Reference through Mental Files : Indexicals and Definite Descriptions

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1. <u>Nondescriptive Modes of Presentation as Mental Files</u>

In the Fregean framework, modes of presentation provide a solution to the following puzzle. There are well-known situations in which a rational subject thinks of a given object *a* both that it is and that it is not *F*. (For example, Ralph believes of Ortcutt that he is a spy, and he also believes that he is not a spy.) How can that be ? Frege solved the problem by appealing to modes of presentation over and above the objects thought about. A rational subject can believe of *a*, thought of under a mode of presentation *m*, that it is *F*, and at the same time believe of the same object *a*, thought of under a different mode of presentation *m'*, that it is not *F*. Insofar as the modes of presentation are distinct, there is no irrationality.

According to an influential view favoured by Frege himself, modes of presentation are *descriptions* of the referent. When we think about an object, we think of it as 'the F', where F is some uniquely-identifying property of the referent. This view is known as Descriptivism. An alternative to Descriptivism is Singularism, which comes in two varieties. The Russellian variety says that in *some* cases, we don't think of an object through a description of it, but 'directly', where this means that there is no mode of presentation whatsoever. The thought involves *the object itself*, not a mode of presentation of it. Since modes of presentation are involved whenever identity confusions are possible, and identity confusions are almost always possible, the Russellian option is only marginally different from Descriptivism. Direct reference is possible in a few exceptional cases, e.g. when one refers to one's own sense-data, but everything else is thought about descriptively.[1] So a true Singularist should go for the other option – the *neo*-Fregean option.

In the neo-Fregean framework, there are two types of mode of presentation, corresponding to two modes of reference determination. An object is thought of *descriptively* iff it is thought of as the bearer of some identifying property. The thought contains a uniquely

[1] I take Lewis's centered-worlds approach to be a variant of the Russellian position, but I can't go into exegetical matters in this article.

identifying description of some object, and the reference — the object thought about — is whatever *satisfies* the description. In contrast, *nondescriptive* modes of presentation rest on acquaintance relations to objects in the environment. The reference in this case is determined relationally : it is the object with which the subject happens to be acquainted — whether or not that object 'fits' the subject's representation of it. In this framework, identity confusions are still possible even though the thought is nondescriptive— the subject may be related to the same object twice, without realizing it, and may end up ascribing contradictory properties to that object without ceasing to be rational.

In my implementation of the neo-Fregean framework, nondescriptive modes of presentation are *mental files*. Mental files are based upon acquaintance relations to objects in the environment : their role is to store the information we derive from an object in virtue of standing in some acquaintance relation to it. The 'mode of presentation' under which the object is thought of is not constituted by the properties which the thinker takes the referent to have (i.e. the properties represented in the file) but, rather, by the file itself. The file is what plays the role which Fregean theory assigns to modes of presentation. In all the relevant instances in which modes of presentation are needed to account for the subject's rationality (e.g. Quine's 'Ortcutt' example, or Kripke's puzzle about belief), the subject has two distinct files about one and the same object, and that is what enables him or her to ascribe contrary predicates to that object without (internal) contradiction.

Among the predicates in a file, some have the distinguishing property that they are 'singular', i.e. they are supposed to be satisfied by a unique object. 'Tallest mountain in Europe' is a case in point. That is a predicate which my MONT BLANC file contains, along with other predicates such as 'called Mont Blanc' or '4000 metres high', but it differs from these predicates in being singular. Descriptivism holds that, in singular thought, we exercise such predicates, which serve as *individual concepts* : we think of the object the thought is about as 'the F' — e.g. the tallest peak in Europe. [2] I hold that we do *not* think of objects in this manner when we entertain a singular thought : we think of them under *nondescriptive* modes of presentation, that is, mental files. Still, singular predicates have a role to play in the

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[2] Individual concepts correspond to (partial) functions from situations to individuals. With respect to any situation in which there is a unique *F*, the function returns that object as value. The function is undefined for all situations in which there is no *F* or more than one. NB. Following Kaplan (1978), Abbott (2011) introduces another kind of individual concepts which are 'constant' rather than 'variable', that is, which return the same object irrespective of the situation talked about. Abbott's constant individual concepts are nonsatisfactional (nondescriptional, as she says), so mental files would count as constant individual concepts by her characterization.

communication of singular thoughts. Singular predicates may occur as part of the content of files, and, like any piece of information in a file, they can, if expressed, trigger the activation of the file to the content of which they belong. It is this mechanism which I think accounts for referential communication.

