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CRITICAL NOTICE

Critical notice of *Words and Contents*, by Richard Vallée

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Abstract
Section I gives an overview of the contents of "Words and Contents", and lays out the plan for this Critical Notice. Section II expounds Vallée's Perry-inspired Pluri-Propositional semantic framework, and Section III is an in-depth case study, focused on complex demonstratives. In Sections IV-V we develop some criticisms, and in Section VI we suggest a solution to these difficulties, which builds on Vallée's innovative work.

Keywords: semantics; pragmatics; indexicality; reference

1. Introduction

This volume brings together eight papers written between 1996 to 2017 by one of the most original and insightful voices in Canadian philosophy of language. It is especially welcome since Vallée's incisive work has been underappreciated outside Canada. Taken collectively, the papers provide sustained, careful analysis of how certain specific kinds of words, across diverse kinds of contexts, relate to multiple sorts of contents. Having a number of Vallée's publications collected together allows us to see how his views on core themes evolve and how the project overall coheres.

For the most part, Vallée works within a Perry-inspired "pluri-propositional," or "reflexive-referential" semantic framework (Perry 2001, 2006; Korta and Perry 2011). He applies it in innovative ways to a wide range of topics in the literature—especially to various kinds of context sensitivity. In general, these papers are gems: they provide a paradigm of research in the field. Vallée is always clear about what his aims are and are not, and intellectually honest about any limitations encountered.

Chapters 1 ("Who are We?") and 2 ("Talking about Us") together provide the most comprehensive discussion in existence of the semantics of first-person plural pronouns. While there is plenty of literature on the semantics of indexicality (see 2 for an overview of the groundbreaking work[1]), and also good work on the semantics of plural reference (see the citations on 4, 23), there is surprisingly little in the way of solid, sustained research on their overlap. Plural first-person pronouns pose some distinctive challenges, and Vallée's work is the place to look for thorough discussion of them.

Chapter 3 ("Complex Demonstratives, Articulation, and Overarticulation") applies the promising framework to the case of complex demonstratives ('that chicken') and introduces the useful concept of overarticulation (the contrary of Perry's [1986] notion of an unarticulated constituent). Chapter 4 ("Unarticulated Comparison Classes") addresses issues raised by relative gradable terms and their implicit comparison classes ('tall' for a three-year-old). Chapter 5 ("Conventional Implicature Revisited") investigates conventional implicature from his perspective ('but' vs. 'and'), and Chapter 6 ("On Local Bars and Imported Beer") shifts the focus to "contextuals" (predicates like 'local'/ 'foreign' and 'ally'/'enemy,' which include an indexical component).

[1]Unless otherwise noted, all cited page references are to the volume under review (Vallée 2018).

Chapter 7 ("Slurring and Common Knowledge of Ordinary Language") develops a pluri-propositionalist account of slurring terms ('Boche,' 'limey'), and finally Chapter 8 ("Color Adjectives, Compositionality, and True Utterances") applies the framework to Travis's (1997) arguments about the context-sensitivity of color terms.

We begin our discussion with the background framework. We then turn to applications to some of the topics mentioned above. Next, we develop criticisms. That there are some is unsurprising; the work introduces not just novel issues but innovative methods, and that's a risky endeavor. This doesn't make the papers less than gems, as even gems are flawed. We end with a sketch of a philosophical approach which takes some of Vallée's themes even further than he does.

2. Vallée's pluri-propositional framework

All of these papers except chapter 1 are crafted within a semantic framework influenced by Perry (2001). (Chapter 2, published in 2009, is largely an updated, pluri-propositionalist defense of chapter 1's [1996] approach to first-person plural pronouns.) As such, it makes sense to begin there. We try to steer clear of questions as to whether or how well Vallée gets Perry correct, focusing instead on an exposition of Vallée's broad point of view.

There are two fundamental tenets therein:

> *Pluri-propositional*: "… each utterance of a sentence determines many … contents, depending on what is taken into account …" (p. xi)
> *Reflexive*: Some of those contents are about the utterance itself.

We may rephrase the approach in terms of the authors Vallée draws most heavily on. From Russell (1905) and Kaplan (1977), he takes a commitment to directly referential propositional content. A proper name, e.g., is simply a "tag" for an object. For reasons stressed by Frege (1892), however, one needs more than that: something must capture the difference in "cognitive significance" between, say, (1a) and (1b):

1. (a) I am Richard Vallée.
   (b) Richard Vallée is Richard Vallée.

Vallée would have us supplement the directly referential, singular content, specifically with reflexive contents. Here, he draws on Reichenbach (1947). Finally, the framework is Austinian (1962) thrice over: it focuses on concrete utterances; it allows indefinitely many contributions by any given utterance; and a crucial aspect of linguistic meaning is a conventional instruction for doing something, a schema for acting. Vallée writes:

> Things look very different once [Perry's] perspective is adopted… . [T]he focus is put on utterances of sentences, rather than sentences… (x).
>
> An utterance is a concrete event with many properties, not only those that inspired the contextual items that Kaplan recognizes … but also … indefinitely many others (24).
>
> In this approach, an utterance of a single sentence determines many propositions or contents, forming a variety of truth-conditions that one can identify by exploiting meaning and extralinguistic context (136).

Spelling out things out, Vallée distinguishes the following three levels of meaning (51–52):

> **[1: M]**—for linguistic **M**eaning: This first kind is conventionally encoded in the expression type. It is what users who have mastered an expression in the shared language know to be its meaning.

