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Evans on reference

I Singular terms

According to Evans, Frege's theory of *Bedeutung* (which Evans translates as "Meaning" or as "semantic value") starts with the idea that the significance of a complete sentence consists in its being true or false (1982: 8).¹ Given this starting-point, Evans continues, it was natural that Frege should think of the semantic power of an expression as the power to affect the truth-value of sentences in which it occurs: and natural, as a further step, to think of this power as determined by the expression's being associated with some extra-linguistic entity. This entity he called the *Bedeutung*. For singular terms, he identified it with what one would ordinarily call their reference, an identification which Evans says "makes evident good sense" (p. 9) provided that we are setting aside non-extensional contexts.

Frege argued that a full account of the significance of an expression must appeal not just to semantic value (*Bedeutung*) but to some further property, which he called *sense*. Sense has to explain "difference in cognitive value" between pairs of sentences, like "Hesperus is Hesperus" and "Hesperus is Phosphorus", which are point-by-point indistinguishable in respect of semantic value. For Evans, the essential notion of Fregean sense is *the way in which the semantic value is presented*. Thus two singular terms which have the same semantic value, and so refer to the same thing, may differ in sense: they may present this referent in different ways. Perhaps "Hesperus" presents its referent in a way connected with evening sightings, whereas "Phosphorus" presents its referent in a way connected with morning sightings. The different modes of presentation may prevent one who has mastered both terms, and so knows for each what its referent is, from realizing the identity.

1 Even if we ought to see this as the fundamental idea in Frege's semantics, it is not presented by Frege in this light. In "On Sense and Reference", Frege starts with *Bedeutung* as a property of singular terms, and only subsequently and derivatively goes on to argue that complete sentences also possess this property.

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How should one state what the sense of an expression is? Evans approvingly quotes Dummett: “For Frege, we *say* what the referent of a word is, and thereby *show* what its sense is” (Evans 1982: 26). This idea gives no leverage to those who seek to identify the sense of a singular term with some descriptive condition. In particular, if, following Evans, we take mode of presentation as what is essential to sense, he is surely right to say that there is a contradiction in Frege’s concession, albeit equivocal and qualified (p. 38), that an expression can have a sense yet lack a referent. For if there is no referent, there is no such thing as how the referent is presented.

To understand how Frege was forced into this contradictory position, we must recall two things: that he unhesitatingly grouped together, into a single semantic category, both definite descriptions like “the greatest prime number” and ordinary names like “Aristotle”; and that, in addition to thinking of sense as mode of presentation of semantic value, he also treated possessing sense as equivalent to being significant. It is obvious that there are significant definite descriptions which have no referent. Using the equivalence of sense and significance, this means that definite descriptions can have sense while lacking a referent. And then given the homogeneous treatment of descriptions and names, it would seem inevitable that it should be possible for a name to have sense while lacking a referent.

A common response to this aspect of Frege’s thought has been to cease to take with full seriousness the account of sense as how the semantic value is presented and to see Frege as, rather, identifying the sense of a name with some descriptive condition, thus releasing sense from reference. Evans rejects this response, which sees Frege as a forerunner of Ayer and Searle (p. 27), as wrong-headed, on the grounds that it gives more weight to the rather few passages in which Frege equivocally and with qualification, concedes the possibility of sense without reference, than it does to the central passages in which sense is said, unequivocally and without qualification, to be how a referent (or, more generally, semantic value) is presented. Evans therefore sees the concession of sense without referent as an aberration on Frege’s part. The remedy involves subdividing Frege’s broad grouping. Although Evans does not put it in quite this way, what one will look for is a group of expressions owing their significance to being non-derivatively associated with a semantic value which is also their referent in the intuitive sense. No doubt an empty definite description, like any other definite description, has a derived semantic value, derived from the values of its parts. But it has no non-derivative semantic value, and obviously its derivative semantic value does not coincide with its referent (in the intuitive sense); so it would be excluded from the category.

Thinking just of singular terms whose semantic value is non-derivative and is simply their referent, Evans’s Frege is in one way close to Russell. For the property of owing significance to association with an extra-linguistic entity, the referent, is just the semantic function characteristic of Russell’s

logically proper names. Russell provides a test for such an expression: to suppose that it lacks a referent is to suppose that it lacks its actual significance. In Russell's words, quoted by Evans:

Whenever the grammatical subject of a proposition can be supposed not to exist without rendering the proposition meaningless, it is plain that the grammatical subject is not a proper name, i.e. not a name directly representing some object (Evans 1982: 43).

Evans calls a singular term which passes this test "Russellian". A main theme of the book is to establish that a large class of singular terms, including most ordinary proper names and standard uses of demonstratives, are Russellian. If we start with an intuitive grouping of grammatically subject expressions and then remove the Russellian singular terms, there remain at least two sorts of expression. First, those which deserve the title of singular terms or referring expressions, but which are non-Russellian. Evans doubts if there are many examples in English, but suggests that if a name, say "Julius", were introduced by an explicit descriptive stipulation (e.g. "Let us call whoever invented the zip 'Julius'"), it would count as a referring expression (the argument is given on pp. 49–50), but would be non-Russellian, since even if no one had invented the zip "Julius" could still have its actual significance.² Secondly, there remain those which are not singular terms or referring expressions at all: thus most definite descriptions are quantifiers (the possibility of exceptions is discussed in Ch. 9.3).

Russell held that two logically proper names (Russellian singular terms) naming the same object have the same meaning:

. . . if one thing has two names [i.e. logically proper names] you make exactly the same assertion whichever of the names you use (Evans 1982: 43).

In this respect, Russell differs sharply from Frege. Evans sees this as an unwarranted retrograde inference from the Russellian status of singular terms. On Evans's view, two such terms referring to the same object may

² Is it the case, as Martin Davies suggested to me, that had it not been for this rather peripheral sort of case, Evans could have regained the notion of the "the essence of reference", a title which McDowell tells us (Evans 1982: vi) Evans came to regard as unsatisfactory for a course of lectures? I think not. The variety most stressed in the book is that within the category of Russellian singular terms: the variety of the modes of identification involved in thoughts needed to understand utterances containing them, and the variety of ways in which associated information and modes of identification affect the conditions for successful communication by means of such utterances. See, for example, what Evans has in mind by variety on p. 305.

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differ in Fregean sense. Evans aims to steer between two extremes: he rejects Russell's obliteration of the distinction between sense and reference, yet he does not go to the other extreme of allowing sense without reference. Put more positively, his view of singular terms is that they are Russellian, but he allows that co-referring terms may differ in sense.

Frege held that the sense of a sentence, the thought that it expresses, must be common to speaker and hearer in successful communication. Evans denies this. In the case of ordinary proper names, for example, he suggests that it is sufficient for communication that speaker and hearer think of the right object. It is not in addition required that they both think of it in the same way. So the thought a speaker has in uttering a sentence containing a name may diverge from the thought the hearer has in understanding that utterance, even though there is no failure of communication. The point is that successful communication depends upon the appreciation by the hearer of conventionally relevant features of the utterance. In the case of proper names, Evans claims (briefly at p. 40, and as part of a full discussion in Ch. 11) that the conventions link no one way of thinking of the object with the name. Hence there is room for variations among competent speakers and successful communicators, consistently with what the linguistic conventions require.

In this kind of reflection, one can already discover an argument for the Russellian status of those singular terms which are like proper names in the respect just noted. The claim is that the Fregean condition for the communicatively successful use of such an expression is too strong. By what should we replace it? It seems as if what we must require, for a hearer to understand a speaker in his use of such a term, is that both think of its referent. So if there were no such object, the utterance could not be understood, so nothing would have been said, so the term would have no meaning. Hence such terms are Russellian.

