The Identity Theory of Quotation

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THE IDENTITY THEORY OF QUOTATION*

Suppose I want to talk about a bit of language, say, the title of this essay. How might I go about doing this? I can give it a name. ‘U’ will do. I can then say that U has twenty-eight letters, and what I say will be true. Another option available to me is to offer a description. I can describe the title in terms of its constituent words. I can give the names ‘V’, ‘W’, ‘X’, ‘Y’, and ‘Z’ to the five words that compose it. I can then say the expression consisting of V followed by W followed by X followed by Y followed by Z has twenty-eight letters, and again what I say will be true. Yet another option is to demonstrate it. I can say, pointing to the top of the page, that that expression has twenty-eight letters, and once again I shall say something true.

Naming, describing, and demonstrating are distinct ways of mentioning the title. Together they exhaust the standard ways of mentioning nonlinguistic objects. But most of us would balk at the idea that our options for mentioning language are limited to these three. Surely, if I want to mention the title, I can simply quote it. I can talk about the title by saying that ‘The identity theory of quotation’ has twenty-eight letters, and what I say will be true. But in quoting the title, am I doing something other than naming it, describing it, or demonstrating it? This is the main question which I want to address. The answer I suggest is “yes.” I argue that the use of expressions in quotation is fundamentally different from nonquotation uses of language.

In natural language, quotation is a way of mentioning things. Its use is easy to learn and once learned it is readily applied and understood. These qualifications make quotation a phenomenon worthy of explanation. The fact that quotation, like the modalities and the attitudes, gives rise to opacity makes it a problem for the philosophy of language. As such problems go, however, quotation would seem to be on the easy side. Its workings appear to be a paradigm of simplicity: in quotation, it seems that words are used and mentioned in the same breath. Moreover, this correlation would appear to be explanatory: it seems that words in quotation are mentioned simply by being used.

*I have received helpful comments from John Perry, Jamie Rucker, Michael O’Rourke, Henry Smith, Johanna Carr, and a referee for *The Philosophical Review.*
In what follows, I shall argue that, where quotation is at issue, the appearances are the reality. I shall argue that, in quotation, expressions are used to mention themselves and that this correlation is rule-governed. I call this view the identity theory, which is based on the idea that linguistic expressions may be used in different ways. According to the theory, a special quotational use of expressions underlies the phenomenon of quotation. The quotational use of an expression contrasts with what I call its standard use. The paradigm of standard use is the use of expressions outside of quotation in unembedded contexts. The contrast is illustrated in (1):

1. ‘Three words long’ is three words long.

The first use of the expression ‘three words long’ is quotational, while the second is standard. The first is interpreted by the principle of identity, the second is not.

Alfred Tarski, W. V. Quine, Peter Geach, and Donald Davidson are among those who find the appearances misleading. These writers maintain that while quoted expressions may seem to mention themselves, the identity is illusory and, in point of fact, the expressions used are not what is mentioned. They also deny that the principle of identity or any related principle plays a role in the interpretation of quotation. They recognize only the genera of uses that I call standard, and advocate theories that treat quotation as involving a standard, though perhaps disguised, use of names, descriptions, or demonstratives. The quotation in (1) is thought to be analogous to (2), (3), or (4):

2. A is three words long.
3. The expression consisting of B followed by C followed by D is three words long.
4. That expression is three words long.

(Where ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’, and ‘D’ are names and ‘that’ is a demonstrative.)

I call these theories “standard.” A standard theory is one that analyzes quotation on the model of a standard use of an expression. Below I shall explain how standard theories differ from the identity theory and attempt to show why the commitment to standard semantic concepts makes it impossible to give a correct answer to what would seem to be a very simple problem. My choice of the term ‘standard’, which I contrast with ‘quotation’, is meant to underscore the essential difference between quotation and other uses of language.

It will help to prevent confusion later on if I take a moment to formulate some terminology and draw some distinctions. At the out-
set, it is important to distinguish expressions from their tokens. The former are types, which are abstract particulars. The latter are tokens, which are concrete particulars. When I say ‘expression’ I mean expression type, and when I say ‘token’ I mean expression token. I call an expression a “mentioning expression” if it is used to mention something. Being a mentioning expression is a property that an expression has on a particular use. My use of the verb ‘mentioning’ is meant to be neutral between different ways of talking about objects. I use ‘semantic value’ as a term for the contribution an expression makes to the interpretation of sentences of which it is a part. I use ‘object mentioned’ or ‘mentioned object’ as terms for objects that are mentioned. Objects mentioned are the semantic values of mentioning expressions. When I say that the semantic value of an expression has been ‘stipulated’, I mean that the expression acquired its value as a direct result of the performance of a particular act or acts. I do not mean to imply that the acts were performed with the intention of giving the expression a value.

To give a precise analysis of the semantics of quotation, three basic questions have to be answered:

5. What expressions are used and what roles do they play?
6. What type of object is mentioned?
7. How is the semantic value of the mentioning expression determined?

I shall let these questions guide my discussion. In the next section, I review some well-known standard theories of quotation and the answers they give to questions (5)-(7). In section III, I briefly summarize the identity theory and the answers it gives to questions (5)-(7). Sections IV-VI address questions (5)–(7) in detail. I provide reasons why they should not be answered in the manner of the standard theories and why they should be answered in the manner of the identity theory, taking the occasion to go more deeply into details of the proposals.

II

Question (5) asks us to determine the parts of a quotation, if there are any, and assign credit for overall effects where credit is due. Given the orthographic structure of standard written quotation, the candidates for the mentioning expression are limited to three. The mentioning expression could be (a) the expression consisting of the marks and what stands between them, which I term the ‘quotation as a whole’; (b) the expression between the marks, the ‘quoted expression’; or (c) the quotation marks alone. Tarski, Quine, and Geach have advocated the view that it is the quotation as a whole which
mentions an object, while Davidson is responsible for the novel suggestion that the quotation marks are complete mentioning expressions in themselves and that the quoted expression is not used at all.

