

Against Structured Referring Expressions

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1. Introduction

It is plausible to think that the notion of structure is tightly connected to the distinction between referring and denoting. For example, paradigm cases of referring expressions are atomistic, and so lack any internal structure (e.g., ‘I’, ‘this’, ‘Jones’, ‘gold’). In contrast, all denoting expressions seem to involve molecular compositional complexity, as is attested by the following representative list from Russell (1905: 235):

*... a man, some man, any man, every man, all men, the present King of England, the present King of France, the center of mass in the solar system at the first instant of the twentieth century, the revolution of the sun round the earth.*¹

However, not much effort has been spent explicitly mining the exact nature of this connection between reference and structure.

One exception is the following passage from Neale (1993: 104):

Following Russell and Wittgenstein (as I read them), I see an important connection between reference and structure: only a semantically unstructured expression can be viewed as a device of reference. ... As I understand the *semantical* notion of reference – in contrast to the important but quite different notion of *speaker’s* reference – it is an arbitrary relation that holds between a symbol and an individual, and as soon as one invokes a constructive or compositional procedure for determining the semantical value of an expression, one is no longer engaged in trying to establish reference. If an NP has any internal semantic structure it is to be accorded a nonreferential treatment (though of course some of its parts may be referential).

Following Neale (2007), I call this notion that there can be no such thing as a structured referring expression ‘structure skepticism’.² The specific aim of this paper is to defuse some putative counterexamples to structure skepticism. The general aim is to bolster the case in favor of the thesis that lack of structure – in a sense to be made precise – is essential to reference.

The goal of §2 is to specify the relevant senses of ‘reference’ and ‘structure’. §3 underlines some morals from the debates about referential uses of definite descriptions, and §4 addresses the challenge which complex demonstratives pose for structure skepticism. In §5 I turn to some other putative varieties of structured referring expressions, and in §6 I draw out some conclusions. To round off these introductory remarks, I will briefly discuss two skeptical questions about this research project, each of which recurs at several junctures below. First, doesn’t structure skepticism presuppose an outdated, untenable conception of the semantics-pragmatics distinction? Second, even apart from that, why should one find structure skepticism even remotely interesting anyway?

Among the variety of debates raging in the disputed territories at the semantics-pragmatics border,³ Bach (2005: 15-6) describes one central dispute as follows:

Indeed, it is now a platitude that literal meaning generally underdetermines speaker meaning. That is, generally, what a speaker means in uttering a sentence, even if the sentence is devoid of ambiguity, vagueness, or indexicality, goes beyond what the sentence means. The question is what to make of this *Contextualist Platitude* ...

On this question, the extreme opposing factions are radical contextualists (who think that the very idea of literal meaning is thereby shown up as inert and sterile) and conservative literalists (who think that the traditional semantics-pragmatics distinction requires only minor refinement in response to this challenge); and several positions have been carved out in between these extremes. The present challenge is this: since structure skepticism is a thesis about context-independent literal meanings, only an extreme conservative literalist would find it significant or interesting. However, most contemporary theorists reject extreme conservative literalism (cf. note 3), and so the question of the tenability of structure skepticism is moot.

To the contrary, not even radical contextualists deny that linguistic expressions have context-independent semantic properties; rather, what they insist is that no more substantive

content can be given to literal meanings than “semantic potentials” (cf., e.g., Recanti (2004: 97, 152)). Now, to be sure, this is a bold departure from many traditional conceptions of the semantic enterprise, since a semantic potential “only determines a concept against a rich pragmatic context” (ibid: 97). However, even on this view, a recognizably traditional terrain for semantic theorizing is marked off. Down this avenue, the moral of the contextualist challenge is that linguistic meanings are much more flexible than traditionally conceived, that meanings are malleable – relative to, and as mandated by, the context of utterance. The crucial present point is that these considerations hardly support categorical skepticism about the very idea of context-independent semantic properties. Further, for lots of reasons, we still need this recognizably traditional, though updated, conception of context-independent semantic properties (e.g., to make sense of the very idea of non-literal usage or pragmatic implicature, not to mention more fundamental considerations about learnability or systematicity).⁴

So, structure skepticism is a thesis about context-independent semantic properties, but it does not follow that its tenability is contingent on any particular position – *a fortiori* on an obsolete position – at the semantics-pragmatics border. So, on to the second question mentioned above: What, then, is the general import of structure skepticism?

The answer is that I am convinced that – building especially on the works of Russell, Kaplan, and Kripke – “the philosopher’s toolbox ... contains just about everything necessary to get to the heart of ... the notion of ... reference” (Neale 1993: 89), and that, towards that end, the relevant notion of ‘structure’ is one of the most important tools in the box. Structure skepticism lies implicit in these seminal works, as well as throughout much of the work which these authors have influenced.⁵ On these grounds, then, it seems eminently worthwhile to try to explicitly tease

out this widely-presumed connection between reference and structure, and to evaluate what it is be said for and against the *prima facie* counterexamples.

This is very preliminary, and both of these challenges will be discussed in more depth below. The aim of this paper, then, is to show that the notion of structure, properly excavated, underlies and grounds various important points in the theory of reference.

2. Reference and Structure

2.1: two distinctions

I will use the term ‘designator’ in Kripke’s (1972) relatively loose and intuitive sense – i.e., (more or less) any expression that can serve as the subject of a sentence is a designator.⁶ Some such notion is indispensable, for posing various questions within the study of language. Structure skepticism concerns the precise relation between two significant fault-lines within the category of designators: i.e., structured vs. unstructured expressions, and referring vs. denoting expressions. I begin by drawing these two distinctions in a preliminary way; the contours of both distinctions will be mapped more precisely as the essay proceeds.

At first glance, the structured-unstructured distinction is relatively simple. An expression is structured only if it has independently meaningful proper parts. So, sentences are typically structured;⁷ but individual terms can either be structured (e.g., ‘snowball’) or unstructured (e.g., ‘ball’). Only structured expressions involve molecular compositional complexity; in contrast, unstructured expressions are atomic and primitive. (‘Primitive’ in that it seems reasonable to hold that, typically, structured expressions ultimately factor out into unstructured bits. There may be a limited set of oddball idiomatic exceptions.) So, ‘nine’ vs. ‘the number of baseball positions’ are a paradigmatic pair of co-designative terms, the first of which is unstructured, the

second of which is structured. That is, while ‘nine’ is semantically atomic (i.e., has no meaningful proper parts), ‘the’ and ‘number’ and ‘of’ and etc. each make significant contributions to the complex, compositionally determined condition that determines the designatum of ‘the number of baseball positions’.

The referring-denoting distinction is more complex and involved, as it is inextricably tied up with Russellian exegesis and controversial theses in the philosophy of language. Building on Frege’s (1879) groundbreaking work on the distinction between object-dependent and object-independent propositions,⁸ Russell (1905) develops a more fundamental semantic distinction between two different types of designation. While *referring* is a conventional or stipulative relation between certain kinds of designator and what they are used to designate (paradigm cases include ‘I’, ‘this’, ‘20’, ‘Gödel’, ‘gold’)⁹, *denoting* is a distinct sort of connection that holds between certain kinds of designators (such as ‘a squirrel I saw yesterday’, ‘at least one even number’) and that, if anything, which satisfies the condition semantically expressed. Sentences whose subject-expressions are referring expressions semantically express object-dependent propositions (e.g., ‘I am cold’, ‘20 is even’). Sentences whose subject-expressions are denoting expressions semantically express object-independent propositions (e.g., ‘A squirrel I saw yesterday was albino’, ‘At least one even number is prime’). Even if these latter cases are about exactly one individual, in the attenuated sense of aboutness that Russell calls ‘denoting’, still only a compositionally determined condition is essential to their content (i.e., the content of the proposition stays constant across situations in which distinct individuals, or no individuals, satisfy the relevant compositionally determined condition).

To illustrate a bit further, consider the following:

[1] A man I met on my hike yesterday gave me a bottle of water.

Now consider two different contexts of utterance, in both of which [1] expresses a truth:

- (i) Alf was the only man I met ..., and he gave me a bottle of water
- (ii) Bert was the only man I met ..., and he gave me a bottle of water.

The claim that [1] semantically expresses an object-independent proposition is precisely the claim that uses of [1] would semantically express exactly the same proposition in these two different contexts. Contrast that with:

[2] Alf gave me a bottle of water.

