

EVANS' VARIETIES OF DEMONSTRATIVE IDENTIFICATION

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Abstract

Gareth Evans is best known for his work on the topic of *singular reference and thought*, especially his celebrated work on demonstrative expressions and modes of thought. In this paper I analyse the successes and failings of Evans' account of demonstratives in relation to Evans' crucial notion of a mode of identification. This is a way of identifying an object that provides for the understanding of demonstrative expressions and the forming of demonstrative thought (thoughts, which require the use of demonstrative terms in their expression; a sub-category of singular thoughts, which require singular terms for their expression). Evans advances three different modes of identification, based on perception, memory and definite descriptions. I argue that while the first is fine as Evans introduces in and provides us with the paradigm of a neo-Fregean account of demonstratives; and the second, though suffering from some notable problems in the form that Evans presents it, can be revised on the model of the first; the third is too beset with problems to be salvageable and should be rejected in order to preserve the overall unity of Evans' neo-Fregean account.

Keywords: demonstrative thought, mode of identification, Gareth Evans, neo-Fregean

Resumen

Gareth Evans es conocido sobre todo por su trabajo sobre referencia y pensamiento singular, especialmente su admirado trabajo sobre expresiones y modos de pensar demostrativos. En este artículo analizo los éxitos y fracasos de la teoría de los demostrativos de Evans en relación con la noción central para Evans de modo de identificación. Esta es una forma de identificar un objeto que permite comprender las expresiones demostrativas y la formación de pensamientos demostrativos (pensamientos que requieren el uso de términos demostrativos para su expresión; una subcategoría de los pensamientos singulares, que requieren el uso de

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términos singulares para su expresión). Evans reconoce tres modos de identificación, basados en la percepción, la memoria y las descripciones definidas. Argumento que el primero es correcto de la forma en que Evans lo introduce y que nos proporciona un paradigma de una explicación neo-fregeana de los demostrativos; el segundo, aunque sufre de algunos problemas importantes tal y como Evans lo presenta, puede ser revisado a la luz del primero; el tercero sufre de demasiados problemas para poder ser salvado y debería ser rechazado para poder preservar la unidad global de la explicación neo-fregeana de Evans.

Palabras clave: pensamiento demostrativo, modo de identificación, Gareth Evans, neo-fregeano

EVANS' VARIETIES OF DEMONSTRATIVE IDENTIFICATION

1. The late Gareth Evans is best known for his work on the topic of singular reference and thought, especially his celebrated work on demonstrative expressions and modes of thought¹. In this paper I will analyse the successes and failings of Evans' account of demonstratives in relation to Evans' crucial notion of a *mode of identification*. This is a way of identifying objects that provides for the understanding of demonstrative expressions and the forming of *demonstrative thoughts*². Evans advances three different modes of identification, based on perception, memory and definite descriptions. I shall argue that, while the first is fine as Evans introduces it and provides us with the paradigm of a neo-Fregean account of demonstratives, and the second, though suffering from some notable problems in the form that Evans presents it, can be revised on the model of the first, the third is too beset with problems to be salvageable and should be rejected in order to preserve the overall unity of Evans' neo-Fregean account.

2. Evans takes his account of demonstratives to be one which fits into a broadly *Fregean* approach to semantics, which can be summed up in the slogan: "a theory of meaning is a theory of understanding³." What this amounts to is the view that semantics cannot limit its analysis of language to those relations which exist between elements of language and items in the world but must also take into account the way those elements are comprehended by competent language-users. Thus, semantics is seen as comprising two

¹ In *The Varieties of Reference* (henceforth, VoR) and "Understanding Demonstratives" (henceforth, UD). For the sake of economy of expression I will use a few abbreviations, which are introduced in the first and third footnotes.

² Demonstrative thoughts are thoughts which require the use of demonstrative terms in their expression; they are a sub-category of *singular* thoughts, which require singular terms for their expression.

³ Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (FPL) p.92. The classic statement of such an approach is Frege, "On Sense and Meaning" (S&M). For Evans' commitment to it see UD and VoR Ch.1.

parts: one which deals with the first set of relations by assigning, to each expression, a *Meaning*, or *semantic value*, which accounts for its contribution to a sentence's *truth value*, e.g., for singular terms this would be the term's *reference*; and another which deals with a language-user's understanding of each expression by assigning a *sense* which accounts for its contribution to a sentence's *cognitive value*⁴. But how should we understand this second dimension of semantics?

Frege's approach was quite radical: he took the senses of sentences to be the same as the objects of the propositional attitudes—which he called *thoughts*; so the sense of an expression is what accounts for its contribution to the sense of a sentence—the thought it expresses⁵. With this identification, all the discriminations which figure significantly within the scope of propositional attitude contexts also figure in the meaning of sentences⁶, in addition to the discriminations which affect truth value. So singular terms, indistinguishable so far as the assignment of reference and contribution to truth value are concerned, can be differentiated in that they cannot be substituted within propositional attitude contexts, and this is reflected in their being assigned different senses. As a result, we have a theory of meaning which not only enables us to account for the difference in informativeness of statements of identity between two different, but co-referential, singular terms, and between one of those terms used twice over (the original issue which motivated Frege to introduce a bipartite semantics), but also deals effortlessly with the semantically recalcitrant area of propositional attitude contexts⁷.

3. Traditionally, it has been assumed that the execution of the two tasks of Fregean semantic theory can be carried out independently of each other: that one should be able to specify the sense of a singular term independently of the account of its reference, or of whether it has a referent or not⁸. However, nothing in the account so far makes that assumption mandatory, and it is one of the key doctrines of the *neo-Fregean* approach to singular terms,

⁴ A sentence's cognitive value relates to how it is understood, and is usually glossed in terms of its *informativeness*; "cognitive value" is sometimes taken as synonymous with "sense," but this suggests an unfortunate contrast between the cognitive and the semantic, which is precisely contrary to the Fregean's intentions, so I will avoid such use.

⁵ Frege, S&M, p.62. See also, Frege, "Thoughts".

⁶ S&M, p.62. Evans calls the individuation of senses in terms of the distinctions that can be made in propositional attitude contexts, the "intuitive criterion of difference", see VoR p.18.

⁷ Pace Kripke, "A Puzzle About Belief".

