

Direct Reference

*From Language
to Thought*

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Introduction

What is it for a singular term, or for a use of a singular term, to be referential in the strong sense, i.e. 'purely' or 'directly' referential? This is the general question I will try to answer in this book. The intuitive (and largely metaphorical) notion of referentiality that is current in the philosophical literature emerges from the following set of statements:

A (directly) referential term is a term that serves simply to refer. It is devoid of descriptive content, in the sense at least that what it contributes to the proposition expressed by the sentence where it occurs is not a concept, but an object. Such a sentence is used to assert of the object referred to that it falls under the concept expressed by the predicate expression in the sentence. Proper names and indexicals are supposed to be referential in this sense; and although definite descriptions are not intrinsically referential, they have a referential use.

That such a notion exists in contemporary philosophy is beyond question. But many philosophers do not like it. I suspect that there are two reasons why this is so. Firstly, it is thought that the intuitive notion of referentiality is too vague and metaphorical to be of any use; secondly, assuming that a definite view does emerge from the set of statements above, it is thought that there are serious objections to this view. I do not share this pessimism. One of my aims in this book is to show that the notion can be satisfactorily defined and the putative objections disposed of.

I will start by providing a theory of direct reference construed as a *linguistic* phenomenon. In so doing I will be concerned with 'type-referentiality', that is, referentiality *qua* semantic property of

expression types.² It will turn out that there is a parallel feature in thought: *de re* thoughts include constituents, namely *de re* concepts, which are 'referential' in their own way. The nature of *de re* thoughts, and their relation to the semantic properties of utterances containing referential terms, are among the main topics to be investigated.

Notes

- 1 Throughout in this book I will use 'referential' and 'referentiality' as short for 'directly referential' and 'direct referentiality'.
- 2 Referential uses ('token-referentiality') will be dealt with in the second part of the book.

I.1

De re communication

the information that *s* is *F* carries this information in *digital* form if and only if the signal carries no additional information about *s*, no information that is not already nested in *s*'s being *F*'. In Peacocke's counter-example, the information that John is a man is not given primary representation in Dretske's sense, so it cannot be said to be carried in analog form on the revised definition.

Chapter 7

Egocentric concepts vs. encyclopedia entries

7.1 Introduction

From what I said in chapter 6 it follows that the general category of *de re* modes of presentation is best characterized in terms of the notion of information: for something to be thought of under a *de re* mode of presentation, the subject must possess information about it. This information may be purely descriptive, provided it is information. (Here I rely on standard accounts of information, according to which there is no information without a causal link between the information-bearer and that which the information concerns.) A *de re* mode of presentation may thus be conceived of as (a pointer to) an information file. *De re* modes of presentation so characterized have two properties: their reference is determined (in part) relationally, as that from which the information derives, and the reference-determining condition is not among the truth-conditions of the thought (truth-conditional irrelevance). As I have argued at length, there is no weaker notion of *de re* mode of presentation than this.

There is, however, a stronger notion, corresponding to a particular species of *de re* modes of presentation whose non-descriptive character is overdetermined: they are non-descriptive in the sense of *de re*, but they are also non-descriptive in the sense that they essentially involve non-descriptive (iconic) information. Since iconic information is typically information derived from perception, the stronger notion is that of a 'perception-based' mode of presentation. In this chapter, I want to argue that perception-based modes of presentation are the psychological modes of presentation expressed by indexicals. I will call such modes of presentation 'egocentric concepts', in

contrast to another type of *de re* modes of presentation, which I will call 'encyclopedia entries'.

7.2 Indexicality and perception

The claim I have just made may seem surprising. For the psychological modes of presentation with which indexicals are associated (*Ego*, *Hic*, *Nunc*, and so forth) do not seem to be very much like the perceptual representations described in 6.6. An iconic representation of the reference seems to be involved when we think of an object demonstratively, e.g. when we think '*this dog is bizarre*', but it is not clear that the same sort of analysis is appropriate in the case of indexicals proper. Is a perceptual representation necessarily involved when we think of a place as 'here', or when we think of ourselves in the first-person way? The obvious and immediate answer seems to be 'No'. So how can it be maintained that the psychological mode of presentation of the reference associated with an indexical expression is a perception-based mode of presentation?

There is, I think, an obvious reason for tying indexicality to perception. Our perceptual experience is irreducibly egocentric. This is what in 6.6 I called the *perspectival character* of perception: perception is essentially from a point of view, namely the point of view of the perceiving subject, who serves as origin for what Evans calls 'egocentric space'. This egocentricity of our perceptual experience can only be captured using indexical expressions. Thus we see that the thing *over there* moves very fast, that it gets closer to us, and so forth. (Our plans for action, being themselves based on our perception of the world in which we act, inherit this perspectival or egocentric character: we intend to pick up the box of matches *over there*, and so forth.)¹ The natural conclusion is that egocentric concepts such as those mentioned in chapters 4–5 are constitutive of perception-based thoughts: perception-based thoughts *are* egocentric thoughts.

It does not follow that all egocentric thoughts are perception-based, though. On the contrary, it seems that egocentric thoughts can be had in the absence of any perception. Thus Elizabeth Anscombe describes the following case:

Imagine that I get into a state of 'sensory deprivation'. Sight is cut off, and I am locally anaesthetized everywhere, perhaps floated in a tank

of tepid water; I am unable to speak, or to touch any part of my body with any other. Now I tell myself 'I won't let this happen again!' (Anscombe, 1975, p. 58)

This example shows that one can have an *I*-thought in the absence of any perception. (One may complicate the case and imagine, with Evans, that the anaesthetized subject is also amnesiac: this does not prevent her from entertaining *I*-thoughts). Similar examples can be found, showing that one can entertain *here*-thoughts or even *this*-thoughts in the absence of any perceptual information about the place or the object thought about (Evans, 1982, pp. 161, 169).

The sensory deprivation cases oblige us to make a distinction between two sorts of egocentric thought. Perception-based thoughts involve egocentric concepts; they are egocentric thoughts. Not all egocentric thoughts are perception-based thoughts, however. What distinguishes perception-based thoughts within the *genus* of egocentric thoughts is that they are 'saturated', as Evans says, by perceptual information (Evans, 1982, p. 122). Thus when I think 'That bear is getting closer to me' I have a perception-based thought, i.e. an egocentric thought saturated by the perception of the bear as it moves. But I may also have an egocentric thought in the absence of any perceptual information, as in the sensory deprivation examples. Such an egocentric thought unsaturated by perceptual information may be called a 'pure egocentric thought', as opposed to a perception-based one.

Appearance notwithstanding, one need not sever the link between egocentric concepts and perception in order to account for pure egocentric thoughts. Egocentric thinking, it may be maintained, requires that the subject be perceptually connected to the object of her thought. The sensory deprivation cases do not constitute a counter-example to this principle if the required perceptual connection is allowed to be *dispositional* (Evans, 1982, p. 161). On this construal, 'the informational connection still obtains even if the subject's senses are not operating' (Evans, 1982, p. 161n): it obtains provided the subject's thought is *in principle* sensitive to perceptual information from the object. This type of sensitivity to perceptual information, which may exist even if it is not actualized, is what Evans takes to be constitutive of egocentric thinking. Thus 'it is essential, if a subject is to be thinking about himself self-consciously, that he be disposed to have such thinking controlled by information which may become available to him' in perception, especially through proprioception

and kinaesthesia (p. 216). In the same way, 'it is difficult to see how we could credit a subject with a thought about *here* if he did not appreciate the relevance of any perception he might have to the truth-value and consequences of the thought...' (pp. 161–2). All egocentric thoughts may thus be said to involve perception in the sense at least that it is constitutive of such thoughts to be 'controlled' by the deliverances of the perceptual system *if there are any*. Pure egocentric thoughts are, as it were, *counterfactually* controlled by perception: in the sensory deprivation type of example there is no perception, but if there were, the thought, insofar as it is egocentric, would be controlled by it.

To be sure, not any type of perceptual information is relevant to any type of egocentric thought. The type of perceptual information which is relevant to a particular egocentric thought depends on the egocentric concepts which occur as constituents of the thought. As Evans and Perry both emphasized, egocentric concepts are associated with particular ways of gaining (perceptual) information, based on particular relations to the object of one's thought. (I shall present the Evans-Perry view in the next section.) This suggests that perceptual information is relevant to a given egocentric concept only to the extent that it is gained in the special way associated with that concept.

