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*Some remarks on referentiality**

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Speech belongs half to the speaker, half to
the listener.

Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*¹

1 Introduction

The main focus of this paper is on two issues: which, if any, NPs can be used to refer, and which, if any, NPs can be (truthfully) said to refer all by themselves. It is evident just from this statement that we will be dealing with two distinct reference relations – a pragmatic relation holding among speakers, expressions, and entities out in the world (so to speak); and a semantic relation holding among expressions and entities. It should also be made clear that only singular reference will be at issue here, of either the semantic or pragmatic type. However I'll assume that plural entities and masses are possible singular referents (as is standard these days – cf. e.g. Link 1983, Partee 1986).

A couple of other background issues deserve sections of their own. In §2 we look at object-dependent propositions. I will sketch an argument for a view on which such propositions **do not** contain entities from the outside world, but in their stead contain constant individual concepts. §3 contains another argument for incorporating individual concepts into our semantics, based on the interpretation of indefinite descriptions. These sections will turn out to be relevant to the discussions which follow. In §4 and §5 we will take up in order the issues of (singular) pragmatic and semantic reference, closing in §6

* This paper draws heavily (and sometimes word-for-word) on Abbott 2010, chapter 11. I am very grateful to Kent Bach for his comments on that chapter and to both Kent and Dennis Stampe for their comments on a previous draft this paper. I regret not having been able to address all of their comments as I would like.

¹ I'm grateful to Larry Horn for tracking down an extended version of the quote in the original French, and in the Donald M. Frame English translation, and sending them to me:

La parole est moitié à celui qui parle, moitié à celui qui l'escoute. Cettuy-cy se doit preparer à la recevoir selon le branle qu'elle prend. Comme entre ceux qui jouent à la paume, celui qui soustient se desmarche et s'apreste selon qu'il voit remuer celui qui luy jette le coup et selon la forme du coup.

Speech belongs half to the speaker, half to the listener. The latter must prepare to receive it according to the motion given it. As among tennis-players, the receiver moves and makes ready according to the motion of the striker and the nature of the stroke.

The tennis metaphor isn't really relevant to the rest of the paper, but perhaps other tennis addicts will appreciate it as I do.

with some concluding remarks. This paper primarily targets some proposals from Kent Bach (to be found in, e.g., his 1987, 2004, 2006), and I should acknowledge here my gratitude to him for writing so clearly and cogently about these and other issues in semantics and philosophy of language, and for helping me to understand them (to the extent that I do). Usually I agree with what he says, but not in the areas that are the subject of this paper.

2 Object-dependent propositions

It is generally understood these days that when one speaks of singular reference, of either the semantic or the pragmatic type, one is speaking of OBJECT-DEPENDENT PROPOSITIONS. As I will use the term, an object-dependent proposition is one whose truth conditions depend on the properties or relations held by some particular individual. Compare the examples in (1).

- (1) a. Grizzly Man Timothy Treadwell was eaten by a bear.
b. Every year somebody is eaten by a bear.

(1a) concerns the particular individual Timothy Treadwell – it is true because, and only because, this particular person was indeed eaten by a bear. The person Timothy Treadwell is the object whose properties are crucial to its truth. (1b), on the other hand, does not involve any particular person or thing; its truth conditions only require that every year somebody or other gets eaten by some bear or other.²

Many philosophers these days assume that object-dependent propositions contain actual entities as constituents. The proposition expressed by (1a) above, on this view, would contain the individual Timothy Treadwell together with the property of having been eaten by a bear. The idea that propositions might contain entities like people and chairs goes back to Russell (e.g. 1905, 1918), who, however, thought that such propositions were rarely if ever expressed by ordinary sentences. Ultimately he concluded that the only NP that could be used to express such object-dependent propositions was *this*, used demonstratively (cf. Russell 1918: 177); all other NPs received a quantificational analysis. However David Kaplan (1977) resuscitated Russell's idea and suggested it as an analysis of the propositions expressed using demonstratives generally as well as other indexical terms. So (2) below

- (2) That [pointing] belongs to me.

would be used to express a proposition containing the indicated object, the speaker, and the belonging relation. In “Dthat”, Kaplan suggested that such propositions are what is expressed with referentially (as opposed to attributively) used definite descriptions, thus providing an analysis of Donnellan's (1966) referential-attributive distinction. And eventually proper names were added to this list of expressions which “carry their referent as meaning” (Kaplan 1989: 606). This view of the object-dependent propositions expressed using indexicals, proper names, and referential definite descriptions has been

