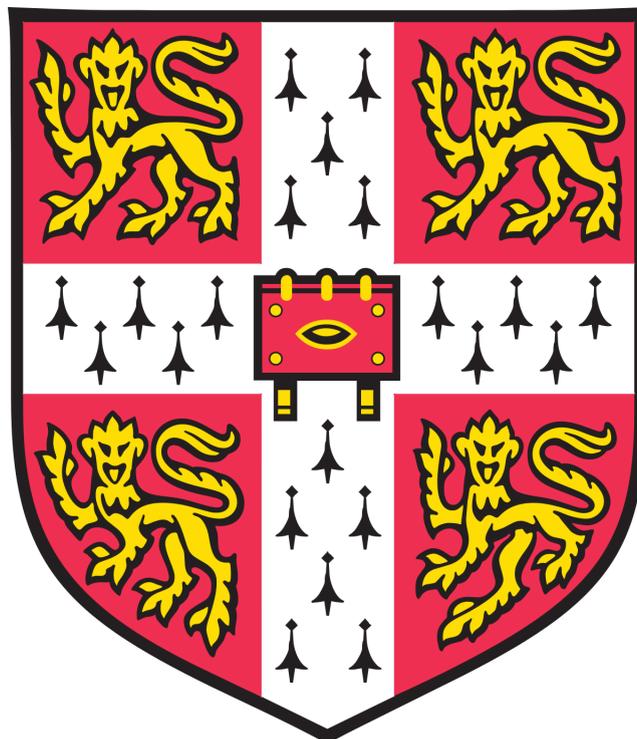


An Internalist View of Specific Thought

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This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text.

δός μοι που στω και κινω την γην
Give me a place to stand and I will move the Earth
- **Archimedes**

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An Internalist View of Specific Thought

In this thesis I shall call into question the prevailing view that (what I call) specific thought is object-dependent. After an introduction of the notions of specific thought and object-dependence (section 1), I will argue that such object-dependence would lead to results that are incompatible with a certain - Cartesian - conception of the mind (sections 2 and 3). Finally, I will formulate an analysis of the content of specific thoughts that reflects their specificity, but does not make them object-dependent (section 4).¹

1. Specific thought and Object-dependence

1.1. Specific Thought

When we think about the world, we sometimes entertain thoughts about particular objects. Consider:

- 1) John is happy.
- 2) That tree is large.
- 3) My stomach hurts.

The thoughts associated with these sentences are about particular things, namely John, that tree and my stomach. Contrast this to sentences which do not purport to be about particular objects:

- 4) There are no aliens.
- 5) There is at least one book full with lies.
- 6) Everyone who has lost a close friend will always remember the resulting feeling of emptiness.

The thoughts expressed in sentences 4) - 6) are not about any objects in particular. They do not concern any particular aliens, books or people. Traditionally, a distinction has been drawn between singular thoughts (thoughts about a particular object) and general thoughts (thoughts that are not about any particular object). However, I wish to follow Crane (2011, 2013) and instead draw a more general distinction between specific thoughts and general

¹ I wish to thank my supervisor Tim Crane for his extensive help and encouragement and Ege Yumusak, Eno Agolli and Erlend W. F. Owesen for helpful discussion and comments on the draft. Versions of this paper have been presented at the Trinity College Philosophy Society and the Cambridge MPhil Thesis Seminar.

thoughts.² Specific thoughts can be characterised by their cognitive role. Someone has a specific thought when they are aiming at one or more particular objects. In other words, they have some particular object in mind. By contrast, general thought is “thinking generally about things in the world” (Crane 2013: 141). Singular thoughts, thoughts aimed at one particular object, are specific thoughts. But there are specific thoughts that are not singular. Consider:

- 7) John and Mary love each other.
- 8) Those pandas are cute.
- 9) My feet hurt.

The associated thoughts are specific as they are about particular objects, but they are not singular. Hence, they are specific plural thoughts.³

General Thought: Thought that is not aimed at any particular object

Specific Thought: Thought that is aimed at one or more particular objects.

Singular Thought: Specific thought that is aimed at one particular object.

Plural Thought: Specific thought that is aimed at more than one particular object.

Having drawn these distinctions, a few clarifications are needed:

First, specific thoughts are thoughts aimed at one or more particular objects. If that particular object exists, I will call that particular object the intentional object of the thought.⁴ When I have a specific thought about John, then John is the intentional object of that thought. All intentional objects exist. Saying that a specific thought is aimed at its intentional object does not commit me to saying that specific thoughts could not exist without their intentional objects. One might aim to refer to an object, but that object does not actually exist. Thus, I do not want to exclude the possibility that some specific thoughts do not have an intentional object. In fact, I wish to argue for this possibility later in this essay.

Second, Crane’s definition of a specific thought seems to diverge slightly from mine: For him, a specific thought is such that “there is some particular object that the thinker is aiming at when [...] they have someone particular in mind” (Crane 2013: 141). This seems to imply that specific thought is only possible if the object which is aimed at exists. However, he agrees that specific thought about non-existent objects is possible. The reason for the divergence in the formulation is that Crane’s way of talking allows him to say that ‘there are

² Crane (2013) credits Quine (1960) with the insight that ‘singular terms’ are terms that purport to refer to one object.

³ See Azzouni (2011).

⁴ My usage of the term is therefore the same as Searle’s (1983: 16ff).

objects of thought that do not exist'. He would say that every specific thought has an object of thought, but some of these objects of thought do not exist. Hence, this is a mere terminological difference.

Third, there is the question as to where exactly the boundary between specific and general thought lies. Some theorists want to restrict the class of possible intentional objects. Russell, for instance, held that a thinker can have singular⁵ thought only about objects she is acquainted with.⁶ Being acquainted with an object means having some direct epistemic relationship with that object. For Russell, this reduced the class of possible intentional objects to sense data, universals, relations and the self. Consequently, he would have denied that thoughts about John or that tree are specific. By contrast, Neo-Russellians hold onto a version of Russell's acquaintance principle, but liberalise it to allow other objects, such as trees or pandas, to be the intentional objects of specific thoughts.⁷ Jeshion (2010b: 126), in a similar way, holds that it is the object's "significance to the subject" that determines whether the subject can have specific thought about it.⁸ Many have seen a connection between the use of devices of 'direct reference', most importantly names and demonstratives, and specific thought. I do not wish to enter these debates in this paper. Crane's characterisation of specific thought in terms of cognitive role may not provide a clear-cut boundary between specific thought and general thought. For some thoughts it might be unclear as to whether a thinker has some particular thing in mind or not. However, the resulting vagueness is not a disadvantage of this psychological characterisation.

Fourth, some thoughts are aimed at indeterminate objects. Consider

10) I need someone who is reliable and speaks Arabic.

In this example my thought seems to be aimed at someone who is reliable and speaks Arabic, but that object is not determinate enough. However, there are no indeterminate objects in the world. So how can thought be aimed at these objects? This has been a problem for various theorists, but I can easily argue that such thoughts about indeterminate objects fall under what I called 'general thoughts'.⁹ I aim to find someone with the properties 'reliable' and 'speaks Arabic', but do not have anyone particular in mind.