Evans envisages this argumentative strategy as early as p. 72. It is amplified in Ch. 9.5 and it runs through the whole of Ch. 11 ("Proper Names"). But despite the interest of this chapter, the strategy is relatively peripheral to the book as a whole. For one thing he holds that it is not usable for every kind of Russellian singular term.³ For another thing, he holds that there is an independent, and more illuminating, strategy which reaches the same conclusion through considering the nature of thought, in particular, the nature of the thoughts needed in order to understand utterances containing such singular terms. The greater part of the book is devoted to this issue. The upshot is that

3 The exceptions are those for which it is plausible, even if incorrect, to impose a non-object-involving condition for successful communication. Thus for some uses of "That *G* is *F*" which are in fact Russellian, an opponent may be unpersuaded by the envisaged pattern of argument, for he may hold that a sufficient condition for understanding is that the hearer realize that the speaker has said something which is true if and only if exactly one thing is *G* and it is *F*. Cf. p. 136 and pp. 139–41.

for a wide range of singular terms the kinds of thoughts we must have in order to understand sentences containing them are thoughts that would be simply unavailable in the absence of a referent of the term. So if there were no such object, the term could not be understood, that is, it would have no meaning. So it is Russellian.

A large part of the book is concerned to investigate various kinds of thoughts about objects (“particular-thoughts”, as Evans calls them) and to relate them, in various different ways, to conditions for understanding various kinds of singular term. The book is complicated and (to my mind) difficult, so I will suggest some ways of breaking it up into manageable portions.

Part I (Chs 1–3) consists of a historical introduction relating to Frege, Russell, and recent work. The ground covered corresponds roughly to what has been discussed so far in this notice. The last chapter (Ch. 11) is the discussion of proper names, already mentioned. The penultimate chapter (Ch. 10) is a discussion of existence. Although this forms an essential part of the defence of Evans’s Russellian conception of singular terms, the problem being to explain how there could be true negative existential singular sentences, the argument is fairly self-contained. One could therefore read it before reading the rest, or defer reading it until afterwards.⁴

The remaining chapters can be roughly divided into two groups. Chapters 4, 5, and 9 set the general framework within which the main argument for the Russellian status of many singular terms is conducted. Here the two most important things are Russell’s principle (“A subject cannot make a judgement about something unless he knows which object his judgement is about” p. 89) and the idea of information-based thought and its linguistic image, information-invoking singular terms.

As Evans says, Russell’s principle, as just stated, is of no use without some further elaboration of *knowing which*. For on one reading the principle prohibits nothing (in one sense, of course the baffled detective *knows who* he is thinking about when he wonders who the murderer is: the murderer!); while on another it prohibits too much (in one sense, you may not *know who* the man you can see stealing the safe is). The remaining group of chapters, 6–8, can be seen, in part, as providing the needed analysis, applying it to various ways in which one can identify objects in thought (some demonstrative ways in Ch. 6, recognition-based ways in Ch. 8, and the self as a special case in Ch. 7). These chapters are of great interest independently of their place in the larger structure. None the less, one route through the book is this: pause for breath after Part I, get hold of the main argument for Russellian status, based on the nature of thought, and presented in Chs. 4, 5, and 9, fill in the details

4 Admittedly, if one were persuaded of the conception yet found the account of existence unsatisfactory, the appropriate response would be not that the conception must, after all, be defective, but rather that one must find an improved account of existence.

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with Chs. 6–8 (perhaps skipping Ch. 7 on the first reading); and the last two chapters can be picked off when convenient.

My principal aim will be to discuss what I have just referred to as the main argument for Russellian status. In addition, I shall discuss just one other issue: the account of existence sketched in Ch. 10. I thus neglect a great deal of extremely interesting material, notably from Chs 6–8 and 11. It is a matter of particular regret to have no space to discuss Ch. 7 (“The Self”), which is one of the most exciting in the book. It is notable for pushing further the idea, adumbrated in “Things Without the Mind” (Evans 1980), that thinking of oneself involves thinking of oneself as an element of objective reality. This is bound up with Evans’s conception of self-ascription, one upshot of which is that “our customary use of ‘I’ simply spans the gap between the mental and the physical” (236). But despite the attraction of these themes, I decided that readers, and also the book, would be best served if I confined my discussion to the question of Russellian status.

2 Information, communication, thought

2.1 Information-invoking singular terms and information-based thought

Evans’s account of thought about objects is governed by Russell’s principle:

A subject cannot make a judgement about something unless he knows which object his judgement is about (89).

He holds that there are three central kinds of *knowing which*, or, as he calls them, kinds of modes of identification: descriptive, demonstrative, and recognition-based.⁵ These always enter into the determination of the identity of thoughts, though they do not necessarily enter (in any straightforward way: see 2.2 below) into the determination of the identity of the unit of communication.

There is no simple link between singular terms and kinds of mode of identification. Thus an utterance of “That *G* was *F*” may express a thought involving the descriptive kind of mode of identification, if the identification exploits the fact that the object is or was uniquely *G* (cf. p. 135). (Note that the descriptive kind of mode of identification must be firmly dissociated from definite descriptions, assuming that these are treated quantificationally. A quantificational phrase, even when it includes a uniqueness condition,

⁵ I shall reserve “mode of identification” for something highly specific. But I shall allow “kind of mode of identification” to include more specific kinds than the three just mentioned, e.g., the perceptual kind (a species of the demonstrative kind).

imposes no requirement of identification.) An utterance of the same sentence may also express a thought in which recognition-based identification is involved, for example if I recognize a currently perceived *G* as one previously encountered. And an utterance of the same sentence may, if used in connection with a *G* currently perceived, and not recognitionally identified, express a thought involving demonstrative identification. Where an object is identified by the mode of identification involved in a thought, let us call it the thought's *Object*. Evans uses "object" in this quasi-technical sense (pp. 138–9), though he does not stress it by the initial capital.⁶

Very often, in thinking about an object a subject possesses information flowing from that object. Information includes misinformation (121). A central example is perception, but memory and testimony also provide such an informational link. Information can be supposed to be expressible by an open sentence (122, 125). Thus the informational content of a photograph of a red ball on top of a yellow square can be reported by the open sentence:

Red(*x*) & Ball(*x*) & Yellow(*y*) & Square(*y*) & On Top Of(*x*,*y*) (p. 125).

Information (with content *Fx*) "controls" a thought of a particular object if and only if the subject, thanks to acquiring and retaining the information, is disposed to "appreciate and evaluate" thoughts about the object as thoughts about an *F* thing (p. 122). For example, suppose a subject is looking at a black and white cat he has not previously encountered or heard about. The content of his perception, and no other information, will control his thought about the cat:

He will be able to entertain the thought that the cat is ginger, but he will, of course, grasp it as false; whereas the thought or speculation that the cat is a favourite of Queen Elizabeth will be grasped as having the (probable) consequence that Queen Elizabeth likes black and white cats; and so on (p. 121).

I presume that informational content could be expressed as a generalization as well as by an open sentence. If so, then we could say that a perceptual informational content, expressible as a perceptual content as of *a* black and white cat, interacts with a speculation (that that cat is a favourite of Queen Elizabeth) to yield a thought recognized as a probable consequence of the speculation. The information, *Fx* or $\exists xFx$, is thus linked to the subject's thought of an object in that the subject reasons as if he had the premiss

⁶ The reference here is to an appendix. Though John McDowell, the editor, warns (p. vi) that some of the material in Appendices may not be verbatim Evans, I treat the book throughout as the work of a single hand.

