

Unresponsive Bach

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My paper, "Good and Bad Bach", describes Bach's position on the semantics-pragmatics issue and then makes four objections. The first objection is to Bach's austere notion of what-is-said. The other three are to Bach's conservative methodology for deciding what is "semantic". I object to his "Modified Occam's Razor"; to his "correspondence" principle that I describe as "the tyranny of syntax"; and to his application of his notion of standardization. Bach's "Reply to Michael Devitt on Meaning and Reference" is very disappointing. He fails even to mention my objections to his positions on what-is-said and standardization. And he makes hardly any serious attempt to address my objections to his Modified Occam's Razor and the tyranny of syntax. All my objections still stand.

Keywords: Semantics, pragmatics, meaning, methodology, what is said, Modified Occam's Razor, dead metaphors, definite descriptions, conventions, standardization, tyranny of syntax, pragmatic derivations.

1. Introduction

My paper, "Good and Bad Bach" ("GBB": 2013c),¹ describes Kent Bach's interesting and distinctive position on the vexed semantics versus pragmatics issue and then makes four objections. The first objection is to Bach's austere notion of *what-is-said*. The other three are to Bach's conservative methodology for deciding what is "semantic". I object to his "Modified Occam's Razor"; to his "correspondence" principle that I describe as "the tyranny of syntax"; and to his application of his notion of *standardization*.

Bach's "Replies to My Critics" (2013)² is prompted by several papers including GBB. He begins "Replies" as follows:

¹ All unspecific citations to my work are to this paper.

² All unspecific citations to Bach's work are to this paper.

Since obviously I can't respond to everything, I will try to address what strike me as the most important questions they ask and objections they raise. I think I have decent answers to some questions and decent responses to some objections, in other cases it seems enough to clarify the relevant view, and in still others I need to modify the view in question. (217)

The part of his "Replies" prompted by GBB, "Reply to Michael Devitt on Meaning and Reference" (232–44), is, then, a real disappointment. (1) He discusses the *topics* of two of my objections at some length—what-is-said and standardization—without even mentioning my *objections*! Does he perhaps think that the objections are so unimportant? Or, is his thought rather that it is "enough to clarify" his views without addressing the objections? I shall briefly identify these two objections (sections 2 and 3), without repeating the details, leaving it to the public to decide whether Bach's failure to mention them can be justified on either of those grounds. (2) In discussing the topics of my other two objections, Bach does mention the objections but, I shall argue (sections 4 and 5), makes hardly any serious attempt to address them. His responses do not come close to being "decent". These two objections of mine have much wider significance than simply for Bach's philosophy because, unlike the unmentioned objections, they are aimed at principles that are widely held: Modified Occam's Razor and the tyranny of syntax. Most of the present paper will be concerned with them.

2. *Bach's Austere What-Is-Said*

The first objection that goes unmentioned is to the austerity of Bach's "semantic" notion of what-is-said. Like many people's notion, Bach's what-is-said *includes* properties of an utterance arising from conventions, disambiguations, and the reference fixing of pure indexicals (and tenses). What is distinctive about Bach's notion is that he *excludes* properties arising from the reference fixing of demonstratives, pronouns, and proper names.³ When Bruce utters, "I went to the bank", having a certain financial institution in mind, what he says is the complete singular proposition that he, Bruce, went to that institution. But when Sheila utters, "He went to the bank" or "Bruce went to the bank", having Bruce and the institution in mind, that proposition is *not* what Sheila says but rather an "implicature". What she says is "semantically incomplete", only "a propositional radical" (233).

³ Bach insists that we should talk of *speakers using these terms to refer* in a context and not of *the terms themselves referring* in that context. He rejects (234) my claim that this issue is just verbal (176 n. 11). But it *is* just verbal. Bach agrees that there is a convention of speakers using these terms to refer to the object the speaker has in mind (is appropriately causally linked to). So we can simply *stipulate* that when a speaker so uses a term *it* conventionally refers to that object.

