

First Person Reference

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Abstract

I argue that to be able to think referring 'I'-thoughts I do not need a concept of myself, while to be able to think about and refer to an object which is independent of me I must have a concept of that object. My positive proposal is that to refer to myself I just need to intend to refer to myself; I do not need to know what kind of object I am, what that object's boundaries are, or how it can be distinguished from among other objects. In Chapter 1 I develop the notion of what it is to have a concept of an object, arguing that to be able to refer to an object I must be able to single the object out, and in cases of objects which are independent of me, this can only be achieved if I have the ability to come to know the criterion of identity of the object. In Chapter 2 I examine an argument from Evans (from the premise of the generality constraint) which is meant to prove that I must have a concept of myself. I show that this argument makes assumptions about how I must think about objects – either to be able to single the object out, or to be able to make judgements about the object – which are irrelevant to the way I must think about myself. In Chapter 3 I discuss and refute Anscombe's contention that my account of first person reference must be circular. I conclude that the token-reflexive rule can explain genuine first-person reference, and suggest that it is the fact that we are subjects who normally need concepts to refer to objects and yet do not need a concept to self-refer which explains how we can refer self-consciously.

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Introduction

In this thesis I will argue that 'I'-thoughts are singular referring thoughts which differ from all other singular referring thoughts. This is because in thinking about and referring to an object which is independent of me I must have a concept of that object, but to be able to think 'I'-thoughts which refer to the object I am I do not need a concept of myself. The initial motivation for this thesis was my dissatisfaction with the available accounts of 'I'-thoughts. Such accounts tend to argue either that I can have no concept of myself, and so my 'I'-thoughts do not refer to an object (e.g. Anscombe (1975)), or that my 'I'-thoughts are singular referring thoughts and therefore I must have a concept of myself (e.g. Evans (1982)). Even the more recent account of Campbell (1994), which on the face of it argues that I do not need a concept of myself to think 'I'-thoughts (because the token-reflexive rule can account for the way the reference of 'I' is fixed) in fact argues that there must be a certain "richness" in the "conceptual role" of the first person if my 'I'-thoughts are to refer to an object. The conclusion of the first kind of argument (e.g. Anscombe's) seems implausible to me. For example, my thought that *I am hot* seems to share truth conditions with someone else's thought about me that *she is hot*; *I* and *she* both seem to refer to the object which I am, and the thoughts are both true if the object which I am is hot. It seems bizarre – although obviously not impossible – to conclude that one thought does not refer to me while the other does. The second type of account, which I think correct in arguing that my 'I'-thoughts do refer to the object which I am, postulates concepts which I am supposed to have of myself, and ways by which I am supposed to come by such concepts, which I think are unnecessary in many cases of my 'I'-thoughts. My claim is not as strong as Anscombe's; that I can have no concept of myself. Instead I will argue that I need no concept of myself in order to be able to think 'I'-thoughts. Through questioning why it is such a common assumption that reference requires concepts, I think we find that the reasons, which are very plausible in the case of objects which are independent of us, do not apply to our thoughts about ourselves.

My thesis is about 'I'-thoughts. Some of the philosophers whose arguments I examine discuss thoughts explicitly (e.g. Evans). Others are primarily concerned with the philosophy of language. Still others seem to move between thought and language very easily, with little or no remark. There is thus a question of whether I am justified in using considerations from the philosophy of language to discuss 'I'-thoughts. With the two philosophers whom I use the most in this respect, Dummett

and Anscombe, I think I am so justified. Both believe there is a very close connection between language and thought. Dummett (1973), in *Frege, Philosophy of Language*, views understanding a sentence as grasping the thought expressed by the sentence (e.g. p4). In saying and understanding an 'I'-sentence I am grasping an 'I'-thought. Anscombe (1975), in her article 'The First Person', is discussing how I am able to use the term 'I'. To explain this, she goes in search of the sense of 'I'. She sees the role of this sense as enabling my mind to 'latch onto' the object I am. The implication is therefore also that in grasping the sense of 'I' I am having an 'I'-thought.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: In Chapter 1 I begin by investigating what it is to have a concept of an object. The term 'concept' is used in various ways in philosophy so I end up being somewhat stipulative. Nevertheless, I think the presence or absence of what I term a 'concept' marks a genuine difference between 'I'-thoughts and other singular referring thoughts. In Chapter 2 I examine arguments, mainly drawn from Evans (1982), which purport to show that to be able to refer to an object I must have a concept of it, and conclude that these arguments do not demonstrate that I must have a concept of myself to be able to think 'I'-thoughts. Then in Chapter 3 I look at an argument due to Anscombe which many take to show that the token-reflexive rule – that 'I' refers to whoever writes speaks or thinks it with the intention of referring to themselves – cannot be sufficient to explain our use of 'I'. I do not think this argument succeeds, and from this I go on to develop a positive account of how we are able to refer to ourselves in thought.

Chapter 1

Concepts of Objects

1

In 'The First Person' (1975), G.E.M. Anscombe argues that 'I' is not a referring term. She makes the plausible assumption that were 'I' a referring term, the referent of 'I' must always be present when 'I' is used to express 'I'-thoughts; we do not seem to be able to make any sense of the notion that I may think an 'I'-thought and somehow refer to myself 'in absence' (1975, p147). She argues that if 'I' were a referring term with such properties, then either my being able to refer to myself using the term must involve my associating the term 'I' with a conception of the object which I am, to enable my mind to 'latch onto' this object (p141), or my 'I'-thoughts must consist in some sort of 'pure' reference, where I refer directly to the object immediately before me (p146). In the first case, she argues that there is no conception that could fulfil the required role. For the second alternative, she argues from the premise that I would still be able to think 'I'-thoughts when sensorily deprived in a sensory-deprivation tank. The only thing directly present to me in such a situation could be some kind of Cartesian Ego, so if I am able to refer in such a pure direct way, it must be to an Ego; a conclusion she takes to be absurd. As she believes these options exhaust the possibilities for referring to an object which is before one, Anscombe concludes that 'I' does not refer.

As I stated in the introduction to this thesis, I will argue that my 'I'-thoughts do refer to an object. However, I think that Anscombe is correct in arguing that what is normally required for successful singular reference is not present in the case of 'I'-thoughts. To refer to an object which is independent of me I must have a concept of the object, but I am able to refer to myself without having a concept of myself. In this chapter, I want to use Anscombe's account to develop what I mean by *having a concept*. By starting from her underlying picture of reference, isolating what she takes to be important for reference to objects and believes lacking in the case of 'I'-thoughts, I think we can come up with a plausible initial picture of the requirements for us to be able to refer. My aim is to clarify and expand this initial notion, drawing out the intuitions which are behind it. In the following section I will look specifically at Anscombe's requirement of an 'associated conception.' Analysing this notion will enable us to gain a rough view of what is essential for reference to objects which are independent of us; requirements which I shall call having a concept of an object. After that, in section 3, I will look at Anscombe's idea of 'pure direct

reference', which despite surface appearances will also shed light on what it is to have a concept of an object, and how it is that we come to have concepts. In the concluding section I will explore *why*, to refer to an object which is independent of me, I should need a concept of the object, and examine potential counterexamples to this hypothesis. We shall see that it is very plausible that concepts are needed for all reference to objects which are independent of me, but that the reasons why concepts are required do not apply in the case of 'I'-thoughts.

2

The first time that Anscombe discusses the requirement that to be able to refer to an object we must have a conception of it is when she argues that the token-reflexive rule:

'I' is the word each one uses when he knowingly and intentionally speaks of himself. (Anscombe, (1975), p137)

is not sufficient to explain our use of 'I' as a referring term.¹ One of her issues with this rule is that by the use of the pronoun 'himself' we specify the object to which a person refers when using the term 'I' without specifying the *conception* under which the person's mind is supposed to "latch on to" the object. She later expands on what she means by this, when discussing whether 'I' functions as a proper name. Here she compares 'I' with other names and gives examples of conceptions we associate with such names:

The use of a name for an object is connected with a conception of that object. And so we are driven to look for something that, for each 'I'-user, will be the conception related to the supposed name 'I', as the conception of a city is to the names 'London' and 'Chicago', that of a river to 'Thames' and 'Nile', that of a man to 'John' and 'Pat'. Such a conception is requisite if 'I' is a name. (Anscombe (1975), p141)

Later on the same page Anscombe says that if 'I' is used to make a reference in the same way that names are used to refer to objects "a correlative term is needed for its *type* of object." (p141, my emphasis). The examples which she gives ('city', 'river', 'man') and this later comment suggest that in order to be able to refer to an object in this way we must know what type or kind of object it is and somehow this knowledge enables us to make the link between us as thinker and the object in the world we are thinking about. At this stage, however, it is not entirely obvious that it is *knowledge* of the kind of object which is essential – Anscombe avoids addressing the issue directly by using cagey language, saying the use of a term to refer to an object is 'connected with' and 'correlated with' a term for the type of object it is.

¹ I discuss this argument in Chapter 3, where I conclude that it is not successful

Singular terms in language must be correlated with general terms for reference to succeed, but it is not clear what a thinker trying to think about an object needs to do. However, in her discussion of demonstratives, the use of which to make a reference she also believes to involve a conception of an object, Anscombe is much more explicit:

Assimilation to a demonstrative will not – as would at one time have been thought – do away with the demand for a conception of the object indicated. For, even though someone may say just ‘this’ or ‘that’, we need to know the answer to the question ‘this *what?*’ if we are to understand him; and he needs to know the answer if he is to be meaning anything. (Anscombe (1975), p142)

From this it seems that Anscombe believes that one way of referring to an object involves *knowing what kind of thing* the object is.

A reason why one might need to know the type of object to be able to refer to it is suggested by Dummett in *Frege, Philosophy of Language* (1973, p546). He argues that what is essential for reference to an object is that we know the criterion of identity for the object, which he specifies as knowledge of how to recognize the object as the same again. For instance, Dummett says:

Merely to know that a name has as its referent an object with which we are confronted, or which is presented to us in some way, at a particular time is not yet to know what object the name stands for: we do not know this until we know, in Frege’s terminology, ‘how to recognize the object as the same again’, that is, how to determine, when we are later confronted with an object or one is presented to us, whether or not it should be taken to be the same object. (Dummett (1973), p545)

Knowledge that an object is of a certain kind will give us knowledge of the criterion of identity for that object, because, Dummett believes, if we understand a general term for a kind, we will already associate with the general term the criteria of identity for objects which fall under it. For example, to understand the general terms that Anscombe discusses – ‘city’, ‘river’, ‘man’ – we also need to know the criteria of identity of the objects to which the general term will apply. If I then know (e.g.) that London is a city I will know the criterion of identity for London. It is knowing the criterion of identity for an object which is essential for being able to refer to the object – knowing that the object is of a certain kind is just a means for obtaining this essential knowledge. This seems to fit with Anscombe’s picture of reference, as being able to refer to the same thing over time plays an important role in her account. If we look at her rejection of the view that we can know what kind of thing we are, we see that part of the reason she dismisses this is because she thinks we would not

know how to recognize the same self over time to continue to refer to the same object over time. This is contrasted with our ability to refer to other objects. Anscombe remarks:

...just as we must be continuing our reference to the same city if we continue to use 'London' with the same reference, so we must each of us be continuing in our reference to the same self (or 'person') if we continue to use 'I' with the same reference. (Anscombe (1975), p141)

The implication is that if we are to use and understand 'London' we must know how to recognize it as the same again – by associating it with the criterion of identity for a city. In the same way, in order to use and understand 'I', I must know how to recognize the object that I am as the same again – by associating it with the criterion of identity for a self. As she says:

...a repeated use of 'I' in connection with the same self would have to involve a reidentification of that self (Anscombe (1975), p141)

But the problem is, I do not know what selves are. I do not know how to reidentify the same self because I do not associate a criterion of identity with a self. Therefore, a self cannot be the conception I associate with 'I' because it does not provide me with the requisite criterion of identity. And Anscombe believes that no other conception can do the job either.² The underlying view of reference in her account at this point is the same as that proposed by Dummett; that to be able to refer to an object I must know its criterion of identity.

In addition to providing the means for reidentification of an object over time, associating a conception with an object and thereby knowing its criterion of identity also enables one to single out the object in the first place. Dummett sees this as particularly important. According to him, we cannot single an object out if we do not know what kind of thing it is; in just pointing to something we do not single out an object, as several kinds of object could occupy the same location; (e.g.) either a statue or a lump of clay. This is why it sometimes appears as though identity is relative, as we can point at something (twice over a period of time) and say (e.g.) 'This is the same statue as that but is not the same lump of clay as that' (for example, the clay has been replaced over time as it has eroded). According to Dummett, our use of a demonstrative, whether or not accompanied by a pointing gesture, does not succeed in singling out an object. Until we are able to single out an object, we cannot refer to it. We have to think of whatever we are pointing to (in this example) *as a*

² e.g. in her discussion of 'A'-users, where people make reports on the basis of observation, the implication is that such people reidentify themselves over time as a physical object. But Anscombe thinks that such a conception does not enable us to account for self-consciousness (p138-9)

statue or *as a lump of clay*, associating a different criterion of identity with each, before we can refer to one object or the other. Once an object is singled out it is always identical with itself and identity is absolute – the object cannot be the same *F*, but a different *G*. Knowledge of the criterion of identity of the object enables us to single the object out. As Dummett says:

An object cannot be recognized as the referent of a proper name....or thought of in any other way whatever, unless it has first been singled out in some definite way.....we have to suppose that, for each category of objects, there is some favoured method of being 'given' an object in that category to which the criteria of identification or of application relate. (Dummett (1973), p232)

Dummett believes that we are often misled into thinking that no criterion of identity is required to make a successful reference to an object because, if we stop to reflect upon it at all, we think of our thoughts and our use of natural language on the model of a first-order formal language. A first-order formal language has a specified domain of objects. It seems to us that we can easily refer to an object in that domain without knowing the criterion of identity of that object; we just use '*a*' to refer to object *a*, or we can just think about *a* without having any idea what kind of object it is. But in specifying the domain, we have *already* used a criterion of identity to single out objects. For instance, we may have specified the domain to be all statues in London at a particular time. Having already singled out the objects, we are able to refer to them and reidentify them over time. But normally to refer to an object we do not have a pre-specified domain; instead we must single the object out by using our knowledge of its criterion of identity.

Is a similar notion of singling out contained in Anscombe's article? She says that to be able to refer to an object we must be able to 'reach' the object (p137), to 'catch hold of' the object (p143) or 'attach to' the object (p144). These metaphors could just be taken to mean that objects are 'given' to us, and we can just refer to an object which is given to us in such a way without knowing what kind of object it is. But until she later explicitly considers the option of a kind of pure direct reference (p146) Anscombe is quite clear that we cannot 'reach', 'catch hold of' or 'attach to' an object without associating a conception with that object. A use of a demonstrative without an associated conception does not succeed in singling out the object – to have successful reference we need to know the answer to the question 'this what?' (p142). Anscombe also seems to believe there is more to needing to know the criteria of identity of objects than just being able to reidentify the objects over time.

In a footnote explaining why we also need a conception of the object for demonstrative reference, Anscombe states:

This point was not grasped in the days when people believed in pure ostensive definition *without the grounds being prepared for it*. (Anscombe (1975), p142, footnote 3, my emphasis)

I take it from this that she also believes that we cannot just point to an object and thereby refer. In order to be able to refer to an object we need to be able to single it out, and we cannot do this if we do not know what kind of thing it is. At the end of her article, Anscombe also writes that to refer to an object I need to connect “what is understood by a predicate with a *distinctly conceived* subject” (p153, my emphasis). Although it is not entirely clear what she means by this, this could also be taken to mean that to refer to an object we need to be able to single it out.

It is important to distinguish two claims which I am attributing to both Dummett (1973) and Anscombe (1975) (at least in the part of her discussion where she believes that an associated conception is required for reference). The first claim is that to refer to an object I need to be able to single it out. This has an intuitive plausibility. Otherwise, how is it that I can think about and refer to one object rather than another? Such a singling out does not have to be perceptual, as the examples so far may have suggested. I may hear of an object from someone else, and it is arguable that if I am able to single it out in some way I can think about it and refer to it. The stronger claim is that this singling out of the object can only occur if I know the criterion of identity of the object. Only if I know the criterion of identity of an object can I single it out and thus refer to and think about it. I am attributing both the weak and strong claims to Anscombe; knowledge of the criterion of identity of an object is essential for singling the object out, which in turn is essential to be able to refer to the object. It is because Anscombe believes that I cannot know what kind I am that she concludes that I am unable to single myself out and thus that ‘I’ cannot be a referring term.