Crucially, [2] is much more discriminating than [1] – i.e., unlike [1], what [2] semantically expresses is false in context (ii). The root of that difference is that [2] exhibits the characteristic mark of reference, in that the content semantically expressed is essentially tied to a specific individual, while [1] instances the characteristic mark of denoting, in that the content semantically expressed specifically concerns only quantificational relations among concepts.¹⁰

2.2: some reasons for and against structure skepticism

As mentioned at the outset, it seems evident that there is some fairly close connection between the notion of semantic structure and the distinction between referring and denoting.

Consider, for example, the following passage from Russell (1911: 258):

Scott is merely a noise or shape conventionally used to designate a certain person; it gives us no information about that person, and has nothing that can be called meaning as opposed to denotation. ... But *the author of Waverley* is not merely conventionally a name for Scott; the element of mere convention belongs here to the separate words *the* and *author* and *of* and *Waverley*. Given what these words stand for, *the author of Waverley* is no longer arbitrary. ... A man's name is what he is called, but however much Scott had been called the author of *Waverley*, that would not have made him be the author; it was necessary for him actually to write *Waverley*, which was a fact having nothing to do with names.

Russell sees a close intrinsic fit between these two distinctions, so that the category of designators might be thought to bifurcate into the sub-categories structured-denoting and unstructured-referring.¹¹ It is not that Russell takes unstructured-structured and referring-

denoting to be exactly the same distinctions, intensionally speaking; it is rather that what makes something a denoting expression also and thereby guarantees that it is a structured expression, and so an unstructured designator would simply have no choice but to refer. For another example, consider Kaplan (1968: 194):

To wonder what number is named by the German *die Zahl der Planeten* may betray astronomical ignorance, but to wonder what number is named by the German *Neun* can only indicate linguistic incompetence.

Again, because only structured designators involve molecular compositional complexity, only in their case is a compositionally determined condition semantically expressed – which condition one then compares against the empirical facts (in the relevant context) to determine what the designator designates. In contrast, in the case of an unstructured expression, there is certainly nothing compositional at work, and it is notoriously contentious whether an unstructured designator semantically expresses any specific condition at all.

So, structure skepticism is not entirely without precedent. However, (as far as I can tell) neither Russell nor Kaplan ever fully endorses structure skepticism. Rather, while both clearly endorse the weaker sub-theses that all denoting expressions are structured and all unstructured designators refer, neither explicitly takes a stand on their converses (i.e., only denoting expressions are structured, and only unstructured designators refer). Further, these stronger sub-theses are open to *prima facie* objections. First, referentially-used descriptions (e.g., ‘the world heavyweight champ’) and complex demonstratives (e.g., ‘that big green-headed duck’) seem to be structured referring expressions. Further, as Marcus (1975: 36) points out, some descriptions have grown capital letters, and made the transition to referring expressions (e.g., ‘The Holy Roman Empire’, ‘The Morning Star’). One might also think that ordinary proper names pose a similar complication, as names are the very paradigm of a referring expression, and yet people

tend to be called by complex, structured expressions like ‘Willard van Orman Quine’ or ‘Louis XIV’. To cite one further example, King (2001b) argues that what he calls ‘day designators’ (e.g., ‘December 12, 1902’) pose a problem for structure skepticism.

Hence, the thesis of structure skepticism is hardly obvious or trivial. Before tackling head-on these *prima facie* counterexamples, it is necessary to introduce one crucial refinement to the notion of ‘reference’ and one crucial refinement to the notion of ‘structure’.

2.3: speaker’s reference and semantic reference

One cannot attain a clear view of the relation between reference and structure without a grasp on the relation between what Kripke (1977) calls ‘speaker’s reference’ and ‘semantic reference’.

Kripke (1977: 255) takes this to be a special case of Grice’s distinction between on the one hand “what the speaker’s words meant”, and on the other hand “what [the speaker] meant, in saying those words, on that occasion”.¹² To illustrate: there are many things a speaker could use a sentence (say, ‘The cops are around the corner’) to speaker-mean (say, ‘let’s split’, or ‘we’re about to be rescued’, or ‘we’d better hide this stuff’, or ‘yell HELP’, or ‘be quiet’, or ...).

Nonetheless, the sentence ‘The cops are around the corner’ expresses one unambiguous semantic-meaning; competent speakers of English grasp it when they encounter this sentence, and the generation-in-context of any speaker-meanings depends on this semantic-meaning.

To illustrate the special case of speaker’s reference vs. semantic reference: the names ‘Elvis’ and ‘Einstein’ are each associated with a familiar naming-convention, which assigns as the semantic reference of tokens of the terms, respectively, a certain rocker and a certain physicist. Subsequent to and parasitic upon those semantic conventions, it is not uncommon to encounter uses of these names to speaker-refer to individuals distinct from their semantic reference, in the course of various sorts of indirect, complex speech acts (e.g., ‘Get a load of

Elvis over there’, ‘Way to go, Einstein!’). In most straightforward, literal speech acts, speaker’s reference and semantic reference coincide. There are, however, a variety of cases (such as these ironic uses of names) in which the two can come apart. These kinds of case will play a key role below. The important point for now is just that the fact that speakers use complex, molecular expressions to speaker-refer to specific individuals does not yet refute structure skepticism.

It is noteworthy that Neale (2004: *passim*; 2005: note 49) expresses some pessimism about the utility of the notion of semantic reference. His worry is that while semantic reference is the only sort of reference involved in the case of formal languages, in natural languages the basic notion of reference is speaker’s reference. A plausible theory of interpretation has to derive semantic reference from speaker’s reference, in terms of regularities over intentions. To the extent that philosophers of language run afoul of this, they are spending too much time thinking about formal languages, and their theories do not apply to natural languages.

Again, though – echoing remarks made in §1 concerning the contextualist challenge – even granting Neale’s point, I still hold that an empirically plausible notion of semantic reference, along the above lines, is a coherent and attainable goal. Henceforth, structure skepticism should be understood in the light of this refinement to the notion of ‘semantic reference’. As Neale (1993: 104) clearly avows in the excerpt cited at the outset, structure skepticism is, first and foremost, a thesis about semantic reference (otherwise certain phenomena might be mistakenly mis-classified as counterexamples); yet still semantic reference must be understood as derived from speaker’s reference.¹³

2.4: unstructured uses of molecular designators

The second, related refinement concerns the phenomenon of unstructured uses of complex or molecular designators. That is, while designators without any independently meaningful proper

parts (such as ‘nine’ or ‘this’) can only be semantically unstructured, in contrast, tokens of a complex designator could be used in either semantically structured or unstructured ways. This depends on whether the token is used to designate whatever best satisfies the compositionally determined condition the term semantically expresses, or, rather, the token is stipulatively linked to a specific designatum, regardless of how well or ill the designatum fits the relevant compositionally determined condition. Putative candidates for unstructured uses of complex designators include some tokens of ‘Louis XIV’, or of ‘the Evening Star’. That is, provided that, should a previously forgotten French King Louis be discovered, it would be intelligible to say such things as ‘Louis XIV was actually the fifteenth King of France named ‘Louis’’, or provided that one could say ‘It turns out that the Evening Star isn’t a star after all’, then the tokens in question are unstructured, stipulative uses of complex designators. (To borrow one of Kripke’s (1972) examples, ‘the United Nations’ is almost always used in an unstructured way – otherwise the designator would designate nothing, except during the ten minutes (or so) every decade that there exists anything that even remotely approaches the relevant descriptive condition.¹⁴)

Henceforth, I will apply the terms ‘atomic’ vs. ‘molecular’ exclusively with reference to expression types, and the terms ‘unstructured’ vs. ‘structured’ exclusively with reference to specific tokens. Given that, the crucial present point is that there can be *unstructured uses of molecular designators*. A use of a molecular designator is structured iff the token is used to designate that which (in the relevant context) satisfies the compositionally determined condition the term semantically expresses; a use of a molecular designator is unstructured iff the token is used stipulatively to designate a specific entity, and the condition its proper parts semantically compose is not criterial in determining its designatum. For the thesis of structure skepticism, the question of structure is not whether the designator can be broken down into otherwise

meaningful proper parts, but rather whether those meaningful proper parts are criterial in determining the designatum of a given token. This is a crucial point, for I will argue that some of the *prima facie* counterexamples to structure skepticism should instead be classified as unstructured uses of molecular designators. (That is, when it comes to which type of designation is at work – i.e., referring or denoting – ‘the Holy Roman Empire’ belongs in the same category with ‘Scott’, not with ‘the author of *Waverley*’.)

