Singular Thought and the Contingent *A Priori*[1]

MANUEL GARCÍA-CARPINTERO

De re or singular thoughts are, intuitively, those essentially or constitutively about a particular object or objects; any thought about different objects would be a different thought. What would a philosophical articulation or thematization of their nature be like? In spite of extensive discussion of the issue since it was brought to the attention of the philosophical community in the late fifties by Quine (1956), a plausible response remains elusive. This is glaringly revealed by the contrasting recent takes on the issue of writers such as Soames (2005) — who adopts the view of Donnellan (1979) to be outlined presently — and Jeshion (2001), who otherwise share a similar direct-reference approach to the prototypical expression of those contents. Discussing the matter in connection with the status of the Kripkean category of the contingent a priori in the article mentioned above,[2] Donnellan (1979) argued that what can be properly classified as knowable a priori about utterances like those involving 'one meter' or 'Neptune' famously proposed by Kripke (1980) cannot be the very same singular content

1. Research for this paper was supported, as part of the European Science Foundation EUROCORES Programme OMLL, by funds from the Spanish Government's grant DGI BFF2002-10164 and the EC Sixth Framework Programme under Contract no. ERAS-CT-2003-980409, from DGI HUM2004-05609-C02-01, DURSI, Generalitat de Catalunya, SGR01-0018, and a *Distinció de Recerca de la Generalitat, Investigadors Reconeguts* 2002-2008. An earlier version of this paper was presented at talks at the 3rd Barcelona-Milano conference in Milano; Logic & Language 2006, Birmingham; ENFA-3, Lisbon; GAP-6, Berlin; SIFA-7, Cesano Maderno; and SADAF-2006, Buenos Aires. I thank the audience for criticisms and suggestions; I am also grateful to Paolo Casalegno, Keith Hossack, Max Kölbel, Diego Marconi, Teresa Marques, Alberto Moretti, Eleonora Orlando, François Recanati, Sven Rosenkranz, Jason Stanley and Tim Williamson for comments that led to improvements. I am also indebted to Michael Maudsley for his grammatical revision.

2. Examples will be provided below; this is the class of truths unveiled by Saul Kripke (1980) which intuitively have paradoxically-sounding contrasting modalities; they are contingent, in that, although true with respect to the actual world, we can easily imagine possible circumstances with respect to which they would be false, while we seem to be capable of knowing their truth *a priori*.

that is contingent;[3] he distinguished to that end between *knowing a true proposition* expressed by an utterance, and *knowing that an utterance expresses a true proposition.* (Thus, for instance, if, while listening to an utterance in a language that I do not know, I am told by a reliable person who knows the language and whom I trust that the utterance is true, I come thereby to know that the sentence expresses a truth, without knowing the truth that it expresses.) Evans (1979) replied that, for a very specific sort of cases involving "descriptive names", a related proto-two-dimensionalist account should be preferred, on which it is not the singular contingent content, but rather a general descriptive one that is knowable a priori. In a series of papers, Robin Jeshion (2000, 2001) has recently attacked Donnellan's proposal, arguing in favour of the most straightforward interpretation of Kripke's claim: in the relevant cases, the very same singular content can be both contingent and knowable a priori. In this paper, I will appeal to a generalized version of two-dimensional semantics to advance an account of the Kripkean cases along the lines of Evans's, and I will argue that Jeshion's compelling arguments against Donnellan's view do not apply to this version.

Our discussion concerns the semantics of referential terms such as proper names and indexicals in language and, more fundamentally, in thought — as they occur in "utterances" of declarative sentences in default cases in which they constitute assertions or judgments. In fact, to put aside the complications of communication, I will be considering here only "internal" assertions or judgments, conscious voluntary episodic acts performed by "saying in one's heart" or inwardly accepting an aural mental image of a sentence. Those acts I take to be constitutively governed by Williamson's (1996/2000) knowledge rule, that one should assert *p* only if one knows *p*. Assertions have contents, constituting the assertion's truth-conditions — what one should know to obtain if one is to assert correctly. I will call the content of the assertion made by default by thus uttering a declarative sentence the utterance's *assertoric content.*

3. Here is a relevant quotation from Kripke (1980, 56): "What then, is the *epistemological* status of the statement 'Stick *S* is one metre long at t_0', for someone who has fixed the metric system by reference to stick *S*? It would seem that he knows it a priori. For if he used stick *S* to fix the reference of the term 'one metre', then as a result of this kind of 'definition' (which is not an abbreviative or synonymous definition), he knows automatically, without further investigation, that *S* is one metre long. On the other hand, even if *S* is used as a standard of a metre, the *metaphysical* status of the statement 'Stick *S* is one metre long' will be that of a contingent statement, provided that 'one metre' is regarded as a rigid designator: under appropriate stresses and strains, heatings or coolings, *S* would have had a length other than one metre even at *t0*. (Such statements as 'The water boils at 100 degrees centigrade, at sea level' can have a similar status.) So in this sense, there are contingent a priori truths."

A semantic theory's provisions for utterances of declarative sentences should agree with correct intuitions concerning the truth-conditions of the assertions made by uttering them in default circumstances. On this basis, the intuitive considerations marshalled by Kripke (1980) and Kaplan (1989) against descriptivist theories suggest that the contribution of referential expressions to the assertoric contents of simple sentences (whose logical form consists in the application of a n-adic predicate to n referential terms) in which they occur are their referents, if any; and this accounts for their rigidity (Sainsbury 2005, 76-81). Like Sainsbury, I take these contents to be object-individuated (different referent, different content) but not object-dependent (a singular content is expressed even when using vacuous referential expressions).

