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## Critical Remarks on an Interpretation of Reid on Perceptual Apprehension

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### Abstract

I argue that Thomas Reid's theory of perception can be defended against the charges of inconsistency levied against it by Nicholas Wolterstorff. The challenge to be met is roughly that of showing how the Reidian account of perception can avoid being hampered by a descriptive theory of mental reference for perceptual states. First, I will review Reid's theory of perception and Wolterstorff's objections to it. Wolterstorff maintains that Reid is committed to an account of perceptual reference according to which mental representations are conceptual intermediaries between the perceiver and the objects of perception. I hope in section III to show that the theory attributed to Reid is unworkable. In the remainder of the paper I will argue that Reid need not be committed to any such view. In sections V through IX, I will sketch an alternative account of perceptual reference that is immediate in the required sense and that can be incorporated into a Reidian account of perception. My proposal will depend crucially on David Kaplan's account of demonstratives and on mobilizing Kaplan's semantics for application to the case of perceptual content.



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According to Nicholas Wolterstorff,<sup>1</sup> Thomas Reid’s theory of perception faces a problem of perceptual reference. Reid disavows the representational paradigm in the philosophy of mind and perception—the so-called *Way of Ideas* that he associates with modern authors including Descartes, Locke, Malebranche, Berkeley and Hume. According to proponents of the *Way of Ideas*, no one is ever in any sort of intimate, mental congress with the external world; the only things to which we bear any direct cognitive relation are *ideas*—an agent’s mental representations. A theory of *de re* perceptual states must include an account of perceptual reference—how a perceiver gets a mental or semantic grip on objects perceived. Wolterstorff claims that Reid’s theory of perception is insufficiently antirepresentational, owing to its reliance on phenomenal states to mediate perceptual reference.<sup>2</sup> Wolterstorff’s claim is that Reid’s theory is not a theory of *direct* perception since, according to Wolterstorff, Reid is committed to a view of perceptual reference that is not conceptually immediate. First, I will review Reid’s theory of perception and Wolterstorff’s objections to it. I hope in section III to show that the theory Wolterstorff attributes to Reid is unworkable and in the remainder of the paper to show that Reid need not be committed to any such view. In sections V through IX, I will sketch an alternative account of perceptual reference that is immediate in the required sense and that can be incorporated into a Reidian account of perception. My proposal will depend crucially on David Kaplan’s account of demonstratives and on mobilizing Kaplan’s semantics for application to the case of perceptual content.

## I

Wolterstorff characterizes Reid’s theory of perception by laying out what he calls “Reid’s standard schema”—the theoretical-structural core of Reid’s theory of perception. The standard schema, shorn of just those elements in Wolterstorff’s construal that I wish to contest, is something like the following. The world includes objects and properties of certain kinds—some of these objects and properties get along just fine (pace Berkeley) without perceivers and are not identical with perceivers or their mental states. Among the faculties of perceiving agents are dispositions for a certain type of sensation to arise given a causal interaction between an external-worldly entity and sensory modules of the human constitution (sight, touch, etc.). This connection between external-worldly stimulus and attendant sensation is pre-conceptual; the connection is established as a fact of our constitution. These sensations are the sorts

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<sup>1</sup> Wolterstorff (2001)

<sup>2</sup> I will be using the simpler phrase “perceptual reference” rather than “*de re* perceptual reference” throughout.

of things that the agent can have access to immediately—since they are, as it were, in the head. When an agent *S* perceives an external object *o*, *o* causes the appropriate sensations in the usual way for *S* and, as a result, *S* has an immediate conception (apprehension) of *o* and belief *de re* of *o*, that it exists. Reid insists that the relation between sensation and object perceived is to be thought of on the model of the relation between a sign and the thing signified—sensations are *signs of the thing perceived*.

The question of perceptual reference—that is, the referential features of perceptual states and attitudes<sup>3</sup>—is vital for understanding Reid’s theory of perception. The notion that, in perception, there is a “suggest[ion] of the thing signified, and creat[ion of] the belief of it”<sup>4</sup> permeates Reid’s writings. The modes of apprehension<sup>5</sup> available to the theorist of perception that Wolterstorff admits are, in his words, *conceptual apprehension* and *acquaintance*.<sup>6</sup> To have something in mind by way of conceptual apprehension is to have a mental grip on that thing by way of something very much like a definite description (what Wolterstorff calls a “singular concept”). I will use the expression “descriptive reference” for Wolterstorff’s “conceptual reference” throughout. Wolterstorff’s notion of acquaintance is roughly the Russellian one—an agent is

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<sup>3</sup> By the phrase “perceptual reference” I do not mean to generically point to an intentional property of perceptual states or perceptual attitudes. My narrower focus is a distinctively semantic feature of a perceptual state or attitude—the feature of a perceptual state or attitude wherein the content of that state or attitude is determined as either a function of an individual (as in the case of direct reference) or as a function of an individual-valued function (as in the case of descriptive reference.)

<sup>4</sup> Reid (1991), eds. Derek Brookes, 191.

