

How Perception Fixes Reference

Kevin Mulligan

1. Introduction

Thanks to Saul Kripke, the distinction between fixing the referent of an expression and giving an expression's meaning or sense, if it has one, is now familiar. In what follows I shall give an answer to two questions suggested by Kripke's distinction and his remarks on the way in which perceptual baptism can fix reference. These are, first, when does perception fix the reference of singular terms? And secondly, how does perception do this?

The answer I shall sketch is not mine. Nor, as far as I can tell, is it an answer to be found in the voluminous literature inspired by Kripke's work. Many of the elements of the answer are to be found in the writings of Wittgenstein and his Austro-German predecessors, Martinak, Husserl, Marty, Landgrebe and Bühler. Within this Austro-German tradition we may distinguish between a strand which is Platonist and anti-naturalist and a strand which is nominalist and naturalist. Thus Husserl's account of what he calls "directly referring" uses of singular terms invokes senses or individual concepts, albeit simple, not descriptive senses. But the account of reference fixing and reference given by Landgrebe, Bühler and Wittgenstein rejects senses.¹ I confine further reference to these writers to footnotes since my aim here is to develop and unify some of their suggestions, in particular by comparing them with more recent work (cf. Mulligan 1997).

It would a priori be very surprising if an account of the way language works were to be independent of an account of perception. Perception and language are two of our most basic capacities. Two features of linguistic behaviour, at least, are common to humans and many other animals: expression or indication and signalling or steering (the dances of bees) and these are inseparable from perception. In very many ways, representation, the coordination of words and objects, grows out of and relies on, indication and steering.

The view that perception and behaviour are essential to language and linguistic representation might be called the view that perception and behaviour are a part of language.²

The answers to be given to my two questions come in two versions. There is an account of the way perception fixes the reference of singular terms where these are taken to have a simple, non-attributive sense which is grasped, exemplified or instantiated by the subject. But an account is also given of reference fixing which is compatible with the view that senses are obsolete. Each account is compatible with a speculative genesis of reference rooted in a distinction between two basic, neglected types of name.

¹ It may seem natural to assume that a bias in favour of meaning-nominalism and naturalism will render a philosopher more attentive to the details of language use than a bias towards meaning-Platonism. And indeed Marty's anticipation of Grice's analysis of non-natural meaning confirms this suspicion (cf. Mulligan [ed.] 1990). But it is to a Platonist, Reinach, that we owe a thorough anticipation of Austin's analysis of speech acts such as promising (cf. Mulligan [ed.] 1987).

² The "two-field theory claims that the several modes of perceptual pointing and presenting are just as much a part of the essence of natural language as are abstraction and the conceptual grasp of the world, and that they are equally close to the essence of language" (Bühler 1934: v). "... [E]verything which is necessary for the sign to become a symbol is part of the symbol, all the conditions necessary to give it sense or meaning are part of the symbol. These conditions are internal to the symbol ..." (Wittgenstein WL 30-32: 26). "Every speaker has gathered the meaning [Bedeutung] of all naming words from things and states of affairs pointed out directly or indirectly and then retained it by practice. This is how one goes about granting meaning to all symbols" (Bühler 1934: 383). "Acquisitional deixis [cf. Wittgenstein's "ostensive teaching"] continues to have effect always in our understanding of all sentences" (Bühler 1934: 385).

These accounts presuppose that singular terms (and their senses, if they have senses) have a number of properties which will not be further discussed in what follows. Proper names and indexical expressions belong to distinct meaning categories. They therefore combine in certain determinate ways with expressions belonging to other categories. They also possess a variety of properties due to the fact that they stand in contexts which stand in inferential relations to other sentential contexts and their parts. In addition to such horizontal properties, singular terms possess such purely semantic properties as that of naming exactly one, or at most one object. My aim in what follows is to isolate further formal or internal vertical relations connecting singular terms and their referents.

2. Reference Fixing: Scope

I here run through the main types of direct singular reference making as plausible as possible the view that they all involve perception. In the next section I set out and defend the view that the intentionality of linguistic reference is parasitic on the intentionality of perception.

Perhaps the simplest referential uses of expressions occur in non-sentential contexts. They fall into two groups, the first of which involves perception of a bearer, the second both perception and behaviour. In the first group we find name tags, brand names, the names of paintings, of books and chapters. In such cases, names are physically attached to their bearers. In the second group, expressions — not always grammatical singular, terms — are used outside any sentential context but within a structured behavioral context. Thus one asks for a black coffee in a cafe, a single ticket at the station or one shouts “Slab!” to the young apprentice. Call the fields or contexts in which name-tags etc are employed symphysical fields, and those in which one shouts “Slab!” sympractical fields. Name tags, then, are symphysical names³ and the words used in sympractical fields are sympractical expressions,⁴ two rebarbative but useful expressions for tags and signals.