I will assume an epistemic approach to the characterization of *de re* thoughts. On the knowledge account of assertion, there are incorrect assertions whose speakers lack the requisite knowledge; however, they "represent themselves" as having it, for their utterance is subject to a rule requiring it for it not to be incorrect. Analogously, the speaker who uses a referring expression expressing thereby a singular content "represents himself" as having *de re* knowledge, such as (allegedly) knowing of a given entity that it is the referent of the expression, or knowing who or what the referent is, in that his having that knowledge is an ancillary norm to which his utterance is subject. The speaker may in fact lack the *de re* knowledge, as is the case, among other cases, when there is no referent. The required justification involved in that ancillary norm is paradigmatically given by perception and memory, but also in my view by testimony and inductive and abductive reasoning based on successful cases.

For most of the paper, I will be discussing examples involving indexicals and demonstratives. This is mainly for strategic reasons; on the one hand, most writers accept that the arguments for a direct-reference view apply equally to proper names and indexicals; on the other, the view that I want to defend is more easily understood with respect to the latter. (Although, as I will indicate, I assume that what I will have to say applies equally to singular thoughts expressed by means of proper names.) Additionally, I will also assume that the traditional division into deictic and anaphoric uses of indexicals does not have any significant role to play in semantic theory. As Heim & Kratzer (1998, 240) put it in expressing a coinciding view, "anaphoric and deictic uses seem to be special cases of the same phenomenon: the pronoun refers to an individual which, for whatever

reason, is highly salient at the moment when the pronoun is processed".[4] This corresponds anyway to a crucial assumption needed to generate the puzzle of the contingent a priori, namely, that one could introduce a fully-fledged directly referential proper name by fixing its reference descriptively. Assuming all this, let us now consider a case in which the preceding discourse (1), as opposed to a perceptually available situation, provides descriptive material helping to fix the referent of the demonstrative in (2); and compare the epistemic status of that utterance to that of (3) in the same context:

(1) There is a unique planet causing perturbations in Uranus' orbit

(2) That planet is bigger than Mars

(3) That planet causes perturbations in Uranus' orbit

Example (3) has of course been constructed so that it bears a sufficiently striking resemblance to Kripke's (1980) example based on Leverrier's introduction of 'Neptune'. In Kripke's example, an utterance like (3) with 'Neptune' replacing 'that planet' is made in a context in which 'Neptune' has been stipulated to have its reference fixed by 'the planet causing perturbations in Uranus' orbit'; in our case, the demonstrative is uttered in a context in which the relevant referential intentions of the speaker require the demonstrative to have its referent fixed in the same way. Using Kripke's studiously ambiguous manner of expression, utterance (3) provides an example of a contingent *a priori* truth. Everything of philosophical substance that I will say about this case applies *mutatis mutandis* to analogous cases involving proper names (the Neptune example), or natural kinds such as lengths (the meter example). As I said, I prefer to discuss cases involving demonstratives because in the case of names there are distracting factors, in the vicinity of the semantic argument for Millianism (the view that the only semantic feature of a proper name is its referent), which should be dealt with with more care than I have space for.

Now, the claim that (3) expresses an a priori truth provokes the objection that Ray (1994) calls 'the existential complaint'; namely, that (3) implies the existence of the referent of the demonstrative, which cannot be known a priori. This typically leads to conditionalizing, adding to (3) "if anything does" or something of the sort. However, as Ray (1994) and Cowles (1994) show, this objection, even if correct, does not go to the heart of the problem of the contingent a priori

4. A full defense of my arguments here would therefore require confronting views like Siegel's (2002), who argues for an asymmetry in demonstratives depending respectively on perception and discourse; this is a view germane to a requirement of acquaintance in a very strict sense (actual causal relation with the referent) for proper understanding of *de re* contents, which I am rejecting in accepting inductively- or abductively-based acquaintance based.

at all. The epistemic status of the truth that (5) expresses is equally puzzling, even if, in this case, the existential implications of the contextual presumptions expressed in (4) can be granted to be knowable a priori. Thus, even if the point that what is known a priori in this case is at most a conditional like *if (1) then (3)* is correct, granting the knowledge expressed in that condition, the puzzle still remains. I will concentrate on (3) as it is, for the sake of simplicity.

(4) There is a unique cardinal numbering the planets

(5) That cardinal numbers the planets

In fact, as Jeshion (2001) shows, the puzzle is properly speaking not that of accounting for (or explaining away) the apparent possibility of having a priori knowledge of contingent truths, like (3) and (5); for what is basically the same puzzle arises regarding cases involving necessary truths, as witnessed by (6) and (7). (7) is necessary, and if knowable at all it should at first sight be knowable a priori through mathematical proof. The puzzle is rather that, just relative to the referential intentions captured in the contextual presupposition (6), that necessary and a priori truth can be known in the easy a priori way in which consequences of stipulations are known.

(6) There is a unique cardinal numbering the sets with cardinalities higher than ω and lower than the power set of ω

(7) That cardinal numbers the sets with cardinalities higher than ω and lower than the power set of ω

Properly understood, then, the puzzle is this: How can it be that, on the basis of the all too easily available knowledge that the speaker may have of the referential intentions determining the reference of the demonstrative in (3), (5) and (7) (depending on the previous discourse in (1), (4) and (6), respectively), s/he can have the very same knowledge of the truth of a *de re* content which, ordinarily (i.e., for a speaker accessing those very same *de re* contents in different ways) would be much more difficult to attain, and would constitute a genuine epistemic achievement? Of course, the very same puzzle arises if the singular content is not accessed through knowledge of discourse-related referential intentions providing the required specificity to a demonstration, as in our examples, but through knowledge of a reference fixing descriptive stipulation for a proper name or a natural property or kind term.

