Understanding Demonstratives

I

It has recently been claimed that the use of demonstrative or indexical expressions like ‘today’, ‘yesterday’, ‘here’, ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘this’, etc., resists incorporation into a Fregean theory of meaning.¹ I have two reasons for attempting to show that this claim is not true. First, the reasoning seems to me to rest upon a common view of Frege’s notions of sense and reference which is neither attractive nor required by the text, and second, because I believe that a Fregean approach to demonstrative expressions is essentially correct.

The argument which is supposed to show that demonstratives provide an insuperable problem for Frege runs like this. Consider the sentence:

(1) Today is fine

as uttered upon a particular day, *d*. Now, the concept expression ‘(\(\xi\) is fine)’ has (on that occasion) a sense, but if the whole sentence is to have (on that occasion) a sense—express a Fregean thought—then the expression ‘today’ must have (on that occasion) a sense as well as a referent, namely *d*.

From Meaning and Understanding, H. Parret and Jacques Bouveresse (eds.) (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1981). Reprinted by permission. The present paper rests on an idea of John McDowell’s. Quite a few years ago, and more recently in ‘On Sense and Reference of a Proper Name’ (Mind 86 (1977), pp. 159-85), he argued that it was possible to ascribe Fregean sense to singular terms which I describe in this paper as ‘Russellian’. The present paper is an attempt to apply this basic idea of McDowell’s to demonstratives, though in the course of doing so I develop it in ways for which he must not be held responsible, particularly by tying sense to a way of thinking of a reference. Reading through Frege’s works, I became convinced that the position McDowell argued for as a possibility is one to which he is in fact committed. (For similar views of McDowell’s, see ‘Truth-value Gaps’ in Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science VI (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1982).) In my interpretation of Frege I am much indebted to Dummett, whose writings I follow closely. I somehow seem to end up at a quite different place.

Now, the expression-type, 'today' certainly has a meaning, which does not vary from occasion to occasion, which Kaplan\(^2\) calls its character and Perry calls its role. But that cannot by itself provide a completing sense, if for no other reason than that a 'thought' which is a function of these unchanging senses could no more be assigned a truth value than can the sentence-type 'Today is fine'. But equally, the referent, \(d\), cannot be regarded as providing a completing sense. So:

Neither the unchanging role of 'today' (its constant meaning) nor its changing value, provides us with a completing sense. A day is not a sense but a reference corresponding to indefinitely many different senses. So how do we get from the incomplete sense of '(\(\xi\)) is fine', the demonstrative 'today', and the context to a thought? This is the problem demonstratives pose for Frege.\(^3\)

Obviously, if a Fregean approach to this utterance is to be sustained, the demonstrative in context must have a sense, and a different sense in different contexts. To this, Perry replies:

How can we extract from a demonstrative an appropriate completing sense? Such a sense, it seems, would have to be intimately related to the sense of a unique description of the value of the demonstrative in the context of utterance. But where does such a description come from? 'Today' seems only to get us to a day.\(^4\)

Perry then goes on to show rather convincingly that no unique description can serve the purpose, for no thought about a day expressible with the use of a definite description true of that day is the same as the thought expressed with the use of a demonstrative; one can always take different epistemic attitudes towards them if one does not know that the day in question satisfies the description.

As far as I can make out, this is the main case against a Fregean approach to demonstrative expressions, and it rests, quite plainly, upon the view that a Fregean sense of any singular term must be either the sense of a definite description or 'intimately related' to such a sense. This assumption is

\(^3\) Perry, op. cit., p. 480. (I have changed the example.)
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 485.
quite unwarranted, and when this is realized, the case collapses. In order to establish this, I need to explain what I take to be essential to Frege's notion of sense.

II

I am attracted by the following, very abstract, account of the interrelations between Fregean concepts of sense and reference—an account which owes considerably to Michael Dummett.\(^5\)

The heart of a semantic theory for a language constructed on Fregean lines will be a *theory of reference*: a theory which assigns to each meaningful expression of the language something that can be regarded as that expression's reference or semantic value. Such a theory will proceed by discerning structure in the complex expressions of the language, and assigning references to those expressions upon the basis of assignments of references to their parts. A Fregean theory of reference will observe the principle of the compositionality: the reference of a complex expression is a function of the reference of its parts. Frege himself advocated a theory of reference according to which the references, or semantic values, of sentences and singular terms are truth values and objects, respectively, but neither of these choices is required by the adoption of the general conception. The only fixed point is this: an understanding of the language must be capable of being regarded as involving knowledge of the semantic values of expressions. In the case of sentences this knowledge can be regarded as more or less explicit, but for sub-sentential expressions, knowledge of their semantic values will simply be a logical construction out of the knowledge of the semantic values of the sentences in which they occur.

Before you object that one can understand a sentence without knowing its truth value, I hasten to remind you that the references of expressions can be thought of, or identified, in many different ways. One is thinking of the value True both when one thinks of it as the value True, and as the value

of the thought that snow is white, though one may not know
that one is thinking of the same thing. Similarly, the function
which is the semantic value of the concept expression ‘(∃) is
bald’ can either be thought of as the function which yields
truth given as inputs the objects . . . (here follows a list of the
bald men) or as the function which yields truth given any
object if and only if that object is bald. Frege’s idea was that
to understand an expression, one must not merely think of
the reference that it is the reference, but that one must, in
so thinking, think of the reference in a particular way. The
way in which one must think of the reference of an expres-
sion in order to understand it is that expression’s sense. No
substantial, or positive theory of the notion of a way of
thinking of something is presupposed by this conception of
sense. If the intuitive notion needs to be supplemented,
we can appeal to the general idea of an account of what
makes it the case that a thought is about the object which it
is about; two people will then be thinking of an object in
the same way if and only if the account of what makes the
one person’s thought about that object is the same as the
account of what makes the other person’s thought about that
object.\(^6\)

Although a theory of meaning for a language must give the
senses of expressions, we are not to think of the theory of
sense as a separate tier, additional to and independent of the
theory of reference. If sense is a way of thinking of reference,
we should not expect to be given the sense of an expression
save in the course of being given the reference of that ex-
pression. Rather than look for a theory quite independent
of the theory of reference, we must take one formulation of
the theory of reference—the formulation of the theory
which identifies the references of expressions in the way in
which one must identify them in order to understand the

\(^6\) I should explain the main point of departure from Dummett’s account of
Frege’s views. Dummett is impressed, to my mind overly impressed, by the
fact that one can understand a sentence without knowing its truth value. To take
account of this, he regards sense, not as a way of thinking of reference, but as a
way of determining reference—possibly by means which only a being with
superior powers is capable of employing. To think of the sense of a singular
term as a procedure for recognizing an object as the referent generates just the
idea of sense as independent of the existence of a referent which is resisted in this
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language—and make it serve as a theory of sense. Thus, the clauses:

(2) The reference of ‘Hesperus’ = Hesperus

(3) The reference of ‘Hesperus’ = Phosphorus

are equivalent as clauses in the theory of reference, but only (2) can occur in a theory of reference which is to serve as a theory of sense, for it alone identifies the reference of the name in a way which shows, or displays, its sense. The use of the Tractatus metaphor to make this point is due to Dummett:

Indeed, even when Frege is purporting to give the sense of a word or symbol, what he actually states is what the reference said: and, for anyone who has not clearly grasped the relation between sense and reference, this fact makes his hold on the notion of sense precarious. The sense of an expression is the mode of presentation of the referent: in saying what the reference is, we have to choose a particular way of saying this . . . In a case in which we are concerned to convey, or stipulate, the sense of the expression, we shall choose that means of stating what the referent is which displays the sense: we might here borrow a famous pair of terms from the Tractatus, and say that, for Frege, we say what the referent of a word is, and thereby show what its sense is.  

