

# *Do Demonstratives Have Senses?*

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## *1. Opening: What is a Fregean View of Referring Expressions?*

Fregean views of referring expressions—according to which such expressions have, not only reference, but also sense—have been subjected to intense criticism over the last few decades. Frege's view of proper names has been shown to face serious difficulties;<sup>1</sup> but these become even worse if one attempts to defend a Fregean account of demonstratives and indexicals.<sup>2</sup> Consider the word 'today' and ask what the sense of any particular utterance of a sentence containing it should be taken to be. If anything can be supposed to be the sense of an utterance of, say, 'Today is cold', it would seem to be the same thing from one occasion of utterance to the next, something like the sense of 'The day on which this utterance is made is cold'. But utterances of 'Today is cold' cannot always have the same sense, for the simple reason that different Thoughts can be expressed by different utterances of this sentence, Thoughts which must be different, by Frege's own lights, since one can coherently take different attitudes towards them.<sup>3</sup>

I shall fill this argument out somewhat below. But before I do, it is important that we get clear about what a "Fregean" view of demonstratives would be like, that is, what general claims might be taken to characterize such a view. This is

<sup>1</sup>I attempt to resolve some of these in "The Sense of Communication," *Mind* 104 (1995): 79-106.

<sup>2</sup>I shall allow myself to be a bit sloppy about this distinction, sometimes using 'demonstrative' when I really mean 'demonstrative or indexical'. Context should resolve any resulting ambiguities.

<sup>3</sup>Roughly, this argument appears in John Perry, "Frege on Demonstratives," in *The Problem of the Essential Indexical and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 3-32, at pp. 7-9.

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not just for the obvious reason that we cannot evaluate the bearing arguments of the kind just mentioned have upon such positions unless we know what "such positions" are; it is also because I shall ultimately conclude that not all of Frege's doctrines can be sustained. It will therefore be important that we understand exactly which aspects of Frege's view we are forced to abandon, so that we should be able to see how central or peripheral they are.

Although there are many significant Fregean doctrines about the notion of sense,<sup>4</sup> five of them are of particular significance here. The first of these is:

- (1) Thoughts are the contents of certain mental states; in particular, they are the contents of propositional attitudes.

As I understand it, this amounts to a definition: the basic notion of sense, for Frege, is a psychological one. (He would not put it that way, though, since he tends to identify psychology with the study of "ideas"—mental images and the like.) So thesis (1), by itself, makes no substantive claim: it just tells us how the word 'Thought' is going to be used; it involves no commitment about what Thoughts are.<sup>5</sup> There

<sup>4</sup>See Michael Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), Ch. 6, for a now classic discussion of Frege's various doctrines concerning sense and reference, to which I am much indebted. Also of great influence is Michael Dummett, "Frege's Distinction Between Sense and Reference," in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth, 1978), pp. 116-44.

<sup>5</sup>Frege himself held that Thoughts were abstract entities, denizens of a "third realm." See "Thoughts," tr. P. Geach and R.H. Stoothoff, in Gottlob Frege, *Collected Papers*, ed. B. McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 351-72, at p. 363, orig. p. 69. There is good reason, I believe, to think that Frege's position is unstable at this point: See Michael Dummett, "Frege's Myth of the Third Realm," in his *Frege and Other Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 249-62. Frege's position, as I understand it, is not fundamen-

is, however, a subsidiary claim that gives thesis (1) a bit more bite:<sup>6</sup>

- (1a) There can be different Thoughts that "concern the same object" and ascribe the same property to it. For example, the Thought that Superman flies and the Thought that Clark Kent flies are different, even though Superman is Clark Kent.

This is the familiar Fregean doctrine of the intensionality of belief. It is intended to follow from thesis (1) and the observation that a thinker could, say, believe, as Lois Lane seems to believe, that Superman flies, without believing that Clark flies, even though Clark is Superman.

I myself regard thesis (1a) as irrefutable, though not of course unquestionable.<sup>7</sup> The reason is not, I should empha-

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tally committed to this Platonistic claim, however. In many ways, it amounts to an ontological reflection of the much more important claim that Thoughts are shareable, that is, that any given thought can be entertained and believed by anyone. For discussion of the notion of shareability, see Alexander George, "Has Dummett Over-salted His Frege? Remarks on the Conveyability of Thought," in R. Heck (ed.), *Language, Thought, and Logic: Essays in Honour of Michael Dummett* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 35-69. Much has been written on the tension between Frege's claim that Thoughts are shareable and his insistence that self-conscious Thoughts are not shareable. The tension will occupy us below.

<sup>6</sup>Another is the thesis that belief is conceptual, that the contents of attitudes are composed of smaller pieces (intuitively, the senses of the sub-sentential components of sentences that might express them). We need not pursue this matter here. But I will speak, quite freely, of the senses of words (and of similar parts of Thoughts), meaning by this, as Frege does, what the sub-sentential components contribute to the senses of sentences in which they are contained.

<sup>7</sup>Let me emphasize that it does not stand opposed to views according to which belief is a three-place relation, between a thinker, a proposition, and a "way of apprehending" the proposition. If one likes this kind of view, take a

size, that I regard certain linguistic intuitions as incontestable (or as inexplicable, if [1a] is denied). Rather, the reason is that I think that our beliefs about objects are implicated in the explanation of our behavior in ways with which the denial of (1a) would be inconsistent. For example, if John runs in the direction of a particular person and gives her a huge hug, that may be partly because he believes that the person in question, that person, is Susan. And it may well be that the belief that that person was Sarah would not have caused such behavior, even though Susan and Sarah are one and the same (unbeknownst to John).

It is thus important to distinguish the doctrine about the nature of *belief* stated in theses (1) and (1a) from parallel doctrines, which Frege also holds, about the nature of belief-attribution:<sup>8</sup>

(2) Thoughts are the references of that-clauses.

(2a) Sentences of the form '*N* believes that *a* is *F*' and '*N* believes that *b* is *F*' can have different truth-values, even if '*a*' and '*b*' refer to the same object.

Theses (2) and (2a) are independent of theses (1) and (1a); indeed, they are arguably independent of one another.<sup>9</sup>

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"Thought," in my usage, to be an amalgamation of the proposition and a way of apprehending it. (I do think that this doctrine of belief is unfortunately stated, however. On examination, the "ways of apprehending propositions" turn out to factor into ways of apprehending their parts.)

<sup>8</sup>This is what I regard as the correct way to state Frege's claim that sentences in intensional contexts have "indirect reference," namely, their senses.

<sup>9</sup>Thesis (2a) purports to be a piece of data for semantic theory. If accepted as such, it constrains what one can take the references of that-clauses to be: if (2a) holds, one cannot suppose 'that *a* is *F*' and 'that *b* is *F*' to have the same reference whenever '*a*' and '*b*' do, since the relation denoted by 'believes', whatever

More importantly, (2a) does not follow from (1a). It is not incoherent (though it might well be uncomfortable) to hold that, although beliefs must be individuated more finely than by the objects they concern—so that (1a) holds—still, belief-attributing sentences of English effectively ignore such differences, at least so far as their truth-conditions are concerned.<sup>10</sup> Nor does (2a) imply (1a): although, as I have said, I don't think the view defensible, if one did think that the contents of beliefs did not need to be individuated more finely than in terms of the objects they concerned, thus denying (1a), one could still hold that sentences attributing beliefs in English obey (2a), if, e.g., one thought that the semantics of that-clauses was paratactic.<sup>11</sup> Other options are also possible.

In the present paper, I shall simply ignore these issues about belief-attribution, since they do not appear to bear directly upon the issues I want to discuss. On the other hand, I will assume the correctness of (1a) throughout. Skeptics about (1a) should read the arguments here as conditioned by its truth.

The following Fregean thesis has sometimes played an

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it may be, cannot both hold and fail to hold between *N* and the referent of 'that *a* is *F*', i.e., the referent of 'that *b* is *F*'. But (2a) does not tell us what the references of that-clauses are: it does not, in particular, imply that they are Thoughts; all kinds of views are possible here. Nor does (2) imply (2a). If one thought that that-clauses in general were "transparent" in the way that (2a) denies that they are, then one would, I think, be compelled to deny (2), for then there could be no semantic justification for distinguishing the denotations of that-clauses in this way. But "belief" could behave compatibly with the denial of (2a), although some other verbs behaved in accord with analogues of (2a).

<sup>10</sup>David Braun holds just such a combination of views. See his "Russellianism and Psychological Generalizations," *Nous* 34 (2000): 203-36.

<sup>11</sup>See Donald Davidson, "On Saying That," in *Inquiries Into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 93-108, for an early version of this view.

important role in discussions of the issues with which I am here concerned:

- (3) Sense determines reference.

On the weakest interpretation of thesis (3),<sup>12</sup> it speaks of "determination" only in a mathematical sense: it claims only that senses are related many-one to references. Thus, Thoughts are related many-one to truth-values, so if one thinks the same Thought twice, what one thinks must have the same truth-value both times; if one thinks of an object twice "in the same way," one must be thinking of the same object both times. For present purposes, however, as far as I can tell, this thesis is important only insofar as it gives additional content to thesis (1a): if two Thoughts have different truth-values, then surely one can coherently take different attitudes towards them, since it must be reasonable to believe the truth.

We come now to the theses which are of particular import for the present discussion. The first of these is:

- (4) The sense of a sentence is what one grasps in understanding it.

Thesis (4) is important, for us, because it begins to connect the notion of sense to language. Although it is not obvious

<sup>12</sup>Stronger interpretations of thesis (3) are possible. Sense might be held to determine reference in the much stronger sense that it should be possible to explain why a particular belief concerns the objects it does in terms of its having the content it does. In some relatively trivial way, that surely must be true: the fact that the belief is about the objects it is about must have something to do with its having the content it does. But the intention behind this stronger interpretation is that sense should be independent of and prior to reference, so that it should be possible to give the sort of explanation demanded. If so, that might seem to require the notion of sense to be internalist. These issues are very complex. Fortunately, we do not need to pursue them.

that we must do so, I think it best if we also treat it, for the time being, as definitional:<sup>13</sup> it tells us something about how Frege understands the notion of the sense of a linguistic expression. Frege clearly intends that an expression's having the sense it does should be an objective matter; it is equally clear that he intends understanding an expression to amount to one's being aware that it has the sense it does.<sup>14</sup> Thus, thesis (4) tells us that a sentence's having the sense it does is an objective matter and that a speaker's recognizing the sentence as having that sense constitutes her understanding it. But just as thesis (1) is silent about the nature of Thoughts, so thesis (4) does not tell us what the sense of a sentence (or other expression) might be: for all that has been said so far, the sense of a sentence might be a Russellian proposition.

To connect the notion of the sense of an expression, employed in thesis (4), with the notion of a Thought characterized by thesis (1), we need another thesis:

- (5) The sense of a sentence is a Thought.

As many have pointed out, this thesis is not to be understood as definitional: it is the substantive (indeed, bold) claim that a notion which has its home in propositional-attitude psychology is also fit to serve in the theory of lan-

<sup>13</sup>The issues I want to discuss concern the interaction of theses (4) and (5). Treating (4) as in effect a definition allows us to keep one half of the equation fixed. However, I think there is something to be said for the claim that, insofar as Frege distinguishes what we might call "cognitive sense"—the contents of propositional attitudes—from "linguistic sense"—the meanings of sentences—thesis (4) is what characterizes the latter. I hope to address this interpretive issue elsewhere. See "The Sense of Communication," pp. 82-4, 86-90, for some preliminary discussion.