As I said, I want to defend a two-dimensional account of the puzzle. Kripke's studiously ambiguous use of 'truths' in referring to what the relevant modalities operate on hides the fact that they are different intensions in different cases. Direct-reference theorists are right that, to account for legitimate intuitions

concerning possible-world truth-conditions and metaphysical modalities, we should countenance an *official de re* or singular content, to which 'that planet' in (2) and (3) contributes Neptune itself.[5] In agreement with direct-reference theories, these singular contents are the default, semantic contributions of referential expressions: thereby 'official'.[6] They are the contents expressed by utterances of the sentences in which they occur, unless overriding contextual factors intervene, for instance giving the audience reasons to think that the speaker is merely pretending to refer for the purposes of creating a fiction.

However, official contents do not exhaust the semantics of these expressions — which is what allows for the default to be overridden, as in the just mentioned case of fictional discourse. There is also descriptive material derived from the token-reflexive rule constituting the character of the demonstrative, stating that a token of 'that planet' applies to the planet demonstrated in the token's context.[7] The concept of a demonstration in this rule is a determinable, to be further determined in context, as in our examples, relative to the more detailed manifest referential intentions of the speaker, in our cases relating to the descriptive information provided by the stage-setting previous discourses, (1), (4) and (6).[8] The full semantic content of a default assertoric utterance of sentences of the kind we are considering would be more adequately represented by Stalnaker's (1978) corresponding "propositional concept", featuring different official contents for different contexts relative to which the utterance might be made. This propositional concept provides a different intension corresponding to Stalnaker's (1978) "diagonal proposition", available to account for different semantic properties.[9] This amounts to the claim that, for any given context *c* in

5. Perry (2001), which the views defended here — having developed to a large extent from the influence of Perry's earlier work — resemble closely, also uses 'official' in this very same way. I use '*de re*' and 'singular' following well-established usage, but with some misgivings. The problem with the term '*de re*' is that it was introduced relative to the two Quinean criteria, availability to the rules of existential generalization and substitution of identicals, which apply to content-*ascriptions*, not to contents themselves, and the relations between *de re* ascriptions and *de re* contents are not straightforward. The problem with 'singular' is that it begs some questions about the (official) contents of utterances made with purportedly referring expressions that lack reference. The discussion below is intended to prevent these misgivings.
6. Some, including King (2001), would accept this for simple demonstratives, but not for complex ones, like those I am considering here. I do not accept these views, but I do not need to discuss them here, given that my considerations apply equally to examples involving simple demonstratives like 'he', 'you', 'yesterday' and so on.
7. García-Carpintero (1998) and (2000) elaborates on this.
8. García-Carpintero (2005) elaborates on this contrast between determinable concepts provided by linguistic, character-rules for demonstratives, and their contextual determinations.
9. Note, however, that Stalnaker's views on diagonal propositions need elaboration for them to be defensible, and that in all probability he would reject the neo-Fregean elaboration assumed here; see García-Carpintero, M. & Macià, J. (2006).

which the sentence is uttered with the same character, and with its determinable concepts determined in the same way, the assertoric content thus provided by that determined character relative to *c* obtains in the world of the context *c*.[10]

Consider, to illustrate, an utterance of the English sentence 'I am hungry', by me, now. This signifies a singular state of affairs, consisting only of a proper class of the class of possible worlds such that a specific individual, myself, is properly related to hunger at a specific time, now. Presumably, the class also includes possible worlds where no convention of language exists, for neither I, hunger, nor any other constituents of the state of affairs is convention-dependent. However, there is a further relation between modal properties and semantic properties, as shown by conflicting intuitions regarding the modal status of utterances of 'I am here now', or 'I am Manuel García-Carpintero'. We capture it by considering the *diagonal proposition* related to utterances, such as one of 'I am hungry'; it includes all possible worlds such that an utterance of that sentence also takes place, is sufficiently semantically related to the actual utterance (in particular, it occurs in a context where the conventions governing the type 'I' are the very same as they are in English), and signifies a state of affairs obtaining in that world. These possible worlds concern the hunger of different individuals in different moments, in contrast with those comprising the state of affairs signified by the actual utterance and determining the metaphysical modalities applying to it; and, also in contrast with them, the relevant linguistic conventions exist in all possible worlds in the diagonal proposition. This framework explains why, while it can be correct to characterize as necessary the truth of an utterance of 'I am Manuel García-Carpintero' (the official content obtains in all possible worlds), the truth of the utterance can nonetheless be also characterized as known a posteriori (the diagonal proposition fails to include some possible worlds); also, why the truth of an utterance of 'I am here now' can be contingent (the official content fails to include many possible worlds), while known a priori (the diagonal proposition obtains in all possible worlds).

We explain in this framework the contingent while a priori character of (3), (5) and (7) in a similar vein; for instance, (3) is knowable a priori because it has a necessary diagonal content, given the quasi-stipulative role that the referential intentions of the speaker have in determining the determinable notion of a demonstration, in that case relative to the previous discourse in (1); at the same time, any official content that (3) has is bound to be contingent. The kind of linguistic understanding that the stipulator has in these cases in virtue of his

10. García-Carpintero (2006a) elaborates on this.

referential intentions is therefore on the present view enough to account for the epistemic properties of the utterance, independently of whether or not it is also enough to allow him to grasp the *de re* contents expressed by default by (2) and (3). In that respect, the present proposal is analogous to Donnellan's (1979) view, but it differs crucially from it. Jeshion (2001) criticizes Donnellan, from a Millian perspective. I will move on now to discuss her arguments.

