

Immunity to Error through Misidentification and the Meaning of a Referring Term

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I. THE MODEL OF DESCRIPTIVE NAMES

When you make a judgment, you do so on some particular basis. Sometimes, you might make an error of identification in your judgment. That is, you make a mistake about which thing is in question, in making the judgment, but everything else about the judgment was all right. For example, suppose you are in a room full of people, and you seem to hear someone speak. You think, "Bill spoke." You might have made a mistake about whether anyone spoke at all; maybe you misinterpreted some inarticulate sound. That is not an error of identification. But perhaps you were quite right about whether someone spoke, and indeed about what was said. You just made a mistake in thinking that it was Bill who spoke. That is an error of identification; the mistake is, as it were, local to the subject term. A judgment like "Bill spoke," when made on an ordinary basis, is subject to error through misidentification, in that you could have a ground for doubt about the correctness of the judgment which did not undermine your right to claim to know, on that basis, the existential proposition, "Someone spoke."

There are, as Sydney Shoemaker pointed out, judgments which are immune to errors of identification in this sense. I will give two examples. First, there are Shoemaker's own cases: first-person present tense psychological statements.¹ Secondly, I will look at demonstrative judgments about the location of an object. What, if anything, do these cases tell us about the meaning of the first person, or the meaning of a demonstrative term? Here is one model we might use: the model of descriptive names.

There is an easy way to generate judgments which are immune to error through misidentification. Suppose we introduce a descriptive name, "Frank," which has its reference fixed by "the inventor of the postmark." And suppose you have good reason to think that there was such a thing as the inventor of the postmark; it was not the product of a committee or an accidental artifact of the mailing system. Then, exploiting that background belief, and your understanding of the name, you form the judgment, "Frank was a sole inventor of the postmark." You are fallible about this. For there may after all have been no inventor of the postmark, despite your evidence to the contrary. But there is a kind of mistake you cannot have made. It cannot be that you are right about there having been a sole inventor of the postmark, but you are just wrong about which person it was. It cannot be that you do know that there was a sole inventor of the postmark, but you have made a mistake in thinking that it was Frank rather than somebody else. If you are right in thinking that there was a sole inventor of the postmark, then you cannot but be right in thinking that it was Frank who did it. To put it round the other way, if you are wrong about whether Frank invented the postmark, your mistake cannot be localized as an error of identification, about who it was that invented the postmark. If you are wrong about whether Frank invented the postmark, you must also be wrong about whether there was a sole inventor of the postmark.

This suggests a connection between immunity to error through misidentification, and the way in which the reference of a singular term is fixed. It suggests that the way in which it happens, that there are judgments which are immune to error through misidentification, is that there are descriptive conditions on the reference of the singular term. So when the subject uses his grasp of the singular term to articulate a judgment in which the descriptive conditions are said to apply to the referent of the singular term, the result will be a judgment that cannot involve an error of identification. The point about the judgment "Bill spoke" is then that in an ordinary case, you are not using the fact of his speaking as a descriptive condition by which to fix the reference of "Bill"; that is why your judgment "Bill spoke" is subject to errors of identification.

If we have a term whose reference is fixed by a descriptive condition,

this will have the consequence that judgments applying that description to the object referred to will be immune to error through misidentification. So you might propose that we can turn this procedure around. Whenever we find judgments that are immune to error through misidentification, we can conclude that we are dealing with a term whose reference is fixed by a descriptive condition, and we find what the descriptive condition is by looking at the specific contents of the judgments which are immune to error through misidentification.

My first thesis is that this strategy cannot be applied to the case of the first person. Though first-person present-tense psychological judgments are indeed immune to error through misidentification, the explanation of this does not lie in an account of the meaning of the first person. It has to do rather with the idiosyncrasies of our ways of finding out about psychological states.

Secondly, I will look at the explanation of immunity to error through misidentification for the case of demonstrative judgments about the location of an object. I will argue that the phenomenon here does have to be explained by appeal to the meaning of the demonstrative. But that is not because there is any descriptive element in the meaning of the demonstrative. Rather, it has to do with the way in which the meaning of the demonstrative depends on the exercise of perceptual attention.