2. Referential Communication : The Basic Mechanism

Indexicals have descriptive meanings in virtue of which they present their referent as having certain identificatory properties – being the speaker in the case of 'I', being the hearer in the case of 'you', and so forth. These meanings qualify as 'modes of presentation', but they are *linguistic* modes of presentation and as such should be distinguished from the modes of presentation that occur in thought : *psychological* modes of presentation, as I call them (Recanati 1990, 1993). Linguistic modes of presentation correspond to *the reference rule encoded by the indexical* ('I' refers to the speaker, 'you' to the addressee, etc.). In contrast, psychological modes of presentation are answerable to Frege's cognitive constraint on rational subjects : if a rational subject can think of an object *a* both that it is F and that it is not F, this shows that there are two distinct modes of presentation *m* and *m'* under which the subject in question thinks of *a* when he thinks that it is F and when he thinks it is not F (Schiffer 1978 : 180 ; McDowell 2005 : 48-49).

That the two types of mode of presentation can come apart is easily seen in the case of indexicals. The linguistic mode of presentation is fixed by convention hence it is the same for the speaker and his audience. For both of them the reference of 'I' is presented as the speaker, the person who utters the current token of 'I'. But the speaker and the hearer don't think of that person in the same way. The speaker thinks of that person as being himself (or herself), i.e. by exercising the first person concept, while the hearer thinks of the person talking to him or her under a very different mode of presentation. Or take an utterance like 'That ship is longer than that ship' and suppose that, unbeknown to the speaker, the same ship is demonstrated twice. By Frege's constraint, two distinct psychological modes of presentation must be involved, but the linguistic meaning of the phrase 'that ship' stays constant across occurrences, hence the linguistic mode of presentation also stays constant. (This example shows that the linguistic mode of presentation may not be determinate enough to fix the reference. Often it only 'contrains' the reference.)

The linguistic modes of presentation conventionally associated with the indexicals are singular predicates ('speaker of *u*', 'hearer of *u*', where '*u*' is the utterance in which the

indexical occurs), but the predicates in question are *not* what the indexicals contribute to the expressed thought. What the indexicals contribute, rather, are mental files to the content of which the predicates belong. The mental files in question play the role of *psychological* mode of presentation. Thus the speaker expresses a thought with his own SELF file as a constituent, when he says 'I' ; he thinks of himself in the first person way. The singular predicate associated with the word 'I' is contained in the speaker's SELF file (since the speaker is conscious of being the speaker) and it stands for the whole file to the content of which it belongs. When the hearer processes the speaker's utterance, the same singular predicate associated with the word 'I' evokes, in the hearer's mind, the hearer's mental file containing that predicate, and that file is the hearer's file about the person speaking to him. So, in understanding the speaker's utterance, the hearer forms a singular thought about the speaker that matches the thought expressed by the speaker since both thoughts have the same singular truth-conditions, but differs from that thought in that the (nondescriptive) modes of presentation they involve are distinct for the speaker and for the hearer : the speaker thinks of the referent of 'I' as being himself — he exercises his SELF concept — while the hearer thinks of the referent of 'I' in a third person way.

On this picture, the singular predicate associated with an indexical *stands for some mental file to which it belongs* : what the thought contains is the mental file (a nondescriptive mode of presentation) rather than the singular predicate whose role is merely to stand for the file and trigger its activation. If the thought contained the singular predicate, the referent would be thought of descriptively rather than nondescriptively.

The same story applies to the referential use of definite descriptions (Recanati 1993 : 294-96). The singular predicate encoded by a description may be what the description contributes to the thought expressed by the speaker (attributive use), but it may also stand for some file to which it belongs (referential use). Donnellan gives the following example :

> One is at a party and, seeing an interesting-looking person holding a martini glass, one asks, "Who is the man drinking a martini ?" If it should turn out that there is only water in the glass, one has nevertheless asked a question about a particular person, a question that it is possible for someone to answer. (Donnellan 1966 : 48)

Here the speaker uses the description 'the man drinking a martini'. Had the description been used attributively, its reference (if any) would be determined 'satisfactionally' as whoever uniquely possesses the property of being a man drinking a martini. But the description has

been used referentially : the speaker has a certain object in mind, i.e. he stands in some acquaintance relation to some object he wants to say something about. Despite the speaker's choice of the description to pick out the man in question, what determines his reference is the relevant relation : here, the perceptual relation singles out a man (the interesting-looking person the speaker is watching) who as a matter of fact drinks water, not martini.

