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TO CATCH A METAPHOR: YOU AS NORM

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IN HIS ARTICLE "Person and Number in the Use of We, You, and They" (American Speech 53 [1978]: 18–39), M. Stanley Whitley covers the impersonal uses of these three "personal" pronouns. His study exposes an obvious problem that should not have remained in the dark so long, and asks most of the pertinent questions. I return to it because I believe that its mostly sound intuitions have been betrayed by its method. As so often happens with attempts at formal analysis of semantic problems, the need to keep one eye constantly on the formal apparatus interferes with the binocular process of getting the material in focus. I hope in the course of reworking Whitley's analysis to show where the trouble lies.

The following sentences (p. 18) illustrate the usage in question:

Just think! In the twenty-third century we'll teleport to Mars in just seconds. When my great-granddad was a boy, you could still buy candy for a penny a stick.
They said it couldn't be done.

The we, you, and they in these sentences are to some degree and in some sense nonspecific, thus differing from those in the following:

Can we go now, Mom?
You told me you would.
They were sick as a dog.

Whitley's choice of examples is ingenious and his interpretations are insightful. His handicap is an approach that compels him to single out constraints—conditions on occurrence that can be stated in yes-or-no terms. There is no denying that constraints exist, in areas of language controlled by habit. But in other places, marked by choice and intent, the formal template makes a bad fit. The seven supposed constraints listed by Whitley are examples of this shortcoming. All but one are merely tendencies of varying strength, though one of them counts as a real discovery and needs only to be stated in other terms. I take them up according to Whitley's numbering (pp. 24–27).

1. "Impersonal pronouns cannot be stressed." There are two ways of interpreting this. One is that impersonal pronouns cannot be accented (intonationally highlighted) for whatever reason. The other is that they cannot be highlighted semantically for their own sake. The prosodic ef-
fects are almost the same either way, but the two should be looked at separately.

If the accent belongs to the sentence—as happens when a constituent is not being highlighted semantically for its own sake but for some illocutionary reason—the pronoun can carry the accent regardless of its type. Even the pronoun it:

It's hope-him!
He's -less

no use trying to convince

The same can be done with Whitley's example:

You ren-
-bault!
Thi-
He's a -e-
can't control a kid like -gade!

(I have added He's a renegade for the sake of context.) This I am sure is not the case that Whitley has in mind, but I cite it to show how dangerous generalizations about prosody can be. He clearly intends the semantic highlighting of the pronoun. But that too can occur under the same conditions as for fully personal pronouns:

You can't expect sympathy if you do it, only if somebody else does it.

Here an accented impersonal you is coreferential with a preceding impersonal you and in contrast with somebody else.

Whitley envisions what he terms the "stressophobia of impersonal pronouns" as "part of a quasi-global constraint against moving them into an exposed, highlighted position" (p. 24). He then naturally thinks of the syntactic devices that move nominals into a highlighted position—cleaving and pseudo-cleaving. But both cleft and pseudo-cleft sentences can highlight the impersonal pronoun:

CLEFT: When somebody else gets caught it's OK, but if it's you that gets caught, there's something wrong with the law!

PSEUDO-CLEFT: I've felt the same way sometimes. It's all right for the professor to ignore the nobodies, but when the one he ignores is you, that means he's unfair.

Again, the impersonal you is in contrast.

2. "Impersonal you and they cannot be followed by a relative clause (restrictive or nonrestrictive) or by an appositive, and no impersonal forms can be conjoined, either with each other or with other NPs."
As for relatives, the easier case is the nonrestrictive:

Having grass on you in Mexico is risky. They let a dozen slip by, but then you, who are always the one they pick on, get two years in a filthy jail.

This could also be expressed as an appositive by omitting who are. As for restrictive clauses, the limitation may be as stated, though I would not be certain even of that. The purpose of a restrictive clause is usually to make definite by anaphoric reference (you who came yesterday, they who had the means), and definiteness is properly excluded from these impersonals. On the other hand, with cataphora the individuals referred to can be 'anybody who fits the description,' and restrictively modified pronouns here are indefinite in a sense, though not, I think, in the way Whitley intends. An example is they who as plural of he who (probably you who is inadmissible); it is not colloquial:

He who (anybody who) says that is a liar.
They who say that are liars.

