

## **DIRECT REFERENCE AND EVENTS**

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### **I Introduction**

Demonstratives constitute an interesting class of denoting terms which speakers use to refer to actions or events. One might have said of the Challenger explosion “That is unbelievable;” one might have said of Roseanne Barr’s singing of the National Anthem “That is a disgrace,” and so on. One can refer demonstratively to natural or physical events, actions (in some procedural sense), and also the outcomes of actions, modalities of actions, etc.

It is generally accepted that descriptions of events, such as “the next presidential election” or “the Kuwait invasion,” select their referents through the meaning (sense, intension, connotation) of the expressions. There is less agreement about the question whether that picture is also true for demonstratives. In recent years it has become popular to hold that demonstratives are directly referring terms. According to the view, the meaning of the term is reducible to its denotation rather than to a connotation (or sense, intension). Such a Theory of Direct Reference (DRT) defends a resulting essentialism: the objects of directly referring terms are thought to have an essence that remains fixed when the proposition in which the term occurs is evaluated in counterfactual circumstances.

Direct Reference Theory and its companion Essentialism would jointly have to entail that actions and events have essences too, since we *do* refer demonstratively to events. In this essay, I will bring attention to the difficulties which such an account faces. I will argue that, unless we are willing to accept rather unfamiliar conceptions of identity, essence, and events, some referents of demonstratives are events without essence. That conclusion is an argument against Direct Reference.

## II Demonstratives and direct reference

David Kaplan has popularized the view that demonstratives and indexicals are directly referring terms.<sup>1</sup> A demonstrative (in the sense in which we are using the term) consists of a singular denoting term together with a complementing demonstration which indicates the object. The notion of demonstration need not be taken in the customary sense of a paradigmatic pointing. Demonstrations may include natural phenomena whose obviousness or salience helps determine a referent "as when someone shouts 'Stop that man' while only one man is rushing toward the door."<sup>2</sup> Here, the person's running sufficiently indicates the referent of "that man." Shooting stars and loud explosions are other examples of demonstrations in this wider sense. This notion of demonstration, DRT says, is a theoretical one. Kaplan gives the following formulation of demonstration:

The individual that has appearance *A* from here now where an appearance is something like a picture with a little arrow pointing to the relevant subject.<sup>3</sup>

Fregeans equate the meaning of the demonstrative with something like "The individual at whom the speaker now points," or "the object which looks like so-and-so now." The meaning of the demonstrative is thus formulated descriptively in terms of the demonstration. As a result, the demonstrative selects its referent through its sense: in counterfactual circumstances the referent might thus be different. Kaplanians reject this unified Fregean conception of *meaning*, and they individuate two kinds of meaning: character and content. *Character* can be thought of as meaning in the sense in which competent speakers know meaning, set by linguistic conventions, rules, practices. The *content* of an expression is what traditionally has been called the proposition. Content is the object

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<sup>1</sup> David Kaplan, "Demonstratives," in *Themes from Kaplan*, ed. Joseph Almog, John Perry and Howard Wettstein (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 481-563; "Dthat," in *The Philosophy of Language*, ed. A. P. Martinich (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 315-329.

<sup>2</sup> Kaplan, "Demonstratives," p. 490.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 526.

of thought, character is the “manner of presentation of a content.”<sup>4</sup> The content of indexicals and demonstratives is just the object itself, divorced from the manner in which it is presented. Once loaded into the proposition, the referent of the demonstrative remains fixed. That something must remain unchanged throughout different possible worlds requires a form of essentialism.

In the case of direct demonstrative reference to actions and events, the action (event) itself must, in some essential form, be a constituent of the proposition, and something must underlie the events if they are to be objects of direct demonstrative reference. Consider the following examples.

(a) Evans and Robards witness a hoodlum walk through a red stoplight, drinking from a bottle of beer, in full view of two police officers. Moving his head in the direction of the hoodlum Evans says to Robards “That was pretty daring.” The speaker has referred demonstratively to *the hoodlum’s walking across the street, drinking from a bottle of beer, in full view of two police officers*, not just the hoodlum’s crossing the street, his crossing the street on red, or even his crossing the street drinking from the bottle.