A view held by Tarski, Quine, Geach, and many others regarding what is mentioned in quotation, question (6), is that quotation is a device for talking about linguistically interpreted types. These types come in different varieties. On one theory advocated by Tarski and Quine, these types are concatenations of letters. Geach's explicit position is that the object mentioned is a concatenation of words. Taking a subtly different stance, Davidson holds the objects mentioned by quotations to be shapes.\(^1\) Davidson and the advocates of the theory of interpreted types are united in maintaining that in quotation we do not talk about tokens. Disagreements between Davidson and type theorists concern the boundaries of the types and whether the types are linguistically interpreted; a linguistically interpreted type may encompass many distinct uninterpreted shapes.

Question (7) asks about how the value of a quotation is fixed. The answer must give an account of how it is determined which object a given use of quotation mentions. In this connection, Tarski and Quine have promoted what has come to be called the "name theory." This is the view that quotations are standard occurrences of semantically simple expressions.\(^2\) As Tarski remarks:

Quotation-mark names may be treated like single words of a language, and thus like syntactically simple expressions. The single constituents of these names—quotation marks and the expressions standing between them—fulfil [sic] the same function as the letters and complexes of successive letters in single words. Hence they can possess no independent meaning. Every quotation-mark name is then a constant individual name of a definite expression (the expression enclosed by quotation marks) and in fact a name of the same nature as the proper name of a man (\textit{op. cit.}, p. 159).

An expression is semantically simple if its standard semantic value is not fixed by general principles. Words like 'and', 'car', and 'hello' are semantically simple. To say that a quotation is a standard occurrence of a semantically simple expression is to say that its value is not

\(^1\) Davidson seems to be influenced by Tarski, who held that quotations refer to classes of expressions of like shape. See Tarski, "The Concept of Truth in a Formalized Language," in Logic, Semantics and Metamathematics (New York: Oxford, 1969), p. 156n.

\(^2\) Jonathan Bennett reports that Quine has maintained, in personal communication, that in his writings he uses the term 'name' as a catchall phrase for expressions that are semantically simple—"Quotation," \textit{Noûs}, xxii (1988): 399–418.
given by general principles, that some stipulation must have been made for it to have obtained its value.

Along other lines, Tarski (op. cit., p. 160) and Quine⁶ have also suggested that quotations be analyzed as standard uses of collapsed descriptions, which describe expressions by their spelling. This theory, which has been called the "spelling theory," treats the quotation 'hello' as a short form of the description "the expression got by writing 'h' followed by 'e' followed by 'l' followed by 'l' followed by 'o'." Another version of the description theory, given by Geach,⁴ is identical except that the basic parts of descriptions mention individual words rather than letters. He writes: "I maintain that the quotation 'man is mortal' is rightly understood only if we read it as meaning the same thing as "'man' & 'is' & 'mortal'," i.e. read it as describing the quoted expression in terms of the expressions it contains and their order" (ibid., pp. 82-3). I call this the "lexical" description theory. It is important to note that neither the spelling nor the lexical theory gives an account of the semantics of the basic parts of the descriptions. These theories treat the parts as semantically simple, a subtlety which is obscured by the use of quoted letters or quoted words.

The range of views is represented in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proponent</th>
<th>semantic category</th>
<th>mentioning expression</th>
<th>method of fixing</th>
<th>mentioned object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T/Q</td>
<td>name⁵</td>
<td>quotation as a whole</td>
<td>stipulation</td>
<td>expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T/Q</td>
<td>description</td>
<td>quotation as a whole</td>
<td>stipulation for parts</td>
<td>series of letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geach</td>
<td>description</td>
<td>quotation as a whole</td>
<td>stipulation for parts</td>
<td>series of words or unambiguous expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davidson</td>
<td>demonstrative</td>
<td>quotation marks</td>
<td>demonstration</td>
<td>shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frege</td>
<td>anything</td>
<td>quoted expression</td>
<td>principle of identity</td>
<td>expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searle</td>
<td>anything</td>
<td>quoted expression</td>
<td>principle of identity</td>
<td>expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGW</td>
<td>anything</td>
<td>quoted expression</td>
<td>principle of identity</td>
<td>expression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁵ See fn. 2.
III

With regard to the issues raised by question (5), the identity theory diverges from Tarski, Quine, Geach, and Davidson, while agreeing with John Searle and Gottlob Frege. In "On Sense and Meaning," Frege\(^6\) writes:

If words are used in the ordinary way, what one intends to speak of is what they mean. It can also happen, however, that one wishes to talk about the words themselves or their sense. This happens, for instance, when the words of another are quoted. One's own words then first designate words of the other speaker, and only the latter have their usual meaning. We then have signs of signs. In writing, the words are in this case enclosed in quotation marks. Accordingly, a word standing between quotation marks must not be taken as having its ordinary meaning (\textit{ibid.}, p. 201).

In this passage, Frege is primarily concerned with direct and indirect discourse reports. His comments about direct discourse also apply, however, to uses of quotation where words are mentioned and discussed but not attributed to a person as something said. Frege's view is that the use of an expression on the interior of a set of quotation marks is special. Quotation marks, which are most common in written speech, signal this new use. John Searle\(^7\) puts the point succinctly when he writes that in quotation "a word is uttered \ldots but not in its normal use. The word itself is \textit{presented} and then talked about, and that it is to be taken as presented rather than used conventionally to refer is indicated by the quotes" (\textit{ibid.}, p. 76; my emphasis). The quotation as a whole is analyzed into the marks that signify quotational use of the quoted expression and the quoted expression that is itself used to mention an object. All expressions, even those whose standard uses are not as mentioning expressions, become mentioning expressions in quotation.

As regards the question of what quotation mentions, raised in (6), I maintain that the most common use of quotation is to mention linguistic types. These types may be interpreted or uninterpreted, like 'man' or 'ggrmph'; they may be structured or unstructured, like 'this man' or 'man'. If uninterpreted, however, they must at least be potential bearers of linguistic characteristics. In reply to question (7), I hold that a quoted expression is related to its value by identity: a quoted expression mentions itself. The identity theory's distinction between standard and quotation uses can be represented schematically as follows:

A solid line marks the fact that the relation is determined by general principles. I use a dotted line to connect the expression with its standard semantic value to indicate that the connection is determined by stipulation. Stipulations are not general. Since a stipulation may or may not have been carried out, a basic expression may or may not have a standard semantic value. What is commonly called the "lexicon" of a language consists of those basic expressions which have standard semantic values.