<sup>5</sup> Wolterstorff prefers Reid’s term, “apprehension”, to “reference”. The two notions are not, I think, different in any important sense. Indeed, Wolterstorff allows that the notions of “apprehension” and “conception” in Reid are the *analysans* for what Wolterstorff calls “having something in mind” which is taken to be the non-linguistic analogue of linguistic reference. (page 6: “What I am calling ‘having in mind’ is what some philosophers have called ‘mental reference.’ I shall avoid that terminology—mainly because to speak of ‘reference’ to something is to invite the quest for some entity that the person *uses* to refer to the referent.”) I shall use the two terms interchangeably throughout.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-22. Wolterstorff also considers a third mode of apprehension—so called “nominal apprehension”—which is reference to an object by way of a proper name. I am leaving out the notion of nominal apprehension since Wolterstorff neglects it entirely in discussing Reid’s theory of perception. Wolterstorff’s tripartite taxonomy of conceptual apprehension, nominal apprehension, and acquaintance folds up *de facto* into a two-part taxonomy of conceptual apprehension and acquaintance once perceptual reference is at issue. I think this much is because Wolterstorff (reasonably) takes reference-fixing for names to require primeval perceptual access to the referents thereof. Given this assumption, it would be pointless to try and explain perceptual reference in terms of names or in terms of a naming relation since names are to be explained, in part, by antecedent perceptual access to their referents.

or can be (in the paradigm cases) acquainted with their thoughts, their experiences, themselves and, perhaps, universals.<sup>7</sup>

## II

Wolterstorff takes it that we, human persons, are never acquainted (in this sense) with external objects. That is, extra-mental creatures, their categorical and dispositional properties, etc. are not the sorts of things with which one can ever be acquainted. We might grant the point for the sake of argument.<sup>8</sup> How, then, does one get a mental grip on perceived, external objects? Since Wolterstorff takes himself to have eliminated acquaintance as an option, we are left only with descriptive reference (what Wolterstorff calls “conceptual apprehension”). Perceptual reference, the argument goes, must be descriptive.

The crucial point is this: on the view attributed to Reid an agent arrives at a conception of the perceived object by way of descriptive reference. To apprehend something descriptively is to do so under a non-vacuous definite description<sup>9</sup>—the apprehension of the object is possible in virtue of its uniquely satisfying the description in question. In the standard schema, sensations are caused in the appropriate way by perceived objects. If we let  $C$  stand in for some appropriate causal relation obtaining between the perceived object  $o$  and a sensation  $s$ , perceptual beliefs, *de re*, of  $o$ , that  $o$  is  $F$  have the content

(SC<sub>1</sub>): [(The  $x$ )  $C(x,s)$  is  $F$  ]<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 20: “Examples of the requisite apprehensions are legion. I *grasp* the property of *being the fifth president of the United States*; I am *aware* of my present state of feeling dizzy. Though I can get a mental grip on *your* feeling of dizziness by apprehensive use of the singular concept, the *dizziness that you are presently experiencing*, my mental grip on my own present feeling of dizziness is very different: I *feel* it, and am fully aware of doing so. It’s *present* to me, and I’m aware that it is.” See also, Bertrand Russell (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Wolterstorff gives what are, I think, fallacious arguments for this conclusion. The arguments don’t much matter to me since, as I will show below, Wolterstorff’s problems for Reid can be solved without at any point requiring that human persons can be acquainted (in, again, Wolterstorff’s technical sense) with external objects.

<sup>9</sup> Talk of descriptions here includes anything with the logical form of a definite description: an existential and unique predication—this could, for my purposes, be part of a proposition, judgment, etc. and is not limited to descriptions in natural language. (I am not here committed to the view that definite descriptions in natural language *really are* existential and unique predications.)

<sup>10</sup> I am here using oxford brackets to indicate that what I am picking out is the content of a mental state, a belief, whatever (rather than a sentence or a proposition) and the content of the mental

This much is what I take to be Wolterstorff's reading of Reid on perception—that is, the essentials of Reid's standard schema conjoined with the thesis that the basic apprehension involved in perception is descriptive.

Wolterstorff elaborates on the problems with Reid's project if it should come about that his theory incorporates primal conceptual apprehension:

if it's his view that in perception on the standard schema our apprehension of external objects is only a conceptual, not a presentational, apprehension, then his view, on this point, would come perilously close to the Way of Ideas. A central thesis of the Way of Ideas theorists was that the intuitional component in perception is always and only a sense datum, never an external object. Reid would be saying very much the same, that the intuitional component in perception is always and only a sensation. Sensations would be just as much inputs from the world that are interfaces between us and the world as are sense data in the Way of Ideas.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover “both sensations, on Reid's analysis, and sense data, on the analysis of the Way of Ideas, would be input interfaces; and it's at most with these that we have acquaintance, not with the world.”<sup>12</sup> So Wolterstorff takes it that if perceptual apprehension is only ever by way of singular concepts, then Reid's view fails to secure the immediacy of perceptual reference and is not, in this respect, so different from the Way of Ideas. Descriptive perceptual reference, for Wolterstorff, makes sensations into representational intermediaries between the perceiver and the thing perceived. This can be seen by noticing that in the schema  $SC_1$ , above, sensations are part of the description under which the objects of perception are, in the first place, thinkable—reference to sensations become part of the *content* of basic perceptual beliefs. This view appears to be, at best, a species of representational realism rather than, as is desired, a theory of *direct perception*. It is also totally unworkable as it stands, as I will argue in what follows.