The aim of this paper, then, is simply to set out these three different ways in which the phenomenon of immunity to error through misidentification can arise. The three are: as a result of the referring term having descriptive content, as a result of what I will call the "dedicated" character of the way of finding out being used, and as a result of the character of the attentional mechanism on which reference depends. No doubt there are also other possibilities.

II. FIRST-PERSON PRESENT-TENSE PSYCHOLOGICAL JUDGMENTS

As I said, first-person present-tense psychological judgments are characteristically immune to error through misidentification. If you think "I hear trumpets," you might be making a mistake about whether it is trumpets you are hearing. But you cannot have any ground for doubt about whether it is you who is hearing trumpets that is not also a ground for doubt about your evidence that trumpets are being heard. This immunity to error through misidentification is a datum. Most of us would agree without needing extensive theoretical persuasion that it does not make sense to say "Someone has

a headache, but is it me?" So it seems that the meaning of the first person could be investigated by way of such pre-theoretical data. You might suppose that since we have here judgments that are immune to error through misidentification, we must be dealing with a term whose reference is fixed by a descriptive condition. We can then find what the descriptive condition is by looking at the specific contents of the judgments which are immune to error through misidentification. This could lead you to think that the reference of the first person is fixed by some such descriptive condition as "the subject of these current psychological states." That is, the first person just has its reference fixed by the condition "whoever is having this experience of hearing these trumpets, and so on." I think that the idea that we have here a way of probing the meaning of the first person seems, at first sight, quite powerful. Of course, there is another way of stating the meaning of the first person, namely, by simply giving the rule that any token of "I" refers to whoever produced it. But the need to explain the phenomenon of immunity to error through misidentification can seem to show that there must be another level at which the meaning of the term can be characterized, as something like, "the subject of these current psychological states."

The model of descriptive names is, however, not the only one possible. Suppose for a moment that you consider a businesswoman who moves around the world a great deal. She has a secretary, whose life is devoted to keeping track of her itinerary. This secretary, we suppose, also travels a great deal, though not necessarily on the very same routes as his boss, and operates by various electronic media. So we may suppose that though at any moment this secretary knows exactly where his boss is then, he knows relatively little about where anyone else is, including himself (perhaps he has his own assistant who arranges his transportation). Against this background, suppose you ring the secretary and ask where his boss is. He will, reliably, get it right about where she is. But he never has any knowledge of where anyone else is. So although it is in principle possible that he might make a mistake about where his boss is—maybe her plane was hijacked or her train derailed—this will never reflect his possession of knowledge of someone else, that she is at that location, or his possession of knowledge that, at any rate, someone is at that place. So ringing the secretary to find out where his boss is can give you knowledge of her location. You might get misinformation: it is not infallible. But by trusting the secretary you cannot make a mistake of identification. Either you get knowledge of the location of his boss, or you get no knowledge at all.

The point of this rather tortured example is to bring out that there can be cases of immunity to error through misidentification which do not depend on the meaning of the singular term involved. The boss in the above example could be referred to however you like, say by an ordinary proper

the account we give of the ownership of experiences, and how ownership is related to the self-ascription of experiences. The simplest account we might give is this: what makes an experience an experience of X's is the possibility of self-ascription of it by X. If X is able to self-ascribe the experience, that constitutes the experience being an experience of X's. This approach can explain the immunity to error through misidentification of psychological self-ascriptions. For suppose I ascribe an experience to myself. On this approach, I might make a mistake about what sort of experience it is. I might think, for example, that the experience is a hearing of trumpets when it is not. But I cannot be wrong in thinking that the experience is mine; for on this approach, the very fact of my self-ascribing the experience is enough to constitute its being an experience of mine.

The notion of the ownership of an experience is, indeed, more complicated than the above remarks acknowledge. In particular, we often want to think of the owner of a psychological state as the person who is, in a particular way, causally involved in the production of that state; the person who is, in a sense, the author of the state. This is a separate strand in the notion of ownership of a state to the strand that has to do with the possibility of self-ascription of the state. The two can, on occasion, seem to come apart. This is what happens in the case of the schizophrenic patient who seems to find himself able to self-ascribe a thought of which he is not the author, and who consequently feels that alien thoughts—thoughts which are not his—are being inserted into his mind.