Nowadays the demonstrative is preferred: those who.

With conjoining, there is no problem:

You never get caught in these things alone—it's always you and your mother and your aunt.

The effect of the conjoining here is to build you 'somebody' into you 'everybody.' The trouble with Whitley's example John and you is that John is definite, and definites and indefinites don't readily mix. In my example the conjoined NPs are rendered indefinite by the coreferential your. But it could just as well be it's always you and somebody else or you and some other guy, with an explicitly indefinite NP.

3. "Impersonal they ordinarily resists conversion into oblique forms (them, their); that is, it functions only as a subject." The "ordinarily" leaves room for the lone example Give 'em hell and other possible "advisory proverbs." Whitley should have looked a little farther even just to exemplify this type of "exception," for it also includes things that are not advisory and that stretch the concept of the proverbial:

That'll fix 'em!
They say I can't do it, but by God I'll show 'em!
That ought to learn 'em they can't fool with me!

But instances of oblique impersonals are not limited to emotional outbursts:

I'd resign any time before I'd let 'em fire me.
I hate to travel—everywhere you go they cheat you, and I'd rather stay home and be cheated by my local shopkeepers than cheated by them.
My philosophy is this: it's between me and them, and I'm not going to let myself be screwed by them any more. My rule is, when I feel I've been given a bad egg I let them know about it.

A *them* as agent in the passive is not very frequent because one of the functions of the passive is to avoid mentioning the agent—leaving the agent out is the most positive way of making it indefinite; therefore, specifying it is generally with the intent of making it definite. But as two of the above examples show, a *by them* can readily be coreferential with an impersonal *they* or *them* in a preceding clause. The last example shows an impersonal *them* coreferential with the unexpressed (indefinite) agent of a preceding passive. In the *between me and them* of the third example, *them* covers all the hostile forces in a dog-eat-dog society.

Whitley says, "like every generalization, this constraint leaks a little." This constraint, to the extent that it is one, is a sieve.

4. *We* and *you* "cannot be used interchangeably in all sentence types." This is true but uninteresting—it only says that the impersonal pronouns are not identical in meaning. But there is a codicil: "Mixing *we* and *you* in

It makes us/you uneasy when a critic compliments us/you.

produces the repersonalized

†"It makes you/us uneasy when a critic compliments us/you."

If this comment means that all cases of mixing result in repersonalization, it is incorrect, in view of

Why isn't there a little more assurance about the scientific view of the universe? —Because you never know what we're going to find out next.

Both *you* and *we* are impersonal, with the difference that, as Whitley points out, *we* involves the speaker, however indirectly. If this particular example is reversed, *we never know what you're going to find out next*, there is repersonalization, but that is not an automatic result of *we* plus *you* as distinct from *you* plus *we*:

We can never predict, in this society of ours, what you're going to have to do next.

5. "Significantly, of the three impersonal pronouns only *we* can occur" with *some of, all of,* and *as for. We*—that is, *us*—undoubtedly would win a contest of frequency, but *you* occurs easily enough:

Well, in the Army you always know that some of you are going to have to die, and all of you are going to hate the place before it's over. Civilians can turn down an order, but as for you, well, it's your neck if you refuse.
It may well be true that impersonal you as partitive can only follow (and be coreferential with) a nonpartitive you, as in this example. But as for is not so limited.

I skip 6 to return to it later—it is Whitley’s genuine find and needs expatiation.

7. “Finally, impersonal they enters hesitantly, if at all, into combination with the categories of viewpoint and obligation....” “Obligation” is fairly clear. As for “viewpoint,” Whitley defines it as setting forth “someone’s attitude or opinion” (p. 21). I take it for the sake of my examples below that this covers the most obvious attitude-and-opinion verbs of all, namely think, believe, consider, regard, and the like. Whitley’s examples of misapplied they:

†They already sense a growing malaise.
†They gotta go on faith.