To sum up: we start from two fault-lines within the category of designators. The first – i.e., structured vs. unstructured designators – has to do with the operativeness of meaningful proper parts, and the second – i.e., referring vs. denoting expressions – has to do with the semantic relation between designator and designated. The general aim of this paper is to give further grounds in favor of the view that reference is essentially a conventional or stipulative relation, and so “... as soon as one invokes a constructive or compositional procedure for determining the semantical value of an expression, one is no longer engaged in trying to establish reference” (Neale 1993: 104). More generally, I aim to further the grounds in favor of the general view that the lack of meaningful proper parts is the essence of reference.

3. Referential Uses of Denoting Expressions

One considerable case against structure skepticism concerns the phenomenon of referential uses of denoting expressions – and, in particular, referential uses of definite descriptions. Consider, for example:

[3] *The reigning world heavyweight champion* will be on hand to sign autographs.

Since the italicized designator clearly has meaningful proper parts, and given that [3] is at least possibly if not typically used to express an object-dependent proposition, there are grounds for classifying such designators as structured referring expressions.

My goal here is not to develop an original niche within this sprawling debate. Instead, I will briefly motivate, and then subsequently build upon, one of the leading contenders within this debate. Specifically, the Russellian view of denoting expressions offers an independently motivated account of the semantics of sentences like [3] on which, contrary to initial appearances, they pose no tension for structure skepticism. I aim to show that some of the morals of this approach to referential uses of denoting expressions also have clear and illuminating applications to some other *prima facie* cases of structured referring expressions. In particular, the important, general claim that I take the phenomenon of referential uses of denoting expressions to illustrate is this: *any molecular designator that is used referentially (i.e., with the intention to express an object-dependent proposition) is used in an unstructured way*. This claim is at the heart of the present case for structure skepticism; the principle goal of §§3-5 is to justify it.

So, here is a sketch of the Russellian view. Designators of the form ‘the F’ belong in the same semantic category as those of the form ‘an F’ or ‘all Fs’ – i.e., ‘the F’ is a denoting expression, not a device of semantic reference.¹⁵ The fundamental and distinctive Russellian claim about definite descriptions is that utterances of sentences in which they occur semantically express object-independent propositions. Recall [1] and [2] from §2, and compare them with [4]:

[1] A man I met on my hike yesterday gave me a bottle of water.

[2] Alf gave me a bottle of water.

[4] The man I met on my hike yesterday gave me a bottle of water.

Russellians claim that [4] is (almost¹⁶) exactly like [1], in that only a compositionally determined condition is essential to the content of the proposition semantically expressed – i.e., the content

of the proposition stays constant across contexts of evaluation in which distinct individuals, or no individuals, satisfy the relevant compositionally determined condition. (That is, whether we are considering a context in which I met Alf, or Bert, or no one, an utterance of [4] would semantically express exactly the same object-independent proposition.) On this view, the truth-condition of what is semantically expressed by an utterance of [4] is captured by the following first-order formula: $[4^*] \exists x(\forall y(Gy \leftrightarrow y=x) \ \& \ Fx)$.¹⁷

The main challenge to Russellianism concerns the above-described intuitions about cases like [3].¹⁸ It cannot be denied that speakers commonly utter sentences of the form ‘The F is G’ with the intention to express an object-dependent proposition; in such cases, it seems that [4*] is simply not the correct analysis. The Russellian response is that such referential uses of definite descriptions are an instance of the more general phenomenon of referential uses of denoting expressions; which is, in turn, an instance of the more general phenomenon of speaker’s meaning diverging from semantic meaning. First, as Neale (1990: 88) and Bach (2004: 203) explain, all denoting expressions lend themselves to the distinctive kind of non-literal speaker-meaning that Kripke (1977) calls ‘speaker-reference’. However, that an expression can be used to speaker-refer does not entail that it is a device of semantic reference. That latter question rather concerns an expression’s *typical* use $\forall e$, concerns the best all-things-considered account of its context-independent semantic properties. Russellians have given considerable grounds for categorizing definite descriptions as denoting expressions; and it is far from clear that considerations pertaining to speaker-reference undercut or outweigh those grounds.

Now, to be sure, there is a much stronger case for classifying definite descriptions as devices of semantic reference, than there is for any other kind of denoting expression. Definite descriptions especially lend themselves to referential uses, precisely because they semantically

single out exactly one individual. When one wants to express an object-dependent proposition about some unnamed individual, or about an individual whose name is not mutually known among present interlocutors, definite descriptions are often the best means available. Still, there is nothing here that a Russellian must downplay or whitewash. Given the Russellian claim that definite descriptions are denoting expressions whose compositional semantics single out exactly one individual, then it is not at all surprising (let alone inconvenient or embarrassing) that referential uses are “common, standard, regular, systematic, and cross-linguistic” (Neale 2004: 173). The definite description’s one univocal, quantificational semantics is still evident and operative on referential uses.¹⁹ So definite descriptions stand out among denoting expressions as the best tailored for referential uses, but it is far from clear that this does anything to undermine the Russellian’s case.

I have barely scratched the surface of this debate, but that is a sketch of why I think that structure skepticism is safe on this front. Henceforth, I assume that sentences with definite descriptions in the subject-position semantically express object-dependent propositions. When such a sentence is used typically or literally, then speaker meaning and semantic meaning coincide, and this object-independent proposition is the only one meant. Semantic meanings provide a context-independent framework for our creative use; referential uses of definite descriptions are among the most inevitable of non-literal uses.

To consolidate some important points, as well as to anticipate some others, I will briefly develop a couple of examples. First, suppose that we are watching the news (in November, 2007) and at an appropriate point someone utters:

[5] Only the President of the US would try a stunt like that.

Whether the description is used referentially or attributively, either way George W. Bush is the intended designatum. But nonetheless there are differences here – for if the description was used referentially, then one has referred to him and expressed an object-dependent proposition, but if the description was used attributively then one has merely denoted him and expressed an object-independent proposition. The object-dependent proposition is about the audacity of a certain man; the object-independent proposition is about the audacity that uniquely fulfilling a certain office or role would tend to bestow on anyone.

So, how can we tell whether this use is referential or attributive? The conclusive test concerns truth-conditions across contexts of evaluation. One asks the speaker: ‘Suppose that Al Gore were the President of the US in November, 2007; suppose further that Gore would not, but Bush nonetheless would, try a stunt like that. Would what you just asserted be true or false in this scenario?’ If the speaker says ‘true’, then the use is referential; if ‘false’ then attributive. Attributive uses of descriptions are entirely consonant with structure skepticism; our current scrutiny is on the *prima facie* tension which referential uses for structure skepticism.

Focusing on this latter question, then, consider now a variant on a case from Donnellan (1966). Suppose we are in a courtroom in which Jones is on trial for Smith’s murder. The evidence points toward Jones as the perpetrator, there are no other suspects, Jones has confessed, etc. – i.e., you, I, and everyone else believes that Jones, acting alone, murdered Smith. At a certain point, as Jones is behaving erratically, I turn to you and say:

[6] Smith’s murderer is insane.

This is a referential use, and an object-dependent proposition about Jones is intended to be sent and is successfully received. But suppose further that, while Jones is insane, he is also innocent

of this crime. Suppose further that the person who is – unbeknownst to all – the real perpetrator is perfectly sane. Does [6] thereby semantically express a falsehood?

Instead of arguing for a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to this question, I will take each answer in turn, and explain why neither poses a problem for structure skepticism. First, if the answer to the question is ‘yes’, then there is no tension whatever. If [6] expresses a falsehood in this context, despite the fact that a true object-dependent proposition is intended to be sent and successfully received, then the designator is treated as a denoting expression with no constitutive semantic link to the speaker’s object-dependent referential intention. On this option, from a semantic point of view, this use of [6] consists of a garden-variety structured denoting expression just doing its typical thing; though of course from a pragmatic point of view another proposition may be afloat.