As I have already said, Frege quite generally regarded the referent of a singular term as its semantic value. Therefore, on the present conception, the sense of a singular term is a way of thinking about a particular object: something that obviously could not exist if that object did not exist to be

7 Dummett, op. cit., p. 227. This passage of Dummett’s seems to me to contain the answer to those who argue, like Wallace (see ‘Logical Form, Meaning, Translation’, in F. Guenther and M. Guenther-Reutter (eds), Meaning and Translation (London: Duckworth), pp. 45-58), that Davidsonian theories of meaning are inadequate because they do not state the meanings of sentences. The similarity between a Davidsonian conception of the theory of meaning as a theory of truth, and a Fregian conception of a theory of sense as a theory of reference should be particularly striking. Davidson lightens the ontological load, but the general idea is the same. I should explain that I am ignoring in this brief presentation the distinction between ‘model-theoretic’ and ‘truth-theoretic’ approaches to semantics—a Fregean theory of reference, with its ontological weight, should really be regarded as exemplifying the former approach. I have tried to explain the relation between these approaches in ‘Semantic Structure and Logical Form’, in G. Evans and J. H. McDowell (eds.), Truth and Meaning (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976). [Reprinted as Chapter 3 in this volume. Ed.]
thought about. If we take seriously Frege’s metaphor of sense as a mode of presentation of reference, we shall not expect to be provided with specifications of sense save by means of specifications of reference, and therefore, if we remember Frege’s equation of the reference of a singular term with its referent, we apparently discover at the heart of Frege’s semantical system singular terms whose sense depends upon their having a referent—singular terms we more typically regard as Russellian than Fregean. But what makes a Fregean recognition of Russellian singular terms so much more sophisticated than Russell’s own is that it allows such terms to have a sense as well as a reference. Russell himself did not grasp this possibility:

For the name itself is merely a means of pointing to the thing . . . so that, if one thing has two names, you make exactly the same assertion whichever of the two names you use, provided that they really are names and not truncated descriptions.\(^8\)

The semantic difference between two such Russellian terms which have the same referent can be acknowledged, with all the benefits which Frege derived from that acknowledgement. The theory of reference will state their references like this:

\[
\begin{align*}
(4) & \text{ The reference of } 'a' = a \\
(5) & \text{ The reference of } 'b' = b.
\end{align*}
\]

These clauses show the different senses which the two terms possess, but at the same time they could not truly be stated if the terms had no referent.\(^9\)

Attractive though this possibility may be, various things that Frege explicitly says seem to rule it out as an interpretation of his views. Frege says in several places that empty singular terms may have a sense, and, what would be a consequential inconsistency with the conception outlined, he also says that sentences containing empty singular terms


\(^9\) The significance of clauses like (4) and (5) as providing a formal recognition of the possibility of ascribing Fregean sense to Russellian singular terms is first elaborated in J. McDowell, ‘On the Sense and Reference of a Proper Name’, in *Mind* 86 (1977), pp. 159–85.
may have a sense (express a thought) even though they have no reference (no truth value). How can we attribute to Frege the view that sense is a mode of presentation of reference, is a way of thinking of reference, when he seems to say things explicitly inconsistent with it? However, before abandoning this interpretation of Frege’s ideas, which does incorporate much that Frege says, and which takes into account his willingness to apply the distinction between sense and reference to linguistic expressions quite generally, we should examine carefully what Frege actually says about empty singular terms. For, though he does say that they, and sentences containing them, may have a sense, other things that he says in the same connection make it clear that this is far less the unequivocal rejection of the conception I have outlined than it might at first appear.

In the first place, it is clear that Frege regarded empty singular terms as defective, in the same way, and indeed for the same reason, as he regarded vague concept-expressions as defective. His picture of the functioning of atomic sentences required them to be composed of expressions of two kinds: one (or more) which signified an object, and one which signified a function which mapped objects (or \(n\)-tuples of objects) on to truth values. If any expression in an atomic sentence failed to refer to an entity of an appropriate kind, the possibility would be open that no further truth value would be determined for the sentence, and it is clear that Frege regarded this as a defect in a sentence of a quite fundamental kind—which he was quite right to do. With this picture in mind, Frege was simply prepared to insist that concept-expressions must be precise; there is no concession that vague concept-expressions may nevertheless have a sense of a kind appropriate for concept-expressions, or that a sentence which has no truth value on account of vagueness may nevertheless express a thought. He did not make quite the same uncompromising statements about empty singular terms, despite the fact that the motivation is precisely the same—indeed Frege frequently treats the two cases together—because of his willingness to regard empty singular terms as fictional (or mythical). Instead of simply saying:

\[^{10}\text{See Dummett, op. cit., p. 342-8.}\]
'Proper names must have a reference', he says: 'Myth and fiction aside, proper names must have a reference', or 'For scientific purposes, proper names must have a reference'. Frege was well aware that language could be used in fiction, story-telling, and drama, and he appeared to be willing to regard the serious use of an empty singular term as of this kind; he says that the speaker has 'lapsed into the sphere of fiction', without knowing it. The following is one of the many passages in which he takes this line:

But if my intention is not realized, if I only think I see without really seeing, if on that account the designation 'That lime tree' is empty, then I have gone astray into the sphere of fiction without knowing it or wanting to.\(^{11}\)

So, Frege regarded serious utterances containing empty singular terms as belonging with the fictional use of language, and however much we may deplore this idea, it forces us to turn to Frege's account of fiction for our understanding of his views on empty singular terms. The most extended treatment is in the material for a book on Logic which Frege never finished dated around 1897.\(^{12}\)

Names that fail to fulfil the usual role of a proper name, which is to name something, may be called mock proper names. Although the tale of William Tell is a legend and not history and the name 'William Tell' is a mock proper name, we cannot deny it a sense. But the sense of the sentence 'William Tell shot an apple off his son's head' is no more true than is that of the sentence 'William Tell did not shoot an apple off his son's head'. I do not say that this sense is false either, but I characterize it as fictitious.