(which he need not hold explicitly), concerning the object, that it is *F*. (Evans says that we must not hold in general that information possessed is information believed (p. 123). But he holds that for information to control thought it must be believed: “the thought-episode will manifest a belief about the world”, p. 122; cf. also Ch. 9.4 and esp. pp. 331–2.)

In having particular-thoughts which are controlled by information, the subject’s overriding purpose is to be thinking of the object from which the information derives (p. 138). He aims at this object, which Evans calls his *target*, but, as with literal aiming, he may miss it: “as happens when the mode of identification employed does not identify that object” (p. 138). We can now characterize a necessary condition for the existence of an information-based thought about a particular object: in such thinking, Object and target must coincide. That is, the same thing must be that which is identified by the mode of identification involved, and that which is the source of the information controlling the thought. (This simple picture requires modification in the light of Evans’s discussion on pp. 316–18, but I shall ignore the complicating factors.) As Evans puts it:

Only if these two procedures [viz: that which determines Object and that which determines target] locate the same object can the subject be credited with an information-based particular-thought about that object (p. 139).

No such condition governs the having of purely descriptive (i.e. quantificational) thoughts. For the notion of target plays no role in stating the condition for having such thoughts.

Information-based thoughts have a property analogous to the property of being Russellian, as applied to singular terms. If a mode of identification in fact identifies nothing, then it cannot figure in an information-based thought about an object, for the condition of coincidence of target and Object cannot be satisfied. So for an information-based thought having *o* as its Object, had *o* not existed, that thought could not have existed.⁷ Exploiting this analogy, Evans calls thoughts meeting this condition Russellian (cf. pp. 71–2). Evans

⁷ There is room for doubt about the correctness of this interpretation, which sees the Russellian status of information-based thoughts as an immediate consequence of their definition. Evans’s discussion in Ch. 9, and especially 9.4 and the remarks at pp. 326–7, suggest that Evans takes their Russellian status to be a substantive thesis. I suspect that there are alternative presentations. On my interpretation, the substantive issue is whether information-invoking singular terms, characterized in some superficial way, require information-based thoughts for their understanding. On the alternative interpretation, the substantive issue is whether information-based thoughts are Russellian (information-invoking singular terms can be characterized as those requiring information-based thoughts for their understanding). Essentially the same arguments will address either of these substantive issues.

has earlier warned that it is no part of the proposal that one who tries to think such a thought, but fails through lack of an appropriate object, has a wholly vacant mind (p. 45). On the contrary, it may be for him as if he had such a thought, and this may involve images and words passing through his mind and the having of *other* thoughts, for example general thoughts. This view about thought is perfectly consistent with the following view about thought-expression: where an attempt to *express* a Russellian thought (e.g., in the words “This G is F”) fails because there is no appropriate object, no thought correctly attributable to the subject, on the strength of his utterance, counts as the thought expressed, in virtue of the linguistic conventions, by those words thus used.

So much for the account of what information-based thought is. The role it plays in the main argument is as follows. Evans claims that for many singular terms one must think an information-based thought in order to understand utterances containing them (see esp. Ch. 9.4). Information-based thoughts are, as we have seen, Russellian (and this follows more or less immediately from their definition). Hence the singular terms are Russellian: if they did not refer, there could be no thought sufficient for understanding utterances containing them, that is, they would not be significant. In giving his examples of information-based thoughts in the detailed discussions of Chs. 6–8, Evans has, of course, used sentences to express these thoughts. So to some extent the work has been done. None the less, Ch. 9 contains the official general argument.

As expressed in that chapter, the task is to show that “information-invoking singular terms” require information-based thoughts for their understanding. But how are we to identify an information-invoking singular term? At the outset, it should not be so classified in virtue of requiring an information-based thought for its understanding, on pain of trivializing the thesis. Later, of course, we can use the need for information-based thought to effect a principled classification of singular terms. As an example of this general strategy, consider this passage from the discussion of demonstratives in Ch. 6.

If our conception of demonstrative identification is tied in a simple way to the use of demonstrative expressions in English, then we shall include in that category cases like the one in which a man is indicated by means of his footprint. . . . Nothing general may be said about such a rag-bag category (p. 199).

The way to end up with a category with genuine unity is to distinguish it *semantically*. Reverting to our discussion of Ch. 9, however, we need some initial specification of an information-invoking singular term which leaves a substantive thesis to be established.

Although Evans is not very explicit, we can initially say that an information-invoking singular term is one typically intended, as used in an utterance,

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to make the hearer bring to bear, in understanding the utterance, information antecedently in his possession. It is far from immediate that such utterances require information-based thoughts for their understanding. For, first, it is one thing for the speaker to intend that information be brought to bear in understanding, and another thing for the bringing to bear of this information to be required for understanding. Secondly, since information includes mis-information it may seem that bringing information to bear does not even require that the hearer have a belief corresponding to the information, and if he needs no such belief he may not need an information-based thought. Thirdly, even if the hearer believes the information, it may seem that it would be possible for the belief to be false, in which case the route to Russellian status will be blocked. On my reading of Ch. 9, Evans addresses the first question by means of examples, and the second two by general considerations.

On the first point, consider the following passage:

If a speaker utters the sentence “This man is *F*”, making a demonstrative reference to a man in the environment he shares with the hearer, the hearer can understand the remark only if he perceives the man concerned, and, bringing his perceptual information to bear upon his interpretation of the remark, judges “This man is *F*: that’s what the speaker is saying” (p. 305)

Although one cannot call this an argument, it strikes me as convincing. At another point, Evans envisages the following situation.

S and *A* were in the habit of going hunting together in their youth. On one of their hunting trips, they saw a dazzlingly beautiful bird perched in a pine tree. Years later, *S* (the speaker) may advert to this incident, and say something like: “Do you remember that bird we saw years ago? I wonder whether it was shot” (p. 308).

Evans claims that *A* does not fully understand the speculation (that that bird was shot) until he has connected *S*’s use of the phrase “that bird” with information *already in his possession* (my emphasis), information which relates to that bird. No matter how fully *S* may go on to describe the bird, *A* will not understand the original remark until the connection has been made, a connection often manifested in a flash of recollection.

I think we can take it that these examples show that there are many cases in which understanding requires activation of antecedently possessed information. The examples also suggest that an information link to the referent is required, and this would ensure Russellian status for the singular term. However, we do not have to rely on the examples to establish this.

Given that information must somehow be brought to bear in understanding

an utterance, must a Russellian thought be involved? One alternative suggestion is this. Suppose that in the utterance “ t is F ” the use of “ t ” invokes information or misinformation representable as “ ϕ_1, \dots, ϕ_n ”. Then understanding the utterance could be held to consist in the realization that what the speaker said is true if and only if something is ϕ_1 and \dots ϕ_n and F . This exploits the invoked information, but does not require, on the part of the understander, a Russellian thought. For, in particular, no commitment is extracted from the hearer that “ t ” refers or that anything answers to the information (cf. p. 328).

Evans allows (p. 329) that this sort of picture is approximately right for a singular term like “Julius”, introduced by the explicit stipulation “Let us call whoever invented the zip ‘Julius’”. The reason is that understanding such a remark requires being faithful to the speaker’s conception of the object, because the speaker’s intention, in using such a term, is that the referent be identified *as* the possessor of the property of inventing the zip. The speaker’s overriding intention is to convey his conception, and this can be achieved even in the absence of any object it concerns (cf. pp. 328–9). But this is not the case with information-invoking singular terms. Though the speaker intends his hearer to bring information to bear, there may be no information concerning which the speaker has this intention, and the information the hearer quite properly brings to bear, honouring the speaker’s intentions, may not figure in the content of a belief of the speaker’s about the referent.

