

**Oddelek za filozofijo, Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Mariboru/  
Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Maribor**

*in/and*

**Društvo za analitično filozofijo in filozofijo znanosti/  
Slovenian Society for Analytic Philosophy**

**Mednarodna konferenca/International conference**

**DEVITT'S 80<sup>TH</sup>: MANY FACES OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Zbornik povzetkov/Abstracts Booklet**

**MARIBOR, 9. 05. – 10. 05. 2018**



## **Program/Programme**

**Četrtek/Thursday  
Prostor/Room 2.7/FF**

- 09:30 – 10:15 Dunja Jutronić (University of Maribor and University of Split):  
Attempts at Solving the Qua-Problem
- 10:20 – 11:05 Nenad Miščević (University of Maribor): The Semantic Powertrain
- 11:05 – 11:20 Odmor/Coffee break
- 11:20 – 12:05 Martina Blečić (University of Rijeka): Pragmatic Meaning and  
Convention
- 12:10 – 12:55 Miljana Milojević (University of Belgrade) Intuitions and Theories of  
Reference
- 13:00 – 14:30 Kosilo/Lunch
- 14:30 – 15:15 Andrej Jandrić (University of Belgrade): Rigid Application, Theoretical  
Identifications and Metaphysical Necessity
- 15:20 – 16:05 Bojan Borstner and Tadej Todorović (University of Maribor): An Old  
Dispute On Properties
- 16:10 – 16:55 Michael Devitt: Final comments and remarks
- 17:00 Zaključek/Conclusion

## Povzetki/Abstracts

*Michael Devitt and Nicolas Porot, The City University of New York*

### **The Reference of Proper Names: Testing Usage and Intuitions**

Experiments on theories of reference have mostly tested referential intuitions. We think that experiments should rather be testing linguistic usage. **Substantive Aim (I)**: to test classical description theories of proper names against usage by “elicited production”. Our results count decisively against those theories. **Methodological Aim (I)**: Machery et al. (2009) claim that truth-value judgment experiments test usage. Martí (2014) disagrees. We argue that Machery et al. are right and offer some results that are consistent with that conclusion. **Substantive aim (II)**: Machery et al. provide evidence that the usage of a name varies, being sometimes descriptive, sometimes not. In seven out of eight tests of usage, we did not replicate this variation. **Methodological Aim (II)**: to test the reliability of referential intuitions by comparing them with linguistic usage. Earlier studies led us to predict that we would find those intuitions unreliable, but we did not. Our results add to evidence that tests of referential intuition are susceptible to unpredictable wording effects.

**Key words**: reference; referential intuition; linguistic usage; truth-value judgment; proper name; description theory

*Genoveva Marti, ICREA and University of Barcelona*

## **Experimental Semantics, Descriptivism and Anti-Descriptivism. Should We Endorse Referential Pluralism?**

Discussions of semantic theory by experimental philosophers cast doubt on the universality of the intuitions that drive the approach to the semantics of singular and general terms inspired by Kripke and Putnam, among others. Data collected in several empirical studies seem to support the view according to which what an expression refers to is relative to cultural or conversational context. Some results appear to support even wide variations in the semantic *modus operandi* of names and general terms in different uses by one and the same speaker. According to experimental semanticists, the results of those observations support some form of descriptivism against the causal-historical picture of reference, inspired by Kripke, Putnam, and Donnellan and developed by Michael Devitt, refuting what we took to be the fundamental lessons of the approach. Some philosophers have argued that as a consequence we should be prepared to become pluralists. I argue that this is not so.

**Key words:** experimental philosophy; experimental semantics; referential pluralism; semantic pluralism; communication.