⁵ and thus specific thought. In the remainder of this essay I will stick to 'specific' thought, even though the writers discussed did not use that term.

⁶ See Russell (1910).

⁷ For example, Recanati (2010).

⁸ In this way she can reject Semantic Instrumentalism. This is the thesis that specific thought can be achieved simply by manipulating our semantic apparatus.

⁹ One theorist for whom this posed a problem was Anscombe (1965).

1.2. Object-dependence

Here is my definition of object-dependence:

Object-dependence: A specific thought is object-dependent on its intentional object iff the existence of the specific thought necessitates the existence of its intentional object.

The idea is that a specific thought can exist only if its intentional object exists. Distinguish this from a different sense of object-dependence: In this sense, all thoughts are object-dependent on my brain¹⁰, for without my brain my thoughts could not exist. Object-dependence in the sense used here can only exist between a specific thought and its intentional object.¹¹

There is widespread agreement among theorists that specific thoughts are object-dependent.¹² In fact, the association between specific thought and object-dependence goes so far that some have even defined it as thought that is object-dependent. Here is a recent characterisation of singular thought by Armstrong and Stanley:

“Intuitively, a singular thought about an object *o* is one that is *directly about o* in a characteristic way—grasp of that thought requires having some special epistemic relation to the object *o*, and the thought is ontologically dependent on *o*.” (Armstrong and Stanley 2011: 205)

What Armstrong and Stanley call ‘ontologically dependent’ is what I wish to call ‘object-dependence’. Thus, they believe that object-dependence is a necessary condition for something being a specific thought.

What is the motivation for characterising specific thought as object-dependent? Is object-dependence part of our pre-theoretical conception of specific thought? It is at least not obvious that object-dependence is what distinguishes the examples that I characterised as specific thought at the beginning of this paper. There needs to be a motivation for postulating the object-dependence of specific thought. What is the aspect of specific thought that object-dependence is supposed to explain?

Specific thoughts are about particular objects, general thoughts are not. Hence, there is an interesting question about what makes it the case that

¹⁰ Or whatever happens to realise my thoughts.

¹¹ Of course, any of my specific thoughts with my brain as their intentional object is object-dependent on its intentional object, since without my brain I could not have these thoughts. Thus, the intended sense of object-dependence here is that a special thought necessitates the existence of its intentional object *qua* its intentional object, and not, for instance, *qua* object that realises my thought.

¹² For instance, Evans (1982), McDowell (1986), Williamson (2002) and most contributors to the volume ‘Singular Thought’ edited by Jeshion (2010).

specific thoughts are about particular objects. What do specific thoughts have that general thoughts do not have? They seem to have a special relationship with those particulars, a relationship that general thoughts do not have to any particulars. But it is not only a question what makes specific thoughts about other objects, but, moreover, what makes one specific thought about John instead of the tree? What makes it the case that a specific thought is about one particular object rather than another? A specific thought cannot be about any other object apart from its intentional object(s). It seems to be essential to a thought that it is about its particular object(s) rather than any others. I will refer to this problem as Aboutness:

Aboutness: What makes it the case that a thought is about a particular object(s)?

We can now better understand the proposal that specific thoughts are object-dependent, as suggested by Armstrong and Stanley's account: The epistemic relation and the object-dependence of specific thought are supposed to explain why certain thoughts are about particular objects. Explaining the Aboutness of specific thought is the motivation for postulating their object-dependence, as their object-dependence (along with the epistemic relation) is supposed to explain how they can be about particular objects. However, it is key to note at this stage that these are two different aspects: One only serves as the motivation for the other. It requires another argument to show that object-dependence actually does explain the aboutness of specific thought and that nothing else can.

However, arguing that specific thoughts are object-dependent does not imply anything about the nature of their content. There have been two suggestions as to the form of the content that would guarantee the envisaged object-dependence. The first suggestion is that specific thoughts express Russellian propositions. Russellian propositions are structured propositions that contain one or more intentional objects and a property. For example, the proposition expressed by 'John is bald' is the set containing John¹³ and the property 'is bald'. According to this proposal, the intentional object is literally part of the proposition. Thus, without the intentional object, the proposition and the associated thought would not exist.¹⁴ The envisaged object-dependence is thereby secured via the content of the thought. The second suggestion (Evans 1982, McDowell 1986) is that specific thoughts express propositions that consist of Fregean senses. However, these senses are themselves dependent on the existence of the intentional objects (as they are just the mode of presentation). Both Russellian propositions and object-dependent senses are

¹³ "That's right, John himself, right there, trapped in a proposition". (Kaplan 1978: 13)

¹⁴ See, for example, Williamson (2002).

attempts to build the apparent object-dependence of specific thought into their content.

With the suggestion of Russellian propositions we can better understand how such a suggestion can answer the question of Aboutness. A thought expressing the proposition containing John and 'is bald' is about John exactly because the proposition contains John. Since it does not contain any other object, it can only be about John. There is no problem as to why this thought is about John. Object-dependence is part of that explanation because, if the content of a thought is a Russellian proposition, that thought is object-dependent.

1.3. Are Specific Thoughts Object-dependent?

In this section I shall discuss three different positions as to the relationship between specific thought and object-dependence.

First, one might hold that no specific thought is object-dependent. This view is often swiftly rejected. The proponents of such a view have to explain how some thoughts are about particular objects, if not via some object-dependence. A historically influential project was inspired by Russell's Theory of Descriptions. The idea was that thoughts are about particular objects in virtue of the objects satisfying certain qualitative conditions. The content of a thought was identified as these conditions, along with a predication to the referred object. One key motivation for the current unpopularity of such a view is Kripke's rejection of a descriptivist analysis of proper names.¹⁵ Proper names are seen as paradigmatic devices for reference in specific thought. The fact that Kripke's arguments seemed to have made any descriptivist analysis of proper names implausible has made the whole project unattractive. I will say more about this position and attempt to formulate such a descriptivist analysis for specific thought in section 4.

Second, one might argue that specific thought is object-dependent and that without the existence of its intentional object, there is no thought. This might explain the Aboutness of specific thoughts. However, the main problem for this view are cases in which the (seemingly) intentional object does not exist. Imagine someone aims to think about an apple in front of them, but they are experiencing an hallucination. There is, in fact, no apple in front of them. Given that the intentional object does not exist, the proponent of this view would have to argue that therefore the thought does not exist either. As I will argue later, this seems to run against the way we would ordinarily explain and characterise such cases.

¹⁵ Kripke (1980).

