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The Epistemology of Identifying and Identification

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We are asked to identify ourselves and are identified in banks, schools, businesses, stores, government offices, hospitals, and on the internet. It would be difficult for modern post industrial societies to function without these actions. My main goal is to get clear about the nature of identifying and identification. To this end, I shall begin by distinguishing between non-reflexive and reflexive identifying. Within these categories I shall describe acts of identifying that are speech acts and those that are not. I shall then turn to an example of identifying and discuss it in some detail concentrating on its epistemic elements. I shall argue that context plays a role in warranting identifying. Finally, I shall discuss whether machines can identify and conclude that although they can be an aid in identifying, they do not have the capacities that would enable them to perform such actions.

Non-reflexive and reflexive identifying can each be described in two different ways. The two kinds of descriptions of non-reflexive identifying are *A*'s identifying *X* and *A*'s identifying *X* as *Y*, where *A* is anything¹ that has the capacities involved in being able to identify something, *X* is a object, kind, event, etc.² that is not identical to *A*, and *Y* is a property that is attributed to *X* in the act of identifying. I call these descriptions of identifying 'non-reflexive,' since what is being identified is not identical to the agent of the identifying. The two descriptions of reflexive identifying are *A*'s identifying himself and *A*'s identifying himself as *Y*, where *A* and *Y* are as above. I call these descriptions of identifying 'reflexive,' since the agent doing the identifying and the object identified are identical.

Let us begin with *A*'s identifying *X*. Suppose that Sam is shown a bird, an oriole, on which he focuses his attention. He comes to think,

¹ I leave it as this point an open question as to whether machines have this capacity, but it is something that I shall take up later in the paper.

² Anything can be identified. To simplify the exposition, I shall talk only of objects, unless the argument calls for a wider net.

1. Ah, that's an oriole

thus, thinking that bird is an oriole and thinking of the bird as an oriole. His thinking of the bird in this way is an answer to a range of wh-question, for example, 'What is that bird?',³ a question that Sam might pose to himself, have posed to him by another, or be implicit in the context.⁴ We can say that on this occasion Sam has identified the bird as an oriole and since it is an oriole, has identified the bird. Let us call this 'an occasion identifying,' an act of identifying that occurs on a particular occasion. Once Sam has identified the bird, then we can say of Sam with respect to the bird, even when he is not presented with the bird, that he identifies it as an oriole. Let us call this 'a standing identifying,' a state that Sam has that is constituted in part by his continuing non-occurently to think of the bird as an oriole. Moreover, if Sam were able reliably to identify orioles, then in this case Sam would know that the bird is an oriole.

It might be thought that for Sam to identify the bird, the way that he thinks about the bird need not be an answer to a wh-question; all that is required, it could be argued, is that Sam or the person who posed the wh-question thinks that it is an answer. Let us suppose that Sam identifies the bird in question as a blue jay, that is, he comes to think of it as a blue jay, but as before, it is an oriole. Clearly, he has not identified the bird, although he and others might think that he has. What is required for Sam to identify the bird is that he comes to think of the bird as having a property that it in fact has.

³ There are other wh-questions that might be implicit or explicit in the context. Sam might wonder whether the bird is an oriole or he might wonder what kind of bird it is or which bird it is among the pictures of labeled birds on his desk. Anyone of these would do as questions for which Sam's thinking of the bird in a certain way would be an answer.

⁴ The wh-question for which A's thinking about an object in a certain way is an answer depends on the object about which he is thinking. If it is a person it is a who- or which X-question, an event, a where- or when-question, etc.

Against what I have claimed, it might be argued that there are situations in which someone identifies something, but there is no wh-question that is involved in the identifying. Suppose that without being prompted a baby points to an orange and says,

2. Orange

In saying 2, the baby has not posed to itself a wh-question, nor have its parents, but it has identified the thing to which it points as an orange. So it would seem that an agent can identify something without there being a wh-question posed. There is, however, a wh-question implicit in the situation. It is true to say of the baby pointing to the orange that

3. It has identified what that is.

Thus, in this situation, there is implicitly a wh-question, 'What is that?,' to which the baby's 2 is an answer.