Zdenka Brzović, University of Rijeka

## Devitt's Promiscuous Essentialism

When Devitt published his controversial “Resurrecting Biological Essentialism” (Devitt 2008) paper it prompted many reactions by philosophers of biology trying to argue in favor of the near consensus view that there is no place for essentialism in biology when it comes to species (Barker 2010; Ereshefsky 2010; Lewens 2012). Most of the reactions did not discuss Devitt’s version of essentialism as being somehow specific or different than the traditional variety, with the exception of Ereshefsky (2010), who identifies Devitt's view as belonging to ‘new biological essentialism’. In this paper, I will inspect in greater detail Devitt’s version of natural kinds essentialism and its relation to what I take to be the traditional approach to essentialism. Essentialism is standardly taken to have three main tenets: (1) all and only kind members possess a common essence; (2) essence is responsible for traits associated with kind members; and (3) identifying an essence of a kind helps us explain and predict traits associated with kind members (Ereshefsky 2017). The so-called traditional essentialism is associated with two additional claims: (4) that essences ought to be intrinsic properties of kind members, and not extrinsic or relational ones, and (5) natural kind monism, i.e. the claim that there is one correct way of dividing the world into natural kinds. Firstly, I examine what distinguishes Devitt’s view from the cluster approaches to natural kinds and argue that his view is compatible with (1), which implies that natural kinds ought to be categorically distinct, while the cluster approaches reject this. Secondly, I investigate the relation of Devitt’s view to the two additional tenets associated with traditional essentialist view (4) and (5) and show that he denies both, which makes his view a variety of pluralistic essentialism. I argue that Devitt’s version of essentialism is so encompassing that it is more precise to name it promiscuous essentialism, due to its likeness to Dupre’s promiscuous realism. This allows it to encompass a vast range of groupings, but, as such, it suffers from an important weakness. It is very thin on tenet (3) of essentialism; identifying an essence on Devitt’s promiscuous essentialism can be minimally explanatory.

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*Urška Martinc, University of Maribor*

## **Michael Devitt: Biological Realism**

In this paper, we are going to analyse Michael Devitt's position when considering natural kinds and biological realism. We will dedicate ourselves to natural kinds, the species concepts, and Devitt's view of the question regarding the 'species problem'.

The identification of species is a problem that has been quite popular for some time now, as numerous articles and books have been written by various authors, such as Mayr, Ereshefsky, Kitcher, Devitt, Sober, Okasha, Dupré, Mishler, O'Hara, Winston and others. We will examine the views of selected authors regarding this problem and analyse their arguments. We will examine Mayr's biological species concept (BSC) and compare it with the other species concepts.

There are several species concepts. This paper will examine the most recognizable species concepts, such as the phenetic species concept, the biological or reproductive species concept, the phylogenetic species concept, the ecological species concept, and the cohesion species concept. We will try to show the advantages and disadvantages of these concepts. We will help ourselves with the works of Judith E. Winston and other selected authors.

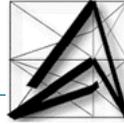
Devitt, in his article "Natural Kinds and Biological Realism" (2011), analyses (I) species concepts and explains what is (II) species monism and (III) species pluralism and what is (IV) biological realism. We will analyse Devitt's position and arguments and either confirm or reject his theses with our own arguments and examples.

**Key words:** natural kinds; biological kinds; species; species concepts.



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*Marian David, University of Graz*

## **Truth and Truthbearers**

Concerning truth, Michael Devitt has admonished us to heed the distinction between concept and property. In this talk, I want to take a new look at another distinction that is crucial for the theory of truth; the distinction between different types of *bearers* of truth — this topic used to be discussed quite a bit, but it has dropped off the radar recently. I shall look at how different answers to the question “What are the proper/primary bearers of truth and falsehood?” bear on debates concerning truth: on realism vs. anti-realism about truth, correspondence theories and their competitors, deflationary approaches, the identity theory of truth, truth-definitions, the idea of truthmaking, and on relativism about truth.

*Vojislav Božičković, University of Belgrade*

## **Causal Networks and the Subject's Point of View**

Devitt holds that the uses of proper names 'Mark Twain' and 'Samuel Clemens' are linked to two different designation chain types (d-chains) as two different causal paths leading to the same person, which are external to the subject's point of view. However, he also holds that d-chains play the role of Fregean senses. As such, d-chains need to account for the point of view of a subject who takes the statement 'Mark Twain is Samuel Clemens' to be false. I argue that d-chains are not fit for this role.

*Danilo Šuster, University of Maribor*

## **Realism, Skepticism and Epistemological Disasters**

According to Devitt (2009) “the underdetermination of theories by evidence often leads to skepticism about the theories and hence to antirealism about the worlds described by the theories.” The underdetermination arguments (UA) and Cartesian-style skeptical arguments (SA) have much in common, still, the latter is more radical and, according to Devitt, whatever one is allowed to use against the skeptic one is allowed to use against the antirealist. He offers two strategies against SA: (i) offensive - Mooreanism and naturalism; (ii) defensive - lack of proper epistemological theories for “just about anything”. Both are problematic from the dialectical and theoretical point of view. Mooreanism is notorious for its question-begging and there are powerful objections to the circular nature of inference to the best explanation (Devitt’s main example - ampliative inference) as a weapon against SA. I try to address these problems with the help of some distinctions - what is the problem? and what is the theoretical goal? To win (against the skeptic?), to convince (the audience or the doubter?), to justify (our epistemic practice).