The difficulty with these examples is that they seem to be trying to generalize to everybody something that can be true (in this context) of only a limited universe of discourse. Whitley has overlooked a syntactic device commonly used with impersonal they: it can be restricted by an adverb that narrows its scope. When it is so limited, viewpoint and obligation are easily expressed:

Where I work they think I’m crazy to put in overtime.
In the Civil Service they don’t have the evaluation procedure to promote you on merit. They gotta go on faith.
They gotta treat me better around here or I resign.

A sentence such as Why do they have to have laws like this? is perhaps to be ruled out because have to does not appear in its “root” sense; that is, it refers to an impersonal necessity, not to what they require—though Whitley says nothing of this stumblingblock in the expression of obligation. In any case, impersonal they is found in limited as well as unlimited universes, and in the former there is no restriction on viewpoint or obligation. In fact, the narrowing of the universe can as easily be implied:

They better do something about this, before somebody gets hurt!

refers to just ‘the people responsible.’ The speaker could be explicit and say

They better do something about this down at City Hall. . . .

Whitley mentions but does not number an eighth “constraint,” which is that impersonal you does not occur as an imperative (p. 37, n. 9). But it
does:

It's OK if you want to kiss a girl on your first date, but don't you dare try to give her a French kiss!
Now you take the other guy: he's probably as scared as you are, but doesn't want to own up to it.

To avoid a declarative intonation, the second example can be said take

the
Now you oth-
-er
guy:

The same sentence could be expressed without you, making the imperative clear morphologically. I have tried to match Whitley's imperative example †Don't you slam that door by using an explicit subject you. Other imperatives are easier—reflexive, for example:

A good rule is, cover yourself before appearing in public.

I return to Whitley's constraint 6: "Unlike personal you, the entities behind impersonal you seem incapable of participating in specific, one-
time actions and events." Whitley rightly calls this "most revealing," and goes on to relate it—also correctly, I think—to imperfective aspect in verbs: "you cooccurs with generic (imperfective) vps" and tends not to cooccur with perfective vps "because it is itself generic" (p. 27).

But first, how tight is the restriction? Take an example like the follow-
ing:

I'm sure we've all had the experience of being cast as the party dunce.
There you were: the conversation sparkled, someone told a joke, you didn't catch on—and the laughter told you that it was at your expense.

Didn't catch on is perfective, but this is a perfective event narrated as something typical of other such events. For the moment, we can put such perfectives aside as figures of speech, and go along with the notion that you does not regularly cooccur with perfective.

The crucial question is, How generic is you? Whitley would have it as generic as 'anyone and everyone' (p. 27), but there are peculiarities of its behavior that suggest a different interpretation. Whitley takes Jespersen to task for saying that impersonal you is incompatible with "remote past" (note 9), and offers the following examples:

Back in the Bronze Age, you didn't have the concept of a nation-state.
Back in the Bronze Age, you couldn't navigate over large distances.
These are normal enough, but sentences like the following are rather less so:

?Back in the Bronze Age, you lived in a village or in the country.
?Back in the Bronze Age, you didn't navigate over large distances.

The same sentences with they or one are normal, and are normal also retaining you if updated to a past not quite so remote, with other changes to avoid anachronism:

In my grandfather's time, you lived in a village or in the country.
In my grandfather's time, you didn't fly around the world in 48 hours.

There seems to be something to Jespersen's claim after all, if we look more closely at the verbs in Whitley's examples and their meanings in the context that is probably at the back of our minds when we interpret them:

The concept of the nation-state is relatively modern. You have it today, and you had it as recently as the time of Athens and Sparta, but you didn't have it back in the Bronze Age.

Who is this you? Not an individual living then, but you now, the observer and commentator. Though the verb is past, it is rather like the past in It was yesterday that they went, where its being yesterday is timeless (and it would be logical to say *It is yesterday that they went) but the time of the event contaminates that of the main verb. (Compare the mixup with the similar double axis of orientation in It was—will be, is, will have been—a week ago tomorrow.) The back of the example induces a past tense, which would not be absolutely required in a sentence like this:

In the Bronze Age, you don't have the concept of a nation-state.

The historian is flattening history onto a timeless canvas. This can be done with an existential verb such as have but not so easily with a verb like live or navigate, which suggests a participant at that time. As for can, the allusion to a present and not a past you is even more evident in

Back in the pre-Cambrian you couldn't see the sun because of all the steam.
*Back in the pre-Cambrian they (one) couldn't see the sun because of all the steam.