Bach supports this austerity by claiming that the reference fixing of demonstratives, pronouns, and proper names, unlike that of pure indexicals, is dependent on speakers' intentions. GBB argues against this alleged support (178–80), summing up as follows:

the role of speakers' intentions does not provide a theoretically sound motivation for excluding the referents of demonstratives, pronouns and... names, from what is said while including the referents of pure indexicals. The referents of the latter depend as much on speakers' intentional participation in referential conventions as does the referents of the former. The intentions needed for reference are not communicative intentions but, even if they were, that would not support discrimination against demonstratives, pronouns, and names when including referents in what is said. (180)

Instead of addressing this argument against his theoretical motivation, Bach accuses me of ignoring his motivation!⁴ “Devitt completely neglects the theoretical motivations underlying my semantic notion of what is said” (233). He cites only one passage that I am alleged to have neglected. In this passage, Bach claims to motivate:

a notion of what is said that applies uniformly to four situations: (1) where the speaker means what he says and something else as well (cases of implicature and of indirect speech acts in general), (2) where the speaker (intentionally) says one thing and means something else instead (nonliteral utterances), (3) where the speaker does not say what he intends to say, as in the misuse of a word or a slip of the tongue, and (4) where the speaker says something but doesn't mean anything at all. (2001: 17–18)

I neglected this passage for two reasons. First, because I entirely agree with it: we do need a notion of what is said that applies uniformly to those four situations. Second, the passage is quite beside the point because it does nothing to motivate Bach's austere what-is-said over a more generous one that most people, including me, favor, as it is easy to see (Devitt 2013a).

3. *Bach's Standardization*

The second objection that goes unmentioned is one of my three objections to Bach's methodology for deciding what is “semantic”. This methodology has the conservative effect of ruling out new meanings. And the unmentioned objection is to Bach's claim that many regularities in usage – for example, referential uses of descriptions – are to be explained not as conventionalizations but as *standardizations*.

GBB argues against these purported explanations at some length (190–5), summing up as follows:

Standardizations are thought to differ from conventionalizations in their relation to “mutual beliefs” and in their involving streamlined pragmatic in-

⁴ He also insists, as if it settles the issue in his favor, that “what is said is...the content of a locutionary act” not an illocutionary one (233). But, as I make clear, that is my view too (171 n. 3), and is beside the issue. The issue is over what goes into the content of the locutionary act.

ferences. I have argued that Bach's account of this distinction is not satisfactory. More importantly, he has not shown that his favorite cases of standardization are not conventionalizations. And that is what I suspect they mostly are. (196–7)

So the focus of my discussion is on (A) “mutual belief” and (B) “streamlining”.

Concerning (A), Bach's view on the differing relations of standardization and conventionalization to mutual belief is as follows:

Conventionalization entails that an utterance of a certain form of words would not have the force it has but for the existence of a general mutual belief that it counts as such. Standardization entails no such thing. (Bach 1995: 683)

Both standardization and conventionalization involve mutual belief but conventionalization entails some stronger dependence on it than does standardization. I pose a puzzle about this. If “force” here meant *conventional* force, then Bach would obviously not have explained the alleged difference. Yet if it means *speaker* force, then the claim is false, as the life and death of a metaphor shows (see section 4 below). I express the hope that Bach “will try to clear up this puzzle”. Bach does not oblige. Nor does he mention the “two tricky questions” that I claim he would still face even if he did clear up the puzzle.⁵ (I) A constitutive question: “Why do we need this stronger dependence, whatever it may be, for an explanation of linguistic meaning?” (II) An epistemic one: “What is the evidence that this stronger dependence, whatever it may be, is *lacking* in Bach's favorite examples of standardization...?” (191).

Concerning (B), Bach claims that standardization, unlike conventionalization, involves a “streamlined” pragmatic inference. Once again, I raise “two tricky questions” for Bach's account that he does not mention. (I) A constitutive question: “We noted in (A) that Bach's standardization involves “mutual belief”. How does that mesh with the view that standardization involves streamlined inference?”. (II) An epistemic question: “There seems to be no reason to suppose that hearers *do* go through such default reasoning in Bach's favorite cases of standardization.” (193)

In this section and the last I have briefly identified objections to Bach's position that I made in GBB (2013c). I refer readers to that paper for details of the objections.