Recognizing this does nothing to reinstate the model of descriptive names, the idea that what explains immunity to error through misidentification for first-person present-tense psychological statements is that the first person has its reference fixed by some such descriptions as "whoever is having these experiences." Indeed I think we have to abandon that model. The reason is that it generates a quite spurious problem. If "I" is glossed as "whoever is having this experience of hearing trumpets" to explain the immunity to error through misidentification of "I hear trumpets," then "I" will have to be glossed as "whoever is having this headache" in order to explain the immunity to error through misidentification of "I have a headache." At this point we have generated a problem: how do I know that it is the same person that is having this experience of hearing trumpets as is having this headache? Until the problem is resolved, I have no right to use "I" in both cases as referring to the same object. But once the problem is allowed to arise, there is no way of resolving it. And the problem is entirely spurious: the reason it does not arise ordinarily is that I know perfectly well that I am hearing the trumpets and I have the headache. My knowledge that it is me who is doing both is what grounds my knowledge that it is one and the same thing in question both times. The model of descriptive names

name, by everyone involved. What makes for the impossibility of an error of identification, in any particular judgment by the secretary as to where she is, is not that the boss is being identified as “whoever it is that is at that location,” which is what the model of descriptive names would suggest, but that the skills of the secretary are dedicated to finding the location of just one person. What makes the example a bit tortured is that we do not, ordinarily, have location-finding skills which really are dedicated to finding the location of just one person; only supposing an electronic environment and a particular power structure can we begin to imagine how that might happen. But the general point is independent of all that. The general point is that you could, in principle, have a way of finding out about particular properties which was, as it happens, confined to finding out about the properties of just one object. Or maybe we could have a way of finding out about particular properties which was, as a matter of logic, confined to finding out about the properties of just one object. This way of finding out about properties might be fallible. But it would still be immune to error through misidentification. It would either provide knowledge of the properties of that one thing, or it would provide no knowledge at all: not knowledge of someone else that they had this or that property, and not knowledge that, at any rate, something had the property.

We are considering the connection between meaning and immunity to error through misidentification. In this context, it is important to mark the distinction between cases in which the immunity to error through misidentification depends on contingencies about the environment and cases in which it does not seem to be a contingent matter at all. In the case in which the immunity depends on contingencies, it can be explained simply by pointing out those contingencies, as in the above example of boss and secretary. The cases that matter for meaning will be those in which the immunity to error is not a contingent matter. For instance, if you say “Frank invented the postmark,” the impossibility of a mistake of identification does not depend on any contingent matter. It is these cases that seem to need explanation by appeal to the meaning of the singular term involved. In the case of “I hear trumpets,” however, the impossibility of error through misidentification does not seem to be a contingent matter. So this might suggest that the immunity to error through misidentification here cannot be explained by citing any contingency, but must rather be explained by appeal to the meaning of the singular term, that is, the meaning of the first person.

As I will explain, though, I think we can set aside the idea of explaining this immunity to error in the case of the first person in terms of the meaning of the first person. The cases about which we cannot be mistaken involve the ownership of experiences—what makes an experience an experience had by one person rather than another. So we might look instead at

reverses this point, and implies that my use of "I" has to be grounded in independently achieved knowledge that it is one and the same person who has both psychological states.

In the case of a descriptive name, your mode of reference to an object is such as to guarantee that if you know any object to have certain properties, you know it is that object which has those properties. What we have found is that the phenomenon is quite different in the case of the first person. In the case of the first person, what is happening is rather that the subject is using ways of finding out about the world that are, as we might say, "dedicated" to the properties of one particular object, namely that very person. They are not ways of finding out that could be equally well applied to any of a range of objects. It is for that reason that although the subject using such a way of finding out can make a mistake, it could not be a mistake about who is in question.