The stronger hypothesis that the singling out of an object involves knowledge of its criterion of identity has its opponents. Ayers (1974) argues that we are able to single out and refer to something which we have not yet identified; he maintains that we can refer to an object where we do not know what kind of thing it is, or in what its criterion of identity over time consists. An illustration of such a possibility is provided by Hirsch (1982), who describes the case of a child who has grown up on a farm, never having seen any vehicles. When he first sees a car, being driven so fast

past him that it is all blurred, even though he does not know what kind of object it is he can nevertheless refer to that *big blue thing*. Here we seem able to think about a thing and refer to it, without having an associated conception. Ayers takes his position to be in opposition to Wiggins's view in *Identity and Spatio-temporal continuity* (1967) which Wiggins later expands in *Sameness and Substance* (1980). Wiggins maintains that:

...the individuating scheme we bring to bear on experience can determine both what kinds of things we shall single out (*fs*, *gs* or whatever) *and*what will be the principles of individuation or conditions of persistence of what we single out. (Wiggins (1980), p141)

Our conceptions enable us to single out objects and to reidentify them over time. It is not that our conceptions determine what objects there are, but they determine what objects we can refer to. Wiggins uses the following analogy: the size of the mesh of a net does not determine what fish are in the sea, but it determines what fish we can find (1980, p217). Wiggins's position is primarily a metaphysical thesis; a theory of what it is for two entities to be distinct, and for one object to persist through time. It is only derivatively a theory of what is required for reference to objects, and as such is weaker than that proposed by Dummett. Wiggins is quite happy that someone may be able to single out an object without knowing what kind of thing it is. All that the person doing the singling out is committed to is that there is a kind to which this strange thing belongs, and that this kind is well-defined, thus with well-defined persistence conditions (e.g. see Wiggins (1980) p218). To be able to track the object over time, and to reidentify it, the subject must come to have an understanding of in what the criterion of identity for that object consists. However, this does not mean that we can initially refer to an object with no hypothesis as to its criterion of identity. As Wiggins says in a later paper, a subject who does not yet know what kind an object is, yet nevertheless singles it out, makes a provisional judgement as to its criterion of identity:

What the inquirer wants is the thing he or she has not yet got, namely the substantial sort the thing belongs to. In the interim he or she picks out the thing tentatively as a bounded, coherent, three-dimensional physical object with a particular way of behaving which is provisionally cum analogically specified, and tries thus, from one moment to the next, to keep track of the thing supposedly behaving in that way. (Wiggins (1997), p419)

So even though on Wiggins's view the thinker does not need to know what kind of thing the object could be in order to be able to single it out, he does have to have the ability to work out its criterion of identity. This knowledge is obtained from information from the object – from the way the object is behaving.

For the moment let us assume that to refer to an object one does need to be able to single it out in some way. What is required to achieve this? We have seen that Dummett and Anscombe suggest that it can only be achieved via knowledge of the criterion of identity of an object. Ayers and Hirsch respond that this cannot be the case as we clearly do single out things without knowing what kind they are. We then have Wiggins's contention that even though Ayers and Hirsch are correct in their observation, we still must know that there is a kind to which the object belongs and can go on to find out the object's criterion of identity. Such a position is supported by Evans (1982) who also argues that someone is able to think of and refer to an object demonstratively without knowing its kind "provided there is such a thing as *discovering* the sort of a thing, and he knows how to do it." (1982, p178). Some background is needed to explain this more fully. Evans is committed to Russell's principle:³

in order to have a thought about a particular object, you must *know which* object it is about which you are thinking. (Evans (1982), p74)

To know which object I am thinking of I must have an *adequate Idea* of the object. This means that I must either have a *fundamental Idea* of the object, or I must know what it would be for my Idea of the object to equate to a fundamental Idea of the object.⁴ At the fundamental level, I have a fundamental Idea of an object if I think of it as the possessor of the fundamental ground of difference which it possesses. The possession of this fundamental ground of difference is what makes the object different from all other objects. The fundamental ground of difference of an object depends on what kind of object it is.

For example, we may say that shades of colour are distinguished from one another by their phenomenal properties, that shapes are distinguished from one another by their geometrical properties, that sets are differentiated from one another by their possessing different members, that numbers are differentiated from one another by their position in an infinite ordering.... (Evans (1982), p106-7)

Physical objects are differentiated from one another by their position in time and space. However, Evans also uses the example of a statue and clay occupying the same location to argue that not only must we know an object's position in space, but we must also know what kind it is (1982, p107). Knowing what kind an object is

³ This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2

⁴ An *Idea* of an object is Evans's technical terminology "something which makes it possible for a subject to think of an object in a series of indefinitely many thoughts, in each of which he will be thinking of the object in the same way." (Evans, (1982), p104). This will be discussed further in Chapter 2

enables us to distinguish it from objects of other kinds, and also allows us to differentiate the object from other objects of the same kind. Thus to have a fundamental Idea of an object – to think of it as possessing the fundamental ground of difference which it possesses – I must know what kind of object it is.

However, not all adequate Ideas are fundamental Ideas, and Evans believes that I can still conform to Russell's principle if I have a merely adequate Idea of an object. One case where I only need an adequate Idea of an object is when I refer to objects demonstratively. To have an adequate demonstrative Idea I must know what it is for my Idea to equate with a fundamental Idea of the object I am referring to. This means that I must know what it would be for my demonstrative Idea to equate to a fundamental Idea of an object at a particular location in time and space, and of a particular kind. Evans believes that I can have this knowledge as long as I have the capacity to locate an object objectively and to discover what sort of thing it is. He thinks that we evidently are able to do such things. In the case of determining what kind of thing an object is, Evans believes that as long as we can indicate a “definitely extended object” we can go on to work out what kind of object it is:

The idea of discovering the sort of a thing, identified demonstratively, would not make sense if there was not some ranking of sorts. As Trinculo goes along the beach and spies Caliban for the first time, he asks ‘What is this?’ It must be presumed that ‘This is a living animal’ is (at least) a better answer than ‘This is a collection of molecules’. Similarly, when the fisherman wonders what he has at the end of his line, the answer ‘A statue’ is a better answer than ‘A piece of clay’. Since we seem to know this ranking, it is not important for us to enquire into its principles: a determinate answer can be given to the question ‘What kind of thing is this?’ provided a definitely extended object is indicated, and such an indication does not by itself presuppose any sortal. (1982, p178-9)

As long as we can indicate a definitely extended object we can go on to discover what kind of thing it is, locate the object in time and space, and hence have the capacity to equate our Idea of the object with a fundamental Idea. So in the case of Hirsch’s (1982) example of the blurred car seen for the first time by a child on a farm, the child can indicate an extended object, and can come to find out what kind of thing it is.⁵ Therefore he can refer to the object and think about the object. It is the fact that the object is definitely extended which enables the child to go on to discover what kind of thing it is, using his knowledge of the ranking of sorts. If the object is not definitely extended then we may not be able to discover what kind of thing it is by our knowledge of the ranking of sorts. In such a case we may first need

⁵ This example is actually slightly more complicated, as a car is an artefact rather than a natural kind.

to know the object's criterion of identity in order to refer to it; otherwise we could not have an adequate Idea of it as we would not be able to equate our Idea to a fundamental Idea. This may be the case for non-physical objects, or for physical objects which we are not in a position to identify demonstratively. So the ability to come to know the criterion of identity is always involved in successful reference to an object; sometimes it is essential up front to be able to single the object out, but even when it is not, being able to determine the kind of object is always needed for an adequate Idea.

The metaphysical picture presupposed by Evans differs from that assumed by Dummett. Evans views the world as divided into objects (albeit accepting that objects of different kinds can occupy the same location). Material objects can indeed be 'given' to me, and I can go on to discover their kind because I (somehow) understand how kinds of objects are ranked. Dummett's picture does not involve this ranking of kinds. He views reality as an "amorphous lump" (e.g. (1973), p577). Physical objects are not 'given' to me with my then having the ability to determine what kind of object they are. I must use my knowledge of an object's criterion of identity to single out the object in the first place. I think that Evans's picture is more plausible, as we do seem to be able to refer to objects demonstratively before knowing exactly what they are. As mentioned before, this is also compatible with Ayers's observation that we do not need to know what kind an object is in order to be able to single it out, because we are able to single out an object knowing only that it is "a complex, unified individual substance – a physical object." (Ayers (1974), p142). However, if Evans is right that our thought must conform to Russell's principle⁶ and that the way in which our Ideas are adequate involves the fundamental level of thought, then to have an adequate demonstrative Idea of the thing I have singled out tentatively I must have the capacity to come to know what kind of thing it is. Otherwise I would not be able to equate my Idea to a fundamental Idea – to have the capacity to know the object's location and kind. Ayers's argument that all objects are physical objects and share persistence conditions, and that we have a primitive idea of physical unity which enables us to pick them out, seems to be an arbitrary account of persistence conditions. It is also argued by many (e.g. Wiggins) that a spatio-temporal physical object is not a kind, and so if this were all we knew, we would not have an adequate Idea of the object; we would not have the capacity to distinguish the object from all others.

⁶ Again, see Chapter 2 for discussion of this

I think that the picture of reference presupposed in the first part of Anscombe's article 'The First Person' – that to refer to an object we must associate a conception with our use of the term for the object – is more similar to Dummett's position than to that of Wiggins or Evans. Her basic requirement seems to be that to refer to an object I must know what kind of thing it is, and I need to know this because I need to know the criterion of identity for the object. It is knowledge of the criterion of identity of the object which is essential to enable me to single the object out, and it is this knowledge which she believes to be lacking in the case of my 'I'-thoughts. When I think 'I'-thoughts she believes I do not have a conception of the object which I am, and – because she supports the strong claim that I cannot single an object out without knowledge of its criterion of identity – I cannot single myself out. Because of this I do not refer to myself. However, I think we should modify this picture of reference to objects along the lines of Wiggins's and Evans's accounts, and say that what is required is the ability to discover the criterion of identity in each case. Even with this modified picture, I believe that what is normally required for reference to objects need not be present in the case of my 'I'-thoughts. I think that Anscombe would also maintain that there is no way of my coming to discover what kind of thing I am.

The purpose of this section has been to try to elucidate what is meant by Anscombe when she says that to refer to an object we must associate a conception with our use of the term for the object. What we have seen so far is that there is an assumption that to refer to an object I must be able to single it out. Anscombe, in the first part of her article, maintains that one way of doing this is by knowing the kind of object it is, and thus by knowing its criterion of identity. I have just suggested that we should weaken this requirement slightly. But in either case, we have not yet explored *why* I should need to be able to do these things in order to refer. Dummett's reasons seems fairly implausible. He argues that we cannot think of an object unless it has first been singled out because:

There is no such thing as judging something to be true of an object, apart from some particular method of identifying the object. (1973, p232)

This has strong verificationist undertones. It is not clear that to be able to think of an object I must be able to determine whether things are true or false of it. And even if this were the case, it is not obvious that in order to do so I would have to single the object out. Evans's position is based on conforming to Russell's principle – the reason I need to be able to discover the kind the object belongs to is to be able to distinguish it from all other objects, so I know which object it is about which I am

thinking. As yet, no argument has been provided in support of Russell's principle. Nevertheless, there does seem something intuitively plausible in the notion that to refer to something I need to be able to single it out, and that to single it out I need to have the ability to know what kind of thing it is. For the moment, I want to set aside any difficulties we may have explaining these intuitions, and just cling on to the intuitions. By exploring the second part of Anscombe's argument in section 3 – that even if there were some kind of pure direct reference where I could refer without associating a conception with 'I', I still could not refer to myself – and other philosophers' responses to this argument, I think we can develop these intuitions further. For now, I will term the requirements to refer to objects which we have provisionally identified 'having a concept of an object'.

3

Because Anscombe thinks there is no conception, or kind, that I can associate with the object that I am to enable my 'I'-thoughts to 'latch on to' this object, she turns, almost as a last resort, to considering an alternative picture of reference to objects; that of "a sort of pure direct reference in which one simply first means and then refers to an object before one." (Anscombe (1975), p146). (She here obviously sets aside her qualms expressed earlier that there can be no pure ostensive reference without a conception.) The presumption is that in such cases of pure direct reference the object referred to must be immediately present to one. Anscombe argues that nothing can always be immediately present to me when I think 'I'-thoughts except a Cartesian Ego. My body need not be immediately present to me, as she contends that it is possible for me to think 'I'-thoughts when in a sensory-deprivation tank while nothing is present to my senses. Her conclusion is that:

....this reference could only be sure-fire if the referent of 'I' were both freshly defined with each use of 'I', and also remained in view so long as something was being taken to be *I*.....it seems to follow that what 'I' stands for must be a Cartesian Ego. (Anscombe (1975), p146)

Because she thinks the referent of 'I' is not an Ego – a position she believes to be absurd – she concludes that my 'I'-thoughts do not refer via a form of pure direct reference. Both options for reference to an object being exhausted (knowing what kind of thing the object is, and pure direct reference), Anscombe concludes that 'I' does not refer.

Anscombe's argument that we can think 'I'-thoughts whilst in a sensory-deprivation tank has caught the imagination of philosophers. But in their responses they tend in the main not to argue that in such a situation we can or cannot have some kind of

pure direct reference to an object immediately before us *without* a conception. Instead, they argue that the sensory deprivation tank either shows that Anscombe is right and we cannot associate a conception with 'I', or that contrary to Anscombe's original contention, we can associate a conception with 'I'; we can have knowledge of the kind of thing we are. If the latter, the focus is then on how we are able to come by such knowledge, and how we could have it if amnesiac and in a sensory-deprivation tank. The thought is that if we can show how we can come to have knowledge of the kind of thing we are, then we can show, contra Anscombe, that our 'I'-thoughts refer. Such responses are not wholly out of the spirit of Anscombe's discussion, as she herself says:

If I were in that condition of 'sensory deprivation' I could not have the thought 'this object', 'this body' – there would be nothing for 'this' to latch on to. (Anscombe (1975), p150)

Part of her problem is that in such a situation there would be no object directly present to me (apart from an Ego) and so 'pure' reference would be impossible. But the main issue is that although an object may be there, I cannot have epistemic access to it unless it is an Ego. The problem is I cannot gain any knowledge about what kind of thing I am. I cannot know that I am an object or a body, and so these cannot be conceptions I associate with my use of the term 'I'. There also seems no way that I could come to know what kind of thing I am, as I seem able to refer without anything being present to me. Because I cannot know what I am, I could not single myself out even if there were something immediately present to me, as singling out involves having the capacity to know what kind of thing I am.

Implicit in Anscombe, and explicit in Evans, is the idea that knowledge of the kind of thing an object is comes from information from the object itself. As we saw before in the case of adequate demonstrative Ideas, our ability to determine what kind of thing the definitely extended object is depends on the information we have from the object – e.g. the way the object is behaving. Evans writes in relation to our thoughts about ourselves:

...a subject's self-conscious thought about himself must be informed (or must at least be liable to be informed) by information which the subject may gain of himself in each of a range of ways of gaining knowledge of himself...(Evans (1982), p212)

Evans argues that I can know that I am a physical object, and that I can know this through my proprioceptive sense, my sense of balance, my sense of heat and cold, and my sense of pressure (1982, Ch7). In a sensory-deprivation tank I am disposed

to gain knowledge of myself in such ways, even if I cannot do it at that moment. Evans is prepared to accept the consequence that, were I a brain in a vat, I could not have a concept of myself (1982, p250). In such a situation, he thinks that my 'I'-thoughts would not refer. The point is not that I could not have a conception of myself, in Anscombe's sense. I may well have been subject from birth to all sorts of hallucinations which convince me that I have a body, that I am experiencing various things, etc. The problem is that the conception I have of myself does not come from any object. To refer to an object, not only must we have the ability to determine what kind the object is, but this knowledge must be well-grounded, and derive from the object.

From what we have drawn from Anscombe's account, supplemented by material particularly from Dummett and Evans, we now have the following picture of reference to objects. To refer to an object I must be able to single out the object. This can only be done if I associate a conception with the object, or can come to associate a conception with the object. In other words, I must know what kind of thing the object is, or have the ability to determine what kind of thing it is. I must know this because I must have the ability to know the criterion of identity of the object. This knowledge must derive from the object itself. If the knowledge is from another source (e.g. hallucination) then my knowledge is not well grounded and I am not referring to an object.