7.3 From 'buffers' to egocentric concepts

In perception we gain information about objects by virtue of standing in certain relations to those objects. Thus by watching an object, or by holding it in my hand, I gain (visual or tactile) information about that object; by standing in a certain place, I gain information about what is going on at that place; by being a certain person, with a certain body, I gain information about that person and that body. In each case there is, corresponding to the particular relation (or set of coordinated relations)² in which the subject stands to that which the information concerns, a special way of gaining information about it. There is a particular way of gaining information about ourselves which depends on our being ourselves: we can gain information in this way (the first-person way) about no one other than ourselves. Similarly, there is a special way of gaining information about an object which is accessible only to those who are in a position to perceive the object and 'track' it in egocentric space; there is a

special way of gaining information about a place which depends on our occupying the place in question; and so forth.³ Following Evans and Perry, I suggest that egocentric concepts are associated with special ways of gaining information, based on 'fundamental epistemic relations' to the object of one's thought.⁴ Thus Hic (the concept we express by the indexical 'here') is associated with what Evans describes as 'the special way of gaining knowledge which we have in virtue of occupying a place' (Evans, 1982, p. 153); the concept Ego is associated with the special way of gaining information about a person which we have in virtue of being that person; and so forth. It follows that the information which is relevant to (i.e. may 'control' or 'saturate') my first-person thoughts is the type of information which I gain 'from the inside', as when I feel that the wind blows my hair about, or that I have a toothache, or that I am blushing; the information which is relevant to my *here*-thoughts is whatever information I gain in virtue of occupying the place where I am; and so forth.

Instead of talking of perceptual information as saturating, controlling or being relevant to the thoughts involving a given egocentric concept, we may, following Perry, construe egocentric concepts as 'buffers' the role of which is to serve as repository for information gained in the special ways mentioned above.⁵ The buffer Hic, on this proposal, is the repository for that information about places which one gains in virtue of occupying the places in question; thus, when I gain some information about a place *p* by virtue of occupying *p*, that information is fed into the buffer Hic. Similarly the buffer Ego is the repository for information gained about a person by virtue of being that person.

Egocentric concepts, however, cannot be reduced to 'buffers' in the sense which has just been glossed. For something to be a genuine *thought*-category (a concept) it must obey a basic constraint, which Evans calls the Generality Constraint: 'If a subject can be credited with the thought that *a* is *F*, then he must have the conceptual resources for entertaining the thought that *a* is *G*, for every property of being *G* of which he has a conception' (Evans, 1982, p. 104). In the case of egocentric concepts such as Ego, Hic, and so forth, one must be able to entertain not only the thought that Ego is *F*, where *F* is some predicate knowledge of whose instantiation can be gained in the special way relevant to the buffer Ego, but also the thought that Ego is *G*, where *G* is some predicate knowledge of whose instantiation *cannot* be gained in the relevant way. In other words,

someone who has the concept of himself must be able to entertain not only the thought that *he* (Ego) has a headache, but also the thought that he was born in 1952, or the thought that he will die in a car accident in the distant future. Now, precisely because this type of information (that the subject was born in 1952, or that he will die in a car accident) cannot be gained in the first-person way, as the information that one has a headache, but only in a third-person way, the concept Ego must be exercisable in connection with information which does not belong to the type of information which is fed into the buffer Ego (that is, the type of information which is derived in the 'special way' associated with the buffer Ego). If this is true, then an egocentric buffer becomes a genuine thought-category only when, and to the extent that, it can be exercised outside its narrow informational domain so as to satisfy the Generality Constraint.

There is an obvious reason why egocentric concepts must satisfy the Generality Constraint, and it is related to the holistic character of thought. By this I mean, simply, that *something is not a thought if it cannot be integrated to our general thought-system*. Now predicates like 'born in 1989' are such that their instantiation cannot be detected through perception. One perceives that a baby is being born now, but one does not perceive that it is being born in 1989: one has to infer this using an additional premiss such as 'Now = 1989'. This type of premisses I shall refer to as 'bridging thoughts'. As John Perry emphasized, they are necessary to integrate perception-based knowledge (involving egocentric concepts) to our general world-knowledge. For example, it is part of my general knowledge that 1989 is the year of the Bicentenary of the French Revolution. Knowing that this baby is being born now, and believing that now = 1989, I am in a position to conclude that this baby's birth coincides with the Bicentenary of the French Revolution. Without the bridging thought 'Now = 1989', my general world-knowledge and my knowledge derived from perception could not be inferentially integrated. It is, therefore, a condition for the integration of perception-based thoughts (hence for their status as genuine thoughts) that the egocentric concepts which occur in those thoughts be able to occur also in bridging thoughts, i.e. in connection with non-perceptual information. Again, we reach the conclusion that egocentric concepts must be exercisable outside their narrow domain, that of perception.

To sum up, the difference between egocentric concepts and their ancestors, the 'buffers', is that only perceptual information (of the right sort) can be fed into egocentric buffers, while egocentric

concepts are hospitable to any type of information: like their perceptual ancestors, they serve as repository for perceptual information, but they can also host descriptive information, as happens when I entertain the thought that I had a Bulgarian grandfather, or the bridging thought that it is now six o'clock. (As we shall see in 7.4, there is another important difference between egocentric buffers and egocentric concepts: the latter, but not the former, satisfy a second constraint on concepts which I call the Objectivity Constraint.) In this framework, the possibility of 'pure' egocentric thoughts, that is, the possibility of exercising egocentric concepts outside perception, straightforwardly follows from the latter's being genuine concepts.

7.4 Stable and unstable object files

The general picture which emerges is the following.⁷ There are three levels to be distinguished. The *bottom level* is that of perception, which we share with animals. At this level, perceptual information, whose iconic character has been stressed in 6.6, is fed into various proto-categories (the 'buffers') corresponding to various aspects of the perceptual situation. The *top level* consists of what I called our general thought-system or world-knowledge. It may be represented as a network of concepts or notions, that is, as an encyclopedia, each node in the network being an 'entry' into the encyclopedia. Now there is an *intermediate level* where we find concepts, as in the encyclopedia, but concepts which closely correspond to the proto-categories of the bottom level.

Many problems remain to be solved, in this framework. Let us start with the most obvious. What exactly is the difference between the two types of (*de re*) concepts or modes of presentation I have distinguished – the egocentric concepts of the intermediate level, and the encyclopedia entries of the top level? We cannot say that the difference is located in the *type of information* involved, for it has just been established that egocentric concepts can host any type of information, perceptual or non-perceptual. Now, the same thing obviously holds of standard encyclopedia entries. My concept of Ronald Reagan may contain any type of information, perceptual or otherwise. What, then, is the difference between the two types of concept?

From what has been said so far, the following response emerges:

It is constitutive of egocentric concepts that they serve as repository for perceptual information, hence it is a necessary condition for an egocentric concept that it be at least sometimes exercised in perception; there is no such condition for other concepts, like the concept of Ronald Reagan. If perceptual information is fed into the latter concept, this is a purely contingent matter.

As the words 'constitutive', 'necessary', and 'contingent' indicate, this is a modal claim. Perceptual information is said to be *essential* to egocentric concepts in a way in which perceptual information is not essential to standard encyclopedia entries. To make sense of this modal claim, I must introduce two new notions: that of an 'object file' and that of an object file 'dominated by non-descriptive information'.

There is something which egocentric concepts and encyclopedia entries have in common in contrast to buffers: they are *object files*, while buffers are role-oriented, not object-oriented. The unity of an object file stems from the unity of its reference, i.e. from the object which the file concerns. But the unity of a role-oriented file does not stem from its reference, for the simple reason that there is no unity of reference, no single object which the file concerns. For example, the content of the buffer 'here' includes whatever information I am currently gaining through the special avenue of knowledge (mode of acquaintance) based on the fundamental epistemic relation: *being at place p*. At time *t* this mode of acquaintance provides information about location *l*, but at *t'* it provides information about another location *l'* (on the assumption that I am moving). The unity of content comes not from the object but from the *mode of acquaintance* itself: the content is not a file about an object, but a file for whatever information is gained in a certain mode.

We may nevertheless consider that, at a given moment *t*, the buffer's content provides information about an object, namely, the object which at *t* figures as the *relatum* in the 'fundamental epistemic relation' which underwrites the mode of acquaintance. So we may consider that the buffer's content constitutes an object file *with respect to* a given context, with time fixed. The relativization to a particular context can thus be seen as a precondition for there to be a genuine object file, characterized by the unity of reference. This is what I call the Objectivity Constraint. Besides this constraint, we saw in 7.3 that a second condition (Generality) must be fulfilled for the object file in question to be a genuine concept: the file must be open

to any type of information, not necessarily gained in the special mode, not even necessarily through acquaintance. When these two conditions are satisfied – when a context is fixed to guarantee the unity of reference, and when information is added from other sources than the relevant mode of acquaintance – we have the type of concept which I call an egocentric concept. Satisfaction of the two conditions (Objectivity and Generality) can thus be seen as turning buffers into egocentric concepts.