So in bringing to bear the information, the hearer is not merely following a path laid out for him by the speaker. He must draw upon his own resources in order to select *appropriate* information. Evans suggests that this selection must be made as follows:

the only possible justification of the belief that, if what the speaker said is true, there is something which is ϕ_1, \dots, ϕ_n and F is that it follows from some belief of the form “The speaker is referring to a ”, together with a view as to how things stand with a (p. 329).

In other words, the hearer knows which information to bring to bear in virtue of knowing what the speaker is referring to. He then brings to bear the information he believes pertains to that object.

This is one natural interpretation of Evans. It may appear hopelessly circular. For are we not using the notion of reference to explain the notion of reference? In more detail, was not associated information to be used to explain what is involved in understanding a referring expression? And in this case must it not be incorrect to appeal to a prior identification of the term’s referent en route to an identification of the appropriate information?

I am not sure. It should be remembered that, for Evans, there are many kinds of referring expression. There are non-Russellian non-information-invoking ones like “Julius” and Russellian but non-information-invoking

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ones like “here”. The idea of a referring expression in general is anchored by the argument that purported to show that “Julius” should be so classified (pp. 49–50), so there is no general reason why it should not appear in the explicans at this point. And if the more specific version of the worry about circularity is meant to suggest that a speaker could first tell what information was appropriate and then go on to identify the referent, it appears to express a doomed hope: the hope is seen as doomed once it is accepted that understanding a remark may require the bringing to bear of information even though the speaker has no intentions concerning this information, and so cannot manifest in his utterance what information is to be brought to bear. So I think that the fear of circularity is misplaced.

Accepting this much by no means completes the argument. For one objection is: is it not enough that the hearer believes that the speaker is referring to something? He can bring information to bear on the basis of this belief, even if the belief is not true.

Against this objection, Evans argues that understanding is a species of knowledge, and knowledge cannot be based on false belief.

Truth is seamless; there can be no truth which it requires acceptance of a falsehood to appreciate (p. 331).*

There remains a category of objections of which one example is this. Suppose that it is rumoured that there is someone called “Jack” who is F_1, \dots and F_n . Suppose I know part of this rumour and know that it is not merely false, but a total fabrication, not originating in anyone’s actual deeds. Suppose I also know that you know part of the rumour and believe that it is true. If you now utter the words “Jack is G ” surely I can understand what you say. I know that I am to bring information to bear, so the example is consistent with “Jack” being an information-invoking singular term (on a superficial characterization of this category), and I bring appropriate information to bear. But there is no object involved, and I do not even believe that there is. (This objection thus respects the “seamlessness of truth”, though there are obvious variants which do not.)

Objections of this category Evans classifies as ones involving pretence. He would describe the case not as one in which I understand your remark, but as one in which I pretend to do so. In general, he allows that something *very like* understanding empty information-invoking singular terms (or rather apparent singular terms) can occur in cases of pretence (cf. pp. 330, 339–40). To modify the “Jack” example so that no one is deceived, imagine that you and I share a magic mushroom and are victims of similar perceptual experiences.

* [Added note]: This argument is discussed further in essay IX below.

As hardened users, we recognize these to be hallucinations. If I utter “That little green man is *F*”, it *seems* that the fact that the subject expression does not refer is no barrier to your understanding what I said, and that the use of the expression invokes the information (misinformation, of course) contained in the hallucination. But Evans asks that these cases be set aside for special treatment (Ch. 10; and see §3 of this chapter):

A proper appreciation of the nature and extent of linguistic pretence holds the key to an adequate theory of reference. For it, and it alone, enables us to hold on to the insight that singular terms are (generally speaking) Russellian, while taking a realistic and credible view of phenomena apparently inconsistent with that insight (p. 340).

This is a powerful weapon: it certainly seems that the apparently most compelling counterexamples to Evans’s theory can be brought within this category.

I defer all criticism of Evans’s account until 2.3 below. I now simply note its consequences for communication. This will explain how the view that two co-referring expressions may differ in sense is implemented.

2.2 Communication

Frege held that communication requires speaker and hearer to associate the same thought with the words used. Evans departs from this view (see e.g. pp. 315–16). Counterexamples, for him, are proper names, pronouns like “I” and “you”, and even demonstratives like “that ship”, used of a ship before the eyes.

We have two distinct continua. On the one hand, there is one set by the degree to which understanding a singular utterance involves not merely identifying the object, but doing so in a particular way. Many proper names rank low on this continuum: it is not merely that speaker and hearer may communicate successfully while exploiting quite different modes of identification of the name’s bearer, but rather that, for the speaker, almost any old mode of identification is one whose use by the hearer will not thwart the speaker’s communicative intentions. (Not all proper names, or not quite any old mode, else there will be no room for an account of a *mis*understanding of “Hesperus” as though it meant what “Phosphorus” means.) By contrast, “I” and “that *G*” (used of an object perceived) rank high on the continuum. Understanding an “I” utterance requires identifying the utterer and realizing that he is the referent of the pronoun. One has not understood the utterance if, for example, one comes to think of the utterer, but does not think of him as the utterer. In the case of “that *G*”, understanding requires demonstrative, in the envisaged case perceptual, identification of the referent.

The other continuum is set by the degree to which the mode of identification the speaker himself uses must resemble that which an understander is to use. Proper names are again at the low end of this continuum, for the reasons already given; and “that *G*”, understood as before, is again at the high end. But “*I*”, by contrast, is at the lowest end of this continuum. Where speaker and hearer are distinct, each must use very different modes of identification, indeed different kinds of modes of identification: the speaker uses self-identification, the hearer does not.

Consider two cases. (1) A speaker looking at a ship through one window, w_1 , says “that ship was built in Japan”. His hearer, thanks to his position in the room, cannot see the ship through w_1 , but can see it through another window, w_2 . Their ways of identifying the ship are similar, but not the same. They exploit the same kind of mode of identification, viz., the perceptual kind, but different modes within this kind. However, the similarity is good enough for successful communication: the hearer can be credited with understanding the speaker. (2) A thinker, looking through w_1 , believes something expressible by “that ship was built in Japan”. Looking through w_2 a moment later, he does not believe something expressible by “that ship was built in Japan”. He does not realize that the ship he sees through w_1 is the same as the ship he sees through w_2 . If we are to avoid the contradiction that the thinker both is and is not related to a single thought by the belief relation, we must distinguish the w_1 -thought from the w_2 -thought (cf. p. 84).⁸ For Evans, the distinction emerges from the differences in the specific modes of identification. They are similar, sufficiently similar to have permitted understanding of a related utterance, as in (1), but none the less they differ in that on the one occasion the object is located at one place relative to the subject, on the other at another.*

For Evans, Frege ran together two ideas under the label “thought expressed by a sentence”. One is the idea of what is conventionally required to understand a sentence. Another is what is in the subject’s mind in virtue of thinking something expressible by the sentence. The first idea gives rise to a relatively coarse-grained specification (the degree of coarseness varying from one singular term to another), apt for giving a realistic account of communication (cf. p. 40). The second idea gives rise to a much finer-grained specification, too fine-grained to give a sensible account of communication, but required for a fully specific account of how things are with a thinker.

⁸ Evans notes that this example is similar to one used by John Perry (1977: 483). It is an accident that the case turns on spatial difference. It is useful to reconstruct it in terms of temporal difference. Evans would presumably have to insist that for the thoughts to differ there will have to be a phenomenal difference with respect to time like that with respect to space.

* [Added note]: Essay VIII below contains further discussion of this example.