The reference of the first person is fixed by the simple rule that any token of "I" refers to whoever produced it. But to interpret someone else's use of the first person, it is not enough merely that you know that the first person was used and that it is governed by that rule. You must in addition know who it was that spoke, and bring that knowledge to bear in understanding the statement. If you just hear someone say, "I have been hurt," you do not know what has been said until you know who it was that spoke. If you apply this point to your understanding of your own uses of the first person, it will seem that it is not enough, in order for you to understand your own uses of the first person, that you use the first person and recognize that it is governed by the simple rule. You must in addition know who it was that spoke, and bring that knowledge to bear in interpreting your statement. But obviously the knowledge I have of who it was that spoke is knowledge that would itself be expressed using the first person. You would express it by saying, "It was I who said, 'I have been injured,'" for example. And this use of "I" cannot itself be interpreted using the token-reflexive rule plus some further identification of yourself, on pain of regress. So it looks as if there must be some further way of explaining the meaning of "I," otherwise than by use of the token-reflexive rule. It can seem that immunity to error through misidentification will give us a way of probing this further dimension to the meaning of "I." But if the thrust of the above discussion has been correct, that is a mistake. The root of the mistake, I think, is to suppose that there is a symmetry between understanding someone else's use of the first person, and understanding your own use of the first person. In your own case, you use the first person as subject to the token-reflexive rule, but to interpret your own uses of the first person you do not need any further identification of the self at all.

III. VISUAL DEMONSTRATIVES

Do either of these models apply to the case of visual demonstratives? There has been relatively little discussion of which judgments involving perceptual demonstratives might be thought to be immune to error through misidentification. Judgments about the noises being made by visually identified objects seem to be clear cases in which there can be errors of identification. Suppose you are looking at a number of technical instruments, lying on a workbench, each of which periodically emits its own characteristic noise. When you make a judgment about the sound being made by a particular instrument, there are two kinds of mistake you could make. Suppose you think "that meter is humming." One kind of mistake is that there is no humming going on at all, there is just something wrong with your ears. Another possibility is that something is humming, but that thing is not the meter. So you have made a mistake of identification: you are right about whether something is humming, but you have just made a mistake about which thing it is.

In contrast, it does not seem that judgments about the locations of these instruments could be similarly subject to errors of identification. A judgment of location can involve a mistake. For example, if there is an unsuspected mirror or prism in between you and the instrument, you might see the instrument perfectly well but make a mistake about where it is. That kind of mistake is not an error of identification. To be making an error of identification, you would have to be getting it right about whether something is at that location, only that thing is something other than the instrument you are identifying.

Intuitively, you are using the perceived location of the instrument to single out which instrument you have in mind. That perception of the location of the instrument might be illusory. But a mistake of identification would require you to be having a veridical perception of the location of some other instrument, and mistakenly attributing that location to the instrument you have in mind. That is what seems blankly impossible. You are not simultaneously perceiving two different instruments to be at the same place. So you would have to be using the veridical perceived location of one instrument to visually single out another instrument, which is not at that location. And that does not seem to be a coherent possibility.

On the approach that works for descriptive names, this would suggest that the reference of the demonstrative, "that instrument," is fixed by some such descriptive condition as "the instrument at this location." But we have already run into a complication. It does not seem that the descriptive model can be quite right here. For on the descriptive model, it should be a priori that "that instrument is at that location (if any instrument is)"; just as it is a

priori that “Frank invented the postmark (if anyone did).” But as I already remarked, it seems entirely possible that you should make a mistake about the location of a perceived object, because of mirrors or prisms or whatever. The point is only that it will not be a mistake of identification.

In the case of the first person, I suggested that what makes an experience an experience of X’s is the possibility of self-ascription of it by X. If X is able to self-ascribe the experience, that constitutes the experience being an experience of X’s. So when I ascribe an experience to myself I cannot be wrong in thinking that the experience is mine; for on this approach, the very fact of my self-ascribing the experience is enough to constitute its being an experience of mine. But this strategy has no parallel in the case of demonstratives. The counterpart would be to say, for example, that what makes a location the location of a perceived object is the possibility of the thinker ascribing that location to the object. And that view has not even a moment’s plausibility. So the model of the first person does not work any better here than the model of descriptive names. We need a new approach. I think this is provided by the model of ordinary proper names.