What are the parts of a quotation and what role do they play? An important fact about quotation which seems to have been overlooked by those who say that the quotation marks either are the mentioning expression or form an essential part of the mentioning expression is that quotation marks may be absent. In conversation, oral promptings ("quote-unquote") or finger-dance quotes can often be omitted without impairing the intelligibility or well-formedness of the utterance. When I introduce myself, I do not say "my name is quote-unquote Corey," nor do I make little finger gestures or even use different intonation in order to show that it is my name and not myself that is being talked about. Linguists do not say "quote-unquote flying planes can be dangerous is ambiguous." Philosophers do not say "the belief report quote-unquote . . . ." In general, when it is clear that the subject matter is linguistic, we simply utter the expression without marking it in any special way.

These mundane facts show that Tarski's, Quine's, and Geach's proposals do not apply to the vast majority of spoken uses of quotation. These writers claim that the quoted expression is a mere accident in the course of the spelling of a longer word, which contains in addition the two quotation marks.\(^8\) It is this longer word, the quotation as a whole, which is the mentioning expression. But when quotation marks are lacking, the quotation as a whole does not occur.

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So, on this proposal, most quotations do not exist—a conclusion that is difficult to accept.

Davidson's⁹ thesis is vulnerable to the same counterarguments. He conceives of quotation marks as referential expressions, roughly synonymous with the locution, 'the shape of that':

On my theory which we may call the demonstrative theory of quotation, the inscription inside does not refer to anything at all, nor is it part of any expression that does. Rather it is the quotation marks that do all the referring, and they help to refer to a shape by pointing out something that has it (ibid., p. 90).

On Davidson's account, the subject of the sentence in (8) is the quotation marks:

8. 'Hello' is a salutation.

That is, (8) appears as:

8'. ' ' is a salutation.

And when uttered without quotation gestures as:

8''. is a salutation.¹⁰

Davidson's theory does not provide for a subject to replace the quotation marks when quotation gestures do not accompany the utterance.¹¹ Unless some other element can be found to serve as the subject of the sentence, the theory makes the manifestly false prediction that spoken uses of (8) are ill-formed.

It has been suggested in defense of Davidson's proposal that the quotation marks in an utterance of (8) are implicit.¹² These implicit quotation marks would then serve as the subject in (8''), saving the structure from ill-formedness. There are circumstances in which a sentence may be perfectly well-formed and yet lack an explicit expression in a subject position. In general, imperatives may go subjectless, as may declarative sentences in languages such as Spanish and Italian ("pro-drop languages"). Contemporary linguistic theories commonly postulate implicit expressions in place of their missing explicit counterparts to explain the syntactic and semantic prop-

¹⁰ A similar argument against Davidson's demonstrative theory of indirect discourse is given by Gabriel Segal in "A Preference for Sense and Reference," this JOURNAL, LXXXVIII, 2 (February 1991): 73–89.
¹¹ Indeed, it is difficult to see how gestures, even when present, could serve in a syntactic capacity in spoken or written language.
¹² This is a response which I have often heard. I cannot recall all of the people who have suggested it. Stephen Neale is one.
erties of these constructions. Nevertheless, these theories are care-
ful to place tight restrictions on the contexts in which implicit
elements may occur. These restrictions exclude the situation in (8').
The predicate in that sentence cannot license an empty element.
Current theory provides no support for the claim that (8') contains
an implicit subject.\textsuperscript{13} In the absence of further evidence for the
existence of an implicit subject in (8'), Davidson's suggestion that
quotation marks are mentioning expressions must be rejected.

The facts about written quotation are similar. In writing, we can
also dispense with quotation marks. We can indicate that an expres-
sion is being quoted by writing it on a separate line or in italics. One
must be pressed very hard to adopt a Quinean point of view and see
the italicized form of the quoted expression or the quoted-
expression-on-another-line as distinct from the quoted expression,
as if italicization or setting an expression off created a new expres-
sion. There is even less reason to attempt to persevere in Davidson's
way of looking at things and reify the italicization or the being-on-
another-line of the quoted token into a mentioning expression.

Yet writing does differ from speech in some important respects.
Unlike spoken quotation, it appears that some signal is required to
indicate that the expression is to be quoted and not used as usual.
Though standard in speech, (9) is simply not acceptable written
language.\textsuperscript{14}

9. Hello is a salutation.

The fact that (9) is ill-formed should not be taken as evidence that
quotation marks form an essential syntactic or morphological part
of the sentence, and hence as evidence for a position like Quine's or
Davidson's. Causes of ill-formedness are varied. Written quotations
without quotation marks are simply incorrectly punctuated and are
deviant in the same way that other incorrectly punctuated expres-
sions are deviant:

10. Did you eat your peas.

11. John who went to school liked to stay up late.

There are a number of ways of explaining how punctuation can
effect syntactic well-formedness without supposing punctuation

\textsuperscript{13} It should be clear that any thought of salvaging Quine's theory by supposing
empty elements (empty letters, in this case) in place of the missing quotation
marks should be met with at least as much skepticism as it is in the case of
Davidson's theory.

\textsuperscript{14} Sometimes something like this is written:

He is called John.

But here the verb 'called' signals that a quotation is to follow.
marks to be words or parts thereof. A view I find attractive is that in
common written language punctuation marks play a role analogous
to the role phrase-structure markers play in linguistics. Just as
phrase-structure markers signal that a linguistic element has a cer-
tain structure or belongs to a certain category, so too do punctua-
tion marks signal that an expression has a certain linguistic charac-
ter. Neither are grammatical constituents of the expressions they
accompany. If a sentence is followed by an exclamation point, then
it is a command or an exclamation; a comma might be a sign of a
break between a series of constituents; an expression flanked by
quotation marks is a quotation.\textsuperscript{15} The absence of the appropriate
marks would signal that the expression lacks the characteristics in
question. (This is necessary to ensure that expressions without punc-
tuation are not systematically ambiguous between punctuated and
unpunctuated readings.) The sentence in (9) would be ill-formed
because the word ‘hello’ would have its normal use as an interjection
in a context where a noun phrase is required.