⁸ Usually in terms of a definite description, though any specification such that the sense is available independently of the existence of a referent would count as an example of this approach; see McDowell, "De Re Senses" §1.

of which Evans can be considered a co-founder, that it should be rejected⁹. Instead, the neo-Fregean embraces the idea that (at least some¹⁰) singular terms are *Russellian*: “nothing is said by someone who utters a sentence containing such a term unless the term has a referent (...). To say that nothing has been said is (...) to say that nothing constitutes *understanding* the utterance” (VoR p.71)¹¹.

For Russell, such *genuine* singular terms only have a reference¹², but the neo-Fregean sees that they can also be attributed a sense. Frege characterised sense as a “mode of presentation” (S&M p.57) of the referent and, given the identification of sense with thought, Evans takes the sense of a Russellian singular term to consist in a particular *way of thinking* of the referent.¹³ Like the notion of a mode of presentation, the idea of a way of thinking of an object requires an object to be thought of (presented), so we can take ways of thinking to be, in part, individuated by the object thought about¹⁴. As a result, we have a notion of sense which is itself Russellian, in that it is “existence-dependant” (UD p.302) or “object-dependant,”¹⁵ and a corresponding notion of *Russellian Thought*: that “simply could not exist in the absence of the object or objects which it is about” (VoR p.71).

Object-dependant thoughts or senses are not intermediaries between the thinker or language-user and the object thought about or referred to,

⁹ Evans describes the traditional interpretation of Frege's notion of sense as “neither attractive nor required by the text” (UD p.291). Other co-founders of the neo-Fregean alternative would be McDowell and Peacocke.

¹⁰ The qualification is necessary because Evans also recognises a category of “descriptive names”, see especially Evans, “Reference and Contingency” and VoR Ch. 1 & 2.

¹¹ See also VoR p.12, where the idea is expressed in terms of “fail[ing] to express a thought.”

¹² Russell, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism”, p.245. This view is adopted by Direct Reference theories, see §4.

¹³ VoR p.16; UD p.294. The notion of a way of thinking may seem vague, but it can be made more precise given the idea of an account of what makes a thought about a particular object: “two people will then be thinking of an object in the same way if and only if the account of what makes the one person's thought about that object is the same as the account of what makes the other person's thought about that object (UD p.294).” Evans notes that in the envisaged comparison of accounts, only the thinking subject changes, *not* the object thought about; cf. also VoR p.20-1.

¹⁴ In this way the neo-Fregean guarantees that senses correspond to referents many-to-one, as Frege requires in the doctrine that sense determines reference, but without Dummett's idea of sense as “a means of determining the referent” or “a route to (...) the referent” (FPL p.95, 96) which could be given independently of (there being) a referent; see VoR p.21, n.24. For the neo-Fregean, Frege's doctrine is logical rather than epistemological.

¹⁵ McDowell, “Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space”, p.228; McDowell also describes such senses as “essentially *de re*” (“*De Re Senses*”, p.214).

and so the thinking or reference is direct, rather than going indirectly via a description or specification¹⁶. Equally, for a semantic theory, an account of sense is not separate from an account of reference: “if sense is a way of thinking of reference, we should not expect to be given the sense of an expression save in the course of being given the reference of that expression” (UD p.294). A theory of reference which gives references of expressions in such a way that they *show* or *display* a term's sense can “*serve as* a theory of sense” (UD p.295)¹⁷. So we can represent the difference in sense between two co-referential, Russellian singular terms, *a* and *b*, in the following way:

(1) The reference of “*a*” = *a*

(2) The reference of “*b*” = *b*¹⁸

4. Despite his Fregean orientation, Evans does not think that we can “force all varieties of reference in natural language into a (...) Fregean model” (VoR p.40). He distinguishes between demonstratives, which are Russellian and can be given a Fregean treatment, since understanding their occurrences requires having certain object-dependant thoughts concerning the referent; and proper names, which are also Russellian, not due to their possessing an object-dependant sense, but rather because of the existence of a name-using-practice which ties a name to a particular referent¹⁹. An alternative, uniformly non-Fregean approach is provided by “The Photograph Model” (VoR p.78) which takes Kripke's view that the reference of proper names is determined by their causal relations and transposes it to the representational properties of thought²⁰. On such a view, just as it is sufficient for a photograph to be *of* particular objects that it stands in a certain causal relation to them, so it is sufficient for a thought to be *about* an object if it stands in a suitable causal relation to it. Such thoughts would be Russellian, since without an object there can be no relation, but they would not have Fregean object-dependant

¹⁶ See note 8. “Direct” is not metaphorical: specifying the reference by description always identifies the referent in terms of a relation it stands in, and so *indirectly*, in terms of something other than the referent (VoR p.43, n.3).

¹⁷ For Frege, a term “*expresses* its sense [and] (...) *designates* its meaning” (S&M p.61). Evans uses Dummett's way of making this contrast by borrowing Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing, FPL p.227.

¹⁸ This way of representing the difference in Fregean sense of Russellian singular terms in a semantic theory is due to McDowell, “On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name”.

¹⁹ VoR p.40-1, 71-2. This view of proper names is more Kripkean than Fregean. Evans' varieties of reference is completed by descriptive names, which have a Fregean sense but are not Russellian (see note 10).

²⁰ See *Naming and Necessity* for Kripke's views on names. The transposition would be encouraged by an approach which takes thought to be symbolic, in the sense of consisting of a ‘language of thought.’

senses, since a mere causal relation to an object is not sufficient to determine a subject's way of thinking about that object²¹.

To mark the contrast with Fregean thoughts, we can follow Burge in calling these entities *Russellian propositions*, which he claims are the contents of *de re* propositional attitudes, like beliefs “whose correct ascription places the believer in an appropriate *nonconceptual*, contextual relation to objects the belief is about²².” Such contents, which are in part composed of the objects determined by these relations, are characteristic of *Direct Reference* theories—“direct” because no mediating Fregean sense is required²³. But, according to the Fregean approach, a nonconceptual element, like an object, cannot, as such, be a part of a thought, since only senses are the constituents of thoughts. Instead, the neo-Fregean suggests that a special kind of *conceptual* content is made available only through the subject's standing in an appropriate contextual relation: “there are ways of thinking about objects which require one to stand in a specific spatial, temporal or causal relation to the object” (UD p.314). This notion of object-dependant sense “yields thoughts which are both *de re* and part of the thinker's cognitive world²⁴,” so allowing us to reject the dichotomy between indirect sense and direct reference without sense.

