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# MODES OF PRESENTATION AND WAYS OF APPEARING: A CRITICAL REVISION OF EVANS'S ACCOUNT\*

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## abstract

*There are many ways in which a subject can think about an object. One of these occurs when the subject can perceive the object: perceiving an object makes it possible to think about it in a very direct and straightforward way. This is so because perception of the object makes a subject aware of the object itself. But what is it to be (perceptually) aware of something? Moreover, how does such an awareness have to be accounted for? According to a very influential proposal leading back to Gareth Evans (1982), the kind of awareness that can home a subject's thought on an object has to be cashed out in terms of singular object-dependent modes of presentation understood as ways of having discriminating (albeit non-descriptive) knowledge of the object. Contra Evans I shall claim that modes of presentation thus characterized do not account for perceptual awareness, but rather presuppose it.*

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## keywords

*perceptual awareness, acquaintance, perceptual contact, ways of appearing*

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### 1. Introduction

The bulk of my paper is about the role that perception plays in our thinking about ordinary, environmental objects. It does not concern the traditional epistemic question of whether and how perception can justify our knowledge claims about the world. Rather, it concerns an issue which I think is preliminary to it and that should be settled in advance of any theorization about the epistemic, justificatory role of perception. This preliminary question is the following: how does perceiving an object make it possible to think about it? Dealing with such a question is of pivotal importance in order to understand the complex interplay between perception and thought and, more generally, the role that perception plays in our cognitive lives.

The question raised presupposes of course that perception (alone, or in combination with some other features) makes it possible to think about objects in our environment. It does not presuppose instead that perception is necessary (directly or indirectly) in order for any kind of thought to home in on an object. As a matter of fact, there are many kinds of thoughts that fix their aboutness utterly independently from perception. This is the case for example of all those thoughts that are about entities (such as numbers for example) whose abstract nature puts them outside the perceptual domain. But, even as regards concrete and therefore perceivable entities, perception is not necessary either. One can think of a concrete object without perceiving it, or even without ever having perceived it. Our question therefore only concerns those cases in which an object is within the subject's perceptual reach and ken. As regards these cases our main aim is to understand what role perception plays and how its playing such a role makes for a substantive difference in the way of functioning of perception-based thoughts.

Most people, and I side with them, agree in claiming that the way of functioning of perception-based (or more generally information-based) thoughts is different and irreducible to the way of functioning of thoughts which are not so based. While the latter fix their aboutness by specifying a set of descriptive identifying conditions (i.e. the conditions that something has to satisfy in order to qualify as the object the thought is about), the former fix it in a more direct way, a way that crucially depends on the existence of an information-perceptual link with the object itself.<sup>1</sup> But how does being perceptually linked with an object, being in

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<sup>1</sup> A distinction often used in this connection is that between satisfactoral vs. relational models of the determination of the aboutness of a given thought.

contact with an object through one's perception of it, make available a way of thinking of the object that does not require the kind of cognitive, conceptual sophistication that is needed when the object is not perceptually available? A crucial step in answering this question goes through an understanding of the presentational role that perception plays in this connection. Clarifying this point helps in fixing one of the main differences between perceiving something and thinking of something. Both states are intentional in the sense of having directedness or aboutness. In so far as they are intentional, they present something to the subject (McGinn, 1988, p. 300). But, and here comes one crucial difference between them, the way in which the object is present is different in the two cases. Let me clarify this difference: in perception, the object is present merely in virtue of being there and within the subject's perceptual ken and reach (to have the object in view on the part of the subject only requires that her eyes are open and that she pays sufficient attention to it). Not so as regards thinking. In this case, the object's *being present* is the result of its *being presented*, that is: there must be something that puts the object before "the mind's eyes", so to say. In other terms, there must be something playing a presentational role. Thoughts differ as regards what plays this role: differences in ways of functioning have to do with what plays the presentational role and how. For thoughts that function according to the satisfactoral model, the presentational role is played by a descriptive component in the thought's content (a component that specifies the conditions that something has to satisfy for being eligible as the object the thought is about). As regards perception-based thoughts however, the presentational role is played (wholly or partly) by perception itself. The object is presented (is brought before the eyes's mind) in virtue of its being present in one's perception of it. Perception puts us in contact with the object in such a way as to enable our thoughts to home in directly on it. But what kind of perceptual contact is required to that end? In particular, is a mere informational contact sufficient to home a subject's thought on the object that is the source of the information, or what is needed is something over and above a mere information-link?

In the next section I shall present Evans's account of perception-based thoughts that is one of the most influential theoretical proposals that have been put forward in order to address the above mentioned issues. According to Evans, the existence of a mere information-causal link is not sufficient to account for the kind of perceptual contact with an object suited to ground a thought about it. What more is required, according to Evans, is something that accounts for the subject's awareness of the object. In trying to account for such an awareness, Evans introduced modes of presentation of the objects conceived as ways of identifications that strictly depend on the existence of an information-link with the object. These modes are singular, object-dependent and very fine-grained. According to Evans, they are modes of presentations so conceived that account for the object's being perceptually presented to the thinking subject. Even though I agree that perception-based thoughts involve modes of presentation of their objects different from those involved in thoughts that function according to the satisfactoral model, I disagree on how modes of presentations have to be conceived in order to provide awareness of the object. In particular, I shall claim that (i) Evans's modes of presentation do not account for the subject's awareness of the object, but rather presuppose it; and (ii) to account for such awareness one needs modes of presentations playing the role of ways of appearing.