> **[2: C]**—for adding **C**ontextual features to content M: It is this second kind of content which provides the "cognitive significance" of an utterance of the expression. Though contextualized, it remains very tightly connected to linguistic conventions, and hence is easily derivable from [**1: M**].
> **[3: D]**—once the referents are **D**etermined: This third kind of content captures the "official" truth-conditions of the utterance. It is even less tightly connected to conventions, but nonetheless tracks them closely enough to capture what the speaker is strictly and literally committed to, as opposed to what she may hint/imply/suggest.[2]

Vallée says that [**1: M**] "is not propositional" (76), and that "… the conventional linguistic meaning of a lexical item understood as a type is a rule of use." Take as an example:

2. I am a philosopher.

[**1: M**] instructs the hearer: find the speaker *S* of the utterance in question; find the time *t* of the utterance; take the content of this utterance to be *that speaker* S *of* u *is a philosopher at time* t *of* u. Getting from [**1: M**] to [**2: C**] requires identifying not just potential utterances, but the actual utterance u_1. [**2: C**] is "saturated" with that specific one. Still, it does not require a grasp of the usual and familiar facts about the context of utterance (Who? When? Where? To whom? Etc.) Establishing those facts will yield [**3: D**]. As will become clear below, [**1: M**] and [**2: C**] are reflexive contents in that they are about (among other things) utterances. [**3: D**] is not reflexive, but rather familiar old referential content.

It is worth pausing to explicitly distinguish a couple of things that Vallée's level [**1: M**] is not. It is not a universally quantified token-reflexive proposition such as "For every utterance *u* of 'I am a philosopher,' *u* is true iff the speaker is a philosopher." That is a possible approach, but it is clearly not Vallée's, for that would be truth-evaluable proposition and [**1: M**] is not. It provides a "how-to" for a particular linguistic tool. It is also not a Kaplanesque (1977/1989) "character" (understood as a function from sets of contextual parameters to contents). Vallée's [**1: M**] is an imperative. Granted, there are similarities between [**1: M**] and the formal semanticist's characters. Both are properties of expression-types, and both are crucial elements for determining "contents." However, Vallée several times stresses differences between an approach to the context-sensitivity of lexical items which is focused on sentences as types in context versus Perry's post-2001 approach, which is focused on utterances (x, 23, 50, 156).

These meanings-levels are most starkly distinguished in a simple case of indexicality. Take (2) again. Meaning [**1: M**] will apply in common to any utterance of that sentence; it is what is grasped by those who have mastered the meanings of its constituent expressions. A native speaker can glean the meaning of [**1: M**] of 'I am a philosopher' knowing nothing whatever about whether it was even uttered. Once we take the meaning-rule for (2) and identify a specific utterance, we get [**2: C**]: *The speaker* S *of this very utterance* u_1 *is a philosopher at time* t *of* u_1. One can get [**2: C**], the purported cognitive significance, from [**1: M**] extremely straightforwardly: simply identify which utterance is in play. More work is required to move forward in the cycle of interpretation. One needs the usual information about that utterance: Who? When? Suppose it is Richard Vallée (RV) who says (2). Fill in who that is, and we get the singular proposition [**3: D**]:

3. <RV, philosopher>.

[2]There is slightly different terminology employed at 28, 106, and other places—as, also following Perry, Vallée's usage evolves over time. For concreteness, we will stick with [**1: M**], [**2: C**], and [**3: D**]. We will call them "levels of *meaning*," exploiting the vagueness of that pretheoretic notion. In contrast, Vallée's 'content,' as a term of art, is tightly linked to the expressions 'proposition' and 'truth conditions': "In this picture, there is no difference between proposition, content, and truth conditions" (181). As we are about to see, level [**1: M**] is explicitly not propositional, hence it is a "meaning" but not a "content."

Content (3) is what utterances of 'I am a philosopher,' 'Richard Vallée is a philosopher,' and 'That man is a philosopher' have in common. It is the course-grained truth conditions. <RV, philosopher> is what is literally stated using those sentences. It is not reflexive but is rather "directly referential": i.e., of the general form <object *o* having property *P*>, or <objects o_1 and o_2 standing in relation *R*>, or…

3. A case study: Vallée on complex demonstratives

Vallée's overarching framework promises explanatory riches. He urges, in particular, that its pluri-propositional and reflexive dimensions can help with otherwise puzzling features of complex demonstratives, of gradable adjectives, of certain of the phenomena which Grice (1975) classifies as 'implicature,' and more besides. As noted, this aspect of Vallée's work is groundbreaking; various novel, interesting complexities arise and are explored.

Let us take a focused look at complex demonstratives. Consider (4):[3]

4. $[_S\ [_{NP}\ [_{DET}$ That] car][is yellow]]

From the perspective of old-fashioned philosophy of language, complex demonstratives stick out like sore thumbs, and have thus attracted much attention. (See the citations on 68 for a fairly comprehensive sampling of this literature.) Grammatically, they seem odd because they combine syntactic features of pure demonstratives ('that,' 'this') with aspects of definite descriptions ('the *F*'). They are like definite descriptions in containing a determiner and a nominal restriction, but they are unlike them in that said determiner belongs to a special category, namely context sensitive terms. Relatedly, an expression like 'That car' looks semantically odd. On the one hand, such phrases involve compositional machinery over descriptive material, and that would seem to put them in Russell's (1905) category of a "denoting phrase" (i.e., a quantificational NP). On the other hand, they seem to yield genuine reference to an object within *de re* singular propositions (e.g., <car_i, yellow>, where the first element of the pair is the object under discussion). Such seemingly quantificational-referential hybrids are at best unique and at worst impossible. Either way, their status cries out for treatment by philosophers of language.