Both neo-Fregean and Direct Reference theorists agree that demonstrative expressions vary in content across different contexts, and that their content is determined by a contextual relation to a particular object. However, what tips the balance in favour of a neo-Fregean approach is that co-referring demonstrative expressions can occur in informative identity statements (i.e., “this = this”) and so need to be assigned a content which reflects the kind of distinctions that can be made within propositional attitude contexts, that is, a Fregean sense. There are many examples which establish this point; Evans' version is based on one originally given by Perry, which runs as follows:

²¹ Although a theorist might attempt to duplicate distinctions in sense with different causal relations to the same object, these differences will stand outside the subject's understanding and so cannot play the role that sense does. This is the fundamental difference between *causal* externalism about content (of thought or language, Putnam's “The Meaning of “Meaning”” being a forerunner of the latter) in which thought and object are separate but causally related, and the *constitutive* externalism of the neo-Fregeans.

²² Burge, “Belief De Re”, p.346 (my italics). The notion of Russellian propositions (*ibid.*, p. 343) is truer to Russell's own views than the (neo-Fregean) notion of Russellian thoughts, see note 12 and the associated text.

²³ See Kaplan, “Demonstratives”, p.483. Other Direct Reference theorists include Donnellan, Perry, and Salmon. As the previous section makes clear, neo-Fregeans challenge the assumption that Fregean reference need be anything less than direct.

²⁴ McDowell, “De Re Senses”, p.227.

Suppose I am viewing the harbor (...); the bow and stern of the aircraft carrier *Enterprise* are visible, though its middle is obscured by a large building. The name "*Enterprise*" is clearly visible on the bow, so when I tell a visitor, "This is the *Enterprise*," pointing towards the bow, this is readily accepted. When I say, pointing to the stern (...). "[This] is the *Enterprise*," however, she refuses to believe me. By the criterion of difference, a different sense was expressed the first time than the second²⁵.

5. In contrast to the Photograph Model, Evans takes it that: "to give an account of how a thought concerns an object is to explain how the subject knows which object is in question" (UD p.303). This expresses Evans' commitment to *Russell's Principle*: "that it is not possible for a person to have a thought about something unless he knows which particular individual (...) he is thinking about" (VoR p.44), where this requires *discriminating knowledge*: "which would enable the subject to distinguish that object from all other things" (VoR p.65)²⁶. For Russell, objects can be known in two ways: by description—knowing that the object has some uniquely distinguishing feature; or by acquaintance—through perception and, perhaps, memory; and only acquaintance is appropriate to genuine singular terms like demonstratives²⁷. However, Russell took the range of acquaintance to be limited to private, mental objects (sense data) precisely because then a subject could never be wrong about whether there was an object or whether it was the same as previously encountered. In contrast, neo-Fregeans think that a form of acquaintance can be had with ordinary, material objects, with the consequences that one can be wrong about whether one is thinking about an object, or whether one is thinking of the same object twice over²⁸.

Extending Russell's approach depends on finding suitable ways in which a subject can know which object she is thinking about, and Evans

²⁵ Perry, "Frege on Demonstratives", p.483. I have altered the example so that the same demonstrative expression is used on both occasions since this reinforces the point by showing that a *character* (Kaplan, *ibid.*) or *role* (Perry, *ibid.*)—a linguistic rule for the use of an expression-type—cannot be appealed to here to distinguish the two utterances. Evans' version is at VoR p.84; Burge gives another version, contemporaneous with Perry's, Burge, *ibid.*, p.355; and McCulloch, *The Game of the Name*, p.199-201, offers a clear version with a Spanish flavour!

²⁶ Also: "a subject cannot make a judgement about something unless he knows which object his judgement is about" and "[a] subject must have a capacity to distinguish the object of his judgement from all other things" (VoR p.89).

²⁷ Russell, "On Denoting" and "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description".

²⁸ An example of the former would be in cases where the subject was hallucinating, but more interesting cases will become apparent in §7. The latter is exemplified in the Perry quote at the end of the last section.

outlines three *modes of identification* which satisfy Russell's Principle: (1) demonstrative identification—a capacity to locate a currently perceived object; (2) recognition-based identification—a capacity to recognise the object if presented with it; and (3) descriptive identification—knowledge of some distinguishing facts about the object²⁹. An instantiation of one of these modes of identification will constitute “an adequate Idea of an object” (VoR p.148). Evans distinguishes *Ideas* of objects from *concepts* of properties, where this reflects their differing roles in thought, corresponding to subject and predicate in language³⁰. An Idea of an object is “capable of sustaining indefinitely many thoughts about that object” (VoR p.148), “in each of which [the subject] will be thinking of the object in the same way” (VoR p.104)³¹. And an Idea of an object is adequate if it is “a fundamental identification of that object, or (...) knowledge of what it is for an identity proposition involving a fundamental identification to be true” (VoR p.149) where “one has a *fundamental Idea* [or identification] of an object if one thinks of it as the possessor of the fundamental ground of difference [“what differentiates that object from others”—i.e., the criteria of individuation] which it in fact possesses” (VoR p.107)³².

But what is it that ties these Ideas to the objects they are about in such a way that thoughts employing them are object-dependant? To answer this, according to Evans, we must look back to the Photograph Model. While it may be wrong to claim that an appropriate causal relation is sufficient for a *thought* to be about an object, it is sufficient for certain mechanisms in our brains to encode *information* about objects. Evans outlines *the information system*—in which information is received in *perception*, transmitted in *communication* and stored in *memory*—which makes up “the substratum of our

²⁹ VoR p.65, 89-90. Evans credits Strawson with turning Russell's dichotomy into a trichotomy with the addition of mode (2). It is important that for Evans mode (3) is based on more than just a descriptive specification, see §9.

³⁰ This contrast is also helpful since Ideas, unlike concepts, can be very short-lived, and can be seen as manifestations of underlying, persisting conceptual capacities to think about objects in various ways.

³¹ Evans deals with this in terms of an Idea's meeting “the Generality Constraint” (VoR 4.3) discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper.