Although *A*'s coming to think about *X* as having a certain property, which is an answer to a wh-question, is necessary for *A* to identify *X*, it is not always sufficient. The police might wish to identify the thief who stole the British Crown Jewels and might discover that it is the same thief who held up the Bank of Canada on April 1, 2006, thereby attributing a property to the person who stole the Crown Jewels that individuates him from other thieves and is an answer to a wh-question, but their discovery is not sufficient for them to identify the thief. The reason is that the purpose that the police have in identifying the thief is to be able to apprehend him. But their knowing that the person who stole the Crown Jewels is the same person as the thief who held up the Bank of Canada does not enable them to do so, unless they are already acquainted with the thief who held up the Bank of Canada. Given the reason that the police have for identifying the thief, what they need to identify him are characteristics that would enable them to track him down and to arrest him. Hence, for *A*'s coming to think correctly of *X* as *Y* to constitute his identifying *X* the properties that *A* applies to *X* must be relevant to the purpose of the identifying. Since these purposes vary with context, the conditions for *A*'s identifying *X* vary with context.

This can be seen by considering a case in which providing an identifying property, not sufficient for identifying the thief in the example above, might be sufficient for identifying a person. On an examination, we might be asked to identify Queen Elizabeth II. Characterizing her as the present queen of Canada might be sufficient to answer the examination question and thus, to have identified her, but a similar answer would not be sufficient for the purposes involved in the thief example above. We have only considered cases in which the properties on offer are individuating properties, but not all cases of identifying require the application of properties that individuate an object. For example, an archaeologist might wonder whether the pot she has found in an archeological site in southern France is Greek or Roman. It would be sufficient for her purpose were she to note that it is a fifth century B.C. Greek pot, thereby, identifying the pot. But being a fifth century B.C. Greek pot does not distinguish it from any other similar pot. Despite this, her characterizing the pot in this way identifies the pot, since the characterization meets the purpose at hand.

In the examples above, we begin with a particular object that we have in mind, the bird, the orange, Queen Elizabeth II, or a particular pot. Identifying the object consists in finding some property that characterizes it and meets the purpose in the context of the characterization. Not all case of identifying go from particular object to attribute. Suppose that little Jonnie complains to his teacher that a student in his class hit him. What the teacher wants to identify is the person who hit Jonnie. That is, he wants an answer to the following question.

4. Who is the student who hit Jonnie?

What the teacher wants to find out are properties of the student who hit Jonnie so that he can find her. For example, he would have the answer to 4, if he identified the student who hit Jonnie as Sally. The teacher begins, then, with a characterization, the student who hit Jonnie, and wants to garner information that would enable him to know who that person is. If it is Sally who hit Jonnie and the teacher discovers this, then he has identified the person who hit Jonnie and has identified this person as Sally. We can say that in this case

we have a property true of some individual, the person who hit Jonnie, and want to identify the particular object to which it applies; in the examples above, we have a particular object to which we wish to fit an attribute that identifies that object.

Let us summarize the first kind of non-reflexive identifying, where *A* is a cognizer⁵ that has the capacity to identify something, *X* is an object, and being *Y* is a property.

5. *A*'s identifies *X* if and only
 - (a) *A* correctly thinks of *X* as being *Y* and that *X* is *Y*.
 - (b) That *X* is *Y* is an answer to a wh-question that is implicit or explicit in the context of the identifying.
 - (c) The answer to the wh-question is relevant to the contextual purpose of the identifying.⁶

Since the purpose of identifying something can vary with context, there is no way to tell in advance whether a subject's correct application of a property to an object constitutes his identifying it. The variation across contexts is related to the connection between identifying and wh-questions. What makes a particular characterization relevant for the purpose of the identifying is the question that is implicit or explicit in the context of the identifying and what among the possible answers to the question can serve to fulfill the purpose of the identifying. In the thief example, that he is the man who held up the bank of Canada is an answer to the question: Who stole the Crown Jewels? But this characterization of the person who stole the Crown Jewels does not serve the purpose the police have in their quest to identify him. They want to be able to think of him in such a way that this way would lead to his capture. How the question that is related to

⁵ The cognizer is anything that has the 'mental' capacities necessary for identifying something, including the ability to categorize, having the beliefs that arise from categorizing, thinking of something as falling under the category, posing or answering a question, etc.