On the other hand, if the answer to that question is ‘no’ – i.e., if this utterance of [6] should be understood as semantically expressing something true – then structure skepticism is still on safe ground, though for a different reason. To embrace this option is to hold that, in the case of a referentially used description, the relevant nominals are what Donnellan (1966: 283) calls “inessential” – “merely a device for getting one’s audience to pick out or think of the thing being spoken about, a device which may serve its function even if the [nominal is applied incorrectly]”. If so, then referential uses of descriptions are unstructured uses of molecular designators. (The same holds of [5] – if the speaker says, “I meant to say something about Bush, not about whoever is President”, then the designator is used in an unstructured way.) In this case, a molecular expression is used in an unstructured, stipulative manner, akin to ‘the UN’ or ‘the Holy Roman Empire’. Crucially, this option denies that the designatum is simply that which (in the relevant context) satisfies the compositionally determined condition the term semantically expresses.

Since this option treats the designator as unstructured, in the relevant sense, then structure skepticism is compatible with the expression of an object-dependent proposition. Further, this example illustrates the key point that any molecular designator that is used referentially is used in an unstructured way.

4. Complex Demonstratives

Complex demonstratives (e.g. ‘that duck’, ‘this bald happy rich man’) are another extensively studied *prima facie* counterexample to structure skepticism. It seems that these expressions are at once structured in the relevant sense, and that they ought to be classified as devices of semantic reference. Recently, complex demonstratives have gotten a lot of press, and there are a variety of views on the market (some references are given below).

For those sympathetic to structure skepticism, in general, there are two possible courses of action: either deny that complex demonstratives are referring expressions, or explain why it is that they ought not to be classified as structured designators. The view that complex demonstratives are not referring expressions has its proponents;²⁰ but I have no interest in pursuing that course, and my reason is elementary: i.e., as I see it, complex demonstratives are among the very paradigm cases of devices of semantic reference. The conventional role of a demonstrative, whether complex or not, is to single out a specific individual, in the course of expressing object-dependent propositions. This role is pretty much definitive of semantic reference, the necessary and sufficient condition for club membership.²¹ For those who do not sympathize with this reason, I have no knock-down arguments to offer.²² For those who do, and who also sympathize with structure skepticism, our question is: Ought complex demonstratives to be classified as *structured*, in the relevant sense?

I think that this question should be answered in the negative, on the grounds that complex demonstratives consist of two distinct proper parts: an unstructured demonstrative ('this', 'that') and what Loar (1976, 1991) calls a 'referential qualifier'. Crucially, the referential qualifier is 'inessential', in Donnellan's (1966: 283) sense – i.e., it is “merely a device for getting one's audience to pick out or think of the thing being spoken about, a device which may serve its function even if [it is applied inaccurately]”. Alternatively, in Evans' (1982: 312) terms, the role of the referential qualifier in a complex demonstrative is to “narrow down the range of possible interpretations of the [demonstrative]”.²³ To the extent that a referential qualifier can play this role without being remotely precise or factually accurate, then complex demonstratives are consistent with structure skepticism. For, first, at the level of particular tokens, complex demonstratives are unstructured uses of molecular designators. And, second, at the level of expression-types, complex demonstratives are not themselves referring expressions; rather, they include an unstructured referring expression as a proper part.

To start, here are two considerations which bolster the inessentiality of the referential qualifier.²⁴ The first is the *substitutivity of referential qualifiers* – i.e., in context, one can, in a very clear sense, say exactly the same thing by uttering either of, say:

[7] That sheep has an injured leg.

[8] That lamb has an injured leg.

(That, is, provided that the speaker intends to refer to the same individual in both cases, and is successful in making this intention manifest.) The second I call the *truth-conditional irrelevance of referential qualifiers* – i.e., in context, either [7] or [8] can be used to express something true even if the intended referent is in fact not a sheep or a lamb, as long as the interlocutors take it to so be. Truth-conditional irrelevance entails substitutivity (but not vice versa); both rest on the underlying point that the primary role of the referential qualifier is to help the audience identify

the relevant object. Substitutivity is simply the claim that, in context, distinct candidates may do this equally well; truth-conditional irrelevance is that claim that what is crucial is that the referential qualifier be effective in making the speaker's primary communicative intentions manifest to the audience, not that it be factually accurate. One main goal of this section is to motivate substitutivity and truth-conditional irrelevance.

Toward that end, I endorse Corazza's (2002, 2004) multiple-propositions approach to complex demonstratives.²⁵ Consider an utterance of:

[9] That duck is about to eat your sandwich!

On a multiple-proposition approach, [9] semantically expresses the following two propositions:

[9(i)] That is a duck.

[9(ii)] That is about to eat your sandwich.

[9(ii)] captures the speaker's primary communicative intentions in uttering [9]; the role of [9(i)] is to aid the hearer in identifying the content of those primary intentions. [9(i)] is akin to a subordinate clause, whose aim is to help the audience identify the topic of discourse. On Corazza's (2002: 181-3) view, the truth-conditions of an utterance of [9] are completely exhausted by [9(ii)].

It is this last claim about truth-conditions which distinguishes Corazza's view from similar views. For Corazza, [9] can semantically express something true even if the relevant prospective-sandwich-thief is in fact a swan or a pigeon. When it comes to structure skepticism, herein lies the rub; for, again, the truth-conditional irrelevance of [9(i)] (i.e., of the referential qualifier) entails that complex demonstratives are unstructured uses of molecular designators. So, here are some cases intended to supplement Corazza's (2002, 2004) arguments for truth-conditional irrelevance.

First, consider the following exchange:

[10] What is ‘canary yellow’?

[11] (looking around until ...) Aha! (pointing) That car is canary yellow.

A multiple-proposition theorist characterizes the content expressed by [11] as follows:

[11(i)] That is a car.

[11(ii)] That is canary yellow.

There is reason to hold that [11] can semantically express a truth even if the speaker happens to point at a boat or a tractor, as long as [11(ii)] is true. The semantic role of [11(i)] is to help the hearer identify the speaker’s primary intention. As long as the primary message is successfully sent and received, [11(i)] has done its job. The role of ‘car’ here is clearly subordinate to the speaker’s primary intention; strictly speaking, it is off the semantic record. (Cf. note 23.)

Consider another example²⁶: Suppose a jungle hiking guide and a city-dwelling novice are, out of nowhere, aggressively confronted by a huge snake. The guide says:

[12] Cover your eyes and walk backwards! This *naja nigricollis* is a venom-spitter!

In the second sentence here, the referential qualifier clearly plays just a secondary, supporting semantic role. The hearer need not be at all familiar with the term ‘*naja nigricollis*’ in order to successfully identify the speaker’s communicative intentions. It is the proposition that ‘This is a venom-spitter’ that matters; given the contextual salience of the intended referent, the referential qualifier has no work to do. That is why the inertness of the chosen referential qualifier has no effect on the audience’s ability to grasp the content semantically expressed.

A third example is borrowed from Borg (2000), who employs it toward a different end. Borg takes the following to pose a deep challenge to the claim of truth-conditional irrelevance:

[13] That doctor is no doctor!

Essentially, Borg’s challenge is this:

Premise 1: [13] is clearly a contradiction.

Premise 2: Any view which takes referential qualifiers to be inessential does not classify [13] as a contradiction.

Conclusion: Therefore, any such view is inadequate.

I concede premise 2 but reject premise 1. To the contrary, I take cases along the lines of [13] to be further evidence in favor of truth-conditional irrelevance. There is a huge difference between an utterance of [13] – in which the first occurrence of ‘doctor’ helps the interlocutor to identify the intended referent, and the second occurrence of ‘doctor’ (while expressing the same semantic meaning) fulfills a different, more conventional predicate-role of categorizing or classifying – and an utterance of [14]:

[14] She_i is a doctor, and (at the same time) she_i is not a doctor.

Now, that’s a contradiction.

Given this difference between what is semantically expressed by the rare but still felicitous construction ‘That F is not an F’ and the explicitly contradictory ‘P & ~P’, then, rather than counting against it, these cases provide further evidence in favor of the truth-conditional irrelevance of the referential qualifier. That is, if in general ‘That F is not an F’ does not mean or entail anything of the form ‘P & ~P’, this proves that the referential qualifier (i.e., the first ‘F’) and the conventional predicate (i.e., the second ‘F’) are not both playing the same conventional, classificatory role (even though they both express the same semantic meaning). One way to account for that, which happily also accords with a variety of other data detailed above, is to endorse a multiple-proposition view of complex demonstratives, which holds that the referential qualifier is truth-conditionally irrelevant.