The way symphysical and sympractical expressions work illustrates the inter-relationships between perception and behaviour already alluded to. Wearing a name-tag is a way of steering behaviour, so are road-signs; in sympractical uses of language one person steers the behaviour and the perceptions of another person. Reference begins where there are shared perceptual fields and steering.

Demonstratives, it is usually agreed, involve perception. If I produce a sentence of the form “That is F”, then if you do not perceive the object I am pointing to — whether or not it is F or is seen as an F — you do not grasp my singular thought, but only some general thought. If I am the victim of a visual hallucination then I do not have a singular thought only the illusion that I do.

Referential uses of definite descriptions involve perception. One of Donnellan’s (1966, III) original examples was:

Suppose one is at a party and, seeing an interesting-looking person holding a martini glass, one asks, “Who is the man drinking a martini?”. If it should turn out that there is only water in the glass, one has nevertheless asked a question about a particular person, a question that it is possible for someone to answer.

³ “When the optical name image is materially attached or connected to the perceptible thing named, that is, when there is a connection that under such circumstances must be interpreted in terms of an effective surrounding field, this visible attachment becomes an indication of an ideal coordination [Zuordnung]” (Bühler 1934: 164), “the physical, sensibly manifest criterion of coordination” (Bühler 1934: 162). “The word ‘to signify’ [bezeichnen, designate], is perhaps used in the most straightforward way when the object signified is marked with the sign ... It is in this and more or less similar ways that a name signifies and is given to a thing. — It will often prove useful in philosophy to say to ourselves: naming something is like attaching a label to a thing (Wittgenstein PI: § 15; cf. §§ 1, 15, 26, 41).

⁴ Sympractical signs signal and steer in a common perceptual field, they belong “to a surrounding field which is a praxis into which they are built” (Bühler 1934: 158 f.). Cf. Wittgenstein PI: §§ 2, 8.

Demonstratives and referential uses of definite descriptions usually occur in the context of sentences, unlike symphysical and sympractical names. But the three categories combine in numerous ways. Consider mention, for example. To mention a sign is to use a symphysical name since the quoted expression is contained within quotation marks. Since the latter function like demonstratives, pointing to an expression which has to be perceived, mention also involves sympractical naming. When the mention is accompanied, as it usually is, by a predication, this constitutes a sentential (or “synsemantic”) field.

Proper names function in perceptual baptism in ways that resemble symphysical names: name and bearer co-occur and are perceived together. The same is true when someone is introduced to the bearer of an already conferred name.⁵ But of course we often use proper names which we have not learnt to use on the basis of perception of their bearers or of objects closely related to these. A full defence of the view that perception is nevertheless necessary for proper names to refer to spatio-temporal objects would involve examining all the examples brought forward by those who think that, as Almog (1991: 598) puts it, “the arsenal of ‘fixers’ at the disposal of the ‘fixer’ is limitless”. Whatever the plausibility of the view that such fixing always involves perception of the right bearer or of something sufficiently closely related to it, there is a more urgent task. Is it the case that reference-fixing via non-referential definite descriptions is connected only accidentally with perception?

What must be the case for a speaker to grasp sentences of the same form as

Madrid is the capital of Spain

or

The capital of Spain is called “Madrid”

where the two descriptions are used attributively and the proper name is new to him?

Perhaps two conditions need to be fulfilled. First, that a speaker already enjoys the ability to use some perception dependent proper names, proper names dependent on his perceptions past or present of their bearers. Secondly, that his grasp of the identity sign flanked by descriptions and proper names as well as his grasp of the predicate “is called” are parasitic on the first condition, his ability to employ proper names based on his perceptions.⁶ The predicate “is called” accompanied by a quoted name