Accordingly, one must give a divided answer to the question how Evans implements his adherence to the distinction between sense and reference. If sense is regarded as determining the unit of communication, then the distinction will manifest itself (as perhaps in the case of “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus”) in the conventional association with different modes of identification of two terms for the same referent.⁹ There is a more important implementation of the sense/reference distinction, more naturally stated at the level of thought than at the level of language. If thoughts ascribe the same property to the same object, they can none the less be distinct if they involve different ways of presenting the object, that is, different modes of identification.

2.3 Two objections to Evans’s view of thoughts

I wish to consider two rather general objections, both discussed by Evans, which serve to make the broad outline of his position stand out more boldly.

As I have said, his view lies between two extremes, and this goes as much for his view of thoughts as for his view of singular terms. At one extreme is Russell’s view, on which the existence of Russellian thoughts is, of course, granted, but it is denied that there can be *two* such thoughts predicating the same property of the same object. At the other extreme is the view which some, though not Evans, attribute to Frege, on which there is no problem about allowing thoughts to be distinct, even though they predicate the same property of the same object, but it is denied that thoughts are Russellian. Let us call these, respectively, the Russellian and the Fregean poles. Evans, of course, has a view combining elements from each pole: Russellian status together with allowing the Fregean distinction.

At the Russellian pole, thoughts about objects are seen as having the identity conditions of sequences: a thought in which an n -ary property is ascribed to n objects can be regarded as a sequence of $n + 1$ entities, the property followed by n objects. The view must be coupled with an account of the conditions under which a subject can think of an object. One such account, which Evans takes as a prime target, is what he calls the Photograph Model. Evans attributes its popularity to a misunderstanding of Kripke (Ch. 3.4).

It is sufficient for a photograph to be of an object, X , that X played a suitable causal role in its origin (cf. p. 78). In a similar vein, Kripke (1972)

9 We need here an intermediate level of classification of modes of identification: we need something more specific than kind of mode of identification, but less specific than a single mode: *ranges* of modes of identification, perhaps.

One must beware of thinking that it follows that there is any purely descriptive specification of such a range of modes. On the contrary, one may be able only to *show* the range, e.g., by re-using the term in a sentence like “‘Hesperus’ refers to Hesperus”. Cf. p. 26 and also McDowell (1977).

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suggested that it is sufficient for someone's utterance to involve reference to an object, *X*, that *X* played a suitable causal role in the origin of the utterance. Evans does not enter any objection to this, despite the fact that it is a theory of sayings which fails to enter the kinds of restrictions that would be required by Russell's principle *if* referring to *X* entailed thinking of *X*. For Evans denies the entailment. He claims (p. 74) that if one uses a proper name, facts concerning other people in the name-using community as a whole may make it the case that one has spoken of the name's referent, even though individual facts concerning just oneself (the only facts relevant to what one is thinking) do not ensure that one has really thought of its referent. In general:

The abandonment of [Russell's principle] at the level of saying is a trivial consequence of the distinction between what one says and what thought one intends to express (p. 76, n. 18).

What Evans does object to, however, is that "later synthesisers and bandwagon performers" (p. 79) have confused Kripke's Photograph Model of sayings with a Photograph Model of thoughts. The latter is the view that it is sufficient for someone's thought to concern an object, *X*, that *X* played a suitable causal role in the ancestry of the thought-episode. The view is objectionable, according to Evans, because it abandons Russell's principle and thereby "encourages" (p. 82: he does not say "entails") the sequence theory of thought. This Photograph Model of thoughts is, then, the first of the two general objections I wish to consider.

Evans uses various examples to try to persuade us of the incorrectness of the Model. One is this:

On a certain day in the past, a subject briefly observed two indistinguishable steel balls suspended from the same point and rotating about it (p. 90. For other examples, see pp. 149–59 (hearing on the radio), and pp. 164–7 (the submarine).)

The subject knows no facts which would discriminate the two balls. Can he think of one ball, rather than the other? It is not clear that the Photograph Model need deliver an affirmative answer, since it may be held that in this case there has been a merging of causal lines (whereas what is required, it may be said, for a thought-episode to concern an object, *X*, is that there be a single causal line running from *X* to the episode). However, Evans considers a variant of the case, which does not raise this problem. We are to suppose that the subject saw each ball on a different day, but that selective amnesia has obliterated the memory of one incident. This makes it plain that the origin of the current thought (if there is one) lies in just one of the two balls. But can the subject really think of this ball? The problem, according to Evans, is that

There is no question of his recognizing the ball; and there is nothing else he can do which will show that his thought is really about one of the two balls (about *that ball*), rather than about the other. The supposed thought – the supposed surplus over the *ex hypothesi* non-individuating descriptive thought – is apparently not connected to anything (p. 115).

By this stage in the argument, Evans has introduced the notion of the “fundamental level of thought” (Ch. 4.4), an account, roughly, of a canonical way of thinking, in terms of which he hopes to elucidate the notion of *knowing which*. The fundamental level presupposes Russell’s principle, so it cannot be used, in any direct way, as a basis on which to reject an alleged counterexample to that principle. We also have in play the “Generality Constraint” (cf. p. 75, n. 15), which requires that if someone can think about an object that it is *F*, he must also be able to think about it that it is *G*, for any concept *G* which he possesses. But simply so far as intuitions go, even as expanded by the generality constraint, there is nothing to be extracted from the case which would serve Evans’s purpose. This becomes plain if we hold before our minds the distinction between whether the subject is really thinking about that ball and whether *he knows that* it is that ball he is thinking of. The Photograph Model claims only that the subject can think of that ball, not that he can know that he is thinking of it. For those already persuaded of Russell’s principle, this will be a distinction without a difference. But the position is meant to be that the adherent of the Photograph Model proposes the case as a counterexample to Russell’s principle. So Evans cannot defend himself by simply drawing upon the principle.

The Photograph Model theorist might argue as follows. If you have seen just one ball, and there are no further relevant circumstances, there can be no doubt but that you can subsequently think of it. Further, if you have seen just one ball, and you also very nearly, though not quite, saw a second indistinguishable one (you would have seen it had not someone quite fortuitously decided to put it into a cupboard), then again you must be able to think of the only one you saw. A mere possibility cannot affect the actuality of thought. But how does this differ from the case under discussion, in which though two balls are seen, the memory of one incident is obliterated? Since the second ball now impinges in no way upon your consciousness, its nullified impact can make no difference to whether or not you can think of the first one.

The problem for Evans is this: can he allow the uncontroversial fact mentioned at the beginning of the previous paragraph without thereby committing himself to the rest? If the subject encounters just one ball, the fact remains that he has at best a seemingly low-grade recognitional capacity with respect to it: he could not distinguish it from other indistinguishable balls. Matters are made no *worse* by changing to the case in which the subject has encountered two balls: with respect to either ball, he has only the low-grade recognitional capacity he had when only one ball was involved. The

upshot is that, for Evans, what makes the difference between the two cases – the first being one in which the subject can think of the ball, the second being one in which, according to Evans, he cannot think of the only ball that is currently impinging upon him – cannot flow from any qualitative difference in the recognitional capacities.

Evans grapples with what is in effect this problem in Ch. 8.3 and also in the Appendix to Ch. 8. The solution of the Appendix is to say that more is involved, in the capacity to think of an object in this sort of case, than the (defeasible) ability to know, if one were to re-encounter it, that one has done so. What is additionally required is that one can more or less definitely locate an encounter with it in one's own past (p. 300). The trouble is that this addition does not help in the case of the steel balls (where two balls have been encountered, but the memory of one incident obliterated), since the subject may be able to locate his encounter with the one ball which now impinges upon him with an accuracy which, while insufficient to distinguish the encounter from the forgotten one with the other ball, satisfies any reasonable general condition. Suppose, for example, that the incidents were a few moments apart. Any reasonable general condition is met by one who correctly holds that the encounter occurred when he was visiting the metal-lurgy department in London on Wednesday last between 11 and 12 in the morning.