<sup>14</sup>He writes: "The sense of a proper name is grasped by everybody who is sufficiently familiar with the language ... to which it belongs... ." See Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference," tr. M. Black, in *Collected Papers*, pp. 157-77, at p. 158, orig. p. 27.

guage—that the sense, or meaning, of a sentence is the very same kind of thing that is fit to be the content of a belief. Bold or otherwise, though, the thesis has great intuitive plausibility: Frege's idea is, ultimately, just that the sense of a sentence is the content of the belief one would express by uttering that sentence assertorically. Or, again, the sense of a sentence is the content of the belief one who understood it would come to have were she to accept that sentence as true.<sup>15</sup>

Theses (4) and (5) are so far unclear, in two important respects.

First, it is unclear what Frege means by saying that understanding involves "grasping" a sense. Typically, when Frege talks of grasping a Thought, he means something like entertaining that Thought—thinking it, though not (necessarily) judging it as true or false. So part of Frege's point is that understanding a sentence involves entertaining a certain Thought, namely, the one that is the sense of the sentence in question. But why does one have to "entertain" a Thought to understand an utterance? It is difficult to be sure what Frege thinks about the matter, but I think we can best make sense of his position if we take him to be trading upon the intuitive equivalence of 'understanding' and 'knowing the meaning'. On this interpretation, Frege is saying that, when one understands an utterance, one knows what it means: one knows, in particular, that it means that  $p$ , for appropriate  $p$ ; and, obviously, in thinking that an utterance means that  $p$ , one must grasp, or entertain, the Thought that  $p$ . To put the point less technically: Frege's idea is that, to understand a sentence, one must know what belief it can be used to express (or communicate); in knowing such a thing, one grasps the Thought that is the content of that belief.

<sup>15</sup>Those wanting to ask whether these explanations are compatible are asked to wait a bit.

Second, there is an unfortunate ambiguity in theses (4) and (5), as Frege usually states them, one that has been responsible for a great deal of confusion: he leaves it unclear whether the theses concern sentences as types or particular utterances of sentences.<sup>16</sup> Most of his explicit pronouncements tend to incline towards the former reading. In most of his discussions of the notion of sense, however, Frege is abstracting from context-dependence; most of the time, there is no need for him to distinguish between sentences and utterances of them, and so no need for him to clarify the theses in the way I am demanding. However, once context-dependence comes into consideration, disambiguation is required. And it should be clear that theses (4) and (5) are jointly plausible only if they are construed as concerning utterances of sentences, for the simple reason, already noted above, that different Thoughts can be expressed on different occasions by utterances of one and the same sentence.

So I take it that theses (4) and (5) may be restated as follows:<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup>There is disagreement about what the basic notion should be taken to be here: an utterance, or a sentence relative to a context, or what have you. These issues should not affect our discussion, so I shall continue to speak of utterances, as that seems most convenient.

<sup>17</sup>Frege did so understand these claims. At "Thoughts," p. 358, op. 64, he writes that, when context matters, "... the mere wording, as it can be preserved in writing, is not the complete expression of the thought; a knowledge of certain conditions accompanying the utterance, which are used as means of expressing the thought, is needed for us to grasp the thought correctly. Pointing the finger, hand gestures, glances, may belong here, too". Note that Frege insists that contextual features are part of the expression of the Thought—part, as it were, of the sentence—not that they help fix the reference of a single Thought always expressed by an utterance of the sentence. For further discussion of this matter, see Tyler Burge, "Sinning Against Frege," *Philosophical Review* 88 (1979): 398-432, and "Frege on Sense and Linguistic Meaning," in D. Bell and N. Cooper (eds.), *The Analytic Tradition: Meaning, Thought and Knowledge* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 30-60.

- (4\*) The sense of an utterance of a given sentence is what one grasps in understanding that utterance.
- (5\*) The sense expressed by an utterance of a given sentence is a Thought.

And again, if we think of understanding an utterance as knowing its meaning, we can combine these theses into the following: To understand an utterance is to know what Thought its utterer thereby expresses or, again, what Thought one who understood it would thereby come to believe were she to accept the utterance as true.<sup>18</sup>

As I am understanding the notion of sense, then, there is no obvious connection between it and the notion of "linguistic" or "standing" meaning: there is, that is to say, no presumption that the sense of an utterance should be identical with the fixed, context-independent meaning of the sentence of which it is an utterance. I shall say more about this matter in section 3.

I hope that this explanation of theses (4) and (5) has made them seem plausible (or at least well-motivated). In a sense, the theses simply tell us that what we say—the content of an assertion—is what we believe—the content of the belief we thereby express. That, I take it, is both natural and attractive. But it is important that we should have a more refined appreciation of what lies behind the theses. There is little in Frege's writings to help us here, but there is some indication that what moves him is a certain conception of the nature of communication, one so natural that we might call it the Naïve Conception of Communication. This conception is worth making explicit.

<sup>18</sup>Those still wanting to ask whether these explanations are compatible are asked to wait a bit longer.

What is the purpose of communication? At a minimum, it would seem, part of its purpose is to transfer information from one speaker to another: I have a belief, or take myself to know something, and I want to get you to believe the same thing.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps I know that the friend for whom you are looking has gone out for the day, and I want that you should know that, too. So I utter some words. I say, "John has gone fishing," and then you too believe that John has gone fishing and end your search. How does that happen? How is it that my uttering these words leads to your having this belief? Presumably, you come to have that belief, in part, because you recognize it as the one I was expressing. But how do you do that? What, that is to say, is the relation between the words I utter, the belief I express, and the belief you acquire? It is because my words mean something that you recognize me as expressing the belief I was; it is because my words mean what they do, and because you recognize them as meaning what they do, that you form the belief you do. But what could my words mean that your recognizing me as having uttered words with that meaning should amount to your recognizing me as expressing the very belief you then acquire? The most obvious answer is that what my words mean is precisely what I already believe and you come to believe: when you grasp the content of my assertion, you thereby grasp the very Thought I believe and am trying to communicate to you.

This is the Naïve Conception of Communication. According to it, when I communicate, I am trying to bring it about that someone else should come (to have the opportunity) to share a belief with me: I do so by uttering a sentence whose content, on that occasion, is the same as that of the

<sup>19</sup>Of course, not all communication has this kind of purpose: sometimes, I want to get you to do something, so I utter a sentence like 'Please shut the door'. But I shall concentrate on the case of assertion, as is common.

belief I am trying to communicate; it is because my addressee, being a competent speaker of my language, recognizes the content of my belief in my words that she can come to believe what I do. That is to say, in the example above, what my addressee needs to know about my utterance, if she is to understand it, is that it means that John has gone fishing; and that John has gone fishing is precisely what I believe and am attempting to communicate. So the sense expressed by my utterance is a Thought, something that can be (and in this case is) the content of a belief.

There is evidence that Frege held such a view of communication.<sup>20</sup> But I shall not pursue this interpretive issue here; for I should not want to say that Frege was attracted to the Naïve Conception because of any specific theoretical commitments he had. On the contrary, he was attracted to it simply because it is so natural: when he started to think about communication, the Naïve Conception was just what came immediately to mind. Indeed, the best reason for attributing the Naïve Conception to Frege is just that it helps us to make good sense of thesis (5)—via the reflections just rehearsed—and so helps us understand Frege's claim that proper names have not just reference but also sense.

Consider again the example just discussed. And now suppose that we both know of John, not just as John, but also as Jack, but are ignorant of the fact that John and Jack are one and the same. If so, then we must ask, not just why you form the belief that John has gone fishing when I utter the words 'John has gone fishing', but also why you do not form the belief that Jack has gone fishing.<sup>21</sup> Frege's suggestion is

<sup>20</sup>It is, for example, active in Frege's various arguments against the claim that Thoughts are ideas. See, e.g., "On Sense and Reference," pp. 159-61, opp. 27-30, and "Thoughts," pp. 361-3, opp. 68-9.

<sup>21</sup>Of course, I am here assuming that these might be different beliefs: I am appealing, that is, to thesis (1a). Note that the question is really why one is (or

just this: My utterance of 'John has gone fishing' has, as its sense, the Thought that John has gone fishing; your recognizing it as having that sense partly explains your forming the belief you do. Had I instead uttered 'Jack has gone fishing', that utterance would have had a different sense—namely, that Jack has gone fishing—and your recognizing it as having *that* sense would then have explained your forming the belief that Jack had gone fishing. These two sentences must therefore differ as regards the senses (that is, the meanings) competent speakers recognize utterances of them as having; if they had the very same meaning, it would be hard to explain why one should form the belief that John has gone fishing when the former is asserted, but form the belief that Jack has gone fishing when the latter is.

The argument for thesis (5) is thus a "how else" argument driven by the Naïve Conception of Communication. How, except in terms of a difference of meaning, can we explain why speakers may justifiably form the belief that John has gone fishing when told "John has gone fishing," but not when told "Jack has gone fishing"? Note that I did not say "even if John is Jack," for the crucial question here—Frege's question, if you will—is independent of whether John is Jack: it arises both if he is and if he is not. If we consider the case of John and Hilary, who are different, then the obvious and, so far as I can tell, universally accepted answer to Frege's question—as one might expect from the "even if"—begins with the claim that the sentences 'John has gone fishing' and 'Hilary has gone fishing' have different meanings: it is because they have different meanings that speakers may justifiably form the belief that John has gone fishing

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regards oneself as being) justified in forming these beliefs, not why one forms them, in a purely causal sense.

only in reaction to an utterance of the former.<sup>22</sup> To avoid a commitment to thesis (5), then, one would have to hold that some other explanation is to be given if John *is* Jack: in such cases, that is to say, the reason why one may justifiably form the belief that John has gone fishing only when told "John has gone fishing," but not when told "Jack has gone fishing," must be, not that the sentences have different meanings, but something else. That, however, seems uncomfortable: we seem to be giving different explanations in cases that are relevantly similar. Moreover, actual speakers are not always sensitive to the difference between the cases; indeed, they are insensitive to it in precisely the cases that are of most interest, namely, cases in which they do not know that John is Jack.

It therefore seems to me that the Naïve Conception of Communication, together with theses (1a) and (4), essentially implies thesis (5); and hence that referring expressions have not just reference but also sense. I will, however, be arguing that the Naïve Conception of Communication is indefensible, at least in the presence of thesis (1a).<sup>23</sup> Specifically, I shall argue, in section 4, that communication is not always designed to get one's addressee to share one's belief—that is, to get one's interlocutor to hold the very same belief one has oneself. If not, the defense of thesis (5) fails and, as we shall see, thesis (5) fails as well. I shall then attempt to determine just how significant a concession the abandonment of thesis (5) is—whether, in particular, we should conclude, as a result, that the meaning of a demonstrative is just the object it denotes. My conclusion will be

<sup>22</sup>Given appropriate background beliefs, of course, one could justifiably form any belief in reaction to the utterance of any sentence. What is at issue here, however, is of course the belief one forms in the first instance, so to speak.

<sup>23</sup>Bob Stalnaker once suggested to me that the right resolution of the conflict would be to abandon thesis (1a) and retain thesis (5). I will be exploring the alternative, since I find thesis (1a) hard to give up.

that we should not so conclude. But I shall have to explain my suggested alternative view later.

## 2. *Demonstrative Thoughts*

With this background in place, we can now begin our discussion of demonstrative and indexical expressions. Consider the demonstrative 'that'. Suppose that I say "That man is a philosopher," demonstrating David Kaplan—and then again demonstrating Bill Clinton.<sup>24</sup> Then it is clear that the Thoughts I express by means of these two utterances are different: that follows from thesis (3), since the truth-values of the Thoughts thus expressed are different. But one does not need to invoke thesis (3) to get this conclusion. I might just as well have said "That man is a great author," demonstrating (someone known to me as) George Orwell, and again demonstrating (someone known to me as) Eric Blair. The truth-values of the Thoughts I thereby express are the same, since George Orwell and Eric Blair are the same person. But if I do not know that they are the same person, I might well take different attitudes towards the Thoughts thus expressed. Since Thoughts are individuated in terms of cognitive significance, these Thoughts must be different.