Let us now consider the distinction between egocentric concepts and encyclopedia entries. Both egocentric concepts and encyclopedia entries are object files which may include any type of information. The difference between them, I suggest, is that non-descriptive information based on fundamental epistemic relations is *dominant* in egocentric concepts. I mean that the file exists only insofar as the subject, in virtue of the fundamental epistemic relation, is in a position to gather non-descriptive information from the object. When the fundamental epistemic relation no longer holds between the subject and the object the file is about, the subject ceases to be in a position to receive non-descriptive information from the object and the file is destroyed, even if descriptive information about the object is still available.

The dominance of non-descriptive information thus entails the essential *instability* of egocentric concepts. Non-descriptive information about an object is made available to us in virtue of a fundamental epistemic relation holding at time *t* between us and this object. When, at a later time *t'*, the relation ceases to hold, this type of information is no longer available. This means that the object file which that information dominates (i.e. the object file which is the content of the category at *t*) is destroyed at *t'*, while another object file is created, concerning the object, if any, which figures as the new *relatum* of the fundamental epistemic relation at *t'*. Egocentric concepts thus are *temporary* object files.⁸ They do not last very long.

In contrast to egocentric concepts, which are unstable, an encyclopedia entry is a *stable* object file, because it is not dominated by non-descriptive information. Since non-descriptive information is not dominant, the object file is made independent of the 'context of acquaintance' (i.e. the set of fundamental epistemic relations, with their relata). The existence of the file is no longer relativized to a particular context of acquaintance.

Consider, as an example, two simple object files, the egocentric concept 'That man who keeps staring at me' and the encyclopedia

entry 'My sister's piano teacher'. Unless I believe that the man who keeps staring at me is my sister's piano teacher, the respective contents of the two files will clearly differ. In the first file we shall not find information related to my sister's piano teacher, nor, in the second file, shall we find information about the man staring at me. A further difference between the two files is the fact that non-descriptive information (viz. the information made available by my perception of the man as he keeps staring at me) is dominant in the first file, but, we may suppose, not in the second.

In order to see what the dominance of non-descriptive information consists in, let us suppress the first difference between the two files, by supposing that the man staring at me is recognized (re-identified) as my sister's piano teacher. Then, *information in both files is transferred into the other file*. Information about the piano teacher is fed into the file 'That man staring at me', while information about the man in question is fed into the file 'My sister's piano teacher'. The informational content of the two files is now the same, yet the two files remain distinct. In the file 'That man staring at me' we find (i) non-descriptive (visual) information derived through fundamental epistemic relations to the object x the file is about, namely the information that x is a man, that x is staring at me, that x is wearing a white shirt, and so forth, and (ii) information not derived through fundamental epistemic relations but through 're-identification' of the object by means of the bridging thought 'This man = my sister's piano teacher', for example the information that x is my sister's piano teacher, that x is a lunatic, that x's lessons are rather expensive, and so forth. In the second object file (i.e. the file labelled 'My sister's piano teacher'), we find exactly the same information as in the first one, with the following difference: while the non-descriptive information acquired through fundamental epistemic relations is dominant in the first file, whose existence therefore depends on the continued existence of the fundamental epistemic relation, is it not dominant in the second file. As a result, the first file is opened only 'on a short-term basis', as Bach says (Bach, 1978, p. 36); it is the cognitive reflex of the fundamental epistemic relation to the reference, which it does not survive. But the second file survives the current perceptual encounter.

To say that the file is destroyed is not to say that the information in the file is lost. As has just been noted, a process of information transfer takes place as a result of my re-identifying the man staring at me as my sister's piano teacher. This process is all-important

precisely because it is what enables the information in the temporary file to be preserved by being fed into the stable file.⁹

7.5 Conclusion

There are two sorts of *de re* modes of presentation: egocentric concepts, on the one hand, and encyclopedia entries on the other hand. Egocentric concepts are information files which presuppose acquaintance with the reference of the file, that is, a particular type of relation to the reference which Perry calls a *fundamental epistemic relation*: a relation (or set of relations) to the object which puts the thinker in a position to acquire non-descriptive information from it. Egocentric concepts serve as repository for non-descriptive (perception-based) information. Standard encyclopedia entries do not presuppose acquaintance, even though they presuppose an informational link to the reference. *Quia* thought-categories, both egocentric concepts and encyclopedia entries satisfy the constraint of Generality, hence both are hospitable to any type of information, perceptual or otherwise. But perceptual information is *dominant* in egocentric concepts, while it is not dominant in standard encyclopedia entries.

The dominance of non-descriptive information gained through acquaintance goes together with the particular status of egocentric categories as intermediate between perceptual buffers and encyclopedia entries. Buffers are role-oriented, not object-oriented. They register whatever is detectable on the basis of acquaintance, independently of which object that information concerns. In encyclopedia entries what is stored is primarily information *about objects*. Egocentric categories are intermediate: with respect to a given context, their content is an object file like that of an encyclopedia entry, but there is no one-one correspondence between egocentric categories and object files. With respect to a context C, an egocentric category has for content an information file (or 'egocentric concept') about the object which enters into the relevant epistemic relations at C. But another object enters into the relevant epistemic relations at t', in such a way that a new object file (a new egocentric concept) replaces the first one.¹⁰ The informational content of an egocentric category is therefore referentially unstable, like that of perceptual buffers. This instability stems from the dominance of context-sensitive (perception-based) information.

Whatever their difference, a central feature common to egocentric concepts and encyclopedia entries is their *de re* character, that is, the constraint they bring to the truth-conditions of the thoughts in which they occur. *When such a concept or mode of presentation occurs in a thought, the referent itself is part of the truth-conditions of the thought.* (Hence no complete thought is expressed unless this individual exists.) It is supposed that there is an object outside the mind from which the subject receives information – either by virtue of some specific relation, as in the case of egocentric thinking, or by any channel available – and this object is that which is relevant to evaluating the thought's truth or falsity. Direct reference in language merely reflects this 'referential' feature of our thought about the world.

What I have just called the referential feature of our thought about the world may also be termed 'intentionality' (in the strong sense): that by virtue of which thought points to something outside thought. On the present conception, intentionality is an intrinsic feature of thought, in the same way in which direct reference is an intrinsic feature of language (1.5). It is a feature which some of our concepts – our *de re* concepts – possess. There necessarily are concepts under which we think of objects when we think about the world; in this sense, we cannot think about objects 'directly': we cannot think of objects without a conceptual mediation. But, in another sense, it is possible to think about objects directly, thanks to the special nature of *de re* concepts. They are such that *the thought in which they occur is supposed to characterize the referent itself independently of its satisfying the very concept which is used to think of it.* This property of truth-conditional irrelevance which characterizes *de re* modes of presentation is the mental counterpart of the feature REF in language. It is achieved by means of a simple architectural trick: putting our conceptions of an object in an informational file supposed to derive from the object makes it the case that a thought containing a pointer to that file is about the object itself.

Notes

- 1 This wrongly suggests that action is secondary with respect to perception. But, as Perry constantly emphasizes after Gibson (1968), perception itself can hardly be dissociated from the ability to move and act.

(This point is already made in Condillac; on Condillac and Gibson, see Morgan, 1977, pp. 164–5.) Perception and action are thus best seen as two aspects of a unified, complex system, which we might call the 'egocentric system'.

- 2 This qualification is needed to account for 'tracking'. Tracking is a fundamental epistemic relation involving a set of more basic relations. Demonstrative concepts based on the 'tracking' relation will be briefly considered in chapter 10 (10.2 and 10.5).
- 3 The existence of these 'special ways of gaining information' accounts for the phenomenon of immunity to error through misidentification (see 5.4). A special way of gaining information is such that a piece of information gained in that way can only be about an object to which the subject stands in a certain relation – the relation on which the special way of gaining information is based. It follows that information gained in that way can only be about an object bearing that relation to the subject. If there is only one such object, there can be no mistake as to which object the information concerns. Thus information gained in the first person way can only be about the subject (the relevant relation being identity). It may turn out to be *mis*information, but it cannot be about something other than the subject herself.
- 4 'Fundamental epistemic relations' is Perry's phrase (Perry, 1990a, 1992). In Perry's framework, fundamental epistemic relations are closely tied to fundamental pragmatic relations which concern action and are also part of what I earlier called the egocentric system.
- 5 Even though I use Perry's term I do not try to be faithful to his own usage, which tends to change as he makes progress on this topic. What Perry now calls 'buffers' (in 1992) is quite different from what he used to call 'buffers' a couple of years ago (in 1990), when I took the term from him. As Perry *now* uses the term, 'buffers' satisfy the Objectivity Constraint stated below. Thus the contrast to be drawn in 7.4 between 'buffers' and 'egocentric concepts' would not hold if 'buffers' were understood in Perry's new sense.
- 6 Perry calls them 'orienting sentences': see Perry, 1986a, p. 353.
- 7 Here I am adapting (and modifying) Perry's three-tiered picture as sketched in Perry 1986a, 1986c and 1990a.
- 8 See Bach (1987, p. 36): 'Files labelled with names . . . are relatively permanent ones, stored in long-term memory, but we have temporary files as well. . . . Demonstratives and indexicals often serve to create temporary files'. See also Millikan (1984, p. 172): 'Each of us possesses certain very general abilities . . . that allow us to coin temporary inner terms for almost any item that we may perceive These abilities allow us to re-identify a thing that we are 'tracking' as we compound information about it. . . . These general abilities yield temporary concepts of individual things in the environment. But such concepts do

not last longer than the tracking process.⁹ On temporary files, see also the quotation from Anne Treisman in 10.2.

