Immunity to Error and Subjectivity

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Immunity to Error and Subjectivity

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Since Sydney Shoemaker published his seminal article 'Self-Reference and Self-Awareness' in 1968, the notion of 'Immunity to Error through Misidentification' (IEM) has received much attention.[1] It crops up in discussions of personal identity, indexical thought and introspection, and has been used to interpret remarks made by philosophers from Wittgenstein to William James.[2] The precise significance of IEM is often unspecified in these discussions, however. It is unclear, for example, whether it *constitutes* an important status of judgments, whether it *explains* an important characteristic of judgments, or whether it merely

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1   At times I will use IEM to stand for the adjective 'immune to error though misidentification' and at other times for the noun, 'immunity to error though misidentification.' Context will make it clear which I mean, and the notational ambiguity seems less cumbersome than repeated explicit attempts to disambiguate.

2   The original presentation of IEM can be found in Shoemaker (1968), but see also Shoemaker's (1970) and (1994). IEM received significant further discussion by Evans (1982). Other mentions of IEM are so numerous that paying some lip service to the status now seems a condition of entry into discussions of self-knowledge and subjectivity. Authors who mention it, or something like it, include Peacocke (1983), McGinn (1983), Parfit (1984), Taschek (1985), Noonan (1989), Recanati (1993), O'Brien (1995), Christofidou (1995) and (2000), Cassam (1997), Rovane (1998), Bermudez (1998), Pryor (1999), Campbell (1999), Baker (2000), Moran (2001), and Bar-On (2004).

marks an important characteristic of judgments. Nevertheless, reference to IEM abounds, making this obscure notion seem all the more significant.

I argue that the deference paid to IEM is a mistake. Though my arguments should show that IEM fails to mark, constitute or explain any important status of judgments, this paper's aim is more specific. Many philosophers seem to advance IEM as an alternative to a Cartesian method of defining first-person privilege and of circumscribing the first-person perspective. Gareth Evans, for example, seems to think that consideration of the scope of IEM helps us see our way past a limited, mentalistic picture of the first-person perspective (Evans, 1982, 224). Similarly, Shoemaker (1994) appears to think that IEM offers us insight into self-knowledge without presupposing a notion of infallible access. Since IEM is a more permissive status than traditional Cartesian forms of epistemic security, it might appear to be an antidote to overly restrictive accounts of self-knowledge and subjectivity.

I argue, however, that Immunity to Error through Misidentification cannot replace traditional forms of epistemic security in our theorizing about self-knowledge and subjectivity. I will show, in fact, that IEM is neither necessary nor sufficient for any interesting status that judgments might possess. In particular, it does not mark a first-personal character of judgments. The appearance to the contrary stems from cases where IEM is underwritten by a more traditional Cartesian status. This does not necessarily force us back into a mentalistic self-conception, but it does suggest that a more liberal perspective cannot be attained by simply bypassing the traditional analyses of self-knowledge. The result is that IEM proves to be an extraneous item in the philosopher's conceptual repertoire, clouding more issues than it illuminates.

I   Immunity to Error through Misidentification

1. The Basic Notion

Shoemaker introduced IEM in an attempt to clarify certain remarks by Wittgenstein and to explain the peculiar status of certain judgments about oneself. In the Blue Book, Wittgenstein maintained that there are two uses of 'I': its 'object use' and its 'subject use.'

> There are two different cases in the use of the word 'I' (or 'my') which I might call the 'use as object' and 'the use as subject'. Examples of the first kind of use are these: 'my arm is broken,' 'I have grown six inches,' 'I have a bump on my forehead,' 'The wind blows my hair about.' Examples of the second kind are: 'I see so-and-so,' 'I hear so-and-so', 'I try to lift my arm,' 'I think it will rain,' 'I have a toothache.' One can point to the difference between these two categories by saying: the cases of the first category involve the recognition of a particular person,

and there is in these cases the possibility of an error, or as I should rather put it, the possibility of an error has been provided for. …On the other hand, there is no question of recognizing a person when I have a toothache. To ask, 'are you sure it is you who have pains?' would be nonsensical. (Wittgenstein, 1958, 66-7)

Shoemaker (1994) maintains that the subject uses of 'I' are not characterized by strict incorrigibility, but rather by Immunity to Error through Misidentification (IEM). He offers the following implicit definition of IEM:

> …to say that a statement 'a is Φ' is subject to error through misidentification relative to the term 'a' means that the following is possible: the speaker knows some particular thing to be Φ, but makes the mistake of asserting 'a is Φ', because, and only because, he mistakenly thinks that the thing he knows to be Φ is what 'a' refers to.

Translating Shoemaker's talk of statements and terms into talk of judgments renders the following:[3]

> (IEM): A judgment that a is F is IEM for S iff it is not possible for S to lack knowledge that a is F simply by being wrong about which thing is F.

So, when I am in an airplane I might judge that the passenger in front of me is giving off an infelicitous odor. I might be wrong about this: it might not be the passenger in front of me, but the one behind. I can make that error, however, and still know that someone stinks. Some judgments don't appear to allow this. If I discover that I am wrong in believing I have a headache, I am not going to be wrong because I am in error about *who* has a headache but perhaps because I have mischaracterized the experience in some way.