I have used Anscombe's argument that we cannot have a sort of pure direct reference to ourselves (because we can still think 'I'-thoughts in a sensory deprivation tank where no object except an Ego could be present) to argue that Anscombe's picture of reference to objects involves knowing what kind that object is where this knowledge derives from the object. However, her argument has also been taken to show that our grounds for thinking 'I'-thoughts differ from our grounds for thinking about objects which are independent of us.⁷ For instance, she argues that when we think about other objects we look for a subject of our thought (1975, p153). In our own case in 'I'-thoughts Anscombe thinks we have "unmediated agent-or-patient conceptions of actions, happenings, and states" where we do not look for a subject (1975, p153). I think that Anscombe is correct that our grounds for thinking 'I'-thoughts differ from

⁷ In this respect, Anscombe's argument is similar to Shoemaker (1986) in 'Introspection and the Self'. Shoemaker argues that in most cases the grounds for our being able to refer to and our having knowledge of an object must either involve an identification of the object, or otherwise a kind of direct demonstration of the object, and my knowledge of myself in 'I'-thoughts does not conform to either of these models. Unlike Anscombe, however, he does not conclude that 'I' does not refer.

our grounds for thinking about other objects, but I also think that this is not the only difference between 'I'-thoughts and other singular referring thoughts. Many would accept that the grounds for thinking 'I'-thoughts differ in this respect, but still argue that I need to have a concept of myself in order to think 'I'-thoughts. They would argue that to be able to think 'I'-thoughts I must be able to single myself out, and to do this I need to be able to know what kind of thing I am. This knowledge must derive from the object which I am, although they concede that observation of what I am need not always enter into the grounds for a particular 'I'-thought. For example, Evans argues that to have the thought that I am in front of a tree, my grounds for this need only involve my perceiving a tree (Evans, (1982) p231). I do not need to observe myself perceiving a tree. Still, to have the thought that I am in front of a tree, I must have a concept of myself. I must think of myself as "a persisting subject of experience, located in space and time"(1982, p232) that has the property of being in front of a tree.⁸ I have this knowledge through my proprioceptive and kinaesthetic sense of myself and this information derives from the object which I am. I want to argue that this is not the case. When I think 'I'-thoughts I do not need a concept of myself at all. I do not need to have the ability to single myself out by being able to determine what kind of thing I am. It is not just that, at the moment of a particular 'I'-thought I do not need to be able to pick myself out through my knowledge of my criterion of identity. I do not have to think of myself in a particular way as being a certain kind of thing.

So let us now review the general picture of reference to objects which has emerged. To refer to an object I must have a concept of the object. Having a concept enables me to single out the object. This singling out cannot be done unless I have the ability to determine the criterion of identity of the object. This knowledge of the criterion of identity must derive from the object. When I think the thought that *a* is *F*, my grounds for this thought need not involve my singling out the object at that moment. Nevertheless, I am able to single the object out, and the ability to know the criterion of identity for the object is derived from the object and is involved in all my thoughts about the object. Why should this be required for reference? Dummett (1973) appeals to verificationist underpinnings to support a similar picture of reference, and Evans (1982) uses Russell's principle to defend this view. I think that both of these seem rather extreme reasons to support a fairly intuitive picture of reference; indeed, all I think we need are the following weaker considerations. In thinking about an object I am trying to think about a particular thing; I am trying to think about one

⁸ I will discuss Evans's reasons for this in Chapter 2

object rather than another. Thought is within my intentional control, and I intend to be thinking about one object rather than another. Having a concept of an object enables me to single out an object from among others, and reidentify the same object over time. It allows me to identify in thought what I am thinking about, as I know what distinguishes the object from others of its own kind and from among objects of different kinds. That I have a concept of the object provides an account of why I am thinking about one object rather than an alternative, and hence of how I am able to refer to a particular object.

4

I want to conclude this chapter by exploring the notion of ‘singling out’ which seems to be required for reference; what this means, and why it is thought to be necessary. I also want to look at whether concepts are always required to achieve this singling out. My thesis is that we need concepts for reference to all objects except in the case of ‘I’-thoughts, so I need to examine potential counterexamples where it appears we are able to refer to objects which are independent of us without concepts. I conclude that in all cases of singular referring thought to objects which are independent of me, I need to have a concept of the object, but the same reasoning which shows why this is necessary also explains why I do not need a concept of myself in my ‘I’-thoughts. First person reference is indeed special.

The notion of singling an object out can appear intimately tied in with being able to distinguish the object from among others by knowing what makes the object different from others. If this is the case then the singling out of an object can seem necessary linked to having a concept of an object, as I have defined concepts. However, I think there is another way of looking at singling out objects which is prior to the way we are able to single them out – whether this way is via concepts or otherwise. When I think about and refer to an object I have an intention towards that object. It may be that having a concept of the object is the only way I can fulfil this intention in most cases, but the method of fulfilment differs from the intention itself. In both my thoughts about objects which are independent of me, and in my ‘I’-thoughts, I believe I have an intention towards (different) particular objects. It is this intention towards particular objects which I think is vital in our notion of singling out.⁹

⁹ This is important in Chapter 3 where I wish to distinguish my position from Rumfitt’s (1994). Both he and I think that no concept is required in my ‘I’-thoughts, but in my case I think we still have an intention towards an object, and so in a sense, single it out. We just do not do this by being able to

Why do we need to be able to have intentions towards objects, and so refer to them? When I normally think about objects I do so intentionally and consciously, and have some understanding of what I am doing. In thinking about one object rather than another I must have some conception of what I am doing; I am intending to think about one object rather than another. I need to be able to single out objects, and keep track of them over time, because, as Millikan (1997) explains:

...every mediate inference, every recognition of a contradiction, and nearly everything learned from perception depends upon recognition of the identity of various items as one and the same thing having multiple properties. (Millikan (1997), p504)

Let us assume for the moment that the terminology ‘recognition of the identity of various items’ does not prejudge how we are able to achieve this recognition. What seems essential is that we are able to think of different individual objects. We are able to keep track of what properties these different objects have, and how these properties change over time. We make use of intentions towards different objects in all aspects of our reasoning. Because our singling out of objects is so important, this has led many to suppose that we must somehow have ‘sameness markers’¹⁰ in our thought – mental markers for the identity of individuals. For example, Perry (1980) in ‘A Problem about Continued Belief’, describes a simple model of the way he thinks our singular thoughts might work, using the example of a system for keeping track of students in his seminar. For each student he has an index card, or dossier, upon which he writes information concerning the student. He ends up with a set of cards, each of which gives a profile of one of his students. The predicates ascribed on a particular card may not actually be true of any one student, but one student will have been the source of the profile – even if the information is mistaken he will have written it on the card believing that it concerns the particular student the card represents. Each card represents a student, and he can use the card to keep track of the student and unite different bits of information about them. Similar models abound. Millikan (1997) describes what she calls a ‘Strawson model’ of thought, based on an account given by Strawson (1974). Each individual is represented by a dot, and the different information which we know about the individual is represented by lines attached to the dot. So, using Perry’s example of keeping track of his students, I would have a dot for each student and the lines attached to each dot would represent the information I have gathered about each student. More generally, I

distinguish the object from others. Rumfitt believes that our intention in this case is not towards an object. See Chapter 3 for further discussion.

¹⁰ The term ‘sameness marker’ is due to Millikan (1997) p503 and elsewhere.

would have whatever is the mental equivalent for a dot for each object towards which I have an intention – objects which seem important to me for some reason – and I will keep track of the objects I come across, and their properties, in this way. It is not important for my purposes how such sameness markers are actually instantiated. Millikan (1997) describes many models which could allow us to keep track of objects towards which we have intentions. What is important is that we seem to have a need to have intentions towards particular objects and to keep track of these objects, using the information about these objects in our reasoning.

How is it that we are able to have an intention towards an object in this way and thus reason about a single object? How do we fulfil this intention? It seems that I must know if an object is identical or not. If two subjects differ in their identity judgements then they will think that the number of objects differs. For example one subject may be thinking of objects *a*, *b* and *c*, while another, appreciating that *b* and *c* are identical, may only be thinking of *a* and *b*. The former believes he has intentions towards three different objects, while the latter has intentions to refer to only two. Thus it seems that our identity beliefs are a privileged range of beliefs – to use the models discussed above, these identity beliefs form the walls of our dossiers, or the boundaries of our dots on the Strawson model. In this chapter I have proposed, drawing from Anscombe and others, that to be able to have such an identity belief, I must also have the ability to come to know the criterion of identity of the object. My identity judgements are ill-formed unless I can know what kind of thing the object is. Thus to be able to refer to an object and have an intention towards it I must have the ability to come to know the criterion of identity of the object – I must have a concept of the object. Having this knowledge, I can then aim to think about a particular object, as I know what distinguishes that object from others.¹¹

Does this picture of reference apply to all our singular thoughts about objects? I obviously do not believe it applies in the case of ‘I’-thoughts, and will return to this below. But what about other objects which are independent of me? I have in mind cases where it seems on the surface as though we can and do refer to certain objects, and yet have no concept of them. For example, sometimes we learn about objects through the testimony of others, and it may appear that we would not know how to distinguish the object from among others. There are other cases where we appear

¹¹ I should point out that having the ability to distinguish an object from among all others is not an ability which Millikan (1997 and elsewhere) thinks we either have or lack. She believes such an ability comes in degrees, and sometimes my thought may be equivocal about two or more objects. Evans would deny this.

able to use a definite description to single out an object; for example, Kaplan (1989a, p560, footnote 76) thinks we can pick out an object by the description “Let’s call the first child to be born in the twenty-first century ‘Newman 1’”. Are we referring to objects without concepts in such cases? It could be argued that we do not have concepts in these cases, but that this does not matter because these are not genuine singular referring thoughts. I do not think we need to take this line however, as I think that we can show that we do have concepts of objects here. Recall that we have a concept of an object if we have the ability to come to know the criterion of identity of the object, where this knowledge derives from the object. In the case of testimony it seems that we do have this ability. Evans (1982, Ch 11) has argued that in the case of proper names, the community of users of a certain proper name is divided into producers and consumers. The producers know how to pick out the object referred to by the name; they know what distinguishes the object from others. Consumers do not know the individual named, and so it may seem that they do not have a concept of the object. However, they learn of the use of the name from producers or other consumers. The reason the consumers are able to use the name to refer is because there are “other participants [the producers] in the communicate transaction, on whom the hearers could rely to tell them which individual a speaker is referring to” (Evans (1982), p399). It is in this way that I think we are able to have concepts of objects which we hear about through testimony. We may not be able to discriminate the object ourselves, but we know of people (directly or indirectly) who can. Thus we have the ability to come to know the criterion of identity of the object, and this ability is dependent on other people who can pick out the object from among others. Our concept of the object is deferential to other people’s concept of it. In a similar way, I think we can refer to future individuals. We may not know now how to distinguish the future individual from among others, but we know what would have to be done for us to be able to do this. We know what kind of thing the future object would be, and so know in general how to distinguish such objects from others. And we know what we would need to know in the specific case to distinguish the object from among others, we just cannot yet do it. Our use of the term to refer is deferential to either our or other people’s future ability to refer to the object.¹²

I thus think that it is extremely plausible that to be able to refer to objects which are independent of us we must have concepts of those objects. But what about in the case of my ‘I’-thoughts? Anscombe believes that the requirements of this picture of

¹² As Kaplan (1989a) points out, in most cases we would have no reason to refer to such future individuals.

reference are lacking in the case of 'I'-thoughts and so concludes that my 'I'-thoughts do not refer. Evans tries to show that my 'I'-thoughts can fulfil these requirements – that I can have a concept of myself and so can refer to myself. But I want to suggest that this picture of reference *only* applies to objects which are independent of us, and thus that although we need not have a concept of ourselves to think 'I'-thoughts, this does not lead to the conclusion that our 'I'-thoughts do not refer. The reason why such a picture of reference seems so plausible is because, in cases of objects independent of us, what we are trying to do is to think about one object among a multitude of objects. We are intending to think about a particular object; aiming at a certain object. We want to distinguish that object from among others. These reasons why concepts are required evaporate when we turn to considering 'I'-thoughts. I do not need to be able to distinguish myself from all other objects because I cannot be mistaken that I am thinking about myself. I am subject and object of my thought and so can easily have an intention towards myself without having to know my own identity conditions to pick myself out. I do not need to reidentify myself over time, as I cannot lose track of myself. Therefore I am able to think 'I'-thoughts which refer to me without having any idea of the kind of thing I am, or being able to discover in what my criterion of identity consists. This is the position I shall build on in the remainder of this thesis.

Chapter 2

The Generality Constraint

1

The argument to be examined in this chapter purports to show, contrary to my thesis, that my ability to think 'I'-thoughts requires that I have a concept of myself; that I must be able to come to know my criterion of identity through information from myself, and thereby single myself out from among other objects. The argument begins with the premise that all our thought is subject to a constraint; the *generality constraint*. This argument can be found in Evans (1982), and I will give a brief outline of it to introduce it, before moving on to discuss it in detail in the rest of the chapter.

Evans believes that our thought about an object *a* that it is *F* is the result of two capacities; the ability to think of, or about *a*, and our ability to think of the property *F*. The *Generality Constraint* is the requirement that if I can think the thought that *a* is *F* and I can think the thought that *b* is *G*, then I can also think that *a* is *G* and that *b* is *F*. If I can think that *a* is *F*, so referring to object *a*, then I must also be able to think of *a* as having different properties and I must be able to think of the property *F* as applying to different objects (1982, p75, p101). This is sometimes explained by saying that thought is *structured*; my thought about *a* in the thought that it is *F* is common to my thoughts about *a* in thoughts that it has different properties. Evans calls my ability to think about object *a* an *Idea* of *a*:

An Idea of an object then, is something which makes it possible for a subject to think of an object in a series of indefinitely many thoughts, in each of which he will be thinking of the object in the same way. (1982, p104)

Evans argues that the generality constraint shows us that to think about an object we must have what I have called a concept of the object. This argument also applies to thoughts about ourselves; to think an 'I'-thought which refers to the object which I am, I must have a concept of myself. Very roughly, the argument works as follows. The generality constraint has two sides, one of which imposes the constraint of generality on the way we think about object *a*, and the other of which imposes the requirement of generality on the way we think of the property *F*. Both sides of the generality constraint are supposed to work together to show that we must have a concept of ourselves; in particular, according to Evans, that we must think of ourselves as a physical object located in space and time, and know how we are distinct from other objects. To meet the first side of the constraint, Evans argues

from the generality constraint to the fundamental level of thought. To be able to think a is F , a is G , a is H etc., I either must have a fundamental Idea of object a – where I think of a as possessing the fundamental ground of difference it possesses and so know what distinguishes a from all other objects – or I must know what it would be for my Idea of a to equate to a fundamental Idea of a :

Provided a subject knows what it is for identifications like $[\delta = a]$ [where δ is a fundamental Idea of an object] to be true, a link is set up between his Idea a , and his entire repertoire of conceptual knowledge, and he will be able to grasp as many propositions of the form $[a \text{ is } F]$ as he has concepts of being F . His Ideas make contact with his concepts [of properties] so to speak, at the fundamental level, and hence there is no need, or possibility of accounting for his knowledge of what it is for propositions about the object to be true one by one. (1982, p112)

In the case of my ‘I’-thoughts, Evans thinks we are perfectly capable of grasping thoughts which we are unable to offer grounds for, such as “the thought that I was breast-fed, for example, or that I was unhappy on my first birthday, or that I tossed and turned in my sleep last night, or that I shall be dragged unconscious through the streets of Chicago, or that I shall die” (p209). I cannot make any sense of understanding such thoughts one by one. Instead I must either have a fundamental Idea of myself – as a physical object located in a certain spatio-temporal location – or I must have an adequate Idea of myself – I must know what it would be for my ‘I’-Idea to equate to a fundamental Idea of myself. In either case, I must have the ability to determine what distinguishes me from all other objects. It is the involvement of the fundamental Idea of myself which connects with my concepts of properties, and enables me to have all kinds of ‘I’-thoughts.