Instead of speaking of 'fiction' we could speak of 'mock thoughts'. Thus, if the sense of an assertoric sentence is not true, it is either false or fictitious, and it will generally be the latter if it contains a mock proper name. (Footnote: We have an exception where a mock proper


\(^{12}\) 'Logic', in Posthumous Writings, pp. 126-51.
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name occurs within a clause in indirect speech.) . . . Assertions in fiction are not to be taken seriously: they are only mock assertions. Even the thoughts are not to be taken seriously as in the sciences: they are only mock thoughts. If Schiller's Don Carlos were to be regarded as a piece of history, then to a large extent the drama would be false. But a work of fiction is not meant to be taken seriously in this way at all: it's all play.

The logician does not have to bother with mock thoughts, just as a physicist, who sets out to investigate thunder, will not pay any attention to stage-thunder. When we speak of thoughts in what follows we mean thoughts proper, thoughts that are either true or false.13

This passage makes it clear that Frege's claim that empty singular terms, and sentences containing them, have a sense, expressed briefly elsewhere, is much more complex and qualified than is usually realized. We might gloss it as follows. Yes: a sentence containing an empty singular term can have a sense, in that it does not necessarily have to be likened to a sentence containing a nonsense-word, but no: it does not really have a sense of the kind possessed by ordinary atomic sentences because it does not function properly, it is only as if it functions properly. Frege's use of the notion of fiction wrongly directs our attention to just one case in which it is as if a singular term refers to something, namely when we are engaged in a pretence that it does, but there are others, and if we think of them we will perhaps speak of apparent, rather than mock or pretend, thoughts.

However indefensible Frege's idea of unwitting lapses into fiction may be, and however much his treatment of fiction depends upon a slide from 'mock assertions' to 'mock thoughts', his intention in this passage is clearly to deny that sentences containing empty singular terms really express thoughts, and is therefore one which makes it not at all impossible that he held the conception of the relations between sense and reference which I have outlined. (Indeed, the idea of 'mock', or anyway 'apparent', thoughts indicates a further direction in which Russell's conception of Russellian singular terms needs to be extended if it is to have any plausibility.)

13 Posthumous Writings, p. 130. I am grateful to Dagfinn Føllesdal for pointing this passage out to me. I have followed the translation of Peter Long and Roger White, save in retaining the traditional translation of 'Bedeutung' as 'reference'.
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I want to stress that the idea of sense as a mode of presentation of reference is not by itself inconsistent with the quite unqualified ascription of sense to empty singular terms. Even if a Fregean went along with Russell and hived off definite descriptions for treatment as quantifiers, he might want to recognize a category of 'descriptive names'—names introduced by means of, and governed by, a 'reference-fixing' stipulation like: 'Let 'a' refer to whatever is φ'—whose sense is thereby guaranteed to be independent of whether or not it has a referent. But for names such as these the equation of reference with referent would have to be given up. One formally adequate possibility would be to take the reference, i.e. the semantic value, of such a name to be a set, determined by the rule:

\[(6) \ (x) \ (x \in \text{Reference of 'a' iff } \varphi(x))\]

with corresponding adjustments to the semantic values of concept-expressions. When nothing is φ, the name ‘a’ has no referent, but its reference is the empty set.

I have tried to show that on a perfectly possible understanding of Frege's semantic theory, he recognized only Russellian singular terms—terms whose customary sense depends upon their having a referent. Although this seems to me to be the correct position, I am aware that many will regard it as highly controversial. It is therefore important to emphasize that the argument of this paper depends only upon a much weaker claim, namely: that there is at least nothing to prevent Frege recognizing Russellian singular terms: i.e. that there is no difficulty in ascribing to such terms a Fregean sense. Since this claim is the basis of my defence of Frege against Perry's attack, it is as well to work through the argument in detail.

14 The idea of a reference-fixing stipulation is Kripke's, see 'Naming and Necessity', in D. Davidson and G. Harman (eds), Semantics of Natural Language (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972), pp. 253-355. I am presuming that φ is incapable of being satisfied by more than one thing. I have discussed the semantics of descriptive names in 'Reference and Contingency', Monist 62 (1979) [reprinted as chapter 7 in this volume. Ed.].

15 Here and elsewhere I rely upon the verbal distinction between 'referent' and 'reference' introduced by Dummett, op. cit., pp. 409 ff. Were we accustomed to Long and White's translation of 'Bedeutung' as 'meaning', the position adopted in the text would have stood out as a possibility more clearly.
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The essential use to which Frege puts the ascription of sense to singular terms is to explain the differing cognitive values of the sentences \( A(t) \) and \( A(t') \) when \( t \) and \( t' \) refer to the same thing. (The difference between \( t = t \) and \( t = t' \) is just a special case of this phenomenon.) Now, to say that two sentences differ in cognitive value is to say that it is possible for anyone who understands them correctly to coherently take different epistemic attitudes towards them—i.e. to accept one sentence as true and to reject, or to be unsure about the other sentence.

Suppose now that to ascribe a Fregean sense to a singular term is to say that there is a particular way in which its referent must be thought of (as the referent) if the term is to be understood. If two co-referring Russellian singular terms have different senses, different ways of thinking of their common referent are required in order to understand them. We have linked the idea of a way of thinking of something to an account that may be offered of what makes a subject's thought about its object, and certainly no argument can be based upon this idea alone to the conclusion that senses can be grasped in the absence of a referent.

Now if the assignment of senses to singular terms \( t \) and \( t' \) is to explain the differing cognitive values of the sentences \( A(t) \) and \( A(t') \), it must be the case that if the singular terms \( t \) and \( t' \) have different senses the sentences will have different cognitive values—i.e. it must be possible for anyone who understands the sentences to take different epistemic attitudes towards them. And this will be so, provided the following very plausible principle is true:

(P) If the account of what makes a subject's thought \( T_1 \) (about \( x \) to the effect that it is \( F \)) about \( x \) is different from the account of what makes his thought \( T_2 \) (about \( x \) to the effect that it is \( F \)) about \( x \), it is possible for the subject coherently to take, at one and the same time, different epistemic attitudes towards the thoughts he entertains in \( T_1 \) and in \( T_2 \).

At no point is it necessary for Frege to adopt any substantial theory of what form these accounts must take. In particular it is not necessary for him to suppose that ways of thinking...
of objects can always be given by giving some definite description uniquely true of the object, or to make any other supposition which would lead to 'existence-independent' senses. It is not necessary, because it is not plausible to suggest that the only kind of account of what makes a subject's thought about an object which is capable of making (P) true is one which relies upon the subject's possessing a unique description of the object.

The initial 'if' in (P) can be strengthened to an 'if and only if' without loss of plausibility and if this strengthening is acceptable Frege is entitled to his equation of the sense of a singular sentence and a thought, when this is understood to be the object of propositional attitudes. An equation can be made between the senses of a singular sentence and a thought only if it is not possible for someone who has understood two singular sentences which agree in sense to take different attitudes to them, but on Frege's view this will not be possible. A difference in attitude would require a difference in the ways the subject thought of the object referred to (by the strengthening of (P)), and this would conflict with the hypothesis of an identity of sense, given that sense is a way of thinking of the referent.