⁵ “If I have a name such as *Charles* or *Maria* solemnly conferred upon a child at baptism, this is a convention that those participating in the ceremony and later others who are in-formed by the participants observe ... For this coordination at baptism is by no manner or means equivalent to a definition, but rather, seen from a distance, equivalent to making the chalk mark on a house. The fact that the individual sign, the proper name, is not branded onto the forehead of the newly baptised child makes no difference to our question ... Indeed, baptism is not a definition but (here it is tempting to continue: a sacrament) — it is rather an assignment analogous to attaching it; it is a deictic name conferral. Proper names are distributed deictically; it is not exactly the symphysical surrounding field but something analogous that becomes relevant here (Bühler 1934: 235 f.; cf. 226). “Giving a name has to be distinguished from subsuming it under a concept and from knowledge based naming. Giving a name has nothing to do with cognition of the object although it presupposes a certain [sensory] grasp of the object”, which “must be differentiated as something constant in contrast to its changing features”. Giving a name involves no predication (cf. Wittgenstein). “Once the reference [Beziehung] of a proper name to a definite person has been fixed, this relation continues to obtain”, is “communicated and transmitted”. “For the chemist, what he analyses as NaCl is the same thing that when he tastes, touches it has for him the same sensory qualities as for the cook, who knows nothing of its chemical composition. It is this same thing that was originally given the [common] name salt and it is in connexion with this that she can communicate with the chemist through the use of the name salt, even if we suppose the fictive case that the chemist knows nothing of its sensory qualities and simply uses the name salt for reasons to do with tradition. To the genuine meaning of this name belong whatever constitutive features are predicable of the so named thing. It is doubtful whether the chemical-physical properties of things belong without further ado to their constitutive features in this sense. For they are not the sort of thing which are furnished by simple grasping of the so named sensory, intuitive thing” (Landgrebe 1934: 65, 61, 89, 81, 73).

⁶ “When proper names have once been formed in direct application (and so on a basis of intuitions which give things to us), we can, by employing the concept of “being called”, itself formed by reflection on proper-naming, give proper names to objects, or take cognizance of their proper names even though such objects are not directly given or known to us, but are only

creates a new type of symphysical name: the name tag is attached not to its bearer but to a description. Thus language acquires a new joint. But for a speaker who has not already learnt to use perception dependent names such a tag would not be a name tag. The claim, then, is that a speaker could not understand such sophisticated name tags unless he already possessed the ability to use genuine names rooted in his perceptions of what these name. And this, in its turn, as we have suggested, is rooted in familiarity with the simplest type of symphysical names.⁷

Well-known objections to the thesis that perception is necessary for indexical reference concentrate on “pure indexicals” such as “I”, “here” and “now”. It is claimed that no perceptual information about their bearers is necessary, perception of the expression and the relevant semantic rule do all the work (Kaplan), or that a mere disposition to be guided by such information is necessary (Evans 1982: 153; cf. Corazza 1995: 45 ff.).

But there is a third, stronger view. “Here” and “now” refer not only to spatial and temporal regions which differ from utterance to utterance but also to regions of different size. Consider Sam, a Christian Marxist, in a supermarket. He meets a friend, another Christian. They commiserate about life here below, in this vale of tears. Then a Marxist friend comes along. They commiserate about a here which is the depressing supermarket and the frenzied consumerism in it. Then Sam’s wife arrives and asks him what he’s doing here, at the meat section, although he knows she’s hysterical about mad cows. The first friend of Sam has not seen him for years. To the question “What are you up to?”, Sam replies, “I now live in Berlin”. His Marxist friend sees Sam regularly. To his question Sam replies “I’m now writing an article on the left Christian response to the mad cow disease”. To his wife’s question about what he thinks he’s doing now, Sam replies, “I’m buying veal”.⁸

How do Sam’s interlocutors grasp and track the right size of the regions he refers to? They must of course grasp that the relevant regions include the immediate temporal and spatial position of the speaker. But the semantic rules are mute about the size of the relevant region. Indeed, reference to the immediate spatial or temporal environment of the speaker is perhaps not even the default case. So what else is needed to fill out the semantic rule? Sam’s interlocutors are certainly steered in the first instance by the type of predicate he uses. But this needs to be supplemented by background information. This in its turn requires the interlocutors to draw on perceptual knowledge and memory, awareness of changes, of the boundaries of the relevant region etc. They must be able to track time and space demonstratively.

If this is right, then pure indexicals represent a complication of the structure involved in demonstrative reference, and not a radically new type of reference. It is true that the quick and easy way in which perception provides demonstratives with their referents is not to be found in pure indexicals. But perceptual and descriptive knowledge as well as perceptual memory play the same sort of role in pure indexical reference effected by “here” and “now” as perception in demonstrative reference. However, what is true of these indexicals is not true of, for example, “today”. This is not surprising. “Today” and the other expressions in its lexical field such as “tomorrow”, refer to temporal regions of a fixed and determinate size.

characterised indirectly as the bearers of certain properties. The capital of Spain, e.g., is called (i.e. has the proper name) “Madrid”. A person unacquainted with the town Madrid itself, thereby achieves both knowledge of its name and the power to name it correctly and yet not thereby the proper meaning of the word “Madrid”. (Husserl LI: VI, § 5 [tr. 685]). Cf. Wittgenstein OC: §§ 543, 548, 566.