Third, one might hold that specific thought is object-dependent, but grant that there can still be some thought, even if the intentional object does not exist. In what I will call the Good Case (a case in which the intentional object exists), the thought implies the existence of its intentional object. But in what I will call the Bad Case (the intentional object does not exist), there is still a thought available. Of course, this thought cannot be dependent on the intentional object, as the intentional object does not exist. Section 2 will explore the second and third option in greater depth.¹⁶

1.4. Object-Dependence and Content Internalism

The question whether specific thoughts are object-dependent can be framed in terms of a debate between content Internalism and Externalism. The distinction between content Internalism and Externalism concerns the facts that suffice to determine the content of thought. Internalists believe that facts internal to the thinker sufficiently determine the contents of thoughts. Externalists deny this. Externalists believe that facts about the external at least partly determine the content of our thoughts.¹⁷ I do not wish to draw a boundary between the internal and external here.¹⁸ Object-dependence of specific thought need not necessarily be a version of content Externalism. Russell, for example, argued that specific thought is possible only for objects that would fall under the internal in the internal/external divide. However, if a proponent of object-dependence grants that specific thought can be about ordinary external things, then the result is a form of content Externalism. After all, change in external facts could necessitate change in content. It is important to distinguish this form of Externalism from other forms that are motivated by different considerations.¹⁹ If one wishes to defend an Internalist view of specific thought, one must either restrict the class of objects for which specific thought is possible or one has to reject their object-dependence.

¹⁶ Of course, the three different positions outlined above are quite abstract. There are various possible ways to fill out each of these positions.

¹⁷ Various forms of Externalism have dominated the debate in recent decades and the 2009 Philpapers Survey reports that 51.1% of participants indicated they believe in some form of Externalism about mental content, while only 20.0% stated that they favour Internalism. Of course, the debate is wide-ranging and a full defense of Internalism is beyond the scope of this paper. In this essay I will only discuss the nature of specific thought as a contention between the two positions.

Results of the Philpapers survey can be found here: <https://philpapers.org/surveys/results.pl> [accessed 17th June 2017].

¹⁸ But see Farkas (2003) for a critique of the usual way (the subject's skin) of drawing such a boundary.

¹⁹ For example, Kripke's (1980) and Putnam's (1975) versions of Externalism were motivated by natural kinds. Burge's (1979, 1986) Social Externalism was motivated by social institutions.

Thus, this essay is a contribution to this aspect of the debate between content Internalism and Externalism. In the next two sections, I will examine views according to which specific thought is object-dependent. In section 4, I will formulate an Internalist view of specific thought which does not involve object-dependence.

2. Object-dependence and the Bad Case

In this section I will explore the view that specific thoughts are object-dependent in greater depth. One particularly challenging example for the proponents of this view is the case in which the intentional object does not exist.²⁰ Surveying the options for the supporters of object-dependence will show that they are opposed to a certain conception of the mind. It is this conception of the mind that I will endorse in section 3. These are my stipulations for the Good Case and Bad Case scenarios:

Good Case: Antonia perceives a shiny green apple in front of her. She thinks: “This green apple must be tasty!”. Antonia is under no hallucination or illusion and there is, in fact, a green apple in front of her.

Bad Case: Antonia perceives a shiny green apple in front of her. She thinks: “This green apple must be tasty!”. However, Antonia is under an hallucination and there is, in fact, no green apple in front of her.

The Good Case is easily explained by the proponents of object-dependence: Antonia has a specific thought about the apple and that thought would not be available if it were not present. The Bad Case is more difficult: If a thought seems to be about the green apple, then this thought does not exist since the apple does not exist. What account can proponents of object-dependence give for the Bad Case?

Two options are available. Either there is a thought in the Bad Case or there is not. Let us first look at the option that in the Bad Case there is no such thought available. If the intentional object does not exist, there does not exist a corresponding thought either. According to this proposal, the way I phrased the Bad Case is misleading. Antonia does not even have a thought in the Bad Case. It might seem that there is a thought and Antonia might think that there is such a thought. But there is none.

However, this proposal faces a straightforward problem. Imagine Antonia tries to reach out to the apple in both the Good Case and the Bad Case. In the Good Case we could explain this behaviour by stating that Antonia has a thought about the apple which forms part of an explanation of her action. Segal (1989) asks how it is possible to make sense of the action in the Good Case without at the same time attributing thought to her in the Bad Case as well. What could explain such an action in the Bad Case, if there is no such thought available as proponents of object-dependence contend? “How can a

²⁰ See Crane (2012) on why what I call Bad Cases are challenging for what he calls ‘Relational Conceptions of Intentionality’.

non-thought cause, and provide the rationale for, an intentional action?” (Carruthers 1987: 19). Given the role that thoughts play in psychological explanations, it seems implausible to hold that there is no thought at all available in the Bad Case.²¹

This motivates the view that specific thoughts are object-dependent, but that there is still some thought available in the Bad Case. McDowell (1986) and Evans (1982) are key proponents of this view. They accept that there is some thought available in the Bad Case, they would just not characterise it as proper specific thought. McDowell (1986, 145) writes about the deceived subject that “he may think there is a singular thought at, so to speak, a certain position in this internal organization although there is really nothing precisely there.” (and continued:) “Nothing precisely there; of course there may be all sorts of things in the vicinity” (ibid, n. 17). So the proponent of object-dependence can argue that specific thought is object-dependent, but that there is some (in an important sense, unsuccessful) thought present in the Bad Case. This unsuccessful thought can then play the psychological role in explaining Antonia’s reaching out.

Before we assess McDowell’s proposal let me first clarify an important terminological difference between McDowell and myself. McDowell defines specific thought as object-dependent (McDowell 1982: 204). Hence, it plainly follows from McDowell’s characterisation of specific thought that Antonia’s unsuccessful thought in the Bad Case is not specific thought. My account of specific thought, by contrast, focuses on the cognitive role of such a thought. In particular, specific thought, on my account, is thought aimed at one or more particular objects. According to this proposal it does make sense to attribute specific thought to Antonia. After all, Antonia may aim to think about the green apple in front of her, even if no such apple exists.

Terminological differences aside, let us further examine McDowell’s view that specific thought only takes place in the Good Case and that in the Bad Case there is some unsuccessful version of specific thought. What exactly is the relationship between specific thought and its unsuccessful counterpart in the Bad Case?

We might be able to clarify the relationship between the two by drawing on material from Taylor (2010), who has made an interesting distinction, between “(merely) objectual representations and (fully) objective representations”. Representations can be objectual and objective at the same time, but some are merely objectual. This is the case for “the class of empty or non-referring singular terms.” Objectual “representations are still, in one sense, fully singular. They are fully singular in the sense that they still enjoy, in virtue

²¹ See also Noonan (1991) for a detailed discussion.

of their form, singular referential purport. It is just that they purport to refer without succeeding in so doing.” (Taylor 2010: 79).

The proposal would then be that merely objectual representations contain some content that ensures that a thought is available in the Bad Case. Merely objectual representations are, however, different from ordinary general thought in that they purport to refer to particular objects. In the Bad Case, they only purport to refer, but in fact there is nothing more than part of the content. In the Good Case, that thought becomes a fully objective representation. It does not just have the objectual content, but also referentially stands for one or more particular objects.

What is crucial is that in an important sense a fully objective representation enjoys a superior standing compared to merely objectual representations. It is only those that purport to and succeed in referring to particular objects. There is an analogy between this way of looking at specific thought and Williamson’s (2000) Knowledge-First approach.²² Williamson suggested that instead of trying to analyse knowledge in terms of a mental state (belief) along with other ingredients (such as truth and justification), we should instead take knowledge as the central mental state. Belief, on this view, is only a ‘botched’ version of knowledge; a version in which something has gone wrong. Similarly, we might regard the fully objective representation as the standard case of specific thought. This is the phenomenon from which we start our theorising. A merely objectual representation (thought in the Bad Case) can be seen as an attempt to achieve specific thought, but a failed attempt. The merely objectual representation is in a sense not the central phenomenon of our mental life.