² I'm assuming a narrow scope, nonspecific, reading for *a bear* for both (1a) and (1b). On the specific reading things are more complicated, as we shall see.

adopted by a number of influential figures in philosophy of language (e.g. Richard 1983, Salmon 1986, Soames 1987); in the words of Stuart Brock, “it would not be unreasonable to suggest that this view has become the new orthodoxy” (2004: 278).³

The term “singular proposition” is often used for these Russell-style propositions which contain entities from the outside world, but I will use the term RUSSELLIAN SINGULAR PROPOSITION (or RSP) for them instead, since I want to argue for a different sort of singular proposition. The alternative I have in mind is one inspired by Richard Montague’s (1973) analysis of an intensional fragment of English. Recall that, following Carnap 1947, the intension of a referential NP has been regarded as an individual concept – a function from world-time points (or situations) to entities. On the alternative view I am proposing, the proposition expressed by (1a) would contain, not Treadwell himself, but rather the CONSTANT INDIVIDUAL CONCEPT that picks Treadwell out of every world-time point (or situation) in which he exists. We can represent the difference as the difference between the two propositions sketched in (3).

- (3) a. <Treadwell, the property of having been eaten by a bear>
 b. <^[Treadwell], the property of having been eaten by a bear>

(3a) shows the Russellian singular proposition consisting of the person Timothy Treadwell plus the property of having been eaten by a bear. In (3b) I’ve drafted the raised caret symbol which Montague used for intensions of expressions to help represent the idea that the first constituent in the proposition is the individual concept which picks Timothy Treadwell out of every world-time point in which he exists.

Wherever followers of Kaplan would postulate RSPs, I would urge instead an analysis involving constant individual concepts. Thus on the view I support, the proposition expressed by an utterance of (2) would contain, not the actual entities referred to using the underlined expressions, but instead their constant individual concepts. By the same token, sentences with referentially used definite descriptions would express propositions with constant individual concepts, while their attributively used counterparts would express propositions with variable individual concepts.

One argument in favor of the use of constant individual concepts over actual individuals in the analysis of object-dependent propositions concerns reference to entities which do not exist. Consider (1a) again:

- (1) a. Grizzly Man Timothy Treadwell was eaten by a bear.

Because of the unfortunate event described in this example, the Timothy Treadwell referred to no longer exists. As a result, it appears that on the RSP view (1a) cannot express a complete proposition – there is nothing to fill the gap corresponding to the underlined NP. In truth, then, (4) below represents the RSP expressed by (1a) with a bit more clarity than (3a).

³ Elsewhere (e.g. Abbott 2010: 34, n. 15; 2011: XX) I’ve commented on the similarity between this view of propositions and the Hopi view of thought, as explained by Benjamin Lee Whorf: “A Hopi would naturally suppose that his thought...traffics with the actual rosebush – or more likely, corn plant – that he is thinking about” (Whorf 1941: 150).

(4) < , the property of having been eaten by a bear >

In contrast, (3b) remains a suitable representation of the proposition expressed by an utterance of (1a) on the alternative proposed here. Although Treadwell is no longer with us, his constant individual concept remains.

The discussion here has been necessarily brief; there is not space enough to review these complex issues in the detail they deserve. For one thing, various solutions to the problem which nonexistent entities present for the RSP view of object-dependent propositions have been proposed by e.g. Nathan Salmon (1998) and David Braun (1993, 2005). More detailed consideration, including replies to the proposals of Salmon and Braun, can be found in Abbott 2010, 2011.

3 Another use for individual concepts

We've just seen one reason why incorporating individual concepts into our semantics might prove useful.⁴ In this section we consider another reason, one which concerns the analysis of indefinite descriptions on their specific use. This use is one which arises in sentences which are free of modals, propositional attitude verbs, and other scope taking operators. Lauri Karttunen (1969: 14) pointed out that a sentence like (5) could be used in two ways.

(5) Mary had lunch with a logician.

On the nonspecific use, (5) simply reports the kind of person Mary had lunch with. However on the specific use, (5) introduces a new entity into the discourse context – one who would be expected to be talked about in subsequent utterances. Disambiguating continuations are suggested below:

- (5') a. ... So she had to go home and take a nap afterwards. [nonspecific use]
b. ... He told her about some of his proofs. [specific use]

Such an ambiguity has also been proposed by, e.g. Chastain (1975) and Fodor & Sag (1982), while others have disputed this claim, as we will see below in §4.

What has not been widely observed is that there are devices to disambiguate indefinite descriptions, which strengthens the argument that the ambiguity in question is linguistically encoded and not some vague pragmatic thing. The imperative sentence in (6) is not ambiguous in the way (5) is.