So, to take stock: a multiple-proposition approaches to complex demonstratives is in competition with a variety of other approaches to complex demonstratives, to be weighed against various semantic and pragmatic desiderata. The approach is intrinsically plausible in that, like in

the case of a conventional implicature²⁷, say, there is an essential duality of purpose about complex demonstratives, and (unlike the case of a conversational implicature, for example) the duality is a function of the semantic properties of the expression uttered, independently of any specific features of the context of utterance. Further, when one takes the further step of classifying the referential qualifier as inessential (cf. note 24), then the *prima facie* tension which complex demonstratives pose for structure skepticism dissolves.

On this view, complex demonstratives are not structured designators, in the relevant sense. Even though they have independently meaningful proper parts, their designatum is not a function of the meanings of their proper parts. Something could count as the designatum of a demonstrative even if it is distinct from the expression's semantic meaning; and that makes all the difference for the relevant question of structure. Rather, as in the case of referentially-used descriptions, or descriptions which have grown capital letters, there is something stipulative at work with an utterance of a complex demonstrative, and the speaker's intentions in the context of utterance have to be discerned in order to identify the designatum. (Cf. note 39.)

At the level of expression types, complex demonstratives should be viewed as composed of an unstructured referring expression (i.e., 'this' or 'that') conjoined with a referential qualifier. The device of semantic reference is the demonstrative 'this' or 'that'; the referential qualifier plays the role which Kaplan (1975: 318) characterizes as "contextual factors which help us interpret the actual physical utterance as having a certain content". Thus, there is an intrinsically satisfying account of complex demonstratives which is consistent with structure skepticism.

5. Other Putative Varieties of Structured Referring Expression

Referentially-used definite descriptions and complex demonstratives are by no means the only putative counterexamples to structure skepticism. Day designators (e.g., ‘December 12, 1902’), molecular names (e.g., ‘Willard van Orman Quine’), and descriptions which have grown capital letters (e.g., ‘the Holy Roman Empire’) are three such cases which have already been mentioned. The aim of this section is to survey a few such cases and argue that their proper analysis, too, is consistent with structure skepticism. The central case to be considered is the case of molecular names; for if the conception of what it is to use a term as a name developed below is a cogent one, then this amounts to quite a strong, general reason to think that any molecular designator that is used referentially (i.e., with the intention to express an object-dependent proposition) is used in an unstructured way. This, in turn, would amount to considerable evidence in favor of the structure skeptic’s very strong constitutive connection between reference and structure.

5.1: Boolean referring expressions

There is, on my view, one sort of structured referring expression, which I call ‘Boolean referring expressions’. Although they are both structured designators and referring expressions, in certain senses of these terms, I will explain why I do not take them to contradict structure skepticism, as well as why this concession does not trivialize structure skepticism.

I will use a related example from LaPorte (2000: note 12) to illustrate. Concede for present purposes that unstructured nominal forms of general terms such as ‘bald’, ‘happy’, and ‘human’ are referring expressions. If so, then the complex expression ‘bald happy humans’ is a Boolean referring expression. The term ‘Boolean’ is appropriate because ‘bald happy humans’ is basically the molecular output of a Boolean operation on three atomic referring expressions (i.e., in this case, the operation is simply a function from n kinds to their intersection). I also take such

expressions as King's (2001b) 'day designators' (e.g., 'January 24, 2002')²⁸ and complex numerals (e.g., '33, 627') to be Boolean referring expressions.

A counterexample to structure skepticism would have to involve a "constructive or compositional procedure for determining [reference]" (Neale 1993: 104). So, for example, if definite descriptions can be referring expressions, this would contradict structure skepticism, because determining the designatum of 'the world heavyweight champ', say, involves a constructive or compositional procedure. However, Boolean referring expressions are composed entirely of atomic, non-compositional referring expressions; crucially, we establish the reference of these proper parts first, and then apply any "constructive or compositional procedure". Thus, Boolean referring expressions are rather unlike 'the world heavyweight champ', which involves a very different sort of compositional harmony of expressions from different semantic categories. Boolean referring expressions are not counterexamples to structure skepticism because they merely involve operations on n referring expressions, as opposed to instantiating a *sui generis* compositional kind of reference.²⁹

As for why it is that conceding the category of Boolean referring expressions does not trivialize structure skepticism, making this concession does nothing to mitigate the structure skeptic's burden to defend controversial theses about referential uses of denoting expressions, about non-Boolean referring expressions which seem to be structured, etc. Further, below I will explain why even the likes of 'Willard van Orman Quine' should not be taken to be Boolean referring expressions, thereby bolstering the claim that this present concession does not trivialize the thesis of structure skepticism.

5.2: structure and naming

I will next show that the notion of a proper name, too, is intimately tied up with the relevant notion of structure. Given that proper names are the very paradigm of a referring expression, as proper names are tailored precisely for the storing and transmission of object-dependent information, then these intimate connections between structure and naming constitute considerable motivation in favor of structure skepticism.

As is evidenced by the quote from Russell (1911) cited in §2(ii) to motivate structure skepticism (contrasting ‘Scott’ with ‘the author of *Waverley*’), Russell clearly endorses a tight constitutive connection between structure and naming. Even more starkly:

A name is a simple symbol (i.e., a symbol that does not have any parts that are symbols) ... (Russell 1918: 244)³⁰

For Russell, names essentially lack structure (in the sense of ‘structure’ that is relevant to this broader discussion). One might think that this connection between naming and structure is contingent on some other, more objectionable aspects of Russell’s theory – in particular, his currently unpopular view that many terms that appear to be names are actually disguised descriptions.³¹ However, that would be a mistake. For example, consider Kripke’s response to Donnellan’s (1977) suggestion that even if our ordinary proper names are rigid designators, surely there could be nonrigid names:

My view is that proper names (except perhaps, for some quirky and derivative uses, that are not uses as *names*) are always rigid. ... It would be logically possible to have single words that abbreviated nonrigid definite descriptions, but these would not be *names*. The point is not merely terminological: I mean that such abbreviated nonrigid descriptions would differ in an important semantical feature from (what we call) typical proper names in our actual speech. (1977: note 9).³²

Here Kripke also endorses quite a similar conception of the relation between the notion of a name and the lack of meaningful proper parts. Both Russell and Kripke evidently hold that to use a term as a name is to use it in an unstructured way, as characterized in §2.4. Given that these

two are the pillars of opposing factions within the theory of reference (i.e., descriptivist vs. causal-historical), it carries considerable weight that they share this axiom in common.

What this claim about naming and structure amounts to can be illustrated by considering designators that were originally coined because they express a meaning that is appropriate to their referent, but subsequently the referent ceases to fit (or to best fit) that meaning. Whether such a designator is used as a name depends on what happens once the designatum fails to (best) fit the linguistic meaning. Take, for example, the name ‘Dances with Wolves’. According to the story, a disgraced soldier is posted alone away in the frontier, where he comes to befriend a wolf. Some locals observe the man and the wolf together, singing at the full moon, and dub the man ‘Dances with Wolves’. Now suppose the man and the wolf have a falling out after the name has been in use for some time, and subsequently the man comes to spend all of his time sulking among the sheep. Suppose further that another derelict soldier moves into the region, and takes up with a wolf; and the locals observe this second soldier together with the wolf, dancing and singing the night away. Now the question of whether these speakers use ‘Dances with Wolves’ as a name or as a description can be clearly posed. If they continue to use the name to refer to the first soldier, even though he no longer fits the linguistic meaning of the expression, then they are using ‘Dances with Wolves’ as a semantically unstructured label, and hence as a name. If instead they begin to call the second soldier ‘Dances with Wolves’ (while, perhaps, beginning to call the first soldier ‘Sulks with Sheep’), and if they do this because of the fit between the linguistic meaning of the designators and the antics of the relevant individuals, then these designators are not being used as names, but rather as semantically structured descriptions.