It may be that Evans was wrong to think that his theory requires him to diverge, in this case, from the Photograph Model. The essence of the position he has to defend, against the Model, is that having a particular-thought is knowledge-involving: you must know which object your thought concerns. This contrasts with the view of the Model, according to which having a thought is like perceiving: it may take place even when you are in no position to gain knowledge of the object involved. Evans must therefore hold that a situation which would prevent any knowledge of an object would prevent any thought of that object. But it is unclear that this is threatened by the case of the steel balls. We might well agree that the earlier version of the case, in which there is no amnesia, is one in which the possibility of knowledge is destroyed. But we have already seen that the case is not then one in which it is clear that the Model entails that the subject can think of one of the balls. And we might feel as disinclined to think that the second version, with amnesia, is knowledge-destroying as we would be to hold that a man who cannot tell fake ducks from real ones, and who is in an environment where there were once plenty of fakes, but these have now all been destroyed, cannot now know, upon encountering a (real) duck, that he is encountering a duck. More generally, disagreement here may be not over the question of whether particular-thoughts are knowledge-involving, but rather over the conditions under which knowledge is possible.

Evans agrees that not much should hang on unprincipled intuition, especially as, he claims, we tend to confuse the phenomenon we should be

concerned with (whether a subject can think of an object) with unrelated questions, like whether he has a certain object “in mind” (see Ch. 5.3).

The Photograph Model is said to “encourage” the sequence theory of thought, and Evans has a decisive refutation of this theory. We saw above that it is quite coherent to suppose that a subject is belief-related to a thought ascribing a property to an object and not belief-related to a thought ascribing the same property to the same object. On the sequence theory, the thoughts are the same, and so the supposition would be contradictory, which it is not. Hence the sequence theory is false.

We have here a refutation of the Photograph Model only if the Model entails the sequence theory. Evans gives no elaboration of the Model which would enable us to tell whether this entailment holds. In connection with the kind of case which refutes the sequence theory, Evans says, speaking of the Model, that it is “quite obscure” *how*

the sheer difference between the causal relations could generate a difference in *content* between the two mental states, given that it need not in any way impinge on the subject’s awareness (p. 83).

But we could well imagine the Model augmented in various ways, ways suggested by the original photographic analogy. This spoke of a “*suitable* causal role”. Whatever its causal origin, a uniformly black print is not a photograph of a magnolia in full flower. The “*suitable*” causal role must involve a requirement that information is, to some degree, preserved. This suggests that the Model does not entail the sequence theory. Though not every difference in the causal origin of a thought will “impinge on the subject’s awareness”, the Photograph Model theorist will seize upon differences that do thus impinge. So the knock-down argument against the sequence theory leaves the Model untouched.

What one would need to consider, to decide this issue, is whether a full elaboration of the Photograph Model’s implicit requirement of some level of match between object and consciousness could stop short of requiring Russell’s principle. I incline to think that it can, just as perception can require, in addition to the mere fact of causation, some level of match, without thereby issuing in an account which guarantees that a subject who can perceive an object is, merely thereby, in a position to gain knowledge of it.

I conclude that Evans’s discussion of the steel balls, taken by itself, ought not to cause the Photograph Model to be abandoned. The crucial issue of whether particular-thought is knowledge-involving *could* not be settled by this case, except in the presence of a quite detailed theory of knowledge. Evans’s main contribution to the debate lies not so much in his discussion of this example, but in his detailed discussions of the various kinds of modes of identification.

In reacting against the Russellian pole, represented by the sequence theory

and its alleged ally, the Photograph Model, there is a natural tendency to swing at once to the Fregean pole. What was wrong with the sequence theory was that it left no room for the different ways in which an object can be represented in our thought. But if a thought is to consist in *representations* of objects and properties, then it seems that it cannot be Russellian: for a representation could exist even if it fails to represent anything.

This is precisely the move which Evans rejects. His claim that some thoughts are Russellian is just the claim (transposed into the present terminology) that some representations are so related to their objects that, were the object not to exist, nor could that representation. In “representation of *a*”, “*a*” figures, for Evans, not just as a specifier of causal origin but as a specifier of content.

we . . . need . . . a distinction between, on the one hand, an *a*-representation (i.e. a species of particular-representation, in a specification of whose content mention of *a* would figure: something which represents, or misrepresents, *a*), and, on the other, something which, without being an *a*-representation, is a representation of *a* (p. 125, n. 10).

A view of thought and representation which apparently rivals Evans’s is this. When we think of a particular object, the thought in itself is non-Russellian: it is a thought which, in other circumstances, would have been a thought of a different object, and in yet other circumstances would have been a thought of nothing at all. What makes a thought concern one object rather than another, or concern any object at all, is the causal relationship between the thinker and his environment.

This source of opposition to Evans’s theory could press into service the Photograph Model discussed earlier. The thought will correspond to the informational content of the photograph, where this is conceived to be specifiable quite independently of what objects there are (cf. p. 125). Whether a photograph is of any object at all (as opposed to being a result of darkroom trickery), and if so of what, is a matter of the photograph’s causal history.

There is an analogue with perception. We tend to hold that perceptual experience may have a content irrespective of whether the experience is of an object, or of which object it is of. Facts of the last sort are determined by the experience’s causal history (though, as mentioned earlier, this may be a complicated story, involving such notions as preservation of information).

On the view in question, the supposition that Descartes’s evil genius really exists entails that all our beliefs about the material world are false. On Evans’s view, the particular-beliefs we actually have would be unavailable under this supposition, and so would not be available even to be false.

A theoretical reason sometimes advanced for the anti-Evans view is this: thoughts explain actions, and adequate explanations must draw on only the intrinsic properties of the things involved in the facts to be explained. But

Evans's view fails to respect this requirement, since he holds that particular-thoughts are not intrinsic to the thinker (the existence of the thought requires the existence of something other than the thinker).

This kind of anti-Evans view may be implemented in two ways. It may be held that all thought is really general. Which object a speaker is thinking of, though it is a question which can be made intelligible, has no bearing either upon the identity of the thought or upon its truth conditions. (This is like Russell's view of descriptive thought: in such thinking an object may be "denoted", but which object, if any, is denoted is irrelevant to the existence or truth-conditions of the thought.) There are plenty of arguments against this view, in Evans and elsewhere. One main line of objection is that in many cases it seems impossible to find a general proposition which both has appropriate truth conditions and is also one that it is psychologically plausible to attribute to the subject.

I shall discuss the other way in which the anti-Evans view can be implemented. On this way, it is accepted that no general proposition captures the truth conditions associated with successful particular-thoughts: the relevant truth conditions are irreducibly singular. But it is held that the thoughts themselves owe neither their identity nor their existence to any truth conditions which may be associated with them. Whether a particular-thought has truth conditions and, if so, what these are is a matter of its causal origin. If such a thought has the extrinsic feature of appropriate causal origin involving an object, *o*, then *o* will enter into its truth conditions; otherwise, the thought has no truth conditions.

Evans identifies this view as the dual component theory (cf. p. 201). His main argument against it is that it makes thoughts into schemata. But schemata cannot represent the world as being thus-and-so; for representing is correct or incorrect, and schemata can be neither.

The objection is simple. It is of the essence of a representational state that it be capable of assessment as true or false. If a state is a representational state, it represents something other than itself as being thus and so. . . . But a schema is not assessable as true or false, nor is any state whose "content" can be given only in schematic terms assessable as true or false (p. 202).

