

## Reference, Intention, and Context: Do Demonstratives Really Refer?

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Of course demonstratives refer! Just as stoves cook and pens write. The question I'm asking is whether they refer in their own right. Or do they refer only insofar as they are used to refer? If that's all that's meant when they are said to refer, there's nothing to discuss. In that case, demonstratives are referring expressions in the same way that forks and spoons are eating utensils. It's just a superficial linguistic fact that we say that demonstratives refer but not that forks and spoons eat.

Whereas many philosophers are reluctant to say that definite descriptions refer (they are swayed by Russell's theory of descriptions), few philosophers have qualms about saying that demonstratives refer.<sup>1</sup> They're careful to point out that demonstratives are context sensitive, as if that somehow explains why they can (be used to) refer to different things in different contexts. Some even claim that the context of use *determines* what a demonstrative refers to in that context. Others concede that it is the speaker's intention (or perhaps a demonstration) that determines the reference in the context, but they are happy to regard this intention as just another feature of the context, in which case the overall conception of demonstratives as context-sensitive expressions can be maintained.

As I see it, this conception is understandable but misguided. It is understandable because it fits into a pervasive picture of sentence semantics as both compositional and truth-conditional. That picture requires the supposition that, certain exceptional expressions aside, sentence constituents make contributions to the truth-conditions of sentences in which they occur, if not independently of context then relative to context. In recent years not only demonstratives (along with indexicals) but also a wide variety of other expressions and constructions have been said to be context sensitive. Regarding them as such is understandable given the overall picture of

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<sup>1</sup> A well-known exception is Strawson. As he famously wrote, "referring is not something an expression does; it is something one can use an expression to do" (1950: 326). However, his reason for saying this was merely that "an expression can be used, on different occasions, to refer to innumerable things" (328), and that leaves open the popular possibility that the expression refers to some one thing on each particular occasion of use.

sentence semantics, but what does this way of looking at them really commit one to?

That's the question I'll explore here. I will take up some recent accounts according to which a demonstrative, as used on a given occasion, refers in virtue of either certain features of the context or a speaker intention of a certain sort. Indeed, these two options can be combined if the intention in question is treated as just another parameter of semantically relevant context.

In response to these accounts, I will argue that there is no good reason for maintaining that demonstratives refer in their own right. They do not have meanings that determine their reference as a function of context. And the sort of referential intention that can plausibly be attributed to an ordinary speaker is not semantically relevant. Here we should keep in mind the ambiguity of the phrase 'demonstrative reference', meaning either reference *with* a demonstrative or reference *by* a demonstrative. If each requires a speaker intention, does a speaker in using a demonstrative have *two* intentions, an intention to refer to something *and* an intention for the demonstrative to refer to something? If not, is the intention for the demonstrative to refer part of, or even identical to, the intention to refer with the demonstrative, despite their distinct contents? I will argue that in using demonstratives we have intentions to refer but not intentions for demonstratives themselves to refer. The difference may seem trifling, but it is consequential. If only intentions for demonstratives to refer could endow them with references but ordinary speakers do not have such intentions, demonstratives do not have semantic references. As I see it, the intention to refer is part of a speaker's total communicative intention, and that makes it pragmatic in import, not semantic.<sup>2</sup>

The natural alternative to the claim that demonstratives have meanings that determine their reference as a function of context is that their meanings merely constrain their literal use. Of course, speakers use them to refer, but this can be explained without attributing references to

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout I will gloss over the distinction between what I have called objectual and descriptive reference (Bach 1987/1994: 66). Think of this as a generalization of the distinction between referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions. It corresponds roughly to the distinction between having a singular thought about something and thinking of something under a description. For certain purposes (as in Bach 2006) I have limited my use of 'reference' to the objectual case, but here I will stick with the looser, more colloquial use, since what is at issue here is whether demonstratives refer in even that sense. Also, I will leave open whether this use of 'reference' is loose enough to cover even quantificational uses of demonstrative phrases (King (2001) has investigated them in depth), since I won't be discussing them.

demonstratives themselves. If this is right, it poses a problem for the standard truth-conditional conception of sentence semantics, since demonstratives won't have references to contribute to the contents of sentences in which they occur. Demonstratives are but one kind of expression that presents this problem, but this is not the place to discuss other putative context-sensitive expressions and constructions, such as gradable adjectives, epistemic modals, predicates of personal taste, relational nouns, genitive phrases, noun-noun pairs, and quantifier phrases.<sup>3</sup>

Before getting to the question about the status, semantic or pragmatic, of demonstrative reference, I should explain the point of asking it. It is philosophically important because it illustrates a general question about language and communication: When one utters something, what information is carried by what the speaker utters, and what is carried by the fact that she utters it?<sup>4</sup> The semantic content of what she utters provides the core of information on which the hearer relies, partly on the supposition that the speaker intends him to, to figure out what she intends to convey. To attribute properties of the speaker's communicative intention in uttering a sentence to the semantic content of the uttered sentence is to commit a version of the "fallacy of misplaced information" (Barwise and Perry 1983: 38). If I am right about demonstrative reference, you can still do truth-conditional semantics if you want, but assigning semantic references to demonstratives is entirely stipulative.