4. *Modified Occam's Razor*

Another of my three objections to Bach's conservative methodology for deciding what is semantic is to his commitment to the very popular Modified Occam's Razor: “Senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity”. I applaud this Razor if it is construed as

⁵ But he does curiously misrepresent my view of conventions, claiming that I “clearly” resist the idea that that something like what he calls “mutual belief” “is necessary for a certain use of an expression to be conventional” (237). In fact, I clearly affirm just that (190).

advising against positing a sense, a conventional meaning, *unless it is needed for the best explanation* of the message conveyed by the utterance. But, so far as I can see, the Razor is uniformly construed in a way that is significantly different from this: it is construed as advising against positing a sense *whenever there is a pragmatic derivation of the message* from an already accepted meaning, without any consideration of whether that derivation is part of *the best explanation* of the message...Bach construes the Razor in the common way and then embraces it. (182)

I object that the Razor, as commonly construed, makes all metaphors immortal:

The metaphorical meaning of a word is derived from its conventional meaning. Over time, a metaphorical meaning often becomes regularized and conventional: the metaphor “dies”. A large part of natural languages is made up of dead metaphors. Yet a derivation of what is now a new conventional meaning from the old conventional meaning will still be available. (182)

So, GBB argues for two theses: (1) that Bach embraces the Razor, as commonly construed; (2) that, so construed, the Razor is methodologically unsound. Bach’s response is highly dismissive: I am accused of missed points, conflation, confusion, lack of documentation, and overlooked facts. So Bach obviously disagrees with something! But it is not as clear as it should be precisely what. Is his target (1) or (2)? Adding to the puzzle, Bach emphasizes, in a tone of disagreement, some of the very points I make and some other points it should be obvious I agree with.

Thus Bach opens his reply by emphasizing, as if this were some sort of a rebuttal of my objection, that he has always known that metaphors are mortal (234–5). *Of course* he has always known this, and so has just about everyone else. That’s why this mortality is such an effective weapon against the Razor as commonly construed! What he apparently has not known, and has yet to acknowledge, is that a thesis he embraces, the Razor, implies that metaphors are *immortal*.⁶

But perhaps we should see Bach’s opening as an indication that he wants to *deny* that he embraces the Razor, as I say it is commonly construed. So he would be objecting to (1).

This conjecture gains support from what seems to be his attitude to (2):

Devitt is right to insist that “the mere existence of a pragmatic derivation of a meaning does not show that the meaning is not conventional” (182). However, his suggestion that Grice’s Razor “cannot be right because it would make all metaphors immortal” conflates historical explanation with pragmatic explanation. Obviously, phrases like ‘kick the bucket’ and ‘spill the beans’ acquired their distinctive meanings long ago. No doubt there is a historical explanation for why ‘kick the bucket’ came to mean *die*, but that explanation, whatever it is, plays no role in its current use. That is fortunate, given that there is no consensus about this idiom’s origin. The same goes for ‘spill the beans’ and many other idioms. (235)

⁶ I first drew attention to this consequence of the Razor in Devitt 1997, p. 127.

Set aside for a moment the charge of conflation. Despite its tone of voice, this passage looks like *an endorsement* of my argument for (2)! Bach is rightly pointing out that although a pragmatic derivation is central to the historical explanation of how a dead metaphor got its meaning, the metaphor is dead precisely because the derivation “plays no role in its current use”. The moral is that a pragmatic explanation of a meaning is appropriate only when the derivation of this meaning from an established meaning *is* still playing a role. What role? Bach does not say here nor elsewhere, so far as I can see. However, one discussion (1995: 683) suggests that he *may* have in mind the requirement that speakers *still have the information that would enable them to make* the derivation. Anyway, I have argued against such a requirement, urging that an adequate pragmatic explanation must give that derivation a much stronger place within the cognitive lives of speakers and hearers (2004: 284–5; 2007a: 12–15). I described this place as follows:

There would have to be regular processes in speakers and hearers that differ from the typical convention-exploiting ones (whatever they may be). In speakers there would have to be thoughts about hearers and their expected Gricean derivation or other non-convention-exploiting inference (“implicitly” at least); in hearers there would have to *be* those derivations or inferences (“implicitly” at least). (185)

Consider now Bach’s charge of conflation. Bach is accusing me of conflating precisely what I emphasize needs to be kept distinct! And it is by using this distinction that I argue for (2): Modified Occam’s Razor, as commonly construed, gives bad advice.

