

## Questioning Perry's Connection between Indexicals/Demonstratives and Behavior

### *1. Introduction*

In "Perception, Action and the Structure of Believing" (ref), Perry describes his project thus:

The sentences whose acceptance will be systematically linked to perception and action typically contain demonstratives and indexicals:  
*That rock is coming at me, I'd better duck, This door is open, etc.* We need an account of meaning that comprehends such expressions." (Perry: )

In "Rip van Winkle and Other Characters," (ref) having discussed Kaplan's view that indexicals and demonstratives have "characters" (*the referent of "I" is the speaker; the referent of "you" is the addressee, etc.*) over and above their (intensions and) extensions, Perry begins his central section with the question:

How can we conceive of beliefs, so that characters may be intelligibly assigned to them?

Perry's position is that there are special ways of thinking of things that are expressed with demonstratives or indexicals, and that these special ways of thinking of things are uniquely connected with perception and with action. I will argue, on the contrary, that indexical and demonstrative words do not correspond to any special ways of thinking of their referents. And I will argue that linguistic indexicals and demonstratives have no essential connections with perception or action, although, of course, the referent of an indexical or demonstrative is quite often present to perception for both speaker and hearer, hence as a possible target for action.

Perry's support for his position began with an observation about the indexical "I."

A person can have a belief that contains a reference to himself but that makes this reference via a designation that he does not know applies to himself. Then he might act differently than if he knew the belief was about himself. For example, Castaneda (1966, 1968) had told a story about Ivan Tovar, heir to a famous fortune, who does not claim it, despite reading accounts in the papers of the search for Ivan Tovar. He doesn't claim the fortune because he has amnesia and doesn't know his own name. As Perry explained it, he accepts the proposition *Ivan Tovar has many riches awaiting him*, but does not infer *I have many riches awaiting me* and so he fails to act (Perry, 146). Thus the word "I" appears to be connected to a special way of thinking about oneself that connects directly with action. I think, however, that this appearance is false.

X First, I will argue, there are two different kinds of mental representations of the self, only one of which has to do with the explanation of action, only the other of which is expressed with the word *I*. Behind the *word I* must be a thought no different in basic kind from any other thought of the self expressible in language, whether through descriptions, other indexicals, demonstratives or a proper name. More generally, indexicals and demonstratives have no intrinsic connection with action. Second, I will suggest a way of understanding the nature of indexicals and demonstratives in general that makes clear *exactly why* there are no mental indexicals and no mental demonstratives. Then I will discuss what I think is right and wrong about what Perry wants to put in place of mental indexicals and demonstratives, namely grasp of the "reflexive contents" of various linguistic forms.

### *2. Two kinds of representations of the self*

X Any animal (such as a human) that has to act with respect to distal objects or situations needs to recognize these distal affairs in many alternative ways. It needs to recognize a thing of interest whether near or far off, overhead or underfoot, under many different lighting or sound transfer conditions, when partly occluded, despite dappled shadows, extraneous noises, or odors, and so forth. In effect, the animal needs to ignore or look through the evidence of its own, currently mediated, relations to affording affairs in order to recognize them objectively, no matter in what manner they are currently affecting its senses.

X On the other hand, in order to act with respect to an object or situation, in order to manipulate it or alter its relation to it, the animal has to factor its own relation to the affording affair back in again. It needs to know, for example, not just that a certain predator or prey is present, but in what direction and at what distance.

X Accordingly, in mammals, two different neural channels are distinguishable for visual perception (also auditory). These are sometimes termed the *dorsal* and the *ventral* visual channels. The ventral channel is operative when identifying objects and when recognizing their relations to one another. In contrast, the dorsal channel is concerned mainly with the perception of action-enabling relations --the relations of objects and events *to the perceiving animal* as required to guide motor behaviors such as walking or running towards or away, between or through, climbing, pointing at, reaching for, grasping, manipulating:

X The dorsal channel does not merely represent relations to the self; it is concerned with direct guidance of the organism's movements in relation to objects. It connects directly with the motor systems. For this purpose it is able to process information very quickly. But this information seems not to be consciously registered; it is not available to the belief forming systems. It is action-enabling information only.