After having introduced Evans's account, I shall take into consideration a criticism recently raised by Michelle Montague (2016) against it. Even though Montague's criticism and my own one present strong similarities, the way in which I propose to correct the inadequacies of Evans's account is very different from Montague's. The main difference has to do with the account provided of the role of appearances. Whereas she characterizes them in purely subjective, phenomenological terms, I opt for a characterization that makes room for

appearances conceived as objective and mind-independent features of objects. In my view only such an account is consistent with Evans's claim that perception makes available ways of thinking that are about their object in a direct, non-descriptive, non-inferential way. The emerging picture provides an account of acquaintance which turns out to be closer to Russell's way of conceiving it than Evans's was, while avoiding at the same time the pitfalls of the sense datum theory that led Evans to part company from Russell's characterization of that notion.

**2. Evans's account of perception-based thoughts**

I shall here confine my attention to perceptual demonstrative thoughts,<sup>2</sup> that is thoughts that are typically expressed by sentences in which present-tense demonstratives occur such as "That G is F" (i.e. "that tree over there is a Pohutukawa", "that bird is a Kiwi", "that cup is yellow"). These are thoughts about spatio-temporal objects which are made available to a thinking subject on the ground of his standing in a perceptual relation with the objects his thought is about.

Evans's account of this kind of thoughts qualifies as an acquaintance-based account. In order to get a grip on the peculiarity of Evans's proposal it has to be stressed that there are two main families of such accounts: the epistemic and the causal ones.<sup>3</sup> Both depart radically from Russell's characterization of the notion of acquaintance,<sup>4</sup> mainly on the ground that it promotes an unbearable restriction of its extent to only sensible particulars, universals and abstract logical facts (1914, p. 127).<sup>5</sup> What motivates both parties in taking this move away from Russell is the willingness to accommodate within the relational model of genuine reference our ordinary reference to mind-independent objects. This point of agreement notwithstanding, the two families differ radically as regards the requirements they put on the acquaintance relation. Whereas the latter claims that a causal connection with the object is sufficient to ground a thought about it, the former, while acknowledging the relevance of causal links (and more generally of external constraints), stresses the need of an internal constraint (which is characterized in epistemic terms). Evans in *The Varieties of Reference* provided one of the most comprehensive account of the epistemic variety of the acquaintance-based model by criticizing the rival, merely causal, account that he labelled the "Photograph model" of singular mental reference. In that work, in the attempt to extend the application domain of the relational (i.e. non-satisfactional) model beyond Russell's strictures, in full

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2 Perceptual demonstrative thoughts are for Evans a proper sub-class of demonstrative thoughts. Demonstrative thoughts for him include also spatial thoughts – of which "Here-thoughts" represent the paradigmatic case – and "I-thoughts" which are typically expressed by sentences in which a token of the first-person pronoun occurs. What motivates Evans in working with a unified category of demonstrative thoughts is a couple of ideas. First, the idea that all these thoughts share the same kind of identification of their aboutness. Second, the idea that the three kinds in question are not autonomous but complementary. In his account he illustrates the interplay between the three kinds by showing that one cannot demonstratively identify an object without at the same time being able to identify the place it occupies, where this identification requires, in turn, the capacity on the part of the thinking subject to conceive of himself as an object among others.

3 For the difference between these two accounts and their respective pros and cons see Hawthorne & Manley (2012).

4 For Russell's characterization of the notion see Russell, 1911, pp. 209-210; 1912, p. 46 and 1914, p. 127. In these passages Russell characterizes acquaintance as a dual cognitive relation between subject and object, a relation that provides awareness of the object in the most possible direct way, that is without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truth. For Russell, acquaintance is the most basic cognitive relation in the sense of being presupposed by all other cognitive relation (among which he mentions: attention, sensation, memory, imagination, believing, disbelieving).

5 For Russell (1912, p. 51) we have acquaintance in sensation with the data of what he calls the outer senses, in introspection with the data of what he calls the inner sense, in memory with things that have been data either of the outer senses or of the inner sense. He also admits that we have acquaintance with universals, logical forms and (perhaps) oneself.

adherence with “Russell’s Principle” (RP) (also known as “the know-which requirement”),<sup>6</sup> Evans promoted a radical revision of Russell’s picture whose upshot is his neo-Fregean theory of singular, object-dependent thoughts.

Before illustrating the main points of departure from Russell’s theory, it is worth stressing the extent of Evans’s agreement with Russell. First of all, Evans agrees with Russell on the idea that genuine referential expressions do not function in the way in which definite descriptions do. The main difference between the two kinds of expressions amounts to the fact that in the case of the former, but not of the latter, their contribution to the thought (proposition in Russell’s terminology) expressed depends on their having a referent, in such a way that if there is no referent there is no thought/proposition expressed.<sup>7</sup> The second point of agreement is the idea that what has to be considered in order to account for the different way in which the various referential expressions perform their common function – i.e. that of identifying an object – is the way in which the thoughts expressed by utterances in which referential expressions occur are about the objects they are about (Evans, 1982, p. 64). Thirdly, Evans agrees with Russell on the idea that what has to be considered in order to account for the way in which the aboutness of a given thought is secured is the kind of knowledge of the object that a subject has to have in order to think the thought in question, or, which amounts to the same in his view, in order to understand an utterance which expresses it. Finally, he agrees with Russell on the idea that genuine singular thoughts have to be grounded (on pain of the whole system of identification failing to be tied down to a unique set of objects)<sup>8</sup> on a kind of knowledge of the object radically different from knowledge by description. The kind of knowledge in question depends on the subject’s being *en rapport* with the objects of her thought in such a way that no such thought would be available if the objects in question did not exist and the subject did not stand in this particular kind of relation with them.

