Response

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We are very grateful to our critics for their kind words and thoughtful engagement with *The Reference Book* (hereafter *TRB*), and also to the editors of *Mind & Language* for the opportunity to respond. We'll start our reply by sketching the book's positive thesis about specific noun phrases and names. In §2 we'll relate the traditional semantic category we call 'reference' to semantic taxonomies given in terms of mechanisms of denotation. In §3, we'll turn to acquaintance constraints on reference and singular thought. And in §4, we'll briefly address McGilvray's and Devitt's general doubts about the project of truth–conditional semantics to which our book contributes. Due to space constraints, however, this is not the setting to justify at any length the broad methodology we share with most of the hundreds of works that we engage with in the book.

1. Specific Existentials

TRB is largely concerned with noun phrases that are intuitively about individual objects. (Various terms have been used for this kind of aboutness—'picking out', 'designating', 'denoting'.) Many theorists hold that among such expressions, there are some whose meanings are more intimately connected to the objects they're about. This class of terms is said to be marked by various characteristic traits, such as *de jure* rigidity, object-dependence, and even having an object as semantic value. We call these the *referential* terms. (In his piece, Bach calls them 'objectually referential'.)

In Chapters 4–6 we present a view on which specific indefinites, definites, and demonstratives are all existentially quantified noun phrases that are nevertheless suitable for uses that exhibit many of the features associated with reference. On this view, these *specific existentials* all involve a special kind of quantifier domain restriction: their domains must be restricted to a single individual.[1] Often this restriction is not achieved by an explicit noun phrase itself, and so must involve a *covert restriction*—that is, an unvoiced contribution of a restrictor property to the truth-conditional content

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[1] More carefully: an occurrence is specific just in case the speaker presupposes that her use of the noun phrase picks out exactly one object at every possibility relevant at the local context. Note also that the covert restrictions we are positing can vary relative to elements in the domain of a higher quantifier. (See pp. 122–9 of *TRB*.)

of the noun phrase. In cases where this property is an identity property, the restriction is said to be *singular* and the noun phrase will take on many of the paradigmatic traits of referential terms. This picture of the operation of these noun phrases, we argued, complicates the orthodox notion of reference.

While specific existentials share a quantificational structure, they differ in the details of the conventional requirements on their use. Roughly, the felicitous use of definite descriptions requires not only that the (often covertly completed) noun phrase picks out a single individual, but also that the audience can grasp the property being used to restrict the domain. Meanwhile, the use of demonstratives conventionally requires that the audience must rely on salient supplemental information to grasp the relevant restrictor. These conventional requirements in turn generate corresponding presuppositions that accompany the use of such expressions, presuppositions that are also projective by standard tests. And while indefinites involve no conventional specificity requirement, a specific use will be marked not only by a covert domain restriction, but also by a presupposition on the part of the speaker that such a restriction is in place.

Here we should note a critical mischaracterization in McGilvray's discussion: he appears to conflate our covert restrictions themselves—which operate at the level of truth-conditional semantics, with various presuppositions *about* those restrictions—which do *not* compositionally interact with truth-conditional content. Thus, we do not hold that presuppositions act as 'determiners fixing a domain' (p. 494), nor do we 'include these presuppositions in what [we] call "semantic content"' (p. 494) or speculate about presuppositions being 'covertly syntactically represented' (p. 494). There are other important mischaracterizations of our view in McGilvray's reply.[2] But this one appears to engender much of the criticism he directs at our view.[3]

In Chapter 6, we asked whether *proper names* could be assimilated to our category of specific existentials. On one view, names are always semantically predicates, but what appears to be a bare 'referential' use is accompanied by a covert determiner that behaves like 'the'. Among other benefits, this view provides for a unified

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[2] Three other examples: (i) McGilvray interprets our 'candidness' requirement on definites as requiring 'prior familiarity as a condition of felicitous use'—a claim we explicitly reject (p. 167). (ii) He also attributes to us the idea that for a speaker to 'refer' with a specific indefinite, the audience 'must have, … some background knowledge garnered from the context or narrative that suffices to specify only specific individuals …' (p. 493). We deny this outright in the book as well (pp. 136−41). (iii) He says that the difference, for us, between using a definite and a demonstrative is that in the latter case the denoted object 'must be salient within the discourse or narrative'; instead the difference turns on a conventional reliance on salient *supplemental information*, which may or may not stem from the 'discourse or narrative' (p. 209).