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state is roughly the semantic content expressed by the words enclosed—or, in the case of  $SC_1$ , by propositions of the form given with definite-description schemata, constants, and predicate-variables. So

[ Joshua is tall ]

picks out a certain content, say, the content of a belief one might have that Joshua is tall. And the content of this belief amounts to the proposition that Joshua is tall, the proposition one would express with the enclosed sentence.

<sup>11</sup> Wolterstorff, 133.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

### III

Wolterstorff's suggestion is that Reid is committed to the view according to which perceptual reference is, in the primordial case, descriptive. In particular, perceptual reference is thought to take place on the basis of acquaintance with some sensation *s* by way of singular concepts. I wish to argue that this view, so construed, is unworkable as an account of *de re* perceptual beliefs—beliefs which, according to Reid's standard schema,<sup>13</sup> are what perceptual states amount to. The argument is the following. Singular concepts are thought to be something like definite descriptions. If they are assimilated to ordinary definite descriptions, then the perceptual beliefs facilitated thereby will not in general be beliefs *de re*. If they are assimilated to rigidified definite descriptions, then the theory faces an insurmountable problem of attitude ascriptions for perceptual beliefs.

Suppose the sensational singular concepts putatively responsible for perceptual reference are construed as ordinary, nonrigid definite descriptions as in  $SC_1$ . Then the associated perceptual beliefs are not *de re* of the objects of perception. For one, a perceptual belief *de re* about some perceived object in general has different truth conditions from a belief about that same object under some suitable description. My belief, of Kristen, that she is wearing green, is true only if Kristen is wearing green. But my belief, say, that the cause of my sensation(s) is wearing green is true only if my sensation is caused by some green-wearing thing. And these truth conditions can fail to coincide across different counterfactual circumstances. Similar points can be made concerning substitutability criteria, epistemic criteria, and criteria of logical form for beliefs *de re*. The distinction between the singular concept-beliefs and *de re* beliefs is patent.<sup>14</sup>

If the beliefs in question are in any way *de re* they are *de re* beliefs about some *sensation* or other and not about the objects perceived. The beliefs facilitated by the singular concepts are only *de re*, if at all, in virtue of those singular concepts being *relationally descriptonal*.<sup>15</sup> With respect to reference to the objects of perception, the

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<sup>13</sup> See page 5 above.

<sup>14</sup> For various criteria and discussions thereof see Burge (1977).

<sup>15</sup> The putative singular concepts involved may incorporate irreducible, non-conceptual access to sensations either deictically or by acquaintance. This would make singular concepts into something like what Nathan Salmon (1981) calls "relationally descriptonal singular terms" (see pages 17-21). Where  $\alpha$  is a nondescriptonal singular term picking out some sensation or other, and  $R$  is some two-place predicate (e.g. concerning some causal connection), then the schema (The  $x$ )  $R(x, \alpha$

beliefs involve only elements, so to speak, in the believer's conceptual repertoire. So perceptual beliefs involving singular concepts in the way suggested are not (in general<sup>16</sup>) beliefs *de re* about the objects satisfying those descriptions.

In the spirit of rational reconstruction, we might suggest that the singular concepts involved in primordial perceptual belief be assimilated to *rigidified definite descriptions*. But this view faces a problem of attitude ascription.

The most plausible strategy for rigidifying singular concepts involved in perception is to assimilate them to definite descriptions rigidified by an actuality operator. Where  $s$  is some sensation and  $C$  is a causal relation of some kind, the reading of  $SC_1$  takes the singular concepts involved in perception to be the ordinary

$\llbracket (\text{The } x) C(x,s) \rrbracket$ <sup>17</sup>;

and, so, the rigidification strategy takes the singular concepts to be something like

$\llbracket (\text{The}_{@} x) C(x,s) \rrbracket$

(where “The<sub>@</sub>  $x$ ” is taken to be, roughly, “the actual  $x$  such that ...”). But this strategy has wildly implausible consequences.

Suppose that  $o$  is the  $x$  such that  $C(x,s)$  and  $S$  perceives that  $o$  is  $F$ . On the above suggestion, the perceptual belief that  $S$  has on this occasion has the content roughly of

$SC_2$ :  $\llbracket (\text{The}_{@} x) C(x,s) \text{ if } F \rrbracket$ .

And this belief, because of the index to the actual world, is a belief, in part, about or

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ends up being a non-“thoroughly descriptonal term” denoting the object standing in relation picked out by  $R$  to the designatum of  $\alpha$ . In this case it would not in general be accurate to say that beliefs incorporating such (not purely) descriptive elements are *de dicto simpliciter*. There may be constituent belief-elements reference to which is not merely had wholly by way of features of the agent's conceptual repertoire. In this case it is important to note that, whatever the  $x$  ends up being (in the above schema), not the  $x$ , but  $\alpha$  is picked out non-descriptively. Put another way, *de re* belief that is in some sense about  $x$  need not be a belief *de re* about  $x$ .