X In contrast, the ventral system processes information necessary for object identification. It detects relations among objects better than relations to the perceiver. It detects what objects and situations the perceiver confronts, carefully abstracting this information away from the perceiver's current relations to them, so as to evaluate appropriate responses: should I approach this? or retreat from it? eat it? post a letter in it? Information gathered by the ventral system is readily available to the belief forming systems. X Speculating on the *form* of dorsal or *action-enabling* representations, clearly they don't represent the perceiving self explicitly. To understand this, consider, for comparison, the dance of the honey bee. By its orientation on the hive wall it shows the direction of nectar relative to a line from the hive to the sun. Change the dance orientation and the represented direction of nectar changes accordingly. Direction is *explicitly* represented in the dance by the orientation of the dance. Time is also explicitly represented. If the dance is performed on Tuesday it indicates where nectar is on Tuesday, if on Wednesday then on Wednesday, that is, time is explicitly represented by time. But the bee dance also talks about nectar, although no change in it will produce talk about something else instead, say, about the direction of milk or of peanut butter. Thus nectar is represented only *implicitly*. Similarly, the hive and the sun are represented only implicitly. Though nectar, hive and sun all figure in the dance's truth conditions, only direction and time are represented *explicitly*. Perry expresses the same

idea, I believe, when he speaks of "judgments that *concern* an object" although they are "not explicitly about" it (EE refs 1986a, 1999).

X Dorsal channel representations, used fleetingly and for movement guidance only, vary to show the varied relations of objects and situations to the perceiver. But the perceiver remains constant through these variations. My action-enabling representations don't sometimes flip so as to show your relation to the objects I perceive. That information would be of no use in guiding *my* motions. In representing my relations to the things I perceive, my action-enabling representations do, of course, always represent myself, but they do so only *implicitly*. Compare Perry when he speaks of "agent relative knowledge," a kind of "*self knowledge*" that

embodies knowledge of the relations things stand in to the agent; the thoughts are true because of facts about the agent. But it does not require that the agent have an idea of self or a notion of self." ("Myself and I," EE 329)

Here Perry has conscious discursive knowledge in mind, knowledge of the sort one would express with "There's an apple over there" (while looking at it). A clearer example might be the form of soliloquy, "To be or not to be..." or "And now to bed." And it may indeed be that we *can also* have implicit thoughts of the self in this discursive form.

X We humans may be the only animals capable of representing ourselves and our relations to the things around us *explicitly*, of representing ourselves "in the same code" (as the neurologists say) as we represent other objects. We may be unique in sometimes representing ourselves from an allocentric point of view as objects among other objects, related to these other objects exactly as they are related to one another. But if we were to represent ourselves *only* in this allocentric way, we would never be able to take action with regard to ourselves or anything else. What defines the difference between oneself and other people or objects is that we are each at the origin of only our own *actions*, this origin being represented dorsally, hence implicitly. This origin is not expressed with the pronoun "I". The person who says the word "I" expresses an explicit allocentric representation of self, not an implicit one as needed to direct action. To understand the sentence "I am being attacked" requires grasping its contrast with "You are being attacked," with "Perry is being attacked," and so forth. I think I am in agreement here with Perry in "Myself and I," though not with Perry in the earlier "The problem of the essential indexical".

In "Myself and I," however, Perry draws distinctions among *three* kinds of knowledge of the self. Besides the first "agent relative" kind where the thought of the self is implicit are two kinds where the thought of the self is explicit: "self-attached knowledge," corresponding to the use of "I," and "knowledge of the person one happens to be," corresponding to a proper name or description of oneself or a demonstrative reference to oneself (say, on seeing oneself in the mirror). On the other hand in a middling essay, "Perception, action and the structure of believing," Perry says concerning the kind of psychological state that leads to "[a]cceptance of / sentences....," that "it is not necessary for someone to have mastered / to be in them," (EI p. 146) for example, that a child *Katie* might learn the use of her own name before learning "the

intricacies of *I....: Katie wants a cookie.*" . Apparently Perry thought at that time that the context dependency of "I" would make it more difficult to grasp its linguistic rules than those for the name "Katie," but that Katie could express the same thought using "Katie" that she would later express with the word "I," thus implying that the thought behind "I" would be, for her, of the same kind as that behind "Katie." I think, and will argue, that Perry was right in this middle essay, rather than in the later "Myself and I." A problem for the (correct) middle view, however, is that if it is true, then the thought expressed with the indexical "I" is not connected in any special way with action, hence no longer appears to be "essential." Perry tries to stave off this conclusion in "Myself and I."