### **1. Demonstratives: A lack of character?**

Among the diverse range of expressions (and constructions) that have uncritically been thought to be context sensitive, the case of demonstratives is special. This is not just because it has received far more attention than other cases but also because of the influence of a popular model of how they work, a model that some, e.g. Jeffrey King (2014b), think can be generalized to other cases. The basic idea, due to David Kaplan (1989a), is that the "content" of a demonstrative (or an indexical) depends, as dictated by its meaning or what Kaplan dubs its "character," on its context of use.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, it's the content, not the character, that figures in

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<sup>3</sup> I take these up in Bach 2012 and discuss the general issue of context sensitivity in Bach 2005.

<sup>4</sup> For convenience I will generally use, in their various forms, the pronouns 'she' for the speaker and 'he' for the *hearer* (addressee).

<sup>5</sup> Well worth noting here is David Braun's (1996) substantial refinement of Kaplan's account, on which character is but a component of meaning. In Braun's view, the linguistic meaning of a demonstrative

what is said when a speaker utters a sentence containing the expression. In the paradigmatic case of the first-person pronoun, the character of ‘I’ determines that when uttered, its content is, as Kaplan puts it, “the agent [speaker] of the context.” If you say, “I am tired,” you are saying that you are tired, not that a certain speaker is tired. ‘I’ refers automatically to you, independently of your intention.

The case of ‘I’ is straightforward enough, but for well-known reasons things get trickier even with indexicals like ‘we’, ‘you’, ‘now’, and ‘here’.<sup>6</sup> In each case, the character (meaning) restricts, but does not fully determine, how the content, or reference, depends on the context.<sup>7</sup> For example, although the content of ‘we’ must be a plurality that includes the speaker, the character does not seem to determine the intended speaker-including plurality. Similarly, the content of ‘now’ must include the time of the context, but it need not be limited to that exact moment.<sup>8</sup> And things get messier with third-person pronouns, simple demonstratives (‘this’, ‘that’), and demonstrative phrases (‘this car’, ‘that dog’), whose meanings limit but certainly do not determine what they can be used to refer to. But perhaps there’s a plausible way of expanding the list of contextual parameters beyond the usual ones (speaker, addressee(s), time, and location of the utterance), so that the meaning of a “discretionary” indexical or a demonstrative word or phrase can determine reference as a function of context after all. Then one could try to sustain the claim that demonstratives are context sensitive, such that their semantic values (references) depend, thanks to their linguistic meaning, on the context in which they are

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together with a demonstration associated with the occurrence of that demonstrative comprise the character of that occurrence, and that character, in turn, combines with the context to determine a content (if something is actually demonstrated). This proposal is designed to handle various problem cases, such as empty demonstratives and multiple occurrences with the same reference. Braun is neutral on the intention vs. demonstration issue mentioned below in the text, and uses ‘demonstration’ for whatever combines with linguistic meaning.

<sup>6</sup> See Smith (1989) and Mount (2008), aptly titled “The Impurity of ‘Pure’ Indexicals.”

<sup>7</sup> There are technical reasons for distinguishing reference from content, but these seem irrelevant here.

<sup>8</sup> In fact, there are uses of ‘we’ that do not include the speaker, as when a coach addresses his players, and uses of ‘now’ that do not include the present moment, as in a narrative, but arguably these are extended, not quite literal. At least that’s what a proponent of the character-context model would have to claim (or else resort to claiming ambiguity).

used. Perhaps one could do that even without including speaker intentions, by arguing that other facts about the context do the trick.

Howard Wettstein (1984), in his aptly titled “How to bridge the gap between meaning and reference,” suggests just such a contextualist approach (he rejects intentionalism). He does not go into detail about how context works its wonders, but Christopher Gauker (2008) does. Gauker proposes that reference is determined by an open-ended range of facts about the context of utterance (he calls them “accessibility criteria”), such as what is relevant to the conversation and what is perceptually salient.

