

different periods it will be of great use to students of James.

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Language and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language,

Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny

A Bradford Book, MIT Press, 1987, 286 pp., \$12.50 pbk.

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Devitt and Sterelny's *Language and Reality* is a staunchly partisan, issue-oriented introduction to the philosophy of language. The centerpiece of their view is the causal theory of reference. In addition to reference, the topics covered include the psychological reality of grammars, the relation between thought and language, the explanatory value of the concept of truth, and linguistic relativism.

More than a quarter of the book is devoted to the causal theory of reference. In essence, the authors' theory is that for certain sorts of terms, especially names and natural kind terms, a term comes to refer to a thing when that thing causes a perceptual act that leads to the introduction of the term (55). Such a term may retain its reference when used by speakers who themselves have not been perceptually affected by the referent provided these speakers acquire the term in the right way from other speakers whose uses of the term refer. Other sorts of terms, such as terms for artifact kinds, may acquire reference by being defined using terms that already refer.

As Devitt and Sterelny are aware, their causal theory of reference is fraught with problems. The most striking of these is what the authors call the "*qua*-problem." Of all the things involved in the causation of the act of perception that leads to the introduction of a term, which will be the term's referent? What makes it the case that "Nana" comes to be the name of a *cat* and not the name of a *head* of a cat or the name of a *time-slice* of a cat? The authors reply that the *type* of the referent is determined by a descriptive element in the thoughts that lead to the introduction of the term (64-65). Thus the authors reject the "pure-causal theory" in favor of what they call a "descriptive-causal theory." But as the authors acknowledge, the *qua*-problem arises as well in accounting for the reference of the relevant descriptive elements. Since a solution along the same lines as before would beg the question, the authors have to concede in the end that they really have no comprehensive theory of reference at all (75).

Since the authors, by their own admission, cannot make the causal theory work, they owe us at least some good reasons for thinking that it *ought* to work. The rationale they offer proceeds in two stages. In the first stage they explain why truth-conditions are of central interest in a theory of meaning (section 2.1), and they explain how truth-conditions depend on reference relations (section 2.2). The second stage is to argue that one alternative theory of reference, the description theory, has all sorts of problems that the causal theory avoids (Chapters 3 through 5).

This rationale does not go to the heart of the issue. The issue is, what may we take for granted in explaining what reference is? May we explain reference in terms of linguistic meaning or in terms of truth-conditions, or must the order of explanation be the reverse of this? If we could give an independent account of meaning, then there might be various ways to explain reference in terms of it. For instance, reference might be explained as a function of meaning and the context of utterance. If the authors could persuade us that reference is more fundamental than meaning, then they could make short shrift of the description theory of reference since this takes for granted the meanings of descriptions. Even if we cannot

give an independent account of meaning, maybe we can give an independent account of truth-conditions. Then, as Davidson and McDowell maintain, reference might emerge as a theoretical entity serving to unify otherwise disparate truth-conditions (see Donald Davidson, "Reality without Reference," *Dialectica* 31 (1977) 247-58 and John McDowell, "Physicalism and Primitive Denotation: Field on Tarski," *Erkenntnis* 13 (1978) 131-52). In the context of their presentation of the causal theory of reference, the authors do not consider at all the idea that meaning may be more fundamental than reference, and they simply dismiss the views of Davidson and McDowell as "obscure and unconvincing" (36).

However much later, in Chapter 9, "Truth and Explanation," Devitt and Sterelny do take up a closely related issue. Here they first briefly present the disquotational and prosentential theories of truth. These theories purport to explain truth in terms of the use of "true" and without appealing to reference relations. Second, the authors argue that truth, considered as a function of reference relations, is irrelevant to the explanation of behavior. The upshot is that there may be no work for their theory of reference to do. Undaunted, the authors reply that the reference-theoretic account of truth belongs to "the theory of symbols" and not to psychology; but they do not make very clear what distinction that label is supposed to draw.

Devitt and Sterelny have little to say about *meaning* at all, considered as something beyond reference. They briefly discuss the need for the concept of *sense* (section 2.5) and what sense is not (section 2.6); but as for a positive account, all they say is that the sense of a term may be identified with the "causal network" that ties it to its referent (58). They make little effort to show that this really solves the problems that lead to the postulation of senses. In particular, they have chosen not to deal with the problem of referential opacity in any detail.

Throughout their book, Devitt and Sterelny stress that they seek a "naturalistic semantics" (e.g. p. 9). One might have expected that a naturalistic semantics would locate the concepts of meaning and reference in an account of the causes and effects of speech or in an account of language as a medium of cooperation. But this is not what naturalism amounts to for Devitt and Sterelny. At every turn they shy away from the question of how language *works*. Their naturalism comes to nothing more than their commitment to the causal theory of reference.