These points of agreement notwithstanding, Evans disagrees with Russell on the idea that the only objects about which one can have direct non-inferential knowledge are mind-dependent ones.

Let us now consider how Evans’s project of extending the relational model beyond Russell’s narrow limits in full adherence to the “know-which requirement” is achieved. There are at least four points that need to be acknowledged to appreciate Evans’s project. The first two are: (1) the rejection of Russell’s interpretation of genuine epistemic requirements upon direct reference as requirements of infallibility, and (2) the rejection of Russell’s Cartesian conception of the mind.<sup>9</sup> The adoption of these two points – which corresponds to the first step of Evans’s strategy – makes it possible to extend Russell’s model of acquaintance to ordinary spatio-temporal, mind-independent objects. The other step of his strategy – which aims at making the obtained extension compatible with the dictates of (RP) – is achieved

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6 The requirement according to which in order for a subject to have a thought – or to make a judgment – about an object she must have knowledge of which object is in question (Russell 1912: 58). For the connection between Russell’s Principle and the Principle of acquaintance see Sacchi 2001, pp. 21-29.

7 Thoughts expressed by genuine referential expressions are thus claimed to be “object-dependent” or, as Evans labels them, “Russellian thoughts”.

8 Evans is here considering the problem of “massive reduplication” raised by Strawson (1959, chp. 1).

9 The two points are strictly connected: it was Russell’s adherence to a Cartesian conception of the mind (and in particular to the idea that we have infallible and authoritative knowledge of the items in the mental domain) that motivated his peculiar way of interpreting the nature of the epistemic requirements upon direct reference. The upshot of Evans’s move is to acknowledge that we are directly knowledgeable open to the world in thought, even though our “openness” is intrinsically fallible. This is so because, according to Evans, which contents we happen to entertain depends (among other things) on which objects in the world we directly interact with, objects about whose existence and nature we cannot be infallible.

though (3) the rejection of the idea that Russell's intuitions about the functioning of genuine referential expressions are incompatible with the ascription to those expressions of a sense, and (4) the acknowledgment of the possibility of non-descriptive singular senses. These non-descriptive modes of identification are, according to Evans, singular object-dependent senses. They are ways of identification of particulars that depend for their existence on the identified particulars themselves. In Evans's Frege-inspired revision of Russell's relational model of singular reference the kind of direct, non-inferential knowledge of the object able to ground non-descriptive thoughts amounts to the subject's practical ability to discriminate the object of her thought from any other objects, on the ground of the subject's standing, or having been stood, in some kind of direct, experiential, contextual relation with the object itself, where the paradigm of this kind of relation is provided by (even though not restricted to) the perceptual case (Evans, 1982, chp. 5).

Crucial in Evans's proposal was a drastic revision of the notion of experience. Evans replaced Russell's somewhat technical use of the notion – which was motivated by Russell's idea that the term 'experience' must not be used uncritically in philosophy on account of the "vague, fluctuating and ambiguous" meaning of the term in its ordinary use (Russell, 1914, p. 129) – with a use according to which experiencing an object means consciously receiving information from it. But for Evans, unlike Russell, experiencing an object is not sufficient in order for a subject to have knowledge of the object. Having knowledge of the object is for Evans having a discriminating knowledge, acquired on the basis of the subject's receiving or having received information from the object. This kind of discriminating knowledge does not amount to possessing some piece of propositional knowledge. Rather, it is a kind of "practical" knowledge (knowledge of the "know-how" variety) which manifests itself in the subject's capacity to attend selectively to a single thing over a period of time or, as Evans puts it, a capacity to keep track of it. Having this discriminating ability is for Evans to possess an "idea" of an object. In turn, having an idea of an object amounts to having a general ability that "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 it in the same way" (1982, p. 104).<sup>10</sup>

I think that Evans was right in stressing, against what he called "the Photograph Model", that a correct account of perceptual demonstrative thoughts requires not only an external constraint but also an internal one. The role of the internal constraint was to account in his view for the way in which the object is presented. In stressing the role of a "presentational element" in an acquaintance-based account of mental reference Evans showed adherence to an important aspect of Russell's picture, according to which the acquaintance relation between subject and object is the converse of the relation between object and subject which constitutes presentation (Russell, 1911, pp. 209-210). A subject is acquainted with an object only insofar as the object is experientially presented to him. But what kind of presentedness has to be in place in order for one to stand in an acquaintance relation with something suited to ground a thought about it? Moreover, does Evans's account provide an adequate characterization of it?

### 3. Revising Evans's account

Evans's account has been very influential in all the subsequent philosophical debate on the intersection between perception and thought. Some scholars have tried to develop more broadly some of Evans's insights by preserving his main tenets while others have taken a more radical critical attitude towards his proposal. Some people have criticized Evans's idea that perceptual demonstrative identification requires the capacity on the part of the thinking subject to locate the object in the objective space. Contra Evans, people like Campbell

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<sup>10</sup> This is called the "Generality Constraint" that Evans put on the possession conditions of concepts.