*Dunja Jutronic, University of Maribor and University of Split*

## **Attempts at Solving the Qua-Problem**

One basic idea of the causal theory of reference is reference grounding. The name is introduced ostensively at a formal or informal dubbing. The question is: By virtue of what is the grounding term grounded in the object *qua*-horse and not in the other natural kind whose member it is? In virtue of what does it refer to all horses and only horses? The problem is usually called the *qua*-problem. What the *qua*-problem suggests is that the causal historical theory in the final analysis depends on some kind of unexplained intentionality. This is a great problem since the whole project is actually an attempt to explain intentionality naturalistically.

Devitt and Sterelny say that historical-causal theory of reference has a deep problem, the *qua*-problem, which they doubt that it has the resources to solve. In 2002, Devitt says: “I have struggled mightily with this problem (1981a: 61–4; Devitt and Sterelny 1999: 79–80), but I now wonder whether this was a mistake: perhaps the problem is more for psychology than philosophy” (p. 115, footnote 15).

In this presentation, I have two aims: (i) to discuss the most important attempts at solving the *qua*-problem; and (ii) to evaluate the solutions.

(i) I focus on the following attempts for the solution of the *qua*-problem: Sterelny (1983), Richard Miller’s (1992), mentioning briefly more recent attempts by Ori Simchen (2012) and Paul Douglas (2018). I also concentrate on the attempts to the solution of the *qua*-problem in mind and brain sciences as presented by Penelope Maddy (1983) and more recently by Dan Ryder (2004). The attempt by Devitt and Sterelny (1999) is discussed in most detail.

(ii) In evaluating the solutions I argue that when a metaphysical question “*what is to name*” is replaced/or identified with the question about the *mechanism* of reference, namely “*in virtue of what* does a word attach to a particular object”, then the final answer will/should be given by neurosemantics. If the goal of philosophical semantics is to explain semantics in a naturalistic way, there might be a vindication of the *qua*-problem. The most promising attempt is Neander’s (2017), based on the teleological causal explanation of preconceptual content to which the conceptual can be developed, as Devitt and Sterelny suggested in their work (1999).

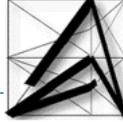
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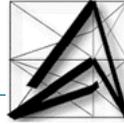
## **The Semantic Powertrain**

In the realm of meaning, which territory belongs to pragmatics and which to semantics? Devitt and I agree on the primacy of semantics; I shall put it by saying that we are semanticists rather than pragmaticists. The vehicle of content is primarily semantic, and is run by its ‘semantic engine’, so to speak.

But what about problematic examples, like (1) *I’ve had breakfast*; (2) *You are not going to die*; (3) *It’s raining*; (4) *The table is covered with books*; and (5) *Everybody went to Paris*?

Devitt proposes an extreme pan-semanticist answer: their semantic content is complete, since it relies on the convention pointing to what the speaker ‘has in mind’ (in Capone, 2013: 89). The semantic vehicle is complete, pragmatics offers just lining and paint. Another extreme is Bach’s proposal that semantics encompasses only the ‘skeleton’, often not truth-conditional.

I would like to defend an intermediate semanticist position: semantic content provides the guidance to truth-conditions, the rest is pragmatics. Call this ‘the guidance view’. In terms of vehicle metaphor, semantic content provides and directs the main force, it is the powertrain of the vehicle. The paper discusses the two semanticist strategies: Devitt’s conventionalist one and the alternative guidance strategy that I would like to propose. The latter uses anaphora as the model for guidance: it assumes that anaphora is semantic, shows that anaphora guides the hearer in determining the truth-conditional content, argues that most problematic cases are anaphora-like (and the rest can be dealt with), and it follows that the guidance view is very close to being the right one.



*Martina Blečić, University of Rijeka*

## **Pragmatic Meaning and Convention**

Devitt acknowledges the importance of conventions for discussing language but he narrows their influence only to ‘what is said’. The question we should ask is can we use conventions to explain the ‘proprieties of an utterance that are not semantic’, i.e. to explain pragmatic phenomena such as conversational implicature? Could an amplified notion of ‘conventions’ help us in the discussion about the ‘metaphysics of meaning’ and the ‘epistemology of interpretation’ cleverly presented by Devitt?