Vallée rejects two broad approaches as promising but imperfect. There are, to coin some labels, *reference-over-satisfaction* views. These emphasize the context sensitivity of the determiner 'that' and reference for the complex 'that car.' 'Car,' goes the idea, merely helps the hearer find the right referent. It renders a certain object more salient, albeit via linguistic means; but, like manifestly staring at something and then saying 'that,' the contextual prop drops out of the proposition expressed. As Vallée nicely phrases it, on this view it is 'that' which genuinely refers, not 'that car' (56). Then there are *satisfaction-over-reference* views. They emphasize the nominal restriction 'car' and its descriptive content. An object must satisfy the condition specified by the word/phrase; and said condition thereby factors into the official truth-conditions. Phrased using jargon that we will later call into question, in *reference-over-satisfaction* the descriptive material 'car' is "merely pragmatic"; in *satisfaction-over-reference*, it is "genuinely semantic."

His highly innovative deployment of the pluri-propositional, reflexive-referential framework falls neatly into neither of the above. He argues that his meaning-levels provide a better overall account because each of the above misses something. We may summarize Vallée's stance on complex demonstratives with (5):

5. *Vallee's "Meanings" for 'That car is yellow'*

   [**1: M**] is a procedural direction: Find the utterance *u* in question. One object *x* is most salient

[3]We purposely employ dated syntactic structures and category labels (e.g., 'S' and 'NP') throughout because the details won't matter here, and the older formalisms will be more familiar to nonspecialists.

to the speaker *S* of said utterance. Take *S* to be communicating of *x* (where *x* is a car) that, at time *t* of the utterance *u*, *x* is yellow;

[**2: C**]: That rule of use, given an actual utterance of (4), yields something utterance-reflexive: One object *x* is most salient to the speaker *S* of u_1; *x* is a car and *x* is yellow at the time *t* of u_1;

[**3: D**]: This u_1-directed content, given the context of utterance, yields: <car_i, yellow, *t*>, car_i being the very object mentioned in u_1.

In brief, the story is platypuslike: the meaning is simultaneously satisfactional because of [**2: C**] and referential because of [**3: D**]:

> According to the view I am suggesting, the bare demonstrative in a [complex demonstrative] introduces an object into the official truth-conditions of the utterance … The nominal introduces a cognitively significant … constituent." (67)
>
> The reflexive content is a proposition and, hence, a truth-evaluable entity. It is also the cognitive value of the utterance … [Whereas] the nominal is semantically inert with respect to the Content D, not contributing anything to the Content D. (61–62)

This proposal has considerable advantages. Four spring immediately to mind. Imagine an exchange like (6):

6. (a) Who is that king?
   (b) [That king] is [that man we saw wearing a funny hat yesterday].

At least on a very simple reference-over-satisfaction approach, there is only a singular proposition in play, whose constituents are the identity relation and an ordered pair containing the same person twice over: e.g., <=, <George IV, George IV>>. Hence, very implausibly, (6b) is predicted to function just like 'That is that' as far as semantics is concerned. The reference-over-satisfaction approach elides cognitive significance. Vallée offers a solution: said difference lies in content [**2: C**]. Continuing with the example, Vallée's content [**2: C**] for 'that king' would refer to the utterance of the first NP (call that u_k), whereas the content [**2: C**] for 'that man we saw wearing the funny hat yesterday' would refer to the utterance of the second NP (call that u_m). Crucially, u_k and u_m are utterances of different sentence types. So, an utterance of (6b) is different from both 'that is that' and from 'that king is that king.' A second advantage: rule (5) isn't ad hoc, with an otherwise unattested mechanism introduced to deal with complex demonstratives. As we stressed at the outset, Vallée's reflexive pluri-propositional perspective applies widely. Moreover, as Vallée points out, the restriction does its usual job of imposing a satisfaction condition that is met or not depending upon how the world happens to be. Advantage number three. Vallée's story also accounts for what happens with a "misdemonstration." A use of 'that king' or 'that car' seems to go awry when the object referred to is not a king/car in a way that isn't parallel to staring or gesturing in a misleading direction while using a bare demonstrative. Such an error is correctly classed as "properly semantic." Fourth and finally, let us underscore a feature of Vallée's proposal which is easily missed. In complex demonstratives, there is material in [**1: M**] that does not make its way into the corresponding [**3: D**]. Therein lies what he calls "overarticulation" of the type-meaning vis-à-vis the official truth-conditions. Precisely because what is "overarticulated" falls out of [**3: D**], Vallée's rule rightly treats the official truth-conditions as genuinely singular—as if the contribution to "what is said" had been directly referential, say via a proper name or pure indexical.

4. Twin difficulties facing the framework

As befits the halfway mark, let us summarize. We began by overviewing the contents of *Words and Contents.* We then briefly presented the background framework. It is pluri-propositional in the

sense that utterances express at least two propositional contents. It is reflexive twice over. There are the reflexive contents of the specific utterance. And the type meaning, a procedural rule of use, is metalinguistic as well. Recall [**1: M**] for 'that car.' It tells the hearer to find the utterance *u* of 'that car'; it tells her that one object is most salient to the utterer of 'that car' at the time 'that car' is spoken. There are nonreflexive propositions expressed too, as "official truth conditions." Summarizing in terms of predecessors, there is the influence of both Austin (1962) and Reichenbach (1947) in that [**1: M**] is a reflexive rule of use. [**2: C**] does Fregean (1892) work. And [**3: D**] captures the singular contents of Russell/Kaplan et al. To illustrate the framework's virtues beyond indexical pronouns, we applied it to complex demonstratives like (4):

4. $[_{S}\ [_{NP}\ [_{DET}$ That] car] [is yellow]]

Vallée proposed a clever amalgam of reference-over-satisfaction with satisfaction-over-reference approaches. As such, it promised the benefits of each more familiar alternative, with the failings of neither.