On the other side of the generality constraint, if I can think thoughts such as that I am F , I must also be able to think that b is F , c is F , d is F etc. We saw in Chapter 1 that to be able think that I am in front of a tree, my *grounds* for thinking this do not need to involve my singling myself out and observing that I have a certain property. But Evans insists that to *think* such a thought I must have a concept of myself. Now that we appreciate that Evans’s arguments depend on the assumption of the generality constraint, we can begin see why he thinks it essential that I have a concept of myself. My being able to think that I am in front of a tree also involves my being able to think that a is in front of a tree, that b is in front of a tree etc. In the same way, to be able to think of the properties of being breast-fed, or being dragged unconscious through the streets of Chicago, I must be able to think of other objects having such properties. For this to be the case, the subject:

...must conceive of himself, the subject to whom the property is ascribed, as a being of the kind which he envisages when he simply envisages *someone* seeing a tree – that is to say, a persisting subject of experience, located in space and time. (Evans, (1982), p232)

According to Evans, both sides of the generality constraint work together to show that I must have a concept of myself. I must have the ability to determine what kind of thing I am, and it is this which enables me to single myself out, from among other objects, and over time.

I want to show that Evans's arguments do not succeed. Not only do they not show that I must think of myself as a physical object, but they cannot prove that I must have a concept of myself at all. One way of demonstrating this would be to show that the premise of the generality constraint is false. Evans does not argue for the constraint; he just takes it to be a true observation of the way that we think – “there is one fundamental constraint that must be observed” (1982, p100). Although I myself am doubtful as to the truth of the generality constraint, I know it is held sacred by many philosophers.¹ I want my thesis that I can think ‘I’-thoughts with no concept of myself to be as robust as possible, and so would prefer not to ground it on a rejection of the generality constraint. I think that it is possible to show that, even if the generality constraint is true, I do not need a concept of myself to think ‘I’-thoughts. I will explain this in the next two sections.

2

In this section I want to look at the argument from the first side of the generality constraint. Specifically, I will examine the argument that if I can think *a* is *F*, then because this means there is a constraint of generality on the way I can think about object *a* (I can also think *a* is *G*, *a* is *H* etc.), I must either have a fundamental Idea of *a* or know what it would be for my Idea of *a* to equate to a fundamental Idea. Thus I must either know what distinguishes *a* from all other objects, or I must have the capacity to work this out. Evans's initial discussion of the generality constraint does not seem to imply that my thought about objects must involve the fundamental level of thought in this way. The requirement seems only to be that:

...someone who thinks that John is happy and that John is sad exercises on two occasions a single ability, the ability to think of, or think about, John. (1982, p101)

As yet, all this seems to commit us to is that if I can think a thought such as that John is happy, I can also think other things about John. For example, I can think that John

¹ Although for an argument against the generality constraint see Charles Travis (1994).

is hot and that John is tired if I can think of the properties of being tired and being hot. The generality constraint, as it is stated here, insists only that understanding a thought that *a* is *F* is a result of two *abilities*; the ability to think of *a*, and the ability to think of the property *F*. There is no reason why this ability must involve having *concepts*; no reason yet why I must be able to determine the criterion of identity of John and thereby single him out. The ability – “the subject’s understanding of ‘a’...which originated in a definite way” (p101) – need, so far as the generality constraint is concerned, involve no form of knowledge at all. This state could, for example, be entirely due to a causal relation between the object thought about and the thinking subject, with no knowledge of what distinguishes the object John (say) on the subject’s part.² To show that this ability of thinking about John requires that I have a concept of John, I seem to need an additional argument. This additional argument could be along the lines of the reasons why I seem to need a concept of an object to be able to refer to it, as discussed in Chapter 1. To recap, to be able to think about John I must intend my thought to be about John rather than an alternative object. I need to be able to single John out. In order to be able to do this, I must know what distinguishes John from other objects. To know this, I must know John’s criterion of identity. Knowledge of this is what is involved in having a concept of John. If we accept this argument we can then go on to argue that because my ability to think about John involves my having a concept of John, having a concept of John is involved in all my thoughts about John, and these thoughts conform to the generality constraint. But without this additional step, there seems no reason yet to think that I must have a concept of an object. If the argument in this additional step does not apply to thoughts about ourselves, as I believe – because we do not need to intend to think about ourselves rather than an alternative object, as we cannot be mistaken that we are referring to ourselves – the argument from the first side of the generality constraint does not seem to show that I need a concept of myself.

Although Evans does not argue in quite this way, I think that his argument to the fundamental level of thought also depends on an additional premise, and cannot be established just from the premise of the generality constraint. It depends on an additional premise about how we must think about objects, and as in the above argument, I do not think this assumption applies to our thoughts about ourselves. Let me explain this in more detail. Evans starts by developing a metaphysical picture – the world is divided into objects which are distinguished from one another in fundamental ways. For physical objects, what distinguishes them from one another

² see, for example, Evans’s discussion on the *Photograph Model* (1982) Chs 3 and 4

is that they occupy a certain spatial position at a certain time, and that they are a particular kind of object; their position and kind is the fundamental ground of difference of a physical object. From this metaphysical picture Evans then moves on to a discussion of the way in which we can think about objects which are in the world. We have a fundamental Idea of an object if we think of it as the possessor of the fundamental ground of difference which it in fact possesses, so a fundamental Idea of a physical object involves knowing what kind the object is and knowing its location. Thus by definition, having a fundamental Idea of an object involves having distinguishing knowledge of it, and being able to discriminate it from all other objects. So far there does not seem much to object to. It is plausible that the world is divided into objects in such a way, and that we can think of an object as the possessor of its fundamental ground of difference. But Evans then goes on to argue that fundamental Ideas – the fundamental level of thought – play a central role in our thought even when we are thinking about an object without a fundamental Idea of it. Thus all our thoughts about objects must involve knowledge of their criteria of identity. It is this which I do not think can be established just from the premise of the generality constraint.

Evans first explores general thoughts about kinds of things, looking at what it is to think that some *G* is *F*, where *G* is a conception of an object in Anscombe's sense – e.g. a city, a river, a man (e.g. see Evans, (1982), p108). He thinks that the way in which we can single out one *G* from among other objects must enter into every thought we have about a *G*. This is because of two premises. The first is that there can be no thought about objects of a certain kind which does not presuppose the idea of one object of that kind. It is not entirely clear that this is true, but I will accept it for now. Perhaps one might argue that it is indeed the case that we cannot have general thoughts without particular thoughts. The second premise is that the idea of one object of a certain kind must involve knowledge of the criterion of identity of objects of that kind – the way in which objects of that kind are differentiated from one another and from all other things. This is the premise with which I have difficulty. Evans does not appear to give any reason as to why I must be able to distinguish the object I am thinking about from other objects, and why being able to do this involves knowing the criterion of identity of the object. It is tempting to think that he must be appealing to Russell's principle – that to have a thought about an object I must know which object it is about which I am thinking. Yet Evans explicitly says that what he takes an Idea of an object to involve is described “initially quite independently of Russell's principle” (p106). I am not here criticizing

Evans's notion of a fundamental Idea, which by definition involves knowing the criterion of identity of the object thought about, and being able to single it out from all others. Instead, my problem is with his contention that if an Idea of an object is not fundamental it still must involve a fundamental Idea; that if one has an adequate Idea of an object one must be able to come to know the way that the object can be differentiated from all others, and that all Ideas are either fundamental or adequate. If Evans is not appealing to Russell's principle to show that an adequate Idea also involves the fundamental level of thought, perhaps he just has the intuitions which I said were intuitively plausible in Chapter One, and above in this chapter: that to think of an object I must intend to be thinking about one object rather than another, and I must be able to come to know what distinguishes the object in order to be able to fulfil my intention. However, this is a separate argument which cannot be established from the generality constraint alone.

Evans's conclusion is that to be able to think a general existential thought of the form 'Some G is F ' one must have "a general conception of the way in which G s are distinguished from one another and from all other things" (p109). This is knowledge of what it is for an arbitrary proposition of the form [δ is F] to be true, where δ is a fundamental Idea.³ One need not have a fundamental Idea of a particular G – for example, when thinking that some horse is F one need not have an Idea of a horse at a specific location – but one does need to know what it would be for a particular G to be F – e.g. one must have the capacity to distinguish horses from other objects by their kind and spatio-temporal location. Evans then extends the conclusion reached for general thoughts to particular thoughts about an object a , in cases where we do not have a fundamental Idea of a . As a is of a certain kind, a G say, a thought about a that it is F is also the thought of some G 's being F , and so by the arguments above, which are supposed to show that such general thoughts involve the fundamental level of thought, he concludes that the thought that a is F must also be conceived to be true "in virtue of the truth of some proposition of the form [δ is F]" (p109). The difference in the particular case is that only one object will make this thought true, and so only one fundamental Idea is determined by the Idea a . Because a subject must know what it is for his Idea of an object a to be equated to a fundamental Idea of an object, "a link is set up between his Idea a and his entire repertoire of conceptual knowledge" (p112). This enables our thought to fulfil the generality constraint as regards thinking about object a .

³ I will return later to exploring what this knowledge might consist of in specific instances

Evans is correct that an appeal to the fundamental level of thought can show how our thought can conform to the first side of the generality constraint. But this does not appear to be the only way that our thought could so conform. My ability to think 'I'-thoughts may be an ability to refer to myself without having any knowledge of the kind of thing I am. Still, this ability would enable me to think I am *F*, I am *G*, I am *H*, etc. and so conform to the first side of the generality constraint, as my ability would be the same in each thought. The argument that this ability must involve my having a concept of myself seems to rely on either the suppressed premise of Russell's principle or on the weaker intuition that to think of an object I must intend to be thinking about one object rather than another, and to fulfil this intention I must be able to discriminate that object from others. But as I have argued at the end of Chapter 1, this argument, while plausible for objects which are independent of us, need not apply to thoughts about ourselves. In my thought about myself, I do not need to be able to single myself out from among other objects, because I cannot be mistaken about the object of my thought. Thus I do not see how the requirement for the fundamental level of thought can be established just from the generality constraint. Maybe this is not Evans's intention, but he does not seem to give any other argument for why to be able to think of a single object one must be able to distinguish it from all other objects. Perhaps, like many, he just finds this intuitively obvious, but as I have argued and will argue, it does not seem obvious in the case of our 'I'-thoughts. Thus I do not think the argument from the first side of the generality constraint can show that to refer to myself I must have a concept of myself.

Perhaps if we look at the 'I-concept' Evans believes we must each have of ourselves we can gather more support for his view that every Idea must be a fundamental Idea or an adequate Idea (and thus that every Idea involves the fundamental level of thought). By exploring the notion of the 'I'-Idea we may be able to determine why it is we are supposed to be able to determine our criterion of identity and so be able to single ourselves out from other objects, without appeal to the suppressed premise of Russell's principle, or the weaker version of what I suggest is required to intend to refer to one object rather than another. Is my 'I'-Idea supposed to be a fundamental Idea or a merely adequate Idea? On the face of it, it seems it cannot be a fundamental Idea. I surely do not need to be able to know my exact temporal and spatial location to be able to think 'I'-thoughts. Even if Evans is correct that my kinaesthetic and proprioceptive senses give me knowledge of what kind of thing I am – a physical object as he supposes – I do not need to know my exact location (at a

time) and so do not need to know my fundamental ground of difference from all other objects to be able to think 'I'-thoughts. If my 'I'-Idea is not a fundamental Idea, is it an adequate Idea? If so, then I must know what it would be for an identity of the form $[I = \delta_i]$ to be true, where δ_i is a fundamental identification of a person. This means that although to think about myself I do not need to know my fundamental ground of difference, I must have the capacity to work out what this is. Evans believes I do have this capacity because I have the practical capacity to locate myself objectively in space, manifested in my ability to find my way about. I have this ability because I know how to equate my egocentric space (at a particular time) – my thoughts of things and places as being here, to the left, to the right, etc. – with a cognitive map of the world which I possess. This cognitive map of the world is supposed to be objective – e.g. I may think of a certain part of London by thinking of how Warren Street Station is related to Goodge Street and Euston Stations, Tottenham Court Road, and the Post Office Tower. This cognitive map is objective because it is not dependent on where I am, it just involves relations between other objects. Because I have the capacity to locate myself in an objective cognitive map of the world – e.g. I know what it is to think 'here is Warren Street Station' – I know what it would be to equate my (adequate) 'I'-Idea with a fundamental Idea of a person; a physical object at a certain time and space.

However, there may be something problematic with this fundamental identification of a place on which the fundamental identification of a person seems to depend. As McDowell points out in Appendix 3 to Chapter 7 of Evans's work, there still seems to be something egocentric in my fundamental Idea of a place. When I think of a place using my cognitive map, I am supposed to be thinking of a place objectively:

Each place is represented in the same way as every other; we are not forced, in expressing such thinking, to introduce any 'here' or 'there. (Evans (1982), p152)

A fundamental identification of a place is supposed to be identified by its relations to the objects in a frame of reference which makes up my cognitive map – as we saw in the example above I may identify Warren Street station by its relation to other tube stations and the Post Office Tower. But this frame of reference involves objects in the world, and these are objects which *I* have encountered or heard about. So it does not appear that I am thinking of places completely objectively; I am thinking of them with reference to objects which (e.g.) I have seen. We need to relate the objects to me if we are to avoid reduplication examples – for example, there could be an equivalent of this part of London with all its landmarks elsewhere on the planet.

What is to show that I am thinking of the Warren Street Station I am intending to think of (rather than its twin elsewhere) if not its relation to objects *I* have encountered or heard about? There is an unavoidable egocentricity.⁴

This egocentricity could be avoided if my 'I'-Idea were itself a fundamental Idea. If my Idea of myself consisted in my knowledge of my fundamental ground of difference (at a time) then the fact that my cognitive map involves reference to objects which I have seen would not stop that map being objective – as any relation to me would be a relation to something I think of objectively. As my 'I'-Idea would be a fundamental Idea it would not be grounded in any use of my cognitive map. But the cognitive map is still important, because it enables me to have adequate Ideas of places. Because I have a fundamental Idea of myself, my Ideas of places could be adequate, because I would have the capacity to be able to locate the places objectively. I could do this because I can locate the places on the cognitive map, with references to places which I have seen, where this reference to me is to something which I can already locate objectively. But this does not seem to be consistent with the way that we think about ourselves, and it also does not seem to fit with Evans's discussion. Although he never explicitly says whether he believes the 'I'-Idea to be fundamental or merely adequate – possibly because he is well aware of the tension I am discussing – his discussion in Chapter 7 leads one to think that it must only be adequate. He says:

...I suggested that our knowledge of what it is for [I am δ_i] to be true, where δ_i is a fundamental identification of a person (conceived of, therefore, as an element of the objective spatial order), consists in our knowledge of what it is for us to be located at a position in space....I argued that this in turn can be regarded as consisting in a practical capacity to locate ourselves in space by means of exactly the kinds of patterns of reasoning that I have just described. ['I perceive such-and-such, such-and-such holds at *p*; so (probably) I am at *p*'; 'I perceive such-and-such, I am at *p*, so such-and-such holds at *p*'...] It is this capacity which enables us to make sense of the idea that we ourselves are elements in the objective order; and this is what is required for our thoughts about ourselves to conform to the Generality Constraint. (1982, p223)

Thus it seems that our 'I'-Idea is not a fundamental Idea, but is an adequate Idea which involves our capacity to find out where we are. But if our knowledge of

⁴ Evans's conception of objectivity is not the only one. For example, see Campbell (1984-85) who argues that a recognition based idea of an object from different viewpoints or times is "as *objective* an idea of a spatial object as it is possible to have" (p153). Such objective ideas are unlike Evans's fundamental Ideas in that they still involve some viewpoint – it is just "that there is no *one* viewpoint which one must occupy in order to have the idea" (p154). For other discussions of whether it is possible to have strictly objective ideas of objects from no viewpoint see e.g. Nagel (1986), Williams (1978), Moore (1997), Eilan (1997)

places is unavoidably egocentric, then we do not get a completely objective Idea of ourselves.

It may be that Evans thinks he can get around this. Certainly he does not want either our 'I'-Idea or our 'Here'-Idea to be prior to the other – 'here' is not defined by being where I am, and 'I' is not defined by being the object which is here. Perhaps he thinks that there is some way in which both can be primitive and we get the objectivity he believes to be so necessary. But it is unclear to me that this absolute objectivity can be achieved. Thus it may be that Russell's principle – that to be able to think about an object, I must know which object it is about which I am thinking – if interpreted as the requirement for an object that I must know its fundamental ground of difference, or be able to come to determine its fundamental ground of difference, can never be achieved. If 'I' is not a fundamental Idea, as it does not seem to be, then I may never know the absolute objective location of physical objects, and so, on some interpretations of Russell's principle, I will never know exactly which object it is about which I am thinking. Does this matter? I do not think so. Russell's principle, interpreted in such a manner, seems implausibly strict. Why should I need this absolute objectivity to be able to think about and refer to objects? Recall that my view in this thesis is that to be able to refer to an object which is independent of me I must intend to refer to one object rather than another, and so know how to distinguish that object from among a multitude of objects. Although Evans would disagree, I believe that it does not matter if this ability to distinguish the object will work only among the objects I encounter or hear about. In referring to an object, the whole point is to aim to refer to one object rather than another among the many objects I know. The crucial part of this ability is that I can fulfil my intention to think about one object among many others.