Thus, we see that far from the Fregean sense of a singular term being restricted to the sense of some definite description (and therefore being 'existence-independent'), it is perfectly possible for there to be 'existence-dependent' Fregean senses—the Fregean senses of Russellian singular terms. I have in fact suggested that we should re-examine those passages in which Frege showed himself willing to ascribe sense to empty singular terms, but in any case, I know of no passage in which Frege can be construed as insisting that singular terms must have an existence-independent sense. In view of this we can appreciate how wrong-headed it is to consider a Fregean sense as necessarily intermediary between thinker and referent, as something which must, from a certain point of view, get in the way, or anyway render indirect what might be direct. A way of thinking of an object is no more obliged to get in the way of thinking of an object, or to render thinking of an object indirect, than is a way of dancing liable to get in the way
of dancing, or to render dancing somehow indirect. And, finally, we can appreciate how baseless it is to maintain that an extension of a Fregean theory to demonstrative singular terms must involve assigning to them the sense of, or anything like the sense of, some definite description. So Perry's argument against Frege collapses.

III

Let us return to the problem of demonstratives. We have seen that Perry's demonstration that there can be no 'completing sense' for 'today' is unsound, but something must be said about what such a completing sense might be.

'Today', as uttered on d, has a completing sense, if and only if there is some particular way in which one must think of the referent, d, in order to understand the utterance containing it. And of course there is. Even if d is the first day after my last lecture, I shall not have understood the utterance of (1) if I think of d only as the first day after my last lecture, thereby coming to believe that the utterance is true if and only if the first day after my last lecture is fine, perhaps not realizing that today is the first day after my last lecture. In order to understand (1) I must think of d as the current day, thereby coming to have the thought which I might express in the words: 'What the speaker said is true if and only if it is fine today.' Now, what makes a man's thought about a day when he thinks of it as the current day—as 'today'—is not something which it is incumbent upon Frege to explain. It is indeed a difficult question. I myself would say something like this.

To give an account of how a thought concerns an object is to explain how the subject knows which object is in question. In the case of 'today', the subject, of course, knows which day is in question, but this knowledge at least partly consists in a disposition to judge the thoughts (which depend upon

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16 I have in mind here several remarks of Kaplan's, who advocates 'the semantics of direct reference . . . theories of meaning according to which certain singular terms refer directly without the mediation of a Fregean Sinn as meaning' (Kaplan, 'Demonstratives', p. 1). See also Kaplan, 'How to Russell a Frege-Church', Journal of Philosophy 72 (1975), pp. 716-29.

17 It is therefore not true that 'today' only gets us to a day.
this knowledge) as true or false according to how things observably are upon that day which in no way rests upon his capacity to identify that day as meeting some antecedently given condition, but depends only upon his being alive on that day. There should be no mystery here; we can test very easily whether or not someone, in his interpretation of a sentence, is thinking of the day in the right way by seeing if he is disposed to judge the sentence as true or false according to how things observably are on that day. Similarly, I should want to place in a central position in any account of what makes a man’s thought concern a particular place in the way which is required for understanding sentences containing the term ‘here’, a knowledge of which place is in question which at least partly consists in a disposition to judge that thought as true or false according to how things observably are at that place—a disposition which he can have vis-à-vis just one place in the universe in virtue of his occupying it, and which in no way depends upon his capacity to recognize that place as the unique satisfier of some description. If these accounts are on anything like the right lines, it is very easy to understand how these ‘ways of thinking’ are irreducible to any other, since no other way of knowing which object is in question, certainly no ‘descriptive’ way, can guarantee the existence of the relevant dispositions.

However, these are speculations which need to be embedded in a general theory of thought if they are to carry conviction. All that a Fregean needs from his opponent is an acknowledgement that those thoughts about a day which we typically express with the use of ‘today’ do involve a particular way of thinking about a day; if this is granted, he can explain how ‘today’, in a context, has a ‘completing sense’.

Therefore, in order to understand the utterance of (1) made on \( d \), one must have, on \( d \), the thought which one might express in words by:

\[
(7) \text{What the speaker said is true if it is fine } \text{today.}
\]

It seems reasonable to say that such a statement is capable of showing the sense which the sentence has on that occasion. However, there might appear to be a difficulty here. A theory of reference was conceived to be a finite set of principles
from which the references of complex expressions, particularly sentences, could be derived. When we think of the principles from which (7) might be derived, we naturally think of the general statement:

(8) For all days $d$, 'today' as uttered on $d$ refers to $d$.

But now, this universally quantified principle cannot be thought to show the sense of any particular use of the expression, nor does it appear to issue exclusively in theorems of the form (7), which can. After all,

(9) What the speaker said in uttering 'Today is fine' on my birthday is true if it is fine on my birthday is equally a consequence of (8), but it apparently does not show the sense which that sentence had on that occasion.

Our interest in theories of reference and of sense is ultimately to better understand the capacity of speakers to speak and understand their language, and when we remember this interest, the present difficulty will be seen as spurious. Speakers do not literally deduce the truth conditions which sentences have from certain universally quantified principles, whose precise form we must endeavour to establish. Speakers judge the truth conditions of particular sentences, and in so doing they exercise complex and interconnected dispositions in which their understanding of the individual atoms of the language may be taken to consist. We are therefore not required to attribute to speakers the general belief that any token of 'today' refers to the day on which it is uttered —and then wonder what form that belief takes, or how they derive the right kind of judgement of truth conditions from it. We are rather ascribing to speakers a propensity to form particular beliefs, of particular tokens of 'today', that they refer to the day of utterance, identified in a particular way, the exercise of which yields thoughts of the form of (7). The inclusion in a theory of reference of a general principle like (8) is a gesture in the direction of identifying the relevant propensity, and it certainly requires supplementation. But this point, though it needs to be borne in mind in interpreting systematic theories of meaning,
is irrelevant to a Fregean theory of the sense and reference of 'today'. What matters for that theory is that tokens of 'today' should have a sense as well as a reference, not that the sense of all tokens of the expression should be capable of being shown in a single principle of the theory of reference.

Thus we have found no reason to depart from Frege's view:

[The thought, for example, that this tree is covered with green leaves will surely be false in six months' time. No, for it is not the same thought at all. The words, 'This tree is covered with green leaves' are not sufficient by themselves for the utterance, the time of utterance is involved as well. Without the time indication this gives we have no complete thought, i.e. no thought at all] . . . the same words, on account of the variability of language with time, take on another sense, express another thought.  

IV

In understanding the sentence 'Today is fine', said on \( d_1 \), one can be regarded as having a Fregean thought, but is it a thought which one can have on any other day? Frege appears to have thought that it is:

If someone wants to say the same today as he expressed yesterday using the word 'today', he must replace this word with 'yesterday'.