X Let us suppose that Katie never calls herself anything but "Katie." (Indeed, there are actually children who do this.) Many ways she has of finding out things about Katie are ways other people can use as well, for example, certain ways she can find where she is, what she is wearing and what's in her open hand. Other ways are ways that only other people can or could use, for example, ways of finding out when Katie was born, whether Katie has the measles and whether the back of her neck is dirty. And Katie can tell certain things about Katie in ways that others can't, like whether Katie's shoes are on (by feeling), what is in Katie's mouth or in her closed hand, whether Katie is cold and what Katie is thinking. Also, Katie is always immediately available to Katie if she wishes to know certain things about Katie, whereas about other people these things may be harder to find out. But, assuming that Katie understands "Katie wants a cookie" as a transformation of such sentences as "Andy wants a cookie" and "Sandy wants a cookie," all of this knowledge about Katie is surely allocentric knowledge. When Katie learns to express this kind of knowledge using "I" instead of "Katie," just as Perry suggested ("Perception action and the structure of believing") it seems that nothing changes. *Why suppose that "I" suddenly expresses some new kind of thought of herself?*

Perry claims that the difference between "self-attached knowledge" (call it "I-knowledge") and "knowledge of the person one happens to be" (call it "Katie-knowledge") is in the "methods" of gaining these two kinds of knowledge. I-knowledge is gained by a "reflexive method"

...a method for finding out whether someone has some property or does not, that we can each use to find out about ourselves, but can't use to find out about others. (EE 334)

The ways Katie finds out whether she has shoes on, what's in her mouth or her closed hand (say, a paper clip), whether she is cold and what she is thinking are, presumably, examples of this method whereas finding out when she was born, whether she has the measles, and what's in her open hand are not. So when she discovers that a paper clip is in her closed hand by feeling she thinks of herself in the "I" way but when she discovers that she has a paper clip in her hand by looking she thinks of herself in the "Katie" way? Perry offers no argument that this sort of difference in ways one can find things out about oneself corresponds to a difference in ways of thinking of oneself. Nor does Perry offer an explanation of why this sort of difference would come to correspond, for Katie, to the distinction between "I" and "Katie."<sup>1</sup> If he were making the neo-Fregean

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<sup>1</sup> Trouble with this distinction surfaces especially clearly when Perry claims that I-

assumption that different ways of recognizing or finding out about a thing always correspond to different ways of thinking of it, then there should be not just two ways but dozens and dozens of ways of thinking about oneself.

Let us explore then the idea that when Katie learns to say "I" instead of "Katie" *nothing* changes in her way of thinking of herself. I'll use Perry's stories.

### 3. *Examining some myths about "I"*

X Suppose I am being attacked by a bear and you are nearby. As Perry notes in "The essential indexical" [???], we will behave differently. Perry claims that this difference occurs because I will think a special kind of thought of the form *It's after ME* while you will think an ordinary kind of thought of the form *it's after RM*. Notice first that the example invites us to confuse differences in behaviors that result from differences in starting points with those that might result from differences in goals. Of course I might be more interested than you in saving me from the bear. We might behave differently because we have different priorities, different goals. So let's explicitly put that aside and assume that our goals coincide: we both aim, with the same determination, only to save me from the bear. Still, for reasons having nothing to do with our ways of thinking of me, to achieve that goal we will have to act differently for the easy reason that my arms and legs and your arms and legs bear quite different relations both to the bear and to me. Each of us must be guided by representations of our own particular relation to the threatening tragedy. Though acting toward the same end, we begin from different starting points so we must act differently. Action-enabling relations perceived by your dorsal system do not match those perceived by mine, substituting in your implicit representation of self for mine. However, our explicit beliefs concerning each of our relations to the bear and to me may match perfectly. Indeed, perhaps, like Katie, each of us expresses thoughts of herself/himself only with a proper name. (Surely the existence of the indexical word "I" in one's language is not necessary to the human condition.) All of our explicit thoughts about what RM should do and what you should do and even our ways of expressing them might match perfectly, but neither of us can perform an action for the other. My dorsal representations concerning my relations to you and to the bear will be different from yours. The difference between us is not then that one thinks an special kind of thought, "I," about RM's relation to the bear, the other