I believe the simplest and most natural way to explain these facts
is to take the quoted expression to be the mentioning expression.
Quotation marks, on this account, are neither mentioning expres-
sions nor parts of mentioning expressions. Quotation marks are
punctuation. As punctuation, they signal that the quoted expression
has a special use.\textsuperscript{16} They take their place alongside the period, semi-
colon, question mark, and comma.\textsuperscript{17} The differences between writ-
ten and spoken quotation can be attributed to the more formal
character of written expression.

Although this account strikes me as the most plausible, it is not
the only one that is compatible with the facts. We have seen that
there are cases in which quotation marks are present and cases in
which they are not; spoken quotation can occur with or without

\textsuperscript{15} For a detailed discussion of the syntax and semantics of punctuation, see
\textsuperscript{16} Quotation is sometimes described as a \textit{linguistic context} in which words take
on a different significance. This way of speaking is not entirely accurate, since
contexts are typically marked grammatically, but the grammatical signs of quota-
tion (the marks) are often absent.
\textsuperscript{17} Sanskrit exhibits a quotative marker (\textit{iti}) which is placed after the quoted
material; see J. S. Speijer, \textit{Sanskrit Syntax} (Leiden: Brill, 1886), pp. 379–88:
\begin{verbatim}
nrpo 'ham iti vada
King-NOM I-NOM QUOTATIVE-MARKER he-says
He says "I am the king"
(I am indebted to Henry Smith for this point.)
\end{verbatim}
According to the \textit{Encyclopaedia Britannica}, quotation marks were introduced in
the West along with the exclamation point around 1550. Prior to this time, their
work was done by contextual factors.
quotation marks, though marks are usually not present; direct quotation in writing may occur with or without marks, though the use must be indicated in some fashion. We could say that there are two sets of mentioning expressions which can be used in quotation, one consisting of expressions with quotation marks (the quotations as a whole) and another consisting of expressions without quotation marks (the quoted expressions). There will be: 'hello' and '‘hello’', 'goodbye' and '‘goodbye’', 'stop' and '‘stop’', and so on. Counterparts in each set will always mention the same object. Although this proposal accords with the facts, it is still undesirable insofar as it leaves unexplained the fact that expressions with quotation marks always mention the same thing as expressions without quotation marks. Another possible explanation is that the quoted expression mentions the object and quotation marks are functional expressions. This would explain the symmetry between expressions with and without quotation marks. The idea of functionless functional expressions goes down hard, however. The fact that these purported functions can be left off when context requires indicates, I think, they are more like context markers (punctuation) than like functions. Given that neither of these proposals is satisfying, I shall stick to the view that the quoted expression mentions the object, while the quotation marks are punctuation.

Before I leave this topic, I want to examine an argument suggested by Davidson's article. The argument is designed to show that quoted expressions cannot be parts of quoting sentences. If the argument is sound, then we must give up our contention that the quoted expression is the mentioning expression. The basis of the argument is Davidson's conception of the finiteness constraints on learnable languages. "In an adequate theory," Davidson writes, "every sentence is construed as owing its truth or falsity to how it is built from a finite stock of parts by repeated application of a finite number of modes of combination" (op. cit., p. 83). In other words, for the interpretation of a language to be finite, only a finite number of elements may occur in its sentences and the semantics must be determined by a finite number of finitely statable principles. This condition reflects assumptions about learnability. The number of basic expressions is limited because a speaker could not learn the semantic values of an infinite number of expressions. Sentences of a learnable language cannot contain an infinite number of expressions whose semantic values have been stipulated. Admitting the

18 This argument is closely connected with the argument Davidson gives against the name theory; op. cit., p. 83.
quoted expression into the quoting sentence, so the argument goes, would lead to a violation of this principle.

To see how quotation is supposed to run afoul of the principle, we need only consider definitions. There is a well-established practice of using quotation to introduce expressions in definitions. (12) is typical:

12. ‘⊕’ means alternatively.

The argument assumes that semantic values of basic expressions which can occur in sentences of a language must have been given by stipulation. The quoted expression in (12) has a semantic value (something like a shape), which determines the content of the definition, what the definition is a definition of. The expression is also clearly simple. The sheer variety of expressions that can be used in this way makes it impossible for such expressions to have been constructed from a finite number of more basic parts. Therefore, the expression in (12) and others like it must have had their values stipulated. But the number of expressions which can be used in this way is infinite. Admitting such expressions into defining sentences will violate the Davidson’s finiteness constraint.

I cannot say that Davidson offers a solution to this problem, since he does not state the argument. One aspect of his theory, however, looks very much like a response to difficulties raised by the argument. Davidson excludes quoted expressions from quoting sentences. He admits into sentences only expressions which occur outside of quotation, expressions which have already been defined. Because only a finite number of definitions will have been introduced at any given time, the number of expressions able to occur in sentences will be finite, at any given time. Finiteness is preserved.

I think that such drastic measures are unnecessary and that the argument that motivates them is unsound. The weak point is the assumption that the semantic value of a semantically primitive expression must have been stipulated. This assumption rests on the view that that stipulation is the only way in which a semantically simple expression can acquire a semantic value, something which is true if all uses of expressions are standard uses, but is not true if, as the identity theory maintains, the semantic values of expressions in quotation are determined by a general principle. In section VI, I give arguments for why I think that the identity theory offers a correct account of how quoted expressions get their values.19

19 At this point, I am already in a position to note that the identity theory saves the argument from infinite regress. The argument is based on the case of the
Once it is granted that the values of expressions in quotation are determined by the principle of identity, there is no longer a need to limit their number. The principle of identity, being single and finitely stateable, offers a finite interpretation for an infinite number of expressions. The constraints on finiteness only serve to limit the number of expressions in the lexicon, the set of expressions that can occur in sentences outside of quotation. The upshot is that finiteness constraints provide no grounds for excluding quoted material from the sentence. Therefore, they give us no reason not to take the quoted expression to be the mentioning expression.