Shoemaker further distinguishes between two different types of IEM: absolute and circumstantial. A judgment is *circumstantially IEM* if it owes its IEM status to the particular basis upon which the judgment was made, while in other circumstances the content of the judgment could be known in a way that is vulnerable to misidentification error. For example, I can come to know that I am wearing a wristwatch in at least two ways: by feeling the watchband tight around my wrist, or by looking at my wrist. In the former case, it hardly seems possible that I

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3   Since the relevant status is possessed by unuttered judgments, it seems crucial to consider judgments rather than statements. Peacocke is explicit that the phenomenon is not necessarily linguistic in his (1983), and sources that agree include McGinn (1983), Campbell (1999) and Prior (1999).

can know on the basis of feeling the pressure of the band that someone is wearing a watch while doubting that it is me. (I might be mistaken that it is a watch on my wrist — it might be a bracelet. But I certainly am not in a position to know someone has a watch on his wrist while wondering who it is.) If I come to know I am wearing a watch by simply glancing at my wrist, however, I am not secure against such error. For it is possible, though unlikely, that I glance at someone else's wrist. In such a case, I can still know a watch is being worn while being wrong about its wearer. Because of these two ways of knowing, one of which has IEM and the other of which doesn't, the judgment that I am wearing a watch — when it has IEM at all — only has IEM circumstantially. A judgment has *absolute IEM* if it is IEM regardless of the grounds on which is was made.[4]

It is worth taking a moment to distinguish IEM from another notion with which it is often confused. IEM is often confused with what I call Immunity to Misguided Reference (IMR).[5] A judgment that x is F has IMR if it is impossible for someone to make that judgment while being mistaken about the reference of x. (IMR is itself to be distinguished from 'Immunity to Reference Failure' which simply maintains that in a judgment 'x is F', x cannot fail to refer. A judgment can have this property while lacking IMR because x could be guaranteed to refer without a guarantee that the maker of the judgment knows what x refers to.) All I-judgments have IMR, while not all I-judgments are IEM. For example, suppose someone believes he is facing a mirror and forms the belief 'I am wearing an excellent suit.' Suppose further that as a matter of fact there is no mirror and the man is not seeing himself, but is instead seeing another man wearing a nice suit. As in all cases, 'I' here cannot fail in reference, and the utterer of the statement understands that it refers to him by simply understanding the meanings of his terms. His judgment is in error by misidentification, however, since he is in the position to know someone is wearing a suit but is wrong about who it is.[6] To be

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4   It might be objected that IEM should not be considered a status of judgments but of 'uses' of 'I'. I have no objection, really, to considering IEM a status of 'uses.' In actuality, IEM doesn't hold of judgments *or* 'uses of the first-person pronoun' simpliciter: it only characterizes them with respect to certain grounds. As such, my argument will not be affected by this issue.

5   This confusion is made by Lynne Rudder Baker (2000), and seems to be made in Andrea Christofidou's recent works on the topic Christofidou (1995) and (2000). Carole Rovane (1998) also seems to be confusing these two issues at various points. P.F. Strawson, however, is careful to distinguish these features of 'I' in his (1994) 210-11, and Bar-On keeps the issues admirably clear in her (2004).

6   If a more precise characterization of IEM is desired, see James Pryor's explanation

immune to error through misidentification, one's judgment cannot be susceptible to a mistake of this form.

II   The Philosophical Applications of Immunity to Error through Misidentification

Despite its provocative use by Shoemaker, Evans and others, the explicit significance of Immunity to Error through Misidentification remains obscure. In lieu of listing all the possible uses of IEM I will attempt to provide an interpretation of its place in the literature that captures the general spirit of its use.[7] The arguments I will present in Section III, however, should undermine the usefulness of the notion in almost any application.[8]

Many philosophers seem to find IEM attractive as a non-Cartesian account of first-person privilege that would explain what it means to say of a judgment that it is made from the first-person perspective.[9] This, in turn, might serve to circumscribe the properties that give rise to such judgments, explaining why they are the properties at the heart of subjectivity.

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of wh-misidentification in Pryor (1999) p. 282. My notion of IEM is essentially the same as his notion of immunity to wh-misidentification.

7   In the picture that follows, I omit two related applications of IEM which have received, in my view, unnecessarily heavy emphasis in the literature. The first concerns the use of IEM to explain the Humean intuition that the self is elusive (Shoemaker, 1963) and the second concerns its use in the personal identity debate between Evans (1984), McDowell (1998e) and Parfit (1984) and Shoemaker (1963) (1970). I omit these in part because they are discussed elsewhere (as in Pryor (1999) and Cassam (1995)), and because if my arguments succeed against the uses of IEM discussed in Section Two, they do so against these as well. Additionally, I find these applications of IEM implausible since, a) it does not follow from a judgment's being IEM that the subject of the judgment is not identifiable in the sense relevant to the Humean intuition (after all, demonstrative judgments are IEM); and, b) it does not follow from memory judgments being IEM that reductionist analyses of personal identity are circular. The memory analysis of personal identity is not circular so long as the notion of personal identity is not an essential component of the analysis of memory — whether or not memories always presuppose self-identity in their *content* is beside the point.

8   This includes, for example, the fact that authors such as Evans and Shoemaker take IEM to be connected with the notion of 'identification freedom.' For more on why I take my arguments to undermine this particular notion as well, see note 42 below.

9   Brewer (1995) seems to agree that Evans is using IEM in the way I describe, and for different reasons he believes that as an antidote to Cartesianism, it will not work.

What is special about statements such as 'I have a toothache?' Historically it has been held that such statements are peculiar because the judgments they represent are so certain: such knowledge is infallible. If so, these judgments possess 'Cartesian Immunity to Error' (CIE). We can characterize CIE as follows:

> (CIE) A subject's belief that p has CIE =df If the subject believes p, then p.