[3] For example, he worries at length about whether our 'presuppositions', involving such nebulous phenomena as what a speaker takes for granted, can be included in 'a compositional semantics'; but they were never supposed to be! Perhaps with the confusion cleared up, McGilvray would still direct these worries at the contextually supplied domain restrictions we postulate, but we don't see why the worry is more pressing for them than for other context-dependent elements of content.

treatment of the name 'Susan' as it appears in 'Susan is happy' as well as in 'I know six Susans'. The predicate view works best when it is augmented with the idea that, along with the covert determiner, the use of names conventionally requires singular covert domain restriction. Such a view can withstand standard Kripkean objections.

However, as Martí notes, we ultimately reject the predicate view of names partly on the grounds that it 'fails to properly distinguish *describing* someone as called by a name … from actually *calling* someone by a name' (p. 486). Suppose that 'is a Susan' means something like 'is suitably related to a naming practice of being called "Susan"'. Still, there seems to be an intuitive distinction between uses of 'Susan' in which one is *describing* someone as related to a naming practice ('She is a Susan') and uses in which one is *engaging* in the naming practice ('Susan is happy'). This difference can be made more stark by reflecting on nouns like 'chef' and 'grandma', whose predicative meanings have nothing to do with naming practices. If you say 'The chef wants truffles', you are describing someone as a chef; if you say 'Chef wants truffles', you are *calling* someone 'Chef'. Or suppose a little girl utters one of these sentences:

1. If I have children and the father takes care of them …
2. If I have children and Father takes care of them … [4]

In the second case she is *calling* someone 'Father' — presumably her own father, rather than describing someone as the father of the counterfactual children.[5]

At any rate, we argued that orthodoxy about names is preferable to the predicate view partly because of this intuitive difference.[6] But we also proposed a 'third way': the *minimal view*. This differs from the predicate view in holding that calling uses suppress the predicative contribution of the noun. Thus, a calling use of 'Grandma' will involve a (projective) presupposition to the effect that the individual picked out is a grandma, but the name itself has no truth-conditional contribution to an utterance of 'Grandma is coming'. Indeed, it needs none: as proponents of the predicate view should acknowledge anyway, the utterance involves a covert determiner (like 'Grandmas are wonderful') as well as a covert singular restrictor (like 'That grandma is wonderful'). These elements can do all the truth-conditional work on their own.

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[4] One could insist that 'Father' takes 'mandatory wide scope'; but feels strained given that (i) the antecedents of conditionals are usually treated as scope islands, and (ii) the distinction is intuitive anyway.

[5] Insofar as one can hear the speaker of (2) as calling her imaginary partner 'Father' in the envisioned scenario, the relevant reading brings along with it not only a presupposition that he is a father in the envisioned scenario, but also that there would be a practice of calling the father in the family 'Father' (as opposed to 'Dad', for example).

[6] Here's another reason: the predicative content is hard to recover with anaphoric expressions. Compare 'The grandma is also a marathon runner' with 'Grandma is also a marathon runner', where 'also' is supposed to be taken to mean 'in addition to being a grandma'. (Thanks to Chris Kennedy and Aidan Gray.)

We tentatively endorsed the minimal view over orthodoxy primarily because it allows for a fairly unified treatment of the various uses of names, and can also (largely) assimilate names to the category of specific existentials. However, Martí argues that the minimal view misses 'some important differences in the *modus operandi* of names' (p. 486). She imagines a community that uses subscripts to avoid having more than one person share a name. Such a convention, she says, would not 'change the peculiar semantic operation of the proper names' (p. 487). In contrast, a similar convention attached to demonstratives would involve a more fundamental shift in meaning:

> Imagine that Pat and Chris are talking about two men they are observing, and in order to avoid the confusions generated by the repeated use of 'that man', they decide to settle things and start using 'that man$_1$' and 'that man$_2$'.