This exploration into the nature of the 'I'-Idea for Evans, far from giving independent reasons for thinking that I must have a concept of myself to think 'I'-thoughts, seems to show us that there is a real tension in Evans's account as to whether the fundamental level of thought can be truly objective. If this is the case, it shows us that Russell's principle, at least as interpreted by Evans, is problematic. There does not seem to be a parallel problem for the weaker constraint for reference which I have adopted – that to refer to an object I must intend to refer to one object among many, and so need to know what distinguishes it from the objects it is among. But as I have said many times, this intention to refer to one object among others does not seem relevant in self-reference, as I cannot be mistaken that I am referring to

myself. So the conclusion of this section is that the argument from the first side of the generality constraint, and an independent investigation into so-called 'I'-ideas, cannot show us that to think 'I'-thoughts we must have an 'I'-concept. If anything, pushing the notion of fundamental and adequate Ideas as far as it will go supports the view that after all there is something special about 'I'-thoughts.

3

Let us see whether the argument from the second side of the generality constraint to the conclusion that I must have a concept of myself fares any better. Recall that the second side of the generality constraint is the requirement that if I can think I am *F*, I must also be able to think *a* is *F*, *b* is *F*, *c* is *F* for certain objects which I can think about. This was supposed to show that I must think of myself as being the same kind of thing as objects *a*, *b*, *c* etc.

Evans's argument has its foundations in an argument put forward by Strawson (1959), in *Individuals* Chapter 3, and I think it is instructive to look at Strawson's arguments first. Strawson is in fact concerned with trying to refute dualism, but the part of his argument on which I wish to focus is where he attempts to explain how we self-ascribe experiences and sensations etc.; in other words, how we are able to think (at least some) 'I'-thoughts. Strawson's first premise is

...it is a necessary condition of one's ascribing states of consciousness, experiences, to oneself, in the way that one does, that one should also ascribe them, or be prepared to ascribe them, to others who are not oneself. (Strawson, (1959), p99).

In order to be able to ascribe such states of consciousness to others he thinks we need to be able to pick out and identify these others. A condition of this being possible is that the individuals concerned, *including myself*, should be of a certain unique type; we must be able to ascribe *both* states of consciousness, and bodily characteristics to these individuals. Why should this be the case? Strawson says that we cannot identify others if we can identify them *only* as subjects of experience and possessors of states of consciousness. We may think we would be able to do this indirectly, through identifying the individuals' bodies, and then indirectly identifying 'pure' subjects of experience related to this body – but really, how would we be able to do this? Strawson thinks it could only be by understanding that *my* experiences stand in a special relation to a body, and then proceeding by analogy. But we could only know this if we knew how to self-ascribe experiences, which, from the initial premise, we can only know if we can also ascribe such experiences to others. Therefore, in order to be able to self-ascribe experiences and states of consciousness

(think 'I'-thoughts), I must have the concept of a person (which Strawson believes to be logically primitive) – an individual to whom both states of consciousness and corporeal characteristics can be ascribed – be able to pick out other people, and be able to think of myself as a person.

I first want to focus on the initial premise of Strawson's argument. This premise may seem puzzling. Why should it be a condition of being able to think 'I'-thoughts that I can ascribe the same experiences, feelings, sensations, intentions etc. to others? To appreciate why Strawson says this it helps to place his argument in its original context and so to understand the opponents at whom it is targeted. In the first part of Chapter 3 of *Individuals*, Strawson is arguing against a 'no-ownership' view of experiences, which he ascribes to Wittgenstein (in *Philosophical Investigations* and also attributed to Wittgenstein by Moore in his 'Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-33') and possibly to Schlick. This is the view that in fact there is no owner of my states of consciousness – that when I appear to ascribe an experience, thought, feeling etc. to myself, really the thought has no object as its referent. Strawson believes the 'no-ownership' position to be incoherent, as he thinks that we cannot eliminate the *my*, in 'my states of consciousness, experiences, thoughts, feelings etc.'. He thinks that such states of consciousness owe their identity to the identity of the person whose states or experiences they are; that when I think 'I'-thoughts I genuinely ascribe my thoughts, feelings etc. to an object – myself. Understanding this puts us in a better position to understand Strawson's first premise. Strawson thinks that the 'no-ownership' view implies that when we ascribe experiences to others we do so on a different basis from the way we ascribe experiences to ourselves. For example, we might judge that someone else is in pain by observing their behaviour, but just *know* that we are in pain. As Wittgenstein suggests, saying 'I am in pain' could just be the verbal equivalent of a groan of pain:

“When I say 'I am in pain', I do not point to a person who is in pain, since in a certain sense I have no idea *who* is.” And this can be given a justification. For the main point is: I did not say that such-and-such a person was in pain, but “I am.....” Now in saying this I don't name any person. Just as I don't name anyone when I *groan* with pain. Though someone else sees who is in pain from the groaning. (Wittgenstein (1953), s404).

Strawson thinks that, in opposition to this, we must use predicates in exactly the same sense when the subject is another as when the subject is myself.

Suppose, with Strawson, that the no-ownership position is incoherent, and that my 'I'-thoughts do refer to the object which I am. Must I then use predicates in the same

sense when the subject is another as when the subject is myself? Strawson considers the possibility that I may still ascribe my own experiences differently. He assumes that when we ascribe experiences to others we must identify the person who is having the experience in some way, and ascribe the experience to them:

For surely there can be a question of ascribing only if there is or could be a question of identifying that to which the ascription is made (1959, p100).

He thinks that it may *appear* that there is no need to identify ourselves when we think an 'I'-thought, but says we must

...remember that we *speak* primarily to others, for the information of others. In one sense, indeed, there is no question of my having to *tell who it is* who is in pain, when I am. In another sense, however, I may have to *tell who it is*, i.e. to let others know who it is (1959, p100).

This seems bizarre. It certainly does not explain why *I* would need to be able to pick out myself in thought and therefore use predicates in the same way in self-ascription as when I pick out others. I am interested in our capacity to think 'I'-thoughts, not only how we communicate such thoughts to others. My use of 'I' may indeed allow others to pick me out, but what does this show about how I self-ascribe predicates? Evans believes that Strawson is on the wrong track here, saying

Obviously, *thinking* of an object does not consist in getting oneself to think of the right object, But surely this cannot show that there is no such thing as thinking of an object, in a certain way, outside of communicative contexts. (Evans (1982), p208)

However, we might be rejecting Strawson's position too quickly. My ability to communicate 'I'-thoughts to others may not explain *why* I must use predicates in the same sense whether I am self-ascribing, or ascribing to others, and so may not explain *why* I need a concept of myself to be able to think 'I'-thoughts, but it might explain *how* I could have an 'I'-concept. What if other arguments show that I must have a concept of myself to be able to think 'I'-thoughts, and yet we find accounts of this concept implausible (e.g. Evans's 'I'-Idea, or a Cartesian concept of the self)? Strawson suggests that my concept of myself is deferential to other people's concept of me, in a similar way that certain of my concepts of objects I hear about via testimony may be deferential to the concepts of those who tell me about such objects.⁵ If it were shown that my 'I'-thoughts required that I have a concept of myself, I think this would be a very interesting line to pursue (Strawson himself does not develop it much further). However, I think that it is not necessary to proceed in this direction because none of the arguments shows that we need a self-concept to

⁵ e.g. see Chapter 1, Section 4 for discussion of this

think 'I'-thoughts, and there are convincing reasons for thinking that concepts are not necessary for self-reference.

As we certainly cannot start from the assumption that my 'I'-concept is dependent on others' concepts of me to show that I must understand predicates in the same sense, whether I self-ascribe them or ascribe them to others, are there other arguments which support this view? We have seen that Strawson holds this is a way of showing that the no-ownership position is incoherent, but surely it is possible that I am the same type as other people which I identify, without having to ascribe predicates in the same way in first and third person cases? It is not clear that he has managed to establish that we do understand such predicates in the same way. Strawson's main point is that *if* predicates are used with the same sense, then to understand the predicates I must have a concept of a person, and this involves knowing what kind of thing I am. Strawson tries to justify this by saying:

The main point here is a purely logical one: the idea of a predicate is correlative with that of a *range* of distinguishable individuals, of which the predicate can be significantly, though not necessarily truly, affirmed. (1959, p99, fn1)

We can see now that this is the same argument which Evans uses from the second half of the generality constraint. To be able to think of myself as having the properties of being breast-fed, or being in front of a tree, I must be able to think of others as having these properties. This is supposed to lead to the conclusion that I must understand what kinds of objects can have such properties, and so if I attribute such properties to myself in my 'I'-thoughts I must understand what kind of object I am. So Strawson's initial premise that I understand predicates in the same way when self-ascribed or ascribed to others is just one side of the generality constraint. Evans argues that this premise must be correct for my 'I'-thoughts, as otherwise I would not be able to think many 'I'-thoughts for which I have no evidence or memory – such as the thought that I was breast-fed. I can only understand this predicate by understanding how it applies to others, and I understand it in the same sense in my own case. As I have said that for the sake of argument I will assume that the generality constraint is correct throughout this chapter, I will not question Strawson's first premise any further.

So does the fact that if I can think that I am *F*, I can also think *a* is *F*, *b* is *F* etc. (where I understand *F* in the same way) lead to the conclusion that I must think of myself as being the kind of thing that can be *F*, and therefore think of myself as being the same kind of thing as *a* or *b*? Evans argues that if I am able to think of

others as having the psychological properties which I think of myself as having, then I must be able to think of persisting subjects of experience as having such properties, and I must thus think of myself, and others, as (persisting) subjects of experience. To a certain extent, I do not have a problem with this. If I can think I am *F*, *a* is *F*, *b* is *F*, etc. then I agree that I can think of myself as the kind of thing that can be *F* (although it is not obvious to me that I *must* think of myself in this way). But Evans wants to go further. He thinks the second side of the generality constraint shows that I must conceive of myself objectively, as a “persisting subject of experience, located in space and time” (1982, p232).⁶ Is this the case? Must I think of others as being of a certain kind (in particular, persisting subjects of experience, located in space and time), and if so, does it follow that I must think of myself in the same way? Strawson’s (1959) reasoning to this conclusion is that to ascribe experiences to others I must be able to pick them out, and I can only do this if I have a primitive concept of a person with both consciousness and corporeal characteristics. But I have already argued that this picture of reference, while plausible for reference to others, does not show us that we must think of ourselves in a particular way. It does not show us that we must have a concept of a person to pick ourselves out. And as I have just argued above, Strawson’s contention that we use ‘I’ to pick ourselves out for others does not show that we need a concept of ourselves, even if it might show how we could have a concept of ourselves, were it needed. Are there any new arguments which seem to show that I must think of myself as being of the same kind as others?

I think the answer to this question is positive. The argument from the second side of the generality constraint is an independent argument, and does not just depend on the assumption that I must pick myself out from among others. Therefore the considerations discussed in the previous section of this chapter are not yet enough to show that this argument to the conclusion that I must have a concept of myself can be dismissed. The point is not just that, in understanding I am *F*, *a* is *F*, *b* is *F* etc., I must be able to single out *a* and *b*, and therefore need to know what kind they are, but is that in understanding the predicate *F* I must know to what kind of objects it can be applied. To understand the predicate (e.g.) ‘*ξ* is tired’ I must know that it can be applied to persisting subjects of experience, located in space and time. Because I

⁶ One aspect which I do not discuss here is Evans’s argument in ‘Things Without the Mind’ (1980) that I must think of myself as a physical object, located in time and space, among other objects, in order to be able to think of other objects existing unperceived. As Cassam (1997) has argued, the most Evans seems to establish is that one must conceive of oneself as spatially located. This does not show that one must think of oneself as a physical object, or that one must have a concept of oneself.

apply this predicate to others and myself alike, in each case I must think of the object to which it is applied as a persisting subject of experience in this way. I therefore must think of myself in the same way as I think of others, and must have a concept of myself.

Does this argument work? Is it the case that to understand a predicate (which, *ex hypothesi* I understand in the same sense no matter to whom it is applied) I must know to what kind of object it can be applied? Are there not instances where I can apply predicates without appreciating exactly which objects they apply to? Dummett (1973) believes that there are occasions when we can do this; when we can understand what he terms *crude predications* such as ‘that is red’, without appreciating the criterion of identity of any object to which the predicate might apply. Our understanding consists in grasping the criterion of application for the predicate – grasping when it is true or false to apply it – but not in knowing any criteria of identity for any objects.⁷ So could it be the case that when I think the thought that *a* is *F* my understanding of ‘ ξ is *F*’ just involves grasping the criterion of application of the predicate, while any grasp of a criterion of identity for an object comes from my understanding of the name ‘*a*’? Thus in the case of the thought expressed by ‘I am *F*’, as I need no knowledge of a criterion of identity of an object (e.g. a self, or a human being) to understand ‘I’, no criterion of identity is involved in understanding the sentence. My grasp of the predicate ‘ ξ is *F*’ would only involve my grasp of its criterion of application, not any grasp of a criterion of identity of the objects to which it can apply.

However, Dummett thinks that the view I have just outlined gives us an over simple picture of how we are able to understand predicates. He says:

...the sense of a predicate is never given fully by knowing the criterion for the truth of crude predications made by means of it, if these are so understood that no particular criterion of identity is associated with the demonstratives they contain. It is true enough that coming to grasp the truth-conditions of crude predications, so understood, may be an important first stage in learning the sense of a predicate; but, if a knowledge of the sense of a predicate is to be adequate for the understanding of atomic sentences formed by means of it, it will be necessary also to grasp which criteria of identity the demonstratives in those crude predications may be taken as governed by. (Dummett (1973), p234)

⁷ Although for Dummett it would be misleading to talk of applying predicates here. Crude predications are not of subject-predicate form. See below for discussion.

Dummett's reasoning is that different predicates apply to different *kinds* of objects. He gives an example of the predicate 'ξ is dusty', which I may think I can understand just by appreciating its criterion of application. Yet we cannot apply the predicate 'ξ is dusty' to all kinds of things. I can say that a copy of a book is dusty, "but only facetiously could I say, 'War and Peace is dusty', since the name 'War and Peace', unlike, say, 'Your copy of War and Peace', determines the object referred to under a criterion of identity which makes the predicate 'ξ is dusty' inappropriate." (Dummett (1973), p234) The understanding of a criterion of identity is not just necessary to understand the name 'War and Peace' (and, according to Dummett, this name can be understood in two different ways, depending on which criterion of identity we associate with it). It is also necessary to understand the predicate, which involves knowing to what kinds of objects the predicate 'ξ is dusty' can be applied.

On Dummett's view, and also on Strawson's (1959), understanding a predicate such as 'ξ is *F*' involves appreciating what kind of object the predicate can be applied to. If I do not have this knowledge then my thought is not of subject-predicate form. It is instead a more basic level of thought which does not involve predicating attributes of objects, or reference to objects ('crude predications' in Dummett's terminology, 'feature placing' in Strawson's). To know what kind of object a predicate can apply to, I must be able to grasp the criteria of identity of the objects to which the predicate can apply. If this is correct then it means that to understand the predicate 'ξ is tired' I must know what objects the predicate 'ξ is tired' can apply to – I must know that it applies to living animals, say. Then it follows that one could argue that even if I can refer to myself without having any concept of what I am – because I do not need to pick myself out from among many objects as I cannot be mistaken as to what I am referring – I cannot justifiably ascribe any predicates to myself without appreciating my own criterion of identity. To think of myself as having any properties – which I clearly do all the time in my 'I'-thoughts – I must know what kind of thing can have such properties, and therefore must know what kind of thing I am. To understand the predicates I must know my criterion of identity, and as I know this, I have the ability to single myself out, from among other objects, and over time. Because of this, I have a concept of myself, and have the ability to single myself out from among others, even though this is not necessary for reference to myself. Strawson's, Evans's and Dummett's considerations appear to show that, contrary to my thesis, to self-ascribe properties and thus think 'I'-thoughts I must have a concept of myself.