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knowledge includes knowledge about oneself acquired by looking in a mirror in the normal way (337 fn.) but not in a mirror across the room (337). Following Shoemaker, Perry describes some of this I-kind of knowing as "knowing from the inside," but, also following Shoemaker, he seems not to be sure that it is *necessary* that one could have knowledge only of oneself in various of the I-ways (335). Nor is it clear how necessity would bear on the question at issue.

not. Both must be guided by both explicit (ventral) and implicit (dorsal) thoughts in order to take action, the difference in action depending on different relations to each other and to the bear, not on different ways of thinking. Exactly similarly, if we were both trying to save Perry from a bear we would behave differently, say, one might throw nearby rocks from the east, the other nearby sticks from the west.

X Returning to the story of Ivan Tovar who fails to collect his inheritance because he has forgotten his name, notice that those currently in charge of the inheritance don't act for exactly the same reason Ivan Tovar doesn't act. They also don't know who Ivan Tovar is. They too don't know, for instance, which body is his. They too don't know any way to identify him. If they did, they would give him the money. The trouble has nothing to do with the indexical "I" or the thought it expresses. Suppose Ivan now calls himself "Pierre." What Pierre needs to know is how to identify the person named "Ivan Tovar," say, as the one seen in the mirror every morning when shaving, the one whose mouth he knows how to tell what's in and whose legs he knows how to move --namely Peter. Perhaps he will eventually succeed in identifying Ivan by noticing that Peter's face in the mirror looks just like the picture of Ivan in the paper.

X Taking another famous Perry example (1993 p. 33), suppose that I notice that someone in the market has been trailing sugar from their grocery cart without realizing that this person is myself. So long as I believe only that *the person trailing sugar* should stop making such a mess, Perry suggests, I won't correct the problem. I must come to believe that *I* am making the mess. But this is not so. I need only recognize the leaky bag, as *the leaky bag* and then perceive enabling relations relevant to fixing it (though the impropriety of fixing someone else's bag might be an issue). Believing it is *my* bag that is trailing the sugar may indeed help me out, but only because I am likely to know where to find my own bag. If I believed it was Perry's bag, I might have more of a search.

X When someone uses the word "I," we do generally take for granted that they are expressing a concept that includes the capacity to recognize the person speaking (themselves) in a great many ways --by looking down or in the mirror, by their name, as the one whose hand they feel things in, the one thinking their thoughts and so forth. We expect them to be able to coordinate their beliefs about this person's relations to various places and objects with their affording perceptions of these same places and objects, crudely speaking, their dorsal with their ventral perceptions. We expect exactly the same when they speak of themselves using their own names. But what we take for granted is not always the case. There are people who think that some of their thoughts actually belong to someone else (thought insertion), people who refuse to believe that their left side belongs to them (hemi-neglect), people who have forgotten their own names (amnesia), people who can not conceptualize relations to themselves that they can none the less take account of for purposes of action (visual form agnosia) and some who have the reverse problem (optic ataxia). (How many ways do you have to be capable of identifying a person --to tell when you are receiving information about them-- to "know who" they are?) The word "I" has nothing to do with any of this. It's use has no more necessary connection with perception or action than does the use of one's own name. So the central indexical word with which Perry illustrates the supposed

connection of indexicals and demonstratives to perception and action seems to be an exception to his rule. What about indexicals and demonstratives more generally?