(2002, p. 112) for example, have contested the necessity of Evans's internal requirement by claiming that a subject can entertain a perceptual demonstrative thought about an object even though she is wrong about the object's actual location.<sup>11</sup> Here we will not consider those criticisms that contest the necessity of Evans's requirements; rather, we shall concentrate on criticisms that are targeted on their sufficiency. One such criticism has recently been raised by Montague (2016) in the context of developing an account of what she labels the "access problem" and that she presents as "the problem of giving a characterization of the mechanism that determines *which particular object* a subject is perceiving or thinking of on a particular occasion" (p. 142). As a matter of fact, this very issue was at the core of Evans's philosophical project as well (even though Evans would not have resorted to the notion of "mechanism" in framing the problem) and Montague's discussion of Evans's answer to that problem is aimed at paving the way for her alternative proposal. Montague agrees with Evans that no purely externalist answer to the access problem can be adequate and that an internal requirement accounting for the way in which the object is presented is an indispensable ingredient of any adequate explanation. Her point of disagreement with Evans concerns the nature of the internal requirement. In her view, Evans's way of accounting for the access problem in terms of Russell's Principle (the "know-which requirement") was wrong. She says that one of the main distinctive features of her view as opposed to a view such as Evans's based on (RP) "is the emphasis it places on the phenomenological features of experience. It states that a certain number of phenomenological features of a perceptual experience need to be in place in order for the perceptual experience to qualify as perceiving some particular object [...]. The claim, then, is that one has to consider phenomenology, narrowly construed, when determining the object of a thought or perception" (pp. 145-146). We can rephrase this point by saying that the main point of disagreement concerns the nature of the internal requirement: Evans characterizes it in epistemic terms (in terms of a notion of knowing-which that he took to be more basic than the notion of thinking of an object) while Montague provides a phenomenological characterization of it. In order to show the inadequacy of Evans's account, Montague proceeds by presenting some cases in which, even though Evans's conditions are satisfied (according to her interpretation of those conditions),<sup>12</sup> there is a strong reluctance in allowing that in such cases the subject succeeds in homing her thought on the object. She provides an example in which a subject is in causal contact with something (a garden shed) but, due to some kind of garbling and distortion, the light-waves reflected by the shed reach the subject rearranged in such a way that the subject ends up having an experience as of a pink elephant (p. 153). According to Montague, since the subject is in causal contact with the shed and has discriminating knowledge about it (in so far as she can locate and track it), it ought to follow, if Evans were right, that the subject can think about the shed. But this is false; the subject of the example does not see the shed (because her apprehension or representation of it is too inaccurate) and *a fortiori* cannot think about it either (assuming, she adds, that the subject has no other access to it); therefore, Montague concludes, Evans's account is wrong (pp. 159-161). The strategy that Montague follows to show that Evans's internal condition

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11 In Evans's picture, the necessity of the "location requirement" is grounded on the role played by "fundamental ideas". The part of his work having to do with such ideas and the role they are supposed to play in accounting for the "Generality Constraint" is, according to many people, one of the most problematic in his overall picture. I have dealt with this topic in Sacchi, 2001, pp. 97-107 where I revised Evans's requirement with a weaker one based on the notion of "apparent location" of the object.

12 I stress this point because, as I shall say, I do not think that her interpretation of Evans's conditions does full justice to Evans's account in so far as it does not assign to a notion that occurs in Evans's picture (the notion of "having an adequate conception of the object") the importance I think it deserves.



on the access problem is wrong is therefore the following: first she tries to show that it is insufficient in the case of seeing an object; then she extends this point to the more general issue having to do with what it is for a subject to have an object in mind.<sup>13</sup> It is important to clarify that for the sake of Montague's argument it is fundamental that the case presented is not taken as one of hallucination. For if it were, the external requirement would not be satisfied: an object must exist in order for a subject to stand in an information-link with it. She also rules out that such a case can be taken as one of illusion, because illusion requires that the object be perceived (albeit misleadingly), whereas in the case considered this requirement is not satisfied due to too strong a deception on the subject's part. We can say that the degree of deception that this case presents is lower than that of hallucination but somewhat higher than that of an ordinary illusory experience.<sup>14</sup> Montague's suggestion is to treat it as a case in which while the subject is in visual contact with the object, she is not in perceptual contact with it.<sup>15</sup> Visual contact for her is something in between mere informational contact and true perceptual contact. It requires visual phenomenology and also that some counterfactual dependencies related to eyes and body movement hold (the subject's experience of the object must correlate with his eyes and body movements).<sup>16</sup> But mere visual contact is not enough for seeing, she claims. The subject of the example does not see the shed because there is too much mismatch between how things appear to her and how things are. It is precisely such a mismatch that prevents the subject from being in perceptual contact with the shed. But how wrong can one be before perceptual contact fails? Her answer to this question is the "matching content view" according to which "for a perceptual experience to be about an object, there must be a certain degree of match between the properties an object has and the properties the perceptual experience represents the object as having" (p. 145). The idea is therefore that one must correctly represent a sufficient number of the object's properties in order for it to be true that one sees the object. To sum up: in order for someone to be in perceptual contact with an object it is not enough either to stand in an informational contact with the object, or to stand with it in visual contact, or to possess a discriminating idea of the object. What more is required is that the subject's experience has the right kind of content, a content which she qualifies as phenomenological in so far as it concerns the properties that the represented object (phenomenally) appears to have. Which object a given subject is in perceptual contact with is the one that satisfies most or a 'weighted most' of the set of the properties that the subject's experience represents the object as having.