The term ‘Newfoundland’ provides another example. The island it refers to is (next to Greenland) the closest part of North America to Europe, and so it was one of the first parts of

North America to be encountered by European explorers. In sixteenth-century logs and maps, it was explicitly designated by the complex expression ‘the New Found Land’. If these explorers had used the term ‘Newfoundland’ to temporarily designate other newly discovered lands, then the term would not have been used as a proper name. Since they did not, since only Newfoundland was called ‘Newfoundland’ even after other lands were newly found, the term is used as a semantically unstructured proper name. (Many surnames exhibit a similar, related phenomenon – e.g., to be a Baker, it is neither necessary nor sufficient to be a baker.)³³

If a term is used to designate whatever best fits its linguistic meaning – perhaps this individual in this context, perhaps other individuals in other contexts – then it is not used as a name. This is a fundamental difference between names and descriptions: even though descriptions can be used referentially, and even if some (such as ‘the champ’ or ‘the Pope’) seem to be used referentially more often or more typically than used attributively, nonetheless descriptions are unlike names in that they express a compositionally determined condition as their linguistic meaning. In the other direction, even though such names as ‘Rolling Stones’ or ‘Detroit Lions’ are chosen (in part) for their evocative powers, they are subsequently typically used as names, because the designatum of an utterance of the term is not a matter of whom or what best suits or fits what is expressed or evoked by the term.

Also, the fact that people tend to have syntactically complex, molecular names – say, ‘Willard van Orman Quine’ – does not undermine the view that the lack of semantic structure is essential to names. The kind of molecular complexity exhibited by ordinary names is clearly quite different from the compositional structure at work in, say, ‘Ohio’s most accomplished philosopher’. Crucially, at any context of evaluation, determining which individual counts as the designatum of ‘Willard van Orman Quine’ is not a matter of figuring out who best fits the

compositionally determined condition semantically expressed by its constituent bits.³⁴ The key difference here is that each of the parts of ‘Willard van Orman Quine’ is itself a (stipulative, unstructured) name; their sum is the sort of complex, molecular name that prevails in most contemporary cultures. In contrast, structured designators involve a compositional harmony of expressions from different syntactic and semantic categories, the sum of which is an identifying condition.³⁵

We are now in a position to return to a thread left dangling above – i.e., the important differences between molecular proper names like ‘Willard van Orman Quine’ or ‘Louis XIV’ and Boolean referring expressions like ‘bald-happy-humans’ or ‘January 24, 2002’. Considered as a whole, molecular names are still purely stipulative; in contrast, even though the basic bits of Boolean referring expressions are stipulative, as a unit they are not. Compare:

[15] It could turn out that Louis XIV was not in fact the fourteenth French King named ‘Louis’.

[16] It could turn out that Willard van Orman Quine was never so-named. (e.g., if two infants were switched after having been named, and the mistake was never detected)

[17#] It could turn out that January 24 is not in January.

[18#] It could turn out that bald happy humans are not humans.

I take it that while [15] and [16] are far-fetched, nonetheless they are intelligible, coherent sentences. Not so, though, for [17#] and [18#], in which case the embedded sentences are self-contradictory. It is, to say the least, much harder to identify a consistent reading of either of these. This, then, is a deep and central difference between Boolean referring expressions and molecular proper names. Only the basic bits of Boolean referring expressions are stipulative, but the entire expression itself is not. In contrast, even considered as a whole, molecular names are stipulatively linked to specific designata.

To sum up: Proper names are typically taken to be the paradigm case of a referring expression, since names are explicitly tailored for the expression of object-dependent

propositions.³⁶ Therefore, this case in favor of the claim that lack of structure is essential to naming conventions is a very strong and quite general reason in favor of structure skepticism. It grounds why referential uses of denoting expressions and complex demonstratives should be understood as unstructured uses of structured designators – i.e., a molecular designator is used referentially (i.e., to express object-dependent information) only to the extent to which structure (in the relevant sense) is irrelevant. This point also underlies some deep but controversial claims about proper names, such as:

Proper names are attached to the objects themselves, and are not dependent on the continuance of any attribute of the object. (Mill 1843: 20)

Proper names ... permit us to entertain a separation in language of the object under discussion from its properties. (Marcus 1975: 36)³⁷

To denote an individual is to specify it indirectly, via the satisfaction of certain concepts; reference is, in contrast, relatively direct and immediate. So, insofar as the relevant designator is used in the stipulative, unstructured way characteristic of naming conventions, then reference by name *per se* is independent of any and all particular modes of presentation of the designatum.³⁸

5.3: defining the set of structured referring expressions

As for types of designator which should be classified as devices of semantic reference, this list will include as *ab initio* members proper names, demonstratives, indexicals, and unstructured nominal forms of general terms.³⁹ Boolean referring expressions and molecular names also belong on this list, but they are in a fairly clear sense derivative. Likewise for complex demonstratives – on balance, I favor the view that the only device of semantic reference in this case is the bare demonstrative ‘this’ or ‘that’.

Crucially, no expressions which are used in a structured way appear on this list of devices of semantic reference. Regardless of the statistical frequency of their being used with an object-

dependent referential intention, because they semantically express a compositionally determined condition whose conventional semantic role is to determine their designata, no structured determiner or quantifier phrase is a device of semantic reference. Rather, they are tailored for the sort of designation which Russell calls ‘denoting’, and their compositional, denotative semantic properties are operative whether they are used referentially or attributively. (Cf. note 19.)

As for speaker reference, tokens of virtually any expression could be a device of speaker-reference. Crucially, though, any structured expression which meets this condition – including especially any denoting expression – is thereby used in an unstructured way.

6. Conclusion

Central among the many groundbreaking semantic and logical advances made by Frege (1879) is his way of framing the distinction between information about something in particular vs. information about general concepts or properties.⁴⁰ Russell (1905) takes another great step forward, arguing that whether a proposition is object-dependent is not simply a question of the number of individuals it is about, because an object-independent proposition can be about exactly one individual. Rather, according to Russell, the object-dependent/object-independent divide is a question of which semantic mechanism is at work – i.e., referring vs. denoting.

The aim of this paper is to describe, and to further develop, another significant advance down this avenue: namely, that lack of structure is a part of the essence of reference. Reference is a conventional, stipulative relation; meaningful proper parts need not apply. Referring expressions exist expressly for the purpose of tracking (the states and doings of) specific individuals, by means of semantically expressing object-dependent information. As for what it

takes to execute this conventional, stipulative relation of reference, for the reasons given herein, the lack of meaningful proper parts seems to be the key condition.

I have urged that the relevant notion of structure is a fundamentally important concept in the theory of reference. Diverse strands within the study of language converge toward this view, and any *prima facie* counterexamples admit of satisfactory explanation. The notion of semantic structure provides the basis of a simple, comprehensive view which not only accords with but grounds various important points about language and thought. The result is a nice instance of Rawlsian reflective equilibrium – i.e., the intrinsic merits of the relevant accounts of complex demonstratives, molecular names, etc., lends further credence to the general notion of structure skepticism; and every single piece of evidence marshaled in favor of the general notion of structure skepticism further grounds a preference for accounts of particular phenomena that accords with structure skepticism.

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¹ Russell's term 'denoting' may seem a bit dated. (Cf. Kaplan (2005: 940): "Linguists call these phrases *determiner phrases* because of their syntactic structure; they are constructed from *determiners*. Russell called them *denoting phrases* because of their semantical property; they are phrases that denote.") Following the philosophical tradition, and as my interests partly involve Russellian exegesis, I will stick with Russell's term.

² Neale has returned to this notion, at least in passing, several times – cf., e.g., (1994: 790-4, 820-3), (1999: 61-3), (2007: *passim*); though in no case does he offer a comprehensive defense. Dever (2001) also explicitly works to further the cause of structure skepticism. Bach (1987: Parts 1-2) and Recanati (1993: Part 1) at least implicitly espouse this thesis, and in any case further develop its grounds. Cf. especially Neale (1993: 89-91, 101-4; 1994: 820-3) and Dever (2001: 272-4) for articulations of the way in which structure skepticism is a case of mutual illumination between work in theoretical syntax, in the formal semantics of natural language, and in philosophical logic. Several very different lines of thought, from diverse corners of the study of language, can be seen as converging towards this conception of the relation between reference and structure.

³ Cf., e.g., Recanati (2004), Szabo, ed. (2005b) for an overview of this terrain.