What type of object is mentioned in quotation? I believe that quotations may mention any type of expression which can be used. These expressions may be words or phrases. They may have a definite set of linguistic characteristics or they may be ambiguous. Quotation may also be used to discuss words and phrases which lack meaning, but which seem to have syntactic properties, as one finds, for example, in Lewis Carroll’s “Jabberwocky.” It may even be used to talk about expressions utterly devoid of linguistic characteristics. By stretching the device to its limit, one can perhaps talk about tokens or shapes.

This position contrasts with the views of all four writers both in its plurality and its specifics. These writers share a liking for uniformity. Davidson’s position is distinctive in its austerity: in all of its uses, quotation mentions shapes. One of Geach’s arguments suggests a position that is distinctive on the other extreme. It seems to imply that quotations always mention expressions with definite and articulate linguistic characteristics. Two other answers see all quotations as concatenations. Tarski and Quine’s spelling theory implies that quotations mention strings of letters, while Geach’s lexical theory implies that quotations mention strings of words. In this section, I attempt to show that the claim that all quotations mention a single type of object is theoretically unmotivated and factually untenable.

Introduction of new expressions through definition. Definitions, however, are nothing but stipulations. (According to the identity theory, what they stipulate are standard semantic values.) If the new expressions which occur in definitions already have stipulated semantic values, which they contribute to defining sentences (as the argument assumes), we should wonder when these stipulations were performed. The assumption that the quoted expression in a definition received its value through definition leads directly to regress. On the identity theory, no regress occurs because no prior definition is necessary. Only the standard value is given by stipulation; the quotational value of new expressions is determined by the principle of identity.
Let us consider Davidson’s theory. He claims that quotations mention shapes, but does not tell us what shapes are. We may presume, however, that shape would be the sort of thing that the inscriptions

13. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

have in common. It is something that they would have in common whether written in pencil, pen, or printed as they are. In the case of spoken tokens, shape is a metaphor for phonological form, a property shared by utterances of increasing volume but identical diction and accent.

Davidson’s demonstrative analysis (op. cit., p. 91) would give the sentence in (15) the gloss in (14’):

14. ‘Snow is White’ is a sentence.
14’. Snow is White. The expression with the shape of that token is a sentence.

In the analyzed version, the quoted expression is set off from the quoting sentence to underscore Davidson’s contention that the quoted expression does not belong to the sentence as a grammatical constituent. Its occurrence within the sentence token is a reflection of nothing more than stylistic convention. In (14’) the italicized ‘that’ refers to the inscription ‘Snow is White’ as a demonstrative pronoun might refer on other occasions to objects salient in the context.

While not clearly mistaken, Davidson’s commitment to shapes introduces what appear to be unnecessary complications. In his analysis, shapes enter into the truth conditions of sentences containing quotations only to give way to expressions that have that shape. It is not difficult to see why this is necessary. The same linguistic characteristics accrue to two tokens if the tokens belong to the same expression type. What is said in a use of a sentence such as (15) depends not on the shape of the token but on the expression:

15. ‘SNOW IS WHITE’ is a sentence.
15’. ‘snOw is wHiTe’ is a sentence.
15”. ‘Snow is White’ is a sentence.

These sentences make the same claim because the tokens are instances of the same expression. That the quoted tokens differ in shape is immaterial from the semantic point of view.20

20 Davidson’s account of direct discourse is based on his account of quotation. According to him, a direct quotation of the form in (a) should be expanded as (b) p. 92:
Davidson's preference for shapes is especially puzzling given that the content of what is said in the examples he uses never depends on the shape of the quoted token. Why then does he not say that quotations ordinarily mention expressions, when this would more accurately reflect the content of his proposal, not to speak of the true state of affairs in quotation?

Davidson does not explicitly defend his claim, but some considerations can be found in its favor. One is generality. Everything that can be embedded in quotation marks has a shape. This shape will always be there to be mentioned. Although it is a slight abuse of the device, one might argue that (16) would not be intelligible if quotation mentioned expressions, because a circle over perpendicular lines is not an expression:

16. ‘⊕’ is symmetrical.

---

a. X said “P”

b. X said, using words of which this is a token, that P.

In verbatim reports of another's speech, the quoted expression plays two roles. First, the words are ascribed to the speaker as something uttered, then they are ascribed to the speaker as the content of what was said. The theory predicts that the direct discourse report in (c) should be rendered as (d):

c. Hume said to his companions, “you must tell Mr. Adams to keep stronger chairs for heavy philosophers” (after picking himself up off the floor); John Burton Hill, *The Life and Correspondence of David Hume* (New York: Garland, 1983), p. 440.

d. Hume said to his companions, using words with the shape of this token, that you must tell Mr. Adams to keep stronger chairs for heavy philosophers.

But this is incorrect. In general, what matters to quotation is the expression and not the shape. To report someone's words, we must use the same words as he did. (a) will be true if and only if we utter the same words that Hume uttered. Davidson's truth conditions, requiring as they do sameness of shape, are too restrictive. Indeed, on his analysis, it is hard to see how a sentence like (c) could possibly be true. If sameness of shape were what mattered, then reporting writing in speech or speech in writing would be an impossibility—on no natural understanding of shape do written and uttered tokens have the same shape. Correct reporting in the same medium would not be ruled out but would require skills of impersonation or forgery.

Indexical elements in direct quotation also pose problems for Davidson's account. As analyzed by Davidson, Hume would be reported as directing his request to my audience rather than his own and his request would apply to the present rather than the past. This is not what Hume succeeded in doing. Although I can see no reason why it would be useful to do so, one can express the truth conditions of direct quotation in terms of indirect quotation as follows:

‘X said “P”’ as uttered by me now is true iff X said, using words of which ‘P’ is a token, that Q.

where ‘Q’ and ‘P’ stand for sentences and ‘Q’ as uttered by me now expresses the content of ‘P’ as uttered by X.
(The fact that indexicals pose a problem for Davidson's account was pointed out to me by John Perry.)
That is to say, one might believe the only expressions there are are meaningful ones. On the shape theory, the problem of a lack of an available object would not arise, since the symbol above obviously has a shape. Similarly, if per chance one did want to distinguish among the quotations in (15), one might think that it would be possible to do so if quotations mention shapes, but not if they mention expressions. The thought is that shapes cut finer distinctions than expressions. If we could give correct truth conditions for all quoting sentences in terms of shapes, then shapes might form the basis of an adequate analysis.