⁶ What distinguishes occasion from non-occasion identifying, is whether 5(a) comes about as the result of *A*'s being presented with an object or whether it is a standing thought.

identifying arises varies across contexts. It can be *A* who poses to himself a wh-question; a wh-question can be posed to *A* by another; it can be *A* who identifies *X* for someone, *Z*, and presupposes that *Z* has or should⁷ have a wh-question about *X* for which his identifying is an answer, or it can be implicit in the context as in the baby example.⁸

As we have seen, identifying *X* is an act that implies success (Ryle 1949).⁹ To misidentify is not to identify. Suppose that the police say that they have identified the thief who held up the Bank of Canada and claim that he is the president of the Bank. If it turns out that the miscreant was not the president of the Bank, they have not identified the thief in question. In addition, identifying is not the same as categorizing, since categorizing does not imply success. If I categorize a whale as a fish, I have not identified whales, although I have categorized them. Lastly, although *A*'s identifying *X* implies that his way of thinking about *X* is true of it, it does not follow that he knows that this is the case. A student on an examination might be asked who Queen Elizabeth II is and make a lucky guess identifying her as the Queen of Canada, an identification that is an answer to the question. But the student, even though he answered the question correctly and has identified Queen Elizabeth II for the purpose of the examination, does not know who she is.¹⁰ That is, he is not warranted in thinking that she is the Queen of Canada. But in many cases of identifying, an agent not only wishes to identify something, but wishes to know who or what the object is. This requires that his way of thinking about the object is warranted. In the thief example above, the police want to catch the thief, that is, they

⁷ This can arise in the interactions between student and teacher when the teacher identifies something for the student without the student having posed a wh-question for which the teacher's identifying is an answer.

⁸ In what follows rather than give this long account of what is involved in the wh-questions connected to identifying, I shall talk about acts of identifying presupposing a wh-question.

⁹ David Matheson (private communication) has suggested that the implication might be pragmatic, and not semantic, as I claim. My reason for thinking that it is semantic rather than pragmatic is the oddity of "Jones identified the bird, but was unsuccessful in doing so."

¹⁰ This was pointed out to me by Jeffrey Speaks (private communication).

want to identify the thief so that they know who he is to track him down and apprehend him. But for this to be the case their way of thinking about him not only must be correct, it also must be warranted.

Let us turn to the other description of non-reflexive identifying, *A*'s identifying *X* as *Y*, which is similar to *A*'s identifying *X*. It involves a cognizer; it presupposes a wh-question for which the identifying is supposedly an answer; and it is an attribution to *X* of a property, *Y*, which categorizes *X*. The difference between the two descriptions of identifying is that *A*'s identifying *X* as *Y*, unlike *A*'s identifying *X*, can be mistaken. For example, the police might mistakenly identify the president of the Bank of Canada as the person who held it up. If this occurs, they certainly have not identified the thief. Hence, it appears that *A*'s identifying *X* implies that *A*'s way of thinking of *X* is true of *X*, but *A*'s identifying *X* as *Y* does not have any such implication. There is however a relation between the two. If the police correctly identify the thief as the President of the Bank of Canada, then they have identified the thief. And if the police have identified the thief in thinking of him as the President of the Bank of Canada, then they have identified the thief as the President of the Bank of Canada. That is, to identify *X* correctly as *Y* is to identify *X* and conversely, to identify *X* is to have applied some characterization, *Y*, to *X* such that *X* has been identified correctly as *Y*. The only difference between *A*'s identifying *X* as *Y* and *A*'s identifying *X* in 5 is a change in condition 5(a). What must be dropped from the condition is 'correctly,' since as we have seen, *A* can identify *X* as *Y*, even though he is mistaken in so identifying it.

As we have seen, *A*'s identifying *X* can be the result of a lucky guess, but there are cases in which it involves more on the part of the cognizer. In the bird example in 1, we can imagine that Sam has the visual capacity to recognize orioles when he sees one, a capacity that he engages in identifying the bird. Of course that he has engaged the capacity does not mean that he might not be mistaken in identifying the bird as an oriole. In some cases, what is required for identifying an object is more complicated bringing to bear for the identification elaborate experiments and complicated theories. Take for

example what is required to identify a particular virus that it is causing a disease or the heavenly body that is causing the perturbations in the orbit of a distant planet. Again, bringing to bear experimental results and theoretical considerations in identifying something does not guarantee the correctness of the identification.

There are not two kinds of non-reflexive identifying, but only one kind that depending on the context, can be described in different ways as 'A's identifying X' or 'A's identifying X as Y.' The difference between the two kinds of descriptions is similar to the difference between 'stating that *p*' and 'stating correctly that *p*.' If *p* is true, then my stating that *p* is correct, but my stating that *p* would not have been a different act had *p* been false. Similar with A's identifying X and A's identifying X as Y. The difference lies in what can be said. If I identify a bird as an oriole and it is not, then it cannot be said that I have identified the bird, but it can be said that I have identified the bird as an oriole. If, however, I identified the bird correctly as an oriole, then it can be said that I have identified the bird and that I have identified it is an oriole.