These proposals invite the question of just how such contextual facts manage to determine reference. The worry is that they come into play because, and only because, the speaker intentionally exploits, and the addressee takes her to be exploiting, these facts. Suppose someone says, “That car must be very expensive,” in a situation where various cars are in view but only one is out of the ordinary. It would seem that the salience of that one particular car comes into play not because of the meaning of the expression the speaker uses to refer to it, in that the meaning of ‘that car’ merely limits the reference to one car. Rather, this is because the speaker cannot reasonably expect the hearer to figure out, and the hearer cannot reasonably take the speaker to expect him to figure out, which car she has in mind unless there is something that makes it stand out from the other cars in view. It could be made salient by a demonstration, by already being the topic of conversation or, as in this example, by being the only one to which the predicate could plausibly apply. Whatever the facts that help the hearer figure out which car is being referred to, they come into play only because of available evidence that the hearer is obviously intended to rely on to ascertain what the speaker means to refer to. These facts don’t play a semantic but merely an epistemic role.

With these considerations in mind, a proponent of the character/context model could insist that the gap between meaning and reference is filled by the speaker’s intention in using the demonstrative. Indeed, this is just the move that Kaplan (1989b) made when modifying his earlier view (1989a). He previously supposed that the character of a demonstrative requires that the feature of the context that fixes its reference is a demonstration by the speaker. However, this picture is highly idealized and does not do justice to ordinary usage. For one thing, a demonstration is often not needed. Maybe the rest of the utterance makes one candidate referent stand out from the others, or perhaps the referent has already been mentioned. And even if a use

of ‘that’ is accompanied by a demonstration, there might be no determinate demonstratum (a dog, a dog’s head, a dog’s nose?) independent of the speaker’s intention. Also, the speaker might be referring to something other than the demonstratum, as in so-called “deferred reference.” For example, one might point to a parked car with its headlights on and say, “She will be back soon,” using ‘she’ to refer to the car’s absent owner. Kaplan realized that requiring an intention rather than a demonstration avoids these problems and, moreover, puts the role of a demonstration (when there is one) in its proper place. A demonstration isn’t necessary when the speaker’s referential intention is evident, and it isn’t sufficient without an accompanying intention to single out one candidate from the others, and a speaker can intend to refer to something other than the demonstratum if there is some obviously intended connection between the two.

Although there was some controversy about whether Kaplan should have stuck to his guns about demonstrations,<sup>9</sup> his switch to intentions has been influential. But how well does intentionalism, in contrast to Wettstein’s and Gauker’s contextualism, fit into the character/context model? Regarding the view that “a speaker’s referential intentions constitute one more component of those n-tuples that [Kaplan] construes as ‘contexts’,” Stephen Schiffer has commented that “the trouble with this is that there is no work for Kaplanian contexts to do once one recognizes speakers’ referential intentions” (2005: 1141). Why I share this concern will become clear as we consider the views of two recent defenders of intentionalism, Andreas Stokke (2010) and Jeffrey King (2014a).

## **2. Two versions of semantic intentionalism**

Stokke is a man of character. Acknowledging that demonstrative reference is not determined as a function of the standard parameters of context, he proposes “a way of incorporating the role played by intentions into a character-based semantics” for demonstratives and discretionary indexicals (2010: 383). This requires him to “take referential intentions as themselves parameters of contexts providing arguments for characters” and to rebut “several arguments found in the literature according to which intentions cannot be parameters of context” (384). Accordingly, he proceeds to formulate an “intention-sensitive semantics” on which referential intentions *are* parameters of context. He presents a certain conception of what is required for the fulfillment of

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Reimer (1991) thought he should have stuck with demonstrations, and I thought he was right to change his mind (Bach 1992).

referential intentions.

One important feature of Stokke's view is that "reference can fail if the speaker has a referential intention, but the audience is nevertheless not in a position to recognize it" (389). The intention can "misfire," he explains, even if the speaker mistakenly thinks it is recognizable, because she either overestimates the quality of the evidence available to the audience or misjudges the audience's ability to identify the intention on the basis of otherwise adequate and available evidence (400). Relying on some intuitively plausible examples, Stokke argues that misfiring intentions fail to determine reference. To be "successful," he insists, a referential intention, if not actually recognized, must be one that the hearer is at least in a position to recognize. Here he seems to be equating successfully *communicating* reference (or at least doing one's part in communicating it) with successfully securing a reference. As a result, Stokke's recognizability condition seems merely pragmatic in character, a condition on communicating reference, not on securing it. This renders his view hard to fit into the character/content framework, in that the requirement of recognizability is not traceable to the meaning of demonstratives. Instead, recognizability is a necessary condition for the fulfillment of communicative intentions in general.<sup>10</sup>