On the relation between thought and language, Devitt and Sterelny have a novel view. On the one hand, they think there is something right about Grice's program of explaining meaning in terms of the thoughts words express. On the other hand, they argue that much thought actually belongs to the thinker's public language. How can they have it both ways? Their answer is that words acquire and maintain their reference by way of certain language-independent thoughts on the part of those whose rapport with the referent is suitably direct, but that others may have the same thoughts by thinking *in* the vocabulary that in this way acquires reference.

One of the virtues of *Language and Reality* is that it contains two chapters on linguistics. One of these (Chapter 6) is a lovely introduction to transformational grammar. The other (Chapter 8) is an extensive treatment of the question whether grammars are psychologically real. The authors' position on this is that there's no good reason to think so. Their primary strategy is to distinguish between several kinds of rule-following. They conclude that a grammar need not be an object of the speaker's knowledge and (what is different) that a grammar need not be represented, i.e., written out, in the speaker's brain. One difficulty with their discussion is that they don't make very clear what linguistics *is* if not a branch of psychology. What they say is that linguistics belongs to "the theory of symbols" (133). But again, what that means is not adequately explained.

Chapters 10 through 15 examine the views of a host of authors with whom Devitt and Sterelny disagree: Whorf, Dummett, Kuhn, the recent Putnam, Saussure, Wittgenstein, Davidson and others. Here and there they find some kernel of truth, but by and large their treatments are unsympathetic. The fault they find again and again is failure to accept a causal theory of reference (182, 197, 205, 208, 217, 243).

Language and Reality is intelligent, honest, stimulating and highly readable. The authors

do not “talk down” to the reader, but at no point does the discussion become very technical or arcane. In graduate and advanced undergraduate courses the chapters on the causal theory of reference, together with the chapter on truth and explanation, would serve very well as the sole text for a unit on that subject (following, perhaps, a unit on Frege and Tarski). The chapter on transformational grammar might also stand on its own. The chapter on thought and meaning might be useful in conjunction with H. P. Grice’s classic paper “Meaning” (*Philosophical Review* 66 (1957) 377-88). The chapter on the psychological reality of grammar might be useful in conjunction with something by Chomsky.

Very extensive bibliographical notes follow each chapter. These include references to both well-known and less well-known works in the analytic tradition, to philosophical works outside the analytic tradition and also to works in psychology and linguistics.

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On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution Towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music, Eduard Hanslick. Geoffrey Payzant, ed. & tr.

Hackett Press, Indianapolis, 1986, 152 pp. \$16.50 cl; \$5.95 pbk.

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For nearly one hundred years, English-speaking readers have had to resort to Gustav Cohen’s loose translation of Eduard Hanslick’s essay on the musically beautiful. Now we have an accurate translation, by Geoffrey Payzant. Apart from the translation, Payzant’s carefully researched bibliography, notes, and essay, “Towards a Revised Reading of Hanslick,” provide valuable insight into what many consider the canonical statement of musical formalism. (Payzant’s translation is taken from the 1891 edition of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen: ein Beitrag zur Revision der Asthetik der Tonkunst*. Cohen’s translation was published in 1895 (Liberal Arts Press edition, 1957).

Hanslick provided only the beginnings of an aesthetics of music. His treatise, nonetheless, has helped to shape our contemporary understanding of music; it has influenced numerous aestheticians and musicians, not least Schoenberg and Stravinsky. It stands in contrast both to the eighteenth-century theories of mimesis and affect and to the more mystical aspects of the romantic aesthetic. Music traditionally was viewed as a language which could express feelings, imitate nature, or somehow express the transcendental or inexpressible. Hanslick countered with the view that music is to be understood only in the specifically musical terms of tonally moving forms [*tönend bewegte Formen*]. The form and content of music are *sui generis*—constituted solely by the melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and thematic shaping of tonal sequences. Herein, alone, lies the musically beautiful.

Morris Weitz has suggested, in his introduction to Cohen’s text, that Hanslick’s brief essay (83 pages in translation) is to musical theory what Hume’s *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* is to speculative philosophy. Certainly Gurney’s treatise on formalism, *The Power of Sound*, produced thirty years after Hanslick’s essay is more systematic. Even so, the latter has advantages: it makes the formalist position strikingly clear; it is stimulating in its polemical and provocative style; last, but not least, it is short. It is undoubtedly essential reading for any student of aesthetics and for anyone else seriously interested in understanding the nature of music. Hanslick’s text serves as one of the best introductions to the problems of music’s meaning and purpose, music’s relation to other arts and to nature, musical form and content, the objectivity of musico-aesthetic contemplation, judgment, and criticism, and, finally the nature of composition and style.

Methodologically, Hanslick’s purpose is three-fold. First, Hanslick proposes—in Kantian