This would 'destroy something quite crucial in the standard semantic behavior' of 'that man', namely its context-sensitive character (p. 486).[7]

Unfortunately, these cases are rather underspecified. We need to know more about Pat and Chris's dispositions if we are to decide whether they are using the ordinary word 'that' combined with two new predicates, or whether they've coined two semantically atomic NP expressions. Suppose the former. Then they have not destroyed anything crucial in the semantic behavior of 'that man'. They have simply coined predicates that apply to exactly one person each. This is not to deny that there is a felt asymmetry with 'Chris$_{256}$', but it is one that the minimal view can elucidate. Because the new unique predicates leave no role for any supplementary information to narrow down the individual, Pat and Chris violate the conventional rule for demonstratives sketched above. (Consider the oddity of 'that tallest man in the world'.) But no such rule governs the use of names.

On another variation of the case, Pat and Chris use 'that–man$_1$' as a new semantically atomic expression. This time there is a significant change in the 'semantic mode of operation', since the new word replaces a complex of determiner and restrictor. But again the parallel with 'Chris$_{256}$' fails even for the minimal view. Merely adopting the subscript-naming convention she describes wouldn't cause the covert quantifier accompanying names to evaporate. We intuit that using 'Chris$_{256}$' 'changes little in the semantic function of names' because we continue to process such names as combining with a covert quantifier and (now unnecessary) restrictor.[8] (Or so the proponent of the minimal view should respond.)

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[7] She gives a similar example with 'here', but the view of 'here' we broach in passing actually does treat it as belonging to a different semantic category from specific noun phrases (p. 245).

[8] Martí might go on to spell out an example intended to rule out that there is a covert quantifier at play in the new convention, perhaps by insisting that the community does not recognize a predicative form of 'Chris$_{256}$', or would be genuinely flummoxed by any attempt to baptize a second person with that name. But in response to examples like this it hardly seems a cost for the proponent of the minimal view to insist that these are scenarios in which there are no terms with the same semantic function as 'Chris'. (Note that the minimal view of names does not entail that lexicalized e-type representations are impossible, or even absent in other parts of natural language.)

Two final points. First, Martí takes the hypothetical example of 'Chris$_{256}$' to show that the role of intentions and salience in the use of names is 'not semantic; it does not operate on each occasion of use to select the referent' (p. 487). But in *actual* natural languages the same name is standardly used for multiple individuals. With nothing semantic to select a referent for 'John', either the name is massively ambiguous or 'John is happy' fails to semantically express something evaluable for truth. We think there's a *pro tanto* reason to avoid both of these options.

Second, Martí writes that 'names allow us to say things about specific particulars, without having to make a claim about the whole world, as existentially quantified claims—no matter how many singular restrictors they contain—do' (p. 489). But intuitively when we say 'Some/Most/All dogs in the house are brown' we aren't making a claim about the whole world either! This is one among several good reasons not to understand natural language determiners in terms of the standard formal quantifiers ∃ and ∀, which range over the entire universe of discourse.[9] The meanings of natural language determiners are fundamentally binary, and it's most natural treat them as only ranging over the domains of their restrictors. The same should hold for the covert determiner accompanying names—saying 'John is happy' only makes a claim about the sole member of the determiner's restricted domain.

2. Reference and the Mechanisms of Denotation

Philosophers of language are often interested in the 'mechanism' by which an expression's success in denoting is to be explained. And since Kaplan and Kripke, it is often stressed that the denotation of names is explained in terms of naming chains, and that and of indexicals is explained in terms of indexical relations. Now, suppose we draw a distinction between those terms whose success in picking out an object is to be explained by invoking a causal/historical-or-indexical relation, and all the rest. On our view, this distinction is simply orthogonal to the distinction between properly referential terms and merely denoting terms. This puts us at odds with both Devitt and Bach, but for different reasons. Devitt only recognizes the first distinction, while Bach acknowledges both, but sees an important convergence between them.

The central disconnect between our thinking and Devitt's is that we are trying to answer questions he doesn't ask. Devitt is interested in questions of foundational semantics, such as: In virtue of what do expressions manage to represent anything at all? How are thought and language 'hooked to the world' (p. 478)? In short, he seeks 'ultimate explanations' for what we call 'aboutness' and he calls '**reference**' (p. 478).