Whereas Stokke explicitly aims to preserve Kaplan's basic picture by incorporating referential intentions into the character of demonstratives and relies on intuitions only to provide data for his account, King's (2014a) main aim is to account for intuitions about demonstrative reference. He presents a variety of intuitively plausible examples of referential success or failure, with the goal of finding a generalization that includes the good cases and excludes the bad ones. After disposing of demonstration and simple intention accounts, as well as hybrid accounts, King seeks a more sophisticated intention account of just what is required for a speaker's intention to,

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<sup>10</sup> For an account of referential intentions as components of communicative intentions, see Bach 1987:1994: 49-53. A key point is that a referential intention isn't just any intention to refer to something one has in mind. It is the intention that the addressee identify, and take himself to be intended to identify, a certain item as the referent by way of thinking of it a certain identifiable way. Such an intention goes unfulfilled if the audience fails to identify the right individual in the right way, that is, the one intended in the way intended. This last feature is stressed also by Korta and Perry (2010).

as he is apt to put it, “secure the semantic value of the use of a demonstrative in context.”<sup>11</sup> There are two problems to contend with, what Jeff Speaks (forthcoming), who discusses King’s view in depth, has called the problems of “insufficient intentions” and of “conflicting intentions.” The intention must suffice to give the demonstrative a unique semantic value. It can’t do this if it is completely opaque to the addressee, as happens when a speaker attempts to use ‘that sheep’, without any further indication, to refer to one member of a flock of sheep. And the speaker can’t have intentions that yield different semantic values, as in Kaplan’s well-known Carnap/Agnew case. Assuming we need for an account of what it takes for an intention to determine the semantic value of a demonstrative in context, both are formidable problems, as well illustrated by the various examples discussed by Stokke, King, and Speaks, among many others.<sup>12</sup>

To handle these problems King proposes a “coordination account.” He calls it that because in his view the semantic value (the referent, more or less) of a demonstrative as used by a speaker in a given context is the object that the speaker intends it to refer to *and* what a certain sort of hearer would take to be what the speaker intends it to refer to. The idea is that the intention needed for a certain object to be singled out as the demonstrative’s semantic value must satisfy a recognizability condition. It must be recognizable, at least by an “ideal hearer,” that is, “a competent, attentive, reasonable hearer who knows the common ground of the conversation”

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<sup>11</sup> King prefers ‘semantic value’ over ‘referent’ because in his view (King 2001) demonstratives are quantificational expressions and, strictly speaking, do not refer. As he explains, “my talk of an object being the value of a use of a simple or complex demonstrative should not be construed as committing me to the claim that the demonstrative refers to the object” (King 2014a: 234, n. 3). Still, we can distinguish an intention by a speaker to refer to something from an intention for something to be the demonstrative’s semantic value in the context.

<sup>12</sup> These others include Kaplan, Wettstein, Reimer, and Gauker. Speaks (forthcoming) is largely a response to King (2014a), and King (2013), though it appeared before both, thanks to the vicissitudes of publishing, is a response to Speaks, specifically on the problem of conflicting intentions. Unfortunately, King and Speaks seem to have overlooked Stokke (2010). All three take up a dizzying array of examples designed to pose challenges to particular formulations of a sophisticated intention-based semantics of demonstratives. I do not have the space to discuss these examples here, but I have discussed a few similar ones previously (Bach 1992; 2006: 545-9), including the Carnap/Agnew case (Bach 1987/1994: 183-6). As I will suggest, the problem posed by such examples arises only on the assumption that speakers’ intentions in using demonstratives actually determine semantic values.



(King 2014a: 229). So it is slightly misleading for King to label his view the “coordination” account, for this suggests that the demonstrative’s reference is determined by the speaker and hearer in concert. In fact, the account allows that a demonstrative can acquire a reference even if its reference is not successfully communicated to the actual hearer.

Unlike Stokke, King is not directly concerned to show how to incorporate his coordination account into a character/context framework, although he hints that it does fit in. He takes “the lexical meanings of demonstratives to require that a use of a demonstrative be supplemented by a speaker’s intention that is recognizable by an ideal hearer,” and he maintains that the speaker’s having such an intention and its being recognizable in this way are “objective features of the context of utterance” (King 2014a: 229). However, although he does seem to adhere to the character/context framework, it is not clear how the intentions specified in his coordination account *can* fit into this framework.