There seem to be at least two ways in which we can resist such a conclusion, whilst retaining the assumption that the second side of the generality constraint is correct. The first response is to say that our 'I'-thoughts do not conform to the generality constraint as they are not of subject-predicate form. The second retort is to argue that Dummett's considerations do not after all show that we must know what kind of thing a predicate can be applied to in order to understand the predicate.

I do not wish to pursue the first response as it goes against a fundamental assumption that underlies all my work; that 'I' refers to an object. The first response is the view that if I can have the thought that I am tired without grasping my criterion of identity, then ' ξ is tired' in this case of self-ascription must be a crude predication, or, in Strawson's (1959) terminology, a feature-placing statement, and as such does not involve reference to an object. The ' ξ is tired' in 'I'-thoughts differs in meaning from the ' ξ is tired' which I apply to other objects on the basis of my grasp of their criteria of identity. In self-ascription I do not need to know to what kind of objects ' ξ is tired' can apply to in order to understand it – to think one does need to know this is to mistake the logical form of 'I'-thoughts, which are not of the form a is F as the grammatical form of sentences which express them may suggest. ' ξ is tired' in self-ascription, or better 'Tiredness!' is not a predicate at all. 'I' is just a dummy subject, like the 'It' in 'It is raining'. As I said in the introduction, I think this view is mistaken. My thought that I am tired (say) seems to share truth conditions with someone else's thought about me that she is tired; 'I' and 'she' both seem to refer to the object which I am, and the thoughts are both true if the object which I am is tired. Although there are *ad hoc* ways of accounting for this, whilst still allowing that 'I' does not refer, such a conclusion seems unnecessary. I believe that 'I' is a referring term. The thought that I am tired is of subject-predicate form; it entails $\exists x$ (x is tired) and contradicts $\forall x$ (x is not tired). 'I am tired' is true just in case the object which I am is tired. My argument is that my 'I'-thoughts do not involve a concept of myself, but this does not mean that the predicate in such thoughts is not applied to an object – myself.

The second line of attack is much more promising. I think that we can show that after all, we do not need to understand what kind of thing a predicate can be applied to in order to understand the predicate. Let us return to Dummett's reasoning concerning the sense of predicates. Why does he think that the grasp of the sense of a predicate involves knowledge of a criterion of identity? The point seems to be that

if we understand a predicate only by grasping its criterion of application (rather than also its criterion of identity) then

...we shall then find that the grasp of the sense of a predicate is an inadequate basis for a judgment of the truth-values of atomic sentences formed with it. (Dummett (1973), p233))

First of all, this has verificationist undertones. It is not clear that to understand a predicate I must be able to determine (or at least know what must be done in order to determine) the truth-value of a sentence containing it. Secondly, even if one accepts this condition, the reason why Dummett thinks predicates with which we associate only a criterion of application will not allow us determine the truth-value of sentences formed with them is linked to his picture of reality as an “amorphous lump” where objects are not ‘given’ to us. Recall from Chapter 1, Dummett’s (extreme) position that I must use my knowledge of an object’s criterion of identity in order to single out the object in the first place. I rejected this in favour of the view (more akin to Wiggins (1980) and Evans (1982)) that in many cases objects are indeed ‘given’ to us, and it is by their behaviour that we come to learn of in what their criterion of identity consists. It is still important that we have the ability to come to know what kind of thing the object is, so we can know how to distinguish it from among many other objects and hence fulfil our intention to refer to it, but reality is not an amorphous mass which can be divided up in many different ways. Dummett argues that in the sentence ‘*a* is dusty’, we do not just need a criterion of identity in our understanding of ‘*a*’, but also in our understanding of the predicate. This is because he says that the truth-value of the sentence cannot be given by the two sentences ‘That is *a*’ and ‘That is dusty’, accompanied by a pointing gesture, if the predicate does not involve a criterion of identity. The reason is that in the second sentence, without knowledge of a criterion of identity, we would not be singling any object out, and so not saying of any object that it is dusty. Thus, we would not be saying that ‘*a* is dusty’. The criterion of identity must come from somewhere, and Dummett thinks it is involved in the sense of the predicate. But if one holds the view of reference I have outlined, such a result does not seem to hold. Understanding ‘That is *a*’ and ‘That is dusty’ is the same as understanding ‘*a* is dusty’. No criterion of identity is needed to understand the predicate, although our ability to come to know the criterion of identity of the object from the way it is behaving is needed to single out the object using the demonstrative ‘that’.

It would be too quick to dismiss the argument from the second side of the generality constraint to the necessity of an ‘I’-concept just on the basis of a rejection of

Dummett's assumptions. There may be better reasons for thinking that my understanding of predicates requires that I have a concept of the object to which they can be applied. Campbell (1994) argues that in order to ascribe predicates to an object (rather than having just subjectless crude predications), I must think of the object in a certain way, and my use of the predicates must display a grasp of this way I must think about the object. In the case of 'I'-thoughts, Campbell's point is not that we need a concept of ourselves to pick ourselves out from among other objects in order to refer – he believes that the token-reflexive rule does all the work necessary for this. His point is instead that the way in which we use predicates – the judgements we make about ourselves and the consequences we draw from these judgements – must involve our thinking of the object we are in a certain way. First of all, our thoughts about objects, including our 'I'-thoughts, must conform to the second side of the generality constraint; if we can think *a* is *F* or I am *F*, we must be able to think *b* is *F*, *c* is *F* etc. As yet, this just seems to be a statement about what we need to be able to do if our thoughts are to refer to objects. We can concede that our 'I'-thoughts are like this, but deny this shows us anything about how one must think of oneself. However, Campbell thinks not only must our thoughts about objects conform to the second side of the generality constraint, but, if we are to have referential thoughts, we must also think of the object as *internally causally connected*, and as a *common cause*.

We think of an object as *internally causally connected* if we understand that its condition at any one time is causally dependent on its previous condition, and we think of an object as a *common cause* if we think of it as causing many different reactions, one and the same object involved in causing all the reactions (Campbell (1994), p139-49). Campbell believes that if our thoughts are to refer to an object, our ascription of predicates to the object must display a grasp of the object's causal structure. This is linked with our ability to determine the criterion of identity of an object, if one accepts the picture of reference which I have outlined. Recall that we are able to determine the criterion of identity of an object which we identify demonstratively because we can observe the way it is behaving; we see how its later condition depends on its earlier condition, and how it interacts with other objects. So if we think of an object as internally causally connected and as a common cause we should be able to come to know its criterion of identity and thus have a concept of it. If Campbell is correct that to refer to an object we must think of it as causally structured in this way, it seems we need to have a concept of the object for reference, even if this concept is not required for singling out. Even though the token-reflexive

rule allows us to refer to ourselves, still a concept is required for our 'I'-thoughts to refer to the object we are.

Why is it that we need to think of objects as internally causally connected and as a common cause? Campbell answers:

The reason is that by meeting this condition, we delineate in thought what we are thinking about. This is how we have any access to the identity conditions of the thing we are thinking about. (Campbell (1994) p151)

Campbell's reasoning here is akin to the motivation underlying Strawson's account, discussed at the beginning of this section. Recall that Strawson wants to show that the 'no-ownership' view of 'I'-thoughts is incoherent. Similarly, Campbell's discussion can be seen as a response to the challenge put forward by the transcendental solipsist. The transcendental solipsist argues that I am not an object in the world, but I am the limit of the world, or I am the world. Campbell replies that the bases on which I make judgements about myself, and the consequences which I draw from these judgements, show that I am an object in the world. In a way, this is exactly what I want to argue. We can meet the solipsistic challenge by demonstrating that we reason in ways which show that we are referring to an object.⁸ When I think about myself, I reason as though I am referring to an object; a single thing. For example, I can think 'I am *F*, I am *G*, hence I am *F* and *G*', and I can reason 'I am *F*, hence $\exists x$ (*x* is *F*)'. This is how we reason about objects – we think of one thing, in the world, that it has various properties. But Campbell wants to go further than just this. He thinks that to be able to reason and think about objects in such a way we must meet the causal structure condition. Why?

Campbell seems to think that the *only* way I can engage in such patterns of reasoning, and thus show that I am thinking about an object, is if I meet this causal structure condition and think of the object as internally causally connected and as a common cause. His argument for this is based on giving an example of when we think of an ordinary physical thing, such as a table or a tree (1994, p139). He appeals to our intuitions, and says that in such cases, our grounds for making judgements about the object – for example, our observing the tree – and the conclusions which we draw about the object – e.g. that the tree is partly green, the

⁸ I appreciate that this is a strong hypothesis and one which has not been justified here. It may be that to answer the solipsist we must show that our inferential abilities must be grounded in something more fundamental – this is Campbell's proposal when he insists that we must meet the causal structure condition. It is compatible with my position to show that some further condition must be met; this does not show that Campbell's causal structure condition is the only option.

tree is partly brown, hence the tree is partly green and partly brown – must involve our understanding how the condition of the object depends on its condition earlier, and our understanding how the object can affect other things. Now perhaps Campbell is correct that an appreciation of an object's causal structure may be a *sufficient* condition for having the patterns of thought which show that we are referring to an object in the world. But there is nothing in his argument which shows that thinking of an object in such a way is *necessary* to reason about a single object. I would argue that in my 'I'-thoughts, to engage in such patterns of reasoning as 'I am F, I am G, hence I am both F and G' etc. I do not need to think of myself as meeting the causal structure condition. I can have an intention towards the object which I am, and apply predicates to this object, without having to think of it in any particular way. I do not need to think of it as causally structured in order to be able to think of a single thing. By citing experimental evidence, Campbell tries to show how it is that our 'I'-thoughts can meet the causal structure condition at both a physical and psychological level. However, even though it may be the case that I can think of myself in such a way, he nowhere justifies the argument that I *must* think of myself like this in order to think 'I'-thoughts which refer to myself.

I therefore do not think that the argument from the second side of the generality constraint fares any better than that from the first side. Neither can show that we must have a concept of ourselves in order to think 'I'-thoughts. In both cases the arguments build in assumptions about how we must think about objects – either to be able single the object out, or to be able to make judgements about and ascribe predicates to the object – which are irrelevant to the way we think about ourselves. My thought that I am *F* may conform to the generality constraint, but this does not show me anything about how I must think about myself. So how do I refer to myself in my 'I'-thoughts? I suggest that I just need to intend to refer to the object which I am, and as I am subject and object of this thought I can achieve this without having to distinguish myself from among other objects. However, Anscombe (1975) has convinced many that there is something circular and insufficient about such an account of first person reference. To show that this is not the case I will now examine her argument in detail.

Chapter 3

Anscombe's circularity argument

1

In this chapter I focus on Anscombe's initial argument in 'The First Person' (1975) that an account of 'I' in terms of the token-reflexive rule – that 'I' refers to whoever speaks, writes or thinks it with the intention of referring to himself – is circular, and hence that if 'I' is a referring term it must have a sense, the grasp of which involves having a concept of what we are.¹ My conclusion is that her argument does not show that the token-reflexive rule is circular and hence does not show that we must have a concept of ourselves to think referring 'I'-thoughts. Instead, her argument presupposes that in all singular thought to have a thought about an object one must have a concept of the object; for her, this involves knowing what kind the object is and thereby knowing its criterion of identity. If one believes that the reasons why concepts are required for reference do not apply in the case of 'I'-thoughts, then her argument cannot establish that the token-reflexive rule is circular. In the third section of this chapter I look at Rumfitt's evaluation of Anscombe's argument, in his article 'Frege's Theory of Predication: An Elaboration and Defense, with Some New Applications' (1994) where he also concludes, like me,² that

...in forming the intention to refer to himself, a speaker need not form an intention to refer to such and such, where the speaker could (if called upon to do so) pick out such and such from among its own kind. (Rumfitt (1994), p635)

However, unlike my conclusion, his is not based on an analysis of why concepts are usually required for reference, and a rejection of this picture of reference for our thoughts about ourselves. On his view, our intention to self-refer is not an intention towards an object at all, and so a concept is not required. On my view, self-reference is an intention towards an object – ourselves – but we need no concept to single ourselves out. Rumfitt tries to explain our use of 'I' as an *intention* to perform an *act* of self-reference; according to him, this act can be specified without reference to any object.³ Rumfitt's account draws heavily on the theories of intention and acts which he develops, and I do not think these can provide the support his account needs. My purpose in this chapter is both negative and positive. Firstly it is to demonstrate that Anscombe's argument does not show, contrary to my thesis, that one must have a concept of oneself in order to be able to think 'I'-thoughts, and that Rumfitt's attempt

¹ This argument can be found on pages 136-7 in Yourgrau (1990).

² And in fact, like Anscombe, although both Rumfitt and I believe that 'I' is a referring term.

³ This will be explained further below, in the third section of this chapter.

to undercut her argument while still conforming to her picture of reference does not succeed. Secondly, it is to reinforce the view that self-reference requires no concept of one's self. To refer to an object which is independent of me – to have an intention towards that object – I must have a concept of it to be able to single it out from among others and fulfil my referential intention. In self-reference, although I also have an intention towards an object, and so in a sense single it out, I do not need to be able to single it out from *among* others. I cannot be mistaken in my act of reference.

2

Anscombe's argument is framed in terms of our use of the word 'I' in language, rather than our ability to think 'I'-thoughts. From this starting point, she argues that knowing the token-reflexive rule – that 'I' refers to whoever speaks or writes it with the intention of referring to themselves – cannot be all that is involved in being able to use and understand 'I'. Instead there must be some 'deeper' level at which we are able to refer to ourselves in thought. 'I' must have a sense; we must have a conception of ourselves where we can pick out the object which we are. We saw in Chapter 1 that for Anscombe, having a conception of an object involves knowledge of what kind of thing the object is, and thereby knowing its criterion of identity. This knowledge enables us to reidentify the object over time, and to single out the object from among other objects. Most of the rest of her paper, after this initial argument, is dedicated to showing that there is no such conception which can do this job in the case of 'I'-thoughts; because of this she concludes that as the token-reflexive rule is not sufficient for reference, and there is no available conception to enable our mind to 'latch onto' the object, then 'I' does not refer at all. If her initial argument is correct it would seem to show that *if* 'I' is a referring expression, as I believe it to be, then we *cannot* express 'I'-thoughts in language without having a concept of ourselves in thought, and being able to pick out the object which we are. As I wish to show that we need no concept of ourselves to think 'I'-thoughts or to express these thoughts in language I need to refute her argument.

Why does Anscombe believe that knowledge of the token-reflexive rule cannot be enough to explain how we are able to use the term 'I'? Before looking at her argument it may be instructive to look at an example where we use the word 'I'. Consider the case when I say 'I am happy.' When I use this sentence to express an 'I'-thought I know that I am using the word 'I' and that this term refers to me. But then the question arises of how I know that *I* am using the term. This may be clearer

if we compare this to our understanding of the use of 'I' by other people when they use it to express 'I'-thoughts.⁴ Suppose we hear someone else say 'I am happy', expressing an 'I'-thought. Although in one sense we understand the meaning of the words, it is certainly arguable that we do not really understand what has been said unless we know *who* is happy. We may not know very much about the person, but we can at least demonstratively identify them as 'that person who uttered the sentence containing 'I'.' What would this knowledge be in our own case, when we use 'I' to refer to ourselves? It does not seem that it can just be knowledge of the token-reflexive rule, as this would lead to a regress, with us still needing ultimately to know who it was who expressed the token of 'I'. This suggests that some deeper understanding of 'I', perhaps in thought, is required. Perhaps we identify ourselves in the same way as we might identify other people; demonstratively, as 'that person who thought the 'I'-thought.' But then we must ask, how do we identify ourselves in this way? We are able to identify other people corporeally; through knowledge of their physical criterion of identity we are able to single them out from among others. We can think of other people as physical objects among other objects, moving around the world, interacting with other objects, talking etc. This leads some to the conclusion that we must also have a way of picking out ourselves; either as physical objects, as we seem to do with other people, or if this does not work, then as some kind of psychological object. In either case we must know what kind of thing we are to be able to single ourselves out, and so to be able to use 'I' to refer to ourselves.