In this example, the singular predicate 'man drinking a martini' stands for a demonstrative file based upon the speaker's perceptual relation to the interesting-looking person holding a martini glass. In that demonstrative file, the speaker stores information gained through the acquaintance relation, such as the information that the referent (the man he is watching) holds a martini glass and, presumably, drinks a martini. By using the description referentially, the speaker expresses a demonstrative thought about that man — a thought involving his demonstrative file as a constituent. On the hearer's side, the same mechanism is at work : the predicate 'man drinking a martini' readily evokes for the hearer her own file about the presumed martini-drinker. If there is no preexisting file containing the singular predicate in the mind of the hearer, but she takes the speaker to express a singular thought, she will put herself in the right epistemic position by looking in the same direction as the speaker and *acquiring* a demonstrative file about the man holding the martini glass, which file will make it possible for her to entertain a singular thought about the man in question in order to understand what the speaker is saying.

The main difference between indexicals and definite descriptions is that the role of the singular predicate encoded by an indexical is purely instrumental : it is to evoke the file to which the predicate belongs. The singular predicate itself *cannot* be what the indexical contributes to the thought (with the exception of so-called 'descriptive indexicals', which are somewhat marginal and which I leave aside here).[3] In the case of definite descriptions, in contrast, there are two options on the same footing. The description may contribute either the singular predicate it encodes (attributive use) or the mental file to which that predicate belongs (referential use). The mode of presentation of the reference is descriptive in the former case, nondescriptive in the latter. Just as in the case of indexicals, the mental files will not remain stable across subjects, but each conversational protagonist will have to entertain a thought involving a similar mental file, based upon some relation to the referent and including the singular predicate in question.

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[3] On descriptive uses of indexicals, see *Direct Reference* (Recanati 1993), chapter 16.

How do we account for the fact that the step from the singular predicate to the mental file to which it belongs is mandatory in the case of indexicals ? In *Direct Reference* I offered an account based on the following premises :

1. In addition to encoding a singular predicate, indexicals carry a lexical feature, REF, which indicates that the truth-condition of the utterance where the indexical occurs is singular. (The truth-condition of an utterance *G(t)* is singular just in case there is an object *x* such that the utterance is true if and only if *x* satisfies *G( )*.)
2. A general 'principle of congruence' requires the thoughts entertained by an interpreter upon understanding an utterance to match the truth-conditional content of that utterance. This entails that, if the utterance (because of REF) is bound to have singular truth-conditions, the interpreter's thought should have singular truth-conditions too.
3. Only thoughts featuring nondescriptive modes of presentation (mental files) are truth-conditionally singular : thoughts involving descriptive modes of presentation are truth-conditionally general.[4]

Together, the three premises entail that the thought entertained by an interpreter upon understanding an utterance with an indexical will have to feature a nondescriptive mode of presentation, that is, a mental file. The singular mode of presentation encoded by the indexical will not be a possible constituent of the thought. Its (purely instrumental) role is to raise the salience of some mental file to the content of which it belongs, thus making that mental file available as a constituent of the thought through which the utterance is interpreted.

3. Denotation, Semantic Reference, and Speaker's Reference

The issue arises, whether the mechanism I have described — the linguistic evocation of mental files via elements of their content — should be considered as semantically relevant, or relegated to 'pragmatics'. I will frame the issue in terms of Donnellan's distinction between 'denotation' and 'reference'. A description may be used referentially or attributively, but even when a description does not 'refer' in Donnellan's sense, it 'denotes' :

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[4] This premise can be doubted, on the grounds that actuality operators can make a descriptive thought truth-conditionally singular. But this issue has more complexity than meets the eye. To actualize a description in thought, we need to open a mental file, and mental files are primarily a tool for nondescriptive thinking. See Recanati 2012 : chapter 13 on the (derived) 'actualizing function' of files.