Here’s the problem. King finds it “reasonable” to require the speaker to do what is necessary for successful communication with a demonstrative. “After all,” he explains, “the purpose in using a demonstrative is to communicate something about its value. It seems plausible to say that a speaker succeeded in securing a value for her demonstrative in context just in case she did what is required for its serving its purpose” (2014a: 229). But what King bills as a “theoretical virtue” of the coordination account is actually problematic. Like Stokke’s account, it makes securing a semantic value (reference) for a demonstrative contingent on the pragmatic achievement of doing one’s part in communicating the reference.<sup>13</sup>

This problem, indeed the very need for the coordination account, arises only on the assumption that in using demonstratives we actually have intentions to secure semantic values for them. It is hard to believe that we do, and King just takes it for granted that we do. I can’t prove that we don’t. At any rate, the problem would not arise if the intention in question were simply the intention, in using a demonstrative, to refer to an object. But then a different problem would arise: how to fit the co-ordination account into character/context framework. There would be no basis for claiming that the intended referent is the *semantic* value of the demonstrative as

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<sup>13</sup> Here’s another problem worth noting. It concerns the very idea of an intention for an object to be a semantic value of an occurrence of a demonstrative. The coordination account says essentially that to be the semantic value is to be recognizably intended to be its semantic value. This smacks of circularity or perhaps even an infinite regress. I’m not sure what to make of this problem.

used in that context. King would need to explain how the speaker's intention to refer confers a semantic value on the demonstrative used to make reference and why the demonstrative's meaning accounts for this.<sup>14</sup> Short of that, it is hard to see how demonstratives could fit into the character/context framework.

As mentioned earlier, Stokke and King both rely heavily on their intuitions about various imagined examples to motivate their requirement that reference-conferring intentions be recognizable. By treating intentions to refer that are associated with uses of a demonstrative as if they are intentions for the demonstrative itself to refer, Stokke and King are tempted into supposing that the conditions on making referential intentions evident to one's audience are semantically significant. In so doing, they assume that their intuitions track semantic properties of the expressions being considered. As I see it, such intuitions are in fact responsive to what, from the standpoint of King's ideal hearer, a reasonable user of a demonstrative can reasonably be taken to intend to refer to. Which object that is depends on the context all right, but the role of context (that is, any information that is mutually manifest in the context) is to guide rational referential intentions and rational inferences about them. It is not to fix the semantic value of the demonstrative being used, since there is nothing in the meaning of the demonstrative to determine what the relevant contextual features are. As we saw in connection with Stokke's view, there is a general recognizability condition on communicative intentions, but no expression-specific requirement.

The upshot so far is that we have a problem for the popular view that demonstratives have context-relative semantic references. What determines reference is indeed an intention on the part of the speaker, but this is not the intention to fix the semantic value of the demonstrative, to endow it with referent. So from the perspective of the character/context framework, unless something else is capable of doing that, demonstratives suffer from a character deficiency. The obvious alternative is to give up the assumption that demonstratives have semantic referents. Then we won't need to get sidetracked seeking an account of just what sort of intention endows

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<sup>14</sup> In fact, King does offer something of an argument in this regard (2014a: 231-2). He objects to my contention that because a referential intention is part of a speaker's communicative intention and, as such, plays a pragmatic role, it could not play a semantic role as well. However, as we have seen, the intention that could play such a role, as per King's coordination account, is an intention with a different content, hence a different intention.

them with their referents.

### **3. The meaning of demonstratives and the status of referential intentions**

No one denies that speakers have referential intentions when using demonstratives, but it is implausible to suppose that they *also* have intentions for demonstratives themselves to refer. It is just as implausible, merely to avoid attributing two different reference-related intentions to speakers, to identify these intentions, as if the intention to refer with a demonstrative just *is* the intention for the demonstrative itself to refer. We have been given little reason to suppose that speakers have intentions of the latter sort, much less that the meanings of demonstratives dictate that their users have such intentions. In the next section I will take up some objections to my evidently unorthodox view, but first let us consider the implications for semantics of giving up the supposition that the meaning of a demonstrative is a rule that determines its semantic value (reference) in context as a function of speaker intention.

As I see it, the meanings of demonstratives (including discretionary indexicals) merely impose referential constraints on their literal use (Bach 1987/1994: 186-92; see Soames 2009 for a similar view). For example, the meaning of ‘that car’ constrains its literal use to refer to a car, the meaning of ‘she’ constrains its literal use to refer to a female, and the meaning of ‘we’ constrains its literal use to refer to a group including the speaker.<sup>15</sup> To use such an expression literally is to use it with the intention of referring to something that satisfies the constraint, but the reference here is by the speaker, not by the indexical or demonstrative itself. You can still attribute referential semantic values to these expressions if you’d like, say for formal semantic purposes, but they play no role in the process whereby speakers make references and hearers identify what speakers use them to refer to.