⁴ Recanati (2004) presses the case that the old-school notion of literal meaning does not play a psychologically realized role in various sorts of communicative interactions; but as Bach (2007) urges, that does not undermine its cogency or worth in a rational reconstruction, or in a theoretical description of semantic competence.

⁵ For example, here are two illustrative cases in which the notion of structure plays a major role. First, considerations of structure are essential to Soames' (2002: Ch.10) argument that, even though 'water' and 'H₂O' have the same extension across possible worlds, the two terms nonetheless have different semantic contents. (That issue, in turn, is related to various debates within epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of science.) Second, consider Bach's (2004: 194) claim that "given the distinction between denotation and reference, the 'directly' in Kaplan's 'directly referential' is redundant, and 'indirectly referential' is an oxymoron". Bach's denial of indirect reference is rather closely related to the thesis of structure skepticism.

⁶ I qualify with 'more or less' because some might insist that non-paradigm cases like gerunds (e.g., '*Swimming* is good exercise') or infinitives (e.g., '*To err* is human') should not be classified as designators. I do not see that anything substantive hangs on the question of whether gerunds or infinitives ought to be classified as designators. (For what it is worth, I think that the central claims defended in this paper also apply with equal force to these (and other) non-paradigm cases.) Neale tends to talk in terms of 'NPs', not 'designators'. Over the range of the paradigm cases – i.e., proper names, demonstratives, indexicals, nominal forms of general terms, and denoting expressions (including especially definite and indefinite descriptions) – Kripke's 'designator' is the philosophical equivalent of the linguists' 'NP'. However, 'NP' is a more precise term: given that an NP is a phrase headed by a noun, gerunds and infinitives are not NPs.

⁷ I leave open the possibility that such things as 'Help' or 'Yes' be counted as sentences.

⁸ As I use the terms 'object-dependent'/'object-independent', they mark a contrast that holds in common for any tenable view of the nature of propositions – be it neo-Fregean, neo-Russellian, the Lewis-Stalnaker view of propositions as unstructured sets of worlds, etc. 'I am fond of dogs' expresses an object-dependent proposition, in that this proposition is essentially about a certain, specific individual. In contrast, 'Some cats are fond of dogs' expresses an object-independent proposition, in that this proposition essentially concerns only quantificational relations among concepts, not any specific individuals – i.e., the content of the proposition stays constant across situations in which distinct cats, or no cats, are fond of dogs. A proposition is object-dependent iff its truth-condition essentially involves a specific individual, and object-independent iff its truth-condition does not essentially involve any specific individual.

⁹ This list constitutes a departure from Russell. (For instance, Russell (1911) argues that one can only refer to the sense data and universals with which one is acquainted.) While I follow Russell in giving central importance to the referring-denoting distinction, I (along with everyone else) reject Russell's strict notion of acquaintance as a necessary condition for reference.

¹⁰ Compare Russell's (1919: 279) lucid discussion of the distinctions between utterances of "I met Jones" vs. "I met a man", even in a context in which both are made true by the very same event of having met Jones.

¹¹ On Russell's (1911, 1918) view, some of the grounds for this semantic bifurcation come from the hypothesis that it lines up neatly with the epistemic distinction between knowledge by description vs. knowledge by acquaintance. It is now generally conceded that semantics and epistemology should not be expected to march in lock-step like this. In any case, no such exact correspondence between semantics and epistemology is a part of the structure skepticism of the other authors mentioned in §1, or of the views defended in this paper.

¹² Cf. Grice (1989). For simplicity, I ignore such complications as ambiguity and indexicality.

¹³ To illustrate briefly: As will be discussed in §5, I hold that, *qua* expression-types, proper names are devices of semantic reference, because they are tailored for the expression of object-dependent information; but nonetheless, proper names admit of a variety of other sorts of non-typical uses. As will be discussed in §3, I hold that tokens of a denoting expression can be used referentially (i.e., with the intention of expressing object-dependent information), while still the expression is not a device of semantic reference. The important point for now is not that these claims are true, but merely that they are consistent with Neale's insistence that a plausible theory of interpretation has to derive semantic reference from speaker's reference, in terms of regularities over intentions.

¹⁴ Cf. Kripke (2005: 1007) for further discussion of this phenomenon of expressions (like Mill’s ‘Dartmouth’ or ‘the UN’) “which may appear to have parts that contribute to the semantics of the whole, but do not.”

¹⁵ Cf. Russell (1905, 1919, 1959). Important developments and refinements to the Russellian view are made by Grice (1989), Kripke (1977), and Neale (1990). See Neale (2004) for a thorough discussion of the development of the Russellian view, and see Bach (2004) and Neale (2007) for current defenses of it. (I should note that Neale (2004) qualifies his (1990) view, in light of developments mentioned in note 18.)

¹⁶ The canonical view is that [4] and [1] differ in that [4] entails that I only met one man yesterday on my hike, but [1] does not. For present purposes, I will persist with this assumption, but cf. Szabo (2005a) for critical discussion.

¹⁷ Following Neale (1993: 99-101; 2004: *passim*), it is now common to see definite descriptions treated as restricted quantifiers, and thus the LF of [4] to be represented as follows:

[4**] (the_x: Fx) x is G

This move brings with it some important refinements. For one thing, the domain over which a restricted quantifier ranges is not the entire universe, but rather some more or less specific contextually salient set. (For example, provided that sentences like ‘*There is no coffee left*’ or ‘*Everyone has arrived*’ can semantically express truths, those italicized expressions are restricted quantifiers. The same point will hold of ‘*The car broke*’.) For another, [4**] constitutes much less of a departure from the surface syntax of [4] than does [4*].

¹⁸ Seminal sources of the anti-Russellian case include Strawson (1950) and Donnellan (1966). Recent developments that have been thought to bolster the anti-Russellian case include work on: (i) the ‘argument from convention’, (ii) ‘the argument from anaphora’, and (iii) the question of ‘incomplete’ or ‘improper’ descriptions (cf. Neale (2004) for a good survey of these issues). (In my opinion, Bach (2004) gives a satisfactory Russellian reply to the argument from convention, and Neale (2004) accommodates the argument from anaphora; but the question of incompleteness turns on the more general – and currently intractable – problem of quantifier domain restriction.) Cf. Schiffer (2005) for current arguments for anti-Russellianism.

¹⁹ Cf. Bach (2004: 201-4). Note also Bach’s discussion at pp. 203, 222 of the exact senses in which referential uses of descriptions should be categorized as non-literal. Note also that Russellians are also well-equipped to handle predicative uses of definite descriptions – cf. Neale (2007: 14) “Part of the beauty of Russell’s theory may be that it explains why acts of describing ... are like acts of referring in some respects but like acts of predicating in others”.

²⁰ Cf. Neale (1993), Lepore and Ludwig (2000), King (2001a).

²¹ Thus, my view is that ‘This/that F is G’ and ‘The F is G’ belong in different semantic categories, despite the fact that, in many contexts, speakers might feel that such pairs are virtually synonymous. The intuition of synonymy is, in my view, accommodated by the authors cited in note 15. As for the key difference between these constructions, consider Neale (1999: 72): “... it is part of the meaning of ‘that’ that the speaker has in mind some object or other that the hearer is meant to identify; it is part of the meaning of ‘the’ that the speaker *may* have such an object in mind.” That is to say, ‘that’ is a device of semantic reference, whereas ‘the’ is well-fitted for speaker-reference.

²² Cf. Borg (2000), Dever (2001) and Corazza (2003) for counters to arguments that complex demonstratives must be treated as quantifiers.

²³ Cf. Kaplan (1975: 320): “...some or all of the [expressions] used in an utterance should not be considered part of the content of what is said but should rather be thought of as contextual factors which help us interpret the actual physical utterance as having a certain content”.

²⁴ Others who have endorsed the thesis that the nominal in a complex demonstrative is inessential include Schiffer (1981), Corazza (2002), and, more tentatively, Larson and Segal (1995: 218). (As mentioned, I find motivation for this thesis in the writings of Evans, Loar, and Kaplan; though, as far as I know, none of them explicitly endorses it.) While I personally find the inessentiality thesis to be intrinsically satisfying, for the reasons outlined in this section, I should point out that it is quite controversial. For example, Richard (1993), Borg (2000), and Glanzberg and Siegel

(2006) all reject this thesis. Cf. Dever (2001) for confluent arguments that complex demonstratives are consistent with structure skepticism which do not rely on this controversial inessentiality thesis.