The volume abounds with other applications.

In what remains, we raise two sorts of difficulties corresponding to the "pluri" aspect of the view and to the "reflexive" aspect. We thereafter diagnose a potential source of these flaws in an equivocation on 'semantic.' We end with a suggestion which takes Vallée's laudable pluralism a step further than he does, thereby avoiding these pitfalls.

The first difficulty: on the present framework, all *contents* of *utterances* must be propositional. Yes, the types have nonpropositional meanings, namely, rules of use. But tokens/"speakings" have only "contents," where the latter are by definition claimlike. It is part and parcel of Vallée's whole approach that for every challenge, additional propositions are the solution. He posits them for troubling (lexical) parts: there are additional propositional constituents for the first-person plural pronouns, contextuals ('enemy,' 'foreign'), and colour terms. He posits them for problematic grammatical combinations: there are additional truth-conditions corresponding to complex demonstratives, graded adjective phrases ('tall man'), and differentially informative sentences.

Vallée is inclined to describe this as a "feature" rather than a "bug." Uniformity is simplicity, he maintains, and hence theoretically desirable (xiii). Not in this case. The exclusive reliance of propositions has, as a consequence, that Vallée always faces a pair of questions:

7. (a) Which proposition is it exactly?
   (b) How exactly is it conveyed?

Each question introduces a subdifficulty.

We will illustrate with slurring words. Vallée's view (162) is that (8a) carries the conventional implicature (8b):

8. (a) Hans is a Boche.
   (b) Hans is German and despicable because of being German.

This seems to us a partially correct answer to (7b) because it is not the case that *is despicable because of being German* is part of the "official" truth conditions (163). We agree that no such thing is literally asserted/claimed/stated. However, and this is the first subdifficulty, Vallée doesn't provide enough evidence against various alternatives with respect to the "How conveyed?" question. Once one is committed to the "extra content" being a proposition, the means of conveyance could be via generalized conversational implicature, via a special kind of manner implicature, or via presupposition.

Nor are we sanguine about the possibility of responding by simply laying out the evidence against these other options, because of the second subdifficulty. To our minds, (7a) is a pseudoquestion

when posed about a slur's alleged present-but-unasserted proposition. 'What is the extra proposition?' has a false presupposition. There is no such thing because the meaning difference between a slurring word and its neutral counterpart is descriptively ineffable. This is now widely recognized in the literature, so we will merely provide a hint of a defense here and direct the reader to Diaz-Legaspe, Liu, and Stainton (2020), which pursues the details. We'll also revisit "slurring content" at the very end. We think it's clear on the face of it that *is despicable* is too precise. Similarly, for *is contemptible* and *is appalling*. More deeply, no exact paraphrase is fully satisfactory. A potential reply: (7a) isn't really a pseudoquestion. It merely calls for an answer in terms of borderless concepts or a penumbral cluster. Granted, that would render Vallée's actual gloss incorrect. But it would leave his pluri-propositional strategy intact. We're unmoved. First, it's not clear to us whether Vallée's framework allows such contents. More deeply, the meaning of slurring words is more descriptively ineffable than that. It isn't a matter of open-endedness. The problem can't be overcome by massaging the details. The contrast in meaning between (pardon the word) 'chink' and its neutral counterpart, let alone the N-word versus 'Black person,' cannot be captured by *any* proposition. We would echo what Davidson (1978) says about metaphor: to look for a state of affairs which distinguishes *Hans being a Boche* from *Hans being German* is akin to looking for the clichéd "1000 words" that captures the exact worth of, say, Picasso's *Guernica*.

Another problem with Vallée's answer to (7a) is that anyone who understands 'chink' or 'spic' would need to possess, on his view, not just the concept *despicable* but *is despicable because of*.... Yet young children can (unfortunately) use and understand such slurring words. That takes us to the second difficulty.

Vallée's framework seemingly attributes to ordinary speakers a great deal of hyperintellectualized knowledge of linguistic contents. We may highlight the point by considering something even more straightforward than the [**1: M**]-rule for 'That car is yellow.' Consider 'Are you hungry?':

9. *Vallée-Style Rule-of-Use for 'Are You Hungry?'*

[**1: M**] Find the utterance *u* in question. Identify the time *t*, speaker *S* and addressee *A* of said utterance. Take the speaker *S* to be asking *A* whether *A* is hungry at *t*.

Given what a corresponding [**2: C**] content will look like, what concepts must one have at their disposal to competently use and understand 'Are you hungry?' on Vallée's approach? At least SPEAKER, ADDRESSEE and UTTERANCE. We find it doubtful that *all* language users can deploy even these: does every three-year-old know what an addressee is, let alone an utterance? Consider how hard it is to explain to undergraduates the type/token/utterance contrast! What about adults suffering from dementia? Worse, even run-of-the-mill folk may not grasp THE TIME OF THIS VERY UTTERANCE. If this already sounds demanding, revisit rule (5) itself for 'That car is yellow': it is even more hyperintellectualized. Now consider a sentence which contains a series of the expressions dealt with in the book:

10. We even saw the local Boche who owns that big red car.

This includes, in addition to a complex demonstrative, a first-person plural pronoun ('we'), a conventional implicature ('even'), a contextual ('local'), a slurring word ('Boche'), a graded adjective ('big car'), and a colour term ('red'). According to Vallée, each will add its own subvariety of reflexive content. So, an utterance of (10) will have many reflexive contents, of many sorts. Now, it must be conceded, (10) is a complex expression. Some young children would have difficulty using and understanding it. Nonetheless, we and our academic peers do not; yet it's implausible that even our linguistic knowledge and online processing encompass so very much.