Russell's definition of denoting (a definite description denotes an entity if that entity fits the description uniquely) is clearly applicable to either use of descriptions. (…) Hence, denoting and referring, as I have explicated the latter notion, are distinct… If one tried to maintain that they are the same notion, one result would be that a speaker might be referring to something without knowing it. If someone said, for example, in 1960, before he had any idea that Mr Goldwater would be the Republican nominee in 1964, 'The Republican candidate for president in 1964 will be a conservative,' (perhaps on the basis of an analysis of the views of party leaders) the definite description here would *denote* Mr Goldwater. But would we wish to say that the speaker had referred to, mentioned, or talked about Mr Goldwater ? I feel these terms would be out of place. (Donnellan 1966 : 54-55)

The denotation is fixed satisfactionally : a description 'the F' denotes whatever is F if a unique object is, and nothing otherwise. Reference is an entirely different matter, according to Donnellan. Reference involves 'having in mind', something that requires some relation to the object thought about.[5] In the present framework, this is cashed out by saying that the reference of an expression is always the reference of some mental file containing the predicate associated with the expression. The reference of a file, as we have seen, is determined relationally.

Note that the denotation/reference distinction applies to indexicals as well as to definite descriptions. An indexical 'denotes' whatever satisfies the linguistic mode of presentation (assuming a single object does), but the *denotatum* need not be what the speaker who uses the indexical refers to. Consider Rip van Winkle. He goes to bed one evening (on day *d)* and wakes up twenty years later. He does not know that he has slept for more than one night, so he thinks of *d* as 'yesterday'. Now which day does he refer to when he says 'Yesterday was a nice day' ? This is a tricky question. In virtue of the reference rule associated with the word 'yesterday', it seems that it must refer to the day preceding the day of utterance. But that is not the day *Rip* is referring to and characterizing as a nice day. Rip refers to the day he remembers, namely *d*, of which he wrongly believes that it is the previous day (so that his memory file contains the predicate 'previous day' which the indexical exploits). Donnellan's distinction between denotation and reference comes in handy here : we

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[5] On Donnellan's notion of 'having in mind', see Kaplan (2011).

can say that the *denotation* of Rip's use of 'yesterday' is the day before his utterance, while the *reference* — what Rip himself refers to and describes as a nice day — is *d*, the last waking day he remembers.

We see that for indexicals too, the reference, understood à la Donnellan, is the reference of some mental file containing the encoded predicate. Just as for definite descriptions, whether the reference actually satisfies the singular predicate is irrelevant since the reference is determined relationally. Thus Rip refers to day *d* by saying 'Yesterday was a nice day', even though *d* is not actually the previous day. He can do so because *d* is the referent of his memory file, a file that contains both the predicates 'previous day' and 'nice day'. Likewise, the subject in Donnellan's example refers to the man he is looking at when he says 'the man drinking a martini is a famous philosopher', even though the man in question is not drinking a martini, but water. This is possible because that man is the reference of the speaker's demonstrative file based on the perception of the man in question, and the file contains the predicate 'man drinking a martini' (and also the predicate 'famous philosopher').

But is reference, thus understood, relevant to semantics ? Many philosophers think that it is not. As far as definite descriptions are concerned, there is a well-known position according to which the referential/attributive distinction is a matter of speaker's meaning and does not affect truth-conditional content.[6] Whether or not the speaker 'refers', and to what, by using a description that denotes a certain object, is irrelevant to semantics. Only denotation matters to semantic content. The same thing holds for indexicals. Even if Rip refers to *d* by his use of 'yesterday', this is *speaker's* reference, not semantic reference. The semantic reference is what the word itself refers to – its 'denotation'. In general, the use of *improper* descriptions or *improper* indexicals to refer to some object the speaker has in mind has no direct relevance to semantics. Such use is like the improper use of names, as Kripke pointed out. In Kripke's example, the speaker refers to Smith (the man he sees raking the leaves) but, under the misapprehension that the man he sees raking the leaves is Jones, he uses the name 'Jones' to refer to him (Kripke 1977 : 263). As Kripke says, the name 'Jones' refers to Jones (semantic referent) even if the speaker who uses the name has someone else in mind, namely Smith (speaker's referent). Indeed the speaker's utterance 'Jones is raking the leaves' is

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[6] The pragmatic account goes back to Peter Geach (1962) and Paul Grice (1969) ; see also Kripke (1977), Sainsbury (1979), Davies (1981) and Evans (1982), to mention some of the early advocates. For a review and a sustained defence of the account, see Neale (1990 : chapter 3).

intuitively false in that sort of case, if the man seen raking the leaves happens to be Smith (and Jones does not happen to be raking the leaves at the same time).