What distinguishes the way I cognitively approach my pains from the way you can approach them? According to the Cartesian, the difference consists in an epistemic asymmetry: I have infallible access to them, while you do not. Since mental states are the only states that enjoy such special access, a Cartesian characterization of subjectivity is not far behind. To the extent that the subjective perspective on the world is reflected by epistemic asymmetries, and to the extent that mental states seem to constitute the source and domain of such asymmetries, it seems persuasive that my mental life is the defining characteristic of my subjectivity. Insofar as I am a subject, I am essentially a thinking thing.

This Cartesian conception of subjectivity has seemed rather troubled in recent years. On the one hand, conceiving of ourselves first and foremost as thinking things has come to seem wrongheaded. Our corporeality and our relationship to the physical world have come to seem just as important to our subjectivity as our minds. On the other hand, the Cartesian epistemological project has not fared well against its twentieth-century critics. Many philosophers have become convinced that mental states are not simply *given* for inclusion in a judgment: some conceptualization must occur.[10] As such, there must always be room for error in such judgments. CIE thus seems to have too much unwelcome baggage as a characterization of subjectivity.

IEM characterizes the epistemology of self-knowledge more modestly, and at first blush it seems to help us understand the first-person perspective in a non-Cartesian manner. I am not infallible with respect to 'I am having a toothache,' but there are some mistakes to which I am not vulnerable. Given normal, first-personal grounds for knowing I have a toothache, I couldn't know that someone has a toothache based upon those grounds while wondering who it is. This privilege marks an asymmetry between my judgments about myself and the judgments

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10   I have in mind the critiques launched by Sellars (1956), and continued by Bonjour (1985), McDowell (1994) and others.

others make about me.[11] When someone else judges that I have a tooth-ache, they do so based on evidence that leaves the possibility of mis-identification open. (For example, it could be they have confused me with my identical twin). The fact that I am immune to such confusions putatively defines the first-personal nature my judgment.

Like its Cartesian analogue, IEM might be thought to select the prop-erties most relevant to our subjective lives. Sydney Shoemaker suggest-ed something like this in his original presentation of IEM:

> It has often been held to be one of the defining features of the realm of the mental, or the psychological, that each person knows of his own mental or psychological states in a way in which no other person could know them. We can put what is true in this by saying that there is an important and central class of psychologi-cal predicates, let us call them 'P*-predicates', each of which can be known to be instantiated in such a way that knowing it to be instantiated in that way is equiva-lent to knowing it to be instantiated in oneself. There are psychological predicates that are not P*-predicates — e.g. 'is highly intelligent'. But I think that those which are not P*-predicates are classified as psychological predicates only because they are related in certain ways to those which are… If this is right, the question of how it is possible that there should be psychological predicates turns essentially on the question of how it is possible that there should be P*-predicates, and this is the same as the question of how it is possible that there should be predicates the self-ascription of which is absolutely immune to error through misidentification. (Shoemaker, 1994, 90-1)

Absolute IEM would thus identify the 'basic' psychological proper-ties.[12]

As it happens, the properties selected by judgments with absolute IEM and those selected by CIE are approximately the same. As we shall see, this is no coincidence, but many theorists — most notably Gareth Evans — have complained that the focus upon 'absolute IEM' serves to perpetuate the Cartesian self-conception that has been so injurious to the study of subjectivity. Evans maintains that statements such as 'the wind is blowing through my hair' and 'my legs are crossed' have IEM when known in the first-personal manner no less than 'I have a tooth-ache.' He maintains that:

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11   In Wittgensteinian parlance, IEM appears to delineate the judgments in which 'I' is used as a subject as opposed to the cases when it is used objectively. Cassam (1995) explicitly endorses IEM as a way to locate the subjective use.

12   While Shoemaker thought absolute IEM was required for this role, it might be thought that this is merely a remnant of Cartesian bias. Evans, for example, when using IEM for a similar purpose does not restrict his attention to absolute IEM. The problems that come with this, however, will be explained in the next section.

> The considerations of this section tell against the common idea that our conception of ourselves 'from the first-person perspective' is a conception of a thinking, feeling, and perceiving thing, and not necessarily a physical thing located in space. …Thus the cases of immunity to error through misidentification that we have considered…reveal that our conception of ourselves is firmly anti-Cartesian: our 'I'-ideas are Ideas of bearers of physical no less than mental properties. (Evans, 1982, 224)

IEM seems promising, then, not only as a non-Cartesian form of immunity to error, but also as an antidote to the Cartesian view of subjectivity which ignores the fact that selves are embedded in the world and that the first-person perspective extends beyond the inside of our heads.

III   The Insignificance of Immunity to Error through Misidentification

I maintain that IEM cannot fulfill its promise without falling back on the very conception of self-knowledge that it aims to replace. When one looks at the many ways IEM can be generated, it becomes clear that a judgment's being IEM is neither necessary nor sufficient for its being first-personal or privileged in any significant way. In order to capture an interesting set of judgments, therefore, IEM must be refined and restricted. Such conceptual fine-tuning, however, only reveals that IEM is not the status doing the work after all. Underneath the meaningful cases of IEM is a more traditional Cartesian status that marks the judgments that are intuitively first-person perspectival. It is this status which explains the first-person/third-person asymmetries IEM was meant to distinguish.