Williamson argues that knowledge is a factive mental state, a mental state that implies the truth of its propositional content. Thus, we might say, there is a ‘success criterion’ on knowledge, some condition on the world that needs to be satisfied in order for the mental state to be successful. Analogously, we might say that, on this proposal, specific thought also has a success criterion in the sense that the object it purports to refer to must exist. This is just another way of saying that specific thought is object-dependent.²³ Only if a specific thought is a fully objective representation does it actually succeed in being about a particular object. A merely objectual representation is inferior as it does not succeed in being about a particular object.

It is now that we can appreciate how the proposed object-dependence of specific thought is supposed to be explanatory for their Aboutness. On the view

²² I am indebted to Richard Holton for making me aware of this point.

²³ The analogy only extends to this success criterion. It does not imply that object-dependence implies the truth of the specific thought’s propositional content. I might succeed in referring to a green apple, but might then be mistaken about its tastiness. The success of a specific thought is only constituted by the fact that the object aimed at exists.

just outlined, the Aboutness of specific thought is made the standard case of such thought. Other versions of thought that fail to be about an object because their intentional object does not exist are not part of this class of successful, i.e. specific, thoughts.

To summarise, on the view just outlined, specific thought is a mental state that involves successful reference to its intentional object. If that intentional object does not exist (the Bad Case), there is only some unsuccessful version of that specific thought, something that does not deserve to be characterised as specific thought.

It is important to note that not all proponents of object-dependence have to go the same way. Most importantly, Russell's version of object-dependence of specific thought does not face such problems in the Bad Case. This is because he restricts the class of objects about which specific thoughts are possible considerably. Russell's acquaintance principle guarantees that the Bad Case does not arise for specific thought, since the acquaintance principle can only be satisfied by objects of whose existence Russell thinks one cannot be mistaken. The problems of the Bad Case only arise if you liberalise Russell's acquaintance principle and allow other objects to be the intentional object of specific thought.²⁴

²⁴ This point is clearly stated in McDowell (1986: 145) and Evans (1982: 44-45).

3. Privileged Access as Mark of the Mental

In the last section we explored an object-dependent view of specific thought according to which Antonia's thought in the Bad Case is a 'botched' version of the specific thought in the Good Case. We saw that the specific thought in the Good Case must be somehow superior to the thought in the Bad Case. This difference cannot consist only in the existence of the intentional object. The proponent of a view of specific thought that denies object-dependence (to be developed later) will happily grant that there is such a difference between the Good Case and the Bad Case. However, the proponent of object-dependence will want to say something more: She will say that there is a difference in the mental states of Antonia in the Good and the Bad Case. The presence of the intentional object in the Good Case results in Antonia being in a different mental state.

This is the point in the debate where the proponent of object-dependence and someone rejecting this view will face a standoff. Someone who rejects object-dependence might argue that it is not clear what this difference in the mental state would amount to. She would insist that the existence of an object that is not part of my mind cannot have an impact on the nature of my thoughts and therefore on my mental states. The proponent of object-dependence, on the other side, will insist that this is the nature of specific thought, namely that the existence of its intentional object is a necessary part. There is no such boundary between my mind and its objects.

What, one might ask, could possibly settle this debate? The answer is that this problem is part of more general considerations about the nature of mind. There is a strong tension between the central tenet of the object-dependent view developed so far and a certain conception of the mind, according to which a subject has privileged access to her mental states.

Descartes' views on the nature of mind have been very influential in the history of philosophy. However, the Cartesian conception of mind has received much criticism in the last century. McDowell and Evans, who were the main proponents of the view developed in the last section, explicitly rejected the Cartesian conception of mind.²⁵ Arguing that their views are not compatible with those of Descartes will therefore hardly impress them.

A defense of a Cartesian conception of mind is well beyond the scope of this essay. It should be noted, however, that much of the bad reputation that Descartes has received is due to his mind-body dualism. I do not wish to endorse this doctrine here. However, it has been convincingly argued that this

²⁵ See McDowell (1986) for a discussion of the Cartesian conception of mind.

dualism is not at all central to what I take to be the central tenet of a Cartesian conception of the mind.²⁶

What is the central tenet of Descartes' philosophy of mind? Farkas (2008) has offered a fresh account of the central points of a Cartesian conception of the mind. Her views should not be seen as a historical analysis of Descartes' views in his *Meditations*, but rather an attempt to rehabilitate what she identifies to be his central insights. Let me summarise her main points:

The core of Descartes' contribution to our understanding of the mind can be found in Descartes' second meditation where he discusses "the nature of the human mind, and how it is better known than the body" (Descartes 1986: 20). Farkas considers the demon test as a test to establish whether something is mental or not. If we are deceived by an evil demon, then there are still some facts to which I have some privileged epistemic access. For example, sensory experience still remains even in the case where I am deceived by an evil demon. I might be mistaken in believing that my eyes are showing me that there is an apple in front of me, but I can still have the sensory experience. This is nicely summarised in this quote where Descartes considers a version of what I called the Bad Case:

"I am now seeing light, hearing a noise, feeling heat. But I am asleep, so all this is false. Yet I certainly seem to see, to hear, and to be warmed. This cannot be false; what is called 'having a sensory perception' is strictly just this, and in this restricted sense of the term it is simply thinking." (Descartes 1986: 24).

The analogy to what I called the Bad Case should be clear. It seems to Antonia that she is perceiving a green apple, but she is deceived. Yet she seems to see the apple. She has 'sensory perception', even though she is under an hallucination. There is an aspect to her experience that remains even in the Bad Case.

Farkas argues that the mental can be characterised as those states to which the subject has this privileged access: "the mental realm is nothing but the subject matter of the cognitive capacity that endows me with special access (...)" (Farkas 2008: 22).²⁷ Privileged access is privileged in the sense that there are some facts that can only be known by me *in this peculiar way*. For example, if I focus for a moment on the tactile perception of my toes, then I will gain some epistemic access to them in a way that no one else can. Farkas calls the faculty that gives us this privileged access 'introspection'. Saying that the mind is the subject matter of introspection does not imply that introspection is infallible. Sometimes we can be misled about our own mental states. However,

²⁶ See McCulloch (1995: 14).

²⁷ Other marks of the mental that have been proposed are consciousness (Strawson 1994, Searle 1992) and intentionality (Crane 2001).

nothing else than introspection could give us this kind of access to facts about our mental states.

While the demon test shows us what we have introspective access to, certain skeptical consequences of Descartes need not be endorsed. In particular, just because the mind is known in a different way from the rest of the external world, it does not follow that no knowledge of the external world is available. The central point is that the mind is known in a special way to the enquiring subject. This does not imply that facts other than those about the mind cannot be known.

