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2 **Semantic intuitions, conceptual analysis,**
3 **and cross-cultural variation**

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7 **Abstract** While philosophers of language have traditionally relied upon their
8 intuitions about cases when developing theories of reference, this methodology has
9 recently been attacked on the grounds that intuitions about reference, far from being
10 universal, show significant cultural variation, thus undermining their relevance for
11 semantic theory. I'll attempt to demonstrate that (1) such criticisms do not, in fact,
12 undermine the traditional philosophical methodology, and (2) our underlying intu-
13 tions about the nature of reference may be more universal than the authors suppose.

14 **Keywords** Experimental philosophy · Language · Intuitions · Conceptual analysis
15

16 **1 Introduction**

17 While philosophers of language have traditionally relied upon their intuitions about
18 cases when developing theories of reference, this methodology has recently faced a
19 number of challenges. Some have argued that semantic externalism gives us
20 particularly *philosophical* reasons to worry about the value of our intuitions about
21 reference,¹ but a specifically *empirical* attack on the use of intuitions in the theory of
22 reference has recently been developed by Edouard Machery, Ron Mallon, Shaun
23 Nichols, Stephen Stich (hereafter “MMNS”).² According to these authors, the
24 standard philosophical methodology presupposes that philosophers’ intuitions about
25 their thought experiments are (more or less) universally shared, and that this
26 universality is what underwrites the assumption that their intuitions about reference

1FL01 ¹ Cappelan and Winblad (1999). (For a response to this line of attack, see Jackman 2005).

2FL01 ² Machery et al. (2004).

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27 reflect the nature of reference itself (rather than simply philosophers' idiosyncratic
 28 conception of it). MMNS then purport to show that intuitions about reference, far
 29 from being universal, show significant cultural variation, thus undermining their
 30 relevance for semantic theory.

31 In what follows, I'll present MMNS's arguments, and then attempt to
 32 demonstrate that they do not, in fact, undermine the traditional philosophical
 33 methodology to the extent that they suggest. Further, I'll argue that a single account
 34 of reference can accommodate the culturally variable intuitions that MMNS point to
 35 without having to treat either culture's intuitions as mistaken.³ That said, this
 36 defense of the role of intuitions in philosophy may not be as robust as some might
 37 hope, since it involves two important assumptions/concessions. First of all, the
 38 explanation for why intuitions remain relevant in philosophical inquiry will turn out
 39 to presuppose a degree of 'constructivism' about the topics that these intuitions are
 40 about. While, I'm independently sympathetic with such constructivist views, it
 41 seems clear that both critics and defenders of the use of intuitions often presuppose a
 42 more straightforwardly 'realistic' attitude towards the semantic questions that these
 43 intuitions are supposed to be about. Secondly, the reliability of our semantic
 44 intuitions will turn out not to obviate the importance of cross-linguistic data when
 45 trying to develop an adequate semantic theory. Since it is this defense of the
 46 relevance of empirical studies, not their criticism of intuitions themselves, that I
 47 take to be at the heart of MMNS's paper, I don't think that this defense of intuitions
 48 is ultimately contrary to the spirit of writers engaged in "experimental philosophy".

49 2 Semantic intuitions and cultural variation

50 MMNS focus on our intuitions about how proper names pick out their reference, and
 51 they present the 'descriptivist' and 'causal/historical' views as the two primary
 52 competing accounts in this area. They characterize the two views as follows:

53 2.1 The descriptivist view of reference

54 **D1** Competent speakers associate a *description* with every proper name. This
 55 description specifies a set of properties.

56 **D2** An object is the referent of a proper name if and only if it *uniquely or best*
 57 *satisfies* the description associated with it. An object uniquely satisfies a
 58 description when the description is true of it and only it. If no object entirely
 59 satisfies the description, many philosophers claim that the proper name refers
 60 to the unique individual that satisfies most of the description (Searle 1958;

3FL01 ³ MMNS do not go into much detail about just what they take "intuitions" to be, and a similar lack of
 3FL02 concern will be shown here. The question we are all focusing on is whether philosophers judgments about
 3FL03 various thought experiments (the so-called "method of cases") should be allowed to play a central role in
 3FL04 philosophical inquiry. Whether such judgments are properly seen as part of a psychosocially/
 3FL05 epistemically natural kind that is properly called "intuition" is a less central concern. (Indeed, I suspect
 3FL06 that "intuition" does not pick out such a unified or relevant kind).

61 Lewis (1970). If the description is not satisfied at all or if many individuals
62 satisfy it, the name does not refer.

63 2.2 The causal-historical view

64 **C1** A name is introduced into a linguistic community for the purpose of referring
65 to an individual. It continues to refer to that individual as long as its uses are
66 linked to the individual *via a causal chain* of successive users: every user of
67 the name acquired it from another user, who acquired it in turn from someone
68 else, and so on, up to the first user who introduced the name to refer to a
69 specific individual.

70 **C2** Speakers may associate descriptions with names. After a name is introduced,
71 the associated description *does not play any role* in the fixation of the referent.
72 The referent may *entirely* fail to satisfy the description.⁴

73 As MMNS note, philosophers have moved away from descriptivist theories and
74 towards causal/historical ones because the latter seemed to fit better with our
75 intuitions about scenarios such as Kripke's well-known 'Gödel' case, in which we
76 are asked to imagine that the description typically associated with the name (say,
77 "discoverer of the incompleteness of arithmetic") is entirely false of the man whose
78 friends and colleagues call "Gödel" (person *a*), and true of a different individual
79 (person *b*), whose friends and family all refer to as "Schmidt". (As it turns out, *a*
80 stole *b*'s manuscript and took the credit for it). Descriptivism seems to entail that
81 our use of "Gödel" would refer to *b* in such a case, while the causal-historical view
82 would suggest that the name would refer to *a*. Kripke's intuition, which is shared by
83 most philosophers, is that we would be referring to *a* in such a case, so our intuitions
84 seem to support the causal-historical over the descriptive view.⁵

85 Not only do most philosophers share Kripke's intuition about the Gödel case, but
86 they also presuppose that such intuitions are (more-or-less) universal. Consequently,
87 they are seen as a "data point" that any theory of reference must accommodate.
88 Indeed, as MMNS note, most critics of the causal theory still accept the standard
89 judgments about the Gödel case; they just insist that they can be explained within a
90 descriptivist framework.⁶ It would thus seem to be a serious problem if, rather than
91 being universal, these intuitions varied systematically from one group to another.
92 Such a result "would raise questions about whose intuitions are going to count,
93 putting in jeopardy philosophers' methodology."⁷ Unfortunately for the armchair
94 philosopher, the possibility that our semantic intuitions show such cultural variation
95 is a very live one.