There is an obvious potential reply. We said, guardedly, that Vallée "seemingly" attributes a great deal of hyperintellectualized knowledge. One might be tempted to respond in either of two ways:

(a) it is only a "seeming" because Vallée is not telling a psychological story; or (b) his is a psychological story but it's all subpersonal. Let us consider each.

The first potential line of defense doesn't pan out because it jars with the Perry-style demands placed upon reflexive contents. The focus of these theorists is *cognitive*—not an abstract, Platonic, logico-linguistic formal system. In particular, a large measure of the motivation for going pluri-propositional is to explain things which stump referentialists such as Mill: e.g., one not reacting in the same way to coreferential terms (e.g., 'My pants are on fire' versus 'That man's pants are on fire' or 'I am Richard Vallée' versus 'Richard Vallée is Richard Vallée').

One might try to save Vallée's rules by suggesting that a theorist can use them to rationally reconstruct the observed behaviors. Relatedly, in a broadly Davidsonian (1976) vein, one might hold that a causal role for the contents is not genuinely necessary for an explanation; all that's required is that the posited rules, were they known, would suffice to yield the observed behavior. Hence, claims of psychological reality aren't required after all. We demur because that sort of explanation is not acceptable in general. No one should be satisfied, for instance, with: 'Though the morbillivirus is not present, it would suffice to yield the patient's symptoms if it were; so, what explains her symptoms is the measles.' Given that such gambits yield terrible explanations in general, a move of that sort by Vallée would be equally undesirable. Returning to the example: by our lights, what's genuinely required to capture the impact of 'My pants' as opposed to 'That man's pants' are different etiologies.

What's more, Vallée seems to agree. For instance, in the particular case of grasping the meaning of 'we,' Vallée (chapter 2) makes multiple (seemingly not-merely-reconstructive) demands on ordinary speakers:

> "I exploit these [reflexive contents] when I interpret [an utterance]." (29)
>
> "Monopropositionalism does not account for the reasoning we do when hearing [an] utterance in order to zoom in from the available reflexive contents to the relevant reflexive content and official truth-conditions of the utterance." (39)

Similar causal requirements are echoed at various points later on in the volume, such as in chapter 3 on complex demonstratives (51), chapter 4 on implicit comparison classes (78–79), chapter 6 on contextuals (138), and in chapter 7 on slurs (157). So, these reflexive contents are, for Vallée, charged with playing psychologically real roles. Rightly so. Absent causal efficacy, no genuine explanation is forthcoming.

The second potential response is that his is a psychological story positing a series of very sophisticated inner representations; however, the knowledge is tacit. It is comparable to knowledge of language in generative grammar. Put otherwise, the theorist uses very abstract representations to describe the mechanisms. So, understanding her tools is very cognitively demanding. That makes things sound hyperintellectualized: e.g., something outside the ken of a young child. But, in fact, though the theorist may, the language user doesn't "know" these rules in the sense of 'know' from commonsense. They are merely psychophysical causes, which mechanically produce behaviors.

This is unpromising on two fronts. Unlike the case of generative grammar, there is no independent evidence of rules like (5) and (9)—not from acquisition, clinical deficits, online errors, etc., nor even from unexpected (un)grammaticality. There's no reason to believe that there is anything in our overall linguistic competence, conscious or otherwise, to be described in this logicomathematical way. More deeply, even if there were tacit rules, such subpersonal processes do not rationalize; they don't, taken alone, explain the actions of the person. In Chomsky-style explanations, the personal-level agent doesn't have the relevant concepts; nor, then, would a person using Vallée's (5) and (9). Yet cognitive significance is supposed to *make sense* of what *agents* do. That is, the suggestion has been that people intend others to believe these contents; and that such beliefs may interact with desires and other propositional attitudes to motivate action. Remember that Fregean aspirations are a core part of Perry's framework, and Vallée approvingly cites them, at multiple places. (See, for example, 50 and 79.) Besides, once again, this simply is not Vallée's approach. Recall the quotations immediately above. His

"I exploit" looks personal-level and rationalizing, as does his "the reasoning we do." His choice of terms is apt, no slip of the pen, given the contents' functions.

Neither of the potential responses rescue Vallée from attributing hyperintellectualized linguistic knowledge to persons. He really must, as an empirical hypothesis, saddle ordinary utterances and our knowledge of their meaning with many, many reflexive contents—more than is plausible given human psychology.

To summarize this section, we spied trouble with the pluri-propositional aspect of Vallée's framework in that, for every explanatory challenge, he posits more propositions. But then, for each one posited, two questions arise: What exactly is it? And how exactly is it conveyed? Answers go begging because the whole issue is ill posed. We spied trouble with the second fundamental tenet, the reflexive one, as well. Those additional propositions in particular are implausibly demanding, psychologically speaking. Looking ahead, our suggested fix will rest on this: if one didn't need to recourse to so many propositions, one could avoid much of the hyperintellectualizing.[4]

5. A potential diagnosis: Equivocation on senses of 'semantic'

The book's contents and background framework have been explained. We've looked at two applications and noted twin difficulties. In the present section, we hazard a diagnosis both in general and specifically regarding the application to complex demonstratives: there is an equivocation on a complex, protean term 'semantics,' which infects much of the field. We will end by pressing Vallée's promising insights even farther than he himself did, thereby making progress on the difficulties from section 4.