You, as observer now, can shift your viewpoint back; but there was no they (or one) then to observe anything. One can be mended, of course, by fixing up the verb:

Back in the pre-Cambrian one could not have seen the sun because of all the steam.
There appears to be an invitation to the imagination in you that is absent in one. More on this in a moment.

A better instance of the you not being “actually there” is provided by Whitley’s sentence

You/they get a lot of snow in the Faeroe Islands. [P. 23]

The they are the people who live on the Islands, or the Islands themselves. The you is the you as observer, who may never have been near the place.

Tentatively we can assign a kind of here-and-nowness to you that is absent from they and one.

Looking in another direction we discover a second restriction on the genericness of you:

How can they (one) tell a horse’s age? —They look (one looks) at his teeth, but I really have no faith in it.
How can you tell a horse’s age? —?You look at his teeth, but I really have no faith in it.

There is something odd about a directive with you, when the speaker regards it as not quite right. Similarly:

How does one get from London to Oxford? —Well, one way is by boat upstream from Westminster.
How do you get from London to Oxford? —?Well, one way is by boat upstream from Westminster.

The person answering the you question feels more bound to give an answer in terms of what is customary; with one, there is more latitude to take into consideration the scenery along the route or other factors of possible interest to a tourist. Suppose we say that the use of you is somehow normative, and test the hypothesis in other contexts.

One such is with the impersonal possessive your:

Your housewife figures it’s better to depend on a husband, while your career woman wants to be independent.
Your typical (average, normal) housewife figures it’s better to depend on a husband, while your typical (average, normal) career woman wants to be independent.
?Your exceptional housewife will resent being dependent on a husband, while your exceptional career woman will resent not having someone to lean on.

The your housewife of the first example appears to refer to the typical, normal, average housewife. The third example seems to be possible only
to the extent that there are typical exceptions. It appears that when we say things like

You put your exponent here and your coefficient there, and you get your result in these terms.

we are talking about normal actions and entities in that setting.

Another context is with paratactic conditions, in which the if clause is expressed without if. These conditions refer to 'things to be expected' or 'normal consequences' and are better with you than with other pronouns:

You try to tell him something, he hauls off and hits you.
*One tries to tell him something, he hauls off and hits one.
??They try to tell him something, he hauls off and hits them.
??We try to tell him something, he hauls off and hits us.

A third context is one of climactic order, where you with its limitation of 'typicalness' turns out to be less "generic" than indefinite anybody, nobody:

When it gets that close you can't tell the difference, really—in fact, nobody can.

If -body were no more generic than you, this sequence would be anti-climactic, but it is an effective form of emphasis. One falls flat:

?When it gets that close one can't tell the difference, really—in fact, nobody can.

A similar pair:

Everybody loses a loved one—but when it happens you realize it's not a cause for you or anybody to despair.
*Everybody loses a loved one—but when it happens one realizes it's not a cause for one or anybody to despair.

Impersonal you and one are close, but they cannot "be used interchangeably, with little if any difference in meaning," as Whitley claims (p. 20).

A fourth context draws on Whitley's concept of imperfective: "Sentences in which the impersonal interpretation of you is possible . . . tend to translate with imperfective aspect, which depicts the action as habitual, recurrent, ongoing, or repetitive" (p. 26). Three of these—"habitual," "recurrent," and "repetitive"—are consonant with what is typical and normal. A sentence like

In those days, you always tipped your hat to a lady.

uses a "repetitive" imperfective to express a norm or custom. But the fourth imperfective category, "ongoing," is unrelated to a norm, and we
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find that this is exactly the imperfective that does not fit; in English it
uses the progressive:

*In those days, you were carrying a club.
*Nowadays you are catching hell if you don’t have a license.

The progressive is not excluded if it covers an action subordinate to
another verb that refers to a norm:

In those days, if you were arrested it was usually because you were carrying
a concealed weapon.