One can imagine a version of the dual component theory of which it might be said that it differs only terminologically from Evans's position. Suppose we reserve "thought" for something which essentially has truth conditions. The dual-component theorist of the kind I envisage will agree with Evans that particular-thoughts are Russellian. Suppose we reserve "thought*" for the intrinsically mental component dear to the dual component theorist. Let the theorist agree that thoughts* are not representations (in Evans's sense), but only schemata; that they do not themselves essentially

possess truth conditions, though in favourable circumstances they may be associated with truth conditions. Thoughts* are evidently non-Russellian. Can Evans agree with the dual component theorist that there exist thoughts*? Indeed, that anyone who has a thought must have a thought*?

Consider a case in which a subject, *S*, thinks, on earth, of an object, *a*, that it is *F*. His Doppelgänger on Twin Earth, *S'*, thinks of *a*'s Doppelgänger, *a'*, that it is *F*. Evans can, and does, allow not only that *S* and *S'* are in a similar condition (there is a *general* disposition which each possesses), but also that the respect in which they differ (their thinking different thoughts) "results from" (p. 204) this similar condition: the general disposition, together with the distinct environment, yields the different specific conditions, one *a*-related, the other *a'*-related. So it would seem that there should be no quarrel between Evans and this brand of dual component theorist. (One should also bear in mind that it is no part of Evans's position that the mind of one who essays, but, through absence of any appropriate object, fails to attain, a particular-thought is wholly vacant (p. 45). Indeed, Evans allows (e.g. p. 203) that for such a person it will be just as if he were having a particular-thought.)

Substantial disagreement would occur if the dual component theorist were to hold that only thoughts* and not thoughts count as genuinely *mental*. Against the view that all genuinely mental states are intrinsic to the subject, Evans has an argument that I think is both illuminating and decisive (p. 203). Let it be agreed that an adequate explanation of actions can be given entirely in terms of the agent's mental states. Actions, however, the explicanda, are often singular. We want know why a subject greeted *that person*, and not merely why he greeted someone having certain general characteristics; why he blamed *himself*, and not merely why he blamed a person having certain general characteristics; and so on. We must explain not merely why *S* reacted so violently to an object having the general features shared by *a* and *a'*, but why he reacted to *a* as opposed to *a'*. (Answer: he could see *a* but could not see *a'*.) The need for Russellian thoughts in our psychological descriptions is correlative with our need to explain *object-related behaviour* in the way that we do. Perhaps this is not the pattern of explanation sought in natural science. If there is a biological explanation of human behaviour, perhaps it will involve only intrinsic states of organisms. If so, this is because it will describe the explicanda in general terms. This would be simply one more reason for seeing biological explanations as quite distinct in kind and purpose from our everyday explanations in terms of mental states. It is no reason for holding that all genuinely *mental* states are intrinsic.

3 Existence

In fiction, and also in less systematic and self-conscious cases of pretence, expressions which appear to be singular terms are used in what appears to be a non-Russellian way. "Hamlet" and "that little green man" appear to be

singular terms, and yet also appear to be usable in make-believe contexts to express thoughts even though these involve no (real) Hamlet, and no (real) little green man. An opponent of Evans's account may take both appearances at face value, saying that the expressions are, even in these contexts, being genuinely used as singular terms, but non-Russellian ones.

The problem comes into especial prominence in the case of true singular negative existential sentences. Taking the sentences as genuinely singular (as opposed to being denials of existential generalizations) seems to force us to regard the apparent singular terms as being used really as singular terms. Taking the sentences as true seems to involve regarding such apparent singular terms as non-Russellian.

The general pattern of Evans's response is as follows. The fictional use of apparently non-Russellian singular terms is not inconsistent with the overall Russellian conception. For the fictional use is typically not a real use, in which a genuine thought is expressed, and the possibility of genuine understanding created, but only a pretend use, in which it is pretended that a thought is expressed, and the possibility created is not of genuine understanding, but only of an imitation of understanding which Evans calls "quasi-understanding". In their fictional use, their role in the pretence is the fictional image of the role of Russellian singular terms used in non-fictional contexts: whatever properties an expression of that category (say a proper name or a complex demonstrative) would have in non-fictional contexts are mimicked in fictional ones, including such properties as being Russellian, being information-linked, and so on.

To have a counterexample to the claim of the Russellian status of the kind of singular terms with which Evans is concerned, we would need to find an expression of the kind that was a singular term but not Russellian. If we view expressions like "Hamlet", which are supposed to be counterexamples, from outside the fiction, then we must agree that they are non-Russellian but not that they are singular terms. If we view them from within the fiction, we must agree that they are (make-believedly) singular terms; but they are also (make-believedly) Russellian.

This does not address the problem of negative existentials, for here the (apparent) singular terms are not being used in a fictional context: the problematic sentences are problematic precisely because they are genuinely true.

Various features of audience reaction to fiction have to be understood as involving a *serious* exploitation of it, serious in that what is said or thought can be properly assessed for genuine (and not just fictional) truth or falsity. Evans's treatment of singular negative existentials sees them as involving such a serious use.

The general idea is that someone who utters such a sentence should be likened to someone who makes a move within a pretence in order to express the fact that it is a pretence. He is not like someone who tries to

prevent a theatre audience from being too carried away by jumping up on the stage and saying: “Look, these men are only actors, and there is no scaffold or buildings here – there are only props.” Rather, he is like someone who jumps up on the stage and says: “Look, Suzanne and the thief over there are only characters in a play, and this scaffold and these buildings are just props.” The audience must be engaged, or be prepared to engage, in the make-believe, in order to understand what he is saying (p. 369).

In working this out in a little more detail, let us adopt Evans’s abbreviation of “it is make-believedly the case that ()” as “*()*”. A sentence with a use within a pretence has the following property: *it has a truth-condition (expresses a proposition)¹⁰. But, Evans implies, it typically will not have a truth condition: typically, that is, it will not really express a proposition.¹⁰ (As we shall see, there is a vital exception to what is typical.)

Evans sees negative existentials as implicitly involving the expression “really”, of which he gives the following account:

“Really” is a word which, when prefixed to a sentence, produces a sentence such that an utterance of it is true (absolutely) if and only if the sentence preceded by “really” is itself such that there is a proposition expressed by it when it is uttered as a move in the relevant game of make-believe, and this proposition is true (absolutely) – not merely *true* (p. 370).

A negative existential sentence, say “Hamlet does not exist”, is to be seen as having the following logical form: it is not the case that really (Hamlet exists). Forgetting for a moment the atypical case, the standard case is one in which, as in the present example, the contained positive existential does *not* express a proposition when it is uttered in the “relevant game of make-believe”. That is, it is not the case that “Hamlet exists” has a genuine and non-fictional truth-condition. (We will shortly look at a justification for this position.) Hence, by the truth-condition for “really”, “really Hamlet exists” is not true, and so its negation is true, which is the desired result.

The atypical case is that in which an utterance, though used fictionally, in fact really expresses a proposition. This is the phenomenon which Evans labels the “game-to-reality shift” (Ch. 10.2 and pp. 370–1). Suppose that *X* is seeing a little green man, but believes that he is hallucinating. His utterances of the form “That little green man is *F*”, though intended as part of a make-believe, in fact refer to the little green man he is seeing: the game shifts to reality. In particular, “that little green man exists” does express a proposition,

¹⁰ For understanding Evans on this point I am particularly indebted to Martin Davies.

indeed a true proposition. So “Really, that little green man exists” is true, and its negation false, which is again the desired result.