(b) (Modified after Lewis) As emperor Nero is fiddling while Rome burns, one Roman citizen is overheard telling his slave “That’ll give the emperor a place in history.” The Roman is referring to *Nero’s fiddling while Rome burns*, not just his fiddling. His *merely fiddling* didn’t give Nero a place in history; his *fiddling while Rome burned* did.

A proponent of DRT should take the demand seriously that such events as a *hoodlum’s walking across the street drinking beer in full view of two police officers*, or *Nero’s fiddling while Rome burns*, should have essences, since they are the referents of demonstratives.

Before exploring how well DRT can respond to this, I want to point to a few obstacles, generally present in any discussion of demonstrative reference, but that are especially troublesome for accounts of demonstrative reference to actions and events. Demonstrative reference to events frequently involves uncertainty about demonstrative identification. Unlike demonstrative reference to persons when the demonstrative typically consists of a demonstration complementing a personal pronoun or noun phrase, for example, “this girl,” “he,” and so on, the presence of a

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 530.

demonstration is often of little value in finding the referent. The theoretical conception of demonstration described earlier isn't very helpful if we want to determine what the referent is on the basis of the appearance of an individual. Of course, in our examples, the presence of a law-flouting hoodlum or an emperor fiddling during a fire may provide a general direction in which to seek the relevant event/reference. But the demonstrations themselves give us no clue about how wide the spatiotemporal scope of the event should be taken. Sentence meaning often comes to the rescue when the demonstration is too underdetermined to help fix the referent. Compare:

- (1) That'll give the emperor a place in history.
- (2) I don't know what's worse, listening to that or perishing in the fire!
- (3) Well how about that!

There should be little doubt that in (2) the speaker is referring to just the fiddling, not the fiddling during the fire as he does in (1). As for (1), we have already noticed earlier that, since the speaker is referring to an event which he believes will give the emperor a place in history, we must regard Nero's fiddling in *those circumstances* as the referent. When sentence meaning does not provide any clues, as in (3), demonstrative identification may remain essentially underdetermined. Generally, instances of demonstrative reference to events provide good evidence against the widely held belief that demonstrations determine referents and content.

Recently, however, Kaplan has rejected his earlier account of demonstrations and he now joins those who argue that the speaker's intention directed to the referent, the object *he has in mind*, is criterial for reference.<sup>5</sup> Such an approach will draw fire from anti-intentionalists who contend that the speaker's intentions are irrelevant. Both views have serious problems which are beyond a quick fix. I will not reiterate or offer any additional arguments, since the question of what is criterial for demonstrative identification is neutral to the questions I want to raise.

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<sup>5</sup> "Afterthoughts," in Joseph Almog, John Perry and Howard Wettstein, 1989, pp. 565-614. For other intentionalist accounts, see Paul Berckmans, "Demonstrative Utterances," *Philosophical Studies* 60: 281-295 (1990), and Rod Bertolet, "Demonstratives and Intentions," *Philosophical Studies* 38: 75-78 (1980).

Once we understand what the possible referents in any context of use could be, we must ask if any of these have essences and, if so, what they are. In example (a) it may seem rather obvious that the event must at least include a walking on red, the presence of the police officers, and the bottle of beer. Sometimes it might be essential that the event is *John's walking*, not anyone else's walking, if, for example, John is a wimp. In other contexts the event may not include John essentially. If the police officers were in fact Toodey and Muldoon, the most vicious officers on the force, the speaker may be intimating that *any* individual's crossing the street on red drinking from a bottle of beer in *their* presence was an act of defiance! One can experiment with the ingredients of the situation and decide which readings appear likely or plausible. In any case, DRT will have to worry about questions surrounding the essentiality of all the events.

### III Demonstratives and essences

Let me introduce a few ideas about essentialism which will guide our subsequent discussion of event essentialism and demonstrative reference. Let us first define an essential property *P* of individual *x* as one which *x* possesses in every world in which *x* exists, such that without *P*, *x* could exist in no world. When, for any *y* which is not *x*, it is the case that *y* necessarily does not have *P*, we say that *P* is an *individual essence* of *x*. It will also be useful to make a general distinction between different sorts of essentialism.<sup>6</sup>

One kind of essentialism, which I will call Absolute Essentialism, or Absolutism, holds that there is an unqualified answer to the question whether *P* is an essential property of *x*, for each *x* and each *P*. Forms of Absolute Essentialism have been defended by, for example, Kripke, Putnam and Wiggins, who have argued for a technical-scientific conception of essences.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This rough outline is after Graeme Forbes, "In Defense of Absolute Essentialism," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 11 (1986).