I think of an intention to refer (in using a demonstrative) as part of a speaker’s overall communicative intention. Take the simplest case, where the speaker is trying to convey a simple singular proposition, that a certain object *o* is *P*, by uttering a sentence of the form ‘*d* is *F*’. In using ‘*d* is *F*’ to convey that *o* is *P*, the speaker has but one communicative intention, albeit a complex one, insofar as the constituents of the proposition she is trying to

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<sup>15</sup> Of course, ‘that car’ can also be used to refer to a non-car, such as a toy car, but that would not be a literal use. Also worth noting, though not directly relevant here, is the difference in meaning between ‘this’ and ‘that’, which seems to correspond to the proximal/distal distinction.

convey correspond to constituents of the sentence used to convey it. So we could say that the speaker's communicative intention, even though it is just one intention, has both a referential and a predicative component. The referential component is constrained by the meaning of the demonstrative being used, but the demonstrative itself has no semantic reference. This may seem to be a strange thing to claim, but it is a difficult claim to avoid once one becomes tuned in to the ambiguity of the phrase 'demonstrative reference'. If, like reference with a demonstrative, reference by a demonstrative also requires an intention but the speaker using it has only one intention associated with the demonstrative (to express a thought about a certain object), she does not also intend the demonstrative itself to have a reference.

An obvious implication here is that a sentence of the form 'd is F' falls short of semantically expressing the singular proposition it is used to convey. The speaker means that o is P but what is semantically expressed is merely that a certain object is P. That *some* object is referred to is semantically expressed, but not which one. This will seem problematic only if one assumes that declarative sentences must semantically express propositions (be capable of being true or false). So, for example, when Gauker stipulates that "what we call the *context* contains all that we need to know in addition to what sentence was uttered in order to assign a proposition (to the sentence in context)" (2008: 360), he is implicitly assuming that a proposition has to be assigned. This is to commit what I call the "proposition fallacy," the fallacy of supposing that if a sentence does not semantically express a proposition independently of context, then it must express a proposition relative to a context, and thereby be context sensitive (Bach 2013: 91). Falling into this fallacy is abetted by the appeal of another one, the context-sensitivity fallacy, to suppose that if something is done in context, it is done by context.

As I see it, then, there is no fact of the matter as to what a demonstrative refers to. The only relevant facts in the neighborhood are what the speaker, in using it, intends to refer to, and what she could reasonably expect her audience to take her to be using it to refer to, and, correlatively, what her audience actually takes, and what they could reasonably take, her to refer to. These are all relevant to communicative success, but are not dictated by the meaning of the demonstrative being used. Its meaning merely constrains how the speaker can use it.

#### **4. Clarifications and replies to some objections**

King and Stokke both object to some previous arguments of mine, and they make some good

points. I will acknowledge these and rebut some other objections they raise.

First I need to acknowledge an important oversight on my part, which affects one of those arguments.<sup>16</sup> I must admit that it was flawed because I failed to separate two distinct issues, the role of context in determining reference and the question of whether the speaker's intention is part of the reference-determining context. I argued that those features of context that play merely an epistemic or evidential role are not relevant to semantics. However, even if the range of contextual features that are semantically relevant is limited, it doesn't follow that the speaker's referential intention isn't one of them. So King and Stokke are both right to object that I had no business dogmatically denying that "speaker intentions can be part of the context that determines semantic values" (King 2014a: 231), at least if they are intentions of the right sort. I was too hasty to dismiss the possibility that even though, in contrast to 'I' and 'today', demonstratives (and many indexicals) are discretionary, they could still, as a matter of semantic rule, depend for their references on the speaker's intention.

After presenting and defending his coordination account, King (2014a) takes issue with several arguments of mine. In particular, he objects to my contention that a speaker's referential intention, because it is part of her communicative intention, cannot determine the semantic value of a demonstrative. In order to sustain this objection, he proposes to "identify Bach's referential intentions involved with uses of demonstratives with speakers' intentions that, according to the coordination account, play a role in determining the semantic values of demonstratives in contexts" (2014a: 232). Unfortunately, this convenient identification just begs the question. King is right to claim that it doesn't follow from the fact that a speaker's referential intention is part of her overall communicative intention (in uttering a sentence in which a demonstrative occurs) that it doesn't also determine the semantic value of the demonstrative being used. But it can't do so by virtue of *being* an intention for a demonstrative to have a certain semantic value, for it just doesn't have that as its content. It is the intention, in using the demonstrative, to refer to a certain thing, not the intention for the demonstrative to have a certain semantic value.<sup>17</sup> And an intention

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<sup>16</sup> This was my "role of context" argument (e.g., in Bach 2005: 35), which is rebutted by both Stokke (2010: 385-7) and King (2014a: 232-3). For a fuller presentation of this argument, see Bach 2012.

<sup>17</sup> The same goes for discretionary indexicals, such as 'we' and 'now', mentioned in section 1. And with automatic indexicals, such as 'I' and 'today', their semantic values do not depend at all on any speaker intention.

with one content can't *be* an intention with a different content. Also, King does not make a case for his pervasive, but unpersuasive, assumption that ordinary speakers even have intentions regarding the semantic values of demonstratives.