A cognizer can identify an object and identify an object as having a certain property without saying anything. There is however a speech act version of identifying X as Y that is similar to other speech acts, for example, promising, stating, and requesting, which are acts of saying something, the saying of which if certain conditions are fulfilled, is the performance of the act (Austin 1975). These acts, which Austin calls 'illocutionary acts,' have associated with them performative verb phrases, 'I promise,' 'I state,' and 'I request,' the role of which is to make explicit what act the speaker is performing. For example, for a speaker to say

6. I promise to repay you the money that you lent me

is for him to promise to repay to the hearer a certain sum of money.¹¹ Similarly, if a speaker were to utter seriously,

7. I identify this bird as an oriole¹²

he would thereby be identifying the bird in question as an oriole. Moreover, were his identification correct, he would thereby have identified the bird. The illocutionary act of identifying *X* as *Y* is similar to its non-illocutionary act counterpart. Neither implies success; both can be mistaken. In uttering 7 the speaker has identified the bird as an oriole, even if it is not. That an utterance of 7 can be mistaken shows why uttering it seriously cannot constitute his identifying the bird, since if he were to identify the bird, he could not be mistaken.

Illocutionary acts can be performed in uttering a sentence without it containing an explicit performative verb phrase and by communicative acts not involving the use of a sentence. A speaker can respectively promise, state and request in uttering the following sentences seriously and literally.

8. (a) I shall repay you the money that I owe you
(b) The economy of Canada will do better in 2006 than it did in 2005
(c) Would you please close the door behind you?

And he can respectively refuse a request, accept an offer, and greet someone by

¹¹ There are certain conditions that must be met for a serious, literal utterance of 6 to be a promise. No promise has been made if the hearer has not lent some money to the speaker or if the hearer tells the speaker to forget about the loan (Searle 1969).

¹² The use of the performative verb formula indicates, perhaps, that the speaker gives out that he has a certain status with respect to the information imparted, that is, he is an authority of the matter at hand. It is similar to uses of 'I state,' a performative verb formula that is not used in ordinary circumstances to say something.

9. (a) shaking his head
- (b) nodding his head
- (c) shaking the person's hand.

The illocutionary act of identifying is similar. A speaker can identify something in uttering 10(a) – (c) or in doing (d) when asked who the thief is.

10. (a) The second bird to the right is an oriole.
- (b) The race in which Jones is running is the one that begins at 5:00 pm.
- (c) Sprig Agnew was the vice-president of the U.S.A. from 1969 to 1973.
- (d) Pointing to someone in a police line up.

None of these contain 'I identify,' but they are cases in which an agent identifies something as having a certain property.

The illocutionary act of identifying can be done for or to someone. As Austin has argued, illocutionary acts have felicity conditions, conditions if not met, entail that the intended act has not come off or if the act comes off, it is open to criticism (Austin, 1975). There are two conditions of the latter sort that apply to a speaker's uttering 7. His performing the illocutionary act of identifying the bird as an oriole presupposes that he intends that his audience recognizes that he has identified the bird as an oriole, which Austin calls 'up-take,' and that he presents himself as believing that the bird is an oriole. Up-take is a general condition on the performance of illocutionary acts; in speaking speakers intend that their audience understand what illocutionary act they are performing. Hence, in performing an illocutionary act, including the act of identifying *X* as *Y*, the speaker's illocutionary act intentions direct his act to his audience. The illocutionary act of identifying can also be performed for someone. In this case, what is added is that the speaker intends that his audience comes to identify the bird as an oriole. The difference can be brought out by considering the example of a teacher and a student. A biology teacher can ask a student to identify a bird. If he tells her that it is an oriole, then he has identified the bird as an oriole to her, but not for her, since presumably she knows what

the bird is and can already identify it. If however the teacher identifies a bird as an oriole and her audience is a student, then one could suppose that she has done it for the student, since she assumes that he is not able to identify the bird.

Identifying and identification go hand in hand. In identifying an object, an agent provides an identification for the object. The converse however is not the case, since an agent can provide an identification for an object without thereby identifying it. The reason is that we can be mistaken or inaccurate in the identifications that we provide for objects, but as we have seen, to identify an object is to characterize it correctly. In saying that the thief who stole the Crown Jewels is the President of the Bank of Canada, the police made a mistake in identifying the thief as the President of the Bank of Canada. In doing so they did not mistakenly identify the thief, but gave an inaccurate identification. So *identification* goes with *identifying as*.¹³ This is a reason why there can be fake or false identification cards that misleadingly identify a person as someone he is not. But a fake identification fails of course to identify the person who proffers the card. As we shall see, both notions of 'identify' will come into play in a discussion of identifying and identification in practical situations.