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[9] This is not the place for an overview of generalized quantifier theory, but note that the meaning of 'most' cannot be captured with so-called type <1> quantifiers, and also that probably all natural language determiner meanings are *conservative*, in the sense that the truth of DET[A,B] turns only on how things are among the As. For two excellent overviews see (Keenan and Westerståhl, 1997) and (Glanzberg, 2006).

As we make clear in the Introduction, such foundational issues are not addressed in our book:

> We will be setting aside certain questions in foundational semantics that are pertinent to a fully satisfying story about reference. These include … how must the metaphysical ground floor of reality be configured for a binary reference relation to arise between an object and an occurrence of a term? [This is a] good question, but [it] lies outside our domain of inquiry.

Nevertheless, Devitt claims that the 'central flaw' of *TRB* is that we are not 'on the lookout' for 'ultimate explanations' of aboutness (p. 477). But surely the issue is whether the book fails to make progress on any *other* 'theoretically interesting' questions instead.[10]

By Devitt's lights, it does not—after all, he does not recognize the key categories that drive our theorizing. Consider, for example, a proper name whose reference is fixed (in Kripke's sense) by a description, without being synonymous with that description. Kripke's discussion of reference fixing highlights that, while the *explanation* of how the proper name gets to refer to its referent will advert to the description, the name is semantically very different to the description (it doesn't 'mean the same', to use his lingo). After all, only the name is a *de jure* rigid designator.[11] Now, Devitt's preferred taxonomy of how terms pick out objects involves a typology of the 'mechanisms' that explain how denoting terms get to be about objects: by being associated with description, by its standing in 'direct' relations to the world (whatever they are), or by a mix of the two (p. 477). Notice that using this typology, the description and the proper name whose reference is fixed by the description fall under the same category. But on the Kripkean picture there is a vast difference in semantic type between the two, one that affects how they interact with other expressions and how they convey information. This is a paradigm of the kind of semantic distinction that we are interested in, but it is one that—as far as we can tell—Devitt doesn't believe in. He denies that what we call 'reference' could be a theoretically interesting category, on the grounds that there is no 'level of specificity' of interest 'in between' (i) the category of terms that pick out a single object, and (ii) the various subclasses of that category, taxonomized by what it is that ultimately explains how they pick out a single object (p. 481). But we weren't interested in a category in between these levels of specificity: we were interested in a subclass of the first category that's orthogonal to the ones he has in mind.

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[10] *Pace* Devitt, we do not think that *liberalism* has much intrinsic theoretical interest—it is after all a negative thesis about the pretty gerrymandered category of acquaintance constraints. Likewise it will not be central to a positive theory of referential terms that one needn't be wearing a top hat to successfully refer. But it can be helpful to point out if someone thinks otherwise.

[11] See Kripke, 1980, pp. 21, 75–80, 94–6, including fns 21, 33, 42.

Take another example. *TRB* investigates whether various uses of 'that' can be semantically unified, so that its truth-conditional contribution is the same in 'That is a dog', 'That dog is happy', and 'Everyone remembers that first dog he or she had as a kid.' In pursuing this question we might ask whether in the first utterance 'that' should be treated as having a dog as semantic value, or else as having a semantic contribution akin to 'the'. (On the second option, no simple tag with a dog as semantic value is voiced at all.) Either way, the speaker's ability to talk about (say) Fido in the first utterance will presumably be explained at least in part by a causal relation—i.e. it will be a case of '*u-/su*-reference'. So again, the question that interests us cannot be stated if we are limited to a 'mechanisms'-based taxonomy. Since Devitt doesn't recognize the distinctions that are central to our project—and indeed to much of contemporary semantics—it is no surprise that he is unmoved by our discussion.