<sup>16</sup> If it should happen that (footnote 15)  $(\text{The } x) R(x,\alpha)$  ends up being identical with  $\alpha$ , then beliefs involving that definite description may be *de re* about the object satisfying the description. But, again, this is only in virtue of that thing *also* being a relational element of the belief (besides also being a descriptonal element.)

<sup>17</sup> I am here using the oxford brackets to pick out the content of a singular concept.



involving the actual world. But then (modifying an argument due to David Braun<sup>18</sup>) the perceptual belief that *S* has in @ is not the same as the perceptual belief *S* would have had if there were seventeen more hydrogen atoms in the nearest main-sequence star. The two beliefs, the one *S* has in @ and the one *S* has in the counterfactual scenario, are content-individuated by the worlds in which they occur. If  $\emptyset$  denotes the perceptual belief that *S* has in @, as an instance of  $SC_2$ , then the following comes out true:

*S* believes  $\emptyset$  but if there were seventeen more hydrogen atoms in the nearest main sequence star *S* would not believe  $\emptyset$ .

But this is not plausibly true.<sup>19</sup> And this much, if the rigidified-description account were accepted, would be true for *nearly every* such perceptual belief. So, the rigidified-description account of the singular concepts involved in perception leads to wildly implausible consequences involving attitude ascriptions.

Thus, Reid's theory of *de re* perceptual beliefs, if taken as involving primordial descriptive reference, cannot get off the ground. If singular concepts are taken to be nonrigid, on the model of ordinary definite descriptions, then the beliefs generated thereby are not plausibly beliefs *de re* about the objects perceived. If singular concepts are taken to be rigid, on the model of "actually"-rigidified definite descriptions, then the view generates a grotesque problem of perceptual-belief-ascription across counterfactual circumstances.

#### IV

The claim that Reid's theory requires basic perceptual reference to be descriptive is not supported exegetically. It is based solely on the premise that perceptual reference is either descriptive or by acquaintance and on the further claim that acquaintance is off the table. This critique of Reid, in effect, is dependent upon Wolterstorff's internalism

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<sup>18</sup> Braun 2008. Braun's argument is against taking complex demonstratives to be rigidified quantificational devices. The argument has variants in the literature on two-dimensionalism and elsewhere. Similar arguments are given by Scott Soames (2005, 303-310), Soames (2002, 46-50) and Fitch (1981) against taking proper names to be synonymous with rigidified definite descriptions.

<sup>19</sup> If *S* were to believe  $\emptyset$  in the counterfactual scenario, *S* would, in effect, be entertaining and believing a proposition about the *actual* actual world, not the world that *would* be actual. It's doubtful that, when *S* perceives that *o* is *F*, *S* so much as entertains any beliefs about how things would be in non-relevantly dissimilar counterfactual circumstances. In the same way, it is doubtful that, were non-relevantly dissimilar circumstances to obtain, *S* would so much as entertain any beliefs about how things are *in the actual world*.

about perceptual content: one's resources for perceptually grasping the external world are exhaustively catalogued by the deliverances of acquaintance and one's reservoir of concepts. As such, Wolterstorff's internalism requires him to compress the question of perceptual reference into the question of acquaintance and thus severely limits the explanatory resources available to the theorist of perception.

One obvious way of escaping Wolterstorff's internalist circumscriptions is to *expand* his limited taxonomy of the modes of perceptual reference. I will do this by considering a means of reference that Wolterstorff has left unexamined, namely *demonstrative reference*. What I have in mind is the mental or non-linguistic counterparts (if any such there be) of deictic expressions that David Kaplan has called *impure demonstratives*: "that", "this", the demonstrative use of pronouns, etc. (I shall use the term 'demonstratives' to refer to impure demonstratives and their counterparts only.)

Assimilation of singular perceptual reference to demonstrative reference is not unprecedented in theories of perceptual content. The view that perceptual reference is essentially deictic and non-quantificational is endorsed, for example, by Dretske.<sup>20</sup> But whereas Dretske can afford to be somewhat equivocal about the proper semantical treatment of perceptual reference,<sup>21</sup> my task is to focus on demonstrative reference as a

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<sup>20</sup> Dretske 1995

<sup>21</sup> Dretske, as far as I can distill, says only that perceptual reference is nonexistential in nature and that perceptual reference is essentially deictic (26-27):  
my use of the word "something" in the description of S as representing something as being blue is not an existential quantifier. It may turn out that S is misrepresenting something to be F when there is something (in the next room, say) that *is* F. The fact that there is something in the world that is going 25 mph does not mean that a speedometer registering "25 mph" says something true about the world. For what the speedometer "says" is not that there is something in the world going 25 mph, but that *this* (whatever it is that stands in C to the instrument) is going 25 mph. If representational system S says anything at all when it represents color—and, thus, represents something as being (say) blue—it is that *this* is blue where *this* is whatever object (if there is one) to which stands in the C-relation.