Frege appears to have held that to have on \( d_2 \) just the thought which one has when one thinks 'Today is fine' on \( d_1 \), one must think 'Yesterday was fine'. Presumably this means that it is possible for someone reading yesterday's newspaper to understand sentences like:

(10) The Prime Minister is holding a cabinet meeting today

by realizing that it is true if the Prime Minister held a cabinet meeting the day before. Now, many philosophers, commenting on this passage, have concluded that Frege intended to abandon a notion of 'what is said', or 'the thought expressed' which was 'psychologically real' in the sense of being the object of propositional attitudes, and was giving expression

to the idea that two people would express the same thought provided that they refer to the same object (in whatever way) and say the same thing about it. Such a conception of *what is said*, or *the thought expressed* is so wholly antagonistic to the theory of language ushered in by the distinction between sense and reference, and is otherwise so wholly absent from his work, that it seems to me to be doubtful that the passage has been correctly interpreted. It is clear, for example, that Frege would have been willing to continue the passage:

\[
\ldots \text{he must replace this word with 'yesterday', or 'my birthday', or any other expression designating the same day?}
\]

Might Frege not have had in mind an idea of a thought the grasp of which, on a later day, requires just as specific a way of thinking of a day as does its grasp on an earlier day—namely as the preceding day? Pursuing this suggestion, we discover that, far from abandoning the 'psychologically real' notion of a thought in favour of a psychologically quite uninteresting equivalence class of thoughts, Frege may well have glimpsed what results when the notion is extended to the sphere of human thinking which depends upon the position human beings have in space and time.

We must agree that, if a subject thinks on \(d_1\), about \(d_1\), to the effect that it is fine by thinking 'Today is fine', and thinks on \(d_2\), about \(d_1\), to the effect that it is fine, by thinking 'Yesterday was fine', there is some level of description at which he is thinking of the same day in different ways—the account of what makes his thoughts about \(d_1\) in the two cases will not be entirely the same. And it is natural to think that this difference in ways of thinking can be exploited to produce the possibility of differing epistemic attitudes to the thoughts, which would then preclude their being the same thought, if thoughts are intended to be the object of propositional attitudes.

However, the natural suggestion is not correct; there is no

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20 See, for example, Kaplan, 'Demonstratives', p. 43. Dummett comes close to this in *Frege*, p. 384, although there, other expressions which can be used to express the same thought are restricted to other *demonstrative* expressions with the same referent.
headlong collision between Frege’s suggestion that grasping
the same thought on different days may require different
things of us, and the fundamental criterion of difference of
thoughts which rests upon the principle that it is not possible
coherrently to take different attitudes towards the same
thought. For that principle, properly stated, precludes the
possibility of coherently taking different attitudes towards
the same thought at the same time. Consider S, who accepted
the sentence ‘Today is fine’ when uttered on \(d_1\), and who
rejects the sentence ‘Yesterday was fine’ when uttered on \(d_2\),
perhaps because he has misremembered the weather, or
because he has ‘lost track of time’. Now, in order to apply
the criterion of difference in this situation, we must first
make a decision as to what it would be for S to have exactly
the same thought on \(d_2\) as he had when he thought on \(d_1\)
‘Today is fine’. Because its application requires a prior
decision on this question, the criterion for difference cannot
by any means be the whole story of the identity and distinct-
ness of thoughts, and it is powerless to upset Frege’s sugges-
tion. For, either we hold that it is possible to think again the
thought entertained on \(d_1\) or we do not. If we hold that it
is possible, no better account than Frege’s can be given of
the circumstances under which it is possible. (If this is not
obvious, some merits of his account will be given below.)
Hence, on this alternative, to think ‘Yesterday was fine’ is to
think the same thought again, and so no possibility opens up,
on \(d_2\), of coherently assenting to the same thought as one
accepted when one judged on \(d_1\) ‘Today is fine’, and of
dissenting from the thought ‘Yesterday was fine’. To hold,
on the other hand, that it is not possible to have on \(d_2\) the
very same thought as one had on \(d_1\), while not at all a ridicu-
loous proposal, obviously precludes use of the criterion of
difference against Frege’s contrary view. Some other con-
sideration must be appealed to.

Frege’s idea is that being in the same epistemic state may
require different things of us at different times; the changing
circumstances force us to change in order to keep hold of
a constant reference and a constant thought—we must run
to keep still. From this point of view, the acceptance on \(d_2\)
of ‘Yesterday was fine’, given an acceptance on \(d_1\) of ‘Today
is fine’ can manifest the *persistence* of a belief in just the way in which acceptance of different utterances of the same sentence ‘The sun sets in the West’ can. Are there any considerations which can be advanced in favour of this way of looking at matters?

To answer this question, we must contrast Frege’s conception with the opposing conception, according to which the thoughts associated with sentences containing temporal indexicals cannot be grasped at later times. On this atomistic conception, what Frege regards as a persistence of a belief is really a succession of different but related beliefs concerning the same time. It must of course be acknowledged that these patterns, or sequences, of beliefs are very commonly to be met with—that human beings do have a general propensity, on forming one belief in this series, later to have the other beliefs in the series, but this fact by itself does not settle the issue. Admittedly it is not clear what account can be given of this succession of belief on the atomistic conception. One belief cannot give rise to another by any *inference*, since the identity belief that would be required to underwrite the inference is not a thinkable one; no sooner does one arrive in a position to grasp the one side of the identity than one has lost the capacity to grasp the other. But one can be suspicious of the atomistic conception for other, deeper, reasons.

On the atomistic conception, whether there are later elements in the series, and whether or not they concern the same object is quite irrelevant to the subject’s capacity to entertain one of the atoms. The atom must be a perfectly coherent unit of thought by itself, even if it is entertained by one who has not the least propensity to form the other members of the series. But this, Frege might well have thought, is wrong. No one can be ascribed at *t* a belief with the content ‘It is now ψ’, for example, who does not have the propensity as time goes on to form beliefs with the content ‘It was ψ just a moment ago’, ‘It was ψ earlier this morning’, ‘It was ψ this morning’, ‘It was ψ yesterday morning’, etc., though of course this propensity can be counteracted by new evidence. Frege might be credited with the insight that a capacity to keep track of the passage of time is not an optional addition to, but a precondition of, temporal thought.
Understanding Demonstratives

If this is so, the thought-units of the atomist are not coherent, independent, thoughts at all, but so to speak, cross-sections of a persisting belief state which exploits our ability to keep track of a moment as it recedes in time.