²⁵ Richard (1993), Neale (1999), and Dever (2001) have also developed ‘multiple-proposition’ views of complex demonstratives. Other applications of the multiple-proposition approach are developed Bach (1999), Neale (1999), Perry (2001), Corazza (2004), and Potts (2005).

²⁶ The following example is a slightly modified version of an encounter I read about in *The Globe and Mail*’s ‘Worst Travel Stories of the Year 2005’.

²⁷ Cf. Bach (1999), Neale (1999), and Potts (2005) for multiple-proposition approaches to conventional implicatures.

²⁸ King (2001b) argues that day designators are neither (quantificational) denoting nor (rigid) referring expressions. I disagree with King’s arguments at several points. For starters, his argument that month designators (e.g., ‘January’) are count nouns rather than proper names (pp. 291-2) is rather weak, as all of the evidence he amasses (e.g., ‘I spent many Januarys at Squaw Valley’, ‘It was a pleasant July’) also holds true of ordinary proper names (e.g., ‘Every Nathan I have previously met was a jerk, but he is a nice Nathan’). Secondly, King’s argument that day designators are nonrigid is based largely on the historical contingencies in the evolution of our time-measuring and calendar conventions, and on the metaphysical complications attendant on the fact that the earth’s rotation is not uniform (cf., e.g., p.296, p.323). Cf. Sullivan (2007) for reasons against thinking that either of these kinds of considerations is relevant to the question of rigidity. Given the complications elaborated by King, it is difficult to individuate exactly what it is that day designators designate. But vague boundaries are no barrier to rigidity – as the cases of ‘the Sahara’ or even ‘tiger’ suffice to demonstrate.

²⁹ There will obviously be lots of different sorts of Boolean constructions, as just the two cases of ‘December 12, 1902’ and ‘33, 627’ illustrate. Day designators are ordered triples – {month, day, year} – where each parameter only admits of a distinct and quite limited class of values; whereas Arabic numerals are ordered n -tuples, for any non-negative integer n , where each parameter admits of the same ten possible values. While even these are considerably more complex than ‘bald-happy-humans’, I take it that the compositional rules involved in determining the reference of the whole are rather straightforward. Presumably, this would hold true for any comprehensible Boolean referring expression.

³⁰ Other germane passages from Russell, on this matter, include the (1911: 253) discussion of ‘Bismarck’ (and the “direct use” which the name “always wishes to have”) and of ‘Socrates’ (1918: 201).

31 “[B]eing used as descriptions ... is a way in which names are frequently used in practice, and there will, as a rule, be nothing in the phraseology to show whether they are being used in this way or as names.” (1919: 284)

³² See also Kripke’s (1972: 102) discussions of the necessary *a posteriori* status of ‘Hesperus is Phosphorus’, in which he is prone to invoke such conditions as ‘If we ... really use ‘Phosphorus’ as a name ...’.

³³ The present point can also be made using a descriptive name. To borrow Evans’ example, suppose the name ‘Julius’ is introduced to designate whoever invented the zip. Suppose we subsequently become convinced as to Julius’ identity – say, we believe that Julius was a Scottish tailor who introduced several clothing innovations in the last decade of the nineteenth century. All is well for a while, years pass with this tailor’s place in history acknowledged, until we discover that we were mistaken, that someone else in fact invented the zip. Now the question of whether we were using ‘Julius’ as a name or, rather, as shorthand for a description, comes to this: to say that ‘Julius did not invent the zip, after all’, is to use ‘Julius’ as a name, while to say that ‘It turns out that someone else is Julius’ is to use Julius not as an unstructured name but as a shorthand for a structured description.

³⁴ Searle (1983), among others, makes much of the point that there could be naming conventions in which each name is associated with a unique reference-determining condition – so that a competent speaker could gloss a uniquely identifying condition from an unfamiliar name. Well, sure, this is possible; but apart from a small handful of examples (e.g., ‘Louis XIV’, ‘29th St.’), it is not a widely plausible conjecture about our actual naming practices. Second, I think that these examples are unstructured uses of molecular designators anyway. (It is intelligible to say

that ‘Louis XIV was actually the fifteenth King of France named “Louis”’, and an ambitious construction project which eradicated the whole of 28th St. would not thereby change the names of all of the streets to the north of it.) For the reasons given in the text, I think that the cases Searle focuses on “differ in an important semantical feature from (what we call) typical proper names in our actual speech” (Kripke 1977: note 9).

³⁵ Recall the quotes from Russell (1911) and Kaplan (1968), cited in §2.2. The present point is that this contrast holds just as surely between say, ‘Willard van Orman Quine’ vs. ‘Ohio’s most accomplished philosopher’. Unlike the latter, the former does not express a compositionally determined identifying condition. (Compare: (i) two people disagree over whether ‘Willard van Orman Quine’ designates α or β , with (ii) two people disagree over whether ‘Ohio’s most accomplished philosopher’ designates α or β . These would be rather different kinds of debates.)

³⁶ Of course, there are a wide variety of types of uses of names, including for example predicative uses and attributive uses. My claim here is that the typical use of a proper name is to refer and express object-dependent information. The question of empty names is, as far as I can tell, not directly relevant to the present discussion. As long as ‘Vulcan’, say, is used with the *intention* to designate a specific individual, then it is used in an unstructured way. A wide range of options seems to me to be open to the structure skeptic, when it comes to how to handle the semantics of such cases (e.g., sentences containing empty names express ‘gappy propositions’ (cf. Salmon (1998)), speakers using sentences containing empty names try, but fail, to express object-dependent propositions (cf. Evans (1982)), etc.). Therefore, empty names pose no distinctive challenge to structure skepticism.

³⁷ Strictly speaking, given the phenomenon of empty names, the Mill excerpt should be amended to “... are *intended to be* attached ...”, and the Marcus excerpt should be amended to “... of the *putative* object under discussion ...”.

³⁸ This should not be taken to imply or preclude any particular views on the semantics of propositional attitudes. Notoriously, a comprehensive account of the semantics of the attitudes must be sensitive to more than just considerations about reference.

³⁹ Not much has been said here about either indexicals or nominal forms of kind terms. Cf. Sullivan (2007) for justification of the present take on nominal forms of kind terms. In taking indexicals to be unstructured referring expressions, I am not straying from the contemporary Kaplan-Perry orthodoxy. (Note that while Perry (2001) argues that indexicals belong in an intermediate category between names and descriptions, he by no means denies that indexicals are referring expressions, in the present sense of the term – which has to do with semantically expressing object-dependent propositions.)

One might think that indexicals pose more of a complication for my view than I here let on, on the grounds that they are clearly referring expressions, but yet not obviously amenable to my characterization of reference as ‘a conventional, stipulative relation’. ‘She’, for example, has a character, and there is nothing stipulative about it. However, to the contrary, cf., e.g., Neale (2005: 196-204) or Schiffer (2005: 1141-3) on the difference between the character of an indexical ‘constraining’ vs. ‘determining’ reference. To illustrate, even if there are six females in the room, I can still semantically express an object-dependent proposition about exactly one of them by uttering ‘She is tall’. The character of ‘she’ tells my interlocutors that (assuming that I am speaking literally) no males or inanimate objects are my intended referent, but it does not determine a designatum. Ultimately, ‘she’ is rather like ‘this’ or ‘Betty’; for in the case of any of these unstructured referring expressions it is the speaker’s stipulative object-dependent referential intention that grounds the connection between the token uttered and its designatum.

⁴⁰ Frege (1879: Ch. 1, §9): “Let me warn here against an illusion to which the use of language easily gives rise. If we compare the two propositions:

The number 20 can be represented as the sum of four squares.

Every even number can be represented as the sum of four squares.

it appears possible to consider ‘being representable as the sum of four squares’ as a function whose argument is ‘the number 20’ one time, and ‘every positive integer’ the other time. We can discern the error of this view from the observation that ‘the number 20’ and ‘every positive integer’ are not concepts of the same rank. ... The expression ‘every positive integer’ by itself, unlike ‘the number 20, yields no independent idea; it acquires a sense only in the context of a sentence.”