⁷ Cf. “Not all description theorists thought that they were eliminating the notion of reference altogether. Perhaps some realised that some notion of ostension, or primitive reference, is required to back it up. Certainly Russell did” (Kripke 1993: 96n).

⁸ ‘Here’, like ‘now’, need not be conceived as an unextended mathematical point, rather it can assume a more or less small or a more or less large extent ... as a devout Christian who says here includes the whole world here below (Bühler 1934: 132). “... a speaker in Berlin says here and includes all of Berlin. That alone is enough to remove the sense of a spoken utterance from the realm of ocular demonstration, even if deictic help is still necessary to fulfil its sense” (Bühler 1934: 373). “If a man says ‘I am tired’ his mouth is part of the symbol” (Wittgenstein / Moore 1959: 262).

What of “I”? If “I” does not refer then the view that reference is fixed by perception survives unscathed. The same is true if egological sentences involve only demonstrative reference as Anscombe (1981: 33) suggests. On her view, “I am this thing here”, in her mouth, contains more than one demonstrative. It means “*this* thing here is the thing, the person ... of whose action *this* idea of action is an action, of whose posture *this* idea of posture is an idea ...” (my emphases). There is also the view that “I” in my mouth can only be used to express a singular thought if I enjoy “internal perception” of my body or person, which thought has the form that some property inheres in the same but not, of course, that my body has the property. A certain sadness can inhere in or depend on my body or person, just as the boundary of my body depends on it. But neither the sadness nor the boundary can be predicated of my body.

If the reference of a proper name is fixed by rigidified definite descriptions, then the present view requires that these bear on the actual world at some indexically specified position.

3. Reference Fixing: Mechanism

What are the features common to all these cases of perception-dependent singular terms?

In the simplest cases, symphysical names and demonstratives, there is co-existence or co-occurrence and co-perception of name and bearer. In particular the whole consisting of name and bearer is visually differentiated for the perceiver, as are both name and bearer, and these are perceived as being physically contiguous.

Symphysical names are more basic than demonstratives provided a common dogma is rejected. The dogma is the view that an expression can only function as a name in the context of a sentence or thought. The alternative to the dogma is the view that symphysical and sympractical fields are enough to allow words to function semantically. The dogma has it that such isolated words are elliptic. It is true that many of the names physically attached to objects are also names that we use in sentences. But the fact that there is no non-arbitrary procedure allowing us to determine the sentences or thoughts of which so called “elliptic” expressions are supposed to be the abbreviation counts against the dogma.⁹

Symphysical names are mastered before names in sentential contexts. And there is good reason to think that the co-occurrence and co-perception of such names and their bearers is deeply rooted. The neurological Stroop test presents patients with objects to which the wrong name tags have been attached. The patient is invited to give the right names of the object. One group of patients invariably fails the test and gives the names that are attached to the objects rather than the right names. They often turn out to have a frontal lobe deficit.

Names function within a context or field. Each such field involves internal relations. In the case of the sentential field the relevant internal relations are simply the relations of grammatical constituency and dependency. In the case of symphysical and sympractical names the field of conventional internal relations fixed by learning determines when physical attachment is and when it is not a criterion for the naming relation. Contiguity is never sufficient for symphysical names; a word does not designate the page it is printed on.

The co-existence and co-perception conditions hold only in the simplest cases. What is perhaps the weakest weakening thereof takes a very similar form both in the case of demonstrative reference and of symphysical names. Names on signposts refer to objects at a

⁹ “The flood of ellipsis will be checked before it swells up if it can be shown that the [following] presupposition is wrong: all meaningfully used words must be situated in a synsemantic field, they must be borne by a [linguistic] context. That alone is the effective and radical cure for the ellipsis plague that has been with us now for two millenia (Bühler 1934: 167 f.). A “sentence is ‘elliptical’, not because it leaves out something that we think when we utter it, but because it is shortened — in comparison with a particular paradigm of our grammar” (Wittgenstein PI: § 20)

distance and in a certain direction. Similarly, I may point behind me and say “That is a portrait of Carnap” (a type of case discussed by Kaplan). Common to these two cases is the fact that there is an internal relation between the region of space the speaker is looking at and the region of space occupied by the bearer of the referring expression. In the demonstrative case the latter may be the object of a perceptual memory or it may be simply a continuation of the speaker’s visual field.

Sympractical uses of words — “Slab!”, “a black coffee!” — are parts of on-going, structured, non-verbal activities and the co-occurrence condition has to be relativised to such dynamic contexts. A further distinct type of weakening is provided by the relation between the word “apples” attached to a drawer and the apples in the drawer. Or between products and the physically attached names of their makers. Finally, and trivially, although perception may stand at the beginning of a chain of uses of a proper name, in the normal case name and bearer are not simultaneously perceived.