9 Information from a temporary file may be preserved even if the subject is unable to re-identify the reference of a temporary file, hence unable to find a pre-existing stable file into which to feed the newly acquired information. To save that information in this type of situation it is always possible to create a special-purpose (stable) object file concerning whichever object *x* made such and such a perceptual impression on the subject at time *t*. Such a file is context-independent; it is not dominated by non-descriptive information. The move, here, consists in making descriptive information out of non-descriptive information, by explicitly representing the context in which the latter is acquired (Smith, forthcoming). This type of move is needed not only to transfer information from temporary files when no pre-existing stable file is available, but also to preserve non-descriptive information within encyclopedia entries when the fundamental epistemic relation which makes that information available no longer holds.

10 As some readers will have already noted, what I am calling here an egocentric 'category' as opposed to an egocentric 'concept' is what I earlier called a psychological mode of presentation as opposed to its particular 'instances'. See 5.2, note 5.

I.4

Proper names

Chapter 10

Proper names in thought

10.1 Introduction

In chapter 8 I considered the question whether proper names can be said to have meaning. Although I found much truth in the view that proper names have no meaning and are not even part of the language, a reasonable interpretation of these claims led me to the view that proper names resemble indexicals on many counts. In particular, there is a mode of presentation of the reference associated with a proper name by virtue of its meaning – a linguistic mode of presentation, in the terminology of chapter 4.

In the case of indexicals such as 'I', 'now', 'here' and so forth, there is not only a linguistic mode of presentation but also a psychological mode of presentation associated with the expression (chapters 4–5). This psychological mode of presentation is the contribution made by the expression to the narrow content of the thought expressed by the utterance in which it occurs. We saw in chapter 7 that the psychological modes of presentation associated with indexical expressions form a particular class, that of *egocentric categories*. Now the question that arises is this: Is there a particular class of psychological modes of presentation associated with proper names, in the same way in which egocentric categories are associated with indexicals? More generally, is there a particular way in which the reference of a proper name must be thought of?

10.2 Proper names, sortals, and demonstrative identification

It is often said that proper names are associated with no particular way of thinking of their reference. This claim may be understood in two different fashions. On one interpretation, it means that there is no unique mode of presentation (or no unique sort of mode of presentation)¹ such that, whenever a proper name is used, its reference is thought of under this mode of presentation (or under a mode of presentation of this sort). This is consistent with the view that, whenever a proper name is used, *there is* a mode of presentation, although not always the same one, under which its reference is thought of. It is the unicity of the mode of presentation, not its existence, which is denied on this interpretation. But there is a stronger interpretation, according to which it is possible to refer to an object by means of a proper name without thinking of that object under any particular mode of presentation. Suppose, for example, that I over-hear the utterance 'What will happen to Globos?', without having the least idea who or what 'Globos' is. I may comment: 'John wonders what will happen to Globos.' No particular psychological mode of presentation of the reference seems to be involved here.

I said in chapter 2 that a thought about an object necessarily involves a way of thinking (a mode of presentation) of that object. I see no reason to depart from this commonsensical view. Examples such as 'Globos' can be handled in two ways: either (i) by saying that the speaker entertains a descriptive, metalinguistic thought about whatever is referred to by 'Globos', rather than a genuine *de re* thought about a particular object; or (ii) by saying that the speaker does not express a *complete* thought, but rather what Sperber (1982, pp. 69–80) calls a 'semi-propositional' thought – a thought with a gap in it. In any case, as Evans used to insist, there is a difference between the thought (or tentative thought) which the speaker actually entertains and the thought which *must* be entertained in order to count as understanding the utterance.² The speaker himself, in the Globos example, would not count as genuinely understanding his own utterance. This phenomenon is not specific to proper names; it may occur with all sorts of linguistic expression. Thus someone might utter 'John went to the taxidermist', without knowing what a taxidermist is. In such a case the speaker does not entertain the thought which his utterance may perhaps be said to express, but only

an incomplete, schematic thought such as 'John went to the ...'. He entrusts the hearer with the task of supplying the missing thought-constituent.

One reason why a thought about a particular object must involve a mode of presentation is that there is nothing like a 'bare' object independent of any mode of identification. As I pointed out earlier, following Geach and Wiggins, an object can only be individuated according to a certain criterion of identity – a criterion telling us what must be the case for something to be *the same thing* as that object (chapter 1, note 19). Geach made this point in connection with proper names:

If an individual is presented to me by a proper name, I cannot learn the use of the proper name without being able to apply some *criterion* of identity; and since the identity of a thing always consists in its being the same X, e.g. the same *man*, and there is no such thing as being just 'the same', my application of the proper name is justified only if ... I keep on applying it to one and the same *man*. (Geach, 1957, p. 69)

As against this, Dretske recently argued that one *can* refer to an object, or think of an object, without knowing what sort of object it is. He gave the following examples:

Perceptual beliefs of a certain sort – what philosophers call *de re* beliefs (e.g. *that* is moving) – are often as silent as gauges about what it is they represent, about what topic it is on which they comment, about their reference. Clyde can see a black horse in the distance, thereby getting the information about a black horse (say, that it is near the barn), without getting the information that it is a black horse – without, in other words, seeing *what* it is. Just as a gauge represents the gas level in my tank without representing it as the amount of gas in my tank, Clyde can have a belief about (a representation of) my horse without believing that it is (without representing it *as*) my (or even *a*) horse. (Dretske, 1988, p. 73)

It may be that Dretske's examples of demonstrative thoughts concerning unidentified objects conflict with the claim that a *de re* thought about an object must involve a 'sortal concept' corresponding to the object in question; for the 'sortal concepts' Geach and Wiggins talk about are fairly specific. But Dretske's examples in no way establish that one could have a *de re* thought about an object without having *the least idea* what it is – without being

able to say whether it is abstract or material, for example. Only thoughts that are satisfactorily related to objects – descriptive thoughts – could possibly have this property. Thus I may entertain a descriptive thought about 'whatever Jonathan talked about in his last speech' without having the faintest idea what it is that Jonathan talked about. In the same way, I may entertain a descriptive thought about whatever is referred to by 'Globos'. But when a thought is directly (i.e. non-descriptively) about an object, as in Dretske's examples, it seems obvious that there is a minimal sense in which the thinker *has to know what sort of object it is he is thinking of*. Dretske's example, 'That is moving', is not a counter-example to this principle because something *like* a sortal concept is involved in this example also (although the concept in question is too general to count as a genuine sortal in the sense of Geach and Wiggins). The thinker does not know that what he sees is a horse, but at least he knows that it is perceptible and occupies a certain portion of space.³

The mode of presentation involved in Dretske's example is one which plays a central role in human cognition according to some psychologists (Kahneman & Treisman, forthcoming; Treisman, 1992). Treisman argues for the following picture of what goes on in the process of e.g. perceiving a black horse. Firstly, at the pre-attentional level, various features of the perceptual situation (such as the presence of black, of curves, of spots, and so forth) are detected by specialized modules working in parallel. Secondly, as attention is focussed on a particular area (that where the black horse is), some of the features detected at the prior level are integrated as belonging to one and the same object occupying this position in space. At this level a 'file' is created, corresponding to the putative space-occupier. This file makes it possible to group the features together even though the nature of the object to which the properties thus detected belong is still unknown. The nature of the object is discovered at the next level by comparing the conjunction of features in the file with memories of familiar objects. The output of this process of comparison is the identification of the object as e.g. a black horse.