Bach, in contrast, is sympathetic with the category of genuinely (or in his lingo, 'objectually') referring terms and the related cognitive category of singular thoughts. Bach recalls the famous passage in which Russell claims that when we make a statement about something 'known only by description'—say Bismarck—we often 'intend to make our statement, not in the form involving the description, but about the actual thing described'. We would like, Russell says, to make a judgment that has Bismarck 'himself [as] a constituent' (1912). Russell thought that this is only possible if one is Bismarck himself. But while Bach retains Russell's distinction between thoughts that have an object as constituent and those that do not, he is more optimistic about how often we achieve the former. And he also gestures at a diagnostic for Russell's distinction: singular thoughts about Bismarck are the ones that would not be thinkable if Bismarck had not existed.[12]

Having presented this distinction, Bach chides us for not offering 'an account' of it, and suggests that doing so requires appealing to something like an acquaintance relation (p. 456). What is distinctive about 'object involving' thoughts, he claims, is that their denotation is explained 'relationally' rather than 'satisfactionally'. Whereas 'satisfactional' representations pick out objects by way of descriptive associations, 'relational' representations do so by way of a special kind of 'connection'. This 'need not involve perception of or even acquaintance with the object'—though he doesn't say what other kinds of connection work, aside from memory and communication chains.

A few points are worth making about Bach's distinction.

(i) There is no clean or exhaustive divide between representations that get to be about an object thanks to a description and those that get to be about an object thanks to a relation to that object. For example, take a representation that denotes an object because that representation stands in a relation to a *different* object—for

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[12] This diagnostic is problematic and has no obvious fix. Assuming the necessity of origins, the thought expressed by 'The mother of David is wonderful' wouldn't have been thinkable if David's mother hadn't existed. But that should not suffice to make it a singular thought about David's mother.

example, one we might express with 'the father of that guy' or 'the person standing there'. So the distinction is not exhaustive. Nor is it very clean. There are all sorts of cases where a representation's denotation is explained partly relationally and partly descriptively, as Devitt acknowledges with his '*su-*' category. For example, what makes a use of 'That', where the speaker points in the direction of the statue, refer to the statue rather than the lump of clay? Finally, there may be factors explaining denotation that fit into neither of Bach's categories. Think of the role of relative naturalness in Lewis's foundational semantics: that a term refers to one property rather than others with similar extensions can be explained in part by naturalness facts about those properties.

(ii) Bach articulates two distinctions and asserts without argument that they line up. But in fact there is reason to doubt that they do. The first distinction is that between thoughts that contain objects as constituents and those that don't. The second is the distinction among representations based on whether their capacity to be about an object is explained satisfactionally or relationally. But there are cases where these distinctions don't line up. Suppose that you are perceiving a dog—surely you can still form a perfectly 'general' thought about the dog, one you might express by 'The dog I am currently perceiving is happy'. Now, the fact that this thought is about (say) Fido is ultimately explained relationally—i.e. by the fact that the thinker is currently perceiving Fido. But Bach would not want to count this as a singular thought about Fido—you could have had that very thought even if Fido hadn't existed. So your thought doesn't contain Fido 'as a constituent'.

To fix this problem, we suspect Bach needs something like the idea of a representation that denotes thanks to a relational connection, but not *because* it is itself *about* that connection. (For example, the representation corresponding to the name 'Fido' exploits a connection, but not one that enters into the compositionally generated content of the thought that Fido is happy.) But what explains the fact that only one of the two representations is about the dog and yet not about the connection? The explanation can't turn on whether their denoting success involves the presence of a perceptual connection. Plausibly, following Russell, the difference lies in the *form* of the two thoughts: here it has become common for theorists to speak of singular representations as mental 'tags' or 'files'. And this leads us to our third point.

(iii) Bach intimates that the *reason* to adopt a relational-connection constraint is that it helps provide an 'account' of the Bismarck distinction: 'If not acquaintance, what?'. (Note that Bach does not seem to buy into the sorts of arguments for acquaintance constraints that we rebut in Chapter 2.) But why—even if his relationality constraint holds—would it constitute an 'account' of the Bismarck distinction? As far as we can tell, it would be a fact about singular thought that requires *further* explanation. We agree that there are various ways for the denotation of a representation to be determined, and that in some cases a thought has the right *form* to be object-involving. But how does it constitute explanatory progress to hold that thoughts of the latter sort can only be found among those whose denotation is determined relationally? What explains why there *couldn't* be thoughts of the

object-involving form whose reference is determined satisfactionally? (For example, recall Kripke's semantic rift between descriptions and names fixed by them.)