(6) Get me a logician!

The reason is fairly obvious – if the speaker had intended *a logician* specifically, her utterance would not have been felicitous since she does not give the addressee sufficient information to satisfy the directive.

On the other hand, as pointed out by Prince (1981), the (nondemonstrative) indefinite *this* determiner, which occurs frequently in casual speech, is necessarily

⁴ See also Aloni 2005a, b and Elbourne 2008 for additional support for individual concepts.

specific. An example is in (7) below. (The addition of *one* prevents *this* from being heard as the demonstrative.)

(7) Mary had lunch with this one logician.

As we might expect, combining these two, as in (8), results in infelicity.

(8) # Get me this one logician!

(8) requires the addressee to procure some specific logician, and without the provision of sufficient information to allow them the figure out which one is wanted the imperative is infelicitous.

The remaining problem is how to analyze this ambiguity, and this is where individual concepts come in. My suggestion concerning the difference between the specific and the nonspecific readings of indefinite descriptions is as follows: with the specific reading, constant individual concepts are being quantified over, while on the nonspecific reading the quantification is over variable individual concepts. Note that I am not suggesting that specific indefinite descriptions are referential (as some would want to claim). Both senses are quantificational, in my view; it's just that different things are being quantified over. As in the preceding section, the discussion in this section has been necessarily brief, ignoring relevant issues. Some of these are addressed in Abbott 1994, 2010, and 2011, and the works cited there.

We turn now to the main issues of this paper: when it comes to (singular) reference, which NPs get to participate and which don't? In the following section we'll address the pragmatic notion of reference – something a speaker uses NPs to do. In §5 we address the semantic notion.

4 Which NPs can be used to refer?

The pragmatic conception of reference is the one that stems from our ordinary everyday uses of words like “refer” in utterances like that in (9).

(9) When you said “that jerk from the Dean’s office”, who were you referring to?

It is (at least) a three-place relation – speakers use expressions to refer to entities. And from the coherence of the utterance in (9), we might guess that definite NPs like *that jerk from the Dean’s office* should be included in the category of NPs that can be used to refer. As we’ll see, it is indefinite descriptions that form the borderline case.

In the first subsection below we’ll look at the views of Kent Bach on which NPs can be used to refer, as well as the views of Peter Ludlow and Stephen Neale, who agree to a great extent with Bach on this issue. Then in §4.2 I’ll offer some objections to these views. This is followed by some section conclusions.

4.1 Bach (and Ludlow & Neale) on pragmatic reference

For Kent Bach (e.g. 1987, 2006) pragmatic reference is actually a four-place relation – speakers use expressions to refer their addressees to entities. The extra place is important for Bach because of his interest in thought, and in what a speaker can convey to an addressee. In Bach’s view, this pragmatic notion of reference is central while (as we will see below) the semantic notion is marginal. It follows that at this point we must bring in a crucial Gricean distinction between the proposition actually expressed in an utterance, and a proposition which the speaker wishes to convey to their addressee but which is not actually expressed in the utterance. This distinction is important because in Bach’s view, object-dependent propositions are almost never what is literally expressed in an utterance, although they may frequently be something that an addressee gleans from what the speaker says. Let us look at what is required on this kind of conception of pragmatic reference, and what the bottom line is as regards kinds of NPs that can be used to refer.

We must note, to begin with, that Bach is among those who assume that singular propositions are RSPs. Thus he says: “In referring to something one conveys a singular proposition having that thing as a constituent” (Bach 2006: 533). The views of Ludlow & Neale are slightly less clear. Early in their paper they say the following:

On Russell’s account, a referring expression ‘*b*’ may be combined with a (monadic) predicate expression to express a proposition which simply could not be entertained or expressed if the entity referred to by ‘*b*’ did not exist. Russell often puts this by saying that the referent of ‘*b*’ is a constituent of such a proposition; **it will be convenient to follow him in this, but nothing in the present paper turns on this conception of a so-called *singular* proposition.** (Ludlow & Neale 1991: 172; italics in original, boldface added, and reference footnote omitted.)

However several pages later they remark: “Recall that a noun phrase *b* is a referring expression just in case its bearer is a constituent of the proposition expressed by an utterance of a sentence containing *b*” (Ludlow & Neale 1991: 178). And as we will see shortly, this RSP conception of singular reference is crucial to the arguments of Ludlow & Neale as well as Bach.