#### 4. *A boring connection with perception and action*

Linguistic indexicals and demonstratives are often used when the things they stand in for are currently present both to the speaker and the hearer. There are lots of exceptions, as when "I" or "you" are spoken over the telephone, "today" is used in a letter, "this" and "that" are used for what was just mentioned or what just passed by, the ubiquity of indexicals in written matter, and so forth. But in the cases we tend to think of first, "I" and "you" are used when speaker and hearer are face to face to refer to something present to both, "this" and "that" are used while the speaker is looking or pointing to something currently perceived by the hearer as well. In these simple cases the hearer generally knows what is being talked about only by currently perceiving it. But what is being talked about is not, in general, something either the speaker or hearer is going to act on. Of course, when the referent is perceived as it is spoken about its action-enabling relations are likely to be perceptible as well. To act on something you must grasp your relation either to it or to something causally connected with it, and the direct way of grasping your relation to something for action is currently to perceive it. In these simple cases, then there is a very loose connection between the use of linguistic indexicals/demonstratives and perception hence action. But this is clearly an incidental feature of the use of demonstratives and indexicals, not something essential. Similarly, using the name of something present when one simultaneously perceives it and when one's hearer also perceives it and knows its name has a loose connection with action, but one that is not theoretically interesting.

I conclude that the idea that linguistic indexicals/demonstratives have a unique or essential connection with action is not well founded. But Perry (and many others) have also claimed that there are *thoughts* of a special kind, often expressed with indexicals or demonstratives, that have a special connection with perception and action. We should look at this second and rather different claim separately. Might there be special kinds of *thoughts* that could sensibly be labeled indexical/demonstrative and that are uniquely connected with perception and action? To explore this further question, I believe that we need first to understand clearly what makes *linguistic* forms indexical or demonstrative, and how these linguistic forms are interpreted. Then we can ask whether there is an analogy between the way these linguistic forms work and the way certain kinds of thoughts work. And if not, we can go on to ask whether there are none the less special kinds of thoughts for which these forms facilitate the expression.

#### 5. *Making linguistic indexicals/demonstratives simple*

A current consensus has it that sentences containing indexicals and demonstratives are "context sensitive." The propositions they express depend on the contexts they are in. As Kaplan explained it, their semantic meanings can be represented as functions from the contexts in which they are tokened to elements of propositional content. Garcia-CarpenteroPerry has proposed, instead, a modified token-reflexive account of indexicals, and Perry has his own account. These are all illuminating ways to think about how indexicals and demonstratives work. But there is another satisfactory way to understand how they function that has the advantage that it

makes the question whether there could be *mental representations* that function in ways analogous to linguistic indexicals crystal clear.

Consider a bottle with a label on it that says "poison." One *could* say, I suppose, that *the meaning of* "poison" written on a label is context sensitive. The relevant contextual index is the contents of the container on which the label is affixed. The semantic function takes us from the value, *x*, of this index to the proposition that *x* is poison. We might also say that the label "poison" affixed on the bottle is token-reflexive, saying "The contents of that to which this token is affixed are poisonous." Such a label would indeed have the same truth conditions as the label-on-bottle itself, differing only in what was represented explicitly as opposed to implicitly. But surely it is more natural merely to consider the whole configuration ---*a-word-on-a label-affixed-to-a-container-with-something-in-it*--- to constitute a conventional sign. The word on the label will have its conventional meaning, the positioning of the label on a container is a syntactic structure, and whatever is in the container stands for itself. Similarly, the color on the outside of a marking pen conventionally stands for itself --for the same color-- on the inside, and one inch can stand for itself --for one inch-- on a scale drawing. And when I shake my fist at you I make a conventional sign that RGM, the one shaking the fist, is angry at you, the one being addressed with the fist. I stand for myself and you stand for yourself. When I say "ouch!!" I also stand for myself.