4FL01 ⁴ MMNS, pp. B2–B3.

5FL01 ⁵ See Kripke (1972/1980, pp. 83–84).

6FL01 ⁶ MMNS, p. B3. They give as examples of this, Evans (1973, 1982) and Jackson (1998). For another
6FL02 instance of this, see Searle (1983).

7FL01 ⁷ MMNS, p. B4.

96 Just as empirical investigation has shown initially surprising variation in our
 97 ethical and aesthetic intuitions, recent work in cultural psychology gives us reason
 98 to have doubts about the universality of our semantic intuitions as well. In
 99 particular, there is evidence of large and systematic differences between East Asians
 100 and Westerners on (1) basic cognitive processes such as perception, attention and
 101 memory, (2) how they describe, predict and explain events, (3) the way they
 102 categorize objects, and (4) the way they revise beliefs in the face of new arguments
 103 and evidence.⁸ As MMNS put it:

104 According to Nisbett and his colleagues, the differences between [East
 105 Asians] and [Westerners] “can be loosely grouped together under the
 106 heading of holistic vs. analytic thought.” Holistic thought, which predominates
 107 among East Asians, is characterized as “involving an orientation to
 108 the context or field as a whole, including attention to relationships between a
 109 focal object and the field, and a preference for explaining and predicting
 110 events on the basis of such relationships.” Analytic thought, the prevailing
 111 pattern among Westerners, is characterized as “involving detachment of the
 112 object from its context, a tendency to focus on attributes of the object in
 113 order to assign it to categories, and a preference for using rules about the
 114 categories to explain and predict the object’s behavior” (Nisbett et al. 2001,
 115 293)... One range of findings is particularly significant... The cross-cultural
 116 work indicates that [East Asians] are more inclined than [Westerners] to
 117 make categorical judgments on the basis of similarity; [Westerners], on the
 118 other hand, are more disposed to focus on causation in describing the world
 119 and classifying things. (MMNS p. B5)

120 These facts about the difference in ‘cognitive style’ between East Asians and
 121 Westerners, particularly the Western preference for causation-based judgments, lead
 122 MMNS to predict that “when presented with Kripke-style thought experiments,
 123 *Westerners would be more likely to respond in accordance with causal-historical*
 124 *accounts of reference, while East Asians would be more likely to respond in*
 125 *accordance with descriptivist accounts of reference.*”⁹

126 To test their hypothesis MMNS set up an experiment with 40 undergraduates at
 127 Rutgers University and 42 undergraduates from the University of Hong Kong.¹⁰ The
 128 participants were presented with 4 probes, two of which were modeled on Kripke’s
 129 Gödel case (i.e., the descriptions associated with a name pick out the ‘wrong’
 130 person), and two were modeled on Kripke’s Jonah case (i.e., the descriptions
 131 associated with a name—in this case the biblical figure who was swallowed by a
 132 whale—pick out no one at all). One of each type of probes used names and

8FL01 ⁸ See Nisbett et al (2001), Nisbett (2003), Norenzayan et al. (2002) and Watanabe (1998, 1999).

9FL01 ⁹ MMNS, p. B5 (italics theirs, but contractions for “Westerner” and “East Asian” removed).

10FL01 ¹⁰ They note: “The University of Hong Kong is an English speaking university in Hong Kong, and the
 10FL02 participants were all fluent speakers of English. A standard demographics instrument was used to
 10FL03 determine whether participants were Western or Chinese.” (MMNS, p. B6).

133 situations that were familiar to the Chinese participants, while the other used names
 134 and situations more familiar to the American participants.¹¹

135 The result of the two ‘Gödel’ probes partially supported MMNS’s hypothesis.
 136 Answers consonant with causal-historical accounts of reference were given a score
 137 of 1, and answers consonant with the descriptive account of reference were given a
 138 score of 0. The scores were then summed, so the cumulative score could range from
 139 0 to 2. Means and standard deviation (in parentheses) for summary scores were as
 140 follows.

141 **Gödel cases**

142 Western participants: 1.13 (.88)

143 Chinese participants: .63 (.84)

144 While MMNS recognize that one can only draw conclusions tentatively from such a
 145 limited range of data, they take this experiment to give at least *prima facie* evidence for
 146 some significant (meta) philosophical conclusions. The two sets of responses to the
 147 Gödel case seem to show not only that our intuitions about reference are culturally
 148 variable, but also that in the ‘Western’ sample, the ‘causal’ intuition was *far* from
 149 universal. Indeed, the high standard deviation for both groups suggests that semantic
 150 intuitions vary considerably *within* cultural groups, so even without evidence of inter-
 151 cultural variation, the surprising amount of intra-cultural variation is itself enough to
 152 put the suggestion that philosophers’ semantic intuitions are ‘universal’ in jeopardy.
 153 The existence of such variation seems to force upon us the question of “whose
 154 intuitions are going to count?”¹² How then, should the philosopher who relies on
 155 semantic intuitions still take them to be probative in the face of such data?

156 **3 Three types of semantic theory**

157 Before answering this question, we need to first answer the larger question of what
 158 *sort* of theory we understand a semantic theory to be. MMNS canvases the possibility

11FL01 ¹¹ One of the Gödel probes was closely modeled on Kripke’s own example, and ran as follows:

11FL02 Suppose that John has learned in college that Gödel is the man who proved an important
 11FL03 mathematical theorem, called the incompleteness of arithmetic. John is quite good at mathematics
 11FL04 and he can give an accurate statement of the incompleteness theorem, which he attributes to Gödel
 11FL05 as the discoverer. But this is the only thing that he has heard about Gödel. Now suppose that Gödel
 11FL06 was not the author of this theorem. A man called “Schmidt” whose body was found in Vienna
 11FL07 under mysterious circumstances many years ago, actually did the work in question. His friend
 11FL08 Gödel somehow got hold of the manuscript and claimed credit for the work, which was thereafter
 11FL09 attributed to Gödel. Thus he has been known as the man who proved the incompleteness of
 11FL10 arithmetic. Most people who have heard the name “Gödel” are like John; the claim that Gödel
 11FL11 discovered the incompleteness theorem is the only thing they have ever heard about Gödel. When
 11FL12 John uses the name “Gödel,” is he talking about:

11FL13

11FL14 (A) the person who really discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic?

11FL15 or

11FL16 (B) the person who got hold of the manuscript and claimed credit for the work? (MMNS, p. B6).

12FL01 ¹² MMNS, p. B4.