If perception fixes reference, what mechanism is involved? If the foregoing is plausible, it will be enough to have an account of the way demonstratives refer, since modifications of the account will then suffice for all the other cases.

Let us suppose, to begin with, that demonstratives, like proper names, have a sense which is simple and is grasped or instantiated by the speaker.¹⁰ This sense is incomplete. What completes it? Veridical perceptual content. If such content is conceptual then demonstrative reference would be neither simple nor direct. But suppose that perceptual content is not conceptual. How could it then complete a simple sense?

One way of analysing complexity of this sort is to think of the way that the simple sense of a simple functor is completed by that of a sentence. Closely related to this approach would be one or another appeal to the way a function combines with an argument to yield a value. But there is an alternative view. The right sort of perceptual content provides a simple demonstrative sense with its lowest specific difference. On this view, the relation between what is completed and what completes is not combinatorial. It is like that between a determinable and a determinate, but it is a relation between a conceptual determinable and a non-conceptual determinate.¹¹

¹⁰ Indexicals “are much like proper names — if the latter function with their authentic meaning. For a proper name also names an object directly. It means it, not in the attributive way as the bearer of these or those properties, but without such “conceptual” mediation, as that which it ‘itself’ is, just as perception might set it before our eyes. (Husserl LI: VI, § 5) “The proper meaning” of a proper name “is without doubt simple” (IV § 3). The “presentational content with which Schultze is presented when we name him can change in many ways whilst his proper name goes on performing in one and the same identical way, always naming the same Schultze ‘directly’ (LI: IV, § 3). “Because a proper name has only a situation-bound meaning, the difference between circumscribing names [synthetic truths] and constitutive determinations [analytic truths] cannot meaningfully be made at all ... No complex of common nouns, however finely articulated, is ever equivalent to a proper name” (Landgrebe 1934: 88). Gabriel (1990) gives a detailed analysis of the relation between the views of Landgrebe and Marty about proper names and current views. For a contemporary defence of the view that indexicals have a simple sense, cf. Evans 1982: 147, 167, 176.

¹¹ “I say ‘this’, and now mean the paper lying before me. Perception is responsible for the relation of my word to this object, but my meaning does not lie in perception. An act of this-meaning builds itself on my perception, depends on it. Without the perception — or some correspondingly functioning act — the pointing would be empty, without definite differentiation. For the indeterminate thought of the speaker as pointing to something ... is not the thought we enact in the actual pointing” (Husserl LI: VI, § 5). Without perception of the object the “expression may continue to be meaningful, it need not lose all its meaning” (ibid.: § 4; on Husserl’s analysis of indexicality, cf. Mulligan and Smith 1986b). “If we hear the words “I am tired” without seeing the speaker, they mean less than if we saw his lips moving and heard him say the same phrase” (Wittgenstein WL 30-32: 26). The meaning of an occasional expression “could not acquire a determinate relation to the object it means without some intuitive aid ... Intuition in fact gives [the common meaning element] determinateness of objective reference, and thereby its last difference. And this achievement does not require that a part of the meaning must itself lie in the intuition” (Husserl LI: VI, § 5) “Even if I (we) now say, the bearer of the name is not its meaning, then still the bearer determines the meaning, and if I, while pointing, say ‘This is N’ then the meaning of ‘N’ is determined’. — But the correct understanding of the word ‘bearer’ in the particular case (colour, form, tone etc) already decides here the meaning down to a last determination (Wittgenstein 1930, as cited by Hilmy 1987: 177). Indexicals “await their meaning specification from case to case in the deictic field of language and in what the latter offers to the senses” (Bühler 1934: 90).

Can perceptual content differentiate conceptual content, if there is such a thing? Yes, because it often does so in cases where what is at issue is not individual concepts but general concepts.

Think of explanations such as “Paint it this sort of red”, accompanied by a sample. Or “Play it slowly like this”. Here the conceptual content is further specified by a perception of a feature of a proffered colour sample or performance. It is not enough to see the colour or hear the melody, they have to be perceived in the right way and this completes the grasp of the instructions.¹²

Why is the lowest specific difference view to be preferred to the combinatorial view? If perceptual content has no logico-syntactic features then there is no reason to think it can combine with what does have such features. The claim that perceptual content has no logico-syntactic features does not of course mean that perception does not involve structure, mereological structure, and even formal operations and transformations. It merely amounts to the point that negation and implication are not to be found in perceptual processing.

The nature of the perceptual content involved in demonstrative reference is largely irrelevant. All that is required for demonstrative reference is that the content involves perceptual differentiation of the right object.