And further (27), Dretske, maintains that reference failure in perception yields a truth-value gap: If we take this to mean that, owing to a failure of presupposition, what S represents to be so (the content of the representation) is neither true nor false, this merely shows something about the nature of sense experience that knew all along: viz., that misrepresentation takes two forms. An experience can misrepresent by (1) saying something false, by saying that *this* is blue when *it* (the object of representation) is not blue; and (2) by saying what is neither true nor false—that *this* is blue when there is no "this" that is not blue. ... It should be understood, however, that when there is no object, "something" stands in for a failed indexical.

solution to the decidedly *semantic* problems left open by Wolterstorff's critique of Reid.

In what follows I will sketch a rough picture of the relevant aspects of perception and an alternative account of perceptual reference. I will first invoke David Kaplan's account of demonstratives in order to carve out a plausible mode of perceptual reference that ends up being thoroughly non-descriptive. Second, I will apply a demonstrative account of perceptual reference to Reid's standard schema with an eye towards explaining the importance of sensations without making sensations conceptual antecedents to one's apprehension of external objects—thus making sensations integral to the account of perception (in a Reidian mode) without compromising the immediacy of perception. Finally, in giving the details of a Reidian account of perception à la Kaplan, I will address what I take to be the chief worries raised by this picture.

## V

David Kaplan gives an account of the semantics of demonstratives.<sup>22</sup> The phenomena to be explained are, roughly, singular terms in natural language that depend on the context of utterance for their semantic values. Contra Frege, the meaning of an utterance is not always a context-independent sense that determines a referent. A sense (or, alternately, an *intension*) is taken to invariantly secure a referent at a given possible world. On this Fregean and Carnapian picture, the charge goes, there is no room for context-dependence—given a sense (an intension) and a possible world, one can determine the referent (the extension) of a singular term. Kaplan's picture incorporates the notion of *character*. The character of an utterance is that constituent of content which is invariant across contexts. Character is that element of content that is to be identified with the semantical rules that take an utterance and a context into a content or proposition. (This allows one to define notion of context dependence and context invariance.<sup>23</sup>)

Besides being context-dependent, demonstratives are, for Kaplan, *directly referential*. As such, the content of a demonstrative denoting phrase (as is thought to be the case for proper names) *just is* the referent. This entails that a demonstrative is a rigid designator. Direct reference is not merely rigid designation, however. Kaplan's idea

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<sup>22</sup> Kaplan, 1985; Kaplan 1989a.

<sup>23</sup> A denoting phrase, say, is context dependent, then, just in case there are any two distinct contexts  $c_1$  and  $c_2$  such that the character of determines that the proposition given by taking  $\langle, c_1 \rangle$  as an argument varies from the proposition given by  $\langle, c_2 \rangle$  as an argument. Within this framework, the old Carnapian intensions are just the proper subset of the set of characters that are context invariant.

is that rigid designation is a *metaphysical* designation. For Kaplan, direct reference is a *semantic* notion; direct reference occurs when an expression's contribution to a singular proposition of which it is a constituent just is the referent of that expression. "The intuitive idea is not that of an expression which *turns out* to designate the same object in all possible circumstances, but an expression whose semantical *rules* provide *directly* that the referent in all possible circumstances is fixed to be the actual referent."<sup>24</sup> Moreover, "the semantical feature that I wish to highlight in calling an expression *directly referential* is not the *fact* that it designates the same object in every circumstance, but the *way* in which it designates an object in any circumstance. Such an expression is a *device of direct reference*."<sup>25</sup> Here "circumstance" connotes a possible world for the evaluation of an utterance and is a distinct notion from that of "context".

Demonstratives are referring terms that take an attendant *demonstration* of some kind and then directly facilitate reference to the thing so-demonstrated. If I turn and point at my friend Jay and utter

"that[pointing at Jay] is a mammal"

I have said that Jay is a mammal. Kaplan more or less accepts what may be called *the Fregean theory of demonstrations*, according to which demonstrations are strongly analogous to definite descriptions "enough to provide a sense and denotation analysis of the 'meaning' of a demonstration."<sup>26</sup> Moreover, as distinguished from the associated demonstrative—which is directly referential and therefore a rigid designator—demonstrations are such that one may ask what a given demonstration *would* pick out—the counterfactual demonstratum—at various counterfactual situations.

In order to distinguish his view from the Fregean full-scale theory of demonstratives—according to which the demonstrative *just is* a surrogate for the associated definite description—Kaplan invokes the distinction between reference-fixing and supplying a synonym. Roughly, the Fregean theorist of demonstratives takes it that because, in general, the denoting phrase 'that[pointing]' (when pointing) picks out the same thing as the denoting phrase 'the thing at which I am pointing', it follows that 'that[pointing]' and 'the thing at which I am pointing' *have the same meaning*.

<sup>24</sup> Kaplan 1989, 493.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 514.

Kaplan disagrees. Though they denote the same thing, the two denoting phrases are not synonymous. As a general *rule*, ‘that[pointing]’ refers to the thing at which the utterer is pointing. Nonetheless a) the two denoting phrases ‘that [pointing]’ and ‘the thing at which I am pointing’ differ with respect to their meaning (one is directly referential and the other is not, for example) and b) the two denoting phrases pick out the same thing. The Fregean confusion here is “to confuse a semantical rule which tells how to fix the reference to a directly referential term with a rule which supplies a synonym”<sup>27</sup>.