Jeshion follows Donnellan in rejecting the most common Millian line to resist the assumption that (in the original examples involving proper names, such as Kripke's 'Neptune' example corresponding to our (3)) just by stipulating that 'N' is to refer to the F (or, equivalently in our demonstrative examples, just by having the manifest descriptive referential intentions allowed by the previous discourse), it is possible for the stipulator to thereby have a *de re* belief about the object O; namely, to require some sufficiently strict relation of *acquaintance* (more lax than in Russell's version, in some unspecified way) for grasping *de re* contents.[11] Such a sufficiently strict acquaintance relation would require us to actually be in a causal relation with the referent, to be able to grasp the relevant *de re* contents. As I said at the beginning, I agree with both of them in rejecting that strict acquaintance requirement, and have developed the demonstrative example on that basis. Against Jeshion (2002), however, I accept a form of *acquaintance* requirement for *de re* thought — only one more liberal than those that she rejects.

Donnellan's argument has two parts, a positive and a negative one. Firstly he presents and defends a metalinguistic account of what the stipulator knows when he accepts (3), (5) and (7): he knows that those sentences express truths, but he does not know merely on that basis the truths they express. The two first types of examples that Donnellan (1979, 51-2) uses are utterances in languages we do not understand, whose truth we accept on the basis of reliable testimony, and indexical utterances whose supporting determinate referential intentions we ignore, which we accept on similar bases. Concerning them, Jeshion (2001, 123-7) is right that they are crucially disanalogous to (3), (5) and (7), in that the speaker does not intuitively understand the utterances. Jeshion is also right that

11. Russell allowed only the possibility of acquaintance with entities having, as it were, just one epistemic guise, making it impossible for them to go unrecognized. Contemporary acquaintance theorists allow, say, for the possibility of having acquaintance with a city by being more intimately acquainted with a part of it, and having the requisite concepts for this part-whole relation. My view does not in fact go radically beyond this. It allows Leverrier acquaintance with Neptune, at the time of introducing the name, on the basis of his being more intimately acquainted with a proper part of the whole solar system to which it belongs, while having the requisite (induction- or abduction-involving) concept of the relevant part-whole relation.

applying Donnellan's account to his third type of example ("Vladimir is called by me 'Vladimir'") simply begs the question at stake, for the philosopher of Jeshion's persuasion whom Donnellan is arguing with will simply contend that audiences have a sufficient understanding of the relevant *de re* contents. My proposal improves on the first prong of Donnellan's strategy, by resorting to the independently well-supported two-dimensional framework as an alternative to Donnellan's metalinguistic account.

The second, negative part of Donnellan's strategy is to argue that the stipulator intuitively lacks understanding of the *de re* content. Donnellan acknowledges the difficulties for arguing for this on the basis of a sufficiently elaborated philosophical account of *de re* intentional states. He seeks to skirt the difficulties by deploying an intuitive correct principle (1979, 55): "If one has a name for a person, say "N," and there is a bit of knowledge that one would express by saying "N is ϕ" then if one subsequently meets the person it will be true to say to him, using the second person pronoun, "I knew that you were ϕ." (A similar loose principle could be constructed substituting a demonstrative...)". But this will not do, for reasons that were already pointed out in the literature on *de re* contents in the '60s and '70s. Donnellan's criterion relies on taking *de re* content-*ascriptions* (defined by the two Quinean criteria, availability to substitutivity and existential generalization) as ascribing *de re* intentional acts. This cannot work, firstly because straightforward *de dicto* contents can be ascribed *de re*: (Pryor, ms.) "A music professor says to a dark, crowded auditorium: "I want all the sisters here tonight to clap on the third beat... " My sister and her husband were listening to their iPods. They unplug the earphones and ask, "What's going on?" Someone sitting nearby tells my sister: "He wants you to clap on the third beat." Or tells her husband: "He wants your wife to clap on the third beat" — even though, as in the previous example, the professor is not acquainted with my sister and isn't in a position to descriptively specify her."[12] Thus, *de re* ascription is not sufficient for *de re* content. More worryingly for Donnellan's criterion, it is not necessary either: reluctance to a particular *de*

12. Burge (1977, 346) provides another example, insisting that in cases of this kind we have merely "a *de re* ascription of a *de dicto* attitude". As I said, other writers have clearly acknowledged the distinction; Burge refers to Castañeda as the first to do so.

re ascription can be explained on the basis of Fregean considerations (Jeshion 2001, 119-23).[13]

Jeshion is also right, I think, that the proper line to pursue to argue for a view analogous to Donnellan's is not to defend that the stipulator lacks understanding of the singular content, but that his knowledge of the reference-fixing features does not provide justification for a belief about its truth. This is what the present two-dimensional proposal contends. To properly pursue this strategy requires taking on the difficult task Donnellan tries to put aside of giving an analysis of *de re* intentional acts. This is a task that I cannot properly pursue here. However, I think that my main argument could be made by mostly relying on what previous writers have uncovered as constitutive features of *de re* contents, which Jeshion herself accepts.