IV. THE BINDING PROBLEM AND THE MODEL OF ORDINARY PROPER NAMES

Consider the way in which testimony uses proper names, such as “Ronald Reagan.” Here we have an individual who is, as it were, radiating information about himself into the community, information transmitted by testimony. Suppose we ask, What is it, for the ordinary hearer, that bundles all this information together, as all true of a single individual? One answer would be that on each occasion on which the name is used, the hearer must assure himself by collateral information that it is the same thing that is being talked about. But this would evidently be false to the role that proper names have for us. It is rather the sameness of the name itself that assures us that it is the same thing that is being talked about. Of course, a single name may have different uses, so on occasion, a gloss has to be supplied to indicate which Ronald Reagan is in question. So, for example, you might gloss the name with “the former actor who was American president in the early eighties.”

This problem of organizing information disseminated by testimony into usable clusters—clusters each of which relates to just one object—is in some ways analogous to the binding problem in vision. The visual system gives separate processing to the various features of objects, such as color, shape, or movement, in different processing streams. For demonstrative reference to objects to be possible, the various features processed in different

processing streams, such as color, shape, or movement, have to be put together as relating to particular objects. Since different features of the world around us are processed in different processing streams, we have to ask how vision puts together various different features as all features of a single object. The simplest form of the solution is to say that features represented as relating to the same location are all put together as features of a single object. Attention to a particular location is what binds together the features at that location as features of a single object.² Your use of a demonstrative, such as “that instrument,” depends on your having solved the binding problem. It is the fact that you are using the demonstrative “that instrument,” on the basis of your having bundled together all the information from location p as true of a single thing, that grounds your use of the demonstrative. It is because the solution to the binding problem gave a special place to location that judgments ascribing a location to the demonstrated object are immune to error through misidentification. When the subject articulates a judgment ascribing the binding property to the object, his judgment will be immune to error through misidentification. Since, if he is managing to refer to anything at all, there is at most one object which he perceives to have that property, his ascription of the property to that object either constitutes knowledge of the object, or it does not reflect knowledge at all; it cannot reflect knowledge that some object or other has the property. The subject can have no ground for doubt that the demonstrated object is at the perceived location, which is not also a ground for doubt about whether he knows that anything at all is at that place.

To see this, suppose we ask how it can happen that you might make an error of identification in using a demonstrative term. Suppose we stay with the case in which you make your judgment purely on the basis of vision, and that vision is using spatial location as its principle of binding. Then what has to happen for there to be an error of identification is that you do visually detect the presence of a certain attribute, so that you have the right to say, “Something is F,” even though there may be grounds for doubt as whether you are right in judging “that thing is F.” For you to have made such a mistake, you must have bound the attribute F-ness together, mistakenly, with a collection of attributes belonging to a different object than the object which is F. Since you are using spatial location as your principle of binding, what this means is that you have assigned F the wrong spatial location, in that it has got put together with a collection of attributes that do not belong to an object which is F. You are right in thinking that there is F-ness around, but you have mislocated it, which is how you have made your mistake of identification. But this can hardly happen with your ascription of location to the object itself. Visual location is the principle which you are using to bind together a collection of features as features of a single object.

So it does not make sense to suppose that you might have assigned the location to the wrong bundle of features. It is visual locations that individuate the bundles of features, so it does not make sense to suppose that the right location has crept into the wrong bundle. So when you say “that object is there (at that visually identified place),” you cannot be making a mistake of identification. You cannot have the right to say, “Well, something is there,” on the same evidential basis, even if your ground for thinking it is that object that is there has been lost.

To say this is not to assimilate demonstratives to descriptive names. An attention-based account on which location is the principle of selection does not regard a demonstrative like “that instrument” as equivalent to a description of the form “the object at location x.” If you descriptively identify an object by means of its location, then there is no possibility of getting it wrong about where it is; a mistake about location can only mean that you have failed to identify anything at all. Similarly, in the case of Frank, getting it wrong about whether he is a sole inventor of the postmark can only mean that you have failed to identify any object at all by using the name. But you can use attention to a location to bind together the features of a single object even though it is not where it seems to be. Suppose, for example, that you see an object—say, an instrument—through a prism without realizing that there is a prism there. You can use the apparent location of the features to select them all, binding them together as features of a single thing, even though the object is not at that place. When you use the demonstrative “that instrument,” it does refer to the object. But your judgment, “that instrument is at location x,” will be mistaken. Still, the judgment of location is immune to error through misidentification. You cannot have a doubt about whether the demonstrated object really is at that location, which would leave intact your evidence that, at any rate, something is at that location.