<sup>7</sup> Kripke proposed that the genetic code of an individual is his essence; Putnam argues for physical, chemical or other scientifically discoverable properties as essential, and Wiggins has proposed that an organism's place in a biological taxonomy is its essence. See, Saul Kripke, *Naming and necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980); Hilary Putnam, "Is Semantics Possible," *Martinich* 1985, pp. 305-314.

Against Absolutism, contextualists argue that talk of the essentiality of a property must be made relative to a context. There might be a context which makes *P* essential, while in a different context *P* might not be essential. Suppose, for example, that an investigation is conducted into the effects of the presence of goldfish in prison cells on convicted criminals. In such a context, that is, from the viewpoint of psychology, it might not be essential that the goldfish are members of a particular family of fish. What is essential in that context is that the fish display the behavioral properties of goldfish, even if they happen to be cleverly designed plastic imitations. We might then ask questions about these fish, even plastic ones, in different worlds. In the context of marine science, however, or, for example, if the relation between carcinogens and genetic mutation is studied, the genetic properties of the goldfish may not be allowed to vary. In such contexts, the genetic properties of the goldfish are regarded as essential; in the other context, the behavioral properties of the fish are so regarded.

A weaker form of Absolute Essentialism regarding individual essences, Haecceitism, has been defended by Adams and Kaplan.<sup>8</sup> Proponents of Haecceitism hold that individuals have no essences other than the individual nonqualitative essence of being *that* individual. They believe that it makes sense to think that in a different possible world individuals could exist without any of the properties typically ascribed to the individual other than the essential property of being that individual. They argue that we can imagine a world, for example, in which Socrates lacks the properties usually associated with him in the actual world. But we cannot consistently hold that there could be a world in which Socrates lacks the property of being Socrates if he exists in that world. On this view, individuals have only nonqualitative essences.

Existing theories dealing specifically with the issue of Event Essentialism, developed independently of their relevance to the theory of reference, offer little hope for DRT. Some philosophers readily accept that events have essences if that's what is entailed by their theories. Lewis, for example, discusses what essences of events must be like if we accept a counterfactual analysis of event causation. When we make a counterfactual statement about some event *e*, there must be a different possible

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<sup>8</sup> R. M. Adams, "Primitive Thisness and Primitive Identity," *The Journal of Philosophy* 76: 5-26 (1979); David Kaplan, "How to Russell a Frege-Church," *The Journal of Philosophy* 72: 716-729. (1975).

world in which *e* exists, but differs in some way from *e* in this world.<sup>9</sup> If this is so, the existence of counterfactuals about events entails something about their essences. It may be the case that the causal context of one world requires certain properties of the event to be present essentially, while in different causal contexts this may not be the case. Lewis is thus a contextualist about event essentialism.

Whether we describe certain properties of an event as accidental or essential depends on how the event features in a causal network. Lewis, giving the example of an individual who says "Hello" rather loudly, argues that one can describe the event either in a weak sense as one that is only accidentally *John's saying "Hello" loudly*, or in a strong sense as one that is essentially *John's saying "Hello" loudly*. Lewis explains that we need both events because they differ causally:

An adequate causal account of what happens cannot limit itself to either one of the two. The first event (the weak one) caused Fred to greet John in return. The second one (the strong one) didn't. If the second one had not occurred —if John hadn't said "Hello" so loudly— the first one still might have, in which case Fred still would have returned John's greeting. Also there is a difference on the side of causes: the second event was, and the first wasn't, caused *inter alia* by John's state of tension.<sup>10</sup>

Lewis then continues to show that sometimes it may turn out that when some event is *accidentally* an *F*-ing there must also be another event which is *essentially* an *F*-ing. But he warns that there should be limits to how wide we can take essences:

Some classifications seem so very accidental that no event could have them essentially. Consider accidental classifications in terms of circumstances. There is an event that is accidentally a fiddling while Rome burns, but I doubt that any event is essentially a fiddling while Rome burns. And the example can be made even more extreme. There is an event that is accidentally classifiable as follows: it is a fiddling in the presence of a boy whose grandson will first set foot on the moon. Surely no event is essentially *that!*<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> David K. Lewis, "Events," in *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

So, while Lewis accepts that events have essences, he recommends that these should not be taken as too rich.