Burge (1977, 346) gives a nuanced indirect account in terms of *de re* ascriptions, sensitive to the difficulties highlighted in the previous paragraph. He characterizes *de re* beliefs as those "whose correct ascription places the believer in an appropriate nonconceptual, contextual relation to objects the belief is about." The problem has been displaced to establishing when a *de re* ascription is "correct"; but Burge's characterization advances nonetheless our understanding of *de re* contents. Burge requires relations to the relevant objects for *de re* contents, and insists that those relations should be "nonconceptual". On a similar line, Evans (1982, 146) says: "a subject who has a demonstrative Idea of an object has an *unmediated* disposition to treat information from that object as germane to the truth or falsity of thoughts involving that Idea." Evan's characterization of the relevant disposition as concerning the *unmediated* use of *information* places it in Burge's neighbourhood, because, for Evans, informational channels (perception, memory, testimony) paradigmatically convey nonconceptual contents.

The attempt to state constitutive conditions distinguishing *de re* from *de dicto* contents leads us thus to the similarly muddled philosophical arena of debates concerning whether perceptual experiences, mnemonic traces and so on have conceptual or nonconceptual contents. I find it useful to disregard the standard accounts of the distinction — which I do not take to be at all illuminating, cf. García-Carpintero (2006b) — and instead to examine the nature of the disagreements confronting philosophers like McDowell (1994) who ascribe a conceptual content to perceptual experiences, and those who, like Burge (2003), Heck (2000) and Peacocke (2001) ascribe a nonconceptual one to it. Both parties to the dispute agree that perceptual experiences have the power to supply epistemic warrant for perceptual judgments or assertions. Both are epistemic internalists, subscribing at least a moderate version that requires that the status as warranted or otherwise of a judgment or assertion depends on matters reflectively accessible to the subject. However, those who ascribe conceptual content to perceptual experiences appear to do so because they subscribe to a stronger version of epistemic internalism — one that requires that the epistemic status itself of any state on which the epistemic status of another depends be reflectively accessible to the subject. If experiences justify perceptual assertions, it is not just that they should be reflectively accessible; their status as warrant-purveyors itself should be accessible. It is this, I think, what Burge (2003) correctly rejects with his distinction between entitlements and justification.

13. Thus, if, in accordance with Donnellan's criterion, and in a situation like the one he is considering in stating it, in some particular case we are reluctant to say "I knew that you were ϕ", this may just be because we are considering ascribing to ourselves that *de re* knowledge *relative to a perceptually-based mode of presentation of the referent*, available in the context of the second-person ascription, which we did not possess before, when we asserted "N is ϕ". Burge (1977, 341) also pointed this out, among others.

With this in mind, let us go back to Evans's characterization of *de re* contents. Evans's idea, I think, is as follows. Let us consider an intentional state *s* (a potential assertion that a subject is considering making), with a content including a purportedly singular demonstrative concept α whose status as *de re* we are defining; I take for granted here that contents are systematically composed out of fundamental units, which is what I take concepts to be, and thus that *de re* contents include *de re* concepts. Now, if other states with conceptual content are invoked as relevant to the determination of *s*'s normative status, this may well require that the subject is in a position to appreciate this on the basis of an inferential mediation through a premise establishing the identity between α's referent and the referent of some other concept in the latter states. However, if α is genuinely *de re*, there are experiences, mnemonic impressions or testimonies, which are relevant to *s*'s normative (epistemic, in our case) status in virtue of having representational contents about α's referent, without this involving any inferential mediation through premises establishing the identity of α's referent and the referents of other modes of presentation.

Thus, in the paradigmatic case of a subject *S* who is considering whether it would be appropriate to assert or judge a thought about an object he takes to be perceiving, which *S* represents by means of concept α, Evans's idea is that what makes this thought *de re* is *S*'s disposition to take into consideration perceptual experiences and mnemonic impressions which are in fact about α's referent, without this "taking into consideration" consisting of any inference involving α. In Burge's terms, the subject has to be related to α's referent, and this rela-

tion has consequences for the constitutive normative status of the intentional state in whose content α figures, but the relation is merely "contextual" in that it does not require that *S* has otherwise conceptualized the object.

The problem with Evans's and Burge's formulation lies in that it presupposes a requirement of strict acquaintance for *de re* contents, excluding *de re* contents deriving from descriptive reference-fixing; and, as I said, I do not take this to be correct. Jeshion (2002, 70) agrees; but she grants that there is something intuitively correct in proposals like the ones we have examined, and what is correct in them is that they at least characterize the paradigm cases of *de re* contents: "Although I have argued that acquaintance is not necessary for *de re* belief, I have not argued that acquaintance is not in some way significant to an understanding of *de re* belief. De re beliefs via acquaintance are developmentally primary. Also, I would hypothesize that acquaintanceless *de re* belief is impossible without *de re* belief with acquaintance. And, no doubt, it is (direct) acquaintance that suggests the idea of a belief being directly about an object." Jeshion (2002) then purports to extract a fundamental core of *de re* contents present in those paradigm cases. She seeks to characterize a cognitive role common to *de re* concepts in paradigmatic cases and in cases dependent on descriptive reference-fixing. For that, she follows previous writers in invoking the *dossier* metaphor originally introduced by Grice.[14] Modes of presentation in *de re* contents are integrated with other ways of identifying their referent into a cognitive dossier, and thus they are not specifically relevant to the character of the thoughts including them in a way similar to what Evans's characterization states for paradigm cases. This is what the condition she calls *Psychological Neutrality* tries to capture: "S introduces 'N' for the F because S aims to think and speak about the object O that is the F by mentally tokening 'N', without necessarily thinking about O via any particular mode of presentation".