Having spelt out a neo-Cartesian conception of the mind, we can now return to the debate about the nature of the thought in the Bad Case. In both the Good Case and the Bad Case, things seem exactly the same to Antonia. Exercising her introspective faculty will not reveal any differences in her mental build-up. However, given that we identified the mind as the subject matter of our introspective faculty, how can there be two different mental states (successful specific thought and its 'botched' version) if they are not distinguishable for the subject?

Of course, a proponent of such a Cartesian conception will allow that there is an important difference between the Good Case and the Bad Case. In one scenario, the intentional object exists; in the other one, it does not. However, the Cartesian will deny that this difference also results in a difference in the mental constitution of the subject in question.

One might object that Farkas allows the introspective faculty to be fallible. Why, then, shall we not identify the Bad Case as one such case where introspection delivers the wrong result to the subject? There is a difference in the mental states between the Good Case and the Bad Case, it is just that in those particular circumstances the introspective faculty will fail to recognise the difference in these mental states.

The objection oversees that it is not only the case that introspection would be wrong in the Bad Case, but moreover that the mental difference between the Good Case and the Bad Case are in principle inaccessible by introspection. Both sides will agree that, given the hallucination is perfect, there is no way it will look different for the enquiring subject compared to the Good Case. So the objection fails as it is in principle impossible for the introspective faculty to recognise the difference. Given this impossibility, it does not make sense to speak of a difference in mental states either, since, according to this Cartesian conception, the mind is the subject-matter of introspection.²⁸

²⁸ One might object that knowledge of one's mental states is not something that is reserved for a Cartesian conception of the mind. Heil (1988) argues that Externalists can just as well allow that self knowledge is possible. This can be granted, but the point of the current proposal is that we have privileged access to our mind. Externalists are not able to account for the privileged aspect of this epistemic access..

While I hope I will have clearly shown the tension between a Cartesian conception of mind and the object-dependent view developed in the last section, I am aware that few will accept that as sufficient reason to endorse such a Cartesian conception of the mind. Farkas identifies a key argument in Descartes's meditations to adopt his conception of the mind: His conception fits our modern understanding of the mind better than its Aristotelian predecessor. Aristotle (1968) believed that the soul can have nutritive, perceptual and intellectual functions. Thus, even a plant has a soul, but it is restricted to its nutritive function. Similarly, animals have souls, but they do not have intellectual functions. The demon test excludes the first two of these and identifies the mind as the third function alone. Due to this restriction, Descartes' account of the mind corresponds to our modern understanding of the mind.

My contribution to this debate will be to show that even with such a Cartesian conception of the mind it is possible to explain the phenomenon of specific thought. McDowell (1998: 243) argued that such 'freestanding' mental states cannot possess the necessary 'intentionality' to be about another object. They would be "blank", "blind" or "dark".²⁹ I shall argue that, on the contrary, this will be a particularly fruitful conception of the mental in order to explain the Aboutness of specific thought. This will be the task of section 4.

²⁹ See Thornton (2004) for an exposition of McDowell's rejection of a Cartesian picture of the mind.

4. Specific Thought without Object-dependence

4.1. Russell's Theory of Descriptions

In order to lay out a view of specific thought that dispenses with object-dependence, I shall first outline Russell's (1905) Theory of Descriptions and explain why it provides us with the theoretical machinery that is needed for such a view. I will follow Neale (1990) in my exposition of Russell's theory and will focus on the essential points thereof.

Russell's achievement with the Theory of Descriptions was to show that an important class of linguistic expressions, namely descriptions, can be analysed in terms of quantified expressions. Descriptive phrases in natural language include 'the biggest man', 'Stephen's departure' or 'my mother'. The proposal of the Theory of Descriptions is that a sentence containing a descriptive phrase, such as 'the F is G' can be analysed as a conjunction of the following three claims:

- (i) There is at least one F.
- (ii) There is at most one F.
- (iii) Every F is G.

Consider:

- 11) The present Emperor of Austria is bald.

According to Russell's Theory of Descriptions, 11) is equivalent to the conjunction of the following three statements:

- 11i) There is at least one present Emperor of Austria.
- 11ii) There is at most one present Emperor of Austria.
- 11iii) Every present Emperor of Austria is bald.

Let us distinguish two aspects of the Theory of Descriptions: First, it guarantees that every utterance containing a descriptive phrase in subject position expresses, *ceteris paribus*, a proposition. Even if there is nothing referred to by 'the present Emperor of Austria', the sentence is still meaningful and can be understood by speakers of English. Second, it has a mechanism that determines the truth-value of utterances containing descriptive phrases. If these utterances fulfil conditions (i) - (iii), then they are true. Otherwise, they are false. Thus, Russell believes that all sentences in which the existential condition is not met are false. According to the Theory of Descriptions, 11) is

false as the first conjunct 11i) is not satisfied. There is not even one present Emperor of Austria. There is a debate about whether this result should be judged as intuitively correct. Strawson (1950) disagrees with Russell and claims that instead sentences like 11) do not have a truth-value. Crane (2013), by contrast, holds that some such sentences are true and some false, namely in virtue of the way their object is represented. Thus, despite the fact that the planet Vulcan does not exist, Crane argues that 'Vulcan was a planet postulated by Le Verrier in 1859' is true. The first aspect is much more important for my project than the second. The central claim of the view to be developed in this section is that specific thought is available even if the intentional object does not exist. I am not able to discuss which truth-values specific thoughts in Bad Cases should have.

It should now be obvious why Russell's Theory of descriptions should be of great interest for those aiming at a view of specific thought that dispenses with object-dependence: What Russell achieved was an analysis of descriptions that does not make them object-dependent. Even if the object of the utterance ('the present Emperor of Austria') does not exist, the utterance still expresses a meaningful proposition. If we were able to give a similar descriptive analysis of specific thought in general, we would be able to account for their content, without making them object-dependent.

Here is an initial attempt for a purely descriptive theory of specific thought:

Initial Attempt: All specific thought can be analysed in terms of purely qualitative definite descriptions.

Let us return to Antonia's thoughts in the Bad Case. My Initial Attempt would guarantee that even in the Bad Case, a proposition is expressed and the thought is available. Consider the specific thought with which Antonia aims at a shiny green apple in the Good and Bad Case. According to the Initial Attempt proposal, this should be analysed as the conjunction of the following three claims:

- 12i) There is at least one shiny green apple.
- 12ii) There is at least one shiny green apple.
- 12iii) Every shiny green apple is tasty.

4.2. Massive Reduplication

Strawson's argument from massive reduplication can be seen as a thought experiment that shows my Initial Attempt to be wrong.³⁰ Here is the structure of the argument:

- A) If specific thought can be analysed in terms of purely qualitative definite descriptions, then there is no fact about whether I think of one object rather than another one with exactly the same qualitative properties.
- B) There is a fact whether I think of one object rather than another one with exactly the same qualitative properties.
- C) Hence, specific thought cannot be analysed in terms of purely qualitative definite descriptions. (By Modus Tollens)

Remember Antonia from our previous example. She perceives a shiny green apple in front of her and judges "That apple must be tasty!". This time Antonia is under no hallucination; there is, in fact, a shiny green apple in front her. However, so the argument from massive reduplication goes, in another area of the universe, there is an exact replica of our solar system. For all objects in our solar system, there is an exact replica of that object with the same properties. On the replicated Earth (call it Earth*), there is also a replicated version of Antonia (call her Antonia*) and a replicated version of the apple (call it apple*).