The metaphor of ‘keeping track of something’ originates in connection with another kind of thought about an object, and it provides a useful, if only partial, parallel. Suppose that one is watching a scene in which there are several similar objects moving about fairly rapidly, but no so rapidly as to prevent one’s keeping track of one in particular. In such a situation, one can think about one of these objects rather than any other, but any such thought rests upon a skill we possess of keeping track of an object in a visual array over time. Our eyes and our heads move, perhaps we are also obliged to turn or move our bodies, but these changes are required to maintain contact with the same object over time. So, one’s thought at a time is dependent upon an ability which is necessarily manifested only over time. One might begin the period with the belief of an object that it is valuable, and end it with a belief of the same object that it is valuable. Now, a move parallel to the one which Frege made in connection with ‘today’ and ‘yesterday’, would be to hold that one belief has persisted over time, despite the local differences which the changing circumstances have imposed upon one. And there is a parallel, opposing, atomistic move which would regard the subject as holding a sequence of different beliefs over the relevant period of time, altering as the subject’s relation to the object altered. And the objection to the atomistic position here is the same as in the earlier case. If the atomistic position were correct, it ought to be possible to have just one of the members of the sequence no matter which others accompanied it, i.e. in the absence of any capacity to keep track of the object. But if that ability is missing, it is not possible for a subject to have a thought about an object in this kind of situation at all. Now Frege himself did not give this parallel, but he did write, after the passage just quoted: ‘The case is the same with “here” and “there”.’ Indeed it is; our ability to think of a place as ‘here’ is dependent upon our general ability to keep track of places as we move about (which requires, in general,
the ability to know when we are moving), so, once again, there could not be thoughts interpretable as ‘It’s ψ here’, if they were not entertained by a subject who had the propensity to entertain, as he moves about, thoughts expressible in the words ‘It’s ψ there’.

These examples suggest that we have to regard the static notion of ‘having hold of an object at t’ as essentially an abstraction from the dynamic notion of ‘keeping track of an object from t to t’ . And the grasp, at t, of a thought of the kind suggested by the passage from Frege, a dynamic Fregean thought, requires a subject to possess at t an ability to keep track of a particular object over time. It is not precluded that one should have only a momentary grasp of a dynamic Fregean thought, for it is not precluded that, after an object has engaged with one’s capacity to keep track of objects of that kind, one should lose track of it, and with it, the thought. Indeed, it is an aspect of the capacity that the subject will, in general, know when this has happened. The capacities upon which certain kinds of thought rest can only be described in dynamic terms; it does not follow that any exercise of those capacities must be extended over time.

Consequently, the way of thinking of an object to which the general Fregean conception of sense directs us is, in the case of a dynamic Fregean thought, a way of keeping track of an object. This permits us to say after all that a subject on $d_2$ is thinking of $d_1$ in the same way as on $d_1$, despite lower level differences, because the thought-episodes on the two days both depend upon the same exercise of a capacity to keep track of a time.21

21 Kaplan briefly raises the possibility sketched in this section, under the heading ‘cognitive dynamics’, but dismisses it: ‘Suppose that yesterday you said, and believed it, “It is a nice day today”. What does it mean to say, today, that you have retained that belief? ... Is there some obvious standard adjustment to make to the character, for example, replacing today with yesterday? If so, then a person like Rip van Winkle, who loses track of time, can’t retain any such beliefs. This seems strange.’ I see no more strangeness in the idea that a man who loses track of time cannot retain beliefs than in the idea that a man who loses track of an object cannot retain the beliefs about it with which he began. If one has in fact lost track of time without knowing it, then one could think that one had retained one’s beliefs when one has not. But, since in general thoughts associated with Russellian singular terms are such that the subject cannot infallibly know that he has one, we should not jib at denying the subject infallible knowledge of when he has the same one.
In discussing thoughts expressed with the use of the pronoun ‘I’ Frege wrote:

Now, everyone is presented to himself in a particular and primitive way in which he is presented to no one else.\(^{22}\)

Replacing Frege’s metaphor of ‘being presented with an object’ with the notion of ‘thinking of’ which underlies it, Frege appears to be saying that each person thinks about himself in a way which is primitive and available to no one else. Since this way of thinking about oneself would be neither primitive nor available to anyone else if it exploited one’s knowledge that one uniquely satisfied some description, the passage appears to provide the clearest possible evidence that Frege did not hold that all ways of thinking of objects must involve thinking of those objects as uniquely satisfying some description. It is not unreasonable to suppose, on the strength of this passage, that Frege had noticed the irreducibility of ‘I’-thoughts to any other kind of thought fifty years before Castañeda made it part of the philosopher’s stock in trade.\(^{23}\)

However, Perry holds that Frege’s conception of a thought was such that to have an ‘I’-thought could not possibly be to have a Fregean thought. One of his reasons is that Frege held that thoughts are ‘generally accessible’.

We can see that having such beliefs could not consist wholly in believing Fregean thoughts. Consider Frege’s timeless realm of generally accessible thoughts.\(^{24}\)

Since it is an immediate consequence of what Frege said about ‘I’-thoughts that they are not ‘generally accessible’, Perry appears to be arguing that a Fregean approach to ‘I’-thoughts must be inadequate by citing a supposed requirement upon Fregean thoughts—that they be generally accessible—which Frege appears to have shown himself free of precisely in what he says about ‘I’-thoughts. Presumably

\(^{22}\) Frege, ‘The Thought’, p. 298.

\(^{23}\) See H.-N. Castañeda, “‘He’: A Study in the Logic of Self-Consciousness”, *Ratio* 8 (1966), pp. 130-57, and in many other papers.

\(^{24}\) Perry, op. cit., p. 492.
Perry would justify his line of criticism by arguing that the shareability of thoughts was such a central Fregean doctrine that nothing recognizably Fregean could exist in its absence:

Nothing could be more out of the spirit of Frege's account of sense and thought than an incommunicable, private thought.\(^{25}\)

I do not believe that this is true. It is true that Frege stresses that possible for thoughts to be grasped by more than one person; were this not so, neither communication nor disagreement would be possible. But this point requires only that thoughts are not by their very nature precluded from being grasped by more than one person, not that every single thought must be capable of being grasped by more than one person. What is absolutely fundamental to Frege's philosophy of language is that thoughts should be objective—that the existence of a thought should be independent of its being grasped by anyone, and hence that thoughts are to be distinguished from ideas or the contents of a particular consciousness. When Frege stresses that thoughts can be grasped by several people, it is usually to emphasize that it is not like an idea:

A true thought was true before it was grasped by anyone. A thought does not have to be owned by anyone, the same thought can be grasped by several people.\(^{26}\)

His most extended treatment of the nature of thoughts—'The Thought'—makes it clear that it is the inference from shareability to objectivity which is of paramount importance to Frege, rather than shareability itself. Since an unshareable thought can be perfectly objective—can exist and have a truth value independently of anyone's entertaining it—there is no clash between what Frege says about 'I'-thoughts and this, undeniably central, aspect of his philosophy. Although Frege does tend to speak without qualification of thoughts as grasped by more than one person, I do not myself see why this should be regarded as an indispensable tenet, rather than a slight overstatement, of his position. Perry certainly does not tell us why he attaches such importance to it.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 474. \(^{26}\) Posthumous Writings, p. 251.
Perry makes clear that, quite independently of any question of Fregean scholarship, he thinks that fatal objections can be raised to the idea of an unshareable thought. This might seem a bit steep, coming after a criticism of Frege based upon his supposed insistence that all thoughts be 'generally accessible'. However Perry will explain that the peculiarities of 'I'-thoughts can be accommodated on his system without recognizing unshareable thoughts. On Perry’s system, both you and I can grasp the thought you express when you say ‘I am hot’, only we grasp it in different ways. However, I try to show in the next section that this is just a notational variant of Frege’s theory.