One response to this, and indeed my immediate response, is that in my own case I obviously know who is expressing the 'I'-thought. I know that it is me thinking and speaking – I cannot be mistaken in this – and I do not need any further knowledge of what kind of object I am to be able to single myself out and ground my 'I'-thought. Yet the uncomfortable feeling lingers that there is something circular in this account. I know that when I use 'I' to express 'I'-thoughts I use it to refer to myself. But what is this 'myself'? This is where Anscombe's argument comes into play. As she points out, I can intentionally refer to myself without realizing that I am referring to myself. For example, it is quite conceivable that I could intentionally refer to Jennifer Taylor whilst reading out a report, but be ignorant of the fact that I am Jennifer Taylor – perhaps having forgotten that I changed my name to Taylor when I married. Although in this case I am referring to myself, I do not seem to be doing so *self-consciously*. There appears to be something additional to the token-reflexive rule when I use 'I' to express 'I'-thoughts which enables me to refer to myself *self-*

⁴ Campbell (1994) does this on p122-124

consciously. This additional knowledge which I lack in the example is that *I am Jennifer Taylor*, and Anscombe does not believe that this knowledge can be expressed without the use of 'I'. Thus she thinks that the 'myself' in the token-reflexive rule – *I use 'I' to refer intentionally to myself* – if able to explain self-conscious first person reference rather than just non-first person reflexive reference, can only be explained in terms of 'I'. This makes this explanation of our capacity to use 'I' viciously circular.

Because of this argument that the token-reflexive rule as explanation of the meaning of 'I' is circular, Anscombe then goes on to say:

If that is right, the explanation of the word 'I' as 'the word which each of us uses to speak of himself' is hardly an explanation! At least, it is no explanation if that reflexive has to be explained in terms of 'I'.....*We seem to need a sense to be specified for this quasi-name 'I'....we have not got this sense just by being told which object a man will be speaking of, whether he knows it or not, when he says 'I'....We have a right to ask what he knows; if 'I' expresses a way its object is reached by him, what Frege called an 'Art des Gegebenseins', we want to know what that way is and how it comes about that the only object reached in that way by anyone is identical with himself.* (1975, p137, my emphasis).

As we saw in Chapter 1, Anscombe's understanding of what is needed to grasp the sense of a referring expression draws heavily on the notion of knowledge, involving knowledge of what *type* of object the referent of the term must be. I modified Anscombe's position slightly, drawing on work from Wiggins (1980) and Evans (1982). What is (normally) important for reference to an object is that we have the ability to determine the criterion of identity of the object, which we can do from information from the object. Anscombe believes that her requirements for reference cannot be met in the case of 'I'-thoughts, and eventually concludes that 'I' does not refer. I think she would also argue that the weaker criteria also cannot be met – we do not have the ability to determine what kind of thing we are. Most of the argument of her paper is dedicated to showing that if we are to come to know what kind of thing we are – and could do so even while amnesiac and in a sensory deprivation tank – then we could only know we are an Ego, which she takes to be absurd.

Let us review Anscombe's argument in more detail. Why exactly is the token-reflexive rule not thought to explain how we can understand 'I', and why, if this rule is not sufficient, is the conclusion that we therefore need a 'conception' to be specified for 'I', if it is to refer? I think that the answers to these two questions are based on the same thing – that Anscombe assumes that in order to understand any

referring expression we must grasp its sense, which for her involves having some sort of discriminating knowledge of the object by which we can pick out the object referred to. To see this, let us look at the first part of her argument. In this, she is arguing that the ‘himself’ in ‘I’ is the word each one uses in speaking intentionally of himself’ cannot be what we would think of as the ordinary reflexive pronoun. She says:

Consider: ‘Smith realizes (fails to realize) the identity of an object he calls ‘Smith’ with himself’. If the reflexive pronoun there is the ordinary one, then it specifies for us who frame or hear the sentence an object, whose identity with the object he calls ‘Smith’ Smith does or doesn’t realize: namely the object designated by our subject word ‘Smith’. (1975, p137)

This, I think, is correct.⁵ In understanding this third-person sentence we understand that the word ‘himself’ picks out the same referent as the subject term ‘Smith’. We might well use this third person sentence to report our hearing of a first-person utterance by Smith; perhaps ‘I am (not) Smith’ or (more unlikely) ‘Smith is (not) myself’. In hearing the words ‘I’ or ‘myself’ it is true that we, as listeners could pick out the speaker; we ‘know who’ the speaker is. We have a concept of the speaker, as a physical object, which we could reidentify over time, and single out from among other objects. Anscombe continues, trying to explain why treating ‘himself’ as the ordinary reflexive in this way should be a problem:

But that does not tell us what identity Smith himself realizes (or fails to realize). For, as Frege held, there is no path back from reference to sense; any object has many ways of being specified, and *in this case, through the peculiarity of the construction, we have succeeded in specifying an object (by means of the subject of our sentence) without specifying any conception under which Smith’s mind is supposed to latch on to it.* For we don’t want to say ‘Smith does not realize the identity of Smith with Smith.’ (1975, p137, my emphasis).

The problem seems to be that although we can understand the sentence in third-person terms, it gives us no indication of what, in first-person terms, it is that Smith *knows*. It does not explain how Smith manages to pick himself out. But the assumption already underlying this is that if Smith thinks, in the first person, ‘Smith is (is not) myself’ he must grasp the sense of the word ‘myself’, and therefore possess a concept of himself which enables him to pick out the object which he is, and which explains the way his mind ‘latches’ on to this object. Then, to understand the sentence, he must also be able to pick out the object which is named Smith (perhaps only by description as ‘the object named Smith’) and either realize or not realize that this object is the same as himself (the object which he has picked out

⁵ Although see below in my discussion on Rumfitt for another way of understanding the pronoun.

through having a concept of himself). Because the ordinary reflexive pronoun gives us no idea of what this concept could be, Anscombe concludes that the reflexive in this case must be a special sort of reflexive pronoun; one that can only be explained in terms of 'I'. Hence she concludes that the token-reflexive rule cannot explain anything.

To an extent I think that Anscombe is right. 'I do not realize the identity of Smith with myself' does mean the same as 'I do not realize I am Smith'. 'Myself' and 'I' refer to the same object, whatever that may be.⁶ But that does not necessarily mean that the rule 'I use 'I' to refer to myself' is circular. I agree that this rule just means the same as 'I use 'I' to refer to the object which I am.' But I think this only seems problematic if one is in the grip of a theory which insists that to refer to an object one must have a concept of the object; one must be able to come to know the criterion of identity of the object, and use this knowledge to single it out from among other objects – obviously that is not explained by the rule. It is this same belief that to be able to refer to an object we need a concept of it which also leads one to search for a sense of 'I', and to explain how it is that we can really have discriminating knowledge of ourselves – to know what it is which distinguishes us from other objects. I think that the mistake arises by attempting to explain our capacity for first-person thought in the same way that we treat our understanding of what other people say. If we hear Smith say 'Smith is not myself', then we know that we, as listeners, can pick out the person called Smith by description (again, perhaps only 'the man called Smith') and, can identify the referent of 'myself' demonstratively, as 'that person'. But why should we assume that first person thought behaves in the same way? Perhaps I really can know that 'I' refers to myself without needing the ability to come to know what kind of object I am, and hence without needing any concept of myself.

To summarize, and rephrase it in the first person, my interpretation of Anscombe's argument is as follows:

1. In the sentence 'I use "I" to refer to myself', if 'myself' is the ordinary reflexive it refers to the same object the first 'I' does – the subject of the sentence – but it does this without specifying any conception under which my mind is supposed to latch on to the object which I am.
2. But in order to understand the term 'I', there must be a conception under which my mind latches on to the object which I am.

⁶ Again, see discussion on Rumfitt in Section 3 for another way of understanding the pronoun.

3. So if 'myself' is the ordinary reflexive, the token-reflexive rule does not help me to understand 'I', as it does not give me any more than that 'myself' refers to the same thing as 'I'.
4. For the token-reflexive rule to explain anything, 'myself' must not only pick out the object which I am, but do it with the right conception.
5. The only way we can specify such a special pronoun is in terms of 'I'.
6. Therefore the token-reflexive rule is circular.
7. Therefore the sense for 'I' needs to be specified in a different way.

My whole thesis is that premise 2 is false. If this is the case then I think that Anscombe's argument collapses. Her assumption throughout is that if 'I' is a referring expression it must have a sense (which for her involves the subject having a concept of themselves). Her argument certainly does nothing to demonstrate that a concept is required from independent premises.

Have I interpreted Anscombe's argument in the correct way? Some might think that I have not, and that the conclusion that the token-reflexive rule is circular does not depend on the suppressed premise that reference to oneself requires a concept of oneself.⁷ The objection runs as follows. Anscombe's argument is based on the unobjectionable premise that a subject can refer to themselves intentionally, without referring to themselves first-personally. The token-reflexive rule does not distinguish between these two cases, and so cannot be what explains first-person thought. No hidden assumptions about concepts are involved. It may be conceded by the objector that Anscombe's picture of reference involving knowledge of the criterion of identity of an object is important later on in her argument, but this is only when she attempts to show that if we refer using 'I' we can only be referring to an Ego. The notion of a concept does not come into play in the initial stages of Anscombe's argument.

I do not think this interpretation of Anscombe's argument captures the full force or importance of the picture of reference underlying her work. Why is it that first-person reference differs from non-first-person reflexive reference? Anscombe thinks we cannot explain this using the token-reflexive rule

...unless the reflexive pronoun itself is a sufficient indication of the way the object is specified. And that is something the ordinary reflexive pronoun cannot be. (1975, p137)

⁷ Lucy O'Brien suggests this in comments on an earlier presentation I gave of this argument. Also, see O'Brien (1994), (1995a).

Throughout her argument, Anscombe's main contention is that the reflexive pronoun in the token-reflexive rule cannot explain to us what it is that Smith (her subject) knows; it cannot explain how his mind latches onto the object he is. There does not seem to be any problem about what the subject knows when he refers non-first personally to himself – he can pick himself out in the same way as he picks out other people and refer to himself in the same way. In this way he does have a concept of himself. But he does not have the *special* first-person concept which Anscombe believes must be necessary to refer first-personally. Her whole issue is that the 'indirect reflexive' 'himself' does not explain to us what this special concept must be. Because of this, any explanation of 'I' in terms of the token-reflexive rule must be insufficient, and we must go on a search for what this special first-person concept could be. To say that the notion of a concept for reference is only involved at the later stages of Anscombe's argument is to miss all the stage-setting and the flow of her article. I think that all of her arguments depend on the picture of reference underlying her work.

Those who object to my reading of Anscombe may still agree that her argument that the token-reflexive rule is circular does not go through. They may think this not because they believe there is a hidden assumption concerning concepts for reference, but because they think that Anscombe has not considered the contrast between referring to oneself by using the token-reflexive rule (first-person reference) and referring in a way which just happens to conform to the token-reflexive rule (non-first-person reflexive reference). I think this is correct, but again I think it misses something, and on its own does not explain very much. What makes it the case that one is *using* the rule rather than just conforming to it? If one accepts the picture of reference outlined in this thesis, then normally to refer to an object one must have the ability to come to know the criterion of identity of the object, and one gains this knowledge from information from the object; it is this which enables one to single out the object from among others and fulfil the intention to refer to that object. If I just happen to be referring to myself in cases of non-first-person reflexive reference – e.g. when Oedipus refers to the slayer of Laius, or Perry (1979) refers to that person who is making a mess – then I am using this concept-model of reference to refer. In these examples, the subject uses a concept to refer to an object which just happens to be themselves. As they happen to be referring reflexively, they happen to conform to the token-reflexive rule. The difference with first-person 'I'-thoughts, is that I refer *using* the token-reflexive rule, and do not need a concept of myself at all. I do not need to be able to pick myself out from among other objects – the token-reflexive

rule allows me to single myself out and have an intention towards the object I am. The fact that a self-concept is not required shows us how referring *using* the token-reflexive rule can indeed be distinct from merely referring in conformity with the rule.⁸

3

I now want to turn to Rumfitt's evaluation of Anscombe's argument, and his proposed method of avoiding the circularity. Rumfitt examines Anscombe's argument in detail in the final section of his paper 'Frege's Theory of Predication: An Elaboration and Defense, with Some New Applications' (1994) and attempts to show that he can undercut her circularity argument by using work he has developed in the first sections of his article. Although his conclusion is the same as mine – that to refer using 'I' one does not need to "distinctly conceive" the object which one is – he reaches this in a different way. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, I believe that Rumfitt himself subscribes to a version of the picture of reference which I have outlined in the course of this thesis. Rumfitt thinks that to have an intention towards an object we must have a concept of the object, and interprets having a concept of an object in terms of the possession of discriminating knowledge, saying

It is natural, indeed, to spell out the notion of "conceptual mastery" in terms of knowledge. So, 'Knacker believes that Hyde killed Carew' cannot be true unless (in some perhaps very weak sense of 'knowing who' and 'knowing what') Knacker knows who Hyde and Carew are, and knows what it would be for x to kill y." (Rumfitt (1994), p622).

Rumfitt's analysis of 'I', if correct, allows him to meet this 'know which' requirement, without one needing a concept of oneself. Although extremely interesting, I do not think Rumfitt's proposal succeeds without modification – in fact, without modifying it to allow that I can have an intention towards myself (an object) without having a concept of myself – and once one allows this, the underlying motivation for Rumfitt's account disappears. I will explain this below.

Rumfitt's discussion, like Anscombe's, concerns how we are able to understand and use 'I' in language. He also starts from the token reflexive rule which he explains, when talking of Anscombe's example (p632) as

- (I) 'I' is the word Smith [a speaker] uses when he knowingly and intentionally speaks of himself.

⁸ I return to how we can use the token-reflexive rule to refer to ourselves self-consciously in Section 4 of this chapter.

Now recall that Anscombe thinks that this is not adequate, as the pronoun ‘himself’ cannot specify or explain how it is that Smith’s mind ‘latches on to’ the object to which ‘himself’ refers, and cannot show how my first-person ‘I’-thoughts are distinct from reflexive thoughts which just happen to refer to me. Instead of the approach which I take, rejecting the requirement for a concept of myself in the case of ‘I’-thoughts, Rumfitt suggests that ‘himself’ is not a referring expression at all⁹ – its function is not to pick out an object. As we are not picking out an object by ‘myself’ we do not need to be able to pick out one object from among many, and therefore do not need to have the ability to come to know the criterion of identity of the object. Hence no concept is required.

How can ‘himself’ not be a referring expression? Rumfitt thinks that there are two options for understanding ‘himself’ in (I). The first he attributes to Evans (1977), in ‘Pronouns, Quantifiers and Relative Clauses (I)’¹⁰, and the second to Geach (1968, 1972).¹¹ Evans’s account seems the intuitive way to treat reflexive pronouns, and is exactly what I assumed was the case in dealing with Anscombe’s argument above. Evans says:

If σ is a sentence containing the singular term positions p_i and p_j , which are chained together, and p_i contains the singular term τ and p_j contains the pronoun κ , then the denotation of κ in σ is the same as the denotation of τ . (Evans (1977), p89)

When I said in my discussion of Anscombe earlier in this chapter “In understanding this third-person sentence [‘Smith realizes (fails to realize) the identity of an object he calls ‘Smith’ with himself’] we understand that the word ‘himself’ picks out the same referent as the subject term Smith” I assumed that the pronoun was a referring expression which picked up its referent in this case from the subject of the sentence. Rumfitt argues that instead pronouns should be analysed as Geach suggests. Geach believes that reflexive pronouns are not referring expressions at all. Instead, they are “surface manifestations of a higher-order linguistic functional of the same category as ‘Ref(ϕ)’” (Rumfitt (1994), p623). Ref(ϕ), as Rumfitt explains, takes a two-place predicable $h(\xi, \eta)$ to a one-place predicable $f(\xi)$ “in such a way that for every name \mathbf{n} , $f(\mathbf{n}) = h(\mathbf{n}, \mathbf{n})$.” (Rumfitt (1994), p604). The best way to think of what Rumfitt calls *predicables* is to think of them as symbolizing properties or relations. To borrow an example from Rumfitt, ‘ x contradicts y ’ is a predicable, which symbolizes the relation of contradicting (p602). So in this example, the linguistic functional Ref(ϕ)

⁹ Although ‘I’ is.

¹⁰ In *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 7, p467-536. Rpt in Evans (1985), p76-152

¹¹ In Geach (1968). *Reference and Generality*. Ithaca, Cornell, and Geach (1972) ‘A Program for Syntax’, in *Semantics of Natural Language*, ed. Davidson and Harman. Dordrecht, Reidel, p483-97

takes us from the two-place predicable '*x contradicts y*' to the one place '*x contradicts x*'. A predicable which needs completion by two singular terms to give an atomic sentence is taken by the functional to a reflexive predicable which needs completion by only one singular term. On this analysis of reflexive pronouns, the pronoun 'himself' has the same sense as $\text{Ref}(\phi)$. We understand $\text{Ref}(\phi)$ if we know what it would be for x to ϕx when we know what it is for x to ϕy (e.g. if we know what it is for x to kill x when we know what it is for x to kill y). We are supposed to be able to grasp the sense of $\text{Ref}(\phi)$ without having to grasp the sense of all its instances.