³² For a shape, this would involve thinking of it as having certain geometric properties, and for a material object, this would be thinking of it as occupying a particular spatial position at a time, and under a sortal (to differentiate a statue from a lump of clay). Evans deals with these ideas at great length in “The Fundamental Level of Thought” (4.4) and elsewhere in VoR. Again, discussion of this very important area of Evans thought is beyond this paper.

cognitive lives" (p.122)³³. When information is available in these ways the subject can base thoughts upon it, where "the object of such an information-based thought (...) [must be] the source of the information on which the thought rests" (VoR p.78). Information-based thoughts depend on a subject possessing information from an object, and identifying (and so having an Idea of) the object the thought concerns. The aim of the thinking is to identify the object from which the information derives, and as such it is possible for a thinker to miss the target, and so fail to have the (object-dependant) thought she intended to have. Evans claim is that "there are many uses of referring expressions for the understanding of which an information-based thought is required" (VoR p.135).

6. For Evans, understanding requires knowing what a speaker is saying, where this is knowing the correct interpretation of an utterance, and he categorises demonstrative expressions into three types corresponding to the kind of information-based thought a hearer must have to understand utterances containing them:

(1) *Ordinary demonstratives* refer to an object in a shared perceptual environment—so to understand an utterance of "This \emptyset is *F*" one must perceive the object and think, based on the perceptual information made available, "This \emptyset is *F*: that is what the speaker is saying."

(2) *Past-tense demonstratives* refer to an object earlier observed and now remembered—so to understand an utterance of "That \emptyset was *F*" one must remember the object and think, based on the stored information, "That \emptyset was *F*: that is what the speaker is saying."

(3) *Testimony demonstrative* refer to an object heard of by testimony (e.g., conversation, rumour, newspaper, etc.)—so to understand an utterance of "That \emptyset is *F*" one must possess the information which the speaker presumes to be in common possession and think, based on it, "That \emptyset is *F*: that is what the speaker is saying"³⁴.

Evans calls such terms "information-invoking" because certain information must be brought to bear on the interpretation of utterances containing them. Understanding such utterances requires knowing not only that the

³³ Note the correspondence between the three sources of information and the three modes of identification: the match is not perfect, but it is suggestive.

³⁴ VoR p.303. This is Evans way of representing an interpretation of an utterance in terms of its truth conditions. \emptyset represents any descriptive component of a demonstrative expression. Evans distinguishes the types of demonstrative expression by source of information, but often this will correspond to mode of identification.

speaker is referring to a particular object, but also which object it is³⁵, where this is provided by an information-based thought about that object; so it involves not just knowing which object is being referred to, but also thinking of it in the right (information-based) way. However, this does not pose an additional problem for the hearer because the context of an utterance will normally be such that the hearer will only be able to know which object is in question by identifying it in the right way, e.g., normally, one will only be able to identify the referent of an ordinary demonstrative by perceiving it, or of a past-tense demonstrative by remembering it³⁶.

Evans' argument attempts to establish that information-invoking uses of demonstratives are Russellian: the only way to understand what someone is saying by the use of such a term is by knowing which object they are talking about, and the only way of knowing this is to think about it yourself, so if there is no object about which they are talking, there is no way of understanding what they are saying. "Nothing is said by the serious use of these terms when there is nothing to which they refer (...) [because] nothing of the kind that normally counts as understanding such a use of these terms can take place when there is no referent" (VoR p.338). Moreover, Evans has a further line of defence in the case of demonstrative expressions which require demonstrative or recognition-based identification of their referent to be understood, since these ways of thinking are themselves Russellian: if there is no object to be thought about, there can be no thought.

7. Evans' earlier account of demonstrative ways of thinking, in "Understanding Demonstratives", takes its inspiration from a passage in Frege's essay "Thoughts":

Therefore, the time of utterance is part of the expression of the thought. If someone wants to say today what he expressed yesterday using the word 'today', he will replace this word with 'yesterday'. Although the thought is the same its verbal expression must be different in order that the change of sense which would otherwise be effected by the differing times of utterance may be canceled out. (*ibid.* p.10.)³⁷

³⁵ Evans responds to the objection that understanding only requires a belief that there is a referent, not that the belief need be true, on the grounds that understanding requires *knowledge* of the truth conditions of an utterance, and possessing knowledge cannot require a false belief because: "Truth is seamless; there can be no truth which it requires acceptance of a falsehood to appreciate" (VoR p.331). This argument seems intuitively compelling, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to assess it.

³⁶ VoR p.313-4. By "normal" Evans is discounting cases where supplementary information, perhaps even provided by the predicative component of an utterance, enables the hearer to identify the object in some other way, i.e., by name or in terms of a definite description. Evans calls the normal case "the minimal identification of the referent" (p.313).

³⁷ Both Evans and McDowell quote parts of this passage, at UD p.306 and "De Re Senses" p.216, respectively.

Evans takes Frege to be expressing the idea that a subject can continue to grasp the same thought, despite changing circumstances and modes of expression, so long as the subject keeps track of the object of the thought, in this case a particular day. These thoughts are *dynamic*, because the subject must continually adjust to such changes in order to hold onto them, but also *Fregean*, because it is not possible to simultaneously take conflicting attitudes to them, so long as the subject continues to think of the object in the same way: “the way of thinking of an object (...) is, in the case of a dynamic, Fregean thought, a way of keeping track of an object” (UD p.311).

This idea is then applied to perception-based demonstrative thoughts: for example, if one is presented, at night, with a number of constantly glowing fireflies, all moving and largely identical in appearance, one can think about one particular firefly, say that it is male, based on one’s ability to keep track of it as it moves about. Over time, one may revise one’s opinion and so take a different attitude to the thought, say doubt rather than belief, but as long as one keeps track of the firefly one cannot take such attitudes simultaneously. However, if one loses track of the object and then, unknowingly, starts thinking of it again, one can take simultaneous, but conflicting, attitudes: “This one is male, but that one wasn’t³⁸.” This is because we have a new thought, in part constituted by a new object-dependant way of thinking, initiated by this new episode of keeping track of the object.