Let us turn to what I have called reflexive identifying, *A's* identifying himself and *A's* identifying himself as *Y*. As before; *A* is a cognizer and *Y* a property. Let us suppose that Sam is shown a photograph in which he identifies the person in the photograph to the left of the teacher as himself. If he is to the left of the teacher, then he has identified the person in the photograph to the left of the teacher. But if he is not, although he has not identified the person in the photograph to the left of the teacher, he has identified the person in the photograph to the left of the teacher as himself. This then is a case of reflexive identifying that is an instance of non-reflexive identifying. Moreover, the distinction between occurrent and standing identifying carries over to this case. In being presented with the photograph, Sam's identifying the person in the photograph to the left

¹³ Italics indicate notions; quotation marks indicate expressions.

of the teacher is an occurrent act of identifying and if he continues to think of the person in the photograph to the left of the teacher as himself, then we have a case of standing identifying. Lastly, there is a wh-question implicit in Sam's identifying the person in the photograph to the left of the teacher, namely, 'Who is that person?'.¹⁴

Just as there are illocutionary and communicative acts of non-reflexive identifying, there are also illocutionary and communicative acts of reflexive identifying. Imagine that I am at passport control and a border guard asks that all the Canadians in the hall identify themselves. If I were to say

11. I am Canadian

I would thereby have identified myself as Canadian and since I am Canadian, I have identified myself to the border guard. Similarly, I could identify myself as Canadian by raising my hand or nodding my head. As well, I could have used the performative verb formula, 'I identify' as in 12.

12. I identify myself as a Canadian¹⁵

In addition, reflexive acts of identifying can be done to and for someone. In the examples above, I have clearly identified myself to the border guard and identified myself to him as a Canadian. But I have as well identified myself for him, since one would suppose that he does not know that I am Canadian before I identify myself as such. It is possible, however, that I could identify myself to the border guard without identifying myself for him. Imagine that it is a small border crossing that I cross everyday and that it is the same border guard on duty when I cross. The border guard knows who I am, but it is necessary

¹⁴ It also seems that Sam identifies himself in the photograph as the person to the left of the teacher. Since he is that person, he has identified himself in the photograph and believes that he knows who he is in the photograph. Thus, the wh-question that is implicit in this way of describing the example is 'Which person am I (Sam) in the photograph?'.
¹⁵ The use of 'I identify' here is a bit formal. It would seem more appropriate in a court of law.

that I identify myself to him before I am allowed across the border. In telling him that I am Canadian, I have identified myself to him, but not for him, since he already knows who I am.

Although there are similarities between reflexive and non-reflexive identifying, there are differences. Let us look at the *wh*-questions with which they might be connected that will bring out a difference between the two sorts of identifying. For both *A*'s identifying *X* to *Z* and *A*'s identifying himself to *Z*, as we have seen, there must be some property of *X* or himself that *A* correctly applies to it that answers a *wh*-question about it. A difference between the two kinds of identifying is in who can pose the question. In *A*'s identifying *X* to *Z*, he can pose the question to himself, a possibility that does not arise with *A*'s identifying himself to *Z*. In doing so, *A* does not pose to himself a *wh*-question about himself for which his identifying is an answer. Rather, he presupposes that *Z* has such a question, should have such a question, or would be interested in having the answer to such a question for which his act of identifying himself is supposed to be the answer.

I now want to turn to a particular example of identifying and show in detail in what way identifying can be warranted. In particular, I shall investigate the epistemological relationship between *A*'s identifying himself as *Y* to *B* and *B*'s identifying *A* as *Y*. I am driving on a highway in Quebec, I have a valid Quebec license, and a police officer stops my car and asks me for my driver's license. She wishes to determine whether

13. I am a licensed driver

Let us see how the police officer comes to know 13. In waving me over and asking me for my driver's license, she is in effect asking me to identify myself.