So, demonstrations are something very much like descriptions insofar as they pick out some demonstratum much in the way that a definite description would. The associated demonstrative then directly refers to the demonstratum of the demonstration. Kaplan introduces his chosen demonstrative:

dthat[ $\alpha$ ]

which “requires completion by a description [(such as  $\alpha$ )] and which is treated as a directly referential term whose referent is the denotation of the associated description”<sup>28</sup> Kaplan’s theory is thus elegant and neat.<sup>29</sup> A demonstrative is a directly referential referring term that takes something like a description—the demonstration—in order for it to be completed. The referent of the demonstrative is the demonstratum of the demonstration, although the demonstrative and the demonstration do not have the same meaning.

## VI

According to Reid’s standard schema, given pre-established connections between an extra mental world and an agent’s sensations, when an agent *S* perceives an external object *o*, *o* causes the appropriate sensations in the usual way for *S* and, as a result, *S* has an immediate conception (apprehension) of *x* and belief *de re* of *o*, that it exists. On the view that Wolterstorff attributes to Reid, perceptual reference is descriptive reference. I have, above, rendered this view as the thesis that, for some appropriate causal relation *C* holding between external objects and sensations, to perceive an

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 518.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 521.

<sup>29</sup> It should be noted, for the sake of the discussion of reference fixing and synonymy above, that in Kaplan’s formal system for demonstratives, it is a theorem that ‘dthat[ $\alpha$ ] =  $\alpha$ ’ but it is not a theorem that ‘necessarily (dthat[ $\alpha$ ] =  $\alpha$ )’.

object  $o$ , with an accompanying sensation  $s$ , and thereby to have a perceptual belief that  $o$  is  $F$  is to have a belief whose content is roughly that given by

(SC<sub>1</sub>):  $\llbracket (\text{The } x) C(x,s) \text{ is } F \rrbracket$

or its actually-rigidified variant, SC<sub>2</sub>. Call this view of perception the *Reidian(SC)* view—that is, the essentials of Reid’s standard schema conjoined with the thesis that perceptual reference is descriptive, on the model of either SC<sub>1</sub> or SC<sub>2</sub>. This view is subject to Wolterstorff’s criticisms; it fails to be a species of direct-realism about perception. I have also argued, above, that it cannot serve as an account of *de re* perceptual beliefs—as Reid’s theory is required to be.

My suggestion is that one ought to keep the standard schema intact while invoking demonstrative reference<sup>30</sup> to take care of what Reid calls “conception” and what Wolterstorff calls “apprehension”. An agent  $S$  apprehends an object  $o$  via a demonstrative just in case  $S$  apprehends  $o$  via some content  $\llbracket d\text{that}[\alpha] \rrbracket$ , where  $\alpha$  is a demonstration (or something playing the *semantic role* of a demonstration) the demonstratum of which is  $o$ . Where  $S$  perceives  $o$  and has the perceptual belief that  $o$  is  $F$ , this perceptual belief has the form given by

(D):  $\llbracket d\text{that}[\alpha] \text{ is } F \rrbracket$ .

Given that we are assuming something like Kaplan’s theory of demonstratives,  $\llbracket d\text{that}[\alpha] \rrbracket$  directly refers to the demonstratum of  $\alpha$ .<sup>31</sup> Thus, I claim that one amendment to the *Reidian(SC)* View that we ought to make is to scrap descriptive perceptual reference in exchange for demonstrative perceptual reference as in (D). Call this the *Reidian(D)* account of perception.

What of  $\alpha$ ? What, on this picture, is playing the role of a demonstration? It cannot be anything like an ordinary demonstration, say, pointing at a squirrel in order to assert “that[pointing at the squirrel] is scruffy”—in this case my demonstration plausibly relies on perceptual access to the squirrel. At the least, it may be thought, an ordi-

<sup>30</sup> And, as should be clear at this point, when I mention “demonstratives” I do not mean demonstratives in any natural language. I mean, more generally, means or modes of reference that have the semantic function afforded to natural language demonstratives by Kaplan’s theory.

<sup>31</sup> I mention the demonstration  $\alpha$  with simply the name “ $\alpha$ ”, as Kaplan does. I am not sure why Kaplan doesn’t use any sort of quotation device when speaking about demonstrations—so I am perhaps taking some liberties if only in spirit. I am here simply naming  $\alpha$  and taking “ $\alpha$ ” to be a name for  $\alpha$  in the context of “ $\llbracket d\text{that}[\alpha] \rrbracket$ ”. Whether or not “ $\alpha$ ” is playing the role of a *name* for a demonstration in Kaplan’s account is not clear to me.

nary squirrel-demonstration relies on some intention to demonstrate the squirrel.<sup>32</sup> And such an intention-to-demonstrate, itself an intentional state, would need to be explained. Common-coin demonstrations that facilitate demonstrative reference in a natural language—relying from the outset on perception and perceptually-facilitated intentions—will not do. I take it that the outstanding explanatory task for the Reidian(D) theorist of perception is to find something or other that can *play the role* of a demonstration for perceptual demonstrative reference in the appropriate way. My suggestion will be that we take the role of demonstrations to be played by definite descriptions relating sensations to external objects by causal relations of the right kind.