On my own view, as I have indicated before, we should not replace an epistemic account of *de re* contents based on an acquaintance requirement with a purely psychological one; what we rather need is to broaden strict forms of the requirement, asking for actual causal relations with the referent; as I suggested above, inductive and abductive relations of the forms presupposed in our examples should suffice. In order to be credited with knowledge of a *de re* content p, the subject should be warranted that the descriptive fixing of the referent has in fact put him in the sort of *rapport* with an object that typically obtains in paradigm cases (perception, memory, testimony). This is the sort of *rapport* that would

14. Perry (2001) elaborates on his already influential previous work on this. Departing from it, I myself resorted to that metaphor for similar purposes in García-Carpintero (2000).

justify maintaining the relevant cognitive dossier, which would allow obtaining new pieces of information to put in the dossier and to eventually invoke so as to appraise the normative status of thoughts like *p*. A competent English speaker (the speaker, or his audience) can indeed have this knowledge in cases like that of our example (3); but it is not simply on the basis of his linguistic knowledge that he has it. In the case of our merely illustrative assumptions above about Leverrier, that knowledge is also based on whatever justifies his believing singular contents about other parts of the solar system with which he was more intimately acquainted (Uranus, the Sun, Earth); and that justifying knowledge goes beyond his knowing his referential intentions.[15]

I cannot go any further into these matters here, but I think we have enough to raise serious doubts that, merely on the basis of knowledge of his intentions, the stipulator can have justified belief of (3)'s official *de re* content. It is not, as in the second prong of Donnellan's strategy, that the stipulator lacks understanding of the *de re* content; it is rather that linguistic competence (and knowledge of the relevant referential intentions) does not provide for knowledge of what is thereby understood, only of some related purely descriptive content. I will appeal to two additional indirect considerations in support of this two-dimensionalist proposal. Firstly, consider the following McKinsey-style reasoning, applied to our case given my assumptions:[16]

McK-1 I am judging that planet causes perturbations in Uranus's orbit

McK-2 I could not be judging that judgment unless my environment is a certain way, e.g., some referents for some referring expressions I use have sometime existed and I or other members of my community have causally interacted with them

McK-3 My environment is the relevant way

Both premises appear to be true, and justifiable on the basis of a combination of reflection and *a priori* reasoning; in the case of the second premise, the justification would appeal to the externalist features constitutive of *de re* thoughts. On my own view, which assumes a weak acquaintance requirement, they are not straightforward, but as I have repeatedly indicated I am assuming that they exist nonetheless, and that a premise of this form is thereby justified. We seem thus to

15. An elaboration of this more tolerant line would also help accounting for (5)'s and (7)'s *de re* contents, although they raise difficult issues of their own that we better put aside here.

16. I take the presentation of the McKinsey-style argument from Pryor (forthcoming); the ensuing discussion has been very much influenced by Pryor's work.

be saddled with the contention that the conclusion is, implausibly, also knowable on the basis of that kind of justification, reflection plus *a priori* reasoning.

There are different options one could adopt to deal with this argument. A natural one available to someone who, like Jeshion, accepts the straightforward Kripkean view on the contingent *a priori* (the very same singular content is the bearer of the two apparently contrasting modalities, without any two-dimensionalist modulation) is to accept its soundness, and then softening the apparent implausibility of the conclusion, appealing to the broad character of the externalist consequences of the individuation of *de re* contents accepted in the second premise. I think that a two-dimensional resolution is more plausible: with respect to the assertoric content, McK-1 is not known by reflection alone. We are entitled to McK-3 (we do not infer it from other beliefs), but this is an empirical entitlement. It is only with respect to the diagonal content that we know McK-1 by reflection alone, but on that reading McK-2 is false.

There are intermediate positions. Like other Millians, Jeshion (2000) admits a non-semantic, psychological or pragmatic role for descriptive modes of presentation; she suggests that issues about the justification of a subject vis-à-vis her attitudes about singular contents depend not just on those contents, but also on the associated modes of presentation. This would allow for a resolution structurally symmetrical to the two-dimensionalist line: the first premise cannot be true unless the subject is judging the singular content under one or another mode of presentation of Uranus'; if it is the descriptive one resulting from the referential intentions assumed in our example (3), then the second premise is false. Of course, only a view on the individuation of singular contents that rejects acquaintance requirements (such as the one that Jeshion (2002) in fact adopts) allows for this to be compatible with the subject being really judging a singular thought, as required by the accepted truth of the first premise. Here I will not go into comparing the relative merits of the two-dimensionalist proposal or alternative lines (to the extent that they are real alternatives to it, which I am not at all sure of) like the two just outlined.

The second indirect consideration that I present in favour of the two-dimensional proposal is that it allows us to provide an intuitively plausible account of utterances including vacuous referential expressions, such as those in (9) and (10). Intuitively, failure of reference does not prevent those utterances from having contents — even of being true, as in (10).

(8) There is a unique planet causing perturbations in Mercury's orbit

(9) That planet is bigger than Mars

(10) That planet causes perturbations in Mercury's orbit

I have presupposed so far that *de re* contents are object-*individuated*: contents cannot be the same if they are *de re* relative to different objects. I have not presupposed that they are object-*dependent*: *de re* contents do not exist, or cannot be entertained, if the objects they are supposed to be about do not exist. Thus, I withhold judgment with respect to the proper theoretical account of (10)'s official content. What matters for present purposes is that whatever justification one may have had for accepting (10), taken with its official content, at the time when the corresponding term 'Vulcan' was introduced, the empirical information we now have overrides it. The two-dimensional account provides a general necessary content that is intuitively *a priori* justified nonetheless; and the justification for believing that content, of course, does survive the empirical demise of the justification for accepting (10)'s official content.