1. The Problem of Demonstrative Judgments

If IEM is a status that can explain the asymmetry between first-personal and third-personal knowledge, then it had better not characterize both. But first-personal judgments about oneself are not the only judgments that have IEM. At the very least, demonstrative judgments also have IEM status.[13] When I gaze into an aquarium and declare 'That is a pink and gold blowfish,' I am judging of the thing I am looking directly at that it is a pink and gold blowfish, presumably based on my visual experience. I might be wrong about my judgment — I might be seeing a

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13   Shoemaker (1994) recognizes this on p.83, but the implications for his project do not seem to be realized there.

pink and gold piranha, as opposed to a blowfish. I am not vulnerable to error through misidentification, however: the possibility that based on my visual experience I know *something* is a pink and gold blowfish but not *that* is ruled out. Any proof that I was really failing to ostend some-thing — my discovery that I was hallucinating or was merely confused by lights reflecting through the water — would also undermine my jus-tification for believing that something is a pink and gold blowfish. For suppose I find out that there is no object corresponding to my 'that.' It doesn't seem a reasonable option for me to retreat and say, 'well *some-thing* is a pink and gold blowfish!' The unreasonability of such a retreat is the earmark of immunity to error through misidentification. Since demonstrative judgments are IEM and are paradigmatically judgments about objects, IEM alone cannot explain what is peculiar about self-knowledge as opposed to knowledge of objects.[14]

Even when the scope of judgments we are considering is restricted to those directed at selves, IEM fails to capture the asymmetry between first-personal judgments and third-personal judgments. This is simply because some third-personal demonstrative judgments are directed at selves. If you see me puzzling through *Varieties of Reference*, you could say 'That man is confused.' This judgment is still IEM: if you are wrong about it, it is not because you know that someone is confused but are wrong that the person you are demonstrating is confused. Your evi-dence for the confusion stems from your seeing me, which grounds your demonstrative judgment, and if you had reason to believe of 'that man' that he was not puzzled, you would have a defeater for your judgment that there was confusion.[15] Since your judgment about me is clearly third-personal, however, the contrast between judgments with IEM and those without does not mark the asymmetry between the third-person and the first-person perspectives.

The situation is not improved by focusing upon judgments one makes about oneself. After all, I can see myself in the mirror and say 'that shabby pedagogue is confused.' The IEM status would be preserved in my demonstrative judgment about myself just as it would be preserved

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14   I do not necessarily want to say that all demonstrative judgments are IEM. I think there can be some debate about that in certain complicated cases. (For problem cases see Shoemaker (1994), 83, and Siegel (2002).) All that I need for my purposes is that demonstrative judgments can have IEM and that they constitute cases of third-personal self-knowledge that is nevertheless IEM.

15   You might have justification that someone is confused by simple probabilities, but this would be a different source of knowledge for the general claim and thus would not prevent this demonstrative judgment from having IEM status.

in your demonstrative judgment about me. This opens the door to cases of self-knowledge which IEM was supposed to exclude.

Of course it must be said that these self-directed demonstrative judgments are not IEM with respect to 'I,' since none of these judgments contain an 'I' component. Perhaps, then, IEM can serve to distinguish judgments with an 'I' component that are first-personal from those that are not. This would severely lessen the usefulness of IEM, since it would not capture the asymmetry between my access to myself and the access others have to me. It turns out, however, that once we investigate what gives rise to IEM, it cannot serve even this limited purpose.

2. The Generality Problem for IEM

The most important source of IEM for our purpose is what we can call *dedication*. John Campbell explains:

> In the case of the first person, what is happening is rather that the subject is using ways of finding out about the world that are, as we might say, 'dedicated' to the properties of one particular object, namely that very person. They are not ways of finding out that could be equally well applied to any of a range of objects. It is for that reason that although the subject using such a way of finding out can make a mistake, it could not be a mistake about who is in question. (Campbell, 1999, 95)

So, for example, memory is simply a faculty by which a subject knows about his own past experiences. Similarly, proprioception is a faculty by which a subject knows about the positioning of his own body. These faculties, by their very nature, are 'dedicated' and deliver information about only one object. As such, judgments made about that object on the basis of those faculties have IEM with respect to that object. The point is general and does not merely apply to self-dedicated faculties: if a way of knowing, W, only provides knowledge of a particular object, O, then all judgments about O by W will have IEM.

While this dedication account nicely explains many cases of IEM, a sort of 'generality problem' looms, because we now have a recipe for making almost any judgment IEM with respect to some source.[16] For any judgment about an object O based on source S, there is another source S* with respect to which the judgment is IEM. All that is needed to get S* is to add to the definition of S that it is a source that is dedicated to object O. But if IEM can be attained so easily, it seems clear that it is too widespread a phenomenon to be of much significance.

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16   The 'Generality Problem' here is a transposition of the generality problem for reliabilism. See Richard Feldman's (1985).

Consider the following science fiction. My brother Lewis and I are close. So close, in fact, that when I close my eyes tightly I have his field of vision. That is, I can see what he sees when his eyes are open, and when they close I can even see his lids narrow and blacken my proxy visual field. This is a very reliable process. Add to this the supposition that when I have his field of vision and see myself 'through' it, a red tinge appears in my field of vision. This red tinge appears iff he is looking at me: it doesn't happen when he is seeing my doppelganger, or anyone else. Call this faculty 'Bro-sight.' In this scenario, I can make self-directed judgments, such as 'I am wearing an orange tie,' that are IEM relative to the source of Bro-sight, yet such judgments are surely no more first-personal than judgments based upon my looking down at my chest or judgments based on looking in the mirror. So there are self-directed IEM judgments that do not mark what IEM was intended to mark.[17]

'Ways of knowing' can be generated like this even using causal mechanisms that are actually instantiated. Say that I have 'burning ears' iff I hear someone talking, I have a conviction that I am the subject of conversation, and those I overhear really are talking about me. When I walk out of class and hear a student say 'He's *sooo* boring,' I am convinced he is talking about me. If he is, my knowledge that I am boring relative to the faculty of 'hearing with burning ears' is IEM. True, relative to the more inclusive faculty of *hearing*, I might be wrong about being the subject of my student's judgment, but not relative to hearing with burning ears.