If we were considering only existential sentences, the truth condition for “really” could be simpler: we get a truth if the sentence to which it is attached has a truth-condition as well as a *truth-condition* and a falsehood if, while having a *truth-condition* it lacks a truth condition. But “really” can attach to other forms of sentence, e.g. “That little green man is really bald”. In the case envisaged in the last paragraph, in which we have the game-to-reality shift, the truth of such an utterance in such a context will require that the sentence “that little green man is bald” express a proposition, but this by itself is not enough: in addition, the proposition expressed must be true.

Evans contrasts his account of “really” with another simpler one, which would be available if all make-believe were existentially conservative, that is, involved only pretence concerning actual objects. Then “really” could simply indicate that what followed was to be assessed for genuine truth or falsehood, as opposed to fictional truth or falsehood. But this will not do as things stand. For when a fiction *introduces an entity*, say Hamlet, a sentence which follows “really” and which *mentions this object* is not assessable for genuine truth or falsehood: such a sentence has no truth condition but only a *truth condition*; it does not really express a proposition. (Here there is no game-to-reality shift.) So the simpler account would, incorrectly, entail that the whole sentence, say, “really, Hamlet exists”, says nothing.

Evans does not himself offer any explicit justification for the view that fictional sentences containing apparent singular terms typically express no proposition. On the face of it, it might seem that, for any fiction, we can represent to ourselves what it would be for it to be really true. So it might seem that we are committed to the view that fictional sentences do genuinely express propositions, ones which we can envisage being true (absolutely).

Against this position, Evans could avail himself of a line of argument used by Kripke (1973), in discussing whether unicorns could have existed. We have to ask: what makes the envisaged counterfactual situation one in which *unicorns* exist, as opposed to one in which there are creatures very like unicorns, but not really unicorns? Kripke says that this question cannot be answered, and that the moral is that no possible situation counts as one in which unicorns exist.

Let us try applying this to a particular fictional name, say “Hamlet”. The anti-Evans claim is that, though we know that this is merely a fiction, we know what it would be for the sentences in the story to be true. So the sentences must express genuine propositions, evaluable for genuine truth. What one cannot deny is that this holds for the generalizations in the story: once upon a time there was a prince who. . . . But we can deny that it holds also for the singular sentences, e.g. “Hamlet was indecisive”. For what would it be for

this to be really true? It is not enough that there be an indecisive person whose father was a king and was murdered, and who. . . . For, as we are inclined to say, a person might have done all those things without being Hamlet. But then what condition is sufficient to discriminate between situations containing someone rather like Hamlet and situations containing Hamlet himself? It seems that no condition is sufficient. If this is accepted, the moral is that we cannot, after all, represent to ourselves what it would have been for “Hamlet was indecisive” to be genuinely, and not just fictionally, true. So sentences of the envisaged kind have a *truth-condition* but no truth-condition. They do not express genuine propositions.

Evans says that one of the conditions for an adequate account of negative existentials is that they must not be represented as metalinguistic (pp. 344–5). As he says, it is obvious that a singular term appearing in such a sentence is used and not merely mentioned. Understanding what a negative existential says requires familiarity with the relevant use of the singular term. But a metalinguistic account, which, in its crudest form, analyses “*a* does not exist” as “‘*a*’ does not refer”, does not meet this condition. Connected with the point that the singular term is used, and not merely mentioned, is the point that the significance of the whole sentence must depend upon the significance of the parts used to compose it. Rival theories, for example Kripke’s, are criticized for their failure to give any explanation of how the positive existential component of negative existentials can be genuinely significant, and thus contribute to the significance of the whole (cf. pp. 349–51). It is instructive to see how Evans’s theory seeks to meet these conditions.

The proof that on Evans’s account the apparent singular term is used and not merely mentioned in a negative existential is this: understanding a sentence of the form “Really *S*” involves quasi-understanding *S*, and this in turn involves familiarity with the game of make-believe within which *S* has its *truth condition*. (Seeing the logical form of negative existential truths as involving “really” is crucial to this point.) No such requirement could hold if the apparent singular term in *S* were merely mentioned. Moreover the sense of a negative existential is sensitive to the sense, or rather, perhaps, quasi-sense, of the apparent singular term. Indeed, two *co-referring singular terms* could, on this account, *express different thoughts*.

Has the requirement that the sense of a compound is a function of the sense of its parts been met in a properly full-blooded way? Is not the notion of quasi-sense, which I have introduced as the correlate of Evans’s quasi-understanding, merely papering over the fact that the positive existential component of a true negative existential is not contributing in the proper way to the sense of the whole? Is it legitimate to allow quasi-sense to contribute to the determination of sense? That the answers to these questions fall out in favour of Evans’s account is, I think, established by the mere fact (assuming it to be a fact) that sentences like “I admire Hamlet” are coherent and wear their logical form on their sleeve. For here the fictional expression, possessing

(on Evans's account) only quasi-sense, contributes to genuine sense. This is what Evans has in mind by the *serious* use of fictional expressions, and it must be stressed that his account of negative existentials is preceded by a *general* discussion of serious use.

In a sentence like "Vulcan does not exist" what is the make-believe in virtue of which "Vulcan exists" has a *truth condition*? Evans does not say. There is a choice. We might consider the benighted astronomers as having gone in for unwitting make-believe. Their illusion of understanding, in using "Vulcan", was systematic enough to make this just like a fiction, except for their lack of suitable intentions and of conscious awareness of what was going on. Alternatively, we might think that it is we, who know that Vulcan does not exist, who create the make-believe, perhaps in the very utterance in which we claim it to be mere make-believe. Evans's account stands in need of completion at this point.

One aspect of the account that is likely to attract criticism is the idea of the game-to-reality shift. Indeed, a critic might use an *ad hominem* argument: the possibility of the shift, it might be alleged, is inconsistent with Evans' insistence that a speaker can only refer to what he intends to refer to (cf. p. 318). I suspect that these criticisms can be deflected. But let me stress the dependence of Evans's account on the game-to-reality shift. Were the shift disallowed, he would have no explanation of the truth of "that little green man really exists", as uttered in the circumstances in which a subject sees a little green man but takes himself to be hallucinating. If there is no shift, the sentence comes out false, by the truth condition for "really".

I am optimistic that Evans's account of existence can be completed into a correct account. It is the only account of existence that has any plausibility at all when it comes to explaining the possibility of truths of the form "that does not (really) exist". (The possibility is realized within the context of a hallucination.) This is worth stressing, since many who, like Russell, would think that "Vulcan" can be treated as a description, permitting a quantificational treatment of "Vulcan does not exist", would not contemplate such a course for demonstratives.

4 Coda

I have discussed only the main plot of *The Varieties of Reference*. I have not done justice to how much this remarkable book contains. It is packed with intense and sustained argument and is brim full of ideas on a wide variety of subjects. These ideas are sometimes casually thrown out (like the footnote (p. 104, n. 22) suggesting a principled way of distinguishing thinkers from other information-processors), and sometimes belong in detailed discussions which deserve attention independently of their contribution to the main theme (for example, the chapter on the self, and that on recognition). The ore lies deep, but it is extremely rich, and amply repays the effort needed to extract it.

70 Evans on reference

There is no doubt that the book will be heavily mined, and will be, deservedly, central to discussions of reference and singular thought for years to come. It not only justifies John McDowell's editorial hope that it will enable us to appreciate how much philosophy has lost by Evans's early death: it also shows us how much philosophy has gained by his life.¹¹

¹¹ Evans's book was the subject of a series of seminars held at Birkbeck College in the Summer Term, 1983. I am grateful to those who participated for any ideas I may have borrowed. I would like to thank the following for helpful comments on an earlier draft: Martin Davies, Marcus Giaquinto, Samuel Guttenplan, Gary Jenkins, Hans Kamp, Ian McFetridge, Colin McGinn, Anthony O'Hear, Anthony Savile.