Bach apparently agrees with (2) and certainly says nothing against it. Yet he obviously disagrees with *something*. So it looks as if my conjecture was right: Bach’s target is (1); he rejects the attribution to him of the Razor, as commonly construed. It is a pity, then, that he is not explicit about this. And it is a much greater pity that *he does nothing to undermine my evidence for (1)*. I cite four passages from Bach that seem to be explicit endorsements of the Razor so construed (182). But actions speak louder than words and so let us consider the evidence from Bach’s actual practice.

Evidence from practice that an author accepts the Razor as commonly construed is not hard to identify. The Razor, as it *should be* construed, advises against positing a new conventional meaning *unless it is part of the best explanation* of the message conveyed. The Razor, as it is *commonly* construed, has no such explanatory requirement. To reject a new conventional meaning it is thought to be sufficient to show that there *is* a pragmatic derivation of the message, the idea apparently being that this derivation *can* then be part of a pragmatic explanation of the message. But there is no onus to show, first, that the derivation *really is* part of a *good* pragmatic explanation. Showing this requires much more than a hand wave toward an explanation. It requires making it plausible that the pragmatic derivation has a place, *of the sort just specified*, in the cognitive lives of current speakers and hearers.

On the common construal, there is no onus to show, second, that any such pragmatic explanation is *better than* or, at least, *as good as* an explanation that posits a new meaning. So, whenever someone rejects a new meaning without accepting the onus of producing *both* a *good* explanation of the sort specified, involving a pragmatic derivation, *and* an argument that this explanation is better, we have good reason to think she subscribes to the Razor as commonly construed. Many philosophers—and linguists—are of that sort.⁷ Bach is one. I shall offer two examples of Bach's practice.

(a) Referentially Used Definite Descriptions: A main thrust of my earlier criticism (2007a: 17–18, 20–7; 2007b: 49–51) of Bach's pragmatic account of referentially used definite descriptions (1987, 2004, 2007a,b) has been that he fails to accept the explanatory onus that I have just described.⁸ GBB sums this failure up as follows:

I argue (2007a: 20–5) that [Bach's] pragmatic explanation is crucially deficient. In particular, it fails to provide what

a pragmatic account of referential uses must provide: an explanation of *why* the speaker would think that saying the general proposition will convey the singular one and *why* the hearer would take the saying of a general one to convey the singular one. (24)

Bach has responded to this criticism (2007a) but, I claim, “simply persists in not answering [the] crucial questions” (2007b: 51). (186)⁹

I noted that Bach (2007b: 56) had admitted as much, offering an excuse. I argued that the excuse was lame and then concluded:

In this exchange, I claim that Bach has no pragmatic explanation of referential uses. Perhaps this goes too far. But the important point for my criticism of Bach's methodology is that there is no sign that Bach acknowledges the need to show that such explanation as he does offer is *better* than a semantic one. This is a dramatic illustration of his commitment to the damaging Razor. (186)

Instead of accepting the onus of the properly-construed Razor, Bach offers little more than a hand wave toward a pragmatic explanation of referential uses and makes no attempt to show that it is the best explanation.¹⁰

⁷ For evidence, see Devitt 2013b: 297–9.

⁸ So it was an odd piece of mistaken generosity for me to say that “Bach accepts the onus, as we shall see in section 6” (2007a: 18): my discussion in that section 6 (20–5) shows that he does *not* accept the onus.