Is Montague right in claiming that Evans's account is inadequate because he would have said that the subject of the example can think about the garden shed? I have to express my disagreement with Montague on this point. In my view, what Evans would have said as regards her example, which is very similar to one he himself provides (Evans, 1982, pp. 196-197), is that the subject cannot be credited with such a thought because, even though his attempted

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13 Actually, it has to be stressed that Russell's Principle was not meant by Evans as an internal requirement applicable to perceptual experiences, but only to thoughts. Not only the claim that in order to perceptually experience an object a subject has to have a discriminating idea of it does not figure in his work, but it also seems to collide with his adherence to non-conceptualism as regards the content of perceptual experience.

14 Ultimately it is not very clear how one should treat such a case. Is it a case of imagination somewhat prompted by visual stimulation?

15 I find this distinction somewhat unclear. Moreover, her characterization of the notion of perceptual contact in terms of phenomenal content seems to me to be tendentious.

16 This is how Montague characterizes this notion: "Visual contact is causal and sensory contact of a sort that involves the impact of light on a sensory organ, and gives rise to experiences of colour and shape of a kind that can be sufficiently indicated by saying that they are of the same sort phenomenologically speaking as experiences of the kind we call 'visual'" (2016, p. 154).



thought is based on information derived from the shed, the information-link at play does not provide the subject with an *effective route* to the shed (notwithstanding the subject's ability to locate and keep track of it). And this is so because the *conception* of the target which governs the subject's attempted thought of the shed is too defective in this case. The notion of conception that Evans mobilizes in this connection is very important to address the issue at stake; I think that Montague, while considering the passages in which Evans makes use of this notion, does not give it the importance it deserves. According to Evans, an information-based thought is governed by a conception of its object that is the result of a belief about how the world is which the subject has because he has received information (p. 121).<sup>17</sup> He adds that as far as perceptual demonstrative thoughts are concerned, their governing conception is determined only by the content of the perception. He admits that the information link may not be functioning well so long as it provides an effective route to the object (p. 179). This requirement is not satisfied when there is too much error in the perceptual-based beliefs that the subject forms on the basis of the information-link and which ground the guiding conception of his attempted thought. Seeing a garden shed as a pink elephant is to host an inadequate conception of the target which, in turn, prevents a subject from entertaining a sufficiently clear idea of the object. In such cases, Evans says, "there is some inclination to say that the attempted thought lacks a content" (p. 197). So, to resume my assessment of this case, I think that, given the role that Evans assigned to the notion of "having an adequate conception of the object" he would not have taken cases such as the garden shed one as counterexamples to his account of perceptual based demonstrative thoughts.<sup>18</sup> If I am right, it follows that Evans's account of the internal requirement is more complex than Montague's reconstruction of it in so far as it does not seem to be exhausted by Russell's Principle. By integrating within the picture the notion of "having a conception of the object" the result is a threefold requirement on a subject's ability to perceptually demonstratively refer to an object in one's thought:

- i. the subject must stand in an information-link with something (the thought's target);
- ii. the subject must be able, on the ground of that link, to form an adequate conception of the thought's target;
- iii. the subject must be able, on the ground of that conception, to form a sufficiently clear idea of an object (an idea that singles that object out from any other object).

It is true that in the example that Montague provides the subject is in an information-link with the shed and moreover possesses discriminating knowledge of it. But, if my interpretation of Evans's requirement is correct, this would not be enough in order to credit the subject with a thought about the shed, because in such a case clause (ii) of the complex requirement is not satisfied. This said, it has to be emphasized that, besides some few scattered hints, Evans did not provide any detailed account of what it is for a guiding conception to be adequate. This is certainly a lacuna in his account. But what this lacuna shows is that Evans's account, as

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17 What he meant in speaking of a subject's thinking being governed by a conception of its object is that "the way he entertains the thoughts (as probable, improbable, true, or false), and the significance he attaches to them (the consequences he is prepared to draw from them) are determined by the content of this conception" (p. 121).

18 It is true that Evans says that a subject can have a perfectly clear idea of an object even though she misperceives its properties and get altogether quite a wrong view of the thing (p. 179). But he also adds that what is required is that the information-link with the object provides the subject with an effective route to the object. In my way of reading Evans, the satisfaction of this requirement has to do with the kind of conception of the object that the subject is able to acquire on the basis of her perceptual experience.

it stands, is incomplete, not that it is wrong. What interests me here is to consider whether there is a way in which this lacuna could be filled in a way which is consistent with Evans's claim that we can make direct, non-inferential reference in our thinking to ordinary external objects.