## VII

Kaplan's treatment of demonstrations says, first, that demonstrations are something very much like definite descriptions. More generally, what is sought after is that "We should be able to represent demonstrations as something like functions from worlds, times, etc., to demonstrata."<sup>33</sup> But functions from worlds, times, etc., to demonstrata need not be representational or intentional. Above we considered singular concepts satisfied uniquely by objects of perception. The objects satisfied the putative singular concepts by way of satisfying some appropriate *causal* condition. I want to suggest that  $\alpha$ , in the schema (D) above, pick out demonstrata in much the same way. When an agent *S* perceives an object *o*, there is a causal connection between *o* and the sensation *s* that *S* has upon perceiving *o*. A *mere* causal connection is not sufficient to locate *o* as the object of *S*'s perception. For example, when I have the sensation of hearing bagpipe noises in the morning, I hear my alarm as it goes off but not my hands, the night before, setting the alarm, even though both objects are causes of the bagpipe noises. So, the requirement of a causal connection must be strengthened. And so, we may variously appeal to nomic connections, functional connections

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<sup>32</sup> It should be noted, though, for reasons of space, shouldn't be drawn out, that the relationship between intentions and demonstrations is far from simple: see Jeff Speaks (2016) for a helpful overview and discussion. Kaplan's view in "Afterthoughts" (Kaplan 1989b) takes intentions to be the crucial factor in determining the demonstratum of a demonstration. But Kaplan's earlier view (Kaplan 1985; Kaplan 1989a) allows that what a demonstration demonstrates may fail to be the object that was *intended* to have been demonstrated. This sheds light on the question of whether or not, in order to demonstrate something, the speaker be in the first place *competent* to form an intention to demonstrate the actual demonstratum. These issues cannot be investigated here. For more on intentions in the theory of demonstratives see Reimer 1991; Reimer 1992; Biro 1982; and More 1982.

<sup>33</sup> Kaplan 1985, 324.

and conditions of counterfactual dependence. The point is something like the following: in perception there are causal, nomic, functional routes from perceived objects to a perceiver's sensations. And these connections suffice to guarantee that for a specification of a context consisting of the appropriate parameters—a world, time, agent, sensation, and whatever else is needed—an agent's sensation  $s$  stands in the appropriate causal, nomic, functional relation to the unique object  $o$ . We may thus take the role of demonstrations in the perceptual case to be played by definite descriptions picking out objects as the unique causal-functional antecedents of an agent's sensations.

Notice, then, that demonstrations need not in this sense be concepts or in any way feature in an agent's cognitive attitudes. Assuming there are the right sorts of causal connections between sensations and external objects (which, for the purposes of the present paper, is assumed<sup>34</sup>) we can give a general *semantical rule* that gives the referent for a demonstrative in a perceptual belief. Where  $C$  is the appropriate causal relation we have been gesturing at, a demonstrative directly refers to whatever, given a sensation  $s$ , stands in the relation  $C$  to  $s$ .

And now it is clear what role sensations are to play in the Reidian(D) account. On the view Wolterstorff attributes to Reid, sensations have to be antecedently apprehended (and conceived of *as effects* of some kind) in order to facilitate reference to their distal causes. According to the account I have sketched they are contextual factors that serve to determine which *res a de re* perceptual belief is about. And as mere features of the context, sensations or reference to sensations need not be part of the *content* of perceptual beliefs. The point might be brought about by analogy with other context-dependent phenomena. We might say that, as a semantic rule, "yesterday" ordinarily refers to the day immediately prior to the day of utterance. So, if I say "yesterday was overcast" I am saying, of the day before this one, that it was overcast. But neither *this day* nor any concept of it are part of the content of my utterance. The day of utterance is a feature of the context that determines the referent of "yesterday" according to a semantical rule. But today is not thereby a part of the content of utterances including the word "yesterday". And much the same, so I claim, for sensations in perceptual beliefs.

## VIII

The main advantage of Reidian(D) Perception over the Reidian(SC) View is that Reidian(D) perception can secure the immediacy of perceptual reference. Im-

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<sup>34</sup> Besides an expedient assumption for my project, it is plausible that Reid himself would have allowed that there be the sort of causal relations I have described.



mediacy should be understood so as to not confuse explanatory and conceptual priority. I take it that Reidian(D) perception entails the *explanatory* priority of sensations (as a constituent of the *context* of perception) but not the *conceptual* priority of sensations (as a constituent of perceptual *content*). This is plausibly the most contestable part of Reidian(D) Perception. I will try and explain what I take to be the immediacy of Reidian perceptual reference.