Conventional signs often consist of a narrowly linguistic part plus a chunk of nonlinguistic context that stands for itself.<sup>2</sup> That is, using things to stand for themselves in certain linguistic contexts is conventional. For example, the complete or "wide" conventional sign may include the speaker or hearer or the time and/or place of the narrowly linguistic sign. A demonstrative sign includes the actual item demonstrated, which stands for itself. (Kaplan on direct reference in *Dthat*: "That's right, John himself, right there, trapped in a proposition." A bit less dramatic: *That's right, John himself, right there, trapped in a representation!*) The speaker of the demonstrative makes clear in some way, either conventional or informal, what she intends as the completion of her sign. If conventional, the gesture of demonstration is part of the syntax, showing where the rest of the sign is to be found, the nonverbal part. *Exactly* as the hearer must recognize each of the words in a sentence prior to understanding the whole, the hearer must identify any items that are demonstrated prior to understanding the whole. Without relevant context, sentence forms containing demonstratives are *incomplete signs*. A demonstrative word in a sentence, or a word such as "I" or "you" or "here" or "today" occurring within a sentence merely *holds a grammatical place* for a contextual item which cannot, of course, be itself positioned *within* the sentence, but which stands for itself. The grammatical place of an indexical word or of a demonstrative shows the position within the propositional form, the logical form, that is occupied by an extra-linguistic and self-representing item. Indexical and demonstrative *words* refer anaphorically.

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<sup>2</sup> For a theory of linguistic convention that clearly entails this result, see my (1998).

Notice that this way of looking at how indexicals/demonstratives function removes all temptation to postulate special kinds of "senses" or special kinds of thoughts for them to express. Obviously, a thing that stands for itself has a directly referential semantics!

From here it seems transparent that the word *I* could not possibly express a thought that was, itself, literally indexical. Katie's *allocentric* thoughts about Katie contain a representation of Katie, not Katie herself, and her action-enabling representations represent her only implicitly. Similarly, the word "you" cannot express an indexical thought. The thought vehicles that Katie has, say, about Sandy that she expresses by saying "you" to Sandy do not contain Sandy himself. Nor do the thought vehicles, say, about Katie's balloon that she expresses using "this" or "that" contain the balloon. Barring Russell's early view that one can use indexical thoughts --*this, that, that, that, etc.*-- to name one's sense data, it appears that no thought, excepting perhaps thoughts of the present time or place (more of that in a moment), could be literally indexical or demonstrative. A complete indexical/demonstrative vehicle always contains, as a proper part, its referent, which stands for itself. Presumably, the various parts of a mental representation are aspects of a psychological state. How then could a mental indexical/demonstrative ever represent something non-mental, something not contained as part of the mental representation itself?

X Consider, then, a perception that it is raining, according to which the time of the perception represents the time of the rain, the place of the perception represents the place of the rain. If the perception were to occur at a different time or place, the time or place to which it refers would differ accordingly. Thus the time and place are represented *explicitly*. But it is unclear why one would wish to call this kind of mental representation "indexical," any more than one calls a scale drawing in which one inch stands for one inch "indexical," or the sign that is a labeled bottle "indexical." What we label as "indexical" in language is always anaphorical, such as the word "this" referring back to the thing indicated, which stands for itself. Of course perceptions and thoughts of the here and now do have a special connection with action here and now, but again, indexicality is not any part of that.

#### 6. Another possibility: Perry's analysis

This is the way it might now appear. Suppose that the school nurse has just measured Katie, Randy and Sandy and called out their heights. As a result, each of the three children has exactly the same belief, exactly the same type of thought, expressed equally well by Katie saying to Randy "I am taller than you" or by Randy saying to Katie "You are taller than me" or by Sandy saying "Katie is taller than Randy." Exactly the same thought could be also expressed by Sandy saying "You are taller than you are" while pointing first to Katie and then to Randy, or by saying "She is taller than he is" or "That girl is taller than that boy." In each of these cases, reference to Katie and Randy is direct; each stands for him or herself. Though the notation is different, the proposition expressed is the same and the kind of thought expressed or understood by each child is the same. True, as Perry claims, Katie has ways of finding out certain truths about herself, about Katie, that neither Randy nor Sandy can use. But Randy and Sandy also have certain ways of finding out things about Katie that only they and not Katie can use

--say, telling if the back of Katie's neck is dirty. Different ways of finding out are not, however, different ways of believing or thinking of. Randy and Sandy may also differ *from one another* in ways they are able to find out about Katie: Randy can recognize Katie by her voice, say, or by her walk whereas Sandy cannot. These are merely epistemological differences, not distinctions between kinds of thoughts.

On the other hand, could it be that linguistic indexicals/demonstratives express special kinds of thoughts that are *not* indexical or demonstrative?