Although the conception of RSPs is Russell’s, Bach is not as restrictive as Russell on the question of what it takes to be able to express them. For Russell, being “directly aware of” the entity in question was required,⁵ but for Bach this is sufficient but not necessary. Memory of such a perception is also sufficient, as is having been informed about the object via a causal/historical chain of communication “originating with a perception of the object” (Bach 2006: 522). Thus for Bach, singular reference requires some kind of causal-historical relation between the agent and the object referred to.⁶ This is because Bach believes that this kind of relation is necessary for *de re* thought.

⁵ Cf. Russell 1918: 165. I’m grateful to Dennis Stampe for pointing out to me that Russell’s relation of acquaintance does not require perception.

⁶ Although Bach is more lenient than Russell in his requirements for comprehension of RSPs, he is less lenient than others. Kaplan, for example, believes (or at least believed at one point) that one can

Bach and Ludlow & Neale are in agreement that one can use singular terms in a referential way to convey object-dependent propositions. Examples of such singular terms would include proper names, demonstratives and other indexicals, pronouns, and definite descriptions when they are used referentially (but not attributively). The borderline cases are those involving **indefinite** descriptions. Bach assumes that referential use of an indefinite description is possible, but only where the utterance is “about an individual that is already the focus of mutual attention” (Bach 2006: 532) and Ludlow & Neale (1991) have views very similar to Bach’s. They give (10) as an example, as uttered in a situation where the speaker is at someone else’s house looking out the window into the garden.

- (10) Look! A man is uprooting your turnips. [= Ludlow & Neale 1991: ex. 3, underlining added.]

Let us assume that the speaker can see that their addressee is looking at the same man, and intends them to recognize that he is the one being spoken about. In this case Bach holds that the speaker may succeed in referring. Bach, and Ludlow & Neale, agree that the proposition actually expressed in this case would be a quantificational one; however the proposition meant by the speaker – one which the speaker wishes to convey to the addressee – is the RSP containing the man the speaker of (10) sees.

Bach follows Ludlow & Neale in distinguishing referential uses of indefinites from specific uses. For the latter, Bach believes that the speaker does not refer – indeed, there is no attempt at reference in those cases. So consider an utterance of (10) without the *Look!*, i.e. (11),

- (11) A man is uprooting your turnips

when the speaker is in the same situation as for (10) (that is, at someone else’s house and viewing the man in question through the window) except that they are talking on the phone to the homeowner. In this case, according to Bach, the speaker does not refer but rather merely *ALLUDES* to the man in the garden (Bach 2006: 532f).

To support this position, Bach gives an argument which was also given by Ludlow & Neale (e.g. 178f) and which (as they acknowledge) goes back to Russell (1919: 168). The argument is as follows: if the speaker had succeeded in referring to the man in the garden, in so doing they would have conveyed the resulting RSP. But in that case the addressee would not have been able to understand what was expressed since they were not in appropriate cognitive contact with the man in the garden. As Ludlow & Neale put it: “If ‘*b*’ is a referring expression it is necessary to identify the referent of ‘*b*’ in order to understand the proposition expressed by an utterance of ‘*b* is *G*’” (1991: 173). Since the addressee at the other end of the phone line **is** presumably perfectly capable of understanding the utterance in question, that utterance cannot have conveyed the corresponding RSP.

comprehend RSPs about entities which do not yet exist, like the first child born in the 22nd Century. Cf. Kaplan 1978: 241; Bach (2006: 530f) has a response to Kaplan on this point.

In referring to something one conveys a singular proposition having that thing as a constituent. When one alludes to something, one does have a singular proposition in mind, and this may be evident to one's audience, but one is not conveying that proposition. (Bach 2006: 533.)

Note the crucial reliance by both Bach and Ludlow & Neale on the assumption that object-dependent propositions contain the actual entities referred to.

4.2 Some objections

I find much to disagree with here. We have already seen at least one problem with the idea that propositions contain actual entities – that presented by sentences concerning nonexistent objects.⁷ Bach's view contains an additional constraint which seems to preclude referring to abstract entities, and others with which one cannot be in perceptual contact. As we've seen, Bach believes that reference requires a causal-historical relation between the agent and the object referred to, and (as he notes in earlier work) “[a]bstract entities simply cannot enter into causal relations” (Bach 1987: 12). To be fair, Bach does also indicate at times that he is just leaving abstract entities out of consideration (e.g. Bach 2006, n. 8), but the fact remains that the account of reference he gives seems to make it impossible to refer to them. This seems arbitrary to me. I don't know why one can't have singular thoughts about numbers, for example. A number like 647 is a unique thing with its own special properties; it's maybe not one that I personally think about a lot, but other people may. There have been reports recently of people who associate particular colors and other qualities with numbers, which enables them to perform arithmetic calculations of amazing complexity in their heads, and with remarkable speed (cf., e.g., Tammet 2007). For such people numbers may be more like acquaintances or even old friends. So while I would agree with Bach that one can refer using definite and demonstrative descriptions, proper names, and so forth, it seems important to allow reference to have been made even to abstract entities – in short, in any case in which referential uniqueness has been attained.