Let me return to the parallel between demonstratives and ordinary proper names, such as “Ronald Reagan.” When is a judgment involving an ordinary proper name immune to error through misidentification? Suppose, for example, that you make the judgment “Ronald Reagan is the former actor who was American president in the early eighties.” Could your judgment involve a mistake of identification? Mistakes of identification certainly can in principle be made using ordinary proper names. For example, you might hear a news bulletin announcing that someone has been awarded a Nobel Prize in economics, and mistakenly think that it is Reagan who is being referred to. In that case, someone might provide you with grounds for doubt as to whether it was Reagan who is in question, without undermining your knowledge that someone has been awarded the Nobel Prize in economics. Or again, at the start of the eighties, you might have heard a broadcast announcing that Reagan has been elected president, and someone could

have challenged you at that point, accepting your evidence that a president had been elected but questioning your grounds for supposing it to be Reagan. Suppose, however, that we consider the position of an ordinarily well-informed speaker now, in the late nineties. Such a speaker uses some such gloss as “the actor who became American president in the early eighties” as his way of checking that the information he is getting concerns *that* Ronald Reagan; it provides his bundling principle, analogously to the use that the visual system makes of location. Suppose this speaker says, “Reagan is the former actor who became American president in the early eighties.” This judgment is fallible. It takes a bit of an effort, but you can imagine being given strong evidence that Reagan was after all never elected president, or that he after all never was an actor. But can you envisage being given proof that, though someone who was an actor was elected president in the early eighties, and though you do have knowledge of that existential proposition, still that person was not Reagan? You can imagine discovering that your whole picture of the early eighties is a complete hallucination, and that coincidentally there was a former actor who became president. But what is not conceivable is that you have knowledge that there was a former actor who became president in the early eighties, and that you are mistaken only in thinking that person was Reagan. The key point is to see that acknowledging this point does not commit you to thinking that “Reagan” is a descriptive name, just because it is entirely possible that Reagan exists, yet was neither an actor nor a President, though he was often referred to as such.

The general point here is this. In the case of visual demonstratives, I have talked about binding principles, such as location. And in the case of proper names, I have talked about bundling principles, such as the gloss, “the former actor who became President.” Such a binding or bundling principle does not deliver a definite description equivalent in meaning to the proper name. This comes out in a number of ways. Most dramatically, the binding or bundling principle is just a way of collecting together a cluster of information as all true of a single thing. For just that reason, it does not need to yield a definite description which actually is true of the object the name refers to. Nonetheless, when you articulate the judgment which ascribes the property used as your binding or bundling principle to the object referred to, the result will be a judgment which, though fallible, is immune to error through misidentification.

V. CONTRAST WITH EVANS

I want finally to contrast this account with Evans’s remarks on demonstratives; a similar contrast could be drawn, though I will not do so here, with

his discussion of the first person. In *The Varieties of Reference*, Evans gives an important place to location in the meaning of a visual demonstratives.³ But he has a quite different explanation to the above account of why it is important. The contrast begins with the generality of his account. The varieties of reference he discusses are all in fact identifications of physical things. But he is trying to fit them to a mold designed equally for all types of singular reference, including reference to abstract objects. He says that "in the case of a proposition of the form 'a is F', knowledge of what it is for it to be true must be the result of two pieces of knowledge, one of which can be equated with an Idea of an object, and the other with an Idea of a property, or, more familiarly, a concept."⁴ This point is the core of his conception of singular reference. Grasp of a singular way of thinking is to be explained, on this view, as requiring a capacity to think a certain range of thoughts. In effect, a "functional" characterization is given. To grasp a singular idea a one must be capable of grasping such thoughts as that a is F, that a is G, and so on, for each way of thinking of a property available to one. The task of a theory of singular reference is to explain what makes this possible. Evans's answer is that what makes this possible is that one's grasp of the idea a consists in what he calls discriminating knowledge of which thing a is.