Perry claims that there are various other levels of content, various "reflexive contents," that stand behind the standard truth-conditional contents of referential terms. These contents differ for different (linguistic) indexicals/demonstratives and also for proper names (Reference and Reflexivity). Different reflexive contents stand behind speakers' beliefs expressed by these forms and different others behind the beliefs their cooperative hearers acquire.<sup>3</sup> These various contents refer reflexively to the utterance tokens or thought tokens that carry them. For example (putting things very roughly indeed) behind a linguistic token of "That's a stapler" stands a reflexive content *That the thing to which the use of 'that' in this token directs attention is a stapler*; behind the belief expressed by this token stands a reflexive content *That the object of the perception attached to the object-notion I'm currently using [the currently open file --see immediately below] is a stapler*. Similarly, for proper names, a reflexive content behind a linguistic token of "Tully is Cicero" would be *That the person the conventions exploited by this sentence utterance permit one to designate with "Cicero" is the person these conventions permit one to designate with "Tully"* (R&R 6.5). Reflexive content, according to Perry, is not what is *said* (direct reference theorists are right about that) but it is psychologically active content: "I claim that the reflexive content helps us understand the *reasoning* that motivates the production of utterances, and the *reasoning* that is involved in their interpretation" (Perry 2006, p. 323, emphasis added.)

#### 7. The thoughts that indexicals and demonstratives express

Perry speaks of our having individual mental file folders for each of the various people, objects and so forth we can remember, into which we insert new information when we encounter these things again or when we hear or read about them. He calls these files, including their contents, "notions." New files can be opened when new things are encountered, used for a brief time, then either discarded or closed and saved. If saved, a file will be opened again if its object is recognized in perception or through language. Sometimes a file's object is encountered again but not recognized. Then the old file is kept closed and, in ignorance, a second file is opened for exactly the same thing. The thinker has failed to understand that *this* object is the same as *that* object or, say, that Cicero is Tully. She has acquired two separate notions of the same thing.

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<sup>3</sup> See, especially, the "Conclusion" chapter of (Perry 2001).

This sort of image is one that I too have strongly advocated (Millikan 1984, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2000). It is found in Lockwood (1971) where it is used to clarify a theory of identity judgments originally drawn from Strawson's lectures and subsequently articulated by Strawson himself in Subject and Predicate in Logic and Grammar (1972).<sup>4</sup> I suggest a different way than Perry's of bringing this image to bear on the analysis of identity sentences and of thoughts expressed with indexicals, a way that agrees better (though not completely) with Lockwood and Strawson's own analyses.

On this analysis, an identity judgment is nothing more nor less than the merging of information received from more than one source into the same mental file. When information is put into a file, the subject of the information is not represented anywhere *in* the file. It is represented by the file, hence by a mental *particular*. Just as existence is not a predicate,<sup>5</sup> identity is not relation, nor is it represented in the mind by a relation. Nothing akin to an ordinary belief is formed when an object is identified, nothing, for example, that could reasonably be modeled by a mental sentence. An identity judgment expresses not a proposition but the application of a know-how, an ability.

Nor is recognizing something's identity discovering some essential feature of it to register in its folder. Knowing what you are thinking of is not contemplating a uniquely identifying description or, say, a "Fundamental Idea" (Evans) of it. Knowing what you are thinking of is merely knowing when to open the folder. It is the ability to recognize when you are thinking of that same thing again or receiving information about that same thing again, an ability manifested in making mediate inferences, in collecting information and in using it for guidance of action. An implication is that all identification is what Strawson once called "story relative identification."<sup>6</sup> All identification is really co-

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<sup>4</sup> Similar models are increasingly familiar in theories of vision, for example in Kahneman [ ["Applied in the context of memory retrieval." and "emphasizes the memory content of the information associated with the objects in memory" (Pylyshyn 2001)].]and Pylyshyn

<sup>5</sup> On the similarity between the "is" of identity and "exists," see Millikan 1984 Chapter 12.