#### 4. Modes of presentations and ways of appearing

What is lacking in Evans's official doctrine is a detailed account of what it is for a subject to entertain an adequate conception of a thought's target. In my view, in order to provide such an account, Evans should have assigned to conscious experience a far more important role than he did. He stressed that the information received from the object must be consciously possessed by the subject (p. 158), but what he meant by this was that the information must be poised for use for the direct rational control of thought and action.<sup>19</sup> We can say, by resorting to Block's (1995) distinction between access consciousness and phenomenal consciousness, that Evans only considered the cognitive-access aspect of conscious experience, almost neglecting its experiential-phenomenal aspect. What was needed instead was an account of how an object has to appear in order for a subject to be in perceptual contact with it. He acknowledged that not any possible way of appearing is compatible with the subject's standing in perceptual contact with an object. But then he did not say anything about how ways of appearing of the object have to be conceived and moreover in which relation do they stand with (cognitive) modes of presentation.

Let me expand on this point in order to clarify the connection between cognitive modes of presentation, ways of appearing and awareness of the object. In several passages of his work, Evans explicitly links the notion of a mode of presentation with the notion of awareness of the object (1982, p. 83). Awareness of the object should provide the subject with an "effective route to the object". And yet, cognitive modes of presentation do not seem to be good candidates for playing that role. As a matter of fact, in the garden shed example provided by Montague the subject possesses discriminating knowledge of the object (she can locate the object and keep track of it) and therefore possesses a mode of presentation of the object and yet what she lacks is precisely awareness of the object.<sup>20</sup> This raises a perplexity that it is important to articulate in order to understand what I take to be an ambiguity hidden behind Evans's use of the notion of "having an effective route to the object". The perplexity is the following: how could a subject in a situation such as the one that Montague presents lack an effective route to the object, given that she can locate and keep track of it? Isn't this enough in order to have an effective route to the object? In general, Evans's use of this notion is taken to have cognitive-epistemic connotations and it is presented in connection with modes of presentation. A mode of presentation, so conceived, is something that provides a subject with an epistemic route to the object the mode of presentation is a mode of presentation of. In the garden shed example we can say that the subject has a cognitive-epistemic route to the object and yet such a route turns out to be incapable in homing the thought on the relevant object because of the lack of "another kind of route", experiential rather than cognitive, actually more basic than the previous one. How does the notion of having an effective experiential route to the object have

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<sup>19</sup> In one of the rare passages in which he talks about conscious experience he says "we arrive at conscious perceptual experience when sensory input is not only connected to behavioural dispositions [...] but also serves as the input to a *thinking, concept-applying, and reasoning system*; so that the subject's thoughts, plans, and deliberations are also systematically dependent on the informational properties of the input. When there is such a further link, we can say that the person, rather than just some part of his brain, receives and possesses the information" (Evans, 1982, p. 158).

<sup>20</sup> People who claim that awareness of the object only requires possession of information about the object enabling the subject to point to it will disagree on this point. For a discussion on this issue see e.g. Dretske, 2006.

to be conceived then in its application to the content of perceptual experience? I think, and this is what I take to be the second reading of Evans's use of this notion, that such a notion in its non-cognitive/epistemic reading, concerns the appearance of the object. A perceptual experience provides a subject with an (experiential) route to the object (able to ground a cognitive-epistemic route to it) in so far as it makes the object appear to the subject. This is required in order to be perceptually aware of the object. A subject cannot be perceptually aware of an object if the object does not appear to her and the object's perceptually appearing to her is what provides the subject with an experiential route to the object.<sup>21</sup> This conclusion has important repercussions on Evans' picture. Cognitive modes of presentation do not account for awareness of the object after all. If such an awareness is not already provided, they are by themselves unable to provide it. It follows that Evans was wrong in thinking that they are cognitive modes of presentation that provide awareness of the object.

I think that behind Montague's criticism of Evans's account there is a similar diagnosis of what is lacking in it. She claims that Evans's internal requirement (clause (iii) in the threefold requirement) is not sufficient because that requirement can be instantiated even in cases in which the subject is not in perceptual contact with the object. As I said I think she is wrong in claiming that in the case presented Evans would have said that the subject can think about the shed (because in such a situation clause (ii) would not be satisfied). But she is right in claiming that an internal requirement only framed in terms of Russell's Principle is insufficient. As I said, I take it to be insufficient because, by itself, it does not provide awareness of the object. It is true that Evans stressed that the subject needs to possess an adequate conception of the object, but he actually did not articulate this point. My suspicion is that had he explicitly articulated this part of his proposal, he would have been compelled to downplaying the role of (cognitive) modes of presentation in his account and conceive of them as grounded on more basic modes of presentation having an experiential nature.

It seems that in his attempt to combine Russell's picture of direct reference as a kind of semantic relation grounded in a basic epistemic relation of acquaintance with Frege's idea that reference is always guided by modes of presentation of the object, Evans has ended up impoverishing Russell's notion of acquaintance to the point of making it unsuited to provide the kind of direct (experiential) contact with the object able to sustain awareness of it. But could Evans have filled this lacuna without abandoning the idea that perception-based thoughts are about ordinary external objects in a direct, non-inferential way?

To start answering this question let us consider whether Evans could have filled such a lacuna by adopting something along the lines of Montague's matching content view. Actually, there are passages in Evans's work that seem to encourage the idea that he had something similar in mind when he talks about the adequacy requirements upon a subject's conception of an object.<sup>22</sup> He explicitly says that there are cases in which it is not appropriate to credit the subject with an adequate conception of the object, because there is too much mismatch between how things appear and how things are. Does this show that he could have had in mind

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21 To sum up: I think that Evans's use of the notion of "having an effective route to the object" is ambiguous between a cognitive-epistemic reading and an experiential one. Even though Evans did not explicitly articulate the relationship between these two readings of the notion, it seems coherent with what he says about the role of the notion of "having an adequate conception of the object" that the experiential reading is more basic than the cognitive-epistemic one. Ditto for the relationship between ways of appearing (or experiential modes of presentation) and cognitive modes of presentation. The former account for awareness of the object. The latter presuppose such an awareness and make it manifest at the cognitive level (in particular, in the subject's ability to take information from the object as immediately germane for the semantic evaluation of her thoughts about it).