According to my Initial Attempt at a descriptivist analysis, both Antonia and Antonia* have the same thought, analysable as 'there is exactly one shiny green apple and it must be tasty'. None of the properties of the apple on Earth make it the case that Antonia is thinking about it, rather than apple* on Earth*. The same applies to Antonia*. The purely qualitative conditions that are expressed in Antonia's and Antonia*'s thoughts fail to pick out the apple in front of them. According to my Initial Attempt, there is no fact which object Antonia and her replica are thinking about. (This establishes premise A).

However, it seems obvious that Antonia on Earth thinks about the apple in front of her and that Antonia* on Earth* thinks about apple*. Antonia has perceived the apple on Earth, but has never had any perceptual contact with apple*. Obviously, there is no danger that Antonia's thought is about apple*. (This establishes premise B). My initial Attempt at a descriptive account cannot account for this intuitive result. As a result, my Initial Attempt at a descriptive analysis fails (Conclusion C).

Of course, it might be objected that in fact our universe does not actually contain such an area with an exact reduplication of our Earth. Hence, Antonia's thought about the apple in front of her is guaranteed to be about that apple

³⁰ See Strawson (1959: 20-22). I take certain liberty in presenting Strawson's argument.

since it is the only one satisfying the conditions.³¹ However, the thesis expressed in my Initial Attempt at a descriptive analysis would presumably be necessarily true (if true at all). Hence, it should be true in all possible worlds. In order to show that it is false, one only needs to establish that the Initial Attempt is false in one possible world.³² However, the argument from massive reduplication in the way I formulated it only needs the metaphysical possibility that our universe contains a reduplication of our Earth. And this possibility is surely given. Once this possibility is granted it can be shown that if the thoughts of Antonia and Antonia* are analysable in terms of the purely qualitative descriptivist account from the last section, then there will be no fact about what they are thinking about.

Note that the problem posed by the argument from massive reduplication can easily be avoided by proponents of the object-dependence of specific thought. For instance, those who analyse the proposition expressed in specific thought in terms of a Russellian proposition can argue that Antonia thinks about the apple in front of her and Antonia* about apple*. This is guaranteed since the apple in front of her is part of the Russellian proposition expressed by Antonia's thought and apple* a part of the proposition expressed by Antonia*'s thought. There is no possibility that the specific thought and intentional objects come apart in the case of massive reduplication. Similarly, the position that we developed from McDowell can claim that the mental state on Earth is a different mental state from that on Earth*, since one is about apple and one about apple*. Hence, this is a problem for a descriptivist analysis of specific thought. In the next section section I shall therefore attempt to overcome this problem.

4.3. Non-purely Qualitative Descriptions

Strawson (1959: 21) himself suggests a solution to the problem of massive reduplication. At least for some cases it is possible for us to have specific thought about the particular object if we *“can pick out by sight or hearing or touch, or can otherwise sensibly discriminate, the particular being referred to, knowing that it is that particular.”* In addition, specific thought about other particulars which cannot be identified in this way can be identified by linking them to other objects that can independently be demonstratively identified.

“[I]t is sufficient to show how the situation of non-demonstrative identification may be linked with the situation of demonstrative identification. The argument supposes that where the particular to be identified cannot be directly located, its identification must rest ultimately on description in purely general terms. But this

³¹ Ignore the problem of incomplete descriptions for definite descriptions.

³² See Williamson (2007) for the structure of reasoning behind thought experiments.

supposition is false. For even though the particular in question cannot itself be demonstratively identified, it may be identified by a description which relates it uniquely to another particular which can be demonstratively identified.” (Strawson 1959: 21)

Strawson sees the solution in identifying a relation that holds between thinker and the intentional object that makes sure that the thinker thinks about that object, rather than the replica of that object on the other side of the universe: “[...] *that of every particular we may refer to there is some description uniquely relating it to the participants in, or the immediate setting of, the conversation in which the reference is made*” (Strawson 1959: 22).

Let us assess Strawson’s proposal. His suggestion that we are able to ensure specific thought for at least some particulars by being able to identify them via our senses does not seem to address the problem of massive reduplication. Imagine Antonia aims to think about the apple in front of her. Strawson might say that if she is able to recognise the apple as that apple if it is presented to her, then she can have specific thought about it. However, imagine that, instead of being presented with the apple in front of her, she is presented with the apple* from Earth*. Would she be able to tell by sight, hearing or touch that this is not the apple, but rather an exact replica of it? Given the stipulation that the apple from Earth* shares all properties, it seems impossible to reliably distinguish between the two. But if we are not able to identify external objects in this way, then which other objects should we be able to think about specifically by being able to recognise them via our senses?

The other aspect of Strawson’s proposal is more promising. If we are able to find a relation that holds between Antonia and the apple in front of her and which is not also held between Antonia* and apple*, then she should be able to refer to one but not the other via that relation. Consider this thought which Antonia might entertain:

13) The apple in front of me is tasty.

Only the apple which is in front of Antonia satisfies the condition in 13). The replicated apple* will be further away, namely at the other end of the universe. Hence, there is a way how Antonia can think about the apple in front of her, despite the presence of the reduplicated earth.

Let us examine the details of this proposal. First, this proposal is different from my Initial Attempt at an analysis of specific thought. The Initial Attempt only considered purely qualitative conditions as part of the meaning of specific thought. In other words, thoughts could refer to objects only via their ‘internal’ properties. Since both the apple and apple* on the reduplicated Earth share all ‘internal’ properties, the analysis could not explain how specific thought is still possible. Allowing relations linking the object uniquely to the

thinker can solve this problem. And nothing in the Theory of Descriptions hinders us from using relations to identify an object uniquely.

Second, Antonia's specific thought about the apple in front of her is, according to this proposal, only possible because she is independently able to entertain a specific thought about herself. I will postpone discussion of thought about the self to section 4.5.

Third, note that, according to this proposal, both Antonia and Antonia* can entertain the same thought, namely that which is expressed by 13). However, despite their thoughts having the same content, their thoughts refer to different objects. Antonia refers to the apple in front of her via 13), Antonia* refers to apple* via the same thought. This proposal is therefore committed to the claim that reference and truth-value pertain to utterances or thoughts, not their content.

Fourth, note that there are more relations that could allow Antonia to refer to the apple than just the spatial relation 'x is in front of y'. She could think about it as the apple that she encountered yesterday, or the apple that she is pointing at. In the next section, I shall consider an analysis of demonstratives in terms of such a relation.

4.4. Demonstratives

Often our thoughts seem to have a different form from those discussed in the last section. Thoughts about particular objects do not always seem to spell out a relation that uniquely relates these objects to us. Demonstratives seem to indicate that we aim a thought at one particular object, without stating any relation that objects stands with respect to the subject. We can imagine Antonia thinking:

14) That apple is tasty.