⁹ Arthur Sullivan notes that Grice, in his famous letter-writing example, “provides an explicit, stepwise calculation for how semantically expressing” one proposition “pragmatically implicates” another. Sullivan, who favors a pragmatic account of referential uses, then observes that Bach (in his 2007a) “does not even attempt to meet Devitt's challenge” to provide “something parallel and solidly plausible” for referentially used descriptions (2012: 506).

¹⁰ This is really “the main bone of contention” in our exchange about descriptions not, as Bach suggests, my “liberal view” of reference borrowing (2007b: 57).

(b) Standardizations: I was in effect prompted to pose the two epistemic “tricky questions” identified in section 3 above because I found no sign of Bach accepting the explanatory onus in his discussion of his favorite examples of standardization (including many other than referentially used descriptions, of course).

Put (a) and (b) together with Bach’s apparently explicit endorsement of the Razor as commonly construed and the evidence for (1) is strong.

If Bach thinks I’m wrong to pin the common construal of the Razor on him, it would have been helpful had he addressed the above evidence that I am right to do so. What he does instead in “Reply” is very different and quite unhelpful.

(i) Bach (239–41) near enough repeats his earlier pragmatic explanation of referentially used descriptions without addressing, even mentioning, my just-cited lengthy criticisms of that explanation.¹¹ So, he does not respond to my charge that that his explanation is crucially deficient. And, despite my increasing emphasis on the need for conservatives like him to show that they have a pragmatic explanation that is *better than* a semantic one (2004: 289; 2007a: 17–18; 2013c: 183–6), he still has not made any attempt to show this. So he is still not accepting the explanatory onus that goes with commitment to the Razor, as *properly* construed.¹² So, we can infer that he thinks he has no such onus because he is committed to the Razor, as *commonly* construed.

¹¹ It is also time that Bach took account of Felipe Amaral’s apparently decisive rebuttal (2008) of Bach’s “massive cross-linguistic coincidence” argument (239), an argument of which Bach is inordinately fond (2004: 226; 2007a: 45; 2007b: 56). Two further scholarly lapses in Bach’s discussion are worth mentioning:

(i) He criticizes what he takes to be my “analogy of referentially used descriptions with dead metaphors” (239). He has done so before (2004: 226). And I have responded to this misrepresentation before: the point of my discussion of dead metaphors is *not* to draw this analogy but rather to undermine “a particular Gricean *argument* for the Russellian view” of referentially used descriptions (2007a: 14n). Bach has apparently overlooked this response, despite Bach 2007a being a reply to the paper in which I made the response. And I near enough repeated the response in GBB (186 n. 26), the paper Bach is now replying to. Apparently he overlooked that too.

(ii) I have also argued that if the pragmatic view of referential uses were correct it would follow that “historically, the quantificational convention for ‘the’, hence the attributive use of definites, *came before* their referential use.” And this raises a problem for the view: “Do we have any reason to believe that the attributive use did precede the referential use?” (2007a: 19; see also: 21). Bach objected (2007a: 42) but, I argued, the objection fails and so he really is committed to the temporal priority of the attributive over the referential use (2007b: 52). That is where things stood until now. So when Bach returns to this matter of temporal priority, we expect him to address this alleged problem for his view. Yet, without even mentioning that problem, he now claims, on the basis of the just-discussed persistent misrepresentation, that *I* am committed to this priority and that the priority “is highly implausible, and Devitt or anyone else has presented no evidence for this” (239). What chutzpah! I made very clear when I first raised the problem for Bach’s view (2007a: 20) that I have no commitment to the priority of either sort of use over the other. However my argument that Bach is committed to a priority that he now finds “highly implausible” still awaits a response.

¹² This is exemplified also in his present discussion of standardization (236–9).

(ii) [Devitt] alleges that Grice's Razor advises making an indiscriminate across-the-board effort to avoid attributing extra senses to expressions at all costs. He does not document this unwarranted allegation. (235)

I don't document it because I don't make it! And – nice irony—Bach does not attempt to document that I do make it. What I *do* allege about how the Razor is construed is quite clear: see the quote that begins this section. I cite a great deal of evidence that this construal is widely held.