John McDowell and Gareth Evans seem to be addressing something like the generality problem when they argue against the notion of quasi-memories. They maintain that quasi-memory would not count as a genuine IEM-generating faculty precisely because it is such a gerrymandered way of gaining knowledge.[18] Just because one can provide a linguistic description of a faculty doesn't mean there is such a faculty.

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17   It is true, I think, that we can describe the relevant field of vision in this case as mine, though controlled in some sense by my brother. This does not alter the fact, however, that the resultant judgment about myself is no more first-personal than a judgment based on looking in the mirror, because it is ultimately a way of making the judgment that is available to another and involves viewing myself as one object among many. Thanks to an anonymous referee from this journal for drawing my attention to this feature of Bro-sight.

18   An anonymous referee for this journal has pointed out to me that in some places, Evans seems to admit the legitimacy of q-memory. See Evans (1982) 240-3. I find it difficult to reconcile this with his remarks on 248, but if Evans does recognize 'gerrymandered faculties', then he would presumably not endorse this 'gerrymandering' objection to the generality problem against IEM. If Evans switches his focus

(Evans, 1982, 248) McDowell urges Evans' point, maintaining that a gerrymandered faculty can be understood only derivatively and that simply changing requirements of a faculty's performance doesn't mean that we have arrived at a new faculty. (McDowell, 1998, 374)

I wish to make several responses to the McDowell/Evans reaction to the generality problem. First of all, even if we cannot be said to really have the faculties I have described, there could certainly be worlds where we receive information and rely upon it in ways that would make it correct to say that we had such faculties. At best, therefore, IEM is an earmark that only contingently selects the correct faculties. As such, it behooves us to look for what IEM happens to mark in this world if what it marks constitutes the essence of subjectivity or the first-person perspective.

What's more, the accusation that the faculties in the counterexamples are gerrymandered is unsupported unless a criterion for being a faculty is defended. It seems peculiar to think we have happened to land upon some necessary and natural division of faculties in our folk and theoretical self-reflections. No doubt the way we divide faculties has much to do with the pragmatic value of certain types of information to our lives. Nevertheless, it does not follow that a faculty's being unusual or gerrymandered means that it does not count as a faculty. In order to see whether certain properties of faculties (such as their producing IEM judgments) are really the source of interest, we must consider all faculties with those properties, not merely the ones we are used to.

I am inclined to think the Evans/McDowell point gains an air of plausibility only given a confusion between a judgment's being IEM and its having what I call an object specifying source (OSS). A typical perceptual judgment, such as 'the cat is orange,' is based on a perceptual source which specifies in its deliverance the object the relevant judgment is about — in this case, the cat. When one sees an orange cat, one's vision delivers the cat and his orangeness bound up in such a way that there is no question about what is orange. For an OSS the object of the judgment is writ into the very deliverance of the source.[19]

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to the notion of 'identification freedom,' however, he might be able to hold his ground. Against this, see note 42.

19 A judgment's having an OSS is neither necessary nor sufficient for that judgment's being IEM. It is not necessary because a judgment can be IEM if the source of the judgment leaves the subject open, but the subject of the judgment is a descriptive name and the predicate of the judgment is that description. (If the referent of the name Norville is fixed by the description 'the inventor of the slinky,' then 'Norville is the inventor of the slinky' is IEM even if the source is not subject specifying.) Moreover, OSS is not sufficient for a judgment's being IEM, because the deliver-

By contrast the information I receive via my burning ears faculty might seem to be indifferent to the object about which it contains information. The arguments made by Evans and McDowell suggest that what they should be saying is, 'Call something a dedicated faculty if you like, but the deliverances of that faculty still fail to specify a particular object.' In this, they are right: defining a faculty as dedicated to O is not enough to make it a faculty whose deliverances specify O as its object. Nevertheless, the faculty so defined can still generate IEM judgments about the object to which it is dedicated. These judgments are simply IEM without being based on an object-specifying source. [20]

3. Absolute and Circumstantial Immunity

Because of the generality argument and the proliferation of IEM, the cases of IEM seem to lack any interesting sort of unity. Perhaps, then, we should turn our attention to a more restrictive brand of IEM: absolute IEM. Recall, judgments have absolute IEM iff they are IEM when made upon *any* ground, and not just upon some ground or other. The generality problem stems precisely from judgments that would be IEM only relative to certain unusual ways of knowing, so judgments with absolute IEM would not be vulnerable to that problem. Limiting our focus to judgments with absolute IEM might yield a suspiciously Cartesian class, but perhaps that is the price that must be paid for the integrity of the concept.

I maintain that absolute IEM is ultimately a red herring, primarily because there are no such judgments. Any judgment that happens to be IEM could also be made upon grounds that allow misidentification error. True, it must be conceded that with some judgments — most notably those about conscious mental events — it is extremely implausible that one would ever have misidentification errors. This does not indicate that we have finally found the type of IEM that can enrich our study of subjectivity, however. In such cases the judgments have IEM because they benefit from an immunity to error which bears a striking resemblance to CIE. The notion of absolute IEM, therefore, only returns us to the more traditional immunity to error it was meant to replace.

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ance of a source could very well indicate something that the final judgment contravenes — as perceptual information might indicate a partly submerged stick is bent, though one judges that it is straight.