In short, while Devitt ignores the form-theoretic distinction of interest to us and urges us to theorize about mechanisms of reference instead, Bach recognizes the distinction but offers an implausible account of it in terms of those mechanisms. That is not to say that the relevant form-theoretic distinctions are fully understood. *TRB* gives reasons to be skeptical of glosses that rely too heavily on the metaphysics of constituency, and there is a good deal of hard work to be done when it comes to understanding the variety of semantical forms in play in mental and linguistic representation. We hope that our book stands as a contribution to that hard work. But we doubt that the distinctions between mechanisms of reference towards which Devitt and Bach gesture should either replace issues about semantic form or be used to account for them.

3. Acquaintance

Among those who accept a distinction between merely denoting terms and genuinely referential ones, many insist there must be a causal or indexical constraint on successfully using (or grasping the meaning of) the latter sort.[13] One standard argument for such a constraint has to do with the apparent truth conditions of quantified-into (or 'exported') attitude reports; another is a reductio involving the potential proliferation of contingent a priori knowledge. We address those arguments in Chapter 2 and find them utterly unconvincing. But neither Devitt nor Bach appeal to such arguments.

For Devitt, of course, the claim at issue cannot even be stated, since it presupposes the existence of a category that he doesn't recognize. But he offers up a surrogate in his own terms:

> (CA) Historical-causal relations explain, or largely explain, the [aboutness] of deictic demonstratives and pronouns, 'referential' definite and indefinite descriptions, and most proper names. So the singularity of some thoughts is explained by those relations.

We are not sure how to take this. Is the idea that, for example, the ability to deictically demonstrate an object x is at least largely explained by historical-causal relations to x, or merely that such a demonstration is explained by some causal-historical relations or other (though perhaps not to x)? Various examples in our book—those

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[13] Among those in this camp are Bach, Davies, Donnellan, Evans (replacing 'causal' with 'epistemic'), Fitch, Neale, Salmon, Soames, Recanati, and Russell. Dissenters include Jeshion, Sosa, and Kaplan in some of his later work. See the citations on pp. 20−3 of *TRB*.

involving reference by depiction or proxy for example—make potential trouble for the former but not the latter idea. Indeed the latter might seem so weak as to be obviously true, were there not also potential counterexamples. Recall Evans's observation that a person's ability to mentally demonstrate a location in physical space via her egocentric map may not be explained by causal relations between that location and its representation, but instead (roughly speaking) by the fact that the representation would dispose the person to move to that location under suitable conditions. If this is right, even the extremely weak version of CA manages to be false.

For his part, Bach dislikes the word 'acquaintance', but is attached to the idea that singular thought requires a special causal connection to the object, so in our terms he counts as positing an acquaintance constraint. For him the foundational connection is *perceptual,* though if you're not currently perceiving an object, you can inherit an adequate connection indirectly by way of a 'chain of representations originating with a perception' (2010). Chapter 1 of *TRB* offers a range of examples suggesting that there is little prima facie encouragement for any such constraint. We invited readers to employ whatever diagnostics they use to detect the presence of singular thought—for example, intuitive judgments about the truth of certain kinds of belief reports. But if one's only diagnostics are theoretically-loaded ideas about objects being constituents of thought and so on, the only way to detect the presence or absence of singular thought in a given case will be to apply one's theory. That is one way for a theory of acquaintance to avoid possible falsification by cases.

Take thoughts about tomorrow—no one has *perceived* that day, so there is no representational chain to exploit. On Bach's view, then, the thought one expresses by 'Tomorrow will be a great day' cannot *involve* that day the way that (presumably) similar thoughts about yesterday do. Of course, we can hardly pretend to have pretheoretic intuitions about whether a given day is a constituent of our thoughts. But we could try reflecting on another diagnostic Bach offers: whether the content of these thoughts 'could have been [about something else] or [nothing] at all without the content of the thought being affected' (p. 459). To us, at least, it seems that this thought about tomorrow are no different in this respect from similar thoughts about yesterday: its content—indeed, its truth-conditions—would have been different if it had been about another day, or if it failed to pick out any day at all (today being the last). Of course, Bach can deny sharing this intuition, or insist that this is really an intuition about the content of certain *sentences* (after all we haven't shown that 'asserting a singular proposition requires having a singular thought') (p. 462).