But the acceptability of this example with you is not because it is pro-
gressive; the norm is carried by usually. On the other hand, the progres-
sive is fine with existential verbs to express a norm that is coming into
being:

By 1977 you were already getting (having, finding, observing, running into)
a conservative backlash.

We and they are not limited in this way:

By the late Pleistocene we (of the human race) were living in huts.

If “ongoing” is a category of imperfective with which you is inappro-
priate except under certain conditions, there is also at least one form in a
second category, the “habitual,” that causes problems. Without testing it,
Whitley mentions used to as one of the overt cues to imperfective aspect
(p. 26). Consider the following:

In those days, you tipped your hat to a lady.
In those days, you would tip your hat to a lady.
?In those days, you used to tip your hat to a lady.

The last example has somewhat the same strangeness as

†In those days, it was your custom to tip your hat to a lady.

—and probably for the same reason: it depicts a custom at the time,
which forces you to take your position back then rather than observe
from the here and now (unless your custom is taken as ‘your normal
custom,’ in the manner of your housewife and so on, above). This is the
same difficulty as the you being “actually there” that we saw earlier. Now
what about the example with would? We can compare it with

In New York you would complain about something like that, but here, you
take it.

The would implies a conditional look, from here and now, at some other
time, place, or circumstance. It is more than imperfective—it has just
enough of the 'if' about it ('If you were back in those days you would tip your hat to a lady') to invite the viewer, from his position here and now, to imagine a different place and time.

It should be obvious now why impersonal you resists perfective aspect: a transitory event does not express a norm. To be interpreted as impersonal, a sentence like You stumbled over the sill, fell, and broke a tooth has to be contextualized in some such way as the following, to show that it is being cited as typical:

You always found it embarrassing to be put down as gauche. If you stumbled over the sill, fell, and broke a tooth, you had to muster all your nonchalance to pass it off as something that could happen to anybody.

The hypothesis of you as typical and normal seems to be confirmed. We can now see how it interlocks with that of you relating somehow to the here and now. The question seems to be this: How easy is it for us to see ourselves as actors on that stage and with those standards? If the norm or standard is explicit, the leap is made easier:

It was the custom in colonial times—you tried old women as witches.

But if the context is unclear on this point, you becomes doubtful when the norm is something that we would now vigorously repudiate:

In colonial times, just like today, you helped your parents in their old age.

In colonial times, unlike today, you tried old women as witches.

In colonial times, unlike today, you acquired goods through barter more than with money.

That's the way things were done—blacks you simply mistreated.

†In the early days in this country, you mistreated blacks terribly.

In the early days in this country, you kept the niggers in their place.

The last example is spoken by a racist who regards such treatment as normal. The next-to-last already judges it as mistreatment, hence the speaker is not willing to identify himself with it. The sentence is acceptable, of course, if you excludes the speaker. The second-to-last sentence forces the issue: you are told to assume the norm.

Another way of putting the speaker on the scene is with the modals and similar expressions—what could be is less of a bar to the imagination than what was:

In colonial times, unlike today, you might (could, would) have tried old women as witches.

In the early days in this country, you could (were expected to, were forced to, had to) mistreat blacks terribly.
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It follows that the types of sentences Whitley finds most propitious for you are the ones to be expected: "possibility," "procedure" (= custom, rule, norm), "narration" using such expressions as never or always, and of course imperfectivity in general where it refers to habit and custom.

The deeper we go into impersonal you, the more personal it seems. If the reference is to a stage on which the speaker has trouble imagining himself, you is proportionately difficult—which is to say that you adopts the viewpoint of the speaker. It does not go so far as we, which involves the speaker in the action more or less directly, not merely as one of the group that accepts a certain norm. But with this proviso, what Whitley says of we is also true of you: there is an "imaginative speaker identification with the referential grouping" (p. 23).

Why, then, if the identification is with the speaker's own viewpoint of what is customary, does he use a second-person pronoun? If we are not too quick to adopt the homonym solution favored by Whitley (a personal you and an impersonal you as distinct lexical items), perhaps we can find characteristics of personal you that help to generalize it.