It can be objected that these two considerations cannot in fact provide much support for the two-dimensionalist account of the contingent a priori, because they are not needed in all cases in which the puzzle nonetheless arises; for, as the examples (5) and (7) illustrate, the puzzle arises in cases in which the singular term cannot fail to have a referent, and in which there do not appear to exist externalist consequences not knowable a priori.[17] My reply to this is that cases like those involving material objects, to which the two previous considerations do apply, are nonetheless interesting because it is clearer in them what further pieces of evidence the thinker should have in order for him to be justified in knowing the truth of the singular content, beyond his knowledge of the reference-fixing intentions or stipulations; this is what they are intended to illustrate. We are unclear in general about the requirements for grasping singular contents and knowing their truth, but even more so in cases involving abstract entities such as numbers or fictional characters (if there are any). In the case of material objects we can at least point out in the direction of what those requirements are, as I have tried to do in my previous remarks about the more tolerant acquaintance relation I was assuming (being more intimately acquainted with, say, Uranus, the Sun and Earth). It does not matter whether possession of that evidence should be counted as an a priori matter — as in the first alternative take on the McKinsey-style argument I described above, and perhaps more clearly in whatever line is adopted for justification of *de re* contents about abstract entities. What matters is that it is clearly a more substantive piece of knowledge than that provided by knowledge of the referential intentions or stipulations, and this

17. I am very thankful to Tim Williamson for raising this concern.

is all that I need. The considerations about the McKinsey-style reasoning and about vacuous singular terms are helpful in illustrating this, given our present lack of a convincing general account of the requirements of knowledge of singular contents.

Jeshion (2002, 60-1) helpfully sums up her criticism of a view like Donnellan's (1979) metalinguistic view (she is discussing examples involving proper names). Her first argument is that "at an intuitive level, the appeal to metalinguistic belief to explain away [the claim that the act of descriptive reference-fixing appears to put the stipulator in a position to be non-inferentially *a priori* justified in believing the proposition expressed by the sentence 'N is the F, if there is a unique F'] is far from convincing. It certainly seems that the stipulator's belief is about nonlinguistic entities". However, as she quickly acknowledges, this point is highly defeasible. I do not think it is methodologically safe to put too much weight on the intuitions of ordinary competent speakers on what (3), (5) or (7) are about. They simply would be too perplexed about what the point of uttering them is. The same applies to Kripke's Neptune case, if the context in which the assertion is made is one such that the relevant reference-fixing stipulation has been made sufficiently salient.

For her second "more significant" argument, she usefully confronts us with five claims for which she finds some support, but which together are jointly inconsistent:

(i) *Possibility of Stipulative Descriptive Reference-Fixing*: It is possible to introduce a name 'N' into the public language by stipulating that its reference is to be fixed by the definite description 'the F'.

(ii) *Purist Millianism about Proper Names*: For *all* proper names, the sole semantic content of a name 'N' is its referent O.

(iii) *Skepticism about Descriptive Reference-Fixing Generated De Re Belief*: Just by stipulating that 'N' is to refer to the F, it is not possible for the stipulator to thereby have a *de re* belief about the object O.

(iv) *Accessibility of Content*: For all expressions E in the language L, and all sentences S in L expressing some proposition P, if an agent A has semantical understanding of all expressions E contained in S, then if A were apprised of all the relevant contextual information, A could have an attitude having P as its content.

(v) *Understanding Millian Names*: In cases of descriptive reference-fixing, the stipulator understands the sentence 'N is the F, if anything is' and is aware of any features of the context relevant to the determination of the content of that sentence.

My proposal is of course to reject (ii), in favour of a two-dimensional account of the relevant cases along the lines of the one offered here for cases involving demonstratives. To properly defend that, however, requires me to articulate a linguistic token-reflexive rule for proper names analogous to the one I have been assuming for demonstratives, capable of providing determinable descriptions for specific cases of proper names corresponding to those I envisaged earlier for demonstratives, to be determined by means of contextual, finer-grained descriptive information. Properly elaborated, (11) and (12) would in my view serve this goal, but I must leave the elaboration required for another occasion.

(11) A case **n** of *N* refers to the most salient so-named individual in the context in which **n** is uttered

(12) The most salient so-named individual when **n** is uttered

To conclude, in this paper I have been expounding the virtues of a neo-Fregean approach to *de re* contents. Grasping them requires knowing who or which objects are involved, which involves in the case of material objects some lax form of an acquaintance requirement, being causally related to perhaps other objects to which the intended referents can be reasonably taken to be related. It thus also requires possessing an individual descriptive concept of them. This allows for sentences semantically expressing singular concepts to have two different although related intensions, to which modal and epistemic operators are sensitive; and it accounts for otherwise puzzling problems having to do with self-knowledge and unsuccessful singular terms.

Universitat de Barcelona

References

Bach, Kent (1987a): *Thought and Reference.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Bach, Kent (1987b): "On Communicative Intentions," *Mind and Language,* 2, 141-153.

Bach, Kent (1992): "Paving the Road to Reference" *Philosophical Studies* 67, pp. 295-300.

Bianchi, Claudia (2003): "How to Refer: Objective Context vs. Intentional Context", in P. Blackburn, C. Ghidini, R. Turner e F. Giunchiglia (a cura di) Proceedings of the Fourth International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Modeling and Using Context (CONTEXT'03), Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence, vol. 2680, Berlin, Springer, pp. 54-65.