14. I hand the police officer my Quebec driver's license.

In doing so

15. I identify myself as a licensed driver in Quebec.

She sees that I have done so, but she does not know from this that the license is mine. She looks at the license and at me and sees that

16. My appearance matches the picture and the description on the card.

14 – 16 provide the evidence that warrants her in identifying me as the person who is depicted on the card that I handed her. This is not however sufficient warrant for her to believe 13, since it is possible that the card I gave her is a forgery. But she knows that in the province of Quebec, there is actually a very low probability that the card is a forgery or has been altered. In addition, she thinks that I do not look like the sort of person who would forge or alter a driver's license. From this and her identifying me as the person who is depicted on the card that I handed her she concludes that

17. The card I handed her is my driver's license.

My driver license contains information about its expiration date, which she reads. From this, she concludes 13. Thus,

18. The police officer thinks of me as having a valid Quebec driver's license.

It follows from 18 that

19. The police officer identifies me as someone who has a valid Quebec driver's license.

Her identifying me as someone who has a valid Quebec driver's license involves attributing to me a certain property, namely, having a valid Quebec driver's license, a property that she is warranted in attributing to me by virtue of the properties about me that are specified on my driver's license and by her background assumption about whether the card is genuine. Hence,

20. The police officer is warranted in identifying me as someone who has a valid Quebec driver's license

Moreover, since I have a valid Quebec driver's license, the police officer knows the answer to a wh-question.

21. The police officer knows whether I have a valid Quebec driver's license.

The example moves from my identifying myself as having a valid Quebec driver's license, a reflexive identifying, to the police officer identifying me as having a valid Quebec driver's license, a non-reflexive identifying. Since the police officer's thinking that I have a Quebec driver's license is constitutive of her identifying me as having a valid Quebec driver's license and she is warranted in thinking this, it follows that her identifying me as having a valid Quebec driver's license is warranted. Since I have a valid Quebec driver's license, the police officer has identified me correctly and thus, knows whether I have a valid Quebec driver's license. She knows, then, that I am in possession of a valid Quebec driver's license.

Identifying someone involving identity cards, including driver's licenses, credit cards, passports, library cards, etc. is not the only form of identification. Let us return to the Jonnie example in which the teacher wishes to identify the person who hit Jonnie. That is, he wants an answer to the following question.

22. Who is the student who hit Jonnie?

He has then a characteristic, the person who hit Jonnie and he wishes to find the particular person who has this property. He would know have an answer to his question if he came to think that Sally was the culprit. Let us suppose that it is Sally who hit Jonnie and the teacher has good reasons to think that it was her. It would follow that

23. He is warranted and correct in identifying Sally as the student who hit Jonnie.

From this he knows the answer to his question and knows that Sally is the student who hit Jonnie.

The epistemic situation in the Jonnie example is different from the driver's license example. In the latter example the police officer is visually acquainted with me, the driver of the car, and wishes to know whether I am the person described on the driver's license.

Moreover, I am asked to identify myself, which I do by handing the police officer my driver's license. In the Jonnie case, the teacher begins with a characterization, the student who hit Jonnie, and wants to garner information that would enable him to know who that person is. In addition, there is no reflexive identifying; the teacher does not ask the person who hit Jonnie to identify herself. Cases similar to the Jonnie example arise with surveillance cameras, DNA samples, fingerprints, etc. where we have a property of someone, their picture, DNA, or fingerprint, and wonder who that person is. And cases similar to the police officer arise at passport controls, libraries, banks, etc., where we have a person before us and want to identify who that person is. We can say that in the first case we have an attribute and want to fit a particular person to it and in the second case a particular person to whom we wish to fit an attribute that identifies that person.

The Jonnie and the police officer examples appear to be straight forward and it might be thought we can generalize the epistemic conditions of these two cases to other cases of reflexive and non-reflexive identifying. There are two sorts of problems, however, that apply in general to warranting beliefs that also apply to reflexive and non-reflexive identifying. First, it appears that warrants for a belief can vary from context to context. What warrants a belief in one context might not be sufficient in another context. There are two sorts of cases. In the first, what changes is the amount of evidence required for the warrant (Goldman 1976); in the second, what varies is the importance for the cognizer in having a warranted belief and with this change there is a change in what is required for the belief to be warranted (DeRose, 1992). Second, it appears that there are cases of identifying that do not involve a cognizer. I shall take up each of these in turn.