It is true that Perry has other reasons for saying that an 'I'-thought cannot be a Fregean thought, for he thinks that objection can be raised to a Fregean treatment of 'I'-thoughts even if Frege is allowed the 'private senses' to which he so desperately resorted. The argument here contains no surprises, for the difficulties result from the excessively wooden interpretation which Perry places on Frege’s notion of ‘way of being presented to oneself’ as a result of trying to force it into the mould of descriptive identification.27 He does point out that thoughts about times expressible with 'now' are also irreducible to description, and therefore if Frege’s strategy is general:

Frege will have to have, for each time, a primitive and particular way in which it is presented to us at that time, which gives rise to thoughts accessible only at that time, and expressible at it, with ‘now’. This strikes me as very implausible.28

In fact we have seen that Frege does not appear to hold that such thoughts are only graspable at one time (Part IV), but even if we ignore this, I do not see that the approach can be so easily dismissed. What is so absurd about the idea that there are thoughts which one can have only because one occupies a particular position in space, or time, or because one is currently perceiving an object? This is just to say that there are ways of thinking about objects which require one to stand in a specific spatial, temporal, or causal relation to the object, and rather than deserving dismissal as implausible,

27 Perry, op. cit., p. 491.  
28 Ibid.
the point seems to me to be worthy of the greatest respect. And to say that the ways of thinking are primitive is to say that they are not reducible to any other, particularly not to any which exploit knowledge of a description of the object, and this too is a point which Perry should applaud, figuring as it does so extensively in his own work.

Perhaps the implausibility is supposed to lie in the consequence of there being an infinite number of distinct, primitive, and particular ways of thinking of objects—one for each time—but alarm at this idea can only rest upon a confusion. A way of thinking about an object is given by an account of what makes some thinking about that object. In the case of a particular 'I'-thought, for example, I envisage statements of the form

\[(11) \ S \text{ is thinking of } S' \text{ at } t \text{ because } R_1(S, S', t)\]

where \(R_1\) is an as yet unspecified relation which can only be satisfied by a triple of \(S, S',\) and \(t\) if \(S = S'\). In terms of this idea, we can make perfectly good sense of the claim that different people think of different things (i.e. themselves) \textit{in the same way}; we do not hold that precisely the same account can be given of what makes each of their thoughts have the object that it does, but that the same type of account can be given—namely in terms of the relation \(R_1\). While it would no doubt be implausible to suppose that there are an infinite number of different types of account, I see no difficulty whatever in the idea of as many different particular accounts as there are times and persons.

VI

A Fregean thought of the kind associated with a sentence 'Today is F' said on \(d\) can be equated with the ordered pair of the sense which 'Today' has on \(d\) and the sense of the concept-expression '(if) is F', thus:

\[(12) \ \langle \text{Sense on } d \text{ of } \text{today}, \text{ Sense of } \langle\xi\rangle \text{ is } F'\rangle.\]

One grasps the sense of 'today' on \(d\) if and only if one thinks of \(d\) as the current day—i.e. in virtue of one’s satisfying some relational property \(\lambda x (R_2(x, d))\)—so we may
equivalently equate the Fregean thought with the ordered pair:

\[(13) \langle \lambda x(R_2(x, d)), \text{Sense of } '(\xi) is F' \rangle.\]

One entertains the object (13) if one thinks of a day in virtue of one's satisfying the first component, to the effect that it is F. If we wished to bring out the way in which any two utterances of (1) are similar, we might, equivalently, equate the thought with the triple:

\[(14) \langle d, \lambda x \lambda y(R_2(x, y)), \text{Sense of } '(\xi) is F' \rangle;\]

one entertains (14) if one thinks of the first member, in virtue of oneself and the first member, satisfying the second member, to the effect that it is F. In this construction the second and third components of the sense of an utterance of (1) are always the same, though the sense which 'today' has on \(d\) can be equated with neither the first member, nor the second member, taken singly, but only with the pair. Then, when Hume thinks 'I am hot' he entertains:

\[(15) \langle \text{Hume}, \lambda x \lambda y(R_1(x, y)), \text{Sense of } '(\xi) is hot' \rangle,\]

and when I think that I am hot, I entertain:

\[(16) \langle \text{G.E.}, \lambda x \lambda y(R_1(x, y)), \text{Sense of } '(\xi) is hot' \rangle.\]

We know that Perry thinks that it is necessary to abandon the notion of a Fregean thought when dealing with sentences containing demonstratives, but with what would he replace it? He introduces a notion of thought according to which the sentence \(F(t)\) uttered in context \(c\), and the sentence \(F(t')\) uttered in \(c'\) express the same thought provided the referent of \(t\) in \(c\) is the same as the referent of \(t'\) in \(c'\). Let us call a thought of this kind a 'P-thought'; a P-thought can be identified with an equivalence class of Fregean thoughts, or alternatively with an ordered pair of an object and a sense of a concept expression (‘... a thought consisting of a certain object and an incomplete sense ...’).\(^{29}\) It is the introduction of thoughts of this kind that Perry claims to be his greatest departure from Frege: 'The idea of individuating thoughts by objects or sequences of objects would be particularly out

\(^{29}\) Cf. ibid., p. 496.
of place in (Frege’s) system’.30 However, for Perry, when we entertain a thought, we do not just stand in a certain relation to a P-thought; we entertain a P-thought in a certain way. When Hume thinks ‘I am F’ and then thinks ‘That man is F’ (indicating himself in a mirror), he entertains the same P-thought, but in a different way. Perry has a positive proposal about ways of entertaining thoughts, one which links them to the ‘roles’ of meanings of demonstrative expressions of natural language. I shall come to this aspect of his position in a moment, but what concerns me now is to see whether, the positive characterization apart, Perry is putting forward anything other than a notational variant of Frege’s position.

Perry frequently speaks as though P-thoughts are the objects of propositional attitudes; this is, indeed, what their name would suggest. This means, I take it, that a belief-assertion asserts a relation between a subject and a P-thought. If this is Perry’s intention, then his position is not a notational variant of Frege’s, since although Frege can say everything Perry can say (using the equivalence class to Fregean thoughts) the converse is not the case. (This is generally true when the ontology of a theory T1 is less ‘fine-grained’ than the ontology of theory T2.) Frege, for example, can consistently describe the belief system of a subject S who understands and accepts, in context c, the sentence F(t), and who understands, and neither accepts nor rejects, in context c’, the sentence F(t’) when t in c refers to what t’ in c’ refers to. S believes one Fregean thought, and neither believes nor disbelieves another Fregean thought. If belief is simply a relation to a P-thought, this situation cannot be described.31

If Perry is to be able to report S’s epistemic situation, his belief reports must be more complex than just a simple relational statement between a subject and a P-thought; the way in which the thought is apprehended must come in as

30 Ibid., p. 496.
31 Perry makes life too easy for himself by considering only the case where S rejects F(t’) in c’; this he can, and does, describe as S’s believing the different P-thought, concerning the object, that it is not F (op. cit., pp. 495-6). The importance of the case of agnosticism was noticed by Kaplan in ‘Quantifying In’, in D. Davidson and J. Hintikka (eds), Words and Objections (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1969), pp. 206-42.
well. Perry uses locutions like 'By entertaining the sense of "I", S apprehended the thought consisting of Hume and the sense of "(ξ) is hot"', and so perhaps he has in mind some such construction as:

(17) S apprehends-in-way-w ⟨x, Sense of '(ξ) is F'⟩.