The problem is that it does not seem possible to explain the truth of all conceivable uses of quotation using shapes. For if we are willing to accept the likes of (16), I cannot see how we could oppose

17. ‘\(\bullet \)’ is large, but ‘\(\circ \)’ is not large.

Such a use could not be explained on the assumption that quotations mention shapes, since both occurrences of the expression have the same shape. If the search is for the greatest generality, shapes will not do. The search would inevitably lead to the conclusion that quotations mention tokens, or better yet tokenings, objects that are always present in quotation and allow for the finest distinctions.

The shape and token proposals rest on a number of questionable assumptions. One is that the uses of quotation in (16) and (17) are worthy of explanation; another is that quotations mention the same type of object in all cases. I shall not take a position on the first, but note that these uses are, at the very least, highly unusual. The second, however, is clearly dubious, and as a general policy it should be resisted. If, for example, we assumed that reference to material objects is reference to a single type of entity, we would have to say that whenever we refer, we refer to space-time slices, since four-dimensional volume is the one property that all material objects have in common. The absurdity of this view reflects badly on its analogue in the case of quotation. Furthermore, I see no reason why we should be committed, as this line of reasoning seems to be, to a rigid concept of expression which requires expressions to be meaningful and which precludes any distinction between the quotations

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21 Hans Reichenbach, in *Introduction to Symbolic Logic* (New York: MacMillan, 1947), introduces special quotation marks, which he calls “token quote-marks,” which allow a speaker to refer to any object standing between them. Token quotes turn the written page into a relief map that may contain, in addition to words and punctuation, sand, home appliances, or real estate, indeed anything a person might want to talk about. For my purposes, I need only note that Reichenbach introduces special symbols to handle token mentioning quotations, rather than treat it as a special use of the familiar device.
in (16). The notion of expression is flexible, and can be applied widely, making coarser or finer distinctions.

A second plausible motivation for the shape theory is related to Davidson’s decision, discussed above, to exclude quoted material from the quoting sentence. He makes the connection in the following remark:

... what I propose is that those words within quotation marks are not, from a semantical point of view, part of the sentence at all. It is in fact confusing to speak of them as words. What appears in quotation marks is an inscription, not a shape, and what we need it for is to refer to its shape (op. cit., p. 90).

Davidson does not explain these remarks, but it seems reasonable to think that his belief that quoted expressions are not part of quoting sentences led him to conclude that quoted expressions are not words; where by ‘words’, I suppose, he means interpreted linguistic expressions. The general idea would be that tokens that are not used do not possess linguistic characteristics. Quoted tokens would therefore be mere inscriptions. Since inscriptions have no linguistically relevant properties aside from their shape, it follows that, if quotations mention what stands between the marks, quotations must refer to either the inscription itself or its shape. We should note that while Davidson’s stated position is that quotations mention shapes, his treatment is compatible with the assumption that they mention tokens.

This argument assumes that quoted expressions are not part of quoting sentences. We have observed that, if the identity theory is adopted, there is no reason to exclude the quoted material from the quoting sentence. With the material readmitted to the sentence as an expression, it can serve as the semantic value of the quotation. Provided that the value-fixing mechanism of the identity theory can be defended, it follows that the second reason for saying that quotations mention shapes is no good.

Let us now turn to the description theories, which are another source of uniformity. On the spelling theory, each multiletter quotation is short for a description that describes an expression in terms of its constituent letters. The nature of the descriptions implies that all quotations mention series of letters. The main problem with this consequence is that it cannot be reconciled with conceptions of syntax on which the syntactic resources of a language are more advanced than concatenation. Most current syntactic theories recognize constituents and subconstituents, whose relationships cannot be represented in the linear ordering of letters. If linear ordering
were all there is to the values of quotations, then most of what linguistics say about expressions could be prejudged to be false. The lexical description theory has consequences that are just as intolerable.

It is interesting to note that the considerations Geach cites in favor of his theory actually support the idea that quotations mention expressions whose structures are not linear. The relevant comments come in the following passage:

a quoted series of expressions is always a series of quoted expressions; the quotes around a complex expression are to be read as applying to each syntactically distinct part of the expression; and if we fail so to read them, because we cannot discern the syntactical parts of the quoted expression, then we likewise fail to understand the quotation— we do not know what it is a quotation of (op. cit., p. 82).\textsuperscript{22}

In line with his official position, Geach emphasizes the serial order of constituent expressions. Yet if he is concerned, as he says he is, with the syntactic parts of sentences, he must be prepared to recognize syntactic relations that are more articulate than concatenation and constituents that are larger than words. If quotes apply to each syntactically distinct part of an expression, they must apply to noun phrases as well as the nouns they contain, verb phrases as well as the verbs they contain, etc. But this means that quotations must abbreviate descriptions of entire syntactic structures. Given that quotations must correspond word for word with the descriptions they abbreviate, it follows that they must describe single syntactic structures. For in order for a quotation to be able to mention more than one structure, it must have constituents that can refer to the same word on more than one occasion. But a single syntactically determinate expression is an unambiguous expression. Geach’s argument suggests, therefore, that quotations mention syntactically unambiguous expressions.

This high degree of specificity has unfortunate consequences. The fact that I say something true when I quote the expression in (18) and say of it that it is ambiguous shows that quotations need not mention syntactically unambiguous expressions.

18. Flying planes can be dangerous.

Geach suggests at other points in his discussion that quotations mention words bound to particular languages (op. cit., p. 86). If this

\textsuperscript{22} This passage is slightly ambiguous, since it is not clear whether quotations are “of” what is used or what is mentioned. But this ambiguity will not prevent us from evaluating the proposal.
were so, then it would not be possible to mention an expression common to distinct languages. The fact that I say something true when I quote the expression in (19) and say of it that it is a noun in English and a preposition in French shows, however, that quotation can mention language-neutral expressions.