159 that philosophers rely on their own intuitions because they see themselves as
 160 engaged in a project modeled on Chomskyan linguistics, with their intuitions about
 161 reference being used to develop “an empirically adequate account of the implicit
 162 theory that underlies ordinary uses of names.”¹³

163 This suggestion has various degrees of plausibility depending upon what we take
 164 a “semantic theory” to be. There are at least three sorts of project that fall under the
 165 heading of “semantic theory”, and intuitions may seem to play a different role in
 166 each. These are:

- 167 1. A theory of “Logical Form” (hereafter “LF”).
- 168 2. A theory stating *what* our terms refer to.
- 169 3. A theory explaining *why* our terms refer to what they refer to.

170 I’ll refer to these as “type-1”, “type-2” and “type-3” semantic theories with the
 171 intuitions directly relevant to them as “type-1”, “type-2” and “type-3” semantic
 172 intuitions.

173 To the extent that one is engaged in a semantic theory of the first sort, the analogy
 174 with Chomskyan linguistics has a good deal of plausibility. Our semantic intuitions
 175 in these cases can plausibly be understood as reflecting underlying realities about
 176 the formal properties of the sentences we grasp. However, it is not over such formal
 177 features that the causal and the descriptive theorist are disputing. In particular, the
 178 question of who, say, “Gödel” refers to in the case described above is not such a
 179 formal question. The issue might have come up if one defended a type of generative
 180 semantics in which names were actually disguised definite descriptions, or possibly
 181 demonstratives, at some deeper processing level,¹⁴ but barring that, the issue of
 182 proper name reference isn’t dealt with at LF. Further, if there were cultural
 183 differences in intuitions about logical form, the claim that two varieties of English
 184 simply embodied different underlying logical forms would not be particularly hard
 185 to defend, so social non-uniformity does not impugn the validity of the intuitions in
 186 question. Finally, LF is the only semantic level where it does seem plausible to think
 187 that every speaker knows the semantics for his or her own language in a full
 188 blooded, if implicit, way comparable to the way in which he or she can be said to
 189 know his or her own syntax.

190 The second sort of semantic project, in which the terms of a language are
 191 assigned their extensions, seems to be the one most relevant to the sorts of intuitions
 192 MMNS consider. The probes focus on, after all, intuitions about what particular
 193 terms refer to in particular contexts. However, such “referential” questions should
 194 not be understood as reflecting implicit knowledge of precisely the sort that our
 195 syntactic intuitions do. In particular, one of the main consequences of semantic
 196 externalism is that speakers needn’t know in the relevantly full-blooded sense what
 197 their terms refer to. An “empirically adequate account of the implicit theory that
 198 underlies ordinary uses of names” in *this* sense would explain what we *take* our
 199 terms to refer to, but since this sort of semantic theory is supposed to describe what

13FL01 ¹³ For an example of such an approach, MMNS cite Segal (2001).

14FL01 ¹⁴ And it does seem that it is precisely such a ‘formal’ question that is the focus of Segal (2001).

200 our terms *actually* refer to, the syntactic model seems to miss out on the ‘normative’
 201 character of such semantic theories.¹⁵

202 Finally there is the third ‘foundational’ or ‘meta’ semantic project which hopes to
 203 explain *why* our terms have the referents/extensions that they are taken to have in
 204 the second sort of theory. The rival causal and descriptive theories that MMNS
 205 consider are theories of this sort. However, the sorts of intuitions that are *directly*
 206 relevant to this third sort of theory are not considered. Intuitions about whether or
 207 not, say, the descriptive theory is a plausible one are not the topic here. Such
 208 intuitions are more like the intuition that a particular syntactic rule is plausible
 209 rather than the intuitions about the grammaticality of particular sentences, and they
 210 seem to carry less weight than the intuitions relating directly to the second sort of
 211 semantic theory. That said, these intuitions do play a role in philosophical
 212 theorizing, and, say, the decision to try to explain the judgments of the second sort
 213 within broadly ‘naturalistic’ frameworks (which both the descriptive and causal
 214 theories could claim to be) could be seen as driven by the assumption that non-
 215 naturalistic (or ‘magical’) theories of reference are ‘unintuitive’.¹⁶ Philosophers
 216 certainly have such intuitions, and one reason some will stick to roughly ‘internalist’
 217 accounts of meaning is that they simply find it implausible that meaning would be
 218 anywhere other than ‘in the head’.¹⁷ Still, the level 3 intuitions, while they motivate
 219 many things, are less likely to be taken as universal.

220 It is not surprising that MMNS focus on intuitions relating directly to the second
 221 type of theory while discussing philosophers working on theories of the third sort.
 222 This approach is typical, and entirely appropriate. While type-2 intuitions bear less
 223 directly on type-3 theories than type-3 intuitions, type-2 intuitions are generally
 224 considered stronger (and possibly less theory driven), and thus more probative than
 225 type-3 intuitions. Just as syntacticians evaluate a theory of, say, binding by their
 226 intuitions about what co-reference assignments are possible for a given sentence,
 227 and not, say whether it seem intuitive to think that C-command would be a
 228 constraint on anaphoric relations, philosophers typically test a type-3 theory by
 229 evaluating its compatibility with type-2 intuitions. In both meta-semantics and
 230 syntax, the most relevant intuitions are about the cases themselves, not about how
 231 best to systematize them. This is why the types of intuitions involved when
 232 philosophers construct semantic theory of the third sort are not intuitions to the
 233 effect that something like the descriptive theory of reference is correct. Rather than
 234 being the direct result of type-3 intuitions, type-3 theories like the causal and
 235 descriptive theory are attempts to systematize and account for our type-2 intuitions.

236 Nevertheless, while analogies between syntactic and semantic theories are often
 237 enlightening, they can also lead one astray, and the assumption that intuitions are
 238 justified the same way in both cases is a mistaken one. In particular, semantic

15FL01 ¹⁵ One might, of course, question the type of externalism upon which this assumption is based, but I think
 15FL02 that the general point that what we actually apply our words to and what they actually refer to may not be
 15FL03 the same does not rest on any externalist assumptions. Rather, externalism rests on this more basic
 15FL04 assumption.

16FL01 ¹⁶ See, for instance, Putnam (1981). For Lewis’s reply to Putnam’s related criticism that aspects of his
 16FL02 theory of intentionality were “spooky” and “medieval-sounding”, see Lewis (1984, p. 67).

17FL01 ¹⁷ See, for instance, Searle (1983).