If Treisman is right, two distinct levels of identification are involved in perception: an object is first identified – or rather localized – as a space-occupier, and then identified as a certain type of object (a plane, say, or a bird, or a black horse). The first, demonstrative type of identification enables one to think of the object – and to give it a proper name, if one wishes to do so – prior to any identification of it in the second, stronger sense.⁴ This type of

identification 'plays an important role by enabling us to keep an impression of continuity and preserved identity when an object moves or when its features change. We may watch something which looks like a distant plane, see it flip its wings and land on a tree, without any interruption of its unity and perceptual continuity. The only thing that abruptly changes is the identity of the object (its label: the name we give it). The plane *becomes* a bird; it is not replaced by a bird' (Treisman, 1992, p. 187).⁵ Thus if we associate the proper name 'Bozo' with the temporary file corresponding to the first level of identification, we may discover that *Bozo was not a plane, after all, but a bird*. Such a discovery would not make sense if Geach was right, that is, if it was constitutive of a proper name such as 'Bozo' to be associated with a specific sortal such as 'bird' or 'plane'.⁶ Such sortals are available only at the second stage of identification, but to think of an object, and to dub it, only the first level of identification is required. It follows that we must reject the claim that *de re* thoughts about an object necessarily involve specific 'sortals' in the sense of Geach and Wiggins. But one may reject this claim without also rejecting the commonsensical view that a *de re* thought about an object must involve a mode of presentation of that object.

I conclude that there is no reason to accept the strong interpretation of the claim that proper names are associated with no particular way of thinking of their reference. In the next section, I will consider the weaker interpretation, according to which there is no *unique* mode of presentation such that, whenever a proper name is used, its reference is thought of under this mode of presentation. Thus interpreted, I think the claim is true to a large extent.

10.3 The psychological neutrality of proper names

The mechanism by which psychological modes of presentation come to be associated with indexical expressions was explained in 5.4. Indexicals are governed by rules of use (such as: 'I' refers to the speaker, 'here' to the place of utterance, etc.). By virtue of these rules, the reference of 'I' is conventionally presented as the utterer, the reference of 'here' as the place of utterance, and so forth. These are the linguistic modes of presentation of the reference. Contrary to them, psychological modes of presentation are not conventionally associated with linguistic expressions, but they are nonetheless

expressed by them because of the very close tie between the linguistic mode of presentation, which is conventionally expressed, and the psychological mode of presentation. The linguistic mode of presentation is a concept F (e.g. the concept of utterer of the current token) and the close tie between this concept and a psychological mode of presentation Φ (e.g. the concept Ego) is due to the fact that the information " Φ is F" (e.g. 'Ego is the utterer of this token') is immune to error through misidentification, given the way it is (normally) acquired.

We have seen that the linguistic mode of presentation of the reference of a proper name NN is the concept: bearer of NN. For there to be a psychological mode of presentation expressed by the proper name NN in accordance with the mechanism we found at work in the case of indexicals, there must be a concept Φ and a way of acquiring information ω such that the information that Φ is the bearer of NN is immune to error through misidentification if it is acquired in the way ω . Can we find such a pair $\langle \Phi, \omega \rangle$?

I must confess that I can imagine no such pair, unless Φ is a descriptive concept. Let us consider only non-descriptive concepts for the moment. For any non-descriptive Φ , it seems that there is no way of acquiring the belief that Φ is the bearer of NN which does not leave open the possibility of error through misidentification. Suppose I think 'This man is the bearer of NN', in such a way that the words 'this man' correspond to a non-descriptive psychological mode of presentation of a certain man (for example a perceptual representation of the man in question). I may have acquired the belief 'This man is the bearer of NN' in many different ways – for example, I may have heard that a certain person was called NN and identified this man as the person in question; or, more directly, I may have witnessed this man being referred to or addressed as NN. In all those cases, the belief 'This man is the bearer of NN' can be seen as the result of two distinct beliefs, namely a belief of the form ' a is the bearer of NN' together with a second belief of the form 'This man = a '. Precisely because it rests in part on the second belief, which Evans calls the 'identification component' (Evans, 1982, p. 180), the resulting belief is open to error through misidentification, for the second belief may turn out to be false. This is quite obvious in the first case: I may be mistaken in thinking that this man is the man whom I heard of as the bearer of NN. Although less obvious, the same pattern is discernible also in the second example. Even if some man is being referred to or addressed as NN right in front of me, the

belief that this man is being referred to or addressed as NN still rests on the combination of two independent beliefs, namely the belief that *this man is the person now being addressed (or referred to) together with the belief that someone is now being addressed (or referred to) as NN*. The resulting belief is open to error through misidentification, for the 'identification component' (i.e. the first of the two component beliefs) may turn out to be false: I may be mistaken in thinking that *this man* is being addressed (or referred to). Perhaps there is another man, hidden behind him, who is the true referent or the true addressee.

What if the relevant Φ is a descriptive concept? Then, I think, there is a possibility for the belief " Φ is the bearer of NN" to be immune to error through misidentification. Suppose I overhear the utterance: 'Mr Banilla, there is a phone call for you!', without having the faintest idea who the addressee is. Upon hearing this utterance, the following thought passes through my mind: 'This guy is called "Banilla"; an Italian, certainly.' Here, 'this guy' stands for the descriptive concept 'whoever is now being addressed'.⁷ In this situation there is no gap between the information that the predicate 'being called Banilla' is instantiated, and the information that *the person now being addressed* is called Banilla, since I acquire the former information (that someone is called Banilla) by acquiring the information that someone is now being addressed as Banilla. Given this way of acquiring the information that the predicate is instantiated, the belief that it is the person now being addressed who instantiates this predicate seems to be immune to error through misidentification. So there is at least one concept Φ such that the information that Φ is the bearer of NN is immune to error through misidentification if it is acquired in a certain way.⁸

Be that as it may, I think descriptive concepts are not to be taken into consideration. Assuming that proper names are directly referential expressions, the possibility that a proper name expresses a descriptive mode of presentation at the level of thought is ruled out by the Congruence Principle, the substance of which was introduced in 3.3 and 4.1:

Congruence Principle:

In literal communication, the proposition expressed by an utterance coincides with the truth-conditional content of the thought expressed by that utterance. Hence, if an utterance expresses the proposition that *P*, the thought it expresses must be true if and only if *P*.

From this principle, it follows that the psychological mode of presentation of the reference of a directly referential expression (the way the reference of such an expression is thought of) cannot be a descriptive mode of presentation. This is so because the proposition expressed by an utterance including a directly referential expression is a *singular* proposition, with the reference of the expression, but no mode of presentation of the reference, as a constituent. In virtue of the Congruence Principle, this entails that the truth-conditional content of the thought expressed by the utterance must itself be singular: the truth-conditions of the thought cannot involve the satisfaction of a mode of presentation, they can only involve the reference itself. Now, when an object is thought of under a *descriptive* mode of presentation *m*, the satisfaction of *m* is one of the truth-conditions of the thought (6.3). It follows that the psychological mode of presentation of the reference of a directly referential expression cannot be descriptive – it can only be *non-descriptive* (truth-conditionally irrelevant).

It turns out that the mechanism by means of which indexicals, or at least some of them, come to be associated with particular psychological modes of presentation (viz. egocentric categories) does not work in the case of proper names. The mode of presentation under which the reference of a proper name is thought of cannot be a descriptive mode of presentation (by virtue of the Congruence Principle), and we have seen that, for any non-descriptive mode of presentation Φ , there is no way of acquiring the belief " Φ is the bearer of NN" which renders this belief immune to error through misidentification. It follows that proper names do not express particular psychological modes of presentation in the way indexicals do. There are particular psychological modes of presentation of the reference, namely the egocentric categories *Ego*, *Now* and *Here*, associated with indexicals such as 'I', 'now' and 'here', but there is no particular psychological mode of presentation of the reference associated with a proper name such as 'Banilla'.

The conclusion we have just reached will have to be qualified in 10.5, but there is an interpretation of it which must immediately be rejected as too strong. On a certain reading, it is inconsistent to hold both (i) that proper names are not associated with particular ways of thinking of their referents, and (ii) that the reference of a proper name cannot be thought of descriptively. If the reference of a proper name can only be thought of non-descriptively, as I have said, then there is a sense in which it is not true that proper names are not

associated with particular ways of thinking of their referents. I agree that there is a virtual inconsistency here, and I suggest the following, suitably weak interpretation of my conclusion concerning the psychological neutrality of proper names:

Proper names, like all referential expressions, require that their referent be thought of non-descriptively; but while there are referential expressions which express a specific non-descriptive mode of presentation, proper names are not associated with any one in particular.