There are multiple senses of 'semantics.' Two are especially important here:[5]

> **Semantics$_{\text{Type}}$**: The linguistically encoded type meaning. That is, the meaning which is conventionally assigned to the expression in the shared tongue. Linguistic mastery amounts to knowledge of this.
> **Semantics$_{\text{Truth}}$**: Meaning which pertains to reference-conditions (for parts), truth-conditions (for wholes), and entailment proclivities.

These are clearly not the same notion intensionally speaking. Nor are they coextensive in the case of the vernacular.

Meanings, in some pretheoretical sense, come in subvarieties. There's the merely conveyed versus the full-on stated, the decoded versus the inferred, names which refer versus sentences which are true/false. There are, we'd add, subvarieties within semantics$_{\text{Truth}}$ which do not belong in semantics$_{\text{Type}}$. Conversational implicatures provide a ready example. They involve reference and truth conditions; the things suggested/implied/intended stand in entailment relations. Yet they are paradigm cases of *un*encoded meaning. An example. Asked 'Would you buy a Mercedes?,' a person who responds with sentence (11), notwithstanding potential cancelability, deniability, etc., in some sense puts forward something bearing semantic$_{\text{Truth}}$ properties, namely the propositions *I would not buy a Mercedes* and *A Mercedes is an expensive European car*.

11. I don't like expensive European cars.

[4]There are various other questions about the general suitability of these reflexive contents. For example: How does the framework apply to unspoken *thoughts*? Not only does the statement 'That king is my best friend' differ epistemically, semantically, and modally from 'My best friend is my best friend,' the thought *that king is my best friend* differs in just the same way. No utterance-centered story would seem capable of capturing that.

[5]For additional senses and more details, see Ezcurdia and Stainton (2013).

Failure of coextension in one direction, then. There are also subvarieties within $\text{semantics}_{\text{Type}}$ which don't pertain to $\text{semantics}_{\text{Truth}}$. Consider the difference between otherwise synonymous expressions with contrasting sociolinguistic registers. The variance in meaning between French's 'vous' (singular) and 'tu' is real and important, but not a matter of the kind of people they are true of. Again, the variance among the system of words which all designate feces—'poop,' 'shit,' 'excrement,' 'stool,' 'turd,' 'night soil'—is likewise a matter of what discourse situations each is suited for. (We'll expand on this in section 6.) The first, 'poop,' is fit, as a matter of linguistic convention, to be used in child-oriented talk; the second is vulgar; the third is designed, in terms of its linguistic function, for academic/clinical situations, etc. Nor, to anticipate an objection, is a speaker of (12) inevitably stating, presupposing or suggesting that their addressee is a child:

12. There is poop on Richard's lawn.

Even more starkly, phatic words such as 'bye' and 'gesundheit' simply lack $\text{semantics}_{\text{Truth}}$. But for the grip of an ideology, one wouldn't think to ask under what circumstances these were true or false. Still less would one inquire about their "cognitive significance" as opposed to their "official truth conditions." QED.

Should one simply dismiss these nontruth-conditional differences as not really part of meaning? Might one simply declare that they have no place in $\text{semantics}_{\text{Type}}$? That would certainly bring the meaning varieties in its extension into closer correspondence with those in $\text{semantics}_{\text{Truth}}$. However, the differences between 'poop' versus 'turd' and 'congrats' versus 'bye' are clearly not a mere matter of form. Like meanings of the truth-theoretic sort, they are instead closely tied to proper linguistic usage in conversational exchanges. What's more, despite the shared $\text{semantics}_{\text{Truth}}$ (whether because of the same reference or the joint absence of reference), a translator who rendered Spanish 'excremento' as 'poop,' or 'bye' as 'hola,' would have mixed up their meanings; and we very appropriately tutor young children and foreigners in the meaning differences among 'engaging in sexual intercourse,' 'screwing' and 'fucking' and among 'gesundheit,' 'cheers' and 'amen.'

Continuing with our potential diagnosis, consider how neglecting all this might lead to mischief. The following implicit argument becomes very tempting:

P1: Conventionally specified, encoded, meaning which is part of linguistic knowledge constitutes the semantic. [By definition]
P2: Semantic meaning pertains exactly to entailment, reference, and truth-conditions. [By definition]
C1: Conventionally specified, encoded, meaning which is part of linguistic knowledge pertains exactly to entailment, reference- and truth-conditions. [by P1 and P2]

C1 obviously encourages, as a general matter, the overpopulation of language with propositional contents. As a specific case in point, recall the puzzle about complex demonstratives like (4) and (6b), repeated below:

4. That car is yellow.

6b. [That king] is [that man we saw wearing a funny hat yesterday].

Vallée asked: Is the role of the nominal restriction (i.e., 'car'/'king') semantic or not? Satisfaction-over-reference theorists emphasized conventional encoding, what knowledge of linguistic meaning is involved, etc. Doing so, the temptation is to infer:

P4: The conventionally specified meaning of 'That *F* is *G*' includes being an *F*.
C2: Being an *F* is part of the semantics of complex demonstratives. [by P1 and P4]

The reference-over-satisfaction contingent point out, among other things, that one doesn't say 'That's false' to 'That king is from Belgium,' just on the grounds that he isn't a genuine king but is merely dressed like one. (That response would seem appropriate if its meaning really were conjunctive, including *he is a king* as a "semantic" conjunct.) The contrary conclusion beckons:

P5: The truth conditions for 'That *F* is *G*' don't include being an *F*.
C3: Being an *F* is not part of the semantics of complex demonstratives. [by P2 and P5]

Vallée, we saw, ingeniously split the difference to overcome the "puzzle." He agrees that **C2** is correct. However, it is correct only about a reflexive content: the nominal's restriction is (merely) part of the level [**2: C**] truth-condition. In particular, the descriptive material provided by the nominal in (4) is:

One object *x* is most salient to the speaker *S* of u_1; *x* is a car and *x* is yellow at the time *t* of u_1.