Suppose, now, that there are no such things as senses, simple or not. The counterpart thereof for the enemy of senses is a way of using the relevant expression. Just as a use of a hammer may be incomplete without perception of the nail, so too a particular use of a demonstrative will be incomplete without perception. Since demonstrative expressions have no senses there is nothing for perceptual content to provide with a lowest specific difference. But the enemy of sense has an alternative account of completion available. Demonstrative reference turns out yet again to be a case of sympractical reference, for the demonstrative expression rides on the back of perceptual and gestural activity.

The two views just presented of the way in which perception fixes reference rely on a particular account of perception. The main tenets of this account are as follows. Perception is assumed to be simple. We directly or simply see things, states, events and processes; such simple seeing is distinguished from seeing that. Perception is an external relation and the corresponding perceptual reports are extensional. Perception involves content, the way we simply see what we see. We have or enjoy perceptual content but we see things and episodes. Perceptual content is not necessarily concept-involving. This claim is compatible with the claim that we would not normally enjoy this or that type of perceptual content if we did not master this or that family of concepts. Perception is dynamic: it is of dynamic objects and perceivers are actual or possible perceptual agents.¹³ Many of these claims can survive rejection of perceptual content (cf. Dokic 1997), that is, its extrusion into what is seen as part of the view that perception is as direct as Russell took naming to be. (This is in fact more than an analogy given Russell’s view that genuine naming is perception dependent). But I here assume that there is perceptual content.

It is obvious that perception will only be able to play a more than incidental role in fixing reference if an account of perception along these lines is right. Suppose that perception is theorised as being essentially a static affair, as is invariably the case within representationalist, sense data theories. Suppose, that is, that static perception is not thought of as an abstraction from processes of tracking objects and processes. Then the quality and quantity of the

¹² As Kaplan (1971: 142) puts it: “Many of our beliefs have the form: ‘The colour of her hair is ---’, or ‘The song he was singing went ---’, where the blanks are filled with images, sensory impressions, or what have you, but certainly not with words”. Peacocke (in: Almog et al. [eds.] 1989: 297) rightly stresses the importance of Kaplan’s appeal to perceptual appearances, here and elsewhere.

¹³ Cf. Husserl LI: VI, §§ 4-6; Husserl 1973; Mulligan 1995.

perceptual information available for reference fixing is diminished and the internal link between perception and action disappears. The functioning of even the simplest types of sympractical and symphysical names becomes incomprehensible. Suppose, finally, that to see were to believe and conceptualise. Then the project of analysing reference fixing in perceptual terms turns out to be circular.¹⁴

But if an analysis of perception along these lines is necessary for the above accounts of perceptual reference fixing to be plausible, a further choice between two accounts of non-conceptual perceptual content is necessary if we are to understand the link between singular terms and their objects. For this link is actually two links. There is the link between the use of a demonstrative, say, and perceptual content. But there is also the link between perceptual contents and their objects. Each of the two main theories of non-conceptual perceptual content leads to a distinct account of this second link and so, if reference is parasitic on perception, of reference.

The two main theories are the conjunctivist (narrow) and disjunctivist (wide) accounts of perceptual content. On the disjunctivist or externalist account of perceptual account there is no lowest type of perceptual content such that some of its tokens are veridical contents and others are non-veridical. Veridical perception is not an example of a “true hallucination”. On the conjunctivist account favoured by the critical realist or representationalist, a given perceptual content may or may not have an object. Thus if the representationalist is right the perceptual content which completes a use of the demonstrative may or may not have an object. On one popular account, such a content, if conceptually expressed, has the form: the object of this perceptual content is the object, whatever it is, that causes this content. This does not turn demonstrative reference into descriptive reference, since the perceptual content is conceptualisable but not conceptual. But it does make demonstrative reference an indirect affair. A representationalist may, however, hold that conceptualisation of a perceptual content displays the presence of a singular term within content and not merely a definite description. Then, if reference supervenes on perception, whether or not an expression refers will depend on whether, as a matter of fact, the perceptual content it is based on is veridical. In other words, the singular term will not be object-dependent. It may or may not refer.