20 See also Martin (1995) section 2 for a discussion of the 'gerrymandered faculty' issue.

The first argument for the claim that there are no absolute IEM judgments stems from a problem about the individuation of judgments. The most obvious definition of absolute IEM holds that the judgment <**a** is F> has absolute IEM for S iff there is no way of S's being justified in believing <**a** is F> that is not IEM. On this most natural reading it seems doubtful that any judgment has absolute IEM. <**a** is F> is a singular proposition, with **a** itself as a constituent. Singular propositions, however, can be entertained in many ways: on the standard view, 'RJH has a headache' and 'I have a headache' express the same proposition. The well-known puzzle is that I can have one of these beliefs without having the other. (Perry 1997 and 1979) If this is the case, however, it seems I could have a justified belief in the proposition expressed by 'I have a headache' that is not IEM. Imagine I am an amnesiac in the hospital. Stoically, I'm enduring a crushing headache. Meanwhile, however, I hear pained screams followed by a nurse's voice saying 'We need to get some morphine for RJH's headaches.' I then judge, 'RJH has a headache.' This judgment, which on most views has the same content as 'I have a headache,' is not IEM. Thus, my judgment that 'I have a headache' does not have absolute IEM since there is a way of believing the same content that is not IEM. These cases can be replicated for every alleged example of absolute IEM.[21]

Absolute IEM faces another, closely related difficulty. On the assumption that we can know that others are in particular mental states, it is reasonable to think that we could use those same third-person techniques on ourselves. We would thus be vulnerable to misidentification errors. Take the case of a toothache. I can know you have a toothache by the way you hold your jaw, your moans, etc. I could also use this type of evidence to judge that I have a toothache. If so, the judgment 'I have a toothache' could be made in such a way that I confuse the evidence that someone has a toothache with evidence for the judgment that I have a toothache. (Perhaps I see my twin brother in the mirror and confuse him for me, etc.)

This problem generalizes. It seems likely that there is no relevant property that it is impossible to know someone else has. If this is the case, then there is possible non-first person evidence for any of my I-

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21   See also Pryor (1999, footnotes 19 and 20, p.300). The natural suggestion in response to my argument would reject the Millian view of content that it presupposes. This is no trivial move, but it happens to be one I endorse to a certain degree. See Howell (2006). The problem is that if one provides something like Fregean senses or modes of presentation for propositions there will have to be something about those modes of presentation that is of particular interest to this first-person perspective, and this seems the relevant object of study as opposed to IEM.

claims. It further seems possible that I could use that evidence to make knowledgeable judgments about myself. But such judgments are vulnerable to error through misidentification. If this is right, no judgments have absolute IEM.

If this argument is correct, then there seems to be little hope that IEM is a status of any independent philosophical interest. Because of the generality arguments and the problem of demonstrative judgment, unqualified IEM marks no particularly unified class of judgments at all. Blocking these arguments requires focusing upon a privileged subclass of judgments that are IEM on any grounds, i.e. judgments with absolute IEM. If such judgments don't exist the arguments against the significance of IEM succeed.

One might object that this last argument proceeds too quickly. Not all judgments, it might be said, can be made on third personal grounds and so not all judgments allow for misidentification. When, for example, would I be vulnerable to misidentification when I judge that I have a toothache? When would I ever use third-personal evidence for such a judgment? Suppose I judged that I had a toothache, and suppose I discovered that my third personal evidence rested upon a misidentification. Would I then believe 'Oh! I don't have a toothache, but someone does?' Surely not! I would simply say 'I have a toothache, and someone else does as well!' This makes it look as though my judgment was not really based on the third-personal evidence in the first place. On the other hand, suppose I was not experiencing a toothache. If I had contravening third-person evidence, such as my dentist's insistence that I must have a toothache, would I agree with him despite my lack of an experience? Surely not. In these cases I seem to be indifferent to third-personal evidence, and so it is implausible that I can base my judgments upon such evidence.[22]

Ironically, this response does more to point to the insignificance of IEM than to its significance. It must be admitted that cases like this constitute a special subclass of IEM judgments. If they are special, however, we have already seen why: it is because evidence that stems from actually having or not having conscious mental states seems to always defeat third-personal counterevidence.[23] What explains *this* fact? It cannot be IEM, for that would involve explanatory circularity. We now have

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22 I owe this way of phrasing the argument to Jaegwon Kim.

23 Note that I need not claim that all cases of judgments about first personal evidence are really incorrigible. My argument is just that when that are not incorrigible, they are no longer in the special class of IEM judgments because they can then be made based upon third-personal evidence.

before us the asymmetry that IEM was supposed to explain, but IEM is only present in these special cases because the asymmetry is already in place. So if IEM does not explain this asymmetry, what does? It should give us pause that the epistemic asymmetry presupposed by the only special brand of IEM appears faintly Cartesian in nature: the judgments that are deemed first personal are judgments about conscious mental states. In the next section, I argue that this is no coincidence.

4. Object Security vs. Judgment Security

The main point of contrast between CIE and IEM is that only the former is an epistemic status that a judgment has with respect to the content of the judgment as a whole. If S's judgment <a is F> has CIE, S is not only in a privileged epistemic situation with respect to the object of the judgment (that *a* is what is F if anything is), but also with respect to the predicate's holding of that object (that a is *F*). We can say that IEM only guarantees what I call *object security* for a judgment, while CIE guarantees that the judgment enjoys a more general *judgment security*.[24] This is to say that CIE, as a status that grants judgment security, precludes mistakes of ascription as well as mistakes that might arise from misidentifying the object of the ascription. IEM, on the other hand, is a status that grants mere object security and only precludes the latter type of mistake.