Evans's conception of discriminating knowledge is explained and defended by reference to his distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental singular ideas. This distinction is applicable equally to singular ideas of all types: to ideas of abstract as to ideas of concrete objects. A fundamental idea of an object identifies it as an object of a certain sort: as, for example, a number, or a shape, or a mountain. A fundamental idea further identifies it as the possessor of the characteristics which ultimately differentiate it from all other things of the same sort. Thus a number is ultimately differentiated from all other numbers by its position in the number series; this is called the "fundamental ground of difference" of the object. The fundamental ground of difference of a spatial object is taken to be its location at a time; its position then with respect to other objects. The most basic way in which one can have discriminating knowledge of an object is, on Evans's account, by grasping a fundamental idea of it; that is, by knowing what sort of thing it is, and those of its characteristics which ultimately differentiate it from all other things of that sort. As he says, "Such an Idea constitutes, by definition, distinguishing knowledge of an object, since the object is differentiated from all others by this fact"; that is, the fact of its having the particular fundamental ground of difference that it does.⁵

Yet why should we think that distinguishing knowledge in this sense is sufficient for singular reference? At this point Evans appeals to his doctrine about the way in which first-level concepts are understood. The doctrine is that, in the first instance, possessing a concept of the property of being F is

knowing what it is for a proposition of the form “ δ is F” to be true, where “ δ ” is, precisely, a fundamental idea of an object. It is, on this view, by reference to the level of fundamental ideas that predicative concepts are first introduced and explained. That is why grasp of a fundamental idea “ δ ” must be sufficient to enable one to grasp such thoughts as “ δ is F,” “ δ is G,” and so on, for each way of thinking of a property available to one, so that one conforms to the “functional” characterization of singular reference. And, as we have seen, singular reference is on Evans’s view just whatever fills this role.

This raises the question how there can be such a thing as non-fundamental singular reference. For if predicative concepts are explained at the fundamental level, how could one’s grasp of a predicative concept F and one’s grasp of a non-fundamental idea δ combine to yield one’s apprehension of the thought that a is F? Evans’s answer is that the discriminating knowledge constituting grasp of a non-fundamental idea δ is knowledge of what would make true an identity of the form “ a is identical to δ ,” where “ δ ” is an arbitrary fundamental idea. It is because of this constitutive tie to the fundamental level that there can be such a thing as non-fundamental singular reference. Evans sums up the position as follows:

When our Idea of an object is a *fundamental Idea*, the knowledge which constitutes our possession of the concept of being F can apply directly, to yield a knowledge of what it is for the proposition ‘ δ * is F’ to be true. When our Idea of an object is of a *non-fundamental* kind, we know what it is for a proposition of the form ‘ a is F’ to be true, because we know that it is true (if it is) in virtue of the truth of some pair of propositions of the forms ‘ $\delta = a$ ’ and ‘ δ is F’; and our Idea of the object and our concept of the property constitute, respectively, knowledge of what it is for propositions of these forms to be true. Provided a subject knows what it is for identifications like ‘ $\delta = a$ ’ to be true, a link is set up between his Idea, a , and his entire repertoire of conceptual knowledge, and he will be able to grasp as many propositions of the form ‘ a is F’ as he has concepts of being F. His Ideas make contact with his concepts, so to speak, at the fundamental level.⁶

How does this account apply to demonstratives? According to Evans, a visual demonstrative is what he calls an “information-based” term. This means that there are two components to its ordinary functioning. On the one hand, there is the causal source of the information that one has about the thing. And on the other hand, there is the content of the information that the causal links supply, in virtue of which the thinker knows which thing he is talking about. It is this information that provides the thinker with the basis for his knowledge of what it would be for an arbitrary statement of the form “that instrument is δ ” to be true. Here what replaces “ δ ” will be an identification of the subject as a spatiotemporal thing, identified at some “objective” level of spatiotemporal thought. The proper use of the demonstrative

“that instrument” requires that the causal source of the information should be the same thing as the thing which best matches the content of the information supplied by the link.⁷

The idea then is that there must be some “match” between the content of the information delivered by the causal link and the thing with which there is the causal linkage. The information delivered by the causal link is held to be uniquely individuating; in Evans’s terms, it must enable the user of the term to “discriminate the thing referred to from all other things.” And it has to do so by providing the subject with the capacity to identify its spatiotemporal location. That is why location matters.