239 intuitions of the sort we are here concerned with need not get their justification from
 240 *reflecting* the “implicit theory that underlies ordinary uses of names”. Syntactic
 241 intuitions are justified on the assumption that they reflect the underlying
 242 mechanisms that produce them, and syntactic theories are needed to explain these
 243 intuitions as a theory fits its data.¹⁸ There is certainly a wide-spread view that
 244 semantic intuitions, and with it conceptual analysis, should be understood in the
 245 same way. Such a view is guided by the ‘Platonic’ assumption that “we all know the
 246 ‘right’ necessary and sufficient conditions [for the application of our concepts]
 247 ... but this knowledge is buried very deep down in our minds and is
 248 therefore hard to make explicit.”¹⁹ So understood, we all have tacit knowledge of
 249 our own concepts and conceptual analysis is just a matter of making this tacit
 250 knowledge explicit. Intuitions about possible cases are guided by such tacit
 251 knowledge, so they are an ideal way of making the structure of these concepts
 252 explicit. Just as grammaticality judgments are taken to reliably reflect implicitly
 253 known linguistic rules, philosophers’ intuitions are taken to reliably reflect their
 254 implicitly known concepts.²⁰ It is precisely this general framework for understanding
 255 conceptual analysis that allows cultural variation among our type-2 semantic
 256 intuitions to present the problems that MMNS to suggest they do.

257 Nevertheless, rather than presenting a problem for intuitions themselves, I think
 258 that the variation in our intuitive judgments points to a limitation in the conception
 259 of conceptual analysis outlined immediately above. The methodology of syntax is
 260 essentially ‘detective’. That is to say, syntactic intuitions are taken to be produced
 261 by underlying rules and thus can be used as evidence for them. Independently of the
 262 sorts of variation that MMNS point to, it should be clear that the psychological data
 263 on the mechanisms underlying classification shows the ‘detective’ model of
 264 conceptual analysis to be in need of serious revision. Philosophers have traditionally
 265 looked for conceptual analysis to yield necessary and sufficient conditions for the
 266 concepts in question,²¹ but it seems increasingly evident that whatever is tacitly
 267 producing our classifications does not have this sort of ‘definitional’ structure, and
 268 that the mechanism in question are often more exemplar and prototype driven.²² If
 269 concepts themselves are taken to have sharp boundaries in spite of this, then
 270 conceptual analysis is better understood as partially a *constructive* and *normative*
 271 process.²³ Rather than thinking that there are coherent concepts lying *behind* our

18FL01 ¹⁸ The performance/competence distinction provides some wiggle room, but not of the sort that I will
 18FL02 argue can be found with semantic theories of the second and third type.

19FL01 ¹⁹ Cappelan and Winblad (1999, p. 205). They are discussing, but not endorsing the assumption in
 19FL02 question. Cappelan and Winblad’s views are discussed in more detail in Jackman (2005).

20FL01 ²⁰ This analogy has been recently defended Miscevic (2000), and for a criticism of this defense, see
 20FL02 DePaul (2000). See also Ramsey (1998, p. 165) for an unusually clear exposition of the psychological
 20FL03 picture purportedly presupposed by classical conceptual analysis.

21FL01 ²¹ And I think that there are good reasons for thinking that we are rationally committed to viewing our
 21FL02 concepts in this way (see Jackman 2004, 2006a).

22FL01 ²² For a discussion of this, see Lakoff (1987) and Rosch (1975).

23FL01 ²³ For a possible example of this approach to analysis, see the discussion of “knowledge” in Williams
 23FL02 2001. For a discussion of how the empirical data on the role of prototypes in classification makes
 23FL03 conceptual analysis as traditionally understood difficult, see Ramsey (1998).

272 usage, philosophers should assume that a coherent concept can be constructed *out of*
 273 our usage, and when conceptual analysis is understood this way, the reliability of
 274 intuitions becomes easier to defend.²⁴

275 On the constructive model of conceptual analysis, semantic intuitions of the
 276 second (and to a certain extent the third) type are better understood as contributing
 277 to rather than reflecting the semantic facts that they are taken to be about. In this
 278 way, the relation between semantic intuitions and semantic facts may be more like
 279 the way Rawls conceives of the relation between ethical intuitions and ethical truth
 280 than it is with anything familiar from syntax.²⁵ There may be underlying
 281 mechanisms that produce our intuitions, but just as ethical theory is supposed to
 282 make our ethical intuitions coherent, not just describe them, type-3 semantic theory
 283 is supposed to systematize our type-2 semantic intuitions, not just describe the
 284 mechanisms that produce them.²⁶

285 A semantic theory bears a ‘normative’ relation to intuitions of a sort that
 286 syntactic theory does not. Of course, syntactic intuitions can be mistaken, but such
 287 mistakes are explained in terms of performance errors that don’t change the fact that
 288 the ‘correct’ intuitions can be understood as directly reflecting the underlying
 289 syntactic reality.²⁷ Semantic intuitions, on the other hand, even when correct, are
 290 correct in virtue of their relations to other intuitions, not to some underlying
 291 concept, and because of this, it is easier to think of semantic intuitions (like ethical
 292 or epistemic intuitions) as mistaken. The process of systematizing them may be best
 293 understood as revisionary.

294 This constructive model of conceptual analysis will point, I hope to show, to at
 295 least one reason why philosophers should be able to remain confident about their
 296 intuitions even in the face of the sorts of cross-cultural data that MMNS point to.

297 4 Reflective intuitions

298 One possible response to the non-universality of our semantic intuitions that MMNS
 299 consider is that philosophers need not assume the universality of semantic intuitions
 300 because they are not interested “unschooled, folk semantic intuitions, including the
 301 differing intuitions of various cultural groups”,²⁸ and it is only the *reflective*

24FL01 ²⁴ One might think that this is simply to replace conceptual analysis with something like Carnap’s notion
 24FL02 of ‘explication’ (Carnap 1950). Indeed, DePaul and Ramsey (1998) seems to suggest that a move to
 24FL03 something like explication is the most plausible way to continue with something like conceptual analysis
 24FL04 when our concepts are prototype driven. However, while Carnap takes the explicative process to be one of
 24FL05 replacing older ‘confused’ concepts with new and improved ones, I’m more inclined to view the
 24FL06 constructive process as often (though certainly not always) one of getting clear on what our concepts have
 24FL07 committed us to all along. (see, Jackman 1999, 2004, 2006a).

25FL01 ²⁵ Rawls (1971). For an instance of this approach to semantics, see, for instance, Devitt (1994, 1996).

26FL01 ²⁶ Also, as in ethics, but unlike syntax, type-3 semantic intuitions can carry some weight.

27FL01 ²⁷ Further, if a syntactic intuition represents a “performance error” there should be an account of what
 27FL02 interfered with the underlying competence, while ‘incorrect’ semantic intuitions may be no more
 27FL03 ‘polluted’ than the correct ones. They just may turn out to be outweighed by other intuitions or fit badly
 27FL04 with the actual environment.