19. Car

Since quotation can always be used to mention the whole range of unambiguous expressions, these facts suggest the quotation can be used to mention any type of linguistic expression. Of course, this is

23 I assume that semantics is determined at surface structure. If the interpretation is determined at deep structure and (21) is derived by a "conjunction reduction" transformation from 21, then the semantics could assign distinct references to the different occurrences of "car":

21'. 'Car' is a preposition in French and 'car' is a noun in English.

There are no good arguments for this hypothesis, however.

24 Up to this time, I have spoken freely of types, but it should be clear that they are nothing more than a device to aid in facilitating generalizations, a benefit which can be discarded at any time. Indeed, it is a reasonable question to ask what an interpreted or uninterpreted type is. This question can be answered by describing the relation between types and tokens of those types. (For a discussion of the significance of the role of types in linguistic theory, see Sylvain Bromberger’s "Types and Tokens in Linguistics," CSLI-report 88-0125.)

Let us consider what I have called "uninterpreted expressions." I have discussed the use of such expressions in definitions like (12). I might have carried out this definition to the same effect using a different token, such as the one in (12'):

12'. '⊕' means alternatively.

What is important to the definition is not the particular token but its characteristics. Following Bennett, I call characteristics of a token which matter to interpretation the token's "linguistically relevant characteristics." For the purposes of language use, there is no choosing between tokens with the same linguistically relevant characteristics. When we give definitions, the linguistically relevant characteristics will be some subset of the token's physical characteristics. For written tokens, these will include form and perhaps size, but not weight or material composition. For spoken tokens, accent will be important, but volume rarely, if at all.

When a token is used in a definition, it is an example that serves as a paradigm for future uses. (It is important to underscore that this is true only of expressions that contain no linguistically interpreted parts. For example, if the new expression contains letters, then these letters will not be characterized by the form of the letter tokens that are produced in the definition.)

When it comes to interpreted expressions, the situation is more involved. Since tokens that look or sound alike may have different linguistic properties, the linguistically relevant properties of interpreted tokens are not limited to physical properties. In addition, the intentions of the speaker are also relevant. Through these intentions, the token is associated with a certain standard usage. This standard usage determines its standard semantic value. The speaker intends to use the token as others have used similar tokens in the past. A speaker will not be interested in associating his use with just any previous uses. The only uses which matter are those connected to the current use by a chain of communication. Uses completely cut off from the current one will not be of interest. (The picture is implicit
not surprising. The variety of mentioned expressions simply reflects
the variety of used expressions; a quoted expression mentions itself.

VI

How is the semantic value of the mentioning expression deter-
mined? We have decided that in quotation the expression used and
the expression mentioned are one and the same. The question that
remains is how the expression is associated with itself. The name,
description, and identity theories all offer different answers to this
question.

The name theory disregards all appearances of structure. It sees
all quotations, whether of a word, a sentence, or an entire discourse,
as single semantically simple expressions. The description theories,
which recognize structure where the name theory does not, select
quotations of words or letters as semantically simple and builds
complex quotations from them. What the theories have in common
is their reliance on standard semantics and semantically simple ex-
pressions, though their selections of simple expressions differ. The
theories recognize only the standard use of simple expressions.
Now, the defining characteristic of a semantically simple expression
is that its standard semantic value is determined by stipulation. I
shall argue that this feature of simple expressions is incompatible
with the facts of quotation. Neither whole quotations nor their parts
can receive their semantic values by stipulation. By approaching the
issue from different though related perspectives, I hope to highlight
the consequences of the differences between the name and descrip-
tion theories, on the one hand, and the identity theory, on the other.

in Saul Kripke and Gareth Evans, Naming and Necessity (Cambridge: Harvard,
1980) and "The Causal Theory of Names," in The Philosophy of Language. Physi-
cal form enters the picture insofar as the attributes of a token cannot deviate
arbitrarily far from some paradigm and still be identified with other tokens.

This picture applies not only to names and natural-kind terms, but to all basic
expressions. Even the use of a demonstrative involves an association with a net-
work of past usage. This is what makes a use of the token 'that' a use of a demo-
strative. The difference between indexicals, like pronouns and demonstratives,
and nonindexicals, like names, predicates, and conjunctions, is that once the lat-
ter are connected with a standard use their semantic value is determined, whereas
the standard use only determines the rules of reference of the former. These rules
set conditions under which the particular token picks out a particular object.
(Similar views can be found in D. Kaplan, "Words," Proceedings of the Aristotelian
Society, LXIV (1990): 92-119.)

Statements about types can be understood as follows: to say that a type is used
is to say that a token with certain characteristics is used. To say something about a
type is to say something about tokens that have or might have had certain charac-
teristics. We can identity an uninterpreted expression with a set of physical char-
acteristics and a basic interpreted expression with a network of interpreted
tokens.
To understand what the various views involve, it is helpful to consider the grammar of a small language containing quotation. The grammar that would result if the name theory were adopted is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexicon</th>
<th>Phrase Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NPs</td>
<td>ADJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto mentions Otto</td>
<td>big mentions bigness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big mentions big</td>
<td>very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and so on . . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very mentions very</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very very mentions very</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and so on . . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very big mention very big</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto is big mentions Otto is big</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto is very big mentions Otto is very big</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto is very very big mentions Otto is very very big</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and so on . . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHART C**

Expressions in italics stand for expressions. Expressions in bold face stand for nonlinguistic entities. Quotation takes place when an expression mentions an expression. On the name theory, every unquoted expression, whether complex or simple, whether grammatical or ungrammatical, has as a counterpart a quoted expression that is a distinct semantically simple element. Every one of the infinity of quoted expressions is part of the lexicon. The grammar of the lexical description theory is the same except that only the quoted counterparts of unquoted words are part of the lexicon. Complex quoted expressions are built up from simple quoted parts. Complex quoted expressions will be well-formed NPs even if their unquoted counterparts are ungrammatical strings of words. On the spelling theory, the only quoted expressions in the lexicon are quotations of letters. The identity theory, in contrast, does not put any quoted expressions into the lexicon. The lexicon of the language above would contain ‘Otto’, ‘big’, and ‘very’, and a rule of interpretation would be added: quote (α) mentions α, for all α.