On the other hand turning to indefinite descriptions, I have to confess that I have not been able to establish intuitive contact with the distinction that Bach, and Ludlow & Neale, suppose exists between referential uses of indefinite descriptions, and those uses which are merely specific. For one thing, there seems to be a whole range of possibilities spanning this supposed distinction, without a clear way to draw a line. Consider the case of the man uprooting turnips. For the referential use we imagined speaker and addressee standing together, looking out the same window at the same individual. But what should we say if the addressee is not looking out the window, but only comes to look out the window on hearing the utterance of (10)? It would be strange to say that the speaker's utterance of (10) was referential in the first case but not the second. But then suppose that the homeowner being addressed over the phone in the utterance of (11) was listening on her cell phone, and arrived in her driveway a moment later in time to see the man in

⁷ Bach asserts that existence at some time or other is sufficient for an object to be a constituent of a proposition – implying that the proposition can exist although one of its constituents no longer does (cf. Bach 2006: 530, n.). However, he does not explain how this can be so.

the garden, and that the speaker knew that this would be the case. Is this then so different from the other two situations? It does not seem so to me.

The kind of argument given by Russell (and repeated by Ludlow & Neale, and by Bach) concerning an addressee's ability to comprehend referential utterances depends crucially on a view of reference which involves RSPs. If we take away that assumption, as I would like to, then the argument simply does not go through. What we are left with is a difference between nonspecific uses and specific uses. In the latter case, someone can perfectly well understand a proposition involving a constant individual concept of a man without having any kind of acquaintance with the man the speaker was speaking about. One just needs to know what men are, and what an individual is. That being the case we can eliminate the divide between examples (10) and (11) above, about the man in the garden. If the speaker of (10) has used *a man* to refer to someone, then so has the speaker of (11).

4.3 Section conclusions

So what should we say about the specific use of indefinite descriptions? Should we conclude that the speaker has referred in those cases, or not? It seems that our ordinary everyday use of the word "refer" would apply here. Consider an example from Bach – a man saying to his wife *An old girlfriend will call today*, using *an old girlfriend* specifically. In Bach's view this would **not** be an instance in which the speaker was referring to someone, because the speaker did not give his addressee sufficient information to be able to identify the individual in question and form a *de re* thought about them. However, the discourse below in (12) seems perfectly natural.

- (12) A: An old girlfriend will call today.
B: Who are you referring to?

It is true that in response to (11) above (*A man is uprooting your turnips*), in the situation as described, the question *Who are you referring to?* might seem odd, but that is only because the speaker has no further means to identify the individual other than what they have already included in their utterance. And note that the same would also hold in the case of (10) (*Look! A man is uprooting your turnips*) which, according to Bach, is a case in which reference **has** occurred. Perhaps, then, we should distinguish two kinds of pragmatic referring: one in which a speaker uses an NP to refer to something (a three-place relation), and one in which a speaker uses an NP to refer their addressee to something (a four-place relation). It is my intuition that the first of these corresponds more naturally to our ordinary everyday sense of "refer". There is a bit of support for this intuition in the fact that the question *Who are you referring to?* is probably much more common than *Who are you referring me to?* The latter seems to require special circumstances, such as an interview with a doctor or a guidance counselor.

5 Which NPs (if any) have a (singular) referent?

We turn now to the semantic conception of reference. To get clearer on when this conception is in play it will help to first review where it came from. We follow that with

a review of Bach's main argument for denying semantic reference to all but a very few NPs. § 5.3 responds to Bach's argument.

5.1 Sources for the semantic conception of reference

The semantic conception of reference arises via several routes. One is that which is derived from the pragmatic sense of "refer" via "instrument promotion".⁸ That is, just as we can go from speaking of someone using a knife to cut, to speaking of the knife itself doing the cutting, so talk of people using expressions to refer can lead us to speak of the expressions themselves doing the referring. Once we leave the user out of the picture we suggest a semantic relation – one holding between words and the world. If the only source for the semantic conception of reference were via instrument promotion, then that conception would almost certainly be regarded as invalid. However there are at least a couple of other sources which must be taken more seriously.