If demonstratives are to have senses, then, and if the sense of an utterance is to be the Thought it is used to express, these two utterances of 'That man is a great author' must have different senses. Is that a problem? It would be if one thought that the sense of an utterance was the context-independent standing meaning of the sentence uttered: since the very same sentence has been uttered in the two cases, the two utterances would have to have the same sense. I have

<sup>24</sup>Jeffrey King has recently argued that complex demonstratives, at least, such as 'that man', are not referring expressions but quantifiers. See his *Complex Demonstratives* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2002). I find King's arguments ingenious but ultimately unconvincing, for reasons I cannot discuss here.



already warned against identifying the sense of an utterance with the standing meaning of the sentence uttered. But even if I had not done so, the obvious thing to say about this sort of example would be that, just as the reference of an utterance of a demonstrative is partly determined by the context, so is its sense.<sup>25</sup>

To rest with this response is to miss a large part of the point, however. As John Perry has argued, demonstratives and (some) other indexicals are essentially indexical.<sup>26</sup> The point is most familiar from the case of 'I'. If I utter the sentence 'I am a philosopher', then I thereby give voice to my self-conscious knowledge that I am a philosopher. Perry argues convincingly that no purely descriptive Thought could serve this purpose, and it is no good responding that having a sense need not require being synonymous with a description.<sup>27</sup> The real question, he insists, is: Given that the sense expressed by an utterance of 'I' is partly determined by context, is any additional contribution from context required to determine its reference? Does the fact that the Thought I express is about me depend upon the context in which the Thought is being entertained, or does it not? If it does not—if sense determines reference independently of context—then if someone else were to think that very same Thought, she would thereby think that I, Richard Heck, am a philosopher. But then that Thought could not be the content of my self-conscious knowledge that I am a philosopher; it could only be the content of a piece of third-person knowl-

edge that someone else (or, indeed, I) might have about me.<sup>28</sup> If, on the other hand, the Thought is about me only because I am thinking it—if sense determines reference only with the help of context—then, if someone else were to think it, it would presumably be about her, whence by thinking this Thought she would think the self-conscious Thought that she is a philosopher. But then thesis (3) fails.

The point applies as well to demonstratives. The Thought I express when I say "That woman is Shirley Temple" may express my recognition that the person before me is indeed Shirley Temple; and it may well be because I have such a demonstrative Thought that I then act in certain ways (say, I ask her for an autograph). But now is the fact that the Thought I thus express is about Shirley Temple independent of the context in which I entertain it or is it not? If it is, then, were I to entertain the same Thought in some other context, it would still express something about Shirley Temple; whatever that might be, the Thought could not then embody my recognition of a person as Shirley Temple; it could not have the sort of connection with action that my "Thought of recognition" has. But if some additional contribution from context is needed for reference to be fixed, the Thought is one I could have in some different context—say, one in which I was standing before Jane Fonda—and then it would be about her, Jane Fonda, to the effect that she was Shirley Temple, a Thought which would be false. So again, thesis (3) would fail.

These examples do not just show us something about certain sorts of sentences; most fundamentally, the examples show us something about certain sorts of Thoughts, that

<sup>25</sup>See John McDowell, "De Re Senses," *Philosophical Quarterly* 34 (1984): 283-294, at pp. 287ff., for one version of this response.

<sup>26</sup>See, e.g., John Perry, "The Problem of the Essential Indexical," in *The Problem of the Essential Indexical*, pp. 33-52. Philosophical lore traces this sort of concern, in contemporary philosophy, to Hector Neri-Castañeda, "'He': A Study in the Logic of Self-consciousness," *Ratio* 8 (1966): 130-57.

<sup>27</sup>See Perry, "Frege on Demonstratives," p. 15, fn. 4, which was added in the reprint.

<sup>28</sup>To put this point differently, there seems to be no one Thought that you can entertain that is plausibly identified with the Thought I entertain when I think self-consciously that I am a philosopher.

they are, as one might put it, essentially context-bound.<sup>29</sup> Self-conscious Thoughts and Thoughts of recognition are Thoughts one can entertain only if one is in an appropriate context, i.e., suitably placed with respect to one's environment. The self-conscious Thought that I am a philosopher is one that only I can entertain: at least, it is the self-conscious Thought that *I* am a philosopher only when I entertain it. Similarly, the Thought I have when I think that that woman is Shirley Temple is one I can have only when I am in the right sort of perceptual relation with Shirley Temple: at least, it is a Thought that embodies my recognition that *that* woman is Shirley Temple, rather than my putative recognition that some other woman is, only because I am in that sort of perceptual state.

One option, then, would be to say that the referential properties of demonstrative and indexical Thoughts are determined only given some additional contribution from context—and so to reject thesis (3), and so thesis (1a) as well.<sup>30</sup>

On this view, the Thought I entertain when I think self-consciously that I am a philosopher is one that you could also entertain—though when you did so, you would think self-consciously that you are a philosopher. If that seems unpalatable, it can be made less so. Rather than identify the contents of Thoughts with something that is independent of the contexts in which they are entertained, one can identify them with a kind of amalgamation of a "Thought," in that sense, and the object that context determines as its reference. So when I think that I am a philosopher, what I think is a Thought that might be represented as:

<sup>29</sup>For this terminology, and related arguments, see Burge, "Sinning Against Frege," p. 430.

<sup>30</sup>This is Perry's response. It is also urged by Burge. See "Sinning Against Frege," pp. 429-30, and his "Belief *De Re*," *Journal of Philosophy* 74 (1977): 338-62.

<<self-conscious way of thinking of an object,  
RH>, philosopher-hood>.

And when Bill Clinton thinks, self-consciously, that he is a philosopher, he thinks a Thought that might be represented as:

<<self-conscious way of thinking of an object,  
BC>, philosopher-hood>.

Similarly, the sense corresponding to 'I' is given, not just by the self-conscious way of thinking of an object, but by it together with its reference—in my case, by:

<self-conscious way of thinking of an object,  
RH>.

Some inclined to defend a broadly Fregean view about these matters—Evans, for example—have rejected this sort of "two factor" view in favor of so-called "object-dependent thoughts."<sup>31</sup> I myself favor this strategy, but we need not pursue this issue here. The two views agree that demonstrative and indexical Thoughts are context-bound, at least in the weak sense that someone can entertain the Thought that that woman is Shirley Temple, or the self-conscious Thought that I, Richard Heck, am a philosopher, only if suitably placed with respect to the objects of these Thoughts. They agree, that is to say, that one's placement in one's environment can affect the contents of the Thoughts one is capable of entertaining.

This weak claim—that one's placement in one's environment can affect the contents of the Thoughts one is capable of entertaining—is all I need here. It does not matter, for my

<sup>31</sup>See Gareth Evans, *Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), section 6.4.

present purposes, whether that is because the two-factor theory is correct (the second factor being determined by context) or because something like Evans's view is correct. As we shall see momentarily, however, the two-factor view suggests a familiar conception of the senses of demonstrative and indexical utterances that we need to abandon.

### 3. Understanding Demonstrative Utterances

I warned earlier against conflating the sense of an uttered sentence with the fixed, context-independent meaning of that sentence, what Kaplan calls *character*, Perry calls *role*, and I shall call *standing meaning*. But there is a very natural route to some version of that identification, and it is often invoked by those attempting to defend at least the spirit of Frege's view. Indeed, Frege himself is sometimes said to be committed to such an identification.

The sense of my utterance of 'I am a philosopher' and that of Clinton's utterance of the same sentence must obviously differ: what is said by means of such utterances, their senses, must therefore depend somehow upon context. But suppose we now agree with Perry, who suggests, and not without plausibility, that what a referring expression—for example, 'I'—contributes to what is said by utterances containing it is limited to (i) its standing meaning—roughly, that of the description 'the utterer'—and (ii) its referent—as determined by context on that occasion of use. If so, the sense of my utterance of 'I am a philosopher' might be taken to be something like:

<<standing meaning of 'I', RH>, philosopher-hood>.

This kind of maneuver promises, moreover, to preserve thesis (5). The belief I express by means of this utterance is, on the two-factor view, something like:

<<self-conscious way of thinking of an object, RH>, philosopher-hood>.

So if we identify the self-conscious way of thinking of an object with the standing meaning of 'I', then we will have secured Frege's claim that the sense expressed by an utterance is a Thought.

There are a number of problems with this line of argument. First of all, demonstrative and indexical beliefs cannot, in general, be construed along the lines just suggested. The idea here is that the "way of thinking of an object" that figures in the content of a belief should be identified with the standing meaning of an appropriate demonstrative or indexical expression, namely, the one that might be used in expressing that belief: 'I', in the case of self-conscious beliefs; 'here', in the case of self-locating beliefs; and 'that', in the case of demonstrative beliefs. Although this is not implausible in the cases of 'I' and 'here', the strategy does not generalize. Consider the following example, due to Perry.<sup>32</sup>

Imagine that one is standing behind a large building, seeing the bow and stern of a ship on either side of it. As it happens, the bow and stern are parts of one very large ship, *Enterprise*. One may well find oneself believing "That ship" (mentally "pointing" to the bow) "is an aircraft carrier" while not believing "That ship" (mentally "pointing" to the stern) "is an aircraft carrier." Plainly, if Thoughts are individuated by considerations of cognitive significance, then these Thoughts are different. So they cannot both be characterized as:

<<standing meaning of 'that', *Enterprise*>, aircraft-carrier-hood>.

<sup>32</sup>Perry, "Frege on Demonstratives," pp. 12-13.

One must be thinking of *Enterprise* in different ways when one entertains these two Thoughts: since the standing meaning of the demonstrative does not vary from context to context, demonstrative ways of thinking of objects cannot be identified with the standing meaning of 'that'.

There are ways out here.<sup>33</sup> For example, one could try incorporating the demonstration itself into the content. I don't myself think that this is an adequate response, but let us set this matter aside, for there is a more serious problem. Consider the indexical 'you'. As a matter of its standing meaning, an utterance of 'you' refers to the person addressed in that utterance. But in the sense that there is such a thing as a self-conscious, first-person belief, there is no such thing as a second-person belief, or so it seems to me. Of course, I can identify someone descriptively, as the person to whom I am now speaking, and may have beliefs whose contents involve that descriptive identification. But that is not what I mean to deny: I mean to deny that there is any such thing as an essentially indexical second-person belief. The phenomenon of the second-person is a linguistic one, bound up with the fact that utterances, as we make them, are typically directed to people, not just made to the cosmos. (If there were speakers of a language who never directed their utterances to their fellows, they would have no use for the second-person.) The word 'you' has no correlate at the level of thought: if not, then the contents of the beliefs we express using the word 'you' have very little to do with its standing meaning.

I don't really know how to argue for this claim: it just seems right to me, even obviously so. But if it is right, two things follow. First, the attempt to defend thesis (5) by identifying the sense of an utterance of a demonstrative or indexical expression with its standing meaning plus refer-

ence fails. The case of 'you' shows that the standing meaning of an expression and the contents of beliefs one expresses using it come sharply apart: the contents of the beliefs that are typically expressed using a given expression might have hardly anything to do with that expression's standing meaning. This conclusion threatens thesis (5): if the content of the belief that is expressed by an utterance of an indexical sentence in no way "involves" its standing meaning, then, if the content of the utterance itself does "involve" its standing meaning, we have conclusive reason to reject thesis (5). So, if we are to defend thesis (5)—if we are to defend Frege's identification of what is said with a Thought—we must deny that what is said by an utterance of, say, 'You are a philosopher' involves its standing meaning, as the identification of ways of thinking with standing meaning would have it. The sense of an utterance of 'You are a philosopher' cannot be anything like "The addressee is a philosopher."