Adopting Lewis's view on event essences has rather negative consequences for DRT. Events with rich essences must be rejected, although the referents of the demonstratives in some of our preceding examples must be taken precisely as the sorts of essential events which Lewis wants to exclude. If DRT is right, the event of Nero's fiddling while Rome burns *must* be essential in "That'll give the emperor a place in history," since *that* is the event referred to. This example, in turn, puts Lewis in a difficult position. On his own account of the counterfactual analysis of causation he must argue for a distinction between Nero's *essentially* fiddling while Rome burns and Nero's *accidentally* fiddling while Rome burns, despite his own unwillingness to accept such essential events. Nero's essentially fiddling did cause the Roman to utter "That'll give the emperor a place in history" and it did cause Suetonius to write about the fiddling; Nero's accidentally fiddling did not. Thus, while his own counterfactual analysis would require events with outrageously rich essences, Lewis is not willing to accept that. Perhaps DRT is willing to wrestle with this consequence of Lewis's counterfactual analysis and accept that some objects of demonstrative reference are essential events and some accidental events, depending on their causal behavior. Doing so, however, makes it difficult to make sense of "the object itself" which is "loaded into the proposition," if we cannot tell how rich or poor the essence of an object is to be taken as until after we have tested the behavior of the event, in its varying degrees of richness, in counterfactual circumstances.

His contextualism keeps Lewis from making any claims about the "stuff" of which the essences of events (if they exist) are made. Some Absolutists have proposed noncontextual criteria of event essence. Two accounts I want to explore briefly are van Inwagen's causal genesis criterion and Lombard's controversial temporal criterion.<sup>12</sup> Most other accounts can be seen as variations of these two or of Lewis's. I do not want to challenge either criterion of essence per se, I only intend to show that

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<sup>12</sup> Peter van Inwagen, "Ability and Responsibility," *Philosophical Review* 87: 201-224 (1978); Lawrence Lombard, *Events: A Metaphysical Study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).



their application has undesirable results for DRT even if they are entirely correct.<sup>13</sup>

Van Inwagen argues that the essence of an event is its causal history. He finds enough similarities between substances and events to recommend that a causal genesis criterion for essences of substances be used to identify essences of events. DRT may find this rather attractive initially, since a similar criterion has been proposed for the essences of individuals to whom we refer with a proper name.<sup>14</sup> To give an example of this account, Alexander the Great could have been a shoemaker, he could have had a different teacher, but he could not have had a different father: his causal genesis (his genotype) could not have been any different without his being a different individual. In light of this similarity between demonstratives and proper names, DRT might welcome a common criterion for the essences of their respective referents.

The criterion implies that any two events which have a different causal ancestry are different events. On the causal genesis account, the essence of *Nero's fiddling while Rome burns* resides in the causal history of the event. Since Rome's burning is a constituent of the event to which the speaker referred, its causal ancestry must codetermine the essence of Nero's fiddling while Rome burns. The fact that the fire got started, say, in the kitchen of Lucius enters into the essence of Rome burning and thus into the essence of Nero's fiddling while Rome burns. But had the fire gotten started in the kitchen of Marcus, or in the workshop of Brutus the blacksmith, we would have different fires, since their causal geneses are different. As a result, the following sentences would have to express different propositions since the referents of the demonstratives are different:

- (4) That [speaker turns his head toward the emperor fiddling while the city is on fire, a fire which started in *Lucius's kitchen*] will give the emperor a place in history.

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<sup>13</sup> For criticisms of these accounts, see, for example, (for van Inwagen and Lombard) Jonathan Bennett's *Events and Their Names* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), and (for Lombard) Graeme Forbes' *The Metaphysics of Modality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

<sup>14</sup> See, Saul Kripke's "Naming and necessity."