(iii) Bach discusses approvingly (235) certain passages from Grice (1989: 39, 47–50). I suppose that we should see Bach as arguing that *Grice*, like Bach, does not subscribe to the Razor, as commonly construed. I have twice argued to the contrary, discussing those very passages (183; and in the following passage cited in a note on p. 181 as the basis of the GBB discussion: 2013b: sec. 4). Bach does not mention my discussions.

(iv) Bach claims that “Devitt misses the point”, the point being that “Grice's Razor is methodological” (235–6). The claim that I miss this point is silly. From the abstract, through the discussion of the Razor in section 4, to the conclusion in section 5, the Razor is described and treated many many times as methodological.¹³

In sum, instead of seriously responding to my objection, Bach generates a smokescreen of spurious charges and misrepresentations. So there is not much “decency” here.

5. *The Tyranny of Syntax*

The other objection that Bach mentions is the last of my three to Bach's conservative methodology for deciding what is semantic: I object to “the tyranny of syntax”.

Bach starts his reply puzzled:

I don't know where Devitt gets the idea that in my view conventional meaning is “under the tyranny of syntax.”...I'm not sure what Devitt means by the “tyranny of syntax” (242)

What could Bach's problem be? “Tyranny of syntax” is my somewhat playful name for a doctrine of Bach that I clearly identify (187–8). I refer to Bach's “correspondence” principle reflected in his claim about ‘I'm not ready’ that there is nothing “in the sentence that corresponds to the implicit argument” (1998: 716). I explain the principle more with the following long quote in which Bach insists on a difference between indexical reference and “filling in conceptual gaps” in utterances like “I'm not ready”:

indexical reference fixes the interpretation of an element that occurs in the utterance, be it a pronoun, a demonstrative phrase, a temporal or locational

¹³ Furthermore, I introduce my discussion of the Razor with a note (181 n. 18) saying that the discussion draws on another paper. That paper is titled “Three Methodological Flaws of Linguistic Pragmatism” (2013b). One of those three flaws is a commitment to the Razor.

adverb. An indexical is like a free variable needing to be assigned a value. On the other hand, the conceptual gaps in utterances of semantically underdeterminate sentences *do not correspond to anything in the sentences themselves, not even empty syntactic categories. Not being sentence constituents, they enter in not at the linguistic level but at the conceptual level. An indexical is there in the sentence.* (1994: 133; my emphasis; see also: 2001: 15; 2005: 24)

I conclude: “Bach excludes from semantics anything that does not, according to the syntactic theory he favors, ‘correspond’ to something that is ‘there in the sentence’”. I compare Bach’s principle with the “Isomorphic Principle” which Robyn Carston claims, I think rightly, is “widely held” (2002: 22). Bach’s correspondence principle is what I mean by ‘the tyranny of syntax’. What could be clearer than that?

And now *I* have a puzzle. For, the first substantive comment that Bach makes about the tyranny of syntax is this:

Some simple symbols express complex propositions and do so as a matter of convention. I agree that “it is always an open question to what extent, if any, a meaning is to be explained in terms of a syntactic structure,” insofar as that not all symbols are as complex as their contents. For any symbol, people can adopt a convention that that symbol expresses some arbitrary proposition. (242)

So it looks like Bach *agrees with* my criticism of his correspondence principle! Yet he goes straight on to re-assert the principle: “Yes, I do insist that constituents of the semantic content of a sentence be semantic values of constituents of that sentence” (242). How is this consistent with allowing that “not all symbols are as complex as their contents”? Whatever the answer, from then on, Bach certainly seems to be urging the correspondence principle I criticize.