There is a wide-ranging literature on the semantics of demonstratives like 'this', 'that', 'here' and 'now'.³³ Sentences containing them are usually seen as paradigmatic cases of 'directly referring', or object-dependent expressions. I will not be able to do justice to this debate in this essay. However, in this section I will outline Kaplan's (1989) account of demonstratives and sketch a descriptivist analysis of demonstratives.

Kaplan defines indexicals as expressions whose "referent is dependent on the context of use ... [whose] meaning provides a rule which determines the referent in terms of certain aspects of the context" (Kaplan 1989: 490). A demonstration is "typically, though not invariably, a (visual) presentation of a

³³ For example, Frege (1956), Perry (1977), Evans (1985), Kaplan (1989), Burge (2012) .

local object discriminated by a pointing". A demonstration is an act. A demonstrative is an indexical expression that requires an associated demonstration (for example, 'this', 'that', 'these', 'those'). Pure indexicals are indexical expressions that do not require an associated demonstration (for example, 'I', 'here', 'now', 'yesterday'). What Kaplan and I disagree on is the second of his Two Principles: "Indexicals, pure and demonstrative alike, are directly referential." (Kaplan 1989: 492).

This is a flat contradiction of my aim, namely to give a descriptive analysis of demonstratives like 'that'. Kaplan presents an argument against Frege's theory of demonstratives: It is important to draw a sharp distinction between a demonstration (act of pointing) and the demonstrative ('this', 'that'). Frege's (1956) theory is that a demonstration, like a description, has both a sense and a denotation. The denotation of a demonstration is the demonstratum, the object that is referred to. The sense of a demonstration, by contrast, is the way it is presented. "An occurrence of a demonstrative expression functions rather like a placeholder for the associated demonstration". Kaplan presents a counter-example against Frege's theory of demonstratives according to which demonstrations have sense and reference as well. I shall not review the details of this argument here. Instead, I would like to present an alternative, descriptivist analysis of demonstratives that does not assign sense and reference to demonstrations and is therefore not subject to Kaplan's counter-example.

Kaplan's argument against Frege's theory of demonstratives does not make a descriptive analysis of demonstratives impossible. In particular, I would like to reject the view that a demonstration (the act) has a sense and referent itself. Instead, I want to regard a demonstration (for example, the act of pointing) as constituting a relationship between the speaker and an object.

Thus, I will attempt to sketch a descriptivist analysis of demonstratives. Crane (2001) hints at a relational analysis of demonstratives. He suggests that the demonstratives 'this' and 'that' are equivalent to the singular definite determiner along with a requirement that the object stand in a particular relationship with the subject. Thus, 'that apple' should be understood as 'the apple that stands in a demonstrative relationship to me'. Consider again the following sentence containing a demonstrative element:

15) That apple is tasty.

On such an account, this should be analysed as the conjunction of the following claims:

15i) There is at least one apple which stands in a demonstrative relationship to me.

15ii) There is at most one apple which stands in a demonstrative relationship to me.

15iii) Every apple which stands in a demonstrative relationship to me is tasty.

How should we characterise the 'demonstrative relationship'? Of course, one obvious way how such a relationship can be established is by pointing at an object. McGinn (1981) argues that the referent of a demonstrative expression 'this F' is the first 'F' to intersect the line project from the speaker's pointing finger. If there are 6 apples in front of Antonia, then uttering 15) will not suffice to make clear which one is meant. However, pointing towards one of the apples will establish such a relationship. Another suggestion is that speakers indicate which object they mean by certain cues (Wettstein 1984). These are just a few ways how such a pointing relationship can be established. I will not be able to do justice to the diversity of linguistic phenomena here.

However, it is important to note that on this analysis, demonstratives are just one particular case of the mechanism that was discussed in the last section. Antonia is able to think about the apple in front of her because it stands in a certain relationship to Antonia that apple* does not. The demonstrative relationship is just one of those relationships that help Antonia pick out particular objects. My aim in this section was less to give an analysis of the linguistic phenomenon of demonstratives, but rather to show that even seemingly 'direct' thought about particular objects can be analysed in terms of descriptions.

4.5. Specific Thought about the Self

In the last two sections I have argued that specific thought about objects is possible if the thinker can identify some relationship that links the object somehow uniquely to the thinker. In other words, I have assumed that specific thought about the self is guaranteed and that specific thought about other objects can be achieved by relating them to the self.

Recall the scenario from massive reduplication: Every object on Earth is reduplicated on Earth*, including Antonia. Imagine Antonia tried to think of herself in terms of purely qualitative terms: for example as the unique woman called Antonia born on 23rd December 1950 currently perceiving a shiny green apple. Given that Antonia* on Earth* shares all these properties, such a thought would not pick her out.³⁴

³⁴ See Perry (1979) for the classic statement of this problem.

I am unable to develop a full account of how specific thought about the self is possible. Of course, any account of the kind provided in the last two sections applied to the self would just move the problem one step further. However, given the Cartesian conception of mind that motivates my view of specific thought, it would be natural to argue that specific thought about the self is possible due to the privileged access to one's mind. Russell's view that specific thought is only possible for objects of whose existence one can be certain is very close to this suggestion. He included the self in this category and thus avoided the problem to 'anchor' specific thought in the way I face it.

4.6. Names

Proper names have played a central role in discussions about 'direct reference' and I will briefly address them here.³⁵ Russell suggested that ordinary proper names, such as 'John', should be analysed in terms of a definite description as thinkers cannot stand in an acquaintance relation with John (with the exception of John himself). It is widely accepted that Kripke's (1980) famous arguments against such a descriptivist account of proper names were successful. Kripke suggested a causal theory of reference for names instead. This is, of course, bad news for someone who wants to analyse specific thought in terms of Russellian descriptions. Fortunately, Fara (2015) has recently provided a 'predicativist' account of proper names. According to this proposal, names are count nouns. A name in a sentence, such as 'John is bald' should be read as a denuded definite determiner ('the' is not uttered). The predicate 'John' is true of whoever satisfies the 'being called condition' for the name 'John'.

Something that has not been sufficiently clarified in Fara's account is that predicativism requires a distinction between names as predicates and names as properties. A name as a property is a property that some people possess and others do not. For example, Barack Obama has the property of being called 'Barack Obama'. In Fara's terminology, he 'satisfies the being called condition' for the name 'Barack Obama'. It is because he has this name, that the linguistic token 'Barack Obama' in a sentence picks him out.³⁶

Kripke (1980) considered some version of predicativism. He complained that it would be circular to state that 'Socrates' picks out Socrates because 'Socrates' is his name. To say that 'Socrates' is his name, so Kripke, only states that 'Socrates' refers to him. But that is not an explanation, just a restatement of what is to be explained.³⁷

³⁵ See Frege (1948), Russell (1905, 1910), Searle (1958), Kripke (1980), Fara (2015) for important contributions to the debate on names.

³⁶ See Oliver (2010) for a clear account of predicates and their role vis-à-vis properties.

³⁷ A similar argument can be found in Searle (1983: 242) against what he calls the 'standard logic textbook' view of names.