Meanwhile, Vallée agrees that **C3** is also correct. Applied to our example, the descriptive content $\lambda x.$ *car*(*x*) is not part of the "official" truth condition for (4). Instead, the level [**3: D**] result is the *de re*:

<car_i, yellow, *t*>

Herein lies the mischief of the equivocation. To overcome the impasse, Vallée posits two propositions. Both sides are right, but about different contents. This may represent a significant improvement (assuming for the nonce that reconciliation is the right goal). It certainly exemplifies the originality and insight we underscored at the very outset. However, it lands Vallée with the last section's twin difficulties, here specifically with respect to complex demonstratives.

What's the alternative for reconciling satisfaction-over-reference with reference-over-satisfaction without additional propositions? Disambiguate. Both sides can be right because they are using 'semantic' in different ways. **C2** looks plausible with respect to $\text{semantics}_{\text{Type}}$; **C3** looks plausible with respect to $\text{semantics}_{\text{Truth}}$.

6. From reform to revolution

We began by praising Vallée' work as introducing not just novel issues but innovative methods. It's a paradigm to be built upon. In this final section, we try to do just that. We'll frame our discussion in terms of his reforms, and how we'd press beyond them to something more revolutionary.

As a preliminary, we need to explain very briefly what Vallée is moving forward from. Within Early Analytic philosophy, there was a very reasonable focus on truth, evidence, and logical relations. Frege, Russell, Tarski, Church et al. brilliantly developed artificial logical languages for modeling those. What we'll call High Church Formalism is a tradition which grows out of the calculi of these pioneers. It retained, when theorizing about natural languages, the narrow focus. As a result, natural languages such Amharic, Bengali, Cantonese, Dutch, Ewe, etc., were treated, but for some curious epicycles, basically like the Predicate Calculus and Intensional Logical.

Vallée and his fellow travelers advanced matters by (i) switching the focus to "on the hoof" communication in ordinary utterance contexts and (ii) highlighting more contents (in the plural, as per the book's title). Vallée pushes (ii) forward on dual fronts. Some meanings, namely those of expression types, are rules of use. Nor are utterance meanings exhausted by "official truth-conditions." And yet, despite repeatedly emphasizing that his concern is communication rather than logic, Vallée ends up staying too close to the Formalist tradition, with its primacy of truth-conditional/referential contents. For reasons we'll explore shortly, this strikes us as a deep mistake.

First, a digression into an important question left open in section 5. How could Vallée, of all people, run the two notions of "semantics" together? What could have induced a conflation between (what should now appear) two obviously different things—so as, e.g., to implicitly

license the fallacious inference from **P1/P2** to **C1**? Vallée's focus, after all, are constructions whose encoded meanings are not *per se* truth evaluable. In particular, the manners in which $\text{semantics}_{\text{Truth}}$ and $\text{semantics}_{\text{Type}}$ part ways are central to understanding indexical pronouns such as 'we,' demonstratives (whether simple or complex), and (more controversially) comparison classes, contextuals, and colour terms. More than that, the contrasts among his meaning levels echo the disambiguations of 'semantic.' Nonetheless, Vallée seems to embrace (what is by our lights) the fateful slide in so many words. He writes, for instance: "The linguistic meaning of a term is a property of an expression as type and a rule assigning the truth-conditional contribution…" (49) and "If ['Hans is German' and 'Hans is a Boche'] do not share the same linguistic meaning, they cannot share the same truth conditions" (160; see also 97). In his book, there appears no explicit recognition of meanings that have *nothing whatever* to do with truth or reference. Our ultimate diagnosis is a historical hangover: he adopts as his departure point symbolic systems wherein $\text{semantics}_{\text{Truth}}$ and $\text{semantics}_{\text{Type}}$ are roughly coextensive. Given that, it may seem innocent enough to equate them in natural language too, worrying only about that "roughly."

Returning to the main thread, our alternative suggestion is to press Vallée's insights to their logical end. To take even more seriously the richness of actual conversational interaction. To insist that various kinds of "nonlogical" interactions are fundamental, not curious outliers. Thus, the semanticist's paradigm shouldn't be a philosophical debate in the pages of *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, let alone a mathematical proof. Rather, if one must identify "core cases," Austinian ones would be better: bidding farewell with 'bye,' comforting with 'there, there,' and closing a prayer service with 'amen.' Encapsulated in a slogan, *pace* Montague (1970), English, far from theoretically indistinguishable from a formal language, isn't even in the same species.

Fleshing out the sloganeering, in some cases, to give an expression's meaning is simply to describe its job in linguistic interactions. Not all the ways that the linguistic device is used, but how it is supposed to be used: its function in our "language games." Let's apply this ever so briefly to some examples from Section 5. To give the standing linguistic meaning of a phatic expression such as 'bye' or 'gesundheit' is simply to say: 'bye' is the informal word for parting; 'gesundheit' is the word one uses when someone else has sneezed. To specify the contrasting $\text{semantics}_{\text{Type}}$ of a formal-register pronoun and its informal sister is to say, e.g., that 'vous' is the second person singular which is apt for social superiors of some kind. As for the contrasting "colouring/shading/tone" among words having the same $\text{semantics}_{\text{Truth}}$, recall (12):

12. There is poop on Richard's lawn.

But for ideology, but for a Formalist "hangover," it would be obvious that there is no place laden with poop but not excrement/shit; obvious that a user of (12) is not stating, nor even conveying in some other way, that the addressee is a child. Instead, to specify the use-theoretic aspect of 'poop' is simply to say that, among the system of co-referring terms, 'poop' is lexically marked as [+ child-oriented, – clinical, + slang].