A variant of the disjunctivist view, however, leads to the conclusion that singular terms are object-dependent. Suppose there is no lowest type of perceptual content such that some of its tokens are veridical and some non-veridical and that perceptual content is either object-dependent or illusory. If, now, object-dependent perceptual content completes the use of a demonstrative term then the latter inherits object-dependence from the latter. If the completor is a perceptual illusion then there is no singular reference, the expression employed merely appears to be a singular term, just as the subject only appears to enjoy veridical perception. Thus we arrive at a view of referring expressions that resembles Kripke’s account of rigid designators. The starting point was this: if singular terms have a sense, it is not descriptive. But the route taken was an unfamiliar one. Whether or not we accept the category of object-dependent singular terms depends on whether we accept the disjunctivist account of content and the claim that reference depends on perceptual intentionality. At the end of that route, if these two premisses are accepted, then a choice remains to be made between two possibilities. First, the strong view that the direct reference of a singular term involves no modes of presentation other than purely perceptual modes of presentation, perception of the linguistic sign and perception of its object. No conceptual mode of presentation with any sort of representative powers is required, on this view, whatever inferential and combinatorial

¹⁴ A subject who uses a demonstrative term and perceives its bearer does not normally judge that the expression and his perceptual state have the same object, or that the object of his cognitive state is identical with that of his perception, but he has this ability. If exercised, this ability allows him to identify the referents of two parts of his total cognitive state or to identify the referent of this state with that of one of its parts.

properties the sign has. Secondly, the weaker view which attributes a simple sense to singular terms.

The two relations of dependence, between the use of a singular term and perceptual content, and between perceptual content and object do not of course constitute the naming relation. As already noted, this involves a variety of formal relations including inferential and combinatorial properties as well as semantic rules or theses. The suggestion has been that two further formal relations of one-sided dependence are needed if reference is to occur.

The view presented here is unfamiliar. It may therefore be useful to compare it with the better-known framework of Frege, in particular his views on indexicality as these have been presented and developed by Wolfgang Kühne (1982, 1992) In 1914 and in his 1918 paper “The Thought” Frege sketches an elegant account of the way indexical expressions refer. Frege suggests that an indexical term is not wholly verbal:

the time of speaking is a part of the expression of the thought ... in all such cases the mere word (sound), as this can be fixed in writing, is not the complete expression of the thought; rather, one requires for its proper grasping [Auffassung] also knowledge of certain circumstances accompanying the utterance, which are used as means of expression of the thought. Finger-pointings, movements of the hand, looks, come into question here (Frege 1984: 358).

If a time-indication is conveyed by the present tense one must know when the sentence was uttered in order to grasp the thought correctly. Therefore the time of utterance is part of the expression of the thought (ibid.).

As he had put it in 1914,

the proper name is then to be understood not as the concept-word alone, but as the whole made up of the concept-word, the demonstrative pronoun and the accompanying circumstances (Frege 1914: 230).

Following Kühne I shall call the type of proper name introduced here by Frege “hybrid proper names”, since they contain a verbal and a non-verbal part. Frege does not in these passages claim that the non-verbal part of a demonstrative is or contains its referent. But this does seem to be suggested. If we follow this interpretation and apply it to the case of demonstratives, then we get the following claim. If I assert of some thing that “That is a table”, the singular term I employ is a hybrid name consisting of the word “That” and the table itself (or some thing which is not a table, but which is pointed at, if my assertion is false). Together they form a unified whole. This claim suggests two questions. What is the relation between the hybrid name and its referent? What is the sense of such a name?

If the table is part of the singular term, the other part of which is verbal, then Frege seems to be committed to the view that, here at any rate, the singular term is object-dependent. What is the sense of such a hybrid singular term? Frege’s own semantic principles do not oblige him to say anything more than that such a hybrid singular term has a sense. It is no part of his view that every part of an expression has its own sense. But the question can still be asked. After all, the singular term consisting of “this” and, say, a physical table consists of two very salient heterogeneous parts. What, then, is the sense correlated with the table, if there is one, what is the relation between this sense and that of “that”?

In order to answer these questions, we need an answer to another question. What was Frege’s own view of perception, of what we see and of how we see? He talks of perception of things and of properties.¹⁵ He stresses that sensory impressions are not judgements (NS: 286) and allows for seeings that, the contents of which are true or false, and which are judged to be true on the basis of sense impressions (“The Thought”). Impressions are *Vorstellungen* and are what we have when we perceive, “necessary constituents” of sense-perceptions, but not what we see (ibid.). What must be added to these constituents is “non-sensible”. Although Frege preserves a discreet silence about the non-sensible something which combines with

¹⁵ “Eigenschaften”, “Beschaffenheiten” (*Foundations*: §§ 21, 26). Angelelli (1967: 25, 36, 231 f., 245 n.4) argues that, in these passages and elsewhere, Frege accepts accidents (tropes) as objects of perception.

impressions to yield perception of public things, the implication seems to be that the something must be a sense. It is perhaps a judged thought, occasioned by impressions (NS: 286); to see things is then always to see that they have certain properties. Let us suppose that this is Frege's view, that the "knowledge" referred to in the first quotation from Frege above is propositional knowledge or at the very least involves a sense which is not a thought. (If, as Frege says in "The Thought", the sense of the name in "Dr. Gustav Lauben is wounded" differs according as one "knows personally" the good Doctor, then this knowledge cannot be mere acquaintance, on the present interpretation of Frege). Does this help us to understand what the sense of a hybrid name is? Not really. The singular term consisting of "that" and the table now seems to express a sense which consists of the sense of "that" and a thought or other sense grasped in the context of perceptual judgement. It is completely unclear how these senses combine.