Equipped with the distinction between names as predicates and names as properties we can see why predicativism need not be circular. Having the property of being called 'Barack Obama' is a social property. He acquired that name because of his baptism or certain social conventions or else. The fact that a sentence containing the predicate 'is Barack Obama' refers to him, is only due to the fact that he has the property of having the name 'Barack Obama'. There is therefore no circularity involved in saying that 'Socrates' refers to Socrates because 'Socrates' is his name.

Fara's account is neutral as to whether or not such descriptions should be analysed according to Russell's Theory of Descriptions. However, it provides all the material for such an analysis. Thus,

16) John is bald.

should be understood as

16*) "The" John is bald.

which can be analysed as the conjunction of the following statements:

16i) There is at least one John.

16ii) There is at most one John.

16iii) Every John is bald.

Such a predicativist account of proper names is able to withstand Kripke's well-known arguments that were directed against the 'Frege-Russell'³⁸ view of proper names, according to which a proper name like 'Gödel' is equivalent to some description that is true only of Gödel, for example 'the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic'.³⁹ However, so Kripke's argument, it is perceivable that we were mistaken and Gödel did not in fact discover the incompleteness of arithmetic. It might have been that someone else, let's say Schmidt, discovered the theorem in Vienna at that time; Gödel just pretended it was his discovery. According to the 'Frege-Russell' thesis, 'Gödel' would refer to Schmidt, since Schmidt satisfies the description associated with 'Gödel'. But clearly, 'Gödel' refers to Gödel. A similar argument can be found for other such descriptions as well. This shows that this account of proper names is implausible.

³⁸ It is questionable whether Frege and Russell actually held such a view on names. See Wiggins (1984) for an account of Frege's views. Searle (1958) and Strawson (1959) are proponents of cluster descriptivism.

³⁹ Kripke (1980: 83ff).

However, this does not establish that no analysis of proper names in terms of definite descriptions can be true. A predicativist analysis can allow for an analysis of names in terms of definite descriptions and still deliver the intuitively correct result in the Gödel case. A predicativist would argue that 'Gödel' is not equivalent to 'the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic', but instead to 'the person who is called Gödel'. Schmidt, despite being the real discoverer of the incompleteness theorem, does not bear the name 'Gödel'. Gödel bears that name. And therefore it is possible to refer to Gödel via that name.

4.7. Rigid Designation

Kripke (1980) argued that names are rigid designators. It has since then become widely accepted that all devices of 'direct reference' are rigid designators. A rigid designator is an expression that picks out the same object in every possible world in which that object exists. 'John', on this account, is a rigid designator because it picks out John in all worlds in which he exists. There might be worlds in which John is called 'Tom', but he is still picked out by the name 'John' used in our world.

Furthermore, descriptions are non-rigid designators on this view. 'The President of the United States' picks out Donald Trump in our world, but in the possible world in which he lost the election, this expression picks out Hillary Clinton. Hence, the referent of a description depends partly on contingent facts in a world.

Given that I have attempted to provide a descriptive analysis for demonstratives and names, it seems that I would be committed to saying that, in fact, names and demonstratives are not rigid designators. After all, if they are just a special class of descriptions, then their referents depend on contingent facts about the world. On my account, it is only a contingent fact that John is picked out by 'John', namely the contingent fact that he is called John.

I myself do not see overwhelming reasons for regarding names or demonstratives as rigid designators. However, if one insists that names or demonstratives are rigid designators, it is possible to add an actuality operator to a description and thus 'rigidify' the description.

The idea behind a rigidified description is that an object is picked out via a property it exhibits (or a relation it stands in) in the actual world, but then the object is held fixed in order to talk about it in a different possible world.⁴⁰ For example, 'the President of the United States' can be read in this rigidified version:

⁴⁰ See, for instance, Ahmed (2007).

17) Whoever is actually the President of the United States could have been not the President of the United States.

The word 'actually' functions as the actuality operator in this world and picks out the actual world. Thus, the person who is President of the United States in the actual world is referred to and this person is then held fixed in order to talk about them in other possible worlds.

Additionally, one might argue that sometimes the actuality operator is not pronounced (in the way it is in 17)), but only implied. For example,

18) Gödel could have been not Gödel.

There is one reading according to which this sentence is plainly false, namely the reading that Gödel could have been non-identical to himself. Every object is identical to itself. However, there is another reading according to which 18) is plausible, namely that the person who is actually called Gödel, could have had another name. According to this second reading, only one of the instances of 'Gödel' in 18) is rigid, namely the first one. Hence, we might analyse it as

18*) The person who is actually called Gödel is not called Gödel in at least one possible world.

Thus, if there are strong reasons for believing that names or demonstratives are rigid designators, then this need not be a reason for rejecting my descriptive analysis of these terms. One can add the actuality operators in situations where names or demonstratives are rigid designators. I do not have the space here to explore the rules that govern when expressions should be analysed in this way.

5. Conclusion

In section 2, I explored a view of specific thought that explains their Aboutness and posits their object-dependence. We saw that such a view would require that there is a difference between the mental state of a subject in what I have called the Good and the Bad Case. This difference does not only consist in the existence of the intentional object, but also in the nature of the mental states.

In section 4 of this essay I have attempted to formulate an Internalist view of specific thought. This view is Internalist to the extent that it is compatible with a Cartesian conception of the mind. This account does justice to the Cartesian insight that subjects have privileged access to their minds. The privileged access to one's mind is preserved because the content of a thought is analysed in terms of descriptions, which implies that the content of a thought is not dependent on the existence of its intentional object. The important contrast to the object-dependent view explored in section 2 is that there is no difference in the nature of the subject's mental states in the Good and in the Bad Case.

Russell's Theory of Descriptions served as the starting point for the formulation of such an Internalist view. Analysing specific thought in terms of a description ensures that the propositional content is available even if the intentional object does not exist. We saw that the analysis in terms of descriptions also needs to involve conditions relating the intentional object uniquely to the subject. The need for this requirement results from the argument from massive reduplication.

Remember that we viewed the thesis of object-dependence as an explanation for the Aboutness of specific thought. It should be clear that the view outlined in section 4 has no problem at all explaining this Aboutness. Thoughts are about particular objects in virtue of the particular objects satisfying the description of the thoughts. Hence, even if object-dependence can be part of an explanation for the Aboutness of specific thought, there is another good explanation for their Aboutness that does not require their object-dependence.

A defender of Internalism of mental content is committed to rejecting the object-dependence of specific thought.⁴¹ An Internalist view that dispenses with object-dependence does not necessarily have to be in terms of descriptions in the way I have suggested.⁴² Yet an analysis in terms of Russell's Theory of Descriptions satisfied the constraints of a Cartesian conception of mind and at the same time offered enough theoretical machinery to accommodate various instances of specific thought.

⁴¹ With the exception of Russell's position.

⁴² See Crane (2013) for an alternative analysis that rejects object-dependence.

An important question that I was not able to fully address and that might be the subject of future research is how specific thought about the self is possible. Furthermore, more needs to be done to spell out the details of descriptivist analyses for linguistic expressions, like names and demonstratives.

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