<sup>6</sup> Individuals, p. ??

identification. The ability to recognize the same thing as the same, under various conditions and through diverse media, for various kinds of things and for various individuals, is or has been gained through experience, initially of the species, then of the individual thinker. It is always an imperfect and fragile ability. As with other abilities, one's abilities to recognize or reidentify various individual things and kinds generally improve with time but are never perfect. "Knowledge of reference" (John Campbell's way of putting it) is always a matter of degree. I can know more, or less, well what it is that I am presently perceiving or thinking of.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> These claims are defended at length in Millikan 2000.

Consider, for example, various ways that you may or may not be able to recognize when natural information is arriving at your senses about John Perry.<sup>8</sup> You may do this by seeing him in the flesh, close up, at a distance, from the back, from the front, from the side, half hidden behind another person or a chair, sitting or standing, or yawning, or stretching, or running, or eating, up the street, in daylight, under a street lamp, through a fog, half way through the door, in a picture, on TV, through binoculars, by hearing his voice across the room, hearing it close up, over the telephone, by recognizing his signature, by recognizing his name when spoken, or when written by hand or in a hundred different fonts, by recognizing his walk in the distance, or his style of prose, or by a dozen descriptions such as "the tall philosopher who teaches philosophy of language at Stanford," or "the man who wrote 'The problem of the essential indexical'," or "the man who[m] this conference is for" ---or by his name (in context).

Just like their faces, people's names, recognized in context, generally open corresponding folders in other people's minds so that information can flow into these folders. The job of an identity sentence such as "Tully is Cicero" is not to express a proposition or to represent a relation or to cause a belief. (Language has many other functions than causing beliefs.) It is to change the mental dispositions of the hearer so that information arriving or that has previously arrived via the name "Tully" and via the name "Cicero" is all funneled into the same folder. Encounter with each of these names now opens the same folder. If the names "Tully" and "Cicero" do in fact name the same, then this new disposition will be a genuine new ability. That it is a genuine ability will, of course, depend on certain facts about the names "Tully" and "Cicero," but that an ability rests on certain empirical facts does not require the one with the ability to harbor a representation or a belief or a "content" that concerns those facts. For example, being able to ride a bicycle does not require a representation or a belief or a content concerning the laws of momentum. Similarly the ability to identify information arriving via the names "Tully" and "Cicero" as about the same person does not require representing or thinking about or having concepts of or reasoning about words. Nor need any reasoning be involved in the interpretation of a heard identity sentence.

Things that must be true of a linguistic form for it to function normally are not things represented by the sentence on any level nor, indeed, need a speaker or hearer be aware of them. Philosophers of language don't yet agree about what makes something the referent of a proper name, say, about what it means to say that so and so is "*the person the conventions exploited by this sentence utterance permit one to designate with "Cicero,"*" but that doesn't keep us from using and understanding proper names. We don't need to know the underlying mechanics any more than we need to understand how the binoculars or the voltmeter work in order to use them.

We can generalize this to cover the interpretation of indexicals and demonstratives. Learning to understand "I" is learning how to find the right folder to

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<sup>8</sup> The sense of "natural information" intended is discussed in Millikan 2004, Chapters 3-6, where it is also argued that information carried by language in a completely normal way is also a form of natural information.

open when "I" is heard. Learning to use "I" is learning to express the contents of a certain folder, in Katie's case, the one into which she has earlier put certain information from the mirror, from looking down, from feeling herself, from hearing "Katie" talked about, and from many other ways she has already learned to reidentify Katie. Surely Katie can understand and use "I" long before she can articulate or even understand that "I" stands for the person speaking, indeed long before she has the concept of a sign or symbol.

What goes with "I" then is not a special reflexive content or any special way of thinking of something. And so for other indexicals and demonstratives. One learns how to identify through them given the conventions in one's surrounding community, which strongly simulate natural laws, and one learns how to express oneself through them in conventional ways, to cause simulation of the same laws. These uses no more involve reasoning to or from different levels of content than learning to recognize Perry first, say, by his face straight on, later by his walk in the distance and then by his voice. Nor do these new ways of expressing oneself and of understanding others have anything in particular to do with perception and action.

I can't help but repeat a plea here that I have made many times before. Surely the assimilation of ways of recognizing to ways of thinking of, hence to some kind of "content," was a mistake on Frege's part (later exacerbated by Dummett) that we need very much to put behind us.

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