When the theories are presented in this way, it is easy to see the shortcomings of the name and description theories. Quoted expressions in chart C receive their values on an individual basis with no eye to regularity. This way of proceeding does not guarantee that
quoted expressions match up with their values in any particular way. Whatever correlations arise are the result of accident, not planning. So, when we look at the grammar, we have to think that it is just a coincidence that ‘very’ mentions very, ‘Otto is big’ mentions ‘Otto is big’, and in general, expressions mention themselves. It would not go against the semantic rules if (20) were to turn out to be false because ‘Otto’ mentioned ‘supercalifragilisticexpialidocious’:

20. ‘Otto’ is big.

This shows that the grammars of the name and description theories do not capture the phenomenon of quotation. It is of the essence of quotation that quoted expressions mention themselves and this essence is not an essential part of these theories. 25

The productivity of quotation also poses insurmountable problems for the name and description theories. The name theory treats each quoted expression as a special case requiring individual stipulation. Since only a finite number of stipulated expressions can occur in sentences of the language, the name theory predicts that only a finite number of expressions can occur in quotation. Previous observations have already shown that this is not the case. I noted that an infinite number of new expressions may be defined using quotation and these expressions will be part of quoting sentences. 26 Indeed, there is no need to go beyond expressions that already have meaning. There are an infinite number of meaningful expressions in English and everyone of them can be quoted. If the name theory were correct, this would not be possible.

The productive resources of the description theories put them in a somewhat better position to confront the productivity of quotation. By choosing one simple quoted expression for each simple unquoted expression, the theories generate an infinite number of quoted expressions that mirror the infinite number of unquoted expressions. The problem with these theories is that not all expressions can be built out of the simples currently in the language. For instance, all potential new expressions cannot be built out of a finite number of parts. Since descriptions must be constructed from a finite basis and any expression may occur in quotation, there will not be enough descriptions to describe all expressions that may oc-

25 This objection to the name and description theories is in the spirit of those offered by Davidson; see op. cit., pp. 83, 87.

26 This is essentially the line taken by the argument in section III. That argument treated the occurrence of new expressions as the standard occurrence of simple expressions.
cur in quotation. For this reason, the descriptions theories cannot be correct as general accounts of quotation.\textsuperscript{27}

The third and last aspect of quotation that I shall consider is its opacity. The opacity of the quotation is illustrated by the fact that substitution of ‘Clemens’ for ‘Twain’, which in other cases would be licensed by (23), leads from the true (22) to the false (24):

22. ‘Twain was a writer’ has 15 letters.
24. Twain = Clemens
24. ‘Clemens was a writer’ has 15 letters.
25. Twain was a writer
26. Clemens was a writer.
27. Clemens
28. Twain

The truth of (22) and the falsehood of (24) shows that the names ‘Twain’ and ‘Clemens’ cannot be used interchangably in quotation. The name and description theories explain this fact in two stages. First, they determine the semantic structure of the quoted expression, and then assign semantic values to the simple parts. The name theory treats the entire quoted expressions in (22) and (24) as simple wholes. As simples, it assigns to them the expressions in (25) and (26) as semantic values. The difference in the lengths of the semantic values of the quoted expressions explains the difference in the truth values of (22) and (24). The fact that the unquoted sentences have the same semantic value is irrelevant. The lexical description theory assigns the quoted expressions a structure in which the words are semantically simple. It assigns the expressions in (27) and (28) to the quoted names ‘Twain’ and ‘Clemens’. The difference in the lengths of the semantic values of the quoted names makes a difference in the length of the semantic value of the quoted sentences, which explains the difference in truth value between (22) and (24). The fact that the unquoted names have the same semantic value is irrelevant. Similar things are true of the spelling theory.

One should not be impressed by the apparent success of these theories in explaining opacity. Their emptiness is obvious. The weakness is again due to the stipulative nature of the semantics. In each case, the difference in truth value comes down to the difference in the semantic value of the basic expressions, values which are perfectly arbitrary. Without some principle backing the assignment of values, the explanation of the difference in the truth values is simply that quoted sentences mention different things. But this much we knew before we got started.

\textsuperscript{27} These objections are again essentially Davidson's; see \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 83, 89.
The identity theory furnishes simple and natural explanations for the facts that cause trouble for the name and description theories. First, consider the fact that a quoted expression invariably mentions itself. This correlation appeared on the name and description theories to be merely a fortuitous coincidence. According to the identity theory, it is the rule of quotation for which there are no exceptions. If an expression does not mention itself, then it is not quoted. Second, the fact that we can quote an infinite number of meaningless expressions, which turns out to be incomprehensible on the name and description theories, is not an issue for the identity theory. Using a single principle, the identity theory churns out interpretations of all quotations. The principle applies with equal indifference to interpreted and uninterpreted expressions, and applies to a finite number just as quickly as it does to an infinite number. As a result, problems having to do with the size of the interpretative apparatus do not afflict the identity theory. Finally, there is the phenomenon of opacity. Using the distinction between quotational and standard uses of expressions, we can say that the use of an expression is opaque if its standard semantic value may change when one of its constituents is replaced by another expression with the same standard semantic value. By tying the semantic value of a quoted expression to the identity of the expression, the identity theory makes it clear why uses of expressions in quotation are opaque. In the case discussed above, replacing ‘Twain’ by ‘Clemens’ in (22) lengthens the expressions used and so lengthens what is mentioned, making (24) false. The fact that ‘Twain’ and ‘Clemens’ have the same standard semantic value is irrelevant.

Although Davidson’s demonstrative theory is false, I believe that quotation has more in common with demonstration than with naming or describing. We can demonstrate an object through one of its tokens. I can mention a type of car by pointing to a particular car and saying: “that model” or “the model of that car.” In demonstration, the only requirement is that the object or its proxy be salient in the context. In quotation, we also mention an object through one of its tokens. The difference between quotation and demonstration is that quotation makes a more economical use of resources. Since what is mentioned is a piece of language, we economize and use it in a syntactic and semantic capacity in the sentence.

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