The crux of my methodological criticism is as follows:

This principle puts the cart before the horse. *First*, we need to establish whether or not an expression has a certain conventional meaning. Suppose that the expression does; for example, suppose it has a meaning that requires a slot to be filled when it is properly used. *Then* we need to consider what syntactic structure, if any, has to be ascribed to the expression to explain its meaning; for example, to explain the fact that it has a slot to be filled. I am no syntactician and so would venture no proposal on this matter. But I do insist that no prior assumptions about the bearing of syntax on meaning, like Bach’s correspondence assumption and the Isomorphic Principle, *could* show that such a conventional meaning is *impossible!* (188)

I support the criticism with a brief discussion of naval flags, road signs, and phone books. For, these are “languages” where we are not tempted to insist on a correspondence between the syntax of the symbol and the structure of its content. Bach quite likes the discussion but objects to it as a criticism of his correspondence principle because these “symbol systems lack the recursive compositional productivity of languages” (243). I agree, of course, about the difference between these systems and our languages; see my reference to generative grammars (189). But why is this an objection? My point is, in effect, that we can’t simple

assume that compositionality covers *every* aspect of our languages. It is an empirical question just how extensive it is. Bach's correspondence principle does simply assume this.

So Bach's point about compositionality is not an effective defense of his principle from my methodological criticism. But at least it *aims* to be a defense. So far as I can see, this is the only part of Bach's reply to my criticism that does so aim. The rest of the reply changes the subject from methodology to substantive semantic theses. Those theses are not the subject of my paper. I shall illustrate this change of subject with two passages from "Reply":

(i) Suppose someone utters "Everyone went to Paris,"...and means and successfully conveys that everyone at a certain conference went to Paris. The explanation for how such a thing can rationally be meant by the speaker and understood by the hearer does not have to invoke a specific convention about quantifier domain restriction. (242)

I do not claim that we *have to* invoke this. I do claim that Bach's correspondence principle should play no role in *settling whether we should* invoke this. True, I do air the idea that the best explanation of quantifiers *does* invoke this.¹⁴ I *promise* an argument elsewhere for this substantive thesis but I don't *present* one. This thesis is not any part of my criticism of Bach. That criticism is not of Bach's semantics for the likes of "Everyone went to Paris" but, quite explicitly, of Bach's methodology for arriving at this semantics.

(ii) The fact that one cannot be just plain ready but only ready for something or other is a metaphysical fact, not a semantic fact. This is a fact about readiness, not a fact about 'ready'. So the onus is really on Devitt to show the need for positing a syntactic slot (and thereby creating the need for a semantic value). To insist on something syntactic to play the role of a covert indexical is to fall to the tyranny of syntax. (243–4)

Bach is quite right to emphasize that the fact that one cannot be just plain ready is a metaphysical fact about readiness not a semantic fact about 'ready'. But there is no onus on me to show anything about such semantic facts because the paper is not arguing for a position on those facts. It is false that "Devitt *claims* that somehow the meaning of a word like 'ready' somehow 'requires a slot to be filled when it is properly used'" (243; emphasis added). What I actually say is that "I *would argue (forthcoming)*" (187; emphasis added) to that effect. And when I do argue it, I shall not feel any onus to say how this slot filling should be accommodated in the syntax; see above. My "tyranny of syntax" criticism is of Bach's methodology not of his view of the semantic and syntactic facts.

¹⁴ Note that the appeal is to inference to the best explanation not intuition. So the surprise Bach expresses in the following passage is uncalled for:

Considering Devitt's professed skepticism about semantic intuitions, I'm surprised that he relies on intuitions, along with semantic convention, to account for the fact that quantifier phrases are commonly used as if they were implicitly restricted. (242)

Digression: That having been said, let me *now begin* the foreshadowed argument. I enthusiastically endorse the claim Bach makes in discussing ‘ready’ that it is a metaphysical not semantic fact that “one cannot be just plain ready but only ready for something”. He makes similar points in discussing some other terms:

consider adjectives like ‘relevant’, ‘qualified’, and ‘legal’ and what they semantically express. A topic can’t be just plain relevant, a person can’t be just plain qualified, and an action can’t be just plain legal. That is, being relevant, being qualified, and being legal are not properties but what might we might call *property functions*. These are metaphysical facts about being relevant, being qualified, and being legal, not linguistic (lexical) facts about the words that express them. These facts do not require the lexical entries for these adjectives to include a variable (or slot) which, when given a value (or filled), specifies that for which the topic, person, or action is being said to be relevant, qualified, or legal. (244)