The most important of these other sources is Frege's seminal paper "Über Sinn und Bedeutung", or "On sense and reference". It must be acknowledged that "reference" is not the only possible translation for "Bedeutung"; others that have been used include "denotation", "nominatum", and "meaning". (See Beaney 1997: 36-46 for an interesting discussion of the problem of finding an appropriate translation for "Bedeutung", as Frege used it in this paper.) Nevertheless the relation Frege was apparently talking about – that which holds between a linguistic expression and something extralinguistic with which that expression is associated and which plays a role in determining the truth value of sentences containing that expression – is quite parallel to the pragmatic conception of "reference" reviewed above, at least until we get to possible referential uses of indefinites. That is, when a speaker is using a singular term to refer to some entity, then it is natural to see the singular term and the entity as standing in Frege's relation. It is true that this very parallel might lead to some unhealthy commingling of the two conceptions of reference (as I will suggest below), and for that reason choice of a different term for the semantic relation might have been a good idea. However it wouldn't have changed the facts.

I'd like to suggest one other route which brings us to the idea that expressions bear relations to extralinguistic entities, and that route comes from the fact that people are as much consumers of language as they are producers. When focusing on the speaking/writing role it is natural to think of the agent as using expressions to refer. But as a group, language users engage in the comprehension role much more frequently, since a typical written text has one author but many readers, and even when speaking, occasions of speaking to oneself must be heavily outnumbered by those on which we speak to at least one other person. And for the language consumer, the significance comes from the words themselves. Now Reddy (1979) has forcefully reminded us that language comprehenders must do a serious amount of work in constructing a message from the words that are presented to them. On the other hand comprehenders are able to do this because the conventions established by previous generations of language users

⁸ I first heard of this source for the semantic conception of reference from Richard Larson in a 2004 talk, but recently he told me that he subsequently discovered that Dennis Stampe had made similar observations much earlier. See Stampe 1968 for extensive discussion focusing on the verb *mean*; and cf. also Bach 2006: 516.

have invested those words with their standard meanings, as well as providing rules for combining those meanings to make the meanings of phrases and whole utterances. As Wittgenstein has observed, we can't say *bububu* and mean 'If it doesn't rain I shall go for a walk' (1953: 18). Neither can we interpret *bububu* to mean 'If it doesn't rain I shall go for a walk'.

We turn now to Bach's view on the question of which NPs might be said to participate in a semantic relation of reference. Here we will be focusing on definite NPs – proper names, demonstratives and other indexicals, pronouns, and definite descriptions.⁹

5.2 *Bach on semantic reference*

We saw above that Russell had a very constrained idea of which NPs could correctly be said to pick out an entity that plays a role in the proposition expressed in an utterance. That was because any such expression, properly used, should guarantee the existence of the denoted entity. This is very difficult for a poor little expression to do, and hence almost all NPs were, for Russell, quantificational – that is, they could only be used to express general propositions not involving any particular individuals. Ultimately, as we have seen, he decided that the sole exception was the word *this*, used demonstratively (Russell 1917: 216 and n. 5). In this regard it is interesting to note that under the analysis of King (2001), as it might be extended to proximal demonstratives, *this* itself should be regarded as a quantificational expression. In any case, below I will argue that it would be strange to have just one, or a very few, NPs singled out for this special property.

When it comes to semantic reference Bach takes a position which approaches Russell's in restrictiveness. He arrives at this position via what he describes as "an embarrassingly simple argument", which is repeated below in (13) (Bach 2006: 542; I've replaced his Arabic numerals with Roman numerals).

- (13) (i) Virtually any expression that can be used to refer can also be used literally but not referentially.
(ii) No variation in meaning (semantic ambiguity of underspecification, indexicality, or vagueness) explains this fact.
(iii) So the meaning of such an expression is compatible with its being used non-referentially.
(iv) So virtually any expression that can be used to refer is not inherently referential.

A footnote indicates that the exceptions to the generalization in premise (13i) (signaled by Bach's "virtually") are *I*, *today*, "and a few others ('pure' indexicals)", possibly including *you* (Bach 2006: 542, n. 31). These are the only NPs that could possibly be taken to have a (singular) referent.

Bach is certainly correct that NPs can typically be used in a number of different ways, at least some of which would definitely not be considered (by anyone) to be referential. We have generic and bound variable uses of both definite and demonstrative

⁹ I take it as given that indefinite NPs do not refer (semantically). For convincing arguments to this effect, see King 1988.

descriptions in addition to their referential use; and pronouns that function as bound variables as well as deictically and anaphorically. Some examples are given below in (14).