   My claim is that beliefs that only have object security gain that security by being grounded in more basic judgments that have judgment security. Recall the class of judgments that held the best promise of evading the arguments of the previous section: judgments about conscious mental states. They seemed to hold a special sort of IEM because they resist third-personal judgments that contravene them. This is not because they are infallible, but because one's reason for making them is in part the fact that one is justified in making judgments that not only have object security but also full judgment security. So, for example, take the supposedly merely object-secure judgment 'I have a toothache.' The object security here is surely provided in part by the judgment security possessed by 'I am having a painful sensation' or something of the sort. After all, imagine one's dentist offered the correction 'You can't have a toothache, because after your root canal you have no nerve in your tooth,' and suppose he then added 'You must have someone else's tooth in mind!' The reason this would be baffling

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24   My distinction here is similar to that given in Christofidou (2000) and Bar-On (2004).

is that one is very justified — with respect to both subject and ascription — in replying 'Well I had a feeling as of a toothache,' or 'I was undeniably feeling a painful sensation,' and this is clearly part of the reason for one's initial claim that one had a toothache. If these replies and the beliefs grounding them did not possess such a high degree of judgment security, it is difficult to see what would be wrong with saying 'I wonder why I thought I had a toothache? Perhaps someone else does and I was merely responding to that!' For if there was no grounding judgment with the more general form of security, it is hard to see on what basis one could rule out that one was, in fact, receiving information about someone else's tooth.

   It is worth lingering for a moment at this crucial juncture in my argument. It might be resisted that the object-secure, IEM judgments are grounded in what I have called judgment-secure judgments, since it is sometimes said that IEM judgments are not grounded in anything at all.[25] In some sense of 'grounding' this might be correct. Such judgments are often non-inferential, in that they are not the result of conscious inference or reflective deliberation on behalf of the subject, and it is very rare that we would require a defense of such judgments. They are not, however, 'groundless' in another intuitive sense. The sense of grounding I have in mind is just the sense in which the justification of one judgment depends upon the justification of another.[26] That some judgments serve to ground others in this sense is indicated by the fact that the grounding judgments would be adduced to explain error in the riskier judgments. When one judges that one's legs are crossed based upon proprioception, one could be wrong — perhaps because one is in some peculiar neurological experiment that replicates proprioceptive sensations. When the error is pointed out, one is likely to say 'Well, I *felt* like my legs were crossed!' For our purpose we can remain indifferent between many particular analyses of the grounding relation.[27] All that

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25 Wright (1998), 20, seems to be promoting such a view at points. It is important to note, however, that there is a sense of 'having grounds' that he accepts in the same passage, since he admits that IEM judgments are so because of their 'sources.' With respect to IEM judgments with that are non-psychological, he also recognizes a version of my claim about judgments being IEM because they are 'derived' from other judgments. I would like to thank an anonymous referee of this journal for urging me to clarify my position on this point and on grounding in general.

26 The notion of justification here can be indifferent to externalist or internalist analyses of what it is for a belief to be justified. For my purposes here, I do not wish to presuppose one or the other.

27 One attractive notion of basing is developed in Audi (1986), but it need not be our notion. Any notion should fit the bill.

need be admitted is that there is a sense in which it is false for someone to respond to the question 'Why do you think your legs are crossed?' by saying 'Oh, there is no reason.' What's more, there is such a thing as answering this question *correctly*. If I judge that my legs are crossed using proprioception, and someone asks why I think my legs are crossed, it is incorrect for me to say 'because Jenny told me they are crossed,' while it seems correct to say 'because I feel my legs crossed.' The correct answer provides the grounds for the IEM judgment.[28]

Of course not all IEM judgments will be merely object-secure. Some, namely those which provide the grounds for the IEM judgments, will be both object-secure and judgment-secure. In those cases, the IEM of the judgment will not be directly explained by the judgment's grounds, but instead by its judgment security. This is intuitive since judgment security necessitates object security and not the other way around. More importantly, it should be clear that in these judgments one's security with respect to the object portion is not independent of one's security with respect to the attributive portion. Take, for example, the judgment that I am in pain. When I judge that I am in pain, I am not certain about that judgment because I am certain about two separate things: that I am in pain if anyone is, and that I am in pain. It seems absurd to challenge my judgment with respect to the subject portion not because of some ineffable connection I have to the subject portion, but because it is absurd to challenge my judgment as a whole. Put another way, a judgment's being IEM is surely not a basic, brute fact. Furthermore, any explanation of that fact will surely need to invoke the particular cognitive intimacy we have with some of our own properties, which is reflected in our security with respect to the ascriptive portion of our judgments.

Returning to the overall dialectic, my argument is that there is a generality problem for IEM which shows that it characterizes such a disparate field of judgments that nothing interesting unites them. The most promising attempt to privilege a certain class of IEM judgments is to focus upon judgments with absolute IEM. Yet it looks like no judgments really have absolute IEM. Still, the handful of judgments that appear to be candidates for a special sort of IEM are the sorts of judgments where first-personal evidence resists being contravened by third-personal evidence. These judgments, though, are precisely the IEM judgments that are grounded in other judgments that possess judgment security to an especially high degree. It is this more traditional epistemic security

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28   It is, in fact, doubtful that the notion of IEM can be explained without the notion of grounding. After all, the judgments are only IEM with respect to a certain faculty, and this is because the judgments are grounded in the deliverances of that faculty. Evans confirms this. See Evans (1982), 219. Also see Bar-On (2004), 87-92.

of the grounding judgments that appears to be doing the work, rather than the object-security marked by IEM.