In terms of Evans’ later notion of information, the idea of a thought based on an ability to keep track of an object becomes that of a thought governed by an evolving conception of the object, which changes, and is disposed to change, with information received from the object. This is the idea of an *information-link*: “which provides the subject with (...) information about the states and doings of the object over a period of time” (VoR p.144). In order to think demonstratively about an object the subject must have, in addition to an information-link with that object, an adequate Idea of the object, which in the case of a material object: “involves either a conception of it as the occupant of such-and-such a position (at such-and-such a time) or knowledge of (...) what it is for the relevant object to be at a particular position in space and time” (VoR p.149). Evans takes this to consist in the subject’s ability, on the basis of a continuing information-link, to locate the object in her *egocentric space*: “the subject conceives himself to be in the centre of a space (at its point of origin), with its co-ordinates given by the

³⁸ My choice of predicate underlines the subject’s inability to discriminate fireflies in any way other than by keeping track of one, since among fireflies that glow constantly, it is the female, rather than the male, that glows.

concepts 'up' and 'down', 'left' and 'right', and 'in front' and 'behind'" (VoR p.153-4)³⁹. Ideas of positions in an egocentric space qualify as adequate Ideas of places in a public space in virtue of the subject's ability to impose an objective frame of reference upon their egocentric space, where this consists in an ability to align points in egocentric space with objective landmarks or, as Evans neatly puts it, "a capacity to find one's way about" (VoR p.162). Thus, despite the different terminology, the basic idea remains the same: "the fundamental basis (...) of a demonstrative Idea of a perceptible thing is a capacity to attend selectively to a single thing *over a period of time*: that is, a capacity to *keep track* of a single thing over a period of (...) continuous observation" (VoR p.174-5).

Demonstrative thoughts involving such perception-based identifications are Russellian: "if there is no one object with which the subject is in fact in informational 'contact'—if he is hallucinating, or if several different objects succeed each other without his noticing—then he has no Idea-of-a-particular-object, and hence no thought" (VoR p.173). Where a subject fails to keep track of an object, it is not failure to identify *this* with *that*, but rather a failure to identify any *this* or *that*, because the subject intended to pick out one object (one *this*); the subject can also pick out a *this* and a *that*, and then judge (perhaps wrongly) that *this* = *that*, but that is another case. The ability to keep track of an object must accommodate not only the movement of the object, but also of the subject: demonstrative thoughts are part of a system of thoughts which depends on the subject's location in the spatio-temporal world, and the subject "must conceive of his (...) experience as simultaneously due to the way the world is and his changing position in it" (VoR p.176). And it must allow the object to momentarily disappear from view, and here demonstrative Ideas shade into Ideas based on recognitional capacities.

8. While it is perception that underpins our ability to think about an object which we are currently observing, memory becomes increasingly significant to our capacity to keep track of an object over longer periods of time. For Evans, memory is a capacity for storing and retaining information, either in the form of persisting beliefs generated by information or "purely at the level of the information system" (VoR p.239). However, merely retaining the information which was sufficient to enable a demonstrative identification in the past is not sufficient to enable an identification at a later date since the demonstrative identification also required an ability to locate the object in space, which clearly is not retained. Instead, according to Evans, the subject

³⁹ Evans insists that an egocentric space is not a special kind of space, but a special way of thinking about ordinary, public space (VoR p.157).

must identify the object by exploiting some individuating fact (descriptive identification), or in virtue of a capacity to recognise the object, so long as the subject is disposed to pick out only one object (recognition-based identification), or some mix of the two.

Thus, one may need to descriptively limit the “area of search” (VoR p.279) within which the recognitional capacity can be regarded as uniquely identificatory, in order to prevent cases where duplicates would undermine it: for example, I can think about my television in virtue of my capacity to recognise it *in my house*, even though there are many just like it that I would fail to distinguish it from. But Evans also believes that pure cases of recognition-based identification can be conceived of given that a limit on the area of search can be set egocentrically, in terms of a spatial region located relative to the subject: for example, one can think about a sheep one was recently acquainted with, rather than another from across the valley that one would be unable to distinguish it from, on the basis that the sheep is still located within a region related to one’s current position⁴⁰. However, despite Evans initial inclination to give priority to the recognitional capacity, on the grounds that it could, in certain circumstances, be sufficient for an identification of an object, his second thoughts wisely moved away from this claim⁴¹.

A recognitional capacity seems unsuited to play the role of the means of identification for an object-dependant thought. It may be true that such a capacity is distinct from any descriptive knowledge the subject might have, and can only be exercised with respect to an object; but, unlike the capacity to locate which enables demonstrative identification, Evans takes recognitional capacities to be sufficient for identification even when they are not being exercised with respect to an object. Furthermore, it can be argued that a recognitional capacity, since it is essentially a disposition to respond to an object on the basis of its appearance, is something which could in principle exist even if no such object had ever existed⁴². Equally, a mere recognitional capacity will fail to differentiate two indistinguishable objects (e.g., identical

⁴⁰ Both these cases are from VoR 8.3. Evans believed the latter approach would protect recognitional capacities from the conceivability of Twin Earth dopplegangers (cf. Putnam, *ibid.*).

⁴¹ As expressed in the appendix to VoR Ch.8. The authorship of the material in the appendices is not always entirely clear. I suspect the hand of McDowell in the revision of memory-based identification, especially since he endorses it in “Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space” and “Peacocke and Evans on Demonstrative Content”.

⁴² This suggests that recognitional capacities are more like descriptive specifications than the kind of abilities which underpin demonstrative identification (see the appendix to VoR Ch.8).

twins), despite the fact that a subject encountered one rather than the other and so seems to be able to think of it in virtue of remembering the encounter. As a result, it should be accepted that “the recognitional capacity is merely an effective–though defeasible–way of knowing when one has encountered the same individual again” (VoR p.300).