- (14) a. Those who arrive within the first 5 minutes will be given prizes.
 b. The/that woman who does her own taxes is usually in charge of her life.
 c. Every older maple tree is usually visited by squirrels who use the tree/that tree/it as a storage device.

Bach discusses many of these kinds of uses, as well as some others, to show that all of these kinds of NP have uses which would not be considered referential (in the “singular reference” sense).

Bach gives a number of examples to argue that proper names also have nonreferential uses, and I want to pause briefly to consider one of them. Example (15) below illustrates the apparent variable binding (and thus quantifier-like) use of proper names.

- (15) Bob hates his boss, and so does every other employee. [= Bach 2006: ex. 17.]

Of interest here is the sloppy identity reading, where everybody hates their own boss. It is generally assumed that this reading requires that both *Bob* and *every other employee* bind a variable corresponding to the pronoun *his* in order to obtain this reading. (Cf. Heim & Kratzer 1998: 254-7.) Note that if this piece of evidence constitutes a valid argument for nonreferentiality, then *I*, *you*, *today*, and demonstratively used *this*, would also be excluded from the class of referential NPs, given examples like those in (16).

- (16) a. I hate my boss, and so does every other employee.
 b. You should take your vitamins, and so should everybody else.
 c. Today has its own troubles, as does every other day.
 d. This [pointing at a jar] is missing its top, and so are all of those.

All of these can have the sloppy reading, and in the case of (16b, c, d) this is much the preferred interpretation (if not the only one). Thus we would have to conclude that no NPs can be said to have referents.¹⁰

In a way this result – that no NPs can be said to have referents – would be a natural one. As I remarked above, with respect to Russell’s views, it would be very strange if just one NP in all of English were able to have a semantic referent. The same holds for Bach’s position, which is only slightly more liberal than Russell’s. So suppose I say something like (16) to my cousin Lyn, with our friend Kathy standing by:

¹⁰ On the other hand it is not so clear that the proper name in (15), or the indexicals in (16), need actually be seen as binding any variables. A plausible logical form for the first sentence of (15), on the sloppy identity reading of that sentence, is (i).

(i) $\lambda x[x \text{ hates } x\text{'s boss}](\text{Bob})$

Here it is the lambda operator that is binding the variables, not *Bob*. And it is also worth noting that on the “variable free” approach of Jacobson (e.g. 1996, 2000), there would not be any long distance binding at all.

- (17) I play tennis and you bike, but she [nodding at Kathy] hikes.

Is it really reasonable that my first clause, and possibly the second, express one kind of proposition while the third clause expresses a different one? And isn't it also suspicious that there is some question as to where the middle case falls?¹¹ In short, I cannot see that there is any great divide between NPs like *I, you, this, and today*, on the one hand, and all of the other definite NPs in the language, on the other. Similarly the propositions expressed using these expressions do not seem any different from those expressed with other definite NPs when they are used to talk about specific individuals. But in the next section I'll be suggesting a view on which **all** such NPs have referents on those uses, rather than none of them.

5.3 Response to Bach

One fundamental problem with Bach's argument is the idea that an NP's having a (semantic) referent is a consequence of some semantic feature that it expresses each time it is being used (literally) to refer to something. I think it is a mistake to think of semantic reference in that way. For one thing, it confounds semantic reference with the pragmatic conception that arises from our everyday talk of referring. That is, the criterion for semantic reference which is implicit in Bach's embarrassingly simple argument, is consistency in pragmatic reference. But instead of trying to derive a semantic conception of reference from the pragmatic one, perhaps we should take to heart the Fregean roots that already exist for the semantic conception of reference. If we are interested in particular in singular reference, then we should look for NPs whose contribution to the truth value of an utterance in which it occurs can sometimes involve a particular entity – NPs, that is, which are used in the expression of object-dependent propositions and which are the source of that object-dependence. I want to suggest that on those occasions when an NP actually has such a contribution to make, it can be said to be referential in the semantic sense. On this view the old standards – proper names, definite and demonstrative descriptions and pronouns – would be included as potentially contributing such a referent in at least some of their uses. Indefinite descriptions and other quantificational NPs would not.¹²

It is through no fault of its own that a given NP sometimes makes such a contribution and sometimes does not. It is rather a consequence of its surroundings; we need not suppose any ambiguity. Consider the underlined NP in examples such as the following.

- (18) a. The tallest student in the class (I forget her name) is waiting outside.
b. The tallest student in the class (which varies from class to class) is always asked to close the blinds.

¹¹ Thus Bach's footnote quoted above indicates an inclination to include *you* among the referential NPs but John Perry's (2006) distinction between automatic and discretionary indexicals would put *I* in a class by itself. And we know that Russell had *this* as the sole member of this elite category.