10.4 Descriptive names

I have just said that the mode of presentation under which the reference of a proper name is thought of cannot be a descriptive mode of presentation, by virtue of the Congruence Principle. This consequence of the Congruence Principle raises an obvious difficulty, for in certain cases it seems that the utterance includes a referential term (e.g. a proper name or a demonstrative), but it also seems that the reference of the term is thought of descriptively. One example of this phenomenon is provided by what Evans called 'descriptive names' (see 6.4): proper names whose reference is fixed stipulatively by means of a definite description, e.g. 'Julius' as a name for whoever invented the zip. It seems that the reference of such a name is thought of descriptively; but the Congruence Principle entails that the reference of a referential term cannot be thought of descriptively. Faced with this difficulty, one may either deny that descriptive names are genuine proper names (hence deny that they are directly referential) or deny that the reference of such a name is thought of descriptively. As I will indicate, neither solution seems to me satisfactory.

It seems very hard to deny that the reference of a descriptive name such as 'Julius' is thought of descriptively. We suppose a situation in which we have no further information about the inventor of the zip – a situation in which the only thing we know is that someone or other invented the zip. In such a situation, we may refer to this person using the description 'the inventor of the zip' attributively, or using a descriptive name 'Julius' introduced stipulatively by means of that description. Now, whether we use the description or the descriptive name, whether we say "Julius is F" or "The inventor of the zip is F", the only thought available to us is a thought about *whoever invented the zip* – it is a thought with a descriptive mode of presentation as a

constituent. *The same descriptive thought is involved whether we use the description or the name, because this thought is the only one available to the thinker.* As Evans puts it, 'someone who understands and accepts the one sentence as true gets himself into exactly the same belief state as someone who accepts the other... We do not produce new thoughts (new beliefs) simply by a "stroke of the pen" (in Grice's phrase) – simply by introducing a name in the language' (Evans, 1982, p. 50). I conclude that the reference of a descriptive name is thought of descriptively.

The fact that this is so provides a *prima facie* reason to hold that descriptive names are not genuine proper names, given the Congruence Principle. But this conclusion is not easy to accept. Russell, for one, held that ordinary proper names were not 'genuine' proper names; they were, he thought, definite descriptions in disguise. It is this view, restricted to descriptive names, which the Congruence Principle seems to force upon us.

The problem is that, even restricted to descriptive names, the Russellian type of approach has a normative flavour that no longer seems attractive. Contemporary philosophers of language study language as it is rather than language as it ought to be; when it comes to proper names, they try to capture the characteristic features of those words which are called 'proper names' rather than the features of the words which *deserve* to be so-called. Now descriptive names such as 'Julius' fall into the category of proper names in the ordinary sense of the word. Not only do they behave like other proper nouns from a narrow grammatical standpoint; semantically also they have much in common with ordinary proper names. If what I have said in chapter 8 is right, proper names are characterized by the fact that there is a convention pairing them with an object (the bearer of the name). The convention is of the form: 'The bearer of NN is...', what fills the blank being the specification of an object. Nothing prevents the specification in question from being descriptive: 'The bearer of "Julius" is whoever invented the zip'.

Another reason to resist the conclusion that descriptive names are not genuine names is that there are demonstratives which behave in much the same way as descriptive names (chapter 16). Schiffer mentions the sentence 'He must be a giant', uttered in reference to an enormous footprint on the sand. We cannot say that the pronoun 'he' in 'He must be a giant' is not a genuine demonstrative, for it is the familiar demonstrative pronoun; but the thought in the mind of the speaker seems to be the descriptive thought that *the man,*

whoever he might be, whose foot made that print must be a giant (Schiffer, 1981, p. 49). So it seems that directly referential expressions in general can be used to express descriptive thoughts.

There is a third solution, though. It consists in showing that, despite appearances, the existence of genuine proper names (or demonstratives) whose reference is thought of descriptively is consistent with the Congruence Principle. After all, the Congruence Principle only applies to *literal* communication (3.3). When the reference of a directly referential expression is thought of descriptively, all the Congruence Principle permits one to conclude is that the thought of which the descriptive mode of presentation is a constituent is not the sort of thought which might be said to be literally expressed by the utterance, or the sort of thought the forming of which would constitute genuine understanding of the utterance. In other words, the Congruence Principle states a constraint on literal communication: it says what the thought(s) must be like in literal communication if the utterance expresses a singular proposition. In particular, it entails that the reference of a proper name *must* be thought of non-descriptively, but this, suitably understood, is consistent with the existence of descriptive names. For there is a crucial distinction between the way the reference of a proper name is thought of (*de facto*) and the way it has to be thought of (*de jure*).

De facto the referent of 'Julius' is thought of descriptively, because it is known only by description; but this is consistent with the fact that, *qua* proper name, 'Julius' requires that its referent be thought of non-descriptively. As I said above (10.2), we must distinguish the actual thought in the mind of the thinker in the envisaged situation from the type of thought which someone who fully understands the utterance would have to form upon hearing or uttering it. The only thought that is available to the thinker in the envisaged situation is not the type of thought which the utterance, insofar as it includes a (genuine) proper name, requires one to form upon understanding it, namely, a thought including a *non-descriptive* mode of presentation of the reference.⁹ On this view, the Congruence Principle tells us what 'must' be the case, what type of thought is to be associated with an utterance with a proper name, in virtue of its status as a referential term, but it does not tell us what is the case as a matter of fact, hence it does not rule out the possibility of names whose reference is thought of descriptively.

It is worth noting that Russell himself was attracted by a similar view concerning ordinary proper names. Along with the well-known

view that ordinary proper names such as 'Bismarck' are not genuine proper names, because genuine proper names require direct acquaintance with their referents (a type of acquaintance possible only with oneself and one's sense data), Russell seems to have held a slightly different view, namely: that 'Bismarck' is a genuine proper name, but that we are unable to entertain the thoughts which our utterances including this name are meant to express. The thought we think when we hear or say 'Bismarck was an astute diplomatist' is not the thought this utterance purports to express, Russell claimed, because this thought is unavailable to us; it is available only to Bismarck himself.¹⁰ It is because ordinary proper names such as 'Bismarck' are genuine proper names, on this view, that they require their users to be acquainted with their referents (a condition that is not fulfilled when someone other than Bismarck uses the name 'Bismarck'); this is also why an utterance including a name such as 'Bismarck' is meant to express a singular thought – a thought which an ordinary user of the name is unable to entertain.

In the framework I have just sketched, a proper name is a word which *must* be used in a certain way, even though it may happen to be used in other ways.¹¹ A genuine proper name is defined (normatively) by what it demands; Russell thus speaks of 'the direct use which (a proper name) *always wishes to have*'¹² (my emphasis). In the case of 'Julius', as in the case of 'Bismarck' (in Russell's framework), there is no reason to deny that the name itself is a genuine proper name, which requires that its reference be thought of non-descriptively. This is perfectly consistent with the fact that the reference of the name *happens* to be thought of descriptively.¹³

But, it may be replied, a descriptive name is *defined* by the fact that its reference is known only by description. It would be misleading to say that the reference of such a name is thought of descriptively as a matter of contingent fact (in opposition to what the name itself would normally require), because it is *the essential purpose of such a name to name an object which is known merely by description*. The descriptive nature of the mode of presentation under which the reference of such a name is thought of is built into the name-convention which governs the uses of the name ('Let us call "Julius" whoever invented the zip'). Hence it is far from obvious that descriptive names, like other proper names, 'require' their reference to be thought of non-descriptively. What characterizes descriptive names seems to be precisely the fact that they do not.

This objection presupposes a highly doubtful claim: that the type

of information available concerning the bearer of a name – for example, the fact that we know the bearer of ‘Julius’ merely by description – can be used to *individuate* the name in question. This claim is doubtful because a proper name such as ‘Julius’ does not become a different name if more comes to be known concerning its referent – if we discover who invented the zip and continue to call this person ‘Julius’. Thus ‘Neptune’ once was a descriptive name, in the sense that its referent was known only by description. One day astronomers became acquainted with Neptune and continued to use the name.¹⁴ The claim I am criticizing entails that there are two distinct homonymous names ‘Neptune’ (or ‘Julius’), one belonging to the category of descriptive names and the second to the category of ordinary names. I see no reason to accept this. It seems to me – as it does to common sense – that there is only one name, which was first introduced when its referent was known merely by description. Thus we cannot say that a name such as ‘Julius’ is *defined* by the fact that its referent is known merely as whatever satisfies the description ‘the inventor of the zip’. Nor can we say that it is the ‘essential purpose’ of such a name to name an object which is known merely by description. The name-convention ‘Let us call “Julius” whoever invented the zip’ simply *fixes the reference*, as Kripke says, and it does so by means of the only information that is available to us concerning it. But what counts as far as name individuation is concerned is the link between the name and the object, not the piece of information which is used in establishing the link.