How does the denotation/reference distinction relate to the semantic reference/speaker's reference distinction ? One option — corresponding to the pragmatic account I have just presented — is to say that they are just the same distinction : the denotation of an expression *is* its semantic reference. So, in the case of Rip van Winkle, the day *d* is the speaker's reference, and the semantic reference is the day before the day of utterance, i.e. the denotation. Similarly, when the speaker in Kripke's example uses the name 'Jones' to refer to Smith, Smith is only the speaker's reference ; the semantic reference is Jones, the bearer of the name (and the satisfier of the metalinguistic predicate 'called Jones'). But the view that the semantic reference just is the denotation ought to be resisted if one takes the referential use of descriptions to be semantically relevant. For, as Donnellan points out, descriptions denote *whether they are used referentially or attributively*. If denotation equals semantic reference, there can be no semantic difference between the referential use and the attributive use : the description will have the same 'semantic reference' in both cases (viz. the denotation). It follows that the equation of denotation and semantic reference can be maintained only by someone who holds that the referential use of definite descriptions is *always* a matter of speaker's meaning or speaker's reference.

There are philosophers who take the referential use of descriptions to be semantically relevant, however. They stress the analogy between indexicals and definite descriptions (on their referential use).[7] According to their account, the descriptive meaning of a referential description has a purely instrumental role – it serves to fix the reference. The semantic content of the utterance is a singular proposition, just as it is when an indexical is used instead of a description. In contrast, when descriptions are used attributively, the semantic content of the utterance is a general proposition. Now, if one treats the referential use of descriptions as semantically relevant in this way, as I think one should if one wants to capture the striking analogy with indexicals, one needs a *threefold* distinction between denotation, semantic reference, and speaker's reference. When a description is used attributively, as in Donnellan's 'Goldwater' example, it does not refer (though it denotes). When a description is used referentially, it refers, but sometimes its reference is mere 'speaker's reference', while in other cases it is 'semantic reference'. The reference will be (mere) speaker's reference in all

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[7] See Stalnaker (1970), Peacocke (1975) and Kaplan (1978) for early statements of the semantic view, and Recanati (1989) for a defence of the view against the 'ambiguity' objection raised by Kripke and many others.

the cases in which it does not satisfy the singular predicate encoded by the expression. But that does not prevent us from acknowledging a genuine semantic contrast between attributive and referential uses. On the referential use, if the description is proper, that is, if what the speaker refers to satisfies the description, then the truth-condition of the utterance is singular, in contrast to what happens when the description is used attributively.

Note that for indexicals we don't need the threefold distinction between denotation, semantic reference and speaker reference, because indexicals are bound to be used referentially (again, leaving aside the descriptive uses which are somewhat marginal). We only need a distinction between the cases in which an indexical is used to refer to its denotation, and the cases like Rip van Winkle in which an indexical is used to refer to something other than its denotation (speaker's reference).

4. The Millian Approach

In the previous section I introduced the two main approaches to the referential/attributive distinction currently on the market. According to the pragmatic account, all referential uses of definite descriptions, whether proper or improper, are, indeed, *uses* and, as such, they are of concern to pragmatics, which deals with uses, but not to semantics, which deals with meanings. According to the semantic account, proper referential uses make a distinctive (singular) contribution to semantic content, but improper uses, that is, cases in which the speaker refers to something which does not satisfy the description, are to be ignored as irrelevant to semantic content. The implicit premise here is that a necessary condition for an object to be the semantic referent is that it satisfies the encoded predicate. Now there is a third type of position, less familiar but closer to Donnellan's original inspiration, which rejects that premise, on the grounds that reference is determined relationally, not satisfactionally. It is that position which I would like to explore in this section.

The semantic account takes seriously the idea that descriptions can be used a devices of direct reference. But there are two notions of direct reference on the market : the strong, Millian notion, and the weaker, Kaplanian notion.[8] The semantic account is based on the

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[8] The strong notion of direct reference is that I mentioned in connection with Russell in the first section of the paper : reference is direct, for Russell, only if there is no mode of presentation of the reference. Russell's notion of a 'logically proper name', construed as a tag that is directly assigned to an object, is characteristically Millian.