¹² Actually this statement might need to be modified for some occurrences of universally quantified NPs. See Abbott to appear for discussion.

Suppose we agree that *the tallest student in the class* denotes, with respect to any situation, the unique entity who is the tallest student in the class. Then for an utterance of (18a) to be true there must be, in the situation spoken of, such an entity who is waiting outside. That person plays a role in determining whether (18a) is true or false; thus she (or her constant individual concept) is the semantic referent of the NP *the tallest student in the class* as it occurs in the utterance of (18a), on this Fregean conception of semantic reference. On the other hand (18b), on the intended reading where the NP is within the scope of *always*, has truth conditions involving a variety of different situations with potentially different individuals involved. For an utterance of (18b) on this reading to be true it must be the case that in all of those situations, the entity who is the tallest student is asked to close the blinds. In this case there is no one entity whose properties determine the truth or falsity of (18b). Thus we do not have a singular referent. We have not supposed any change in the meaning of the NP *the tallest student in the class*, yet in one case it has a semantic referent of the singular type and in the other case it does not.

Note that on this conception attributively used definite descriptions will have a semantic referent, since whether (19) below is true or false depends on whether or not the person who murdered Smith is insane.¹³

(19) The murderer of Smith is insane.

That is the case regardless of whether (19) is asserted attributively or referentially. The difference between the two assertions can be seen as lying in the proposition expressed (one containing a variable individual concept or a constant one). On the other hand when definite descriptions are in the scope of other operators there may be no (singular) semantic referent. This is true of (18b) above, when the adverb *always* takes scope over a definite description. Another example, with a definite description within the scope of a quantificational NP, is (20).

(20) Every child read the book that had been assigned to them.

And as a number of scholars (e.g. Gareth Evans (1980), George Wilson (1984, 1991)) have pointed out, definite descriptions can even be bound by other operators, as in (14c) above, or (21) below.

(21) Every scientist who was fired from the observatory at Sofia was consoled by someone who knew the fired scientist as a youth. [= Wilson 1991: ex. 1]

But this kind of variability in use does not require us to propose different semantic interpretations for the NPs themselves.

¹³ If we agree with Bach that in using a definite description attributively the speaker does not refer to anyone or anything, but also agree with me that attributively used definite descriptions have a semantic referent, then we will have arrived at a position which Salmon (2004: 239n. 13) describes as “curious”. But perhaps it is only curious for the holder of what Salmon calls the “speech-act centered conception of semantics”. In this paper Salmon himself argues for an expression centered conception, and I agree with him on that.

So, is this picture the correct one? Bach admits that he doesn't have a knock-down argument for his position (2006: 518), and I don't have one for mine. However it seems to me that this conception of semantic reference has at least some plausibility.

6 Concluding remarks

This paper has had two main objectives. One was to get clear on which NPs may be successfully used by speakers in acts of (pragmatic) reference, and the other was to get clear on which NPs may correctly be said to have referents – and thus to participate in a semantic reference relation. In connection with the former issue I've argued that there is a certain amount of support for the position that indefinite descriptions, on their specific use, can be said to be used to refer to entities. In connection with the latter issue, I've put forward a position on which any definite NP which is used to single out an entity which plays an essential role in the truth conditions of its containing utterance can be said to have a referent. In the background, and sometimes in the foreground, has been the issue of the nature of object-dependent propositions. The currently dominant view is that such propositions contain actual entities from the outside world. I've opposed this with a view on which the corresponding constituents are abstract objects – constant individual concepts, and I've argued that this view allows a more natural and realistic view of reference of either the pragmatic or the semantic type.

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- clitic licensing: referentiality, familiarity, specificity, etc., irrespective of animacy o some Romanian varieties still preserve clitic-doubling with no DOM18 (see MiÅeska-TomiÅ 2006, a.o.) (20) AROMANIAN. Lu vidzu.Â Non-DOM definites and incorporation. V. some remarks on the status of scales. - These problems, as well as many others, have led to renewed debates about the nature of Scales (discussion in NÅ!ss 2004, Kiparsky 2008, von Heusinger et al. 2008, Carnie 2005 "â€"merely post-factum descriptive statements of grammatical tendencies"â€™, a.o.) property specificity/referentiality definiteness mapping into focus. Subject 8. 8.Â Âf no existentially quantified NPs as EA Âf no non-referential expressions as EA Âf formal marking of definiteness on the EA Âf no focus expression in the EA position. (7) a. mihinany trondro fotsiny eat.AF [fish only].