I conclude that it is a mistake to think of a descriptive name such as ‘Julius’ as being essentially (or intrinsically) descriptive. The fact that its referent is known only by description is purely contingent. Far from being essentially descriptive, a name such as ‘Julius’, like any other proper name, demands that its referent be thought of non-descriptively. If we use a descriptive *name* rather than a description, this is precisely because we look forward to a richer state of knowledge in which we will be able to think of the referent non-descriptively. A descriptive name such as ‘Julius’, ‘Neptune’, or ‘Jack the Ripper’ is created only in the expectation that more information about the bearer will accumulate, thus eventuating in the possibility of thinking of the latter non-descriptively. This possibility is simply *anticipated* by the use of a descriptive name.¹⁵

10.5 Proper names and encyclopedia entries

In chapter 7 I argued that there are two sorts of *de re* mode of presentation: egocentric concepts on the one hand and encyclopedia entries on the other hand. My first example of an encyclopedia entry in chapter 7 was my concept of Ronald Reagan, associated with the proper name ‘Ronald Reagan’. Since egocentric concepts, or at least egocentric categories, are associated with indexical expressions (though not on a conventional basis), we might expect the same type of association to hold between proper names and encyclopedia entries. It is very natural indeed to construe proper names as labels for or pointers to encyclopedia entries in the minds of the language users. But what I have said about proper names in this chapter might be construed in such a way that it would forbid this sort of move. For encyclopedia entries are a specific sort of *de re* mode of presentation, as opposed to another sort, namely, egocentric concepts. So, if proper names are associated with encyclopedia entries, it is not true that they are not associated with any particular sort of *de re* mode of presentation, contrary to what I claimed in 10.3.¹⁶

I have to admit that the conclusion of 10.3 – namely, that proper names are not associated with any particular sort of *de re* mode of presentation – was exaggerated, at least on a certain interpretation. What was actually shown in that section was that the mechanism at work in the case of indexicals (i.e. the mechanism which crucially involves the property of immunity to error through misidentification) did not work in the case of proper names. But what the mechanism in question does, when it works, is associate a linguistic expression with an *egocentric concept*; for it is only egocentric concepts which give rise to the phenomenon of immunity to error through misidentification (see 7.3, note 3). So the only thing that could have been legitimately concluded was that proper names are not associated with egocentric concepts. Since proper names are associated with *de re* modes of presentation (because of the Congruence Principle, which rules out descriptive modes of presentation), this leaves two possibilities open: either proper names are associated with encyclopedia entries, or they are not associated with any particular sort of *de re* mode of presentation. These two possibilities are illustrated by figures 3 and 4 respectively. In figure 3, proper names are associated with encyclopedia entries; in figure 4, they are not associated with any particular sort of *de re* mode of presentation, but only with the generic category of *de re* mode of presentation.

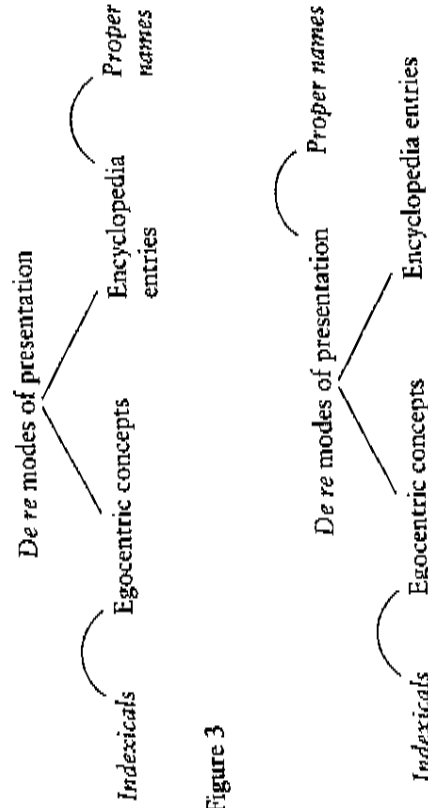


Figure 3

Figure 4

Something which I said earlier seems to support the view illustrated by Figure 4 – the view that proper names are not associated with any particular sort of *de re* mode of presentation, not even with encyclopedia entries as opposed to egocentric concepts. Treisman's 'temporary files' mentioned in 10.2 are egocentric concepts; they are based on the subject's ability to 'track' objects in the perceptual environment. As Treisman points out, two distinct levels of identification are involved in perception: an object is first localized, then recognized as a certain type of object (a plane, say, or a bird). The first level is that of *demonstrative* identification: an object is perceived as occupying a certain position in (egocentric) space, and information gained via the subject's perceptual relation to that object is fed into a temporary file whose existence does not require an identification of the object in the second, stronger sense. Now I have suggested that we can associate a proper name, say 'Bozo', with the temporary file corresponding to the first level of identification; thus we may see something moving in the sky, call it 'Bozo', assume that it's a plane, and later discover that *Bozo was not a plane, after all, but a bird*. If that is true, then it seems that proper names can be associated with egocentric concepts as well as with encyclopedia entries.

The sort of evidence I have just adduced should not be given too much weight, however. For we have seen that there is a sense

in which proper names can be 'associated with' even *descriptive* concepts: we may decide to call whoever invented the zip 'Julius'. Still, the view that proper names require a non-descriptive mode of identification of their referent can be maintained. When an object known only by description is given a proper name (as in the 'Julius' case), a situation in which that object will come to be known in a more direct manner is anticipated (10.4). The same sort of thing might be true of the 'Bozo' case, where a proper name is given to an object identified on a purely demonstrative basis. That may also be a case of anticipation of a further state of knowledge in which the object will be identified in a more stable manner, via an encyclopedia entry.¹⁷ From such examples, not much follows concerning the psychosemantics of proper names.

Although I keep an open mind on this issue, I tend to favour the view illustrated by figure 3. Egocentric concepts, in general at least, are temporary files: they serve as repository for information got through acquaintance with objects, and do not last more than the acquaintance relation itself (7.4–5). Encyclopedia entries are stable files; they are the sort of file into which information got through acquaintance with the object has to be stored in order to be preserved. Now, we do not use a proper name for an object unless we expect our mental file about that object to last more than the time of the encounter with the object. For that very simple reason, I think proper names are associated with encyclopedia entries in a fairly close manner.

Proper names have two functions in relation to encyclopedia entries: they can be used to initiate them or to access them. Let us consider the initiating function first. A mental file, whether an encyclopedia entry or an egocentric concept, is created on the basis of specific pieces of information which serve as a 'peg' for clustering further information about the object that information concerns. Suppose I acquire the information that a certain person is my new neighbour. The concept 'my new neighbour' (or rather, the information that someone satisfies that concept) can be used to cluster information about the person whom I take to be my new neighbour in a way that reflects the putative fact that it is all information about a single person. The information which plays the initiating role I call the 'initiating label' of the file. It is part of the informational content of the file, along with whatever information comes to be stored in the file (table 2). Note that, although certain pieces of information play a special role in initiating files, *any* information in the file can

Table 2 An encyclopedia entry with its initiating label

My new neighbour
 man met in the staircase on January 1st, 1992
 has a beard
 Englishman
 wears glasses
 member of the Labour party
 called 'Peter Jones'
 reads *Mind and Language*
 has a daughter called 'Sarah'

...

be used to access the file, through the process of synecdoche alluded to earlier (5.5; more on this in 15.6). I will come back to that issue in a moment.

In order to initiate a file, a concept must be (putatively) identificatory of an object; in order to initiate an *encyclopedia entry* as opposed to an egocentric concept it must be so in a stable manner; it must identify the referent in a way that does not depend upon a perceptual relation to it. Both definite descriptions and proper names express concepts which have the required property. Definite descriptions such as 'my new neighbour' or 'the man I met in the staircase on January 1st, 1992' express concepts which stably identify some object the subject has information about. 'Peter Jones' expresses the concept 'called "Peter Jones"', and that concept, too, stably identifies some object the subject has information about. (This is one sense in which proper names are very much like definite descriptions.) In contrast, 'that man' expresses a demonstrative concept which identifies an object in a non-stable manner, typically through perception.

Suppose I meet someone who tells me 'I am Judith.' By telling me her name, she provides me with what I need for creating an encyclopedia entry about her. If she says 'I am the new Professor of Botany', that will work too. Both types of information about the (demonstratively identified) referent can be used to create a stable encyclopedia entry about her which will enable me to preserve information gained through acquaintance with her (7.4).

I said earlier that any information in a file can be used to access the file. Thus if someone tells me he has met an Englishman in coming to my place that will probably call up the concept of my new neighbour, since the latter contains the information 'is an Englishman' (and is made contextually salient by the reference to my place). The expressed concept of an Englishman calls up my notion of my new neighbour by virtue of the part/whole relation in which the former stands to the latter. If the speaker asks me 'Do you know Peter Jones?', that will also call up my notion of my new neighbour, since it contains the information 'called "Peter Jones"' (i.e. the very concept which the proper name expresses). That is the second function of proper names: they serve to call up encyclopedia entries including the information that the referent bears a certain name. That function of proper names is very similar to that of indexicals, as I shall now emphasize: in communication the relation between proper names and encyclopedia entries is the same as that between indexicals and egocentric concepts.