Speaks (forthcoming) makes a bit of a case for this, at least in a negative way.<sup>18</sup> He concedes that it is “not obvious” that at least some speakers, such as his two-year old daughter, have intentions about objects being the semantic values of occurrences of demonstratives. However, he points out that it is also “not obvious that my daughter has (or needs to have) intentions about speaker reference in order to use demonstratives.” The trouble here is that having an intention to refer does not require having an intention *about* reference or, for that matter, about the demonstrative one uses to refer. One's intention to refer to a certain thing is of course associated with one's use of the demonstrative, but neither two-year olds nor normal adults have, or need to have, metalinguistic intentions when they use demonstratives to refer. Referring is not like making a pun or otherwise trading on semantic or phonetic properties of words, which clearly do involve metalinguistic intentions.

King has a second objection to my contention that referential intentions can't determine the semantic value of a demonstrative relative to a context. Supposing that only “objective” features of the context can play that role, features such as the identity of the speaker, the addressee, the time, and the place, I claimed that the speaker's referential intention (or its content) is not another such feature. Now obviously if a speaker intends to refer to a certain object in using a demonstrative, that is an objective fact. So, it would seem, the speaker's intention *could* be a semantically relevant feature of the context as well. But this does not show that it is. It must be the meaning of the demonstrative that requires a speaker using it to have an intention of the right sort. Its meaning must be what requires the speaker not just to intend to refer but also to intend for it to have a certain semantic value. So, as we have already seen, King needs to argue that the meanings of demonstratives require speakers to have such intentions, as well as that speakers actually have such intentions when they use demonstratives.

Stokke also rebuts my contention that referential intentions can't determine the semantic value of a demonstrative. He points out, first, that it is not a problem for his intention-sensitive

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<sup>18</sup> Speaks, like King, makes no positive case for his assumption that users of demonstratives, whatever their age, have intentions not only to refer but also for the demonstratives they use to refer to have referential semantic values.

semantics that the addressee may need to take a wide range of contextual information into account in order to ascertain the speaker's referential intention. That's an epistemic matter, and it does not bear on what actually secures the reference, namely this intention. I agree. As Stokke explains, his intention-sensitive semantics "is not supposed to solve any problems regarding how speakers form their assumptions about what audiences will or will not be able to grasp" (Stokke 2010: 399).<sup>19</sup> However, I was not arguing from epistemic considerations.

Also, Stokke reproaches me for stipulating, and not really arguing, that speaker intentions can't be part of reference-determining context (2010: 391). But I do offer at least a semblance of an argument, and it is mentioned by King: "Bach claims that the elements of the semantically relevant context must 'be the same' for speaker and hearer" (2014a: 234). Unfortunately, I failed to explain what sort of symmetry I had in mind. Contrary to what King suggests, it was not symmetry between the epistemic situations of the speaker and the hearer.<sup>20</sup> The idea was that semantic content should be a linguistic matter, and not dependent on who is doing the talking. That might be wrong, but here's the argument.

If the context is to determine reference as a function of linguistic meaning, it must be the same for the speaker as it is for his audience. But how the speaker's intention (considered as part of the context) comes into play is not the same for both. From the hearer's point of view, the semantic value of a demonstrative should be determined, given the demonstrative's linguistic meaning, by facts about the context in which the demonstrative is uttered. And the speaker's intention for the demonstrative to have a certain reference could be one such fact. But what about the speaker's point of view? On the intentionalist view, the demonstrative doesn't have a semantic value, a reference, unless the speaker forms an intention to that effect. So if the speaker has no such intention, the demonstrative has no reference; if the speaker intends for it to refer to one object, that object is its reference; if the speaker intends for it to refer to another object, then *that* object is its reference. What its reference is, if any, is up to the speaker, at least on a simple

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<sup>19</sup> It is irrelevant, for example, that it generally requires more cognitive effort to identify the speaker's intention than to identify the speaker, and that the audience's reasoning may be more open-ended. I agree, but such epistemic considerations were not the basis for my argument. See the next paragraph.

<sup>20</sup> King's concern does apply to an argument given by Fodor and Lepore based on "an inherent asymmetry between the epistemological situations of the speaker and the hearer with respect to the role of contextual information" (2005: 84).

intentionalist view.<sup>21</sup> Beyond the referential constraint it imposes, the meaning of the demonstrative does not restrict what the speaker can use it to refer to. What the speaker can reasonably be expected to be referring to may be determined by facts about the context, but what the speaker actually intends to be referring to is up to her.