Kaplanian notion, while the less familiar account I am about to present is based on the Millian notion.

According to the Millian notion, a directly referential expression is like a 'tag' to which an object is directly assigned without going through a satisfactional mechanism. Proper names are directly referential in the strong sense — they are 'tags' — but personal pronouns like 'I' and 'you' are not because they carry a descriptive meaning and present their referent as, respectively, the speaker or the addressee. On the Kaplanian picture, direct reference *is* compatible with the possession of such meaning : what matters for direct reference in the weaker, Kaplanian sense is only the *truth-conditional irrelevance* of the mode of presentation (Recanati 1993). The mode of presentation (or 'character') only plays an instrumental role : it provides a way of identifying the referent in context, but it is the referent, not the mode of presentation, which contributes to the possible world truth-conditions of the utterance.

The standard semantic approach, defended by Kaplan and Stalnaker, takes referential descriptions to be directly referential in the weak sense, just like indexicals. A referentially used description 'the F' presents its referent as being the F, but what is truth-conditionally relevant, on that use, is only the *referent* picked out through the property of being the F. The descriptive meaning of the description only serves to 'fix the reference', just as the character of an indexical only serves to 'fix the reference' of the expression in context. According to the Millians, however, (i) the mere truth-conditional irrelevance of the mode of presentation is not sufficient for direct reference in the *strong* sense, and (ii) Donnellan's comparison of referential descriptions with 'logically proper names' clearly indicates that he took referential descriptions to be directly referential in just that sense.

Genoveva Martì has eloquently expressed the Millian point of view and its rejection of the standard semantic approach à la Kaplan/Stalnaker :

> What defines a referential use of a definite description, or of any device, is… the absence of a semantic mechanism to search for and determine the referent… If a definite description can be used as a device of direct reference in this sense, *the attributes associated with it should not play a role in the determination of reference*. Therefore, if a definite description 'the F' can be used referentially, in the strong sense, it must be possible to use it to refer to an object independently of whether that object satisfies the attributes associated with 'the F'. And that's the characteristic mark of referential uses of descriptions according to Donnellan. (Martì 2008 : 49 ; emphasis mine)

What Martì objects to is the idea that definite descriptions can only be directly referential in the weak sense. She thinks this misses the thrust of Donnellan's original observations. Indeed, Donnellan has much insisted on the fact that a referentially used definite description need not be 'satisfied' by its referent. In the martini example, the man referred to by means of the description 'the man drinking a martini' may actually be drinking water, not martini. Such 'improper' uses of definite descriptions have been ignored by proponents of the standard semantic account, or explicitly put aside as semantically irrelevant (Recanati 1993 : 281-84).

The Millian thinks a directly referential expression is like a tag, so if a definite description can be a device of direct reference, it must be possible for it to target a referent and get assigned to it in context, *whether or not the referent possesses the property encoded by the description*. The property in question, though semantically encoded, becomes irrelevant when the description is used referentially because the mechanism through which the referent is determined is no longer the satisfactional mechanism but a different, relational mechanism.

I think Martì is right: the anti-descriptivist thrust of early theories of direct reference such as Donnellan's is lost if we say that the singular predicate encoded by a referentially used description or an indexical 'fixes the reference' of the expression. Two-dimensional Descriptivism is still Descriptivism. The mental-file account preserves the original, Millian inspiration of direct reference theories in giving pride of place to acquaintance relations and downplaying satisfactional factors. According to the account, a referentially used description refers to what the mental file containing the encoded predicate is about, and the file is about the entity to which it is appropriately related. That entity may or may not satisfy the singular predicate which occurs in the file and which the referential description exploits (to activate in the hearer's mind the appropriate counterpart of the mental file in the speaker's mind). In Donnellan's example, 'the man drinking a martini', the singular predicate does not even 'fix the reference' since the reference does not satisfy the predicate.