Let us begin with the first case in which what is warranted in one context is not warranted in another.¹⁶ Suppose that I wish to take a photograph of a genuine Amish barn in Lancaster County in Pennsylvania where many Amish live and where there are a number of Amish barns. I am familiar with such barns and can identify one when I see it. I see

¹⁶ The following is a variant of an example introduced by Goldman (1976).

what I take to be a genuine Amish barn. Given the context, Amish country, where there are many Amish barns, my familiarity with such barns, and my seeing what I take to be a genuine Amish barn, there is then a warrant for my believing that

24. I have identified the barn at which I am looking as a genuine Amish barn.

Imagine a different scenario. I am again in Lancaster County, but now unbeknownst to me a film about the Amish is being produced there. Moreover, the movie production company has erected a number of fake Amish barns scattered around the county. I am in front of the same barn as in the previous scenario. Is there now a warrant for my believing 24? I think not, since there is nothing that has ruled out the very real possibility that it is one of the fake Amish barns that the movie company has built around Lancaster County. Notice that in the two scenarios, there is no difference in my internal states. I have the same sense experiences in the two scenarios, the same memories, and the same intentional states. What has changed between the two cases is external to me. The difference is in the context in which my belief in 24 arises. In the first scenario, Lancaster County is without fake barns, but in the second there are fake barns scattered around Lancaster County.

What then is required in the two cases for there to be a warrant for my believing 24? In the first case, given that I see an Amish barn, it is sufficient that the barn at which I am looking is an Amish barn that causes my perceptual belief that it is an Amish barn and there is nothing that looks like a genuine Amish barn, but is not, which would cause me to have a relevantly similar perceptual belief; in the second case these are not sufficient. The reason that in the first case my seeing the Amish barn is sufficient to warrant my belief is that in the circumstance my seeing the Amish barn is a reliable indicator of its being an Amish barn. Hence, the belief that my seeing the barn gives rise to is warranted. What must be added in the second case is additional evidence that the barn that I believe to be an Amish barn is in fact an Amish barn, since in this case my seeing an Amish barn is no longer a reliable indicator of its being an Amish barn, since there is the real possibility that it is not an Amish barn. There are various sorts of additional evidence that

might well be sufficient in the second case. Perhaps it would do for me to look inside the barn to see whether the construction techniques are those that the Amish use. Or I might take a closer look to investigate the age of the building. If it were an old building, then since the movie production company has only recently come to Lancaster County, this would be additional evidence that it is an Amish barn and sufficient warrant for my belief in 24. Even then, we can imagine a context in which it would not be sufficient to warrant the belief in 24. Suppose that the movie company wishes that the barns that they construct to appear to be genuine Amish barns even from the inside. They also want them to appear to be old Amish barns and they go to great trouble and expense to simulate Amish barnness. If this were the situation, then my examining the barn and seeing that the construction techniques are those that the Amish used and that the barn looks old would not be sufficient to warrant my belief in 24 based on my expertise about Amish barn. The point is that what warrants a belief in one context might not warrant the same belief in another context.

It should be obvious what connection the Amish barn example has to our discussion of the driver's license example. There can be a warrant for the police officer identifying me as having a valid Quebec driver's license, if there are no or very few fake driver's licenses in Quebec when I identify myself to her as a licensed driver. But if the number of fake driver's licenses were to increase, there might not be a warrant for the police officer's belief that I have a valid Quebec license and thus, there would not be a warrant for her to have identified me as being a licensed driver in Quebec. Not only is the number of fakes a factor, but the skill with which they are made plays a role in determining whether the beliefs are warranted. If there are many counterfeit driver's licenses, but they are crudely made and easy for a police officer to spot, they would have no effect on whether her belief was warranted. But if there were many counterfeits and they were ably made, then the reliability of the belief would diminish.

Another contextual factor that affects the degree to which a belief is warranted is the importance to the believer of the truth of the belief (DeRose, 1982). Suppose that my

wife and I want to withdraw money from our bank account; it is a Friday; and our bank is closed over the weekend. My wife asks me when the bank closes and I tell her that it is at 5:00 pm and that I know that it is, since I passed the bank two weeks ago and it was open at 5:00 pm. In this case it would appear that there is a warrant for my believing that

25. The bank will be open at 5:00 pm this coming Friday.

Suppose that the importance for my wife and me of the bank's being open changes. After I tell my wife that I passed the bank two weeks ago on Friday at 5:00 pm and it was open, my wife reminds me that it is very important that we get the money from the bank today, since if we do not, we would not be able to buy our tickets for our long planned trip to Paris the next day when the banks are closed. In this case it would be an appropriate response on my part that I am no longer sure that the bank is open and that I better call to make certain. That is, there is no longer a warrant for my believing 25. What has changed from the first to the second scenario is the importance to me and my wife of the bank's being open. In the second case, given that it is very important to us that the bank is open, my having seen that it was open at 5:00 pm on Friday two weeks ago does not warrant my believing that it is open on the day on which I have the conversation with my wife.