Kaplan, of course, has familiarized us with one way of denying that standing meaning is any part of what is said.<sup>34</sup> On his account, standing meaning is a *determinant* of what is said but is no *part* of what is said: character, as he puts it, determines but is no part of content. I have argued, on grounds different from his, that Fregeans must accept this component of Kaplan's view. Now, Kaplan of course claims further that demonstratives and indexicals are directly referential, that such expressions contribute only their referents to what is expressed by utterances of sentences containing them: such utterances express "singular propositions." If so, since, in the example I borrowed from Perry, the two utterances of the sentence 'That ship is an aircraft carrier' express

<sup>34</sup>See David Kaplan, "Dthat," in P. Cole (ed.), *Pragmatics* (New York: Academic Publishers, 1978), pp. 221-43, and "Demonstratives: An Essay on the Semantics, Logic, Metaphysics, and Epistemology of Demonstratives," in J. Almog, J. Perry, and H. Wettstein (eds.), *Themes from Kaplan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 565-614.

<sup>33</sup>For discussion of such examples, see David Braun, "Demonstratives and Their Linguistic Meanings," *Noûs* 30 (1996): 145-73.

the same singular proposition, they have the same content, and thesis (5) fails in dramatic fashion.

If what a referring expression contributes to determining what is said by utterances of a sentence containing it is limited to its standing meaning and its referent, on that occasion of use, there is of course no alternative to Kaplan's position. Any attempt to defend a Fregean alternative must therefore begin by developing a conception of how such an expression might contribute something else to what is said. Let me then sketch a view whose commitment to the thesis that demonstratives are directly referential is open to debate, but which still allows us to respect Kaplan's central insights, namely:

- (a) Standing meaning, together with context, determines what is said, so that
- (b) what is said by means of utterances containing demonstratives and indexicals may vary with context, even though
- (c) standing meaning is no part of what is said.

Once this view is in place, we can return to the question whether demonstratives are directly referential. Developing the view amounts to "reconstructing the literature," as it is sometimes put: I need to show that it is possible to draw the important distinctions one needs to draw here in terms other than those used by Kaplan. Much of what follows will therefore be familiar in outline but novel in detail: where Kaplan employs the framework of possible worlds semantics (in which there is little room for something besides character and content), I will employ notions drawn from a general theory of communication. Additional novelty lies in the fact that my argument for (c)—my argument that character is no

part of content—will, unlike other arguments known to me, make no reference to modal, epistemic, or intensional operators of any kind.

I suggested earlier that, for Frege, understanding an utterance amounts to "grasping" its sense *as* the sense of that utterance—to knowing that the utterance has the sense that it does. And Frege is clear that the sense of an utterance is its truth-condition.<sup>35</sup>

So we may take the meaning of an utterance is to be given by means of an appropriate statement of the form:

- (6) Utterance  $U$ , of sentence  $S$ , is true if, and only if,  $p$ .

If the meanings of utterances of  $S$  do not vary with context, this will reduce to a T-sentence of the familiar form:

- (7)  $S$  is true iff  $p$ .

But if the meanings of utterances of  $S$  do vary with context, we need to record how they vary. We may do so by introducing contextual variables into the antecedent of a conditional that has something of the form (6) as consequent:<sup>36</sup>

- (8) If  $U$  is an utterance of  $S$ , made in context  $C$ , then  $U$  is true iff  $\phi(C)$ .

<sup>35</sup>See Gottlob Frege, *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1966), vol. I, sec. 32. The relevant portion of *Grundgesetze* is translated as *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic: Exposition of the System*, tr. M. Furth (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964).

<sup>36</sup>Such "conditional T-sentences" first appear in Tyler Burge, "Demonstrative Constructions, Reference, and Truth," *Journal of Philosophy* 71 (1974): 205-23. For a more general discussion of their import, see James Higginbotham, "Contexts, Models, and Meanings," in R. Kempson (ed.), *Mental Representations: The Interface Between Language and Reality* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 29-48.

Instances of schema (8) will thus characterize how the meanings of utterances of  $S$  depend upon context. That dependence is captured by ' $\phi(C)$ '. The meaning of a particular utterance of  $S$  will then be given by a T-sentence for that utterance, namely, the T-sentence delivered by the relevant instance of schema (8) and the contextual facts.

In particular applications, reference to contexts may be replaced by reference to those features of the context which are relevant in specific cases. Thus, in the case of 'you', we might have:

- (9) If  $U$  is an utterance of 'You are  $F$ ', and if  $x$  is the addressee of  $U$ , then  $U$  is true iff  $x$  is  $F$ .

Similarly for 'that':

- (10) If  $U$  is an utterance of 'That is  $F$ ', and if  $x$  is the demonstratum in  $U$ , then  $U$  is true iff  $x$  is  $F$ .

Of course, an actual semantic theory would not contain axioms concerning arbitrary sentences of the forms 'You are  $F$ ' and 'That is  $F$ ' but would contain axioms stating how the referents of 'you' and 'that' are determined by context; one can expect other complications, too.<sup>37</sup> But this should do for now.

It should be clear why this treatment satisfies conditions

<sup>37</sup>Of course, more than one demonstrative 'that' may occur in a given sentence, so the actual clause for 'that' would have to take notice of this. A similar problem can arise even with 'you'. Consider "You may be smart, but you are even smarter," where one speaks first to one person and then to another.

I shall not directly address the difficult question what it is for an object to be the demonstratum in a given context, though I shall discuss a related issue below. I do not think that we need to resolve that issue in order to answer the questions I am discussing here.

(a) and (b), above. Clauses like (9) and (10) capture standing meaning's role as a determinant of what is said, so (a) is satisfied; the T-sentence delivered by standing meaning and context will obviously vary with context, so (b) is satisfied.

What of condition (c)? A large part of the point of the proposal is to remove standing meaning from what is said. On this view, understanding an utterance  $U$  is knowing its truth-condition, that is, knowing something of the form (6). To understand an utterance of a sentence containing a demonstrative or indexical, therefore, it cannot suffice that one know something of the form (8), that is, that one know the standing meaning of the sentence: one must know what the values of the contextual variables are, so that one can discharge the antecedent and thereby arrive at some piece of knowledge of the form (6). If someone says "You are a philosopher," one does not understand the utterance if one knows only that, if  $x$  is the person addressed, the utterance is true iff  $x$  is a philosopher; one must know who was addressed in order that one might advance from knowledge of the sentence's standing meaning to knowledge of the meaning of this specific utterance of it. If I know that that person is the addressee, then I will know that the utterance is true iff that person is a philosopher: nothing about addressees now appears in this statement of the meaning (that is, the truth-condition) of the utterance; the standing meaning of 'you' is no part of what is said by means of this utterance.

Not just any knowledge one might have of the form (6) will suffice for understanding, however. Suppose someone says "You are a philosopher," speaking to someone I take myself to recognize as Bill Clinton. Did the speaker say that Bill Clinton is a philosopher? The speaker may not know that she is speaking to Bill Clinton. Moreover, my understanding of this utterance can survive my coming to doubt that Bill Clinton is indeed the addressee, so long as I still

know that that person (the one I took myself to recognize as Bill Clinton) is the addressee. My knowledge that Bill Clinton is the addressee thus seems to rest upon two other pieces of knowledge: that that person is the addressee, and that that person is Bill Clinton. It is the former piece of knowledge that (partially) constitutes my understanding the utterance. In general, insofar as knowledge of something of the form (6) constitutes understanding, it is, so to speak, only *unmediated* knowledge of something of that form that will do so.<sup>38</sup>

Hence, one will understand an utterance of 'You are a philosopher' just in case one thinks something like "That person is a philosopher; that's what the speaker is saying."<sup>39</sup>

But should we deny that someone who knows only something of the form (9)—someone who knows only the standing meaning of the sentence that was uttered—understands the utterance? Must one know who was addressed to understand an utterance of 'You are a philoso-

<sup>38</sup>The identification of the addressee upon which understanding rests must be, in the words Peacocke uses for a slightly different purpose, "identification-free." See Christopher Peacocke, *Sense and Content* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 139ff.

There are some odd cases about which I do not quite know what to say. Suppose, for example, that someone says "You are a philosopher," and that I do not myself see who has been addressed but am told that it was Bill Clinton. Then I may well know that Bill Clinton was the addressee, and my knowledge that he was does not rest upon any other identification I have made. Still, however, it seems wrong to say that what was said was that Bill Clinton is a philosopher or that I so understand it. Note however that my identification of the addressee plausibly does rest upon some other identification, although it is not one I have made: so we can still say that I do not understand the utterance; my knowledge could not survive my informant's coming to doubt that it was Bill Clinton who was addressed (though his understanding of it could).

<sup>39</sup>To put the point differently: 'You', on this view, acts as if it were a special kind of demonstrative, one that always refers to the addressee. So if you want an analysis of 'you', try "That person to whom I am speaking."

pher'? It would be very easy to dismiss this issue as merely verbal. Certainly, someone who knows the standing meaning of the utterance knows something about it that a monolingual speaker of Chinese would not be in a position to know: in that sense, an English speaker would understand, and our Chinese speaker would not. All sides to the dispute must accept that much. So why should we reserve the word 'understanding' for the case in which one knows more than just the standing meaning of the uttered sentence?

This is a fair question, but it is one that can be answered. What is important here is not the word 'understanding' but the theoretical work that word is doing. The notion of understanding entered this discussion, in the first place, because it is mentioned in thesis (4), that the sense of an expression is what is grasped by those who understand it; it appeared again in the explanation I tried to give of thesis (5), that the sense of a sentence is a Thought. As we saw, theses (4) and (5) concern the sense expressed by a particular utterance of a sentence; they do not concern the standing meaning common to all utterances of that sentence. Insofar as a (not *the*) notion of understanding is used in explaining these theses, it has to be the more refined one, according to which what is involved in understanding a particular utterance of a given sentence may differ from what is involved in understanding another utterance of that sentence. To that extent, then, we can simply stipulate, for the purposes of the present discussion, that it is the more refined notion of understanding that is relevant.

In fact, however, I think there is something substantive to be said on behalf of the claim that one does not understand an utterance of a sentence containing a demonstrative or indexical expression if one knows only its standing meaning. As I said, I do not wish to quarrel over the word. But it does seem to be important that the way I am proposing to use it

be theoretically well-motivated; if it is not, theses (4) and (5) will seem peculiarly unmotivated or misstated. Essentially, I want to suggest that we should use the word 'understanding' in such a way that someone has understood an utterance when and only when certain very basic goals of linguistic communication have been achieved. On this proposal, to say that someone has understood is to say that, in some fundamental way, a particular communicative exchange has been successful. Of course, this explanation is programmatic: if it is to be made less so, something has to be said about what these "basic goals of communication" are supposed to be. Different conceptions of the nature of communication will then lead to different views about "understanding." As I suggested earlier, however, thesis (5) itself rests upon certain natural ideas about the nature of communication, enshrined in the Naïve Conception. So it is at this point that we need to invoke certain of the ideas that inform that Conception.

As I said above, one of the basic purposes of communication is to make the transfer of information from one speaker to another possible. If that is right, one will have understood only when one has, so to speak, put oneself in a position to acquire information from the speaker (whether one chooses to do so is another matter). If one knows about a particular utterance of 'You are a philosopher' only what one would know about any such utterance, one is not in a position to acquire the particular belief (that is, the particular *de re* belief) the speaker means to be expressing. So knowledge of the standing meaning of the sentence uttered does not make the transfer of information possible: knowing only the standing meaning of the sentence does not guarantee that this basic goal of communication will have been achieved. If so, one does not, simply by knowing the stand-

ing meaning of the sentence uttered, understand the utterance.