Still, it is important to recall where the burden of argument lies. If one postulates a condition that floats free of independent diagnostics, one can make stipulations about its presence and absence in a completely untrammeled way. The real question is whether there is any explanatory value in such stipulations. For Scott Soames and others, a causal acquaintance constraint is put to use in attempting to explain various belief reporting data. For Gareth Evans, an epistemic constraint is used in an attempt to account for various *abilities* constitutive of thinking about objects. Of course, *TRB* argues in detail that both of these attempts to extract explanatory benefits from acquaintance fail. But at least these are attempts to put the acquaintance

constraint to explanatory use. The one explanatory benefit Bach seems to claim for his constraint is the idea addressed above, viz. that it provides an 'account' of the Bismarck distinction.

Acquaintance, we suggest, has a pretty dismal record as a helpful explanatory tool. If you, the reader, disagree with us, we urge you to do more than sort examples with theoretically-driven criteria. Write down the barebones of a theory where acquaintance is a crucial element and try putting the theory to explanatory work! Those who posit free-floating conditions while prescinding from any abductive ambitions are not going to advance our understanding of object-directed thought.

4. Concluding Methodological Remarks

As mentioned earlier, we do not have the space to offer a full-fledged defense of what we take to be the central methodology of contemporary semantics. But a few remarks are in order. One theme running through the remarks of both McGilvray and Devitt is that we—and the philosophers we are criticizing—are overly confident in assuming that reference and singular thought are kinds of interest to a 'natural' or 'naturalistic' science.

For example, Devitt doubts that our categories 'play important causal roles in that world' as all theoretically interesting kinds must do (p. 476).[14] But we disagree that scientific inquiry involves the idea that every property worth its salt must be causally efficacious or (worse still) that we cannot treat a property as theoretically important until we have first identified a causal role for it. Take a simple example. Suppose one is presented with a sentence and asked about the kinds of scope ambiguities had by the sentence. It won't help to insist on specifying a causal role 'in the world' for each scope ambiguity. Of course, one would hope that any satisfactory account of semantic structure can ultimately be embedded into a causal explanatory theory of the interaction of mind and world. But that does not mean that we should at every turn be asking directly about the causal cash value of each semantic category.

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[14] Devitt also complains that the debate we engage in 'is dominated by appeals to intuitions', especially those involving 'terms of art' (p. 476). We do pay heed to empirical facts that our view purports to predict and explain, such as facts about the truth or acceptability of utterances at contexts, the presence of presupposition, the availability of various readings, and so on. And we hope the reader shares our judgments about such cases. But we also emphasize other theoretical virtues that should constrain a theory of the meaning of denoting terms—such as systematicity, elegance, and sensitivity to structural connections both within and outside of semantics. Devitt goes on to say that our appeals to intuitions often involve 'other terms of art'; here he cites pages where we make judgments about truth or acceptability of exported attitude ascriptions, of utterances involving anaphora, of sentences in cases of local accommodation, and so on. But we do not ask readers to form judgments about such cases *under these descriptions*. And where we appeal to judgments about phenomena like presupposition, we take pains to explain what we are getting at in pretheoretic terms, at least when introducing the lingo.

Relatedly, McGilvray worries that theorizing about reference does not 'meet the methodological standards of natural sciences' since it lacks 'clearly understood and defined "inputs" and "outputs" to the computational system' (p. 496). But this leads to a fairly radical skepticism about any truth-conditional semantics involving notions like reference (or truth) at contexts. Such an endeavor would have to be 'sensitive to shifting discourse contexts and people's views and beliefs about them' (p. 497), and McGilvray claims that such things lie outside the boundaries of natural science. After all, referring is 'a form of action', and 'natural science cannot be expected to deal with human action', especially 'language use'. It's too flexible, mercurial, 'creative' (p. 498). Thus, it would seem, much of contemporary semantics is utterly wrongheaded, and reference should probably go the way of phlogiston. Of course, we aren't sure exactly where McGilvray would like to draw the boundaries of natural science, or what 'methodological criteria' allegedly guard them. But we are simply unmoved by the assumption that every inquiry outside those boundaries is unfit for systematic and knowledgeable theorizing—including all of 'human action'. Unfortunately, an engagement with these much larger issues is well beyond our (already-flouted!) word-count limit.

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