28FL01 ²⁸ MMNS, p. B8.

302 intuitions of philosophers that are relevant in finding the *correct*, rather than merely
 303 folk, theory of proper name reference.²⁹ MMNS are, to say the least, unsympathetic
 304 with this sort of reply. As they put it:

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305 We find it *wildly* implausible that the semantic intuitions of the narrow cross-
 306 section of humanity who are Western academic philosophers are a more
 307 reliable indicator of the correct theory of reference ... than the differing
 308 semantic intuitions of other cultural or linguistic groups.... In the absence of a
 309 principled argument about why philosophers' intuitions are superior, this
 310 project smacks of narcissism in the extreme. (MMNS p. B9)

311 While I agree with MMNS that we shouldn't simply dismiss ordinary intuitions,
 312 it needn't follow that there can't be good reason to favor reflective over pre-
 313 reflective intuitions. Indeed, MMNS never deny that this might turn out to be the
 314 case, they just ask that any philosopher who proceeds as if this were so provide
 315 some "principled argument about why philosophers' intuitions are superior", and
 316 that is precisely what I'll be trying to do here.³⁰ In particular, it will be argued that
 317 philosophers' reflective intuitions are often superior because they are largely shaped
 318 by the need to make our intuitions about various cases *consistent*.³¹

319 After all, one thing that comes up in MMNS's data is that philosophers' intuitions
 320 are noticeably different from not only most Chinese informants, but also with a good
 321 deal of the Western informants as well. How should one explain this difference? One
 322 might try to do so in terms of 'disciplinary' pressures which, say, prevent students who
 323 don't have 'causal' intuitions from being admitted to graduate programs, and thus into
 324 the profession.³² However, while this might explain the intuitions of philosophers who
 325 are, say, 45 and younger, it doesn't explain the initial reception of Kripke's and
 326 Putnam's work in the mid-seventies. If philosophers' intuitions were the result of
 327 professional indoctrination, one would have expected most philosophers in the early
 328 1970s to have descriptivist intuitions, but that does not seem to be how things played
 329 out at all. While Kripke's and Putnam's work was not universally accepted, most
 330 critics focused on just what could be taken to follow from the 'causal' intuitions; they
 331 did not, as mentioned earlier, deny the intuitions themselves. The 'indoctrination'
 332 explanation thus seems, at least for the case of semantic intuitions, suspect.

333 A more charitable explanation of why (at least some) philosophers have
 334 intuitions about the Gödel cases (where the descriptions seem to 'misidentify' the
 335 referent) that are in line with the causal theory is that this seems to be what is needed
 336 to make them consistent with their intuitions about the Jonah cases (where the
 337 descriptions associated with a name pick out nothing at all).³³ As MMNS note, the

29FL01 ²⁹ For something like this defense of philosophical intuitions, see Hales (2006, chap. 4) (esp. pp. 171–
 29FL02 172).

30FL01 ³⁰ Though given the view ultimately defended, it might be somewhat misleading to say that I take
 30FL02 philosophers' intuitions to be a "reliable indicator of the correct theory of reference", since such
 30FL03 "indicator" talk suggests that intuitions are tracking something which is independent of them.

31FL01 ³¹ As the earlier comparison with Rawls should make clear.

32FL01 ³² MMNS suggest as much themselves (p. B9). For a similar suggestion about our epistemic intuitions,
 32FL02 see Cummins (1998).

33FL01 ³³ Or, more commonly in the case of names, no *unique* person at all.

338 intuitions of *both* Western and East-Asian groups about the Jonah case are roughly
 339 the same, and in both cases they support the causal account over the descriptive (and
 340 to a greater extent than either group supported the causal account in the Gödel case).
 341 These results were:

342 **Jonah cases**

343 Western participants: 1.23 (.96)

344 Chinese participants: 1.32 (.76)

345 This may not be surprising. It seems to be a deeply entrenched assumption with our
 346 use of names that we take them to pick out unique individuals, and if the descriptive
 347 theory suggests that our names don't uniquely refer, or (as in the Jonah case) don't refer
 348 at all, that is a serious bullet for most speakers to bite.³⁴ Indeed, the move from the
 349 'simple' description theory (where the name picks out whatever satisfies *all* of the
 350 descriptions associated with it) to the 'cluster' theory (where the name picks out
 351 whatever satisfies *most* of the associated descriptions) is motivated by the realization
 352 that the simple theory would make for extremely widespread reference failure.

353 Further, it should also be noted that when MMNS present the Jonah case to their
 354 informants, what they treat as the 'descriptivist' doesn't posit reference failure as
 355 much as it does the speaker referring to a fictional character.³⁵ When MMNS outline

34FL01 ³⁴ As MMNS note on p. B7.

35FL01 ³⁵ The Jonah case is presented by MMNS as follows:

35FL02 In high school, German students learn that Attila founded Germany in the second century A.D.
 35FL03 They are taught that Attila was the king of a nomadic tribe that migrated from the east to settle in
 35FL04 what would become Germany. Germans also believe that Attila was a merciless warrior and leader
 35FL05 who expelled the Romans from Germany, and that after his victory against the Romans, Attila
 35FL06 organized a large and prosperous kingdom.

35FL07 Now suppose that none of this is true. No merciless warrior expelled the Romans from Germany,
 35FL08 and Germany was not founded by a single individual. Actually, the facts are the following. In the
 35FL09 fourth century A.D., a nobleman of low rank, called "Raditra", ruled a small and peaceful area in
 35FL10 what today is Poland, several hundred miles from Germany. Raditra was a wise and gentle man
 35FL11 who managed to preserve the peace in the small land he was ruling. For this reason, he quickly
 35FL12 became the main character of many stories and legends. These stories were passed on from one
 35FL13 generation of peasants to the next. But often when the story was passed on the peasants would
 35FL14 embellish it, adding imaginary details and dropping some true facts to make the story more
 35FL15 exciting. From a peaceful nobleman of low rank, Raditra was gradually transformed into a warrior
 35FL16 fighting for his land. When the legend reached Germany, it told of a merciless warrior who was
 35FL17 victorious against the Romans. By the 8th century A.D., the story told of an Eastern king who
 35FL18 expelled the Romans and founded Germany. By that time, not a single true fact remained in the
 35FL19 story.

35FL20 Meanwhile, as the story was told and retold, the name "Raditra" was slowly altered: it was
 35FL21 successively replaced by "Aditra", then by "Arritrak" in the sixth century, by "Arrita" and
 35FL22 "Arrila" in the seventh and finally by "Attila". The story about the glorious life of Attila was
 35FL23 written down in the 8th century by a scrupulous Catholic monk, from whom all our beliefs are
 35FL24 derived. Of course, Germans know nothing about these real events. They believe a story about a
 35FL25 merciless Eastern king who expelled the Romans and founded Germany.