It is not just that one is in no position to acquire the belief the speaker is expressing, to gather information from her; if one does not know who the speaker said was a philosopher, one cannot evaluate, contradict, or endorse the claim, either; more generally, one is in no position at all *to engage the speaker rationally*. There is a case to be made, I think, though I shall not make it here, that we should conceive of the goals of communication in this more general way:<sup>40</sup> Communication does serve to make the transfer of information from speaker to speaker possible, but, more fundamentally, it serves to make it possible for people to engage one another rationally; it makes it possible for thinkers to bring their beliefs to bear upon the cognitive lives of others and to allow their own cognitive lives to be influenced by those of others.<sup>41</sup> If that is right, and if 'understanding' is used as I have suggested it should be, understanding occurs only when rational engagement has been made possible. But the phenomenon highlighted above is arguably a general one: if a speaker knows only the standing meaning of an uttered sentence, not the context-dependent meaning it expresses on that occasion of use, then she will typically be in no position to engage the speaker rationally. So she will not have understood.<sup>42</sup>

What I have been trying to do here is to establish a connection between demonstrative utterances, on the one hand,

<sup>40</sup>Some of my reasons for this claim will come to the fore in the discussion in section 5. One of my students, Michael Rescorla, has been pursuing the idea, as well, in his work.

<sup>41</sup>It would be nice if the fact that communication serves to make the transfer of information possible could be argued to follow from this more general purpose.

<sup>42</sup>Thanks for Paul Coppock for discussions that profoundly influenced the last few paragraphs.



and demonstrative Thoughts, on the other: I have been arguing that, to understand a demonstrative utterance, one must entertain an appropriate demonstrative Thought. To understand an utterance of 'That ship is an aircraft carrier', for example, one must think something like "The speaker is saying that that ship is an aircraft carrier" (thinking of the ship in question demonstratively). There are, however, uses of demonstratives which do not fit neatly into this picture: one can use a demonstrative to refer to an object, even if one does not oneself know to which object one is referring. Perhaps the most famous example of this sort is due to Kaplan. Pointing back over his head, he says, "That is a picture of a great philosopher." He thinks he is pointing at his beloved picture of Carnap—which, as it turns out, someone has recently replaced with a picture of Spiro Agnew.<sup>43</sup>

The example merits extended discussion; it has received such in the literature. But I do not think we need to worry too much about it here. There is something pathological about the case, something one might be tempted to record by saying that Kaplan does not understand, or does not know, what he himself has said.<sup>44</sup> If that sounds odd, then that is because we have been concentrating on the understanding other people have of what one has said. Kaplan's example should serve to remind us that communication is a two-sided process: we cannot understand it without considering the speaker's side of the exchange as well as the hearer's. Communicative success—which amounts to making the transfer of information (more generally, rational engagement) possible—requires both the speaker and the audience to do their parts. It is the audience's responsibility

<sup>43</sup>For the example, see Kaplan, "Dthat," p. 239.

<sup>44</sup>See Evans, *Varieties of Reference*, pp. 171, 317-20. See also Kaplan, "Dthat," p. 231: "Erroneous beliefs may lead a speaker to put on a demonstration which does not demonstrate what he thinks it does, with the result that he will be under a misapprehension as to *what* he has said."

to identify the belief the speaker is expressing. But they will be able to do that only if the speaker makes it possible for them to do so: the speaker must make sure that her words really do express the belief that she means to be expressing. In the example, Kaplan has let his audience down at just this point. He has failed to "speak with understanding," as we might put it: he has not made it possible for his audience to acquire the belief he meant to be expressing, since his words do not express that belief at all. If he is to speak with understanding, then he must know, just as his audience must know, which object he is demonstrating, or to whom he is speaking, or what have you. And, in the example, Kaplan has no such knowledge.<sup>45</sup>

My arguments so far do not show that the descriptive information that constitutes the standing meaning of an indexical is no part of what is expressed by an utterance of a sentence that contains it; they only show that more is required, if one is to understand such an utterance, than that one know its standing meaning. So the arguments do not yet refute the "two factor" theory of the meanings of demonstrative and indexical utterances. But the attractions of that view are somewhat diminished by the arguments just given. It would certainly seem to follow from the alternative picture I have been trying to motivate that the two-factor view is incorrect: standing meaning, on this view, is precisely not part of what is said. Reflection on reports of what has been said reinforce this conclusion. If someone says to Bill

<sup>45</sup>Of course, Kaplan would have had such knowledge—or so it would seem—had his picture of Carnap not been pilfered. What shall we say in this case? Here again, I am somewhat unsure what to say; but I am inclined to respond as I did earlier, in note 38, regarding what seems to be a similar case. If Kaplan does know, his knowledge is not robust, in the way that his interlocutors' would be: were he to come to suspect that the picture had been pilfered, his own understanding of what he had said would be called into doubt, in a way that his interlocutors' would not be (if they could perceive the picture).

Clinton "You are a philosopher," I can truly say, "He said that that person is a philosopher," demonstrating Bill Clinton—as truly as if he had demonstrated Bill Clinton and said "That person is a philosopher."

Now, I warned earlier against confusing questions about belief-attribution with questions about the nature of belief. I would be inclined to issue a similar warning against confusing questions about the attribution of sayings with questions about what is said. But I do not mean to be ignoring my own warnings. The phenomenon just noted is not due to special features of attributions; it is due to features of sayings themselves. Suppose someone says to Bill Clinton "You are a philosopher," and I wish to disagree with her. I do not have to turn to Bill Clinton and say "You are not a philosopher": I can simply demonstrate Bill Clinton and say, to the original speaker, "He is not a philosopher." There is a strong intuition that, when I do so, I contradict what the original speaker said, in a way that does not play upon identifications of the Hesperus-Phosphorous sort. If so, then it is hard to see what point there might be in including the descriptive information associated with 'you' in what is said, when we already have a perfectly good way of taking note of its contribution, by putting it into the antecedent of a conditionalized T-sentence.<sup>46</sup>

A more difficult case is the case of 'I'. If we follow the pattern displayed by 'you', we will be led to the following conditionalized T-sentence:

- (11) If  $U$  is an utterance of 'I am  $F$ ', and if  $x$  is the speaker, then  $U$  is true iff  $x$  is  $F$ .

<sup>46</sup>Compare Perry's remarks about 'you' in the Postscript to "Frege on Demonstratives," pp. 29-30. It will be obvious that I do not agree with the conclusions Perry draws from these remarks, but I am nonetheless deeply indebted to Perry's discussion. This paper began as an attempt to answer his criticisms of Evans's position.

But one might worry that such an account of 'I' will fail to give proper place to the fact that the beliefs speakers express using 'I' are self-conscious beliefs. The suggestion will then be that we can remedy the situation by including in what is said the fact that 'I' refers to the speaker, that is, by including its standing meaning in what is said. I think such worries misplaced. For one thing, I find it obscure why including the standing meaning of 'I' in what is said should be thought to help: it would, if there were some reason to suppose that the self-conscious way of thinking of an object was the standing meaning of 'I', but we have already seen reason to doubt that that is true. Moreover, insofar as the inclusion of the standing meaning of 'I' in what is said does explain the fact that the Thoughts thus expressed are self-conscious, the same purpose is served by putting its standing meaning into the antecedent of a conditionalized T-sentence.

Suppose Frege has amnesia and so does not know that he is Frege.<sup>47</sup> Then he cannot express his belief that Frege is a philosopher (a belief he might have acquired at the library) by uttering the sentence 'I am a philosopher'. To do so, he would have to know that his utterance of 'I' refers to Frege; but that is precisely what he does not know. More generally, if someone is to express any belief at all by uttering the sentence 'I am a philosopher', he must know what his utterance of that sentence will mean; otherwise, he will fail to speak with understanding, just as Kaplan did in the example considered above. That is to say, where  $U$  is an utterance of 'I am a philosopher', the speaker can express a belief by means of this utterance only if he knows something of the form:

- (12)  $U$  is true iff  $x$  is a philosopher.

<sup>47</sup>Amnesia cases are, of course, common in the literature. But this particular aspect of them has never, so far as I know, been discussed before. There are, though, remarks in a similar spirit in Peacocke, *Sense and Content*, pp. 133-9.

To know something of this form, he must know who the speaker is. But it is his intention to speak, and that seems to mean that it is his intention that he himself should speak these words: he knows, that is to say, that he is himself the speaker; the character of his intention seems to make it necessary that he have self-conscious knowledge that he is to be the speaker. Hence, the specific knowledge he has of the form (12) is that  $U$  is true iff he himself is a philosopher. So the fact that utterances of 'I am  $F$ ' express self-conscious beliefs simply follows from the statement of the standing meaning of such sentences and the requirement that speakers must know what they are saying if they are to express their beliefs by uttering sentences of that form.

The case of 'I' should serve to remind us of a familiar point: Information can be conveyed by an utterance in all kinds of ways, not only by being (part of) what is said. So the fact that certain information is ordinarily conveyed by utterances of a given sentence cannot give us conclusive reason to suppose that such information is part of what is literally said by means of such an utterance. Much of the resistance to the claim that the "descriptive information" contained in the standing meaning of an expression is no part of what is said results from neglect of this point, one that is familiar from discussions of implicature but which also applies to standing meaning. If someone says "I am a philosopher," part of what is *conveyed* by such an utterance is that the speaker self-consciously believes herself to be a philosopher. Similarly, if someone says "You are a philosopher," then part of what is conveyed is that she is talking to someone she thinks is a philosopher; "She is a philosopher," that the person she demonstrates is female; and so forth. But this observation should not lead us to conclude that part of what is *expressed* by an utterance of 'I am a philosopher' is that the speaker self-consciously believes that she is a philosopher.

We can refuse to draw this conclusion and still explain the observed facts.

#### 4. The Indefensibility of the Naïve Conception of Communication

The claim for which I have been arguing is this: One does not understand an utterance of 'You are  $F$ ' unless one knows who is being addressed, nor an utterance of 'That is  $F$ ' unless one knows what has been demonstrated. Moreover, the standing meaning of the indexicals and demonstratives contained in such utterances are no part of what is said by means of them. What is important here is not the conclusion: it is widely accepted already. What is important is the argument given for it. As mentioned above, my argument makes no reference to modal (or other intensional) operators. More importantly, however, unlike Kaplan's argument, it neither depends upon nor obviously implies the claim that what is expressed by means of such an utterance is a singular proposition, so it leaves open the possibility that utterances of sentences containing demonstratives and indexicals should have sense, not just reference. Can that claim be made at all plausible?

One might think not. Consider again the kind of statement I have been suggesting of the standing meaning of an indexical, say, that of 'you':

- (9') If  $U$  is an utterance of 'You are a philosopher', and if  $x$  is the addressee of  $U$ , then  $U$  is true iff  $x$  is a philosopher.

It is often said that variables are the directly referential expressions *par excellence*:<sup>48</sup> a variable simply has a value (an

<sup>48</sup>See, e.g., David Kaplan, "Afterthoughts," in *Themes from Kaplan*, pp. 565-614, at pp. 571-3.

object, in this case) assigned to it; no sense is assigned along with it. So one might think that (9') can yield, as a statement of what is said by a particular utterance of 'You are a philosopher', only something like:

(12)  $U$  is true iff  $x$  is a philosopher

where the value of ' $x$ ' is the addressee of  $U$ . If so, the proposition expressed by this utterance can hardly fail to be singular, and uses of 'you' can hardly fail to be directly referential.

So to argue, however, is to overlook the fact that (9') and (12) are intended as representations of the knowledge possessed by a speaker who knows the standing meaning of an utterance, or understands it, respectively. Certainly (9') is stated using a variable, one which is universally quantified. But to pass from (9') to a T-sentence giving the meaning of a particular utterance, one must know a particular fact of the form:

(13)  $t$  is the addressee of  $U$ .

Here  $t$  is not a (free) variable which has been assigned a value, but a schematic letter. Our hypothetical speaker needs to have a specific belief of this kind; in having such a belief, she will—by thesis (1a)—have to think of the object denoted by  $t$  in some particular way. This belief will, in conjunction with (9'), then lead to a specific belief of the form:

(14)  $U$  is true iff  $t$  is philosopher.