Boghossian, P. A. (1997). Analyticity. In B. Hale and C. Wright (eds.) *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Blackwell, 331-368.

Borg, Emma (2001): "Pointing at Jack, Talking about Jill: Understanding Deferred Uses of Demonstratives and Pronouns", *Mind and Language* 17, 489-512.

Burge, Tyler (1977): "Belief de Re," *Journal of Philosophy*, 74, 338-362.

Burge, Tyler (2003): "Perceptual Entitlement," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57, 503-548.

Campbell, John (2002): *Reference and Consciousness*, Oxford: Oxford U.P.

Cowles, David (1994): "The Contingent A Priori: An Example Free of Existential Worry," *Philosophical Studies* 74, 137-141.

Donnellan, Keith (1968): "Putting Humpty Dumpty Together Again," *Philosophical Review* 77, 203-215.

Donnellan, Keith (1970): "Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions," *Synthese* 21, 335-358.

Donnellan, Keith (1979): "The Contingent A Priori and Rigid Designation," in French, P., Uehling, T. and Wettstein, H. *Contemporary Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language*, 45-60, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Donnellan, Keith (1990): "Genuine Names and Knowledge by Acquaintance," *Dialectica* 44, 99-112.

Evans, Gareth (1982): *The Varieties of Reference,* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (1998): "Indexicals as Token-Reflexives", *Mind* 107 (1998), pp. 529-563.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2000): "A Presuppositional Account of Reference-Fixing," *Journal of Philosophy* XCVII (3), 109-147.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2006a): "Two-dimensionalism: a Neo-Fregean Interpretation", in García-Carpintero, M. & Macià, J. (eds.), *Two-Dimensional Semantics,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 181-204.

García-Carpintero, Manuel (2006b): "Nonconceptual Modes of Presentation", *European Review of Philosophy*, 6: *The Structure of Nonconceptual Content*, C. Van Geen & F. de Vignemont (eds.), Stanford: CSLI, 65-81.

García-Carpintero, M. & Macià, J. (2006): "Introduction", in ibid. (eds.), *Two-Dimensional Semantics,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grice, H. P. (1971): "Intention and Uncertainty", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 57, 263-279.

Harman, Gilbert (1984): *Change in View*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Heck, Richard G. Jnr. (2000): "Nonconceptual Content and the 'Space of Reasons'", *Philosophical Review* 109, 483-523.

Heim, I., & Kratzer, A. (1998): *Semantics in Generative Grammar,* Oxford: Blackwell.

Jeshion, Robin (2000): "Ways of Taking a Meter," *Philosophical Studies* 99, 297-318.

Jeshion, Robin (2001): "Donnellan on Neptune," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63, 111-135.

Jeshion, Robin (2002): "Acquaintanceless *De Re* Belief," in Joseph Keim Campbell, David Shier, and Michael O'Rourke *Meaning and Truth: Investigations in Philosophical Semantics*, New York: Seven Bridges, 53-78.

Kaplan, David (1978): "Dthat", in P. Cole (ed.), *Syntax and Semantics,* New York: Academic Press, 221-43. Reprinted in P. Yourgrau, *Demonstratives*, 11-32, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Kaplan, David (1989): "Demonstratives", in J. Almog, J. Perry and H. Wettstein (eds.), *Themes from Kaplan,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 481-563.

King, Jeffrey (2001): *Complex Demonstratives: A Quantificational Account,* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Kripke, S. (1980): *Naming and Necessity,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

McDowell, John (1994): *Mind and World,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P.

Peacocke, Christopher (2001): "Does Perception Have a Nonconceptual Content?", *Journal of Philosophy* XCVIII, 239-264.

Peacocke, Christopher (2004): "Joint Attention: Its Nature, Reflexivity, and Relation to Common Knowledge", in *Joint Attention: Communication and Other Minds*, N. Eilan, C. Hoerl, T. McCormack and J. Roessler (ed.), Oxford: Oxford U. P.

Perry, John (1993): *The Problem of the Essential Indexical and other Essays,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Perry, John (2001): *Reference and Reflexivity,* Stanford: CSLI Publications.

Pryor, James (2007): "Externalism about Content and McKinsey-style Reasoning," in Sanford Goldberg (ed.), *Internalism and Externalism in Semantics and Epistemology,* Oxford: Oxford U.P.

Pryor, James (ms): "An Epistemic Theory of Acquaintance", available at http://www.jimpryor.net/research/index.html.

Quine, W.V.O. (1956): "Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes," *Journal of Philosophy* LIII. Also in W.V.O. Quine *The Ways of Paradox,* New York: Random House, 1966, pp. 185-196.

Ray, Greg (1994): "Kripke & the Existential Complaint," *Philosophical Studies* 74, 121-135.

Reimer, Marga (1991): "Demonstratives, Demonstrations and Demonstrata". *Philosophical Studies* 63, pp. 187-202.

Reimer, Marga (1992): "Three Views of Demonstrative Reference", Synthese 93, 373-402.

Searle, John (1969): *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.

Siegel, Susanna (2002): "The Role of Perception in Demonstrative Reference", *Philosopher's Imprint*, <wwww.philosophersimprint.org/002001>.

Soames, Scott (2005): *Reference and Descriptions: The Case against Two-Dimensionalism,* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U.P.

Stalnaker, Robert (1978): "Assertion," in P. Cole (ed.) *Syntax and Semantics* 9, New York: Academic Press, 315-332.

Wettstein, Howard (1984): "How to Bridge the Gap Between Meaning and Reference," *Synthese* 58, 63-84.