35FL26 When a contemporary German high school student says "Attila was the king who drove the
 35FL27 Romans from Germany," is he actually talking about the wise and gentle nobleman, Raditra, who
 35FL28 is the original source of the Attila legend, or is he talking about a fictional person, someone who
 35FL29 does not really exist?

35FL30 (A) He is talking about Raditra

35FL31 (B) He is talking about a fictional person who does not really exist.

356 the descriptive theory it involves a clear commitment to the effect that “If the
 357 description is not satisfied at all or if many individuals satisfy it, the name does not
 358 refer”, but when they present the case, this commitment disappears, and the name is
 359 taken to refer to “a fictional person who does not really exist”.³⁶ The switch to the
 360 Jonah cases already tilts the intuitions of both groups towards the causal theory, and
 361 I expect that they would tilt considerably more so if actual *reference failure* was
 362 postulated rather than lapsing into fiction. Indeed, quasi-mythic characters like
 363 Jonah are not the best examples of reference failure precisely because the thought
 364 that talk of them involves lapsing into fiction has some appeal. This appeal is
 365 consequently less with, say, the speaker who only believes of “Einstein” that he was
 366 “the man who invented the atomic bomb”.³⁷ Since there was no single man who
 367 invented the atomic bomb, the name would on the descriptive view, fail to refer, and
 368 the alternative explanation that the speaker is talking about a fictional character has
 369 far less appeal in the “Einstein” case than it does with names like “Moses”,
 370 “Homer” or “Jonah”.

371 Speaking from my own (undergraduate) past, my intuitions about cases of
 372 ‘misidentification’ were initially in line with the descriptive theory, and it was only on
 373 reflection about what to say about cases where the descriptions picked out no unique
 374 person at all that they shifted more towards the causal/historical account. This, in turn,
 375 made descriptivism about the kind-terms focused on by Putnam seem less appealing,
 376 which eventually lead to accepting the sorts of cases focused on by Burge.³⁸ A theory
 377 of reference is constructed to systematize our intuitions, and our intuitions, in turn,
 378 may be modified when we understand what they seem to commit us to.³⁹ The theory
 379 thus needn’t be understood as already implicitly there producing our intuitions.
 380 Consequently, the preference for philosophers’ intuitions is not because philosophers
 381 are especially good at detecting what is already there,⁴⁰ but rather because they are the
 382 only ones actively concerned with the sort of consistency-driven construction that
 383 conceptual analysis involves. Because of this, it isn’t obvious that the philosopher’s
 384 preference for reflective intuitions is *simply* an instance of narcissism.

385 That said, the possibility still remains that, just as we bring our intuitions about
 386 the Gödel cases into line with our causal-theory-friendly intuitions about the Jonah
 387 cases, reflective Chinese speakers might bring their Jonah intuitions into line with
 388 their descriptive-theory-friendly intuitions about the Gödel cases. Consequently, the

36FL01 ³⁶ Unless, of course, MMNS are following Rorty (1979) in making a strong distinction between
 36FL02 “referring” and “talking about”. I’d be surprised if that was the case, especially since, if the distinction
 36FL03 was intended, it wouldn’t be clear why cultural variation in our intuitions about “talking about” should be
 36FL04 relevant to the question of whether philosopher’s intuitions about *reference* were representative.

37FL01 ³⁷ See Kripke (1972, p. 85).

38FL01 ³⁸ Putnam (1975) and Burge (1979). This line of thought could ultimately be taken to include the
 38FL02 contribution of *future* use as well, and Jackman (1999) outlines quite clearly how these commitments in
 38FL03 one of these areas make taking on similar commitments in others much less conceptually costly.

39FL01 ³⁹ Indeed, Nisbitt 2003 describes how the intuitions of both Easterners and Westerners can be ‘primed’ to
 39FL02 run in a characteristically Eastern or characteristically Western fashion, and having an awareness of the
 39FL03 reference-failure cases may ‘prime’ ones intuitions about the misidentification cases towards the causal
 39FL04 account.

40FL01 ⁴⁰ By contrast, see MMNS, p. B3, note 3.

389 mere fact that we have reason to privilege reflective intuitions over unreflective
 390 ones, doesn't show that cultural variance in unreflective intuitions will disappear at
 391 the reflective level. After all, that we may ultimately end up with conflicting sets of
 392 *reflective* intuitions is just what many suspect with the case of our ethical intuitions.
 393 Admittedly, I find it highly unlikely that any group would systematize their
 394 semantic intuitions in a fashion that allowed for comparatively wide-spread
 395 reference failure. Nevertheless, let assume for the sake of argument that the
 396 differences between Eastern and Western type-2 semantic intuitions would persist
 397 through the process of each group's reflections. If disagreement persists even among
 398 people's "reflective" intuitions, would that show that intuitions aren't a trustworthy
 399 starting point in philosophical inquiry?

400 It might initially seem as if such reflective disagreement doesn't produce any real
 401 problems for defenders of the intuitions who endorse the 'constructive' understanding
 402 of intuitions and their role in conceptual analysis. After all, the constructive
 403 conception can be contrasted with the realism implicit in the 'indicator model' of the
 404 role of intuitions in conceptual analysis in which semantic facts are independent of
 405 our intuitions about them, and so there is always a live question of why our intuitions
 406 should be taken to be reliable indicators of the truths about this independent semantic
 407 reality (reflective intuitions just being our most considered take on these independent
 408 facts). On this realist understanding of semantic facts, if different groups have
 409 different intuitions about semantics, this is itself a good reason to think that *neither* set
 410 of intuitions can be trusted. By contrast, on the constructive model, semantic truths
 411 are simply what are produced by the best systematization of our intuitions, and this
 412 sort of constructivism about semantic facts has the following beneficial consequence
 413 for the epistemology of semantic theory. Since they are partially constitutive of what
 414 they are about, semantic intuitions are *prima facie* justified and can only be mistaken
 415 if they conflict with more deeply held sets of judgments. Consequently, if it turned out
 416 that there were competing sets of consistent systematization of two cultures' type-2
 417 semantic intuitions, then rather than saying that neither set is reliable, we can say that
 418 the two groups are picking out different objects with the names in their versions of
 419 English. There is nothing incoherent in assuming that two people could ultimately
 420 turn out to mean different things by terms like "person", "knowledge" or "Gödel",
 421 and the two cultures' ability to reach non-convergent equilibria relating to these terms
 422 would suggest that we are dealing with such a case. Disputes about what, say,
 423 "Gödel" refers to would be the product of speakers not realizing that they mean
 424 different things by the same term.⁴¹