- (5) That [speaker turns his head toward the emperor fiddling while the city is on fire, a fire which started in *Marcus's kitchen*] will give the emperor a place in history.
- (6) That [speaker turns his head toward the emperor fiddling while the city is on fire, a fire which started in *Brutus's workshop*] will give the emperor a place in history.

Surely no proponent of DRT is willing to argue that (4)-(6) express different propositions. We find that our intuitions about what is essential for the referent of a directly referring demonstrative are at odds with the causal genesis theory. It is apparent that the essentiality of properties for events should have something to do with how the event is constituted as a referent of a demonstrative. When we look at *Nero's fiddling while Rome burns* as a referent, it becomes obvious that we should regard the causal ancestry of the event as an accidental property which we can allow to vary in ways that we allow appearances of individuals to vary. DRT holds, for example, that sentences (7) and (8) express the same proposition, *that John is suspicious*:<sup>15</sup>

- (7) He [the speaker points at John, as John stands on the demonstration platform nude, clean shaven, and bathed in light] is suspicious.
- (8) He [the speaker points at John, as John lurks in shadows wearing a trench coat, bearded, with his hat pulled down over his face] is suspicious.

What the causal genesis account supplies as essential for an event might be just accidental if we look at the event as a referent of a demonstrative. We can think of the intentions of the emperor and the law-flouting hoodlum that way, too. Although intentions contribute causally to an action, it is not essential for the action *qua* referent (in these examples) that the emperor and the hoodlum acted on these intentions. That the hoodlum crossed the street to meet his girlfriend there, or that he did so on his way to the liquor store, are causal factors which can be taken as accidental when we are concerned with the event's constitution as a referent. These contextualist considerations compel us to reject this absolutist causal-genesis criterion as a companion for DRT.

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<sup>15</sup> This example is taken from Kaplan, "Dthat."

Larry Lombard has given a highly sophisticated discussion of essences and events. For Lombard, events are nonrelational changes in subjects at a time. A nonrelational change is a change which occurs within a subject, to be contrasted with a relational change; a change related to some other event or subject. Xantippe's becoming a widow is a relational change in Xantippe, for example, since her becoming a widow depends on the death of Socrates. Socrates' death however, is an event since it is a nonrelational change in a subject, Socrates, at a time. Lombard subsequently argues that the subject, the nonrelational change, and the time of occurrence constitute the essence of an event.

On Lombard's account of events we must take events rather narrowly. Since Lombard's events are nonrelational changes in a subject, we must exclude from eventhood such events as *John's walking across the street drinking from a bottle of beer in full view of two police officers* or *Nero's fiddling while Rome burns*. These examples involve more than nonrelational changes in a subject at a time. The qualification that Rome burns, for example, is on Lombard's view merely a circumstance in which the event *Nero's fiddling* occurs, not a constituent of the event. But since such circumstances *are* constituents of the events to which the speakers referred, Lombard's conception of events and event essentialism cannot be put to use for these kinds of cases.

One might, of course, attempt to modify Lombard's theory and stretch events so as to include such circumstances in the event. Even if that move were successful, we wouldn't come any closer to making the criterion work for DRT. As we have noticed earlier, it is sometimes accidental that the agent involved in the actual world is *that* agent. There is a reading of the example of the hoodlum discussed earlier on which a different agent could be involved in the event in a different world. These are different events for Lombard since they involve changes in different subjects. But from the point of view of demonstrative reference, when we are talking about the object of the demonstrative, agents can sometimes be allowed to vary. Lombard's criterion thus suffers from a contextual insensitivity similar to van Inwagen's, making its compatibility with DRT difficult to argue for.