The last point suggests an alternative approach to identification based on memory: such an encounter would have happened at a particular point in a subject's past, and so the object can be identified by locating this event within the subject's (egocentrically conceived) history, where this form of identification exhibits the same vulnerability to failure as perception-based thoughts. Thus, just as the adequacy of a perception in enabling one to think about an object depends on one's being able to bring that perception under an objective frame of reference, precisely because if one is unable to that suggests the object is not an objective existent but merely, e.g., a hallucination or an after-image; so the adequacy of a memory of an object depends, first, on one's being able to locate one's encounter with it in one's *egocentric history*, i.e., in relation to events in one's life, and then on one's being able to impose on that an *objective historical framework*, i.e., a system of dates or non-egocentrically defined events, where a failure to be able to suggests the object and the event are not objective but merely, e.g., imagined or dreamed. These capacities should not be conceived of as description-based: if Evans is right that locations in egocentric space are not descriptively specified, then this should equally be true of periods in egocentric time, e.g., ‘now’, ‘then’, ‘in a moment’, ‘a moment ago’, ‘last week’, ‘next year’, etc. The *unity* of an egocentric history, provided in the case of egocentric space by the subject's body, is provided for by the fact that one locates objects and event's in relation to one's extended conception of oneself as a persisting subject of experience⁴³.

9. In addition to demonstrative thoughts based on perception and memory, Evans thinks that “one way of conforming to Russell's Principle is constituted by knowledge of individuating or distinguishing facts about an object” (VoR p.132)⁴⁴. Given the objections raised in the previous section to the idea that a

⁴³ This also brings in Evans' argument, on self-identification in VoR Ch.7, that *I*-thoughts are not description-based. My presentation brings together memory-based demonstrative thoughts with *then*-thoughts, in a way that mirrors Evans' connection between perception-based demonstrative thoughts and *here*-thoughts. In this paragraph I have extended these ideas beyond the material presented in the appendix to Ch.8, or McDowell, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Unlike perception-based identification (Ch.6) and memory-based identification (Ch.8) Evans does not dedicate a specific chapter of VoR to descriptive identification—ironically,

mode of identification could be constituted by possession of a recognitional capacity, one could be forgiven for thinking that this would be a non-starter. Clearly, all the points made there carry over to identification based on a description, and in more pressing forms: a description is something that can be entertained independently of thinking of a particular object that fits it, even of whether such an object exists, and, obviously, is unable to distinguish between identical objects. However, Evans takes it that, in descriptive identification, although the subject identifies the object in terms of its uniquely satisfying a description, the subject only knows the description in virtue of having acquired some information from the object⁴⁵. This latter point allows Evans to distinguish demonstrative reference based on a descriptive identification (e.g., that \emptyset) from mere definite descriptions (i.e., the \emptyset) for which Russell's quantificational analysis is adequate: "In the subject's choice of description, he can be regarded as aiming at something, namely the object from which he acquired, and of which he retains, information, and so there is room to speak of error here (...) in a way which is completely absent in the case of descriptive thought as construed by Russell" (VoR p.268)⁴⁶.

Given that the subject's means of identification is merely a description, Evans needs something more to justify this claim, and he looks to the intentions of the subject: "When a person intends to give expression to an information-based thought, we can safely ascribe to him (...) the purpose of referring to the object from which the information derives (...). Only if he succeeds in referring to the object will his linguistic performance be *well-grounded*" (VoR p.131). So for demonstrative thoughts: "the thinker's overriding intention is that his thinking be well-grounded; and his thinking is well-grounded only if the mode of identification employed does in fact identify the object from which the information was derived" (VoR p.197). With this in place, Evans argues, if the subject fails to distinguish the intended object, i.e., if she picks out another object, or no object, or if the information came from no object, then her demonstrative thought fails altogether. However, Evans clearly sees

because he thinks that we have a clear understanding of what it involves (see VoR p.136)–however, the majority of his discussion of it is to be found in Ch.5.

⁴⁵ The most obvious way would be via the testimony of others. Prior to my revision in §8, Evans' view is that some memory-based identifications are descriptive but, given the revision, I think we should reject this; obviously, retaining testimony requires memory, but of facts (descriptions), rather than objects.

⁴⁶ So, Evans claims, acceptance of a description-based mode of identification does not lead to a 'description theory' of reference along the lines of the traditional conception of Fregean theories (§3). Evans accepts Russell's Theory of Descriptions as presented in "On Denoting" and, more perspicuously, in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism".

that with descriptive identification, the purely descriptive content will still be available to be thought by the subject even when the attempt at an information-based thought fails: “In the case of description-based identification, a subject may have a fully *coherent* Idea-of-an-object (...) even if there is nothing that would be identified by that Idea” (VoR p.136); this is because the subject still knows what an object would have to be like in order to be the object in question. This contrasts with the other modes of identification which are Russellian since: “in those cases, if there is no object that would be identified by the purported mode of identification, then there is no coherent Idea-of-an-object, even in this sense” (*ibid.*).

With descriptive identification, the two factors in Evans' account of demonstrative thought and reference are especially clear: the subject possesses information from an object (due to a causal connection), and also identifies an object (thereby satisfying Russell's Principle); and the aim is to identify the same object as that from which the information derives. The first factor is a necessary condition for an information-based thought, but not part of the content; only the second factor gives the subject's way of thinking of the object. However, as the appendix to Ch.5 acknowledges, there is a conflict between the idea that the descriptive mode of identification gives the way in which the subject thinks of the object, and so the thought content or sense, and the idea that the descriptive content is available even when there is no object—that descriptive identification is non-Russellian⁴⁷. Since the mode of identification is expressible as “The \emptyset ”, it can only be the causal factor, which is not part of the content, which determines whether the thought is expressible as “That \emptyset .” But the difference between “The \emptyset ” and “That \emptyset ” is a difference in content, and so should be reflected in the mode of identification. Evans is forced into this problem because he sees that, if the mode of identification really does consist in knowledge of an individuating description, then clearly the description is still available to the subject when there is no object, or when the description picks out an object other than that intended: grasp of a purely descriptive content could not be undermined by such failures⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ Again, the argument presented in the appendix looks like an editorial contribution since, according to p.138, n.1, “[McDowell] (...) elaborate[s] some (...) notes of [Evans]; and enter[s] (...) a consequential *caveat*”, by implication, of his own.

⁴⁸ If there were any doubt about Evans' commitment to such a picture it can be dispelled by the example of the hunters reminiscing about ‘that bird’ in VoR Ch.9, p.307-8. Evans claims that the hearer might have exactly the same thought content prior to, and after, recollection, the only difference is in their informational, or causal, state, and this is what determines whether or not they can understand an utterance of ‘that bird’.