In order to communicate successfully and enable the hearer to re-identify the object he is referring to, the speaker must express a concept – a linguistic mode of presentation – which (i) fits the object he wants to talk about, and (ii) corresponds to some information the hearer has in his dossier for that object. In other words, the linguistic mode of presentation must correspond to some information which both the speaker and the hearer possess about the referent. But quite often the speaker and the hearer know different facts about the referent. Now the speech situation creates facts about various objects involved in the speech situation itself, and those facts are automatically known to both speaker and hearer *qua* participants in that situation. Thus both the speaker and the hearer (in a normal conversational setting) know that the speaker – say John – is the speaker, that the hearer – say, Jim – is the hearer, and so forth. This enables the speaker to use these mutually manifest facts in referring to the speaker, the hearer and other aspects of the speech situation. The linguistic modes of presentation conventionally expressed by indexicals correspond to facts about their referents which are created by the speech situation itself and are therefore mutually manifest to participants in the speech situation. What is so special about reference by means of indexicals is that the facts exploited for identificatory purposes are not facts which exist independently of communication, but facts which are created in the very process of communication (Benveniste, 1956).

The same sort of thing is true of proper names. The fact that someone is called 'Peter Jones' does not exist independently of communication: it is a fact which is created in order to make communication about (and with) Peter Jones easier. Calling a man 'Peter Jones' in a speech community C is a way of conventionally introducing a certain piece of information in the dossiers which members of C have for Peter Jones, thereby making successful communication possible.

We saw in 3.4 and 5.5 that the linguistic modes of presentation expressed by indexicals (e.g. the concept of the utterer of this utterance, expressed by the first person) correspond to particular pieces of information contained in the egocentric concepts which constitute the 'psychological modes of presentation' associated with those indexicals. Contrary to the linguistic modes of presentation, which are the same for speaker and hearer, the psychological modes of presentation are different: the speaker thinks of himself as *himself*, while the hearer thinks of the speaker as *that man*. But there is something common to the speaker's and hearer's respective egocentric concepts (the speaker's notion of himself, and the hearer's notion of the man he is talking with). It is part of John's notion of himself that he is uttering this utterance, and it is also part of the hearer's notion of the man he is talking with that that man is uttering this utterance. That common constituent is what the indexical conventionally expresses and which enables it to (non-conventionally) stand for both the speaker's and the hearer's respective egocentric concepts, through a pragmatic process of synecdoche.¹⁸ In the same way, the speaker and the hearer may have very different encyclopedia entries about Peter Jones – they may know different facts about him – but there is a fact which their belonging to the same (local) speech community guarantees they both know: the fact that Peter Jones is called 'Peter Jones'. That common constituent of their respective encyclopedia entries about Peter Jones, namely the concept 'called "Peter Jones"', is what the proper name 'Peter Jones' conventionally expresses and which enables it to stand for the speaker's and the hearer's respective encyclopedia entries.

The two functions of proper names I have talked about in this section, namely the initiating function and the accessing function, are not specific to them. Like proper names, definite descriptions – or rather the concepts they express – can be used to initiate encyclopedia entries; and any information in an encyclopedia entry (including non-individuating information of the sort expressed by indefinite

descriptions) can be used to access or call up the latter. What characterizes proper names is the fact that these functions are essential to them: it is constitutive of proper names that they fulfil that sort of function. To put it slightly differently, proper names have a secondary character: the concept which a proper name conventionally expresses – the concept of being called by a certain name – does not correspond to 'primary' information about the referent, like the concept of being my new neighbour, but has an organizing function with respect to information of the latter sort. To know that someone is called by a certain name is a practical or formal bit of knowledge which makes it possible (i) to store whatever primary information we gain about that person under an entry labelled by that name and (ii) to communicate with others about that person even though the (primary) facts they know about her are different from those we know.

Notes

- 1 This qualification will often be implicit in what follows. By 'mode of presentation' I generally mean 'mode of presentation or sort of mode of presentation'.
- 2 Evans, 1982, p. 92 and 143n. A similar distinction will be elaborated later (10.4).
- 3 Wiggins insists that 'to fulfil its office and constitute an answer to the *what is it* question, a genuinely sortal predicate must stand for a concept that implicitly determines identity, persistence and existence conditions for members of its extension' (Wiggins, 1980, p. 62). The concept of space-occupier is not such a genuinely sortal predicate, according to him (Wiggins, 1980, p. 63), because some spatio-temporal continuants are more tolerant of intermittent manifestation than others (Wiggins, 1980, p. 50): it follows that the notion of spatio-temporal continuity *per se* is too general to determine a genuine principle of individuation. Wiggins, however, concedes that in certain situations, 'it does not matter very much to know more than roughly what the thing in question is' (Wiggins, 1980, p. 122n). Hence it might be argued that *for practical purposes* the concept of space-occupier may serve as a sortal concept even though it is not a genuine one for theoretical purposes. This would amount to making a distinction between the sortal concept necessary for effective individuation (i.e. the sortal concept which is truth-conditionally relevant) and the sortal concept which is actually used by the thinker (i.e. the sortal concept which is cognitively relevant). See Wiggins's reply to Ayers in Wiggins, 1980,

- pp. 217–19. See also below (10.4–5) the distinction between the actual cognitive state of the name-user and the cognitive state 'required' and 'anticipated' by the use of a name.
- 4 See Evans, 1982, pp. 178–9.
 - 5 Contrast this with what Aristotle says in the passage of *De Generatione et Corruptione* quoted (with approval) by Wiggins (1980, p. 61n).
 - 6 This conclusion could be qualified by appealing to the distinction alluded to at the end of note 3. See below 10.4–5.
 - 7 Such 'attributive' uses of indexicals will be discussed below (10.4); see also chapter 16.
 - 8 The possibility of immunity to error through misidentification in connection with descriptive concepts has been noticed by Evans (1982, pp. 180–1).
 - 9 If I am right, we cannot accept Evans's words at face value when he says that 'someone who understands and accepts the one sentence [e.g. "Julius is F"] as true gets himself into exactly the same belief state as someone who accepts the other [e.g. "The inventor of the zip is F"]...' (Evans, 1982, p. 50). What is true is this: in the envisaged situation, the same belief state corresponds to both utterances, as Evans rightly insists. But it is not true that the thinker in this situation fully understands the utterance with the name 'Julius'. To fully understand this utterance, one would have to think of the referent non-descriptively – something that is simply not possible in the envisaged situation. It is precisely because the thinker does not fully understand the utterance with a proper name in it that he forms the same belief in connection with both utterances. (To be sure, the thinker in the envisaged situation fully understands the sentence 'Julius is bald'; but that is another issue.)
 - 10 'Knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description', in *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 218.
 - 11 Gilles Granger once objected to this account that it is normative rather than descriptive, contrary to the intention I expressed earlier in this study language as it is rather than language as it ought to be). I reject this charge. The normative element which plays a crucial role in my account of descriptive names does so only because it is integral to 'language as it is'. This element is *mentioned* in my account, but the latter is not thereby rendered normative.
 - 12 *Op. cit.*, p. 216.
 - 13 Using Gardiner's terminology, we might characterize the uses of a proper name as being 'congruent' or not (Gardiner, 1932): a proper name would be said to be 'used congruently' if and only if the conditions set up by the word itself (*qua* proper name) are fulfilled as a matter of fact.

- 14 On this example see Kripke, 1980, p. 79n.
- 15 What I have said of descriptive names can also be said, I believe, of 'descriptive demonstratives' of the sort mentioned by Schiffer (see the giant footprint example). The most interesting descriptive uses of demonstratives to be discussed in chapter 16 belong to a different category, however.
- 16 The conclusion of 10.3 might still be defended, though. It was formulated thus: Proper names, like all referential expressions, require that their referent be thought of non-descriptively; but while there are referential expressions which express a specific non-descriptive mode of presentation, proper names are not associated with any one in particular. This might be defended as follows: Even if proper names are associated with encyclopedia entries, they are not associated with specific (types of) encyclopedia entries, whereas indexicals such as 'I' or 'now' are associated with specific indexical categories, viz. the indexical category Ego or the indexical category Nunc.
- 17 The same strategy might be used in defence of the claim that the use of a proper name 'requires' the ability to think of its referent under a specific 'sortal'. See 10.2.
- 18 See 15.6.