And here again, our speaker will be thinking of the object denoted by  $t$  in some particular way, typically, in a demonstrative way. The knowledge of the form (14) in which her

understanding consists will thus be something like " $U$  is true iff that person is a philosopher."

So, if one is to understand an utterance of 'You are a philosopher', one must think of the object that is in fact the addressee in some particular way, typically, in some demonstrative way. Of course, that is good for Frege. But it leaves us far short of a Fregean view of demonstratives: in particular, it does not provide us with any way to defend thesis (5), that is, to defend Frege's identification of the sense that is expressed by a particular utterance with a Thought. Certainly, if one is to understand an utterance, one must think of the objects denoted by demonstratives contained in the uttered sentence in some way or other; but that is just a consequence of the fact that belief is intensional—a consequence of thesis (1a). Nothing that has yet been said so much as suggests that there need be any interesting relation between the ways different speakers think of the referent, other than that they must all think of the right object (i.e., that they must know which object is in question). To put the point differently, nothing yet said suggests that how one thinks of the object reflects any objective feature of the utterance, rather than simply being a subjective matter of no linguistic interest, on a par with the ideas one associates with an expression. But now it should be clear that thesis (5) has not only not been defended; it is actually in a fair bit of trouble. The argument I used to motivate (and indeed to explain) thesis (5) depended upon the assumption that, when I communicate with other speakers, my intention is that they should come to believe *the very Thoughts I am expressing*.

This assumption is indefensible. The problem is most dramatic in the case of 'I'. The belief that someone expresses when she says "I am a philosopher" is the self-conscious belief that she herself is a philosopher. But the belief I form, if I accept what she says as true, is not the self-conscious belief

that she is a philosopher: *I* cannot so much as entertain that belief. Her self-conscious belief that she is a philosopher, though it involves a Thought to which I can refer, one I might well know her to believe,<sup>49</sup> is in that sense private to her. This follows from our earlier discussion of indexical beliefs. What accounts for the essential indexicality of her self-conscious Thoughts is the fact that her self-conscious Thoughts are ones only she can entertain.<sup>50</sup> The belief I acquire cannot be the belief the speaker is expressing; it is, instead, the belief that she (the speaker) is a philosopher, a belief that involves a demonstrative (and not a self-conscious) way of thinking of her.

Frege is not unaware of the problem to which this example gives rise: he confronts it directly in his only serious discussion of context-dependence. He writes:<sup>51</sup>

Now everyone is presented to himself in a special and primitive way, in which he is presented to no-one else. So, when Dr. Lauben has the thought that he was wounded, he will probably be basing it on this primitive way in which he is presented to himself. And only Dr. Lauben himself can grasp thoughts specified in this way. But now he may want to communicate with others. He cannot communicate a thought he alone can grasp. Therefore, if he now says 'I was wounded', he must use 'I' in a sense which can be grasped by others, perhaps in the sense of 'he who is speaking to you at this moment'; by doing this, he makes the conditions accompanying his utterance serve towards the expression of a thought.

We can here see the Naïve Conception of Communication at work: Frege is supposing that to communicate his Thought,

<sup>49</sup>See Peacocke, *Sense and Content*, pp. 121-2, for this idea.

<sup>50</sup>It does not matter here whether this is because the two-factor theory is true, so that the object of the Thought is "part" of it, or because such Thoughts are object-dependent, as Evans would have it.

<sup>51</sup>Frege, "Thoughts," pp. 359-60, op. 66.

Dr. Lauben must get his audience to entertain the Thought he is expressing. But that is impossible if he is expressing the self-conscious Thought that he has been wounded. So Frege is forced to introduce a special, communicative sense for 'I', which he identifies with its standing meaning. Unfortunately, however, his doing so does not resolve the problem, for as we saw in the last section, the standing meaning of 'I' is no part of what is expressed by utterances of sentences containing it.

A similar, though less dramatic, problem arises even for demonstratives. Suppose someone says, "That bottle is half-empty." Must I think of the bottle in the very same way she does if I am to understand her? I think not. If I can perceive the bottle—if I can think of it demonstratively—I may well be in a position to know which bottle is in question: I may know that she is demonstrating that bottle and so know that her utterance is true if, and only if, that bottle is half-empty. If so, I will understand her utterance: I will know its truth-condition. But my perspective on the bottle may be sufficiently different from hers that my Thought is, by the usual Fregean criterion, different from the one the speaker was expressing. Someone could believe that that bottle is half-empty when she thinks about it in a demonstrative way appropriate to perceiving it from one side, while denying that it is half-empty (or being agnostic about the matter) when she thinks about it in a demonstrative way appropriate to perceiving it from the other side: she might well fail to realize that the same bottle is in question both times.<sup>52</sup>

So it would appear that the initial assumption underlying the argument I gave above for thesis (5), that understanding requires one to entertain the very Thought the speaker is ex-

<sup>52</sup>Evans suggests that one might avoid this consequence by appealing to his treatment of what Kaplan called "cognitive dynamics": See *Varieties of Reference*, pp. 341-2. I am skeptical, but shall not discuss the matter here.

pressing, is untenable. One might try to resist this conclusion in two ways. First, one might insist that this condition on understanding is an ideal to which ordinary communication only approximates.<sup>53</sup> Such a move has a certifiable Fregean pedigree,<sup>54</sup> but I find it deeply problematic. For one thing, the ideal cannot possibly be achieved in the case of 'I'. For another, our interest as philosophers of language should not be in some ideal form of communication, however attractive, but in communication as we have it. It needs to be shown, at least, that the ideal somehow shapes or guides actual communicative practices. But I do not believe that that can be done, because there is a perfectly reasonable account of what understanding involves that does not require any "guiding ideal," yet which yields it as a kind of "best case scenario."

Frege himself suggests such an account. Discussing a case in which two speakers associate different senses with a certain proper name, he writes:<sup>55</sup>

...[A]s far as the proper name 'Dr. Gustav Lauben' is concerned, [these speakers] do not speak the same language, although they do in fact refer to the same man with this name; *for they do not know that they are doing so.*

Note the italicized clause: the important condition on understanding is that one should know what is denoted by the various referring expressions being used. Ideally, perhaps, one should think of the objects in the very same way the speaker does: if one does so, one will thereby minimize the

<sup>53</sup>See Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, pp. 105ff. In "Frege on Sense and Linguistic Meaning," Burge argues that the notion of sense was, for Frege, a certain sort of idealization—though not, as far as I can see, an idealization of the sort that would help here.

<sup>54</sup>See Frege, "Thoughts," p. 359, op. 66; and the famous footnote 4 to "On Sense and Reference," p. 158, op. 27.

<sup>55</sup>Frege, "Thoughts," p. 359, op. 65; my italics.

chance that one might fail to have such knowledge.<sup>56</sup> But the alleged ideal then follows from the sort of condition on understanding we have been deploying all along. And that condition can be satisfied even when we do not think of the object in the same way the speaker does.<sup>57</sup>

So we cannot defend thesis (5) by construing the condition that speaker and hearer think of the object in the very same way as an ideal.

Another option is to identify what is said by means of an utterance with the content of the belief the speaker is expressing on that occasion. This would certainly preserve thesis (5), but it would do so in letter only. It is far from clear why a direct-reference theorist should have any problem with this sort of identification: so far as I can see, he could accept it but regard it as a merely stipulative definition. Certainly speakers say what they do because they believe what they say to be true: that is why what someone says is a reliable guide to what she believes; someone's saying something is, typically, to be explained (rationally, not just causally) in part in terms of her beliefs. We might say that speakers *voice* their beliefs when they speak. But this is just a truism: it leaves us far short of the claim that speakers express their beliefs, if this is supposed to mean that the contents of their utterances are the contents of the beliefs

<sup>56</sup>It would minimize the danger, not eliminate it. This is the central point of my response to Alex Byrne and Michael Thau, "In Defense of the Hybrid View," in my "Communication and Knowledge: Rejoinder to Byrne and Thau." Both are in *Mind* 105 (1996), pp. 139-49 and 151-6, respectively.

<sup>57</sup>Another idea would be that, in such circumstances, the speaker and hearer really are thinking of the object in the same way, so that the identity conditions of modes of presentation are themselves sensitive to context. Dan Vest urged this view upon me and has been developing it in his recent work. Some of my own remarks in "The Sense of Communication" could be taken similarly. But I no longer find this view attractive, substantively speaking, for reasons I shall not discuss now. (Some of the what I have to say in section 6 bears upon this issue.) Vest may, on the other hand, be right that Frege himself held some such view.

they thereby voice; additional justification is required if this inference is to be legitimate. If the speaker and her addressee had to grasp the same Thought if communication were to be successful, that would provide the necessary justification; but the antecedent of this conditional is false. And since one's understanding of what someone has said does not depend upon one's grasping the very Thought she was voicing, why should we privilege the speaker by identifying what is said with the content of the belief she voices? Why not identify it instead with that of the belief someone who understands the utterance would thus acquire were she to accept it as true? Granted, there is no single such belief. But that is precisely what makes the proposed identification of what is said with what is voiced seem so *ad hoc* in the first place.

### 5. *In the Ruins of the Naïve Conception*

So Frege's view that utterances express Thoughts cannot be defended. But I wonder just how significant a concession that is.

Suppose that the Naïve Conception had failed only because, for each (utterance of a) referring expression, there were exactly two ways in which one could think of the referent and still understand that utterance. There would then, of course, be no one Thought to be identified as the meaning of 'John has gone fishing', say. But it would still be a fact about the name 'John' that, to understand utterances of sentences containing it, one must think of its referent in one of those two ways. Such a fact seems no less one about the meaning of the name for this diversity: if it would have been a fact about the name's meaning that there was just one permissible way to think of its bearer, had that been a fact, I do not see why it should not also have been a fact about its meaning had there been just two. Of course, any such supposition

is utterly artificial, indeed, obviously false. But there are less artificial suggestions in the vicinity. Suppose there were, for each utterance of a referring expression, a restricted cluster of ways in which one could think of the referent and yet understand that utterance. Then, again, the mere diversity does not seem impressive: it still seems to be a fact about the meaning of that utterance that one must think of the referent in one of the permitted ways if one is to understand it; it seems no less a fact about it, anyway, simply in virtue of the plurality of permitted ways.

Something like that is, I think, how things are, at least in the case of demonstratives and indexicals.<sup>58</sup> Only a little more reflection on the *Enterprise* example is needed to establish the point. Suppose I say, pointing towards the bow, "That ship is an aircraft carrier." Suppose further that I know that it is. Then, ordinarily, if my addressee understands what I have said and accepts it as true, she will thereby come to know something,<sup>59</sup> namely, what she could now express by pointing toward the bow and saying, "That ship is an aircraft carrier." But suppose that, instead of forming the belief she could express that way, she instead

<sup>58</sup>Proper names are another matter, and I am not sure what to say about them. I am inclined to think that they are similar, but I am unsure what to say about the contents of the beliefs we express using names and so remain unsure what to say about their meanings. Still, the general points to be made here will apply to them in some form: certainly, there are going to be restrictions upon how one can think of the referent of a proper name and understand utterances of it.

