In 1956, G.E.M. Anscombe set the following problem as a competition in the journal *Analysis*.

"It is impossible to be told anyone’s name. For if I am told “That man’s name is ‘Smith’”, his name is mentioned, not used, and I hear the name of his name but not his name."

The problem focuses on the example of a human name. But the difficulty that it raises is perfectly general; it is the difficulty of understanding what it is for language to be a topic at all. In this paper, I shall suggest that the lesson of the problem is that, insofar as it is in use, language is nothing given, and as such is nothing represented: it is not the topic of any predication, and as such it is not “in the world”. And yet (as the problem equally brings out): we can hear it (or see it)—it remains present in, but not given to, a form of sensory consciousness. I shall go on to suggest that there is, in this respect, an important parallel between language (insofar as it is in use), and the subject (sc., the I).

Zur Person:
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