#### IV Haecceitism and events

The accounts of event essentialism discussed thus far assign qualitative (descriptive) essences to events. Since it would suffice that objects of direct reference only have nonqualitative (nondescriptive) individual essences, we should consider the possibility of Haecceitism for events. Kaplan formulates the position as follows:

The doctrine that holds that it does make sense to ask —without reference to common attributes and behavior—whether this is the same individual in another possible world, that individuals can be extended in logical space (i.e., through possible worlds) in much the same way we commonly regard them as being extended in physical space and time, and that a common “thisness” may underlie extreme dissimilarity or distinct thisnesses may underlie great resemblance, I call Haecceitism... Haecceitism holds that we can meaningfully speak of a thing itself—without reference either explicit, implicit, vague or precise to individuating concepts (other than being this thing), defining qualities, essential attributes or any other of the paraphernalia that enable us to distinguish one thing from another.<sup>16</sup>

While Haecceitism has been widely discussed for objects and persons, its possible relevance for events has gone largely unnoticed, perhaps because the need for nonqualitative essences of events has never arisen in action theory and because philosophers of language have never given much consideration to reference to events. I want to suggest, however, that Event Haecceitism will be a difficult position to maintain.

The relative ease with which we tell plausible stories about haecceities of persons in counterfactual circumstances is markedly absent when it comes to events and their individual haecceitist essences. We have no trouble imagining emperor Nero as a contemporary baseball player, it is argued, and one might even think up a different possible world comedy in which Nero is a dancing bear.<sup>17</sup> The limits of meaningfulness of such examples are quickly reached when we confront events themselves. I cannot offer a formal argument against Haecceitism for events because, unlike the case of Haecceitism for persons, I'm not sure

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<sup>16</sup> David Kaplan, “How To Russell a Frege-Church,” p. 723.

<sup>17</sup> One could, however, charge that such suppositions make sense only if some transworld identity criterion is already presupposed. See, for example, Forbes, *The Metaphysics of Modality*, for such criticisms.

if such a form of essentialism is intelligible. In the case of Haecceitism for persons we have at least the advantage that we understand (or think we do) what it is for an individual to be just that individual. We can understand what's involved in the denial that individuals have essential particular qualitative properties and what's involved when we deny that individuals have individual essences other than just being that individual. We find it intelligible that when we refer directly to such individuals, we "put the object itself into the proposition," with the result that the subjects of singular propositions about individuals are haecceities.

Haecceitism for events is more troublesome. To make it work, we must require that we can make sense of the "event itself," thinking of the event as being just *this event*, without reference to any further properties. We are not asking, for example, whether the Challenger explosion could have occurred under a different NASA administration or whether it could have occurred under different atmospheric conditions. We must be asking if *that event*, the event having the property of being the Challenger explosion, could have had different properties other than, course, the property of being *that event*. To continue with another one of our examples, when speaking of *Nero's fiddling while Rome burns*, we should be able to talk meaningfully about *that event* without reference to the property that the event occurred while Rome was burning, the property of being a fiddling, the property that Nero was the agent involved in the event, and so forth. We should be able to ask of *that event* whether it could have been a singing or a dancing, or whether the agent might have been Brutus or Marcus. It might thus turn out that the event itself is *Nero's fiddling while Rome burns* in one world and *Brutus' dancing in Rome during a thunderstorm* in a different one. In such cases, a common thisness could underlie such dissimilar properties as Brutus' singing in Rome during a rainstorm, Marcus' dancing in Rome during an earthquake, or Nero's fiddling while Rome burns.

The notion of a haecceitist *event itself* becomes especially troublesome when we enter the spatiotemporal properties of events into the discussion. The haecceitist about persons can comfortably show that where a person existed and when he existed are properties which we can allow to vary. He is equally committed to making such allowances for events, for once we have admitted the event itself as an entity whose essential property is simply that of being *that event*, we can meaningfully distinguish between the thisness of the event and its spatiotemporal location, just as we make the distinction between the *thisness* of a thing

and its spatiotemporal location. Consequently, a haecceitist would have to accept that we *can* ask of *this event* what it would be like in a different spatiotemporal location.

There is no doubt that we often raise such questions about events. We can, for example, ask what would have been the case had troops been deployed in Saudi Arabia two weeks earlier or two weeks later than they actually were. We can, furthermore, imagine that the Challenger explosion could have taken place in California, or that it could have occurred a day later than it did. These questions, however, are not questions about the events themselves. If we want to adopt Haecceitism for events, we should be able to make sense of an event itself which in a different possible world could be different with respect to all properties, including space and time, other than that of *being this event*. As a result, it would be meaningful to ask if *this event*, which now has the property of being the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, could have been the Challenger explosion of 1984 or whether Roseanne Barr's singing of the National Anthem could have been Nero's fiddling while Rome burns, or the 1933 World Series.