I agree that these metaphysical facts do not *require* such semantic views but they do help to make such views *plausible*. Take ‘qualified’, for example. We probably never think that a person is just plain qualified (because it is obvious that nobody is). However, we often think that people are qualified for something in particular. And these are thoughts that we often want to convey to audiences. Whenever there are thoughts of a certain sort that we often want to convey, we have an interest in having an expression in our language that is a *conventional* way of conveying thoughts of that sort. So we are likely to have such a convention. If we do, then the relevant expression is likely to be *regularly used* to convey such thoughts. Should our examination of linguistic usage show that an expression is regularly so used, then we have good, though not of course conclusive, evidence that the usage is conventional. I think that an examination of usage would show that ‘X is qualified’ is regularly used to convey a speaker’s thought that X is qualified for something in particular that the speaker has in mind. So, we have good evidence that this is a conventional way of conveying such thoughts, that it is a *semantic* fact about ‘X is qualified’ that it is so used.

There is of course no entailment from the metaphysical fact that one cannot be just plain qualified to the semantic view that ‘qualified’ must, by convention, be “completed” by something that the speaker has in mind. But I am suggesting that this semantic view is, nonetheless, the conclusion of a plausible inference to the best explanation from that metaphysical fact together with the observed regularity. (And, if this is right, we look to linguists to tell us how to accommodate this semantic fact in the syntax.)

Enough of the digression. It is time to sum up Bach’s reply to GBB’s actual “tyranny of syntax” objection. Most of the reply is simply beside the point of my objection and the bit that is not is ineffective. So it is another response that is far from “decent”.

6. Conclusion

GBB (2013c), makes four objections to Bach's position on the semantics versus pragmatics issue. One of these is to his austere notion of *what-is-said*. Another is to his application of his notion of *standardization* as part of his methodology for deciding what is "semantic". Bach has chosen to ignore these two objections in his "Reply" (2013). I have briefly identified them, referring the reader to the paper for details (sections 2 and 3). Bach, reasonably enough, says that he "can't respond to everything" but "will try to address what strikes me as the most important... objections" (217). So, presumably, my two objections do not strike him as important enough to warrant responses. Or, perhaps, he thinks it is "enough to clarify" his views without addressing the objections (217). Needless to say, I don't think either of these attitudes is appropriate. I leave the public to judge whether I'm right.

My remaining two objections were to other parts of Bach methodology for deciding what is "semantic": his commitment to Grice's "Modified Occam's Razor"; and his commitment to a "correspondence" principle that I describe as "the tyranny of syntax". Since these aspects of Bach's methodology are widespread, I have considered what Bach offers in defense of them at some length.

In discussing the Modified Occam's Razor, I argued for two theses: (1) that Bach embraces the Razor, as commonly construed; (2) that, so construed, the Razor is methodologically unsound. Bach's reply is extraordinary. First, it is highly dismissive: I am accused of missed points, conflation, confusion, lack of documentation, and overlooked facts. Second, it involves obvious misrepresentations. Third, it does not respond to the objection. Bach appears to reject (1) not (2) (although this is not as clear as it should be) but does nothing to undermine my evidence for (1).

Bach's reply to my "tyranny of syntax" objection is better because it includes an attempt to respond to my actual criticisms. But the attempt fails. The rest of the reply changes the subject from methodology to substantive semantic theses which are not the subject of my paper.

So here's how I score Bach's 12-page "Reply": two of my objections do not get a mention; one gets a mention in a response that is little more than impolite obfuscation; one gets a mention and an inadequate response. My four objections stand.

Bach's "Reply" is a very disappointing response to what, I like to think, was a careful and serious examination of his views. If it was, Bach has certainly not returned the favor. His "Reply" does not advance the debate on this interesting but difficult topic.¹⁵

¹⁵ My thanks to Felipe Amaral, Francesco Pupa, and Marga Reimer for comments on a draft.

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