He claims that the processes that the hearer uses to interpret an utterance could provide evidence about a meaning-property but that they do not constitute it. He furthers his position with the idea that the hearer might do everything right, acting in accord with all appropriate communicative principles, and still get the wrong interpretation of an utterance. Discussing conversational implicatures, he writes that the implicature is not constituted by the hearer’s competence to perform a pragmatic inference. According to him, the person doing the exploiting of a maxim that generates the implicature is the speaker. By putting more emphasis on the speaker, he wants to separate the question about the interpretation of an utterance from that of what constitutes meaning. But what if the speaker misuses this exploiting process?

This is not a question related exclusively to pragmatics. It could be suggested that if the speaker misuses the word ‘pistol’ his intention to express a thought is not enough to constitute the meaning of this word. Of course, Devitt acknowledges the fact that the linguistic conventions in which the speaker participates are constituted by the interdependent linguistic dispositions of the speech community that she is a member of. A wrong use of the word ‘pistol’ will create a misunderstanding for which the speaker is responsible because he used an expression in the wrong way. Could this not be applied to pragmatics?

Returning to conversational implicatures, we could say that a case of misunderstanding that led to a false belief in the hearer, even if he did everything right during his interpretation of the utterance, could be considered a case of communicational bad luck. Still, I believe that in such cases we should talk about the speaker’s responsibility for what is said, since he used a pragmatic form wrongly. The pragmatic meaning, the message, cannot depend neither on the speaker nor on the hearer taken as individuals. They are language users exploiting existing pragmatic conventions. If we want to communicate successfully, those conventions should be respected by both sides and thus we cannot say that if the hearer ‘does everything right’ he misunderstood. In such cases he understood correctly, it is the speaker who misused an utterance. Furthermore, the epistemic component is not related only to the hearer. Just as he has to interpret an utterance correctly, so does the hearer have to know to correctly use it. The idea is that the pragmatic proprieties of utterances are not constituted by the speaker and his intention but are objective proprieties created by conventions that can be explained by appealing to human rationality.

*Miljana Milojević, University of Belgrade*

## **Intuitions and Theories of Reference**

In their (2004) paper, Machery et al. question the methodology of philosophers of language that consists in relying on their own linguistic intuitions in building theories of reference, while presenting them as universal and thus as evidential support for their theories. In order to challenge this kind of practice, Machery et al. constructed an experiment to test referential intuitions of East Asians and Westerners based on Kripke's (1980) cases of 'Gödel' and 'Jonah'. Based on the work of Nisbet et al. (2001) on cross-cultural cognitive differences, they predicted that referential intuitions of these two cultural groups will differ in such a way that Westerners will show to have much stronger causalist intuitions than East Asians, which was confirmed in the case of referential intuitions about 'Gödel'. Final conclusion of Machery et al. was that predominantly armchair philosophy, which rests on a universalist assumption about intuitions, uses a deeply faulty methodology because referential intuitions are not universal and vary across cultures. The paper provoked numerous responses, which can be grouped in two broad categories: a) those that question the appropriateness of the experiment and the interpretation of its results (it was pointed out that the experiment uses complicated hypothetical cases instead of more mundane examples which introduces greater uncertainty (Devitt 2011), that it does not properly distinguish between linguistic and metalinguistic intuitions and its relevance (Martí 2009), that the difference in results arises because of different epistemic and not referential intuitions (Sytsma and Livengood 2011), etc.), and b) those which question the starting assumption about the role of intuitions in constructing theories of reference. I will focus on the second kind of these objections, which *can* grant that the experiment shows that there are actual cross-cultural differences in folk referential intuitions, but which question the claimed implications of these results with respect to philosophical methodology. There are two kinds of responses that stand out in this group: Deutsch's (2009) claim that philosophers do not rely on intuitions as supporting evidence for their theories of reference, and Devitt's moderate response (2011, 2012) – the Expertise Defense – which questions the relevance of folk referential intuitions and presents a case for preferring intuitions of experts in supporting relevant theories. Devitt's defense is moderate because it calls for experimental methodology in philosophy of language and thus agrees with Machery et al. that armchair philosophy should be abandoned when it comes to theories of reference, but disagrees with respect to the object of experimentation and argues that experiments should be directed at linguistic usage and experts' intuitions. In turn, defense of the preference of expert intuitions in providing supporting evidence is based on a specific view on intuitions that Devitt presents in (2006, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014), or 'the Modest Theory of Intuitions', which he contrasts to the received view in linguistics, or 'the Voice of Competence'. According to Devitt's view, intuitions are unreflective empirical theory-laden responses to phenomena. Both the Modest Theory of Intuitions and the Expertise Defense gained a lot of attention and were exposed to different objections. Instead of directly criticising Devitt's strategy in defending expert intuitions as better evidence for theories of reference and theory of intuitions on which it is based, my aim will be to reevaluate the position of this strategy and offered methodology for philosophy of language in comparison to its alternatives: 'armchair' philosophy and experimental philosophy based on folk