The Austro-German view presented above can now be seen as providing two un-Fregean answers to the two questions we asked about Frege's theory. First, the type of object-dependence invoked above is stronger than that appealed to in our interpretation of Frege. Secondly, the view that the perceptual content of veridical perception completes the simple linguistic sense of "this" or the use of "this" turned on rejecting a Kantian premiss of Frege's account. Perceptual content, we assumed, is not any sort of sense.¹⁶

4. Conclusion

The view presented of the intentionality of reference has been set out with reference to the central case of demonstrative reference. It is obvious that many modifications would be required were the view to be applied to the other types of perception-dependent reference we have distinguished.

My brief account of direct reference and the illustrative quotations provided in footnotes, have, however, brought into focus a number of theoretical options, set out before the Second World War. There is the view that singular terms have a sense, which is simple (Husserl) or complex (a view often attributed to Frege) and the view that sense is obsolescent (Bühler, Wittgenstein). There is the view of Husserl and then Russell that what they each call naming is perception dependent. The object of perception is taken either to be public things and states (Husserl) or sense-data (Russell). Perception of public things is taken to involve non-conceptual content (Husserl and his followers) or senses (Frege). The view that naming is object-dependent is formulated by Husserl,¹⁷ endorsed by Russell and follows from a natural interpretation of some things that Frege says about indexicals. But for Frege and Russell "dependence" is not to be understood in any strong, modal sense.¹⁸ The strong view is the view that was to be made familiar by Kripke.

Finally, it is worth noting that the above account of the intentionality of reference in terms

¹⁶ Cf. Dummett 1988: ch. 9. Dummett (ch. 12) accuses both Frege and Husserl of over-intellectualising perception. This seems to me to be right as far as Frege is concerned.

¹⁷ Husserl describes the view that names are object-dependent: "the proposition that an expression, insofar as it has meaning, relates to an object, can be interpreted in a proper or authentic sense in which it includes the object's existence. Then an expression has meaning if an object corresponding to it exists, and is meaningless if such an object does not exist". It is not clear whether he intends "includes" to be used in the strong modal sense of which he is elsewhere so fond. But in any case he rejects this view; the common way of speaking which identifies meanings and meant objects "springs from a confusion with the genuine concept of meaning": it is unable to do justice to the phenomenon of true, negative existential propositions (Husserl LI: I, § 15): "What a name names" is not to be confused with "what it means" (LI: I, § 16). As Wittgenstein puts it, the meaning of a name is not to be confused with the bearer of the name (PI: § 40; §§ 41 f., cf. § 264), although "this" cannot be bearerless (PI: § 45). In the course of revising the theory of meaning of the *Logical Investigations* Husserl makes use of a twin-earth thought experiment: "But how is it if two men, on two heavenly bodies, in two environments that appear to be exactly the same, have presentations of 'the same' objects and are guided by these in making 'the same' propositions? Has not 'this' in the two cases a different meaning?" (Husserl 1987: 212 f.).

¹⁸ Mulligan and Smith 1986a provides an account of intentionality which employs Husserl's theory of modal dependence.

of perception corresponds to an account of predicative intentionality in terms of dynamic perception. This account is a verificationist account of predicate meaning or, alternatively, of meaningful uses of predicates — albeit an account compatible with realism. Veridical perception, we saw, is essential to reference, although the type of perceptual content involved is not relevant to reference fixing. In the case of predicate meaning, open classes of perceptual contents are crucial. They either partly determine the senses of ordinary language predicates or wholly constitute what it is for these predicates to be used to represent. They do this, says the verificationist, by virtue of the relations of non-propositional, defeasible justification in which appearances and predicates can stand.

But the story of verificationism between 1900 and the 1930's is a much more complicated story than that of direct reference in the same period.¹⁹

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¹⁹ This paper has been presented at talks in Stanford, Leiden, Bordeaux, Barcelona and San Marino between 1993 and 1996. Thanks to Barry Smith, Peter Simons, Manuel García-Carpintero, Jérôme Dokic, Gianfranco Soldati, Nenad Miscevic, Brian Garrett and Goran Sundholm for their comments.

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