To say that the referent of a referential expression is the referent of the appropriate file is to say that linguistic meaning does not determine reference directly, as it does on 'satisfactional' approaches. The linguistic meaning of a referential expression (whether a description, an indexical, or a name) [9] takes us to an intermediary entity, namely the relevant

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[9] In the case of proper names the mode of presentation contributed by the expression type is arguably metalinguistic. The referent of a name NN is presented as *bearing the name NN*. In addition proper names carry the feature REF. The utterance of a name NN therefore triggers

mental file, and the reference of the expression just is the reference of the file. As Chastain puts it,

> A theory of singular reference will have to be combined with a systematic account of certain internal states of the speaker — his thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, memories, and so on — which are, so to speak, the intermediate links connecting the singular terms he utters with their referents out in the world. These intermediaries can themselves be understood only if we treat them as being quasi-linguistic in structure and content (…) and as containing elements analogous to singular terms which can be referentially connected with things in the world...' (Chastain 1975 : 197)

What about the semantic reference/speaker's reference distinction ? From Donnellan and Chastain to Martì, the Millians tend to ignore it, but that is a mistake. As far as I am concerned, I am in sympathy with the nonsatisfactional approach to reference determination put forward by the Millian — an approach I try to implement in my book *Mental Files* — but I take it as obvious that the use of *improper* descriptions to trigger the relevant mental file in the hearer's mind has no direct relevance to semantics. Such use is like the improper use of names, as Kripke pointed out.

Let us assume, with the Millian, that the reference of a description is determined nonsatisfactionally : it always is the reference of some file containing the predicate encoded by the description. We can *still* distinguish between the case in which the description is proper and the case in which it is improper. The reference of the file, on the improper use, will not count as semantic reference for obvious reasons ; it will be mere 'speaker's reference'. But when the reference of the file satisfies the descriptive material, the speaker's reference becomes semantic reference. On that view, which we may call the 'moderate Millian view' (MM view for short), neither the denotation nor the reference of the file count as 'semantic reference' when they diverge. There is semantic reference only when they converge.

One consequence of this view is that the day before the utterance (a day which Rip slept through and had no acquaintance with) *cannot be* the semantic reference in the Rip van Winkle case. It cannot be the reference (but only the denotation) because the epistemological constraints on reference are not met. But the day Rip was referring to — the day *d* he remembers and mistakes for the previous day — cannot be the semantic reference either. It

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the search for a mental file containing the information 'called NN'. The referent of a file containing that information may not actually be called by that name (improper uses).

cannot be the semantic reference (but only the speaker's reference) because the correctness conditions imposed by the linguistic material are not met.

5. <u>An Argument for the Millian View</u>

On the MM view the reference (vs denotation) of a description always is the reference of some mental file or dossier to which the description belongs (Grice 1969), but there are two sorts of case to consider. The reference of a file counts as 'semantic reference' when, and only when, the predicate used to activate the file is a predicate which the reference actually satisfies.

What exactly is the difference between the MM view and the standard semantic account ? If Martì is right, the problem with the standard semantic account is that the semantic reference is said to be determined satisfactionally : it is what fits the singular predicate encoded by the referring expression. To be sure, the speaker's referential intention is acknowledged and ascribed semantic significance : when a description is used referentially the referent goes into truth-conditional content in lieu of the reference-fixing condition. But the descriptive condition encoded by the expression is what determines the reference, and that is what the Millian is objecting to. On the MM view, in contrast, the reference is determined relationally — it is the reference of the file — even if satisfaction of the encoded predicate comes into play to distinguish semantic reference from speaker's reference.

Is there an argument in support of the MM view as opposed to what I will henceforth call the satisfactional view ? I think there is. It has been pointed out that, just like definite descriptions, *indefinite* descriptions can be used referentially to activate a file (Chastain 1975). George Wilson (1978) gives the following example :

(1)   A convicted embezzler is trying to seduce your sister

The non-singular predicate 'convicted embezzler' encoded by the indefinite description in (1) does not determine a unique object, so the reference cannot be determined satisfactionally here – it is bound to be determined relationally (the speaker is referring to the man he is looking at). To be sure, this is not much of a problem for the satisfactional approach because, on standard accounts, indefinite descriptions are not semantically referential, so they should not be expected to carry 'semantic reference' anyway: whatever reference occurs with them is

bound to be speaker's reference. The satisfactional view need not deny that speaker's reference is determined relationally. Its claim only concerns semantic reference.