intuitions. Namely, it seems that the employment of a different theory of intuitions and insisting on greater value of expert intuitions in supporting theories makes Devitt's position far removed from original motivations for doing experimental philosophy and closer to the position defended by Deutsch (2009). On the other hand, request that expert intuitions should be tested against language use and linguistic reality seems to undermine the evidential value of these intuitions and their role in building theories of reference. If it turns out that the main evidence for the support of theories of reference is language use, then the real value of the Modest Theory of Intuitions is in separating linguistic competence from intuitions about reference and focusing on the former in providing evidence for a relevant theory, and not in supporting the Expertise Defense and restricting the domain of the intuitions tested. This will lead to reevaluation of the claim that Devitt's position is moderate because it favours experts but still insists on experimentation, and the Expertise Defense will show to be overestimated in presenting Devitt's proposed methodology.

**Key words:** intuition, reference, expertise, language use

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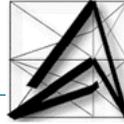
## **Rigid Application, Theoretical Identifications and Metaphysical Necessity**

Saul Kripke introduced the notion of rigid designation for singular terms: a singular term is a rigid designator iff it designates the same object in every possible world in which it exists, and does not designate any other object in possible worlds in which the object does not exist. He used the notion to disprove the description theory of meaning for names, and to argue that true identity statements with rigid designators ('Hesperus is Phosphorus', 'Tully is Cicero') are necessarily true, although we learned about their truth only a posteriori. Kripke proceeded to apply the notion to general terms for natural kinds ('tiger', 'cat'), stuffs ('water', 'gold') and phenomena ('lightning', 'heat'), and claimed that true theoretical identifications with rigid general terms ('Water is H<sub>2</sub>O', 'Cats are animals') are also necessary a posteriori truths. Michael Devitt pointed out that, regardless of whether general terms are taken to designate their extensions or abstract entities, rigid designation cannot single out the terms Kripke considered rigid. Devitt suggested that, in the case of general terms, rigid designation should be replaced with a notion of rigid application: a general term is a rigid applier iff it is such that if it applies to an object in any possible world, it applies to that object in every world in which the object exists. However, Scott Soames argued that rigid application cannot underwrite the necessity of true theoretical identifications with rigid appliers. In my presentation, I will first show that necessitism, i.e. a claim that necessarily everything which exists necessarily exists, is both necessary and sufficient to bridge the gap between rigid application and metaphysical necessity. I will then argue that since Kripke conceives metaphysical necessity as grounded in essences, and since rigid appliers are general terms which stand for essential properties, it is only natural to expect that true theoretical identifications with rigid appliers are metaphysically necessary – indeed, I will suggest that we should understand this connection between rigid application and necessity as partly constitutive of our notion of metaphysical necessity. The moral we should draw from this reorientation is that metaphysical necessity, as Kripke envisaged it, validates necessitism.



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*Bojan Borstner and Tadej Todorovič, University of Maribor*

## **An Old Dispute On Properties**

Our general starting point is: what are philosophical problems?

Russell's proposal: those problems to which, at present, no definite answer can be given remain to form the residue that is called philosophy.

Rescher's idea: the constitution of a philosophical agenda cannot be separated from position-taking in substantive philosophical matters.

There is an old problem tackled in philosophy that goes back to at least Plato: One Over Many.

Is it really the problem in philosophy?

Yes – David Armstrong.

No – Michael Devitt (Quine).

Is there a way out, and who is on the right track?

*Zbornik povzetkov Devitt's 80th: Many Faces of Philosophy – abstracts booklet*

Izdala: Oddelek za filozofijo, Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Mariboru  
*in*  
Društvo za analitično filozofijo in filozofijo znanosti,  
maj 2018

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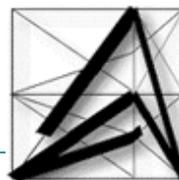
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***Virtus***

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