Such a separating of event itself from its spatiotemporal location cannot be avoided by Haecceitism. Rejecting the separation of event itself from its spatiotemporal location leads to the position that these events are grounded in space and time. That, of course, is inconsistent with Haecceitism, which claims precisely that transworld identity is primitive. We must thus regard questions about events themselves in different spatiotemporal locations in different possible worlds as meaningful. How such an account of Event Haecceitism could be made intelligible is rather mysterious.

I raised the question of Haecceitism for events to accommodate Direct Reference Theory in light of the failure of the preceding conceptions of event essences. DRT needs an account of essence that will allow us to make sense of the event itself that gets loaded into the proposition. Since singular propositions are evaluated in counterfactual situations, we must be sure to understand what sort of content gets evaluated when events themselves are constituents. In the case of individuals, again, as in the earlier example of John, the suspicious individual, the picture is straightforward. After John himself is loaded into the proposition, the subject of the proposition in other worlds is still John, despite possible striking differences in his appearance. In the case of events, it becomes less apparent that the same proposition is evaluated when different

properties are true of the event in counterfactual circumstances. Suppose, for example, that the event that in the actual world has the property of being Nero's fiddling while Rome burns has, in a different world, the property of being the Challenger explosion. It would be rather implausible to deny that the proposition expressed by "That'll give the emperor a place in history" is about Nero's fiddling while Rome burns in one world, and about the Challenger explosion in the other world. However, by hypothesis, the propositions are about essentially the same event. We must thus either give up the view that the propositions are about the same event or dismiss the events as the same event.

Any reasonable treatment of the examples forces us to make the essences of these events subordinate to contextual demands. We must obviously impose some limitations on which properties of events, as referents of demonstratives, can be allowed to vary. These considerations about the intelligibility of Haecceitism cast a serious doubt on the likelihood of its successfully supporting DRT. If we admit some of the questions I have raised about haecceitist essences for events as meaningful we end up with a conception of events, identity, and essence that will need to be elucidated further. If we reject Haecceitism for events we need to resort to other essentialisms for DRT, unless we are willing to give up the DRT position for demonstrative reference to events.

## V Conclusion

We have found that contextual considerations make forms of strong Absolutist Event Essentialism inappropriate for Direct Reference Theory: properties assigned as essential by these accounts may be just accidental properties from the point of view of reference. The only account able to assign the relevant essences to the referent, a form of contextualism like Lewis's, is not without problems. Analysis of cases of demonstrative reference to events shows that the circumstances in which the event takes place must sometimes be regarded as constituents of the referent. To make things worse, there exist classes of events that *essentially* require their circumstances as constituents when we refer to these demonstratively. I have in mind actions governed by so-called constitutive rules and conventions. I may say of John's castling "That was a brilliant move" or of Mike's hitting a home run "That is his third this week." Such events are referred to insofar as they *count as* a castling or a home run. Still, I

doubt if anyone is ready to accept castlings and home runs as being what they are essentially. There are also events which are so uniquely entangled in causal networks that no variation in the event can be allowed. To give an extreme example, suppose that Mr. Evans is so constituted that nothing moves him except Roseanne Barr's fiddling "America the Beautiful" on top of Mt. Rushmore, with the Star Spangled Banner draped around her waist. Since nothing else moves him, that is, no other event can cause him to be moved, we need the event essentially. One can always imagine an event which is causally so constituted that we must take it as essential. However, accepting events with such ridiculously rich essences puts the very notion of essence in jeopardy and leads to its corruption. On the other hand, the exclusion of circumstances and causal contexts as relevant for the event *qua* referent, in an attempt to get rid of events with rich essences (the route from Absolutism), may end up assigning the wrong referent to the demonstrative.

This leaves DRT in a situation requiring a concept of essence for events that bypasses the problems I have outlined but which that appeals to our Aristotelian intuitions about essences.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> I am indebted to Bill Lycan for his invaluable criticisms of an earlier draft.