22 On p. 134 note 21 for example he says "There is some degree of incorrectness in a subject's conception of an object that makes it pointless to ascribe thoughts about it to him".

something along the lines of the matching content view?

In my view, whatever he could have had in mind, such a picture would not have been compatible with his idea that singular thoughts secure their reference in a direct, non-descriptive way. In my view, the adoption of the matching view would not have allowed him to preserve this central feature of his account of singular mental reference. To see why this is so, let us consider the account that Montague provides of what she calls the mechanism of the determination of the aboutness of a perception-based thought. In her view, the thought's aboutness is determined partly by external features (causal-information connections with the environment) and partly by internal phenomenal features. What a given thought is about is the object that stands in the right kind of causal connections with the thought and that satisfies most or a 'weighted most' of the set of the properties that the thought's content represents the object as having.<sup>23</sup> Such a content involves modes of presentation of the object that are only contingently related with the objects a given thought is about.<sup>24</sup>

Could Evans have endorsed one such model? I think not, because he would have considered it inadequate to account for the peculiar way of functioning of singular information-based thoughts. For him, such thoughts do not function in a descriptive way and they do not settle their aboutness by way of a satisfactorial (or causal-satisfactorial) mechanism. Rather they fix it in a very direct way: the object a given information-based thought is about is the one that constitutes the modes of presentation that figure in its content. The object-dependency of modes of presentation was for Evans a non-dispensable feature in the account of the nature of what he, not accidentally, called singular thoughts.

It has to be stressed that this point is well taken by Montague, whose account of the access problem has actually an important section specifically devoted to the particularity issue. For her, a singular thought is a thought that purports to be about a particular individual (in this sense it differs from a purely descriptive thought that purports to be about whatever is the satisfier of a uniquely identifying definite description). This particularity however is not cashed out in terms of object-dependency, but rather in terms of a feature of the cognitive phenomenal character of the mental state that grounds the state's content. She calls this feature "the fundamental object-positing feature or taking as object".<sup>25</sup>

Whether the peculiar way of functioning of singular thoughts is actually reflected in their phenomenology,<sup>26</sup> the question still remains as to whether a phenomenological account of particularity is adequate to capture the kind of particularity that Evans wanted to capture in his account. One important distinction in this connection is that between two senses of particularity: the phenomenological and the relational sense.<sup>27</sup> It is the latter that Evans

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23 In specifying the mechanism of reference determination, Montague makes use of the so-called "cluster" version of the description theory. Her proposal is similar to Searle's even though, as she clarifies, while Searle's view proposes both a sufficient and a necessary condition on reference, her proposal only requires that the weighted cluster of descriptions be a necessary condition (p. 161).

24 The idea that there are internal, phenomenological constraints on the determination of the aboutness of a given thought is present in other authors who defend the phenomenal intentionality thesis. A case in point is provided by Horgan and Tienson (2002) in particular as regards the role they assign to "grounding presuppositions" (the set of presuppositions, determined by phenomenal intentionality, concerning the existence of, the persistence of, and various features of, the sort of entities presented in experience (528)).

25 "The idea is that demonstrative thoughts involving bare demonstratives such as [that (thing)] manifest a fundamental category of our thinking and indeed our experience in general—the concept or category OBJECT [...]. Object-positing delivers the this-object of perceptual experience. Even more strongly put, object-positing is the experiencing of a this-object. Experiencing this kind of thisness is a matter of being presented experientially with an identifiable and usually persisting unity, and this is just what object-positing does" (Montague, 2016, p. 138).

26 This is a claim explicitly endorsed by Farkas (2008) for example.

27 For this distinction see e.g. Schellenberg (2010) where the contrast between the two senses is expressed in

thought was indispensable in an account of singular thoughts and such a sense is not explained by the former, nor can it be reduced to it (Sacchi, 2013). That's why I think that Montague's proposal could not have been coherently accepted by Evans.

Is there a way in which Evans could have developed his picture in order to integrate the role that the appearance of the object plays in an account of awareness in a way compatible with the idea, taken from Russell, that the object itself is a constituent of the thought? I think that a positive answer to that question can be provided and in the remaining part of my paper I shall try to sketch how such an account could be given. One such account ought to satisfy (at least) the two following requirements: (i) it ought to mobilize ways of appearing of the object suited to account for the subject's awareness of the object; and (ii) suited to provide a non-satisfactory explanation of the mechanism of reference determination. Regardless of whether Montague's proposal satisfies the first requirement, the second one is not satisfied in the picture she provides.