An act of perceptual apprehension requires a demonstrative  $[[dthat[\alpha]]]$  for some associated demonstration  $\alpha$ .  $\alpha$  (in the metalanguage) is taken to be extensionally equivalent to some description (i.e. in all circumstances, if the demonstration exists, having the same extension as some definite description). We have said that the description associated with  $\alpha$  picks out the object of perception as the unique individual standing in some nomic, causal, functional relation to the agent's sensation. My claim is that  $[[dthat[\alpha]]]$  allows one to have a conceptually direct grip on the demonstratum of  $\alpha$  even though, *were* one to apprehend the demonstratum of  $\alpha$ , say, *via* some singular concept associated with  $\alpha$ , one's apprehension thereof would indeed be mediated by some sensationalist concept.<sup>35</sup> The singular concept that an agent *would* have used to apprehend the object mediately is not required in order for some materially equivalent demonstration to prompt a co-referring demonstrative to directly refer to the demonstratum thereof. To confuse the content of the demonstrative with the content of the associated demonstration (or some extensionally equivalent singular concept) is to confuse the conceptually prior *device of direct reference* with the explanatorily prior *reference fixer*. Discussing a parallel confusion with respect to proper names, Robert Stalnaker remarks that "singular reference with a proper name is *conceptually* direct, but that should not be taken to imply that there is no explanatory story to be told about what it is in virtue of which a name refers. ... it is a mistake (according to the causal theorist of reference) to confuse an explanation for the fact that a name refers as if does with a conceptual analysis of what is expressed by that name."<sup>36</sup>

Wolterstorff's indictment of the Reidian(SC) view, as I have construed it, was in terms of requiring reference to sensations as mediating one's cognitive relations with the external world. The Reidian(D) account, as we have seen, makes primal perceptual reference into direct reference to perceived objects on the model of de-

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<sup>35</sup> Here I take "sensationalist concepts" to mean concepts that refer to or irreducibly involve quantification over sensations.

<sup>36</sup> Stalnaker 2008, 13-14.

monstrative reference. Sensations, contra the Reidian(SC) theorist, are explanatory antecedents to perceptual reference—they are contextual factors determining perceptual content, but they are not constituents of perceptual content. So, sensations are not conceptual intermediaries in perception.

## IX

One objection that may be raised is something like the following: while the Reidian(D) account of perception provides an analysis of perceptual content and avoids being a species of representationalism, the view doesn't provide an answer to the problem of intentionality. That is, the view does not say what it is in virtue of which agents can stand in intentional relations to things. Rather, it assumes that there is a question concerning certain kinds of intentional relations, gives a view as to what the *contents* of certain intentional states are, and sketches an explanatory account of those states in terms of the conditions (causal, functional, etc.) under which they arise. But, the objection goes, there is more explanatory work to be done.

I think this objection is misguided on two fronts. For one, Wolterstorff's problem for Reid's theory of perception is a semantic one—generated by theses about what the contents of perceptual states must be. The most natural way of avoiding Wolterstorff's conclusion is thus to deny that the contents of perceptual states must be as he says they must be. And the most natural way of accomplishing this is to give an alternative account of the contents of perceptual states. The account of perception in terms of demonstrative reference accomplishes this end. Where Wolterstorff says that perceptual reference must be descriptive, one can take perceptual reference to be direct. Where Wolterstorff takes sensations or reference to sensations to be part of the content of a perceptual state, one can take sensations to be contextual factors that serve to fix what the content of a perceptual state is.

Moreover, in general, it isn't required that an adequate account of the semantics of some meaningful whats-it provide an answer to the problem of intentionality. For example, it's perfectly adequate to say that the referent of the first-person pronoun "I", on an occasion of utterance, is the speaker. The adequacy of the account in terms of a semantical rule is not called into question because of outstanding questions about how one can stand in intentional relations to oneself. (Similar things could be said for accounts of perceptual knowledge that don't, in the first place, presume to give an answer to the question of intentionality.)<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Lewis 1980; Goldman 1976; Plantinga 1993 (and especially Chapter 5).

Second, I think the felt need for an answer to the problem of intentionality here is the result of a lingering internalism. The view attributed to Reid by Wolterstorff, though unsatisfactory, aims both at outlining a semantics for perceptual states as well as providing an answer to the problem of intentionality. (The latter boils down to acquaintance-foundationalism of some kind: there are things with which we are acquainted and any intentional relations to things are either immediate relations of acquaintance or else are mediated conceptual relations that bottom-out at basic relations of acquaintance.) But this account, so I have argued, is implausible in general and unworkable for our purposes—that is, for giving a Reidian account of perception. But it’s no problem, then, if the account I advocate doesn’t answer all of the questions that its competitor merely purports to answer. Though there are suggestive accounts of intentionality aplenty that are broadly in the same spirit as the present paper,<sup>38</sup> an account of the semantics of perceptual attitudes that fails to decide between these accounts is not the worse off for it.

## X

In this paper I have argued that Reid’s general theory of perception can, in its essentials, be saved from Wolterstorff’s criticisms. Not only do Wolterstorff’s specific attacks lack force, they are evidently motivated by theoretical presuppositions with which one has independent reason to take issue. The account attributed to Reid, what I have called the Reidian(SC) view, is independently implausible and fails as an account of *de re* perceptual beliefs. I have argued that Reid’s standard schema, modified so as to allow perceptual reference along the lines of Kaplan’s theory of demonstratives, permits perceptual apprehension to be both direct and immediate. So, in Reid one indeed has a model of perception that, when supplemented by the plenitudinous resources of David Kaplan’s semantics for demonstratives, may yet yield a proper theory of direct perception.

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<sup>38</sup> See Stampe, 1977; Enc 1982; Dretske 1980; Dretske 1995; Stalnaker 1984, Chapter 1.

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