425 However, this may treat the conflicts of intuitions too lightly, since what seems to
 426 be on the table here is not simply a kind of 'semantic pluralism' where we refer to
 427 *Gödel* by "Gödel" while the Chinese refer to *Schmidt* by "Gödel". Rather we are
 428 considering a type of 'meta-semantic pluralism' whereby, given what they mean by
 429 "refer", speakers of Hong Kong English are *correct* to say that *our* use of "Gödel"
 430 refers to *Schmidt*. Since different conceptions of reference would lead to different

41FL01 ⁴¹ For a discussion of the possibility that this may be the norm in metaphysical and meta-semantic
 41FL02 debates, see Lynch (1998) and Jackman (1996). The pessimism about intuitions would thus ultimately
 41FL03 stem from a semantic analog of something like the "epistemological realism" criticized in Williams
 41FL04 (1991, 2001). For a dissenting view about the possibility of such pluralism, see Kornblith (1998).

431 reference assignments, and thus different assignments of truth-conditions, it would
 432 seem that people with different conceptions of reference would disagree over which
 433 claims are assertable, and that this difference is a *practical* one. Like our ethical
 434 vocabulary, semantic vocabulary may, at bottom be difficult to be pluralistic about
 435 if different groups are expected to interact. One might still remain the case that we
 436 could just insist that there is more than one type of assertional practice we can take
 437 part in,⁴² but the pluralistic view seems to be that we can legitimately be interpreted
 438 as engaging in both, even if we clearly intend not to participate in one of the two.⁴³

439 Perhaps there is a way to make sense of a pluralism about our type-3 semantic
 440 theories, but it seems clearly preferable to have a unified type-3 theory, especially one
 441 that would allow for the possibility of pluralism at the type-2 level. For instance, just as
 442 a utilitarian can be an ‘ethical pluralist’ in that he or she allows that different ethical
 443 claims may be true in different cultures, and still be a ‘meta-ethical monist’ in that he or
 444 she takes these different ethical systems to each be justified by the fact that they are the
 445 systems that maximize utility in their particular cultural context, we would like a type-
 446 3 semantic theory that remains meta-semantically monistic, but semantically
 447 pluralistic in the sense that it will allow the considered type-2 semantic judgments
 448 of the member of each culture to be correct about their own language. Fortunately, I
 449 think that there is a fairly well known meta-semantic theory that does just this.

450 5 Charity

451 Both the descriptive and the causal views that MMNS present are extremes, and if
 452 they were the only options available, then we might doubt that our (collective) type-
 453 2 intuitions could converge on a single type-3 theory. However, there are more
 454 nuanced accounts of reference that incorporate aspects of both the causal and the
 455 descriptive theory, and these may be able to accommodate cross-cultural variation
 456 without forcing us to endorse just one culture’s set of intuitions. In particular, I
 457 believe that the most plausible account of reference, one associated with what is
 458 commonly referred to as the “Principle of Charity”, can accommodate, and even
 459 explain, the results presented by MMNS. I should note here that the presentation and
 460 defense of Charity presented here will hardly seem adequate for someone not
 461 already sympathetic to the principle. However, considerations of space prevent me
 462 from providing a fuller defense,⁴⁴ and the principle serves here mainly as an
 463 example of how a single type-3 account of reference could accommodate (rather
 464 than just dismiss or explain away) the diversity of type-2 intuitions across cultures.

42FL01 ⁴² While it might be easier to view ourselves as being able to switch between the two sorts of assertional
 42FL02 practice without undermining the objectivity of either than it would be to make a similar move with our
 42FL03 ethical practices, it should be stressed that this is not the view that the type-3 pluralist seems committed to.
 42FL04 He is committed to the stronger view that we can *always* be justly evaluated in terms of *either* practice.
 42FL05 This would point to a type of indeterminacy, and thus a skepticism about meaning and truth.

43FL01 ⁴³ So, for instance, we would have to, in the Schmidt scenario, treat Easterner’s “Gödel proved the
 43FL02 incompleteness of arithmetic” utterances as false even when they became appraised of all the non-
 43FL03 semantic facts and still insisted that *Schmidt* is the proper reference for “Gödel”.

44FL01 ⁴⁴ For a much more detailed presentation and defense of the principle, see Jackman (2003).

465 The Principle of Charity, very roughly, ties the referents of the terms in a
 466 speaker's language to those objects (or sets of objects) that maximizes the
 467 (weighted) total number of truths among the speaker's commitments. Since Charity
 468 maximizes the truth of our commitments in a way that seems reminiscent of theories
 469 that tie the referents of names to clusters of descriptions, the cases that seem (to
 470 philosophers) to be counterexamples to descriptive theories (e.g., "Gödel") would
 471 also seem to be counterexamples to Charity.

472 However, the principle is comparatively resistant to such purported counterex-
 473 amples provided that we remember that:

- 474 (1) Some of our commitments carry greater weight than others.
- 475 (2) Charity applies holistically to all of our commitments at once.
- 476 (3) Many of our most deeply held commitments are rarely made explicit.

477 Understood in the light of these reminders, Charity can accommodate the 'causal'
 478 intuitions that most philosophers associate with the "Gödel" case.

479 For instance, as Nisbett and MMNS suggest, we (at least we in the 'West') have a
 480 deep, if usually implicit, commitment to perception, memory and testimony being
 481 *causally* structured. While we may not *explicitly* think that, say, our memories are
 482 about those events that are causally responsible for them, such an understanding is
 483 manifested in our practices, and thus forms part of the larger set of commitments
 484 against which our thoughts acquire their contents. If we discover that the person of
 485 whom we took a memory of ours to be a memory about could not have been
 486 causally responsible for that memory, we typically conclude that we must have been
 487 thinking of someone else. We 'know' that our memories must be causally connected
 488 to what they are memories of, even if this knowledge is not explicitly represented.

489 The thought experiments that Kripke musters in support of his 'causal' account of
 490 reference can be understood as illustrating our implicit commitment to testimony
 491 having this causal structure. If we did not already have such manifesting
 492 commitments, we would not find it 'obvious' that we could not be referring to,
 493 say, *Schmidt* by "Gödel", even if most of our 'Gödel-beliefs' would have been true
 494 of him. Indeed, such reactions are partially *constitutive* of our commitment to
 495 testimony's causal basis. Since the commitment to testimony's causal structure is
 496 heavily entrenched, it would not be charitable to give it up just to preserve the truth
 497 of a small set of Gödel-beliefs. Cases like that of Gödel are thus not incompatible
 498 with the Principle of Charity; rather, they only highlight how the commitments that
 499 must be taken into account extend beyond those that the speaker might explicitly
 500 manifest in his utterances.