Again, the relevance of this kind of case for identifying someone should be obvious. If the importance of authenticating someone's identity increases, then the degree of reliability of what we count as evidence for warranting the identification changes. Consider passports and the situation in which the authorities in the United States find themselves after September 11, 2001. They regard it to be of increased importance that they be able to identify everyone coming into the United States and prevent anyone that they have reason to believe might commit acts of terrorism from entering the country. Since the importance of determining the genuineness of passports and the identity of the person described in the passport has increased, the evidence that is required to substantiate the authenticity of passports and the identity of those proffering them has changed.

In the above two examples of the relevance of context to the warrant of the belief involved in identifying, we begin with a particular person and the identifying is affected when a property is provided for the person thereby identifying him. As we have seen Jonnie type examples begin with a property and the identifying is affected by providing an object to which the property applies. The relativity to context affects Jonnie type examples in a somewhat different way. In the Jonnie case what the teacher wants to identify is the student who hit Jonnie and thus wants an answer to a who-question. What would answer this type of question depends on the context in which the question arises and the interests of the cognizer (Boer and Lycan, 1985). What might be a satisfactory answer to the teacher's question about the student who hit Jonnie is information that would enable him to find the student so that he could mete out punishment. In other cases, an answer to a who-question might merely involve knowing the person's name. Suppose that I am drawing up a list of the names of the directors of central banks and I want to identify who the president of the Bank of Canada is. In this context, finding out that it is David Dodge would be enough to answer the who-question presupposed by the identifying. But now imagine that I know the name of the president of the Bank of Canada, but I want to identify David Dodge. In this context, what I wish to have is information about him other than his name that is relevant to my enquiry in this situation.

I have claimed that identifying and identification require a cognizer. It might be thought that machines, ATM machines, iris pattern recognition devices, fingerprint detectors, surveillance cameras, etc., can do the job and thus, a cognizer is not necessary. To show that cognizers are needed for identifying and identification and that machines cannot identify, I shall take as my example iris pattern devices that are being increasingly used at Canadian airports to allow fast tracking through passport control. Information about iris patterns are loaded into the data base of a machine that can take a picture of a traveler's iris patterns when he presents himself at passport control. If there is a match between the iris patterns in the database and his iris patterns, the machine signals that the traveler can pass through passport control without having to appear before a passport officer. It might

be claimed that in doing this the machine identifies the traveler and thus, identifying someone does not require a cognizer.

The function of the iris pattern device is similar to a key that opens a door. The fit between the lock and the key does not mean that the lock has identified the key as being apt for opening it. It is similar with the iris pattern machines. They match iris patterns. But the fit between what is in the machine's data base and the picture of the iris pattern that it registers does not amount to the machines' identifying anyone. Let us consider what is involved in a cognizer's identifying something. If he identifies *X*, then there is a certain property, *Y*, that he thinks that it has. Moreover, if the cognizer were able to identify *Xs* reliably, then he would know what or who *Xs* are. So if the iris pattern recognition device were able reliably to identify the traveler, then it would think that the traveler had some property and would know who or what he is. Moreover, since identifying is an action, the machine would have to have intentions, since one cannot perform actions without having intentions. Thus, if the machine were capable of identifying people, it would have to have a range of psychological states and abilities, including beliefs and believing, intentions and intending, and the ability to know the answer to certain questions. Since it is doubtful that a machine is capable of having such states and abilities, there is little reason to think that machines can identify anything.

I have argued that there are two kinds of identifying, non-reflexive and reflexive, each of which has connected with it two descriptions, respectively, *A*'s identifying *X* and *A*'s identifying *X* as *Y* and *A*'s identifying himself and *A*'s identifying himself as *Y*. In addition, there are illocutionary and communicative acts of each kind of identifying. Central to identifying of either type is a cognizer thinking about something as having a certain property, a property that is an answer to a *wh*-question that is implicit or explicit in the context of the identifying. Not any property that a cognizer attributes to something is sufficient for him to identify the object; the property must be relevant to the purpose of the identifying. What distinguishes identifying something from identifying it as having a certain property is that the former requires that the thing identified has the property that

the cognizer attributes to the object, a requirement that does not apply to a cognizer identifying something as having a certain property. If a cognizer identifies an object, it does not follow that he knows what the object is, since he might not have a warrant for thinking that the object has the property that he attributes to it. Warrants for identifying something, similar to warrants for other beliefs, vary with context. They can change across contexts given variations in the evidential base for the belief and in the importance for the cognizer of the truth of the belief. Since there are a variety of psychological states and abilities connected with a cognizer identifying something, I have shown that machines, although they can be an aid in identifying cannot themselves identify anything.¹⁷

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