I believe that impersonal you is a courtesy device. When I ask How do you make a kite? I defer to your judgment, even take instruction. When I say You do it like this, I give instructions without insisting on my role as would be the case if I said I do it like this and without flaunting my impersonal knowledge as seems to happen with One does it like this. In short, it is a courteous way of inviting you to share a viewpoint. It is impersonal only in that the rationale for accepting it transcends us both: I have no right to assume that you will share with me what is not eminently sharable, namely, a norm.

This means, I think, that there is no semantic discontinuity between personal and impersonal you. Though the connection between the two is more tenuous than that between the two senses of we, the same case can be made for both. Whitley chooses the opposite alternative and rejects it for both. Thus commenting on his example

In 1771 we declared our independence.

he says that the speaker is "not properly included in the referential grouping" (p. 23). But this is taking real time and space too seriously. The sentence is equivalent to

In 1771 we Americans declared our independence.

Although the speaker was not there at the time, neither was he in all probability one of the signers of the document referred to in

Yesterday we concluded a treaty with Red China.
Nor was he one of the assassins implied in

Jack Kennedy is dead! We killed our President! (We allowed him to go to Dallas.)

The denotative spread of a word is not to be boxed in so tightly. We involves—as Whitley correctly observes—"strong imaginative speaker identification," and imagination is the springboard for metaphorical extension everywhere. There is probably no more need for two yous than there is for two Bostons, one the physical city and the other the population, in

If Boston were more spread out, it might not object so much to busing.

If metaphor is the clue to transferring a highly personal to an impersonal usage in we and you, it ought to apply to I as well. Though it has not reached the proportions of a stereotype, there are plenty of instances of such depersonalization:

What's fun for you ('one person') may be work for me ('another person').
You always wonder what's in it for me.
How do I fit these two together?
I put my exponent here and my coefficient there . . .
Anybody would be cautious and figure I'm not going to do that because I know better.

The imaginative leap may use a suggested quotation for a bridge, as in the last example, but the result is the same—a first person singular standing for someone else. The speaker may at any time mint a new metaphor in which I stands for 'somebody, anybody':

Why do they always pick on a guy? Look—I get my first day's wages, I go to a bar for a couple of drinks, I weave a little bit on the highway, and I get pinched.

In what Whitley calls "procedures," especially when the speaker is demonstrating, I rivals we and you; so, rewording two of his examples:

To make kumquat cookies, I strain my pulp and fold in Mother Nadine's Cookie Mix.
Now I insert tab A into slot B, taking care not to tear notch C.

The same process occurs in all three pronouns corresponding to the I-you dyad.

If there is no semantic discontinuity between personal and impersonal you, there ought to be at least some contexts where you is vague between the two interpretations. I believe that such contexts are commonplace
and that they pass unnoticed because of our fascination with the unusual, the anomaly of a you that is a non-you. Suppose you come to me for advice. You want to act out of conscience, but there is a conflict. My advice goes like this:

In such a case, it isn't what you think is right, but what you have to take responsibility for.

Am I as speaker required to get off the fence and decide whether I mean 'you personally' or 'anyone under the circumstances'? I don't think so. Consider an exchange like the following:

How do you get from here to San Francisco? —If you want the best route, you take 280.

A fair guess is that the first you of the reply is personal and the second impersonal, but who is to say? And if they are homonyms—two different words, one personal, the other impersonal—it is strange that at such close quarters there is not the usual homonymic conflict: sentences like Aye, it was I; I think Otto ought to; This make should make you happy usually call attention to themselves. An exchange like the one cited becomes almost offensive if depersonalized fully—the question can contain one, but hardly the reply:

How does one get from here to San Francisco? —?If one wants the best route, one takes 280.

The answer with you enables the speaker to generalize and personalize at the same time. It is even possible to do this reversing the situation of accent that Whitley prescribes—the personal can be deaccented and the impersonal accented:

Have you ever noticed that when you discover something interesting, it's always somebody else who gets the credit? —Yes, it's true. I've never had the experience myself, but plenty of people have.