501 Even with this extremely brief presentation, it should be clear how the account of
 502 reference determination based upon the principle of Charity has a type of flexibility
 503 that allows for it to accommodate the sort of cultural variation that MMNS discuss.
 504 In particular, the Charity-based account explains the fact that we refer to *Gödel*
 505 rather than *Schmidt* by "Gödel" not in terms reference being intrinsically causal, but
 506 rather in terms of our implicit commitment to our words being part of a causally
 507 structured 'informational system.'⁴⁵ If some person, or group of people, were less

45FL01 ⁴⁵ For a discussion of this see Evans (1982).

508 committed to being part of this sort of causal/information system, then the charitable
 509 account would predict that they might refer to Schmidt rather than Gödel by
 510 “Gödel”. Consequently, if, as Nisbett suggests, East Asians put less emphasis on
 511 causation in their explanations, then the charitable account might predict that the
 512 referents of some of their terms might differ from what they would be for
 513 Westerners with a similar set of ‘forgrounded’ beliefs associated with similar
 514 terms.⁴⁶

515 However, this doesn’t mean that different accounts of reference are true of (or even
 516 endorsed by) the two groups. A single type-3 semantic theory applies to both groups, it
 517 is just that this theory predicts that the names in North American and Hong-Kong
 518 English may behave differently given the differences in the higher level cognitive
 519 commitments between the two groups.⁴⁷ We thus are able to preserve the possibility of
 520 semantic pluralism within the context of a monistic meta-semantic theory.

521 Cultural differences in type-2 intuitions about what particular speakers refer to
 522 need not entail any sort of cultural variation in what would be our more reflective
 523 commitments about the nature of reference. Rather, the cultural variation could be
 524 explained by our tendency to project our culture’s background cognitive assump-
 525 tions and commitments onto the characters in the thought experiments. In the Gödel
 526 probe, East Asians and Westerners would ‘fill in’ the rest of the protagonist’s
 527 cognitive commitments in different ways, leading them to take the subject to be
 528 referring to different things.⁴⁸ Important inputs into the reference determining
 529 function may vary from culture to culture, but it doesn’t follow from that the
 530 function isn’t the same. Our initial inclination may be to interpret Hong-Kong
 531 English as having the same type-2 semantic values as North-American English, but
 532 our reflective and more empirically informed judgments may require rejecting this
 533 initial assumption.

534 6 Conclusion

535 In conclusion, then, the cultural variation in responses to Kripke-style thought-
 536 experiments may be surprising to those not already familiar with cultural variation
 537 in ‘cognitive styles.’ However, since the relevant intuitions are about what we
 538 would be talking about in particular cases, not about the nature of reference *itself*,
 539 there is no reason to think that such intuitions cannot all be accommodated within a
 540 general theory of reference. Cultural variation thus doesn’t prevent us from thinking
 541 that an adequate theory of reference should rely heavily on systematizing our
 542 intuitions. It only requires that an adequate theory of reference have a degree of

46FL01 ⁴⁶ One should also note that such variations occur within the members of a culture, and quite possibly
 46FL02 within a single person as they shift from context to context. This might also help explain some of the *intra*
 46FL03 cultural variation in the reported data. How this sort of contextually sensitive weighting of commitments
 46FL04 plays out is described in Jackman (2006b).

47FL01 ⁴⁷ While we have very few of what Evans’s refers to as “descriptive names” (Evans 1982), they might
 47FL02 have many.

48FL01 ⁴⁸ Since they may approach the question of thinking what *they* would be referring to if they were in
 48FL02 John’s position.

543 flexibility (flexibility that the simple descriptive and causal theories lack) that would
544 allow it to accommodate such variation.⁴⁹

545 That said, the above is not meant to suggest that philosophers of language
546 wouldn't benefit from having a look at the sort of cross-linguistic data that MMNS
547 appeal to. Again, the analogy with Universal Grammar (UG) is instructive. While
548 few doubt that our intuitions about grammaticality are generally reliable, it doesn't
549 follow from this that one has much of a chance of coming up with a good model of
550 UG without looking at a good deal of cross-linguistic data. In particular, while we
551 may have reliable intuitions about which sentences are grammatical or not, we need
552 not have reliable access to whether those judgments reflect aspects of UG directly,
553 or just more contingent aspects of the parameter settings of our own language. In
554 much the same way, our intuitions about cases may be reliable, but mistakes may
555 come if we overgeneralize the import of these intuitions, and cross-cultural data can
556 be a corrective to such overgeneralizations. In that respect, MMNS are correct to
557 claim that:

558 the intuitions philosophers pronounce from their armchairs are likely to be a
559 product of their own culture and their academic training, in order to determine
560 the implicit theories that underlie the use of names across cultures,
561 philosophers need to get out of their armchairs.⁵⁰

562 The difference is that I don't take the above to suggest that our type-2 intuitions
563 are *unreliable*, only that they may *underdetermine* the correct meta-semantic
564 theory.⁵¹

565 Philosophers' intuitions about the Gödel and Jonah cases may be accurate, but
566 causal theorists may be overgeneralizing from them if they take them to show that
567 reference is *essentially* a causal relation. Once again, the mistake is not with the
568 intuitions themselves, but the conclusions drawn from them. The 'causal' intuitions
569 are equally compatible with the Charitable account where causation (rather than
570 being an essential feature of reference) is simply a salient commitment that is put
571 into the reference determining function. The charitable account is more complex,
572 but it has the advantage of being compatible with the cross-linguistic data in a way
573 that neither the pure causal nor the pure descriptive account are. Even if the Western
574 data left it underdetermined which of the two is best,⁵² the cross-linguistic set would
575 favor the more flexible account.

49FL01 ⁴⁹ Compare this to the need for a proposed universal syntactic theory to explain why some languages
49FL02 allow various kinds of movement, while others do not. The conflicting intuitions about, say, the
49FL03 applicability of dropping PRO don't require either that we treat one of the linguistic communities as
49FL04 mistaken or simply give up the idea of there being a universal grammar that they both share. (Still, the
49FL05 analogy here shouldn't be pushed too hard, since in the semantic case, there may be more room to dismiss
49FL06 certain intuitions given the normative nature of the enterprise).

50FL01 ⁵⁰ MMNS, p. B9.

51FL01 ⁵¹ Though MMNS's studies suggest that sufficient sensitivity to the variation that exists *within* our
51FL02 culture could play a similar role.

52FL01 ⁵² Actually, I doubt that the 'Western' data leaves this underdetermined (especially given the intra-
52FL02 cultural variation MMNS point to).

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