Rumfitt explains that he thinks that (I) – 'I' is the word Smith uses when he knowingly and intentionally speaks of himself – should be analysed as the word which Smith uses when:

(*) Smith intends to do that. Refer to himself.

This differs from non-first-personal reflexive reference which may be analysed in other various ways, for example:

(+1) Smith intends to do that. Refer to Smith.

or

(+2) Smith intends to do that. Refer to the person with his pants on fire.¹²

Using the accounts of intention and acts developed earlier in his paper, Rumfitt then analyses (*) as

Smith stands in the intending relation to the act (β refers to β).

Rumfitt believes that in order to stand in the intending relation to an act, the subject must know what it would be to do an act (he calls this the 'conceptual requirement' (p622)). Because of this, he thinks that in order to be able to use the word 'I' Smith must know what it is to do the act (β refers to β). But the act (β refers to β) differs from the act (e.g.) (β refers to Smith) in that in order to know how to do the act, the subject does not need to know anything about an object. As Rumfitt explains, Smith can know what it is to do the act (β refers to β) simply by understanding what it means for x to refer to y , and in addition, by having the

...second-level capacity of knowing what it is for x to $\text{Ref}(\phi)$ if he knows what it is for x to ϕy . It is these capacities that underpin the ability to discern the common predication in (for example) 'Jones refers to Jones', 'Brown refers to Brown', etc. (Rumfitt (1994,) p633-4)

In 'I'-thoughts, as opposed to non-first-personal reflexive reference, there is no need for Smith to be able to pick out the object which he is.¹³ He just needs to know what

¹² To borrow an example from Kaplan

it means to refer, possess this second-level capacity, and intend to commit this act of self-reference. If this explanation is correct Rumfitt believes that anyone will

...by virtue of understanding 'I', know that he may realize his ambition to refer to himself by uttering that word. And having explained what it is to intend to refer to oneself in terms that do not involve 'I', there is no circularity in using such a notion [the token-reflexive rule] to specify the meaning of 'I'. (1994, p634).

Rumfitt avoids the need for me to have a concept of myself when I think 'I'-thoughts because no object is supposed to be in the act I am intending when I intend the act of self-reference. Therefore, I do not need to be able to single out any object in order to meet the 'conceptual requirement'. This analysis is based on a general conception of intention developed by Rumfitt, where what is intended is not a particular state of affairs, but an act or act-type. In self-reference, I do not intend the state of affairs that *I* self-refer; I just intend an act of self-reference. If I did need to know who the agent was, then Rumfitt's account would not undercut Anscombe's argument if he still wished to conform to a similar underlying picture of reference, as then, to meet the conceptual requirement, I would need to be able to pick out the agent, and so would need a concept of the agent to be able to do this. So to support his account, Rumfitt needs to justify and explain how I can intend an act, without intending that an agent perform the act. This is something which I do not think he has done satisfactorily, and as the weight of his argument depends on it, I believe his analysis cannot go through.

Rumfitt's initial discussion of acts takes place within an analysis of what it is to order; he sees ordering as a three-place relation, relating *orderer*, *addressee*, and *act*. An act is defined as a thing done by an agent, and its identity conditions are given in terms of the identity conditions of the senses of action predicables which specify the act (Rumfitt (1994), p618). An action predicable is a predicable where the imperative of the predicable makes sense; for example, 'ξ washes the dishes' is an action predicable because the imperative 'Wash the dishes!' makes sense. The action predicable 'ξ washes the dishes' specifies the act of washing the dishes, and any and only action predicables with exactly the same sense will specify the same act. Thus it seems that acts are well-defined. It is therefore important to explore whether it is

¹³ In non-first-personal reflexive reference, to meet the conceptual requirement, and so to know what it is to do an act (e.g. in case (+₁)) Smith must know what it is to refer, and 'know who' Smith is – he must have a concept of Smith and be able to pick him out from among others.

possible to order an act, rather than to order the state of affairs of someone performing an act.

Rumfitt considers this issue by examining how we might analyse the report of an order:

Knacker ordered Plod to arrest Mr. Hyde.

He rejects what might seem to be the obvious analysis, which would treat ordering as a relation between an orderer and a state of affairs. Such an analysis might be represented as follows:

Knacker ordered that. Plod arrest Hyde.

In this analysis, the second sentence specifies a state of affairs, and the first sentence represents Knacker being in the ordering relation to the state of affairs picked out by the demonstrative 'that'; the state of affairs specified by the second sentence. Rumfitt rejects this because he says that the sentence 'Plod arrests Hyde' misrepresents what Knacker actually ordered; he argues:

In giving his order to Plod, Knacker uses no word that designates Plod; indeed, he need not even know who Plod is. (1994, p617)

This seems correct to an extent, but not fully correct. It is true that Knacker does not need to know who Plod is, and so having the name Plod in the specification of what is ordered may misrepresent the content of what is ordered. But I think Knacker does need to know who Plod is in another sense. He needs to know that he addresses his order to *someone*; he is not addressing the order to a vacuum. In Rumfitt's preferred analysis:

Knacker ordered Plod to do that. Arrest Hyde!

the second sentence may better give the content of Knacker's order, as it does not mention Plod by name, but it still seems to contain an (implicit) grammatical subject. Rumfitt thinks that this analysis is equivalent to:

Knacker ordered Plod thus. You arrest Hyde.

saying:

The choice between these variants will, I suppose, turn on the fruitfulness of the linguists' notion of an understood grammatical subject, but for present purposes the choice is a matter of detail. Whether or not the second utterance of the parataxis contains a grammatical subject, what is crucial is that it suffices to identify a predicable, in this case 'ξ arrests Hyde'. (1994, p618)

Although each of the two variants specify the same action predicable, I do not think this is all that they do. In each case I believe that the grammatical subject is important. The grammatical subject (understood or otherwise) correctly specifies the content of the order without naming Plod, and yet is anaphoric on the name 'Plod';

its reference is given by the anaphora. There is both an agent and an act involved in what is ordered. Thus the addressee seems to be an essential part of the state of affairs that is ordered. Knacker is ordering the agent Plod to arrest Hyde. Although the state of affairs he is ordering is better specified by 'You arrest Hyde' rather than the state of affairs specified by 'Plod arrests Hyde', this does not mean Knacker is not ordering an agent to perform an act, and does not show that he does not have a concept of the agent. Although the conception Knacker associates with 'You' (perhaps 'the person addressed') need not be the same as that which he associates with 'Plod', this does not show that there is no conception. I therefore think that Rumfitt's analysis of ordering as a three-place relation between orderer, addressee, and act can be somewhat misleading. It seems to me that the act must pick up its agent from the addressee, and it is the state of affairs involving the addressee which is actually being ordered.

What about the analysis of intention? It is this which is crucial in Rumfitt's explanation of how we can think 'I'-thoughts. Can we intend acts, as he believes, or must we intend states of affairs? Rumfitt sees his analysis of intention as similar to the analysis of ordering, only in this case the intending relation is supposed to be a two-place relation (rather than three-place) between intender and act. 'A intends to ϕ ' is analysed as

A intends to do that act. ϕ .

As in this case, there is no equivalent of an addressee from which the act can take its agent and thereby specify a state of affairs, perhaps we can genuinely intend an act rather than a state of affairs. However, it is not at all clear to me that intention can be a two-place relation as Rumfitt suggests. Can we not intend that other people do acts, as well as intending that we ourselves perform a certain act? For example, it is plausible that I can intend that someone else believe that I am at home, even though I am on holiday (I may set the lights on a timer switch, for example). I may also intend that someone else perform the act of washing the dishes – perhaps I put moral pressure on them, pointing out that I have done it for the last five times. If these examples are possible, and I can intend that someone other than myself perform an act, how can we differentiate between acts I intend I perform, and acts I intend others perform? It would appear that intending must also be a three place relation, between intender, 'addressee' of the intention, and act. Thus we have the analysis:

A intends B to do that. ϕ .

If this is the case, then we have all the problems we encountered with orders. Although I partly intend an act, the act picks up its agent from the addressee of the

intention, and it is the state of affairs specified by the act plus the addressee which is intended.

Perhaps I am being unfair to Rumfitt and there are also genuine cases where I can intend an act without an agent. For Rumfitt's analysis of first person reference to work he does not need all intentions to be intentions of acts rather than states of affairs. All he requires is that I can intend the act (β refers to β) where this does not involve an object.¹⁴ But even if we are willing to grant that we can intend acts rather than states of affairs, I think this becomes more problematic when we talk about intending *reflexive* acts. Recall that Rumfitt's account has a 'conceptual requirement' that in order to intend an act we must know what it would be to do the act. We are supposed to know what it would mean to self-refer by knowing what it is for x to refer to y and by possessing the second-level capacity of knowing what it is for x to Ref(ϕ) if we know what it is for x to ϕ y . Do we really understand the second-order linguistic functional Ref(ϕ)? For the sake of argument, I am also willing to grant that we can understand Ref(ϕ) generally without having to grasp all its instances. But it is when we bring Ref(ϕ) together with the intention of acts that I think we have difficulties. For Rumfitt's account to work, we need to intend a reflexive act, in which there is no agent. But it seems that to understand Ref(ϕ) we need some understanding of an agent, as the point of Ref(ϕ) is to create a predicable which has one space for an object term from a predicable which had two spaces to be filled by singular terms referring to an object. It is not clear to me that we can understand this without thinking of agents. If this is correct, then in the case of self-reference, when I intend the act (β refers to β), to understand this reflexive act I must think of an agent as acting. And then, if one believes that having a concept is required to have thoughts about objects, it seems again that one must know, or have the ability to come to know, what kind of thing the agent is. In the case of reflexive acts, I must intend that someone acts reflexively. In self-reference, I must intend that *I* self-refer, and so with Anscombe's and Rumfitt's underlying picture of reference, I must have a concept of myself.

I therefore think that Rumfitt's account cannot explain why we do not need a concept of ourselves to use the word 'I' whilst still assuming that in thoughts which involve an intention towards an object the subject needs a concept of the object to be able to refer. It seems difficult to see how one could intend an act of self-reference without

¹⁴ Mike Martin (manuscript and in discussion) suggests that an intention of an act can indeed differ from an intention of the corresponding state of affairs – if one intends an act then one is committed to intending the state of affairs, but not the other way around.

intending that *one* self-refer. A solution for Rumfitt would be to reject the requirement that to refer using 'I', I need a concept of myself. Then I could intend that *I* perform the act of self-reference without needing a concept of *I*, and without needing to *know who* I am. But if one takes this step then Rumfitt's explanation of the token-reflexive rule in terms of an intention to perform an act of self-reference seems unmotivated. As I have argued in Section 2, the token-reflexive rule in its basic form – 'I' refers to whoever speaks, writes or thinks it with the intention of referring to himself – is not circular if one does not think: a) that there must be a concept under which my mind latches on to the object which I am, and b) that the pronoun 'himself' should explain this concept.

4

I propose that to think 'I'-thoughts I just need to intend to refer to myself. I thereby have an intention towards the object which I am, even though I may not know what that object is, what its boundaries are, or how to distinguish it from among other objects. I do not need to be able to do these things as I am both the subject and object of my thought, and therefore cannot be mistaken about the object my intention is directed towards. But is this account of first person reference sufficient? Although I believe an affirmative answer to this is implicit in the foregoing discussion, it may be helpful to spell it out. Someone who doubts that this account is sufficient may think there are problems. First of all there may appear to be a formal problem, which can be set up by looking at the use of 'I' in language under the account of first person reference which I have proposed. I have suggested that the token-reflexive rule in its basic form – I use 'I' to refer to myself – is all one needs to know to be able to use the term 'I' and thereby self-refer. How does this differ from the rule: JT uses 'I' to refer to JT (where 'JT', 'I' and 'myself' co-designate), knowledge of which does not seem enough to explain our use of 'I'? One response is to say that the token-reflexive rule is purely general, while the rule which substitutes 'JT' does not apply to everyone. But I do not think this gets to the root of the matter – for me, at least, both rules are equally general, so why does one rule and not the other explain first person reference?

This formal problem has a correlate in a problem in the philosophy of mind. Can my account of first person reference really allow us to distinguish between self-conscious 'I'-thoughts and merely reflexive reference? Here, the important distinction is not between self-conscious 'I'-thoughts and cases which O'Brien (1995a, p243) calls *de facto* reflexive reference, where A refers to B when A = B

(examples of *de facto* reflexive reference are Oedipus referring to the slayer of Laius, or Perry referring to that person who is making a mess). Instead, we need to be sure that this account of first person reference can distinguish between self-conscious reflexive reference, where A refers self-consciously to A, and what O'Brien (1995a, p243) has called systematically reflexive reference, where A refers to A. To understand how systematically reflexive reference differs from first person reference consider Anscombe's example of a community of 'A'-users (1975, p138-9). Anscombe writes:

Imagine a society in which everyone is labelled with two names. One appears on their backs and at the top of their chests, and these names, which their bearers cannot see, are various: 'B' to 'Z' let us say. The other 'A', is stamped on the inside of their wrists, and is the same for everyone. In making reports on people's actions everyone uses the names on their chests or backs if he can see these names or is used to seeing them....Reports on one's own actions, which one gives straight off from observation, are made using the name on the wrist. (Anscombe (1975), p138)

This seems to be a case of systematically reflexive reference. There is no need for self-consciousness, and in fact we could design machines to behave in the same way. O'Brien (1995a, p244) describes machines of this type, designed to bleep when they get too hot. She argues that anyone who thinks that the token-reflexive rule on its own¹⁵ is sufficient to explain self-conscious self-reference must be committed to holding that the machine, when it bleeps, is referring first-personally; a conclusion she believes most will wish to reject.

Let us return to the formal problem. If I did need a concept to understand 'myself', we could explain why the token-reflexive rule is special. The self-concept explains how my mind latches onto the object which I am in a special first-personal self-conscious way. The concept I associate with 'JT' does not do this, so the two rules differ. An opponent of my position says that without a self-concept I cannot explain this difference. But this does not seem to be the case. In the token-reflexive rule I do not need a concept of the object which I am, and so this is clearly different from any other version of the rule in which I need a concept for reference.

In a similar way, we can begin to see the consequences for the equivalent problem in the philosophy of mind. The 'A'-users, or bleeping machines do not fulfil my requirement for first-person reference. Although they may be referring to the object which they are, they are not *intending* to refer to themselves *without* having a

¹⁵ Rather than the token-reflexive rule plus an account of how I know that I am referring.

concept of themselves. The 'A'-users' method of reference to themselves involves the equivalent of having concepts. They single themselves out from among other 'A'-users by having the ability to know what distinguishes themselves from among others. When I refer to myself self-consciously, I intend to refer to the object which I am. I do not pick myself out from among others as I do not need to do this. The bleeping machines are not intending to refer to themselves – they do not have an intention directed towards an object. I have an intention directed towards an object when I refer to myself. The point is this: neither the 'A'-users nor the bleeping machines provide a counterexample to my account of first person reference because in neither case do we have a pure use of the token-reflexive rule by a subject who normally needs concepts to refer. The 'A'-users have concepts but use these for all reference, while the bleeping machines lack conceptual abilities. A subject with conceptual abilities who refers just using the pure token-reflexive rule will be referring first-personally. Not only can I refer to myself without needing a concept of myself, but I suggest it is the fact that I do not need a concept of myself which enables me to refer self-consciously.

'I'-thoughts are essentially special. I can refer to myself without having a concept of myself. My 'I'-thoughts are thoughts which refer to an object, but they differ from all other thoughts which refer to objects. To refer to other objects I must have a concept of the objects, and be able to pick out the objects from among others; otherwise my intention to refer cannot be fulfilled. 'I'-thoughts are not like this; I can have an intention towards the object I am without being able to know my criterion of identity. As we saw in Chapter 2, Evans's argument from the generality constraint cannot show that I must have a concept of myself. And in this chapter we have seen that Anscombe's circularity argument cannot show that the token-reflexive rule is not sufficient for my 'I'-thoughts. 'I'-thoughts are singular referring thoughts which differ from all other singular referring thoughts, and it is the fact that they are unique which allows us to account for the special nature of first person reference.

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