Putting our "out-Vallée even Vallée" reflections another way, philosophical logic has proven a very valuable enterprise. But, as with philosophy of biology—which rightly has no truck with species or methods of reproduction which are merely logically possible—philosophy *of language* must pay far more attention to mundane worldly facts than a philosophy of the Predicate Calculus, or even a philosophy of modal or tense logic. Doing so, one must expand upon Vallée's meaning pluralism. Add more genuine varieties of type-meanings, including rules-of-use for words, phrases, and sentences pertaining not just to the resulting propositional contents of utterances, but to when and where to use such-and-such "verbal implement," and to what sociocultural ends. Add more genuine kinds of utterance-meanings beyond Vallée's "contents." Not just more denominations, more currencies.

To illustrate the payoffs of revolution over reform, we'll end by revisiting slurring words. The problem, recall, was that in taking all utterance contents to be propositional, Vallée was burdened with questions (7 a–b):

7. (a) What exactly is the propositional content?
   (b) How exactly is it conveyed?

His answer to "How conveyed?" about slurs was: via conventional implicature. His answer to "What is conveyed?," applied to example (8a), may be distilled as:

13. *Vallée-Style Rule for 'Hans is a Boche'*

> Given that 'Hans is a Boche' is in English, an utterance of *u* of 'Hans is a Boche' is true if and only if (i) the person that the convention exploited by 'Hans is a Boche' allows one to designate with the particular utterance u_1 of 'Hans' is German and (ii) that person is despicable because of it. (161–62)

We urged that treating slurring as specifically an implicature of the conventional sort was underevidenced. We added that (7a) has a false presupposition and, hence, Vallée's answer *is despicable because of being German* is wide of the mark in a deep and irreparable way. What's more, his rule is manifestly implausible as an account of what the agent who understands 'Boche' must know: it requires, e.g., understanding of the concepts ENGLISH, UTTERANCE, CONVENTION and DESIGNATING.

Our radical way forward is to maintain that a slurring word and its neutral counterpart differ with respect to an entirely different kind of meaning. Here, begging pardon again for offensive terms, is a last set of examples:

14. *Slurring words for Jewish Person*
   (a) abe
   (b) hebe
   (c) hymie
   (d) kike
   (e) yid

As far as reference/truth goes, we hold that all of (14a–e) are equivalent. We don't merely mean that the "official truth conditions" are the same. There is no difference in "contents" in Vallee's technical sense at all—not at any "level," no matter how conveyed. The propositional contribution of 'hebe' is exactly that of 'Jewish person' (except, of course, in hyperintensional contexts, wherein even synonyms cannot be substituted salva veritate). Notwithstanding this, it seems to us perfectly obvious that none of (14a–e) has exactly the same *meaning* as 'Jewish person.' What's more, they differ meaningwise among themselves: some are more offensive than others with 'abe' being the least aggressive and 'kike' being the worst. Only someone under the sway of a stipulative terminology would treat them all as synonyms with the neutral designator. How can all this be? Because $\text{semantics}_{\text{Type}}$ far outpaces $\text{semantics}_{\text{Truth}}$. Because, more specifically, the difference in meaning among (14a–e) is wholly use-theoretic; more specifically still, there is contrasting sociolinguistic register, comparable to the difference between 'shit' versus 'feces' or 'tu' versus 'vous.' All are, to varying degrees, impolite, derogatory slang. The NP 'Jewish person,' in contrast, is the socioculturally appropriate and polite wording option for naming that same group.

This is why (7a) was a pseudoquestion: there is no "extra" proposition hereabouts to paraphrase. And what information needs to be stored in the lexical entries of language

users—including the young child, the second language learner, and the translator? Something not especially intellectualized, viz, that there are various word choices for referring to Jewish people, and (14a–e) are nasty options which ought (with varying degrees of firmness) to be avoided.

7. Summary

Words and Contents is an extremely valuable contribution to the literature. As Vallée notes at the outset, it explores a different perspective on different natural language expressions (ix). Vallée's pluri-propositional and reflexive framework develops a novel variant on Perry's and applies it to a diverse and impressive range of challenging constructions. Multiple meanings systematically attach to types and utterances of them. There is the rule of use for the potential utterances, meaning [**1: M**]. It, in turn, gives rise in context to (at least) two propositional contents. There's the familiar content [**3: D**] so important to direct reference theorists. There are also in-between reflexive contents (our focus was on content [**2: C**]).

All of this is so original that it's unsurprising that it leaves open issues to be pursued by future researchers and may call for some rethinks. We drew attention to issues with both the reflexive and pluri-propositional aspects of the general perspective. We conjectured that an equivocation on 'semantic,' itself a historical aftereffect, may ultimately underlie these. Although at the [**1: M**] level of meaning, Vallée is more pluralist and context-aware than some Frege-to-Kaplan formal semantic traditionalists, he remains too monolithic about utterance contents. He squeezes too many different phenomena into just one sort of mold, i.e., claim-type truth-conditional contents. To repeat our suggested escape: having multiple meanings is an excellent idea, but, as per Vallée's perfectly appropriate focus on actual conversational interaction, one should allow various semantic meanings (in the "deriving from the type" sense) which are genuinely use-theoretic.

We recommend the book in the highest terms.

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