So far, it has not been argued that the traditional immunity to error upon which IEM rests is CIE or infallibility. The argument that IEM is itself not the status that marks or explains first-personal judgments does not depend upon that claim. It might be thought that the further claim, that judgments with mere object security are only object secure because they are grounded in judgments with judgment security, does depend upon the grounding judgments having CIE. The security against misidentification error seems too strong to be underwritten by a weak level of judgment security. It seems so complete, in fact, that it might be thought that nothing but CIE could provide the proper grounds for it.[29] I think this could be resisted, and that a slightly weaker form of judgment security might in fact be sufficient for our purposes, but here I'm willing to grant the point. After all, it is the result of our arguments that not just any level of epistemic security will do. In the cases that interest us — the cases in which one would never base self-ascriptions on third-personal evidence — the security must be such that it resists correction by third-personal evidence. It is not hard to see that there are in fact judgments with this level of security grounding IEM claims. Take the claim 'I have a toothache,' and suppose that a doctor is correcting me, pointing out that I have had the nerves removed from my teeth. At most the third-personal evidence will cause me to weaken my claim to the one that grounds it — 'I feel a strong pain like that of a toothache.' It is hard to imagine my giving up this claim. If for some odd reason I do, it will only be to retreat further to an even more basic ground — 'I feel pain.' This, however, has a very good claim to be a CIE judgment.[30] Thus, the case where IEM might be interesting is precisely the case where such a retreat is possible. What's more, it seems clear that these 'retreat judgments' are not simply new beliefs disconnected from the original IEM judgment. They articulate my reasons, already in place, for making that judgment, whether or not they were consciously considered as such. If this is right, the interesting cases of IEM are ultimately grounded in CIE judgments. Thus, the only cases where IEM suffices to mark something, it merely points us back to the traditional status it aimed to replace.[31]

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29   Thanks to an anonymous referee from this journal for pushing this point.

30   If this does not seem CIE, one can further retreat to the judgment 'I am having a sensation' which, though weak, can serve the purposes required of it here.

31   It has been suggested by an anonymous reviewer for this journal that while this argument might work for IEM, Evans, at least, thought the key notion was really

None of this is to say that there is not something philosophically interesting about how it is that the basic judgments are secure with respect to both their subject parts and their ascriptive parts. This remains unexplained, as does the fact that only judgments about ourselves have something like CIE. This is, however, the more traditional question inherited from Descartes, a question that the introduction of Immunity to Error through Misidentification neither answers nor dispels.

IV Conclusion

The arguments in section three demonstrate that IEM is not up to those tasks implicitly given to it by recent theorizing about the self and self-knowledge. What is the nature of the asymmetry between my knowledge of myself and the knowledge others have of me? What is the difference between first-personal knowledge and third-personal knowledge? It cannot be simply that the former type of knowledge is IEM, because plenty of judgments that clearly should fall into the other-knowledge/third-personal camp are IEM as well. Once we see how easy it is to generate IEM judgments, it becomes clear that a judgment's IEM is a very minor epistemic badge — not one that marks any helpful distinction between types of judgments.

What, then, can be learned from our attraction to IEM? There does seem to be something to the fact that we do not get ourselves into confusions of the sort William James cites in the case of 'Baldy':

> We were driving…in a wagonette; the door flew open and X, alias 'Baldy', fell out on the road. We pulled up at once, and then he said 'Did anyone fall out?' or 'Who fell out?... When told that Baldy fell out, he said 'Did Baldy fall out? Poor Baldy!'[32]

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identification freedom. A judgment <a is F> is identification free if it is not the result of judgments with the following structure: <Φ is F> and <a is identical to Φ.> (See Evans (1982) pp. 218.) Exploring this exegetical issue and fully evaluating the notion of identification freedom extends beyond the limits of this paper, but I think there are promising reasons for thinking that my arguments would apply to that notion as well. The problem of demonstrative judgments would remain, since they too have identification freedom, and since judgments are only identification free relative to a ground, one suspects the generality problem would arise as well. Most important, however, is that identification freedom seems to need an explanation, and one suspects that a closer look will reveal that when a judgment has this freedom, it is grounded in a judgment (but not necessarily an identity judgment) with judgment security. This issue is well worth exploring, however, and I thank the referee for leading me to consider it further.

32 This is quoted in Anscombe (1975, 158-9). James is citing a letter from a friend.

Baldy is thinking of himself in a third-personal way here, and it might seem to be because some of Baldy's basic beliefs are not IEM. This might be, but if I am right IEM is not where we should look for an explanation of Baldy's plight. Instead we should turn to questions about the judgment security of his beliefs and their grounds. In fact, reflection on this case confirms the explanatory merit of the sort of picture I have been encouraging.

With Baldy, the peculiar thing is not simply that he is making the comical error of knowing that someone fell out without knowing that that someone was him. Epistemically, Baldy is strange in one of two ways: 1) he is not forming crucial judgment secure beliefs about himself — 'I feel a sensation of tipping' or 'I feel a thudding on my side'; or, 2) he is forming judgment-secure beliefs that are not serving as grounds for a belief that he fell out of the wagon. Both of these conditions would involve abnormalities, severely limiting Baldy's grasp of himself. Both of these conditions also involve failures pertaining to judgment security — either he isn't forming beliefs that would be judgment secure for normal people, or he's forming judgment secure beliefs that are oddly disconnected from further judgments. Which explanation is correct in this case is of course an empirical question, but either of these explanations is more informative than merely saying that his judgment lacks IEM.

What is the nature of the judgment security that constitutes the first-person perspective? Despite the fact that it is arguable grounded in CIE, this cannot be the end of the story, for that would leave out many judgments that are first-personal but are not epistemically secure. The development of a substitute for CIE is, however, a task for another time.[33] The important lesson is that first-person privilege is grounded in some form of judgment security, even if not all first-personal judgments enjoy that status themselves.[34]

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