Evans' conception of demonstrative reference based on descriptive identification seems to involve a hybrid of a traditional specificatory account of sense (§3), with a separate causal factor that determines the object, in the manner of Direct Reference theories (§4), and so marks out the content as demonstrative. However, as the above point makes clear, this cannot work as it stands: either the mode of identification cannot give the content or the mode of identification cannot be exhaustively given by a description. Given that accepting the former would undermine the very idea of a mode of identification, the appendix takes the latter course. This means rejecting the claim that the descriptive content available in the absence of an object is the same as would have been deployed in a descriptive identification; instead it is only very similar, and the mode of identification is now not merely a matter of knowing an individuating description, but must also reflect the fact that the thought is information-based. However, the appendix is not forthcoming about what this extra factor might be, merely stating that what is needed is that "the fact that a thought is based on certain information is reflected in its content, *without* it being correct for a specification of the content to include a spelling out of the causal relations involved" (VoR p.142). I do not see how this can be done *without* introducing causal or informational notions into the specification of the content, to the severe detriment of the plausibility of the account⁴⁹.

The problem for Evans' account is that it is caught between two conflicting demands: (i) the need to introduce some extra causal or informational element into the specification of the content; and (ii) the need to exclude causal or informational notions from the subject's way of thinking of the object. We have already seen the rationale for (i), as presented in the appendix, so let's turn to the justification for (ii).

Evans emphasises that it is wholly implausible to attribute to the subject thought contents involving causal or informational notions, except in certain special cases. That is, in normal cases, the subject does not think in terms of, and so does not identify the object of her thought as, the object to which she stands in a certain causal or informational relation. Such notions, especially Evans' technical notion of information, play no role in our thinking in normal cases. The only exceptions are "thoughts which rely on informational

⁴⁹ Thus, as in the previous section, the appendix is an attempt to 'fix' the problems with the mode of identification as it is presented in the main text, in this case to try to make the causal relation *relevant* to the content without making it *part* of the content. However, it is very difficult to see how this would work, and so, unlike the previous section, I will ultimately reject the proposed revision.

channels involving circuitousness and time lags" (VoR p.150), where clear examples would be demonstratively referring to an object seen in a photograph or on a television; in these cases the object can "be thought of only *as* the object serving as input to the information channel" (VoR p.147). Such thoughts "do not have the conceptual simplicity of a genuine demonstrative thought: a conceptual element, requiring an idea of the informational situation, must be present" (*ibid.*); where this means that an identity judgement is involved in such thoughts (e.g., this = the object serving as input to this information channel)⁵⁰. However, such cases must be kept clearly distinct from normal cases in which no conception of the informational situation is required, and even then they should be seen as requiring no more than a general grasp of, e.g., how photography or televisions function, and not a mastery of Evans' technical notions.

Thus, the argument for (ii) is that it is profoundly counter-intuitive to include informational or causal notions in a subject's thought content in the vast majority of cases; and in those rare cases where it is required, the status of the thoughts as genuinely demonstrative is undermined due to the need for an intermediary identity step, which means that the thought is not 'directly referential'. So, Evans must resolve the conflict between (i) and (ii), where this means finding a way of registering the relevance of the causal connection, or information link, in the content, while not requiring that the subject think in terms of causal or informational notion. His only means for attempting to do this would seem to be the intention of well-groundedness.

As we have already seen, Evans claims that subjects, when framing demonstrative thoughts, have an intention to think about the object that is the causal source of their information, and this distinguishes demonstrative thought based on descriptive identification from merely descriptive thought. However, if it is implausible that subjects have a mastery of technical concepts of information, or think in terms of causal relations that hold between themselves and the objects responsible for their possession of information, then this applies just as much to the case of an intention as any other kind of thought. In response, Evans could claim that, while it is implausible that subjects have a mastery of such notions, they still have an intention to refer, framed in less technical terms, and in support of this he can point to the kind of understanding which underpins one's grasp of reference to objects in photographs or on television: these cases show that most subjects do have some grasp of what is involved in informational and causal relations, although

⁵⁰ As a result, such thoughts are not "immune to error through misidentification", which Evans takes to be a defining property of genuine demonstrative thoughts (see VoR 6.6).

they may not conceive of them in those terms⁵¹. It is also unclear, though, whether a *general* intention is sufficient for Evans' purposes: this would only provide a relation to the class of objects which, at some time, stand in an appropriate relation to the subject's thinking, whereas what is required is that, on an occasion of an attempt at a demonstrative thought, the intention underpins a relation to the particular object that thought concerns, and it would seem that only a *singular* intention could provide this. However, this leads on to a further problem since it would seem to require the subject to have an intention with respect to the object in question, which would make it a precondition on demonstrative thought about an object that one already have a thought (i.e., an intention) about that object.

Evans has a response to both problems: when he introduces the notion of well-groundedness, he does so within the context of an attempt to explain away the kind of *de re* attributions of mental states which lend support to Direct Reference theories (see VoR 5.3, and §4 above). These attribute thoughts about an object even though the subject does not know which object it is, and so contrary to Russell's Principle. Evans argues that such attributions are merely *interpretative*, in that they are part of an attempt to make sense of the subject's overall behaviour, in terms of its purpose, and so reflect what the subject is *trying* to do, or *should* do, given her goals, rather than what she *actually* does. As a result, Evans can say that *de re* attributions do not attribute genuine thoughts, and so do not provide counter-examples to Russell's Principle. Furthermore, the idea that thoughts can be attributed in a merely interpretative manner gives Evans a means to avoid both the regress and the attribution of causal or informational concepts. Since, on the basis of the subject's actual, general intention that her thinking be well-grounded, we can interpretatively attribute a singular intention to refer to the particular object from which her information derives. Thus, we do not need to attribute, to the subject, an actual, singular intention, and "it is quite unnecessary to attribute to him the intention to refer to the object from which his information derives; and unnecessary even to suppose that he can form such a concept" (VoR p.131).

⁵¹ It might be thought that this idea is undermined by the need for an intermediary identity step. However, the role of the intention of well-groundedness is not to provide an independent means of identification of the object (this would, anyway, lead to a fatal regress, similar to the one about to be raised), but rather to establish a connection to the appropriate object, in terms of which, the success or failure of an attempted demonstrative reference can be judged. The further issue, then, is whether it can also provide the basis for the difference in content between a demonstrative and a descriptive way of thinking of an object.