But surely this is now a notational variant of Frege's approach, at best. Where Frege would write:

(18) S believes ⟨x, w, Sense of '(ξ) is F'⟩,

Perry will write:

(19) S believes-in-way-w ⟨x, Sense of '(ξ) is F'⟩,

or 'S believes, by apprehending such-and-such a sense, the thought consisting of x and the sense of "(ξ) is hot"'.

So, finally, we can come to examine Perry's positive proposals about the various ways of thinking about objects which are involved in the understanding of sentences containing demonstratives, clear in our minds that they are not opposed, but supplementary to any views of Frege's. If Perry has succeeded in making these ways of thinking clear, if he has explained the various R-relations upon which they depend, all other Fregeans have reason to be grateful. For as I have said, Frege left these ways of thinking of objects quite uncharacterized, and so the nature of the senses of these expressions is unknown, even if their existence is not. Furthermore, it has seemed that such an account must presuppose some of the profoundest philosophy. In the case of 'I' for example, one might think that an account of the relation R₁ which explicates 'self-identification' must incorporate the insights, as well as illuminate the struggles, of Descartes, Kant, and Wittgenstein, and many others. One might have expected an account of self-identification—of the way in which we know, when we think of ourselves, which object is in question—would have to relate it to our special ways of gaining knowledge of ourselves, both mental and physical, both past and present. (At the very least, Hume's realizing that he is Hume must involve appreciating the bearing of the knowledge he can gain in these special ways to the truth value of very many thoughts that Hume
is F.) In this way, the ‘immunity to error through misidentification’ of these ways of gaining knowledge would be explained.\textsuperscript{32} And one might have thought that an explanation of one’s capacity to grasp indefinitely many thoughts about oneself which one does not know to be true—thoughts about one’s remote past, or one’s future—could be provided only when the role of conceptions of personal identity in self-identification had been made clear.\textsuperscript{33}

Similarly, one might have thought that an account of demonstrative identification, which underlies the thoughts we might express in (certain uses of) sentences like ‘This table is round’ would have to show how thought can depend upon perception, at least in such a way that we would know what kind of perception can sustain demonstrative identification. Can one demonstratively identify a man when one sees him in a mirror, on a television, in a photograph, in an X-ray? Can one demonstratively identify a man when one hears his footsteps, when one hears him on the telephone, on the radio, on a record? Can one demonstratively identify a city when one perceives only the inside of a room located within it?\textsuperscript{34}

Perry’s answers to these profound questions have an appealing simplicity. In the case of a ‘self-conscious’ thought, for example, he writes:

\begin{quote}
We accept that there is no thought only Hume can apprehend. Yet only he can know that he is Hume. It must not just be the thought that he thinks, but the way that he thinks it, that sets him apart from the rest of us. Only Hume can think a true thought, by saying to himself

I am Hume

Self-locating knowledge, then, requires not just the grasping of certain thoughts, but the grasping of them via the senses of certain sentences containing demonstratives.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{35} Perry, op. cit., p. 492.
By 'entertaining' the meaning or role of the demonstrative 'I', Hume thinks of himself. Similarly, by entertaining the meaning or role of the demonstrative 'here', Hume thinks of a particular place.

Simple though it is, I find that the proposal evades me. The role of a demonstrative was explained as that aspect of the meaning of the expression which was constant from occasion to occasion—presumably a (constant) function from contexts of utterance to objects. So to 'entertain the role' of the demonstrative 'I', for example, would presumably be to have this function in mind in some way. The function is determined by the rule that in any context of utterance the value of the function is the speaker in that context, so I suppose that in a derivative sense one could be said to have the function in mind, and so to be entertaining the role of the demonstrative, if one had in mind the description 'the person speaking', or 'the person who utters the token of "I"'. Since Perry insists that the meaning of 'I' is not a complete Fregean sense, and that different people entertain precisely the same meaning, perhaps we should think of this as like a description containing a free variable:

\[(20) \text{The person who utters } x \text{ and } x \text{ is a token of } 'I'.\]

But, leaving aside the question of how reference is achieved to a particular token—which is an aspect of the same general problem with which we are concerned—what has the idea in (20) got to do with one's capacity to think of oneself self-consciously? The problem is this. No one can give an account of the constant meaning (= role) of a demonstrative without mentioning some relational property (relating an object to a context of utterance) which an object must satisfy if it is to be the referent of the demonstrative in that context of utterance, but the idea of this property plays no part in an explanation of what makes a subject's thought about himself, or the place he occupies, or the current time.

It seems clear that we are on the wrong track; these suggestions must be as far from capturing what Perry intended by 'entertaining the role of a demonstrative' as they are from answering the questions with which we began. An alternative interpretation is suggested by Perry's remark: 'Only
Hume can think a true thought by saying to himself "I am Hume". Perhaps 'entertaining the sense of "I am Hume"' is to be understood along the lines of 'mentally uttering "I am Hume"', or 'saying in one's heart "I am Hume"'. But this would be to suggest that self-conscious thought depends upon the interior exploitation of the conventional meaning of certain public linguistic devices, which is surely neither necessary nor sufficient for it. It could not be suggested that self-conscious thought would be beyond the reach of those who spoke a language which had no first person pronoun, and who had to refer to themselves with their own names, or that one's capacity to think about the place one occupies is dependent upon one's language possessing a device with the meaning of 'here'. These suggestions would surely get things exactly the wrong way round.

Perhaps Perry has no sympathy with these suggestions. Perhaps, contrary to first impressions, he intended by his use of the phrase 'entertaining the sense of' not to characterize, but merely to label these ways of thinking. Perry has adopted a terminology according to which one can grasp the same thought in different ways, and when Perry speaks of Hume's grasping the thought (Hume, sense of '(ξ) is Hume') 'by entertaining the sense of "I am Hume"', perhaps he means simply Hume's self-consciously thinking that he is Hume—however that is ultimately to be characterized. Whether or not this last suggestion is correct, it seems clear that all good Fregeans must live in hope of a yet profounder philosophy.

37 This is certainly all I am able to understand by Kaplan's parallel talk of Hume's thinking of himself 'under the character of "I"'. He gives evidence of the intention to be enlightening about 'the particular and primitive way in which each person is presented to himself' ('Demonstratives', p. 65), but I can derive no more enlightenment from the literal meaning of the phrase, 'under the character' than I can from 'entertaining the role', and further elucidation is not to be found.