I can make vivid Evans’s picture of the way in which perceptual demonstratives work by explaining the idea of a new type of demonstrative, one which we do not actually have as things stand. So that we have an example to work from, suppose that tomato A is directly behind a mirror set at 45 degrees to the subject’s line of vision, so that tomato A is at the position at which tomato B, reflected in the mirror, appears to the subject to be. Though the subject can see tomato B in the mirror, the presence of the mirror is not suspected by her. Now an ordinary perceptual demonstrative, “that tomato,” used by the subject in this case, would refer to the tomato seen in the mirror. There is no prospect of the subject using an ordinary perceptual demonstrative to refer to the tomato hidden behind the mirror. The ordinary use of the demonstrative does require a causal-perceptual link, and the subject does not have that kind of causal-perceptual link to the tomato behind the mirror. But could we not introduce a range of perceptual demonstratives of a second type? These perceptual demonstratives would not rely upon a causal-perceptual link. Rather, they would use perceptual information to give a descriptive identification of the object. So such a demonstrative, say “Yonder object,” would identify its referent as the tomato at such-and-such a location—as “the tomato there”—where the location is identified using the primitive frame of reference involved in vision. Here the object has been identified by its type and location, without relying on a causal-perceptual link between it and the subject. Using this kind of demonstrative, it would be possible for our subject to make reference to tomato A, the tomato hidden by the unsuspected mirror. This kind of perceptual demonstrative, using perceptual information to give in effect a kind of descriptive identification of the object, seems perfectly well-defined, though as I said we do not actually have such demonstratives. In using a demonstrative of this second type, it would be impossible to make a mistake of identification in articulating a judgment of location.

Suppose we now introduce a further type of demonstrative. For a demonstrative of our new type to refer to an object, the object must be at the place where there seems to be an object of the relevant sort (so in this respect it is just like a demonstrative of the second type). But there is a further condition

on reference: for the demonstrative to refer to an object there must also be a causal-perceptual link between that object and the use of the demonstrative. So we have two separate conditions on successful reference, descriptive and causal, which must both be met for the demonstrative to refer. On Evans's account, this is how we actually use perceptual demonstratives.⁸

The problem with this is that it assimilates demonstratives to descriptive names, in the following sense: it implies that if you make a mistake about the location of the object, you are not in a position to refer to the object at all. So you cannot refer demonstratively to an object which you see through a prism that you do not know is there. This view has no plausibility at all. It implies that you cannot even think demonstratively about an object you can see perfectly well, because you are subject to some illusion about its location.

The background problem is Evans's explanation of why location matters for visual demonstratives, and in particular his conception of the "fundamental level of thought." It seems evident that we cannot sustain this conception of a level of thought, more fundamental than the level of perceptual demonstratives, at which predicates of physical things are first introduced and explained. In the case of physical objects, we have to acknowledge that predicates such as "flashing" must be first introduced and explained at the level of perceptual demonstratives, in the context of judgments such as "that light is flashing." The idea that observational predicates have to be first introduced in the context of some other level of thought than demonstrative thought, so that the importance of location can be explained in terms of its link to that level, cannot be sustained. The reason why location matters for the meaning of a visual demonstrative has to be explained rather in terms of the special role of location in attention and binding.⁹

NOTES

1. Sydney Shoemaker, "Self-Reference and Self-Awareness," in his *Identity, Cause, and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
2. For a review of the literature, see Anne Treisman, "The Binding Problem," *Current Opinion in Neurobiology* 6 (1996): 171–78.
3. Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
4. *Ibid.*, 106.
5. *Ibid.*, 107.
6. *Ibid.*, 111–12.
7. *Ibid.*, 139.
8. *Ibid.*, 132–35.
9. An earlier version of this essay was presented to the Cornell symposium on Sydney Shoemaker's work, and I am grateful to participants for discussion. Thanks also to Christopher Peacocke, Jim Pryor, and Timothy Williamson. Much of the background work for this chapter was carried out during tenure of a British Academy Research Readership, and I am grateful to the Academy for its support.