One point that can be raised against this approach is that it would seem that we could only be justified in attributing singular intentions involving informational or causal notions if they were particular instantiations of a general intention in which such notions feature as part of the content. This would then foil the attempted escape from attributing a mastery of such notions to the subject. A possible response would be to claim that even the general intention is attributed only in an interpretative manner. However, such a move runs the risk of undermining the very idea that attributions of mental states can be made in a merely interpretative way, since there must be some real state which justifies the attribution of an overall goal or purpose, from which we derive the interpretative attributions; otherwise we have no grounds for any interpretative attributions of any kind. Similarly, unless the real state features informational or causal notions, or notions for which they could be a reasonable substitution, it is very difficult to see what justifies their introduction in interpretative attributions.

Ultimately, though, these points are merely academic since there is a more fundamental problem with Evans' strategy. The aim was to introduce some extra element in order to distinguish a demonstrative, from a merely descriptive, content, and the intention of well-groundedness was the only means available to Evans to make this distinction. However, to avoid the implausibility of attributing a singular intention involving informational or causal notions, the necessary intentions can only be attributed interpretatively. The problem with this is that such attributions do not attribute actual propositional attitudes and so do not affect the subject's understanding. As a result, they cannot enable discriminations to be made within the theory of sense: in particular, they cannot enable the attribution of ways of thinking about objects, since they can *only* be specified relationally, as *de re* states⁵². Given this, it is difficult to see how they could be taken to provide the extra element which makes the thought contents demonstrative, as Evans needs them to, without giving up on the Fregean approach. Evans' problem is that he needs to find a way to make the causal, informational connection relevant to the content, but ultimately the only way to do this within a Fregean approach is to bring it within the scope of the subject's propositional attitudes, and this is what plausibility prohibits. This shows that Evans cannot escape the original dilemma except by giving up his commitment to a Fregean approach

⁵² The reason being that there can be no fact of the matter about the way in which the subject is thinking of the object since she is not *actually* thinking about it. See VoR p.131-2 and p.132, n.19.

to demonstratives; there may be a way to make Evans' idea of descriptive identification work, but not within a Fregean framework.

What has been shown is that, while the idea of an intention of well-groundedness may allow for the idea that thoughts based on description identification can fail, it cannot provide the idea that such thoughts are demonstrative. Given this, it may be wondered whether the critique of Evans' notion of descriptive identification might not apply to the other modes of identification, based on perception and memory, especially since Evans takes it that the intention of well-groundedness is involved in all modes of identification⁵³. However, these modes of identification are Russellian, and so *object-dependant*: identification is secured by *locating* the object itself, such that the subject can *directly* think about, or refer to, the object. Whereas, with descriptive identification, since one picks out the object in a way that is less than direct, i.e., in terms of a specification, one then must have some means by which to project beyond this to the object itself, i.e., by means of a causal connection. It is this structure, with two separate factors corresponding to a traditional description theory and a causal theory, that undermines Evans' idea of descriptive identification, since the former continues to have content without the latter and the latter cannot contribute to the content of the former. In contrast, with the other modes, the causal and identificatory components do "not make an even notionally separable contribution"⁵⁴ to the content; and the absence of the former entails the absence of the latter.

10. It may seem curious that Evans wishes to defend a mode of identification which is non-Russellian, especially given the contrast with the other two modes. However, Evans believes that descriptive identification can underpin the use of demonstrative expressions which are themselves Russellian (§6). Evans' idea is that two people can employ non-Russellian modes of identification in picking out an object when using demonstrative expressions, but their communicative exchange is Russellian because the object itself is necessary to provide each with the means to interpret the other's use. Given that each may employ a different description, it is the object which provides the unity between the speaker's reference and the hearer's understanding of it (see VoR p.333-4). However, the very idea of Russellian (uses of) demonstrative

⁵³ This is clear from the beginning of the appendix to VoR Ch.5, and the notion arises at various points in the book.

⁵⁴ McDowell, *Mind and World*, p.9. McDowell is discussing apposite Kant's doctrine that: "Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, quoted McDowell, *ibid.* p.5, n.3).

expressions with non-Russellian senses (modes of identification) is deeply problematic for a Fregean. Since, in effect, such expressions are object-dependant in terms of their understanding but do not have object-dependant senses, and this sits very awkwardly with the Fregean alignment of sense and understanding (§2). One is forced to ask what the extra component is which contributes to understanding, where answering this would have to take one outside the Fregean framework. Whereas, if we reject the idea of demonstrative reference based on descriptive identification we can also avoid this problem, and in so doing we bring the Russellian status of demonstrative thought and demonstrative reference into line: demonstrative expressions have object-dependant senses because they require object-dependant demonstrative thoughts in order to be understood⁵⁵.

11. Evans' account of demonstratives is a monumental achievement. By extending the Fregean approach to cover "the sphere of human thinking which depends upon the position human beings have in space and time" (UD p.307) it allows us to understand our thought and talk about the objects we immediately encounter in a far richer way than any other available account, since it allows us to differentiate all the different ways of thinking about an object that can be distinguished within propositional attitude contexts. It also offers a radically new vision of what Fregean sense can be, and in so doing gives a Fregean account of a full range of uses of demonstrative expressions not, *contra* Kaplan and Perry,⁵⁶ in terms of descriptive or specificatory senses, but in terms of object-dependant, or *de re*, senses; where these are constituted by a way of thinking about an object, rather than, as in Direct Reference theories, by the brute presence of an object in the content. However, while the account can be developed for those cases where the object is located on the basis of perception or memory, the idea that it will also work when the object in question is identified by a description, even when the subject's possession of the description is due to some causal connection to the object, cannot be made to cohere with this neo-Fregean approach, and so should be rejected.

⁵⁵ The rejection of descriptive identification also casts doubt on Evans' notion of testimony demonstratives (§6) since the use of these would seem to be exclusively based on descriptive identification; the implications of this are part of my current work.

⁵⁶ Kaplan, *ibid.*, Perry, *ibid.* The neo-Fregean conception of object-dependant sense and thought also has profound consequences in relation to metaphysics, epistemology and Philosophy of Mind. For an analysis of some of these see the paper by Manuel de Pinedo, this volume.

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