I have been supposing that it is one thing for a speaker to intend to refer to a certain object in using a demonstrative and another for a speaker to intend the demonstrative to have a certain object as its semantic value. But here let us consider further the possibility, which King for one could pursue, that they come to the same thing, one intention that can be described in two different ways. But that is questionable. For suppose a speaker uses the pronoun ‘she’ (or the demonstrative phrase ‘that woman’) to refer, unwittingly, to a man dressed as a woman. As so used, ‘she’ (or ‘that woman’) could not have a man as its semantic value. Even so, the reference is to a man: the speaker is referring (albeit unwittingly) to a man and a competent hearer would take that man, though mistaken for a woman, to be the intended referent. Indeed, the crossdressing man would indeed *be* the referent, that is, what the speaker is using ‘she’ (or ‘that woman’) to refer to, and would successfully convey that to a competent hearer. But this intention cannot also be the intention that the demonstrative has that man as its semantic value, much less an intention that a competent hearer would attribute to the speaker. If it were, the two conditions in King’s account would be fulfilled, and it would falsely predict that ‘she’ (or ‘that woman’) has that man, neither a female nor a woman, as its semantic value.<sup>22</sup>

This example suggests something more: whether or not a demonstrative has a referential semantic value or not has no bearing on what is involved in communicating what the speaker is referring to. The speaker does not utter a demonstrative and form an intention for it to refer to something. Rather, she intends to refer to something and utters a linguistic expression to make

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<sup>21</sup> As argued earlier, the requirement that the speaker’s intention be recognizable (by way of the intended referent being salient, relevant, or otherwise distinctive) is not traceable to the meaning of demonstratives. I argued that this requirement, which King and Stokke both think is a condition on achieving reference and is therefore needed to exclude cases where reference fails, is really a condition on communicating reference. This is not the sort of thing that could be imposed by the meaning of a demonstrative.

<sup>22</sup> The situation would be different if the speaker realized that the man dressed as a woman is a man and it was common ground that this is so. Then the speaker would not be using ‘she’ or ‘that woman’ literally, in which case it would be irrelevant that the man could not be the semantic value.



her intention evident to the hearer. And the addressee hears the expression and seeks to identify what the speaker, in using it, intends to refer to. He can recognize her referential intention without having to identify a certain individual as being the semantic value of the expression she is using. Neither the property of being the semantic value nor the process of recognizing a certain object as being the semantic value play any role in the communication of the reference, from either the speaker's side or the hearer's.

## 5. Summing up

There is nothing about the meaning of a demonstrative (or a discretionary indexical) that determines its reference as a function of the context in which it is used, even if that includes the speaker's referential intention. Its meaning merely constrains that intention. Relevant facts about the context help the hearer identify the intention but do not play a role in fixing reference. The speaker's referential intention plays that role, but this is in determining what the speaker is referring to, not in endowing the demonstrative with a reference of its own. It does so as part of the speaker's communicative intention. All in all, there does not seem to be any reason to impute semantic reference to the demonstrative itself. And even if, for some good reason that escapes me, context does somehow manage to endow demonstratives with semantic reference, this plays no role in the communication of the speaker's reference.

Calling various kinds of expressions context sensitive is as casual as it is common. Philosophers just assume that if there are different things that a speaker can mean in using an expression literally, the expression must be context sensitive (or else ambiguous). However, there are a few hurdles to overcome before such claims can be justified. It must be shown that there is something about the meaning of the expression itself that determines the contextual variability. And it must be shown that there is something about the context on which the variation depends. Otherwise, the expression in question is not context sensitive.<sup>23</sup>

We focused on the case of demonstratives because with them, in contrast to many other allegedly context-sensitive expressions, the contextual variation is directly associated with the expression itself. Defenders of semantic intentionalism about demonstratives simply assume that we

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<sup>23</sup> I discuss various other cases of alleged context-sensitive expressions in Bach 2012. Whereas as King (2014a; 2014b) wants to lump them together, calling them all "supplementives," including demonstratives, I think there are some interesting differences among them.

have intentions that determine semantic values (references) of uses of demonstratives in contexts. To me it is anything but obvious that we do. I don't know about you, but when I use a demonstrative, the only intention I have that is directly associated with the demonstrative is to refer to something. I am doing the referring, and all the demonstrative does, so far as I can tell, is to signal that that's what I'm doing in using it. My referential intention is essentially audience-directed. In using a demonstrative I intend to refer my audience to a certain thing and express a thought about it. Part of what enables them to think of what I intend them to think of is the pragmatic fact that I am using that expression. This information is not carried by the expression itself, not even in a context-relative way, but by the fact, a pragmatic fact, that I am using it.

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