I think that one of the main difficulties in trying to satisfy both requirements is due to the tendency to read the notion of appearance only in its psychological sense (as something having only to do with the subjective modifications in the subject's experience). Actually, this is an important sense of the notion of appearance, but it does not exhaust its full sense. As a matter of fact, nothing (different from the subject and her inner world) would appear to a disembodied soul in an empty world. Something (different from the subject and her inner world) appears to us because there is a world out there that appears. And that world would still appear even if no experiencing subject existed. In such a case there would not be appearing in the subjective, psychological sense, but there would still be appearing in the objective sense of the notion (Johnston, 2009). It is precisely this objective sense that is in my view relevant to consider here and this sense becomes available once one stops fixing only on the subjective reading of the notion. So the relevant contrast here is one between a subjective and an objective reading of the notion of "way of appearing". Let us try to clarify this distinction by making an example. Right now in front of me on my desk I have my laptop open. My laptop is purple and it appears purple. Its appearing purple has both a subjective reading (my experience of the colour of the laptop has a purple-ish phenomenal character) and an objective reading (the laptop appearing purple is a feature of the laptop itself: its looking purple is as objective as its being purple).<sup>28</sup>

The notion of appearance here is connected with the notions of look, seem. Jackson famously articulated some strands of these cognate notions by distinguishing three different, albeit related senses of them, namely: the epistemological, the comparative and the phenomenological. What I am here saying is that such a tripartition does not capture the complexity of these notions. There is (at least) a further sense, relevant to the phenomenological one, that is objective rather than subjective (Martin, 2010; Maund, 2003, cap. 7). The notion of a phenomenological-objective sense of appearing, while not as widespread as its subjective counterpart, figures in different authors.<sup>29</sup> So, there does not seem to be anything weird with such a notion. But how could such a notion be used in an account of perceptual contact that does not appeal to something along the lines of the matching content view?

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the following way: "a mental state instantiates relational particularity if and only if the experiencing subject is perceptually related to the particular object perceived. A mental state instantiates phenomenological particularity [...] if and only if the particularity is in the scope of how things seem to the subject, such that it seems to the subject that there is a particular object or a particular instance of a property present" (Schellenberg, 2010, pp. 22-23).

<sup>28</sup> The idea that there are objective ways of appearing is very well expressed in a passage by Austin in which he claims "I am not disclosing a fact about myself, but about petrol, when I say that petrol looks like water" (1962, 43).

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Shoemaker (1994, 2000) for the view that appearances are partly objective, and Noë (2005) for the idea that appearances are "perspectival properties" of objects. See also Schellenberg (2008) and Genone (2014).

This is the suggestion toward which I am inclined.<sup>30</sup> A subject is in perceptual contact with an object (and therefore has an adequate conception of it) if and only if she has an experience that is constituted by a phenomenological-objective way of appearing of the object (where a phenomenological-objective way of appearing is something that reveals properties that the object possesses relative to some environmental-contextual features such as the subject's point of view, the lighting conditions and so on and so forth). Let me make some example. The white way of appearing of a white wall under a neutral light is a phenomenological-objective way of appearing of the wall, because it reveals a property that the object possesses. But also the yellowish way of appearing of the white wall under a yellow light is a phenomenological-objective way of appearing of the white wall, because it reveals a property that the object possesses under those conditions: white objects have the property of appearing yellow under a yellow light. Ditto for a round coin appearing elliptical when seen from a certain position. A phenomenal-objective way of appearing is objective under several regards: it reveals properties of the object and it is something that any subject in the same environmental conditions would enjoy. Phenomenal-objective ways of appearing are modes of presentation of the object's properties, they are the way in which those properties are revealed to us; they play so to say a "revelational role". The requirement stated is not satisfied in the garden shed example provided by Montague. An elephantine way of appearing is not a phenomenological-objective way of appearing of the garden shed, i.e. it is not a possible way in which the garden shed can manifest some of its properties. That's why in such a case I think it is wrong to say that the subject can see the shed and consequently think about it. As it turns out, an account of perceptual contact framed in terms of phenomenal-objective ways of appearing does not make any appeal to the idea, central in the matching content view, that the properties represented in the content of the subject's experience has to match, to a sufficient degree, the properties that the object the experience is of possesses.

Phenomenological-objective ways of appearing constitute the contents of the subject's perceptual experiences that ground her perception-based thoughts. I ultimately think that something along the lines I have indicated could be implemented within Evans's picture in order to fill the lacuna that his account of perception-based thoughts presents in a way which preserves his idea concerning the peculiar way of functioning of this kind of thoughts. Evans acknowledged that not any possible way of appearing is compatible with the subject's standing in perceptual contact with an object. But then he did not say anything about how ways of appearing of the object have to be conceived. I ultimately think that this lacuna has its source in Evans's attempt to avoid the pitfalls of the sense-datum theory which, in his view, was responsible for Russell's inadequate conception of the notion of acquaintance. The fact that Evans stripped Russell's notion of acquaintance of any phenomenological import prevented him from providing an adequate account of the converse notion of presentation. He tried to account for it in terms of ways of thinking of the objects informationally grounded. But modes of presentation, so conceived, are not enough to capture the notion of presentation in its full sense. This is so because such modes of presentation (I have labelled them *cognitive modes of presentation*) do not ultimately account for the kind of awareness of the object that perceptual contact requires. What I have attempted to do in this paper is showing a possible way out that could have enabled Evans to provide a more adequate account of the notion of presentation without falling into Russell's error. This way out hinges on a phenomenological sense of the notion of ways of appearing that is objective rather than subjective.

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<sup>30</sup> I do not have enough space here to fully develop this proposal. Here I shall confine myself to provide a very sketchy presentation of it.



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