<sup>59</sup>It is at this sort of point that the difference between the belief I express and the belief my addressee forms becomes annoying: were I to speak of my belief that that ship is an aircraft carrier, and her belief that that ship is an aircraft carrier (where our Thoughts both focus, as it were, on the bow), my language would make it seem as if we must have the same belief; but that is precisely the implication I am trying to avoid. That is why I speak, in the text, of the sentences by means of which we might express our beliefs: the difference between them is not so easy to capture.

formed the belief she would express by pointing towards the stern and saying, "That ship is an aircraft carrier." These are different beliefs. Now suppose neither I nor my addressee knows that the ships are the same, and that I myself do not know, do not even believe, that that ship (pointing to the stern) is an aircraft carrier. Although my addressee could certainly come to *believe* that that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier in this way, she cannot thus come to *know* that it is—she cannot *learn from me* that it is—for it is a basic fact about communication that it can only transfer, and can never create, knowledge.<sup>60</sup>

This sort of example may seem unsurprising. It is perhaps more surprising that the same sort of phenomenon occurs with indexicals, such as 'I' and 'you'.<sup>61</sup> Suppose Superman swoops down onto the boardwalk and stops an out-of-control bus with his superhuman strength. Lois might say to him, "You saved a hundred lives!" Then if Lois knows what she has said to be true, and if I accept what she has said as true, then I can come to know that that man saved a hundred lives and, indeed, that Superman did, if I know that

<sup>60</sup>In case one is not inclined to agree, suppose my addressee could thus come to know that that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier. Nothing stops her from saying to me, "That<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier," whence I could come to know that it is. But that is absurd: I cannot come to know that that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier in that kind of way.

Of course, when I deny that communication can create knowledge, I have in mind only this, typical sort of transfer of belief. Obviously, that I said what I did can lead to others' having knowledge that I do not have, even knowledge of the very thing I thereby express; but not by their learning it from me.

<sup>61</sup>This sort of example has been discussed, in connection with attribution: See Mark Richard, "Direct Reference and Ascriptions of Belief," *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 12 (1983): 425-52; and John Perry and Mark Crimmins, "The Prince and the Phone Booth: Reporting Puzzling Beliefs," in *The Problem of the Essential Indexical*, pp. 249-78. To the best of my knowledge, however, its implications for our conception of communication have not been seriously discussed.

that man is Superman. But I cannot thereby come to know that that man (the one emerging from the phone booth wearing nerdy glasses) saved a hundred lives, nor can I come to know that Clark Kent did so, without appealing to additional background knowledge. Similar conclusions can be drawn about the case in which Superman himself says, "I saved a hundred lives." Variations will allow us to draw similar conclusions about other indexicals.

To understand the significance of such examples, we need to consider again what is involved in understanding demonstrative and indexical utterances. Consider the *Enterprise* example. When I say, "That ship is an aircraft carrier," pointing to the bow, my addressee, in virtue of her competence as a speaker of English, will know:

- (15) If  $x$  is the demonstratum, then Heck's utterance is true iff  $x$  is an aircraft carrier.

To understand the utterance, however, she must also know which object I demonstrated, so she can advance to knowledge of something of the form:

- (16) Heck's utterance is true iff  $t$  is an aircraft carrier.

But if we assume that my addressee is as much in the dark about the identity of the ship we see on either side of the building as I am, she will not know what I demonstrated unless she focuses upon the bow.<sup>62</sup> So she may be in a position to know

<sup>62</sup>I am assuming that I have done my part and indicated which ship I have in mind in such a way as to focus attention upon the bow. I am assuming, that is, that I have "spoken with understanding," to use the language used above. See the next note.



- (17) Heck's utterance is true iff that<sub>bow</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier

and so, if she is prepared to accept that what I have said is true, will be able to conclude that that<sub>bow</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier. On the other hand, however, she is in no position to know that the demonstratum is that<sub>stern</sub> ship. So she is in no position to know:

- (18) Heck's utterance is true iff that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier.

So, even if she does accept my utterance as true, she is in no position to acquire knowledge that that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier. That is because she can only form that belief, on the grounds that I said what I did, if she misunderstands what I have said. She may believe (18), even truly, but she does not know (18), so it cannot support knowledge that that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier. That is, it is her failure to know (18)—her failure to know the truth-condition of my utterance—that frustrates her attempt to acquire knowledge that that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier from what I have said. (Obviously, a similar story can be told about the Superman cases.)<sup>63</sup>

To sum up: If my addressee hears me, takes what I say as true, and for that reason forms the belief, not that that<sub>bow</sub>

<sup>63</sup>I have been concentrating here on the understanding one has of the utterances of others. But there are conclusions to be drawn, as well, about what is involved in "speaking with understanding," to use a phrase I used above. (It is at this point that I think my remarks here may bear upon the issue I set aside earlier, what it is for an object to be the demonstratum, in a given context.) If one is to express one's belief that that<sub>bow</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier, one must not only demonstrate the right ship; one must do so in such a way that one knows that what one has demonstrated is indeed that<sub>bow</sub> ship, and in such a way that one's addressee can come to know something similar. (See Evans, *Varieties of Reference*, section 9.2, for similar remarks.)

ship is an aircraft carrier, but that that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier, she cannot thereby come to know that it is. We need an explanation of this fact, and it is obscure to me what sort of explanation can be provided, other than one that, like that just sketched, focuses attention upon the fact that my addressee is in a position to know that I have demonstrated that<sub>bow</sub> ship, but is not in a position to know that I have demonstrated that<sub>stern</sub> ship. In any event, what the discussion shows is that utterances of demonstrative expressions can differ, in ways relevant to understanding and communication, even when they do not differ in their referential properties: the successful communication of information from one speaker to another depends not only upon speakers' identifying the right objects as the demonstrata, but also upon their thinking of these objects in the right sorts of ways, although it does not depend upon their thinking of the objects in any particular ways.

What I am claiming, then, is that understanding an utterance of, say, 'That ship is an aircraft carrier' requires, not just that one correctly identify the referent of the demonstrative, but that one think of the reference in an appropriate sort of way—in such a way, in particular, that one can know what the referent is. But one might want to deny this: one way to do so is to deny that, to understand such an utterance, one must know something like (18). Obviously, if understanding a demonstrative utterance does not require one to know what the demonstrative denotes (on that occasion of use), but only that one have a true belief about what it denotes, then the examples will not show that understanding requires one to think of the referent in the right sort of way. Any old way would do.

I have been assuming throughout that understanding involves semantic knowledge in this sense. But one might now want to ask (if one did not want to ask earlier) with

what right I have been doing so. One need not deny that it is intuitively natural to take understanding to amount to knowing what is said: after all, we use 'understanding' and 'knowing the meaning' as near synonyms, in ordinary language. But I am putting much too much theoretical weight upon the notion of understanding for the claim that understanding involves semantic knowledge to be allowed to rest entirely on intuition. If understanding, in the sense relevant here, requires only that one truly believe something like (18), then my analysis of the examples is flawed and there will be no restrictions upon how one may think of the object denoted if one is to understand an utterance of a demonstrative.

Earlier, I suggested that we use 'understand' in such a way that understanding occurs when the fundamental purposes of a communicative exchange have been served. I further suggested that one such fundamental purpose is to make the transfer of information possible. What I was claiming, in effect, was that we should use 'understand' in such a way that the following principle is satisfied:<sup>64</sup>

(UK) If *S* knows that *p* and utters a sentence, *P*, whereby she expresses this belief, and if *A* hears the utterance, understands it, and accepts it as true, then (*modulo* the usual sorts of defeating conditions, regarding *S*'s sincerity and the like) *A* can thereby come to know (something suitably related to the content of *S*'s belief) that *p*.

As a slogan: Understanding enables the transmission of knowledge. It follows from (UK) that, in the cases we have

<sup>64</sup>See Gareth Evans, *Varieties of Reference*, pp. 310-11, for one version of this idea, which is central to the argument of "The Sense of Communication."

been considering, understanding is absent: as our previous discussion showed, the transmission of knowledge has not been enabled.

I find (UK) an attractive principle, myself. But not everyone does, and one who disagreed with my analysis of the cases in question might suggest we should explore alternatives. An obvious alternative is to say that the "fundamental purpose of communication" relevant to our use of the word 'understanding' is that it should transfer, not knowledge, but just true belief.<sup>65</sup> Then true belief would suffice for understanding and the examples will not show what I have said they do. More worryingly, (UK) at least appears to incorporate a fairly substantial claim about the epistemology of testimony, so it might be expected to be controversial for that reason, too.

Fortunately, there is a much weaker principle that leads to the same conclusion as that for which I invoked (UK), that understanding is absent in the examples we have been discussing. The alternative principle is:

(UV) If *S* utters a sentence, *P*, and if *A* understands her but denies that what she has said is true, then their disagreement cannot be merely verbal.

As a slogan: Understanding is incompatible with the existence of verbal disagreements. What I mean by a "merely verbal disagreement" is a merely apparent disagreement that can be resolved to the satisfaction of the disputants by means of a linguistic stipulation or clarification. For example, suppose I say, "Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is a great athlete,"

<sup>65</sup>I discuss this particular proposal in "The Sense of Communication": see pp. 85-6, 90-2. But other responses are possible, including a suggestion that, in examples like these, defeating conditions are present. See Byrne and Thau, for instance.

and someone else disagrees with me. Further discussion may reveal that, whereas I meant to be talking about Kareem the basketball player, she meant Kareem the football player. Once that has been recognized, this disagreement has been revealed as merely apparent. And the same sort of phenomenon can occur even if we are talking, unbeknownst to us, about the same person. If I say, "Bill Bradley was a great athlete," and Alex disagrees with me, our disagreement will be revealed to be merely verbal, in this sense, if it becomes clear that I meant to be talking about Bradley the basketball star whereas she meant Bradley the politician and neither of us knows that these are the same person. In a sense, of course, our disagreement is real: we cannot both be right. But we need not be in any disagreement with one another: we might both believe that Bradley the Knickerbocker was a great athlete and that Bradley the politician was not. Of course, neither my beliefs nor Alex's can both be true, but that is not to the point. What matters is that the structure of our dispute is the same as in the Kareem case: the dispute between us is merely apparent; it can be resolved to our joint satisfaction by stipulation or clarification.

A complete development and defense of (UV) would, I think, have to draw upon the idea, mentioned earlier, that a fundamental purpose of communication is to make it possible for speakers to engage one another rationally. The problem with "merely verbal disagreements," in my sense, is precisely that there is no real engagement between the speakers in such cases. If a disagreement can be settled by means of a stipulation or clarification, then the disputants are not disagreeing about the facts. They are not disagreeing at all: their dispute is, on the contrary, the interpersonal analogue of a fallacy of equivocation. Let me not pursue (UV)'s development here, though. For it seems clear that, however it might be spelled out, it will imply—just as the

controversial (UK) does—that understanding is absent in the examples we have been discussing. In examples like the *Enterprise* example, merely verbal disagreements can obviously occur: if I say, "That<sub>bow</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier," and my interlocutor responds, "I see no reason at all to believe that that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier," then I can respond, "Nor do I; but I didn't say that that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier, only that that<sub>bow</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier."

### **6. Closing: A Somewhat Radical Suggestion**

I take myself to have established that, although understanding an utterance of a demonstrative or indexical expression does not require one to think of its referent in the same way the speaker does, there are nonetheless substantial restrictions on how one can think of it and still understand. These restrictions are, of course, determined by context, but it remains the case that, for any utterance of a referring expression, there will be a restricted cluster of ways one may think of the referent and still understand that utterance. What should we make of this fact?

One answer, of course, is that we should make nothing of it, at least as regards meaning. What has been shown is, at most, that certain conditions that must be satisfied if communication is to succeed in certain sorts of cases. But what, the objector might continue, do requirements on successful communication have to do with facts about meaning? Even if understanding an utterance involved the audience's coming to share a belief with the speaker, as the Naïve Conception has it, that would imply nothing about meaning and so, in particular, would not imply thesis (5), as I earlier claimed it did.