But the same sort of problem arises with so-called 'incomplete' definite descriptions, e.g. 'the man', 'the car', or 'the table'. Incomplete descriptions are like indefinite descriptions in that they fail to determine a singular denotation. They can only achieve singular reference *via the file to which they belong*. But, qua *definite* descriptions, they are supposed to carry semantic reference.[10] So they raise a dilemma for the satisfactional theorist : s/he must either give up the claim that incomplete descriptions have semantic referents, or give up the claim that semantic reference is determined satisfactionally. Since the latter claim defines the view as opposed to the MM view, the first option is the only one that can be seriously considered. So the satisfactional theorist must say that an incomplete description can only carry speaker's reference, not semantic reference. From a semantic point of view, incomplete descriptions are defective.

The problem is that almost all the definite descriptions we use in referential communication are incomplete, so an account which treats them as special in this way (and passes them down to another branch of the theory — the pragmatics — for special treatment) is less attractive than an account which straightforwardly makes room for them. This suggests that we should rather start from incomplete descriptions, and acknowledge the fact that they don't 'denote' (in Donnellan's sense). Given that they don't denote, if they are still granted a semantic referent, *that referent will not be determined satisfactionally, but via the files to which the non singular predicate belongs*. As Donnellan writes,

> In these examples some particular [objects] are being talked about, and the definite descriptions (…) seem surely to have particular semantic referents. If the descriptive content of the uttered descriptions even augmented by background assumptions, etc., is insufficient to determine the referents, how is this possible ? My answer will not be unexpected. The person having some [object] in mind to talk about can provide the needed definiteness. (1978 : 60-61)[11]

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[10] Or at least, that is so *unless* one accepts Russell's claim that definite descriptions are just as nonreferential semantically as indefinite descriptions. See Neale 1990 for a defence of that view.

[11] See Strawson 1950 : 14-15 for a similar argument using incomplete descriptions. Kripke himself suggests that incomplete descriptions are the best argument in favour of Donnellan's picture (Kripke 1977 : 255-56, 271).

At this point, to unify the theory of descriptions, the best strategy is to generalize this relational account to all definite descriptions. On the resulting account (the MM view), the reference of a referentially used description is the reference of some file containing the encoded predicate, and it counts as 'semantic reference' only if it actually satisfies the predicate. (The predicate in question may, but need not, be singular.)

The MM view is similar to the view held by some linguists regarding pronouns, including indexical pronouns such as 'I' and 'you'. Pronouns are treated as variables which (unless they are bound) must be assigned values in context, and which also carry presuppositions, corresponding to the 'features' of the pronoun (gender, number, etc.). The semantic reference of a pronoun is the value contextually assigned to it, *provided* the value in question satisfies the presuppositions. There is no semantic reference if the value assigned to the pronoun does not satisfy the presuppositions – for example if I point to a male person and say 'She is a philosopher'. The analysis extends to indexical pronouns such as 'I' and 'you' : in this case what is presupposed is that the individual the speaker contextually refers to possesses the property of being the speaker or the hearer. If the presupposition is satisfied, the speaker's referent becomes the semantic reference of the pronoun ; otherwise the pronoun fails to semantically refer. Schlenker gives the following example :

> Suppose that I am pointing towards one person (say, to my right) while talking to another person (to my left). If I then utter *You are nice* with emphasis on *you* and a correlative pointing gesture, the result is decidedly odd — in the same way as if, pointing towards John, I were to say: *She is nice.* This is a welcome result: a presupposition failure is predicted because the person that is pointed to is not an addressee of the speech act (similarly, *she is nice* is odd when pointing to John because *she* carries a presupposition that it denotes a female individual). (Schlenker 2005 : 162)

I suggest generalizing this view : in referential communication, the descriptive meaning of the referring expression (the predicate it encodes) acts like a presupposition which the speaker's reference (viz. the reference of the associated mental file) must satisfy. The speaker's reference becomes the semantic reference only if the presupposition is satisfied.[12]

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[12] The idea that what fixes the reference of a referential expression always is some associated mental file may seem incompatible with the view that some referential expressions, e.g. proper names, have a reference of their own, independent of what users of the expression use

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it to refer to. But the two ideas can be reconciled by appealing to the notion of *public file* (a notion I think we need anyway) : we can say that the reference of a name — i.e. the name's *semantic* reference — is the reference of the public file associated with it. In the Smith/Jones case, the public file associated with the name 'Jones' refers to Jones (and does so in virtue of relational factors), while the demonstrative file deployed by the speaker who mistakenly thinks he sees Jones refers to Smith.

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