The second speaker with his denial of his own involvement has taken the second you impersonally. This was probably the first speaker's intention, but he also meant to involve his listener personally. Other examples:

I have trouble convincing him. —Then you try harder. (You, under these circumstances, or anybody, under such circumstances?)
You must learn these the way you learn all rote things, by memorization. Have you found out yet how you put up a prefab? Try it—you get your best results that way usually, and Mary will thank you. You were worrying about how you keep from getting mugged around here, weren't you?
In the last example, a personal you appears in the main sentence and in the tag, bracketing a potentially impersonal you (with its potentially generic simple present tense). There is no homonymic conflict. The interpretation is open, and goes the way that best fits the pragmatics of the sentence. The continuity between personal and impersonal is the same as the continuity between specific and generic in the meaning of a nail in the following:

I drove in a nail thinking to myself how important a nail is in our civilization.

The tie between personal and impersonal can be seen in certain personalizing elements that feed into the impersonal—it is not as if the transfer from personal to impersonal had been made at once at some time in the past; it is ongoing. Take the courtesy device of using want to as a substitute for a modal of obligation—You don’t want to hurt his feelings in place of You shouldn’t (or oughtn’t to) hurt his feelings. That this is personal can be seen by trying it with one—One doesn’t want to hurt his feelings is rather strange. Yet it is not inconsistent with impersonal you:

How do you put the point across? —Well, you start in slow and easy, because you don’t want to assume that everybody is sympathetic or even listening. Then you . . .

Another personalizing source is the use of you by “sleek salesmen,” as Whitley calls them (p. 27), who try to involve the hearer in their product or service. One of his examples shows such a you coupled with a more fully depersonalized your:

Well, your Frigicool X-59D is about the best little fridge you’ll find in your moderate-priced range.

In short, the participants in a conversation—I, you, we—are always present in a communicative act and available for metaphoric transfer. You is favored for reasons that have to do with the personal meanings of you; but we and I have their place, for reasons that in turn have to do with their personal meanings. As for they, its impersonal use probably relates most closely to its plurality. Compare the Spanish indefinite plural, without an explicit subject (dicen que).

Whitley’s effort to describe these pronouns is an example of how an investigation can be channeled by a theory. His boldest passage is his best: “Perhaps the semantic component should oversee and control the entire process of pronoun derivation . . . .” But this vision is “fraught with the need for a wholesale remodeling of grammar” (p. 32), and in place of it he adopts the solution of a homonymic split: impersonal we,
you, and they are different enough from personal we, you, and they to count as different words—like fur and fir. A theory of homonymy covers the pronouns more efficiently because it "can state quite simply their different semantic interpretations, cooccurrence restrictions, and potential for stressing" (p. 33). But the earlier part of this paper has shown that the restrictions, including those of accent, either do not apply at all or are no more than symptoms of an underlying semantic extension. The alternative to homonymy, polysemy, involves all the perils that deterred Whitley, but it is closer to the truth, for it acknowledges at least that the meanings branch from a common base; and, to the extent that the pronouns are stereotyped as impersonals, it is correct. But polysemy insists that the senses are fully extant and established, and fails to recognize metaphor as a process which continually renews the connection between personal and impersonal. Metaphor is the leading edge of creativity in language. Until its products are denatured, bleached out, and grafted onto the machinery of habit, they resist formalization. If we would describe them, it is important not to sacrifice the imprecise truth to the precise half-truth.

**NO WAY**

John Yow calls our attention to the following passage from Carlyle's *Past and Present* (ch. 13, "Democracy," par. 15), in which Herr Teufelsdröckh laments the passing of sartorial distinction: "What now is our fashionable coat? A thing of superfine texture, of deeply meditated cut; with Malines-lace cuffs; quilted with gold; so that a man can carry, without difficulty, an estate of land on his back? Keineswegs, By no manner of means! . . . Our fashionable coat is an amphibion between barn-sack and drayman's doublet. The cloth of it is studiously coarse; the colour a speckled soot-black or rust-brown grey;—the nearest approach to a Peasant's." If Carlyle were living now, he could translate keineswegs more directly as "Nō wāy!"—an option not available to him in the nineteenth century.

The *OED* documents the adverbial use of noway from the thirteenth-century *Cursor Mundi* through Tennyson's "I have lived a virgin, and I noway doubt / But that with God's grace, I can live so still." The now common interjectional use is, however, clearly different and quite recent. Does it owe its origin to the German expression that Carlyle used?