Such a response seems to me to change the subject. If the Naïve Conception were acceptable, it would be a fact about the name 'Hesperus' that, to understand utterances of sen-

tences containing it, one must think of its referent in a particular way. One can deny that this fact about 'Hesperus' is a fact about its meaning, but it is far from obvious that, in doing so, one is not just arguing terminology.<sup>66</sup> There may be a substantial issue here. But if so, Frege's position is hardly an unreasonable one. What is at issue is, in effect, whether the theory of meaning is to be conceived as, in some way or other, embedded within a general theory of linguistic communication. That it should be is a familiar claim: for all their differences, Grice, Lewis, Davidson, and Dummett, for example, would all agree that it is. For present purposes, then, let me simply assume that some version of this familiar thesis is correct. If the arguments here show only that direct reference theorists must reject it, that is enough for me.<sup>67</sup>

Of course, the Naïve Conception is not acceptable, and thesis (5) must be rejected, too. And, reluctantly, I think we must therefore conclude that the sorts of examples we have been discussing will not allow us to resuscitate Frege's view that utterances of referring expressions have sense as well as reference. Since the notion of sense is, as I said earlier, primarily a psychological one, the claim that demonstratives have sense as well as reference is best understood as the claim that utterances of sentences containing demonstratives express Thoughts: it is, that is to say, essentially equivalent to thesis (5), which, sadly, has been rejected. On the other hand, though, as I suggested at the beginning of the last section, it is nonetheless a fact about an utterance of a demonstrative that one must think of its referent in an appropriate sort of way if one is to understand it. That seems no less a fact about its meaning simply in virtue of the plurality of

<sup>66</sup>For a different sort of worry that there is a failure of engagement between Fregeans and Russellians, see William Taschek, "Frege's Puzzle, Sense, and Information Content," *Mind* 101 (1992): 767-91.

<sup>67</sup>For discussion of related issues, see Jason Stanley, "Modality and What Is Said," forthcoming in *Philosophical Perspectives*.

permissible ways of thinking of the object. Nor does it seem less a fact about its meaning in virtue of the fact that which ways are permissible is fixed not by standing meaning alone but in large part by context. That, after all, is what one should expect.

So the question I am raising is: How, within a framework that takes facts about meaning in some way or other to emerge from facts about successful communication, might one understand and defend the thesis that demonstratives are directly referential, in light of the facts about successful communication that emerged in the last section? One conclusion we can draw immediately is that attempts to do so by denying that there are any substantial restrictions upon how one might think of the referent fail. Such a defense is, for example, developed by Stephen Schiffer in "Indexicals and the Theory of Reference."<sup>68</sup> For Schiffer, who is here working within a broadly Gricean framework, the meaning of an utterance is (ignoring the usual complications) the content of the belief I intend you to form in reaction to that utterance. Schiffer wants to hold, with Kaplan *et al.*, that utterances containing demonstratives express (with respect to the demonstrative) singular propositions. But he also accepts thesis (1a), that beliefs are individuated roughly as Frege thought they should be: no singular proposition can be the content of the belief I intend you to form when I utter, say, 'That is poisonous', for the simple reason that singular propositions are never the contents of beliefs. So Schiffer has a problem. His solution, very roughly, is that my communicative intention abstracts from ways of thinking of the object I demonstrate: I do not intend you to think of the object in any particular way; I intend only that you should think of the object, to the effect that it is poisonous. The idea here is

<sup>68</sup>Stephen Schiffer, "Indexicals and the Theory of Reference," *Synthese* 49 (1981): 43-100; see esp. pp. 71-8.

independent of the details of Schiffer's position: it is that no more is required to understand an utterance of a demonstrative than that one should think of the object that is, in fact, its referent; all that is required is that one should get its reference right; there is no restriction upon how one may think of it. If that were right, then demonstratives would be directly referential.

The examples discussed in the last section show that this view cannot be sustained. Schiffer is, in my view, right that there is no particular way I intend you to think of the object demonstrated, but it just doesn't follow that I intend only that you should think of the object, with no restriction whatsoever upon how you think of it: when I say, "That<sub>bow</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier," it is not just irrelevant how you think of the referent; you misunderstand me, or so I argued, if you think of it as that<sub>stern</sub> ship.

This point can be developed in a somewhat different way. Consider, first, an example discussed earlier, in connection with the Naïve Conception of Communication. You are looking for your friend John, and I tell you, "John has gone fishing," wanting you to come to believe that he has and so to stop your search. Clearly, my ultimate intention—that you stop your search—depends crucially upon your coming to believe that John has gone fishing. As I described the example, your believing that Jack has gone fishing simply will not do, so long as you don't believe that John and Jack are one and the same.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, if I know that John is Jack, but know you do not know (maybe you steadfastly refuse to believe it), then my intention may explicitly be that you should think of John as John, rather than as Jack, even though I know you would be thinking *of* John even if you

thought of him *as* Jack. What matters is not how I think of him, but how you do.

Similar examples may be constructed using demonstratives and indexicals. Suppose I know you believe that, if that<sub>bow</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier, then  $p$ , but do not believe that, if that<sub>stern</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier, then  $p$ . I want you to come to believe that  $p$  (perhaps for some evil purpose of my own). So I say, "That<sub>bow</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier," hoping you will draw the obvious inference. It is, again, crucial to my ultimate intention that you should think of *Enterprise* as that<sub>bow</sub> ship, not as that<sub>stern</sub> ship.

These sorts of cases are not, I think, unusual, nor even in any way special. When we say that a given object is  $F$ , we quite often mean to communicate that it is, that is, to instill in our audience a belief that the object is  $F$ . Nor is that always our ultimate purpose: often, we wish the audience to act upon the belief in some way. But how our audience acts upon the belief will obviously depend upon the way they think of the object in question, since different ways of thinking of it determine different beliefs. Someone who says "That man is George Orwell" chooses those words with a purpose. He might, for example, wish his audience to realize that they are in the presence of the author of *1984* and act accordingly. (He would then be presuming that the audience knows that George Orwell wrote *1984*.) Of course, other sentences would express the same singular proposition. But they need not—and under familiar assumptions, would not—have the same effect, because none of them need instill the belief that that man is George Orwell.

Of course, the importance of the way we think of the object will be more apparent in some cases than in others. But it will never fade completely into irrelevance. If, as I have suggested, one of the basic purposes of communication is to make rational engagement between speakers possible, and

<sup>69</sup>Note that belief is the right notion here: it doesn't matter whether any of these beliefs constitute knowledge, or whether they are true, or whether I am speaking sincerely.

if, as I also argued, rational engagement depends upon there being a suitable relationship between the ways different speakers think of the object, then speakers must always strive to ensure that their ways of thinking of the object are suitably related, at least in so far as they wish to engage one another rationally.

I conclude, then, that Schiffer's defense of the claim that demonstratives are directly referential fails. There are surely other ways of defending that claim. But let me not try to put a cat in front of every mouse hole. I wish instead to make a suggestion that may sound somewhat radical. To make it, I need to lay bare the facts as we now have them. My suggestion is going to be that we should simply rest with those facts.

When a speaker makes an utterance, or hears one, she in some sense "associates" a Thought with it: the Thought I have in mind is, if she made the utterance, the one she voiced by making it, and, if she heard it, the one she would come to believe were she to accept it as true. The notion of association here is, of course, one that we all wish we could clearly explain: part of what Grice, for example, is trying to do is explain it. I have my own preference.<sup>70</sup> But I want to work with the intuitive idea, in part to emphasize that the point I wish to make does not depend upon any specific way of developing it. (That is not to say that what I say will not restrict the acceptable ways of developing it. I suspect, in fact, that it does.)

For brevity, let us call the Thought a speaker associates with an utterance, in this sense, its *cognitive value* for her. Frege observes—this is almost just a corollary of thesis (1a)—that different utterances that express the same singular proposition may differ in cognitive value for a given

speaker: a given speaker may "associate" different Thoughts with such utterances. Frege also holds that, to communicate successfully, different speakers must associate the same Thought with a given utterance. That, or so I've argued, is false. If we reject that claim, thereby rejecting the Naïve Conception of Communication—and with it thesis (5)—we allow that different speakers can associate different Thoughts with a given sentence and still understand one another, that is, that a given utterance can differ in cognitive value for two speakers without their being unable to communicate successfully. On the other hand, though, there are limits to the variation that successful communication will tolerate: one cannot associate just any Thought with a given utterance and still understand it; that much is obvious. What may not have been obvious is that the limits are stricter than Schiffer supposed: speakers cannot associate with an utterance just any Thought that determines the right singular proposition (so to speak) and still understand it.

That much I take to be relatively uncontroversial. The question that now arises is: How, given these facts, are we to determine the meaning of an utterance? No *one* of the different Thoughts different speakers might permissibly associate with an utterance is plausibly taken to be its meaning: none of them is privileged over any of the others. What should be taken to be the utterance's meaning, then?

One idea, suggested in my own earlier work,<sup>71</sup> is that one should take the meaning of an utterance to be what is common to the cognitive values it has for different speakers. So, for instance, the meaning of an utterance of 'That<sub>bow</sub> ship is an aircraft carrier' would be what is common to the different Thoughts speakers who understand it associate with it. And, one might suggest, the only thing common to all those

<sup>70</sup>I would seek to explain the relevant notion of association in terms of T-sentences known by speakers, in roughly the terms employed in section 3.

<sup>71</sup>See "The Sense of Communication," pp. 87-8.

Thoughts is the singular proposition they determine: that singular proposition is thus the meaning of the utterance, and direct reference theorists are thereby vindicated.<sup>72</sup> I find it hard to evaluate this position, however, because I am unsure how to take the notion of commonality. I can understand well enough why one might want to say that what is common is a singular proposition. But it is far from clear that there are no other options. Minimally, one can construct something finer-grained by abstraction: simply consider the set of Thoughts speakers can permissibly associate with the utterance; being a member of this set is something common to all of them, but not necessarily to the Thoughts associated with other utterances expressing the same singular proposition.<sup>73</sup> That is artificial, to be sure. But maybe there is something less so. I suggested earlier, following Evans, that understanding an utterance containing a demonstrative requires thinking of its referent demonstratively. If so, the various Thoughts speakers could associate with such an utterance would have at least this much in common: they would involve a demonstrative way of thinking of the relevant object.

The real problem, though, is that it is unclear what interest a notion of meaning so characterized has. We can define a notion of "what is common" to the various Thoughts speakers associate with a given utterance and, if we like, call that the utterance's "meaning." Maybe the singular proposition that is determined by all those Thoughts will even turn out to be what is common. But at this point, all we have is a theoretical construct looking for work, and it is not obvious, to me at least, that there is anything for it to do within the

general theory of communication. It still looks very much like an abstraction, even if it is a somewhat less artificial one.

If one really wants to find something to call *the* meaning of an utterance, then perhaps what is common to the cognitive values the utterance has for different speakers is as good a choice as any. But why do we want to find something to call the meaning? What we (relatively) uncontroversially have are speakers who associate Thoughts with utterances and restrictions upon how the different Thoughts they associate with a given utterance must be related if they are to communicate successfully: to put it differently, we have the fact that utterances have cognitive value for speakers, and we have communicative norms determining how the cognitive values a given utterance has for different speakers must be related if they are to understand one another. Those, it seems to me, are the facts as we find them.

It is not unreasonable to want to identify something objective underlying the diversity, something shared that constrains variation. Frege himself eloquently expresses several reasons one might want such a thing. But, I am now suggesting, the tension between the real-life facts of communicative practice and the demand for something shared are ultimately irreconcilable, unless we reconcile them by brute force and just define something shared into existence. I say that we should abandon the demand, recognizing it as a remnant of the Naïve Conception of Communication. We should seek to explain communication not in terms of speakers' agreeing about what an utterance means but in terms of there being an appropriate relation between the Thoughts they associate with it. If that means there is no such thing as the meaning of an utterance—if all that are left are the meaning it has for me, the meaning it has for you, and some conditions on how these must relate if we are to

<sup>72</sup>Scott Soames makes a similar proposal in his recent book *Beyond Rigidity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

<sup>73</sup>I think this is what I had in mind in "The Sense of Communication."

communicate with one another—I'm not sure what, if anything, has been lost. That, it seems to me, is all there is.<sup>74</sup>

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