

# Précis of *Events and their Names* and reply to reviewers

Jonathan Bennett

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(The numbers in this abstract correspond to the chapter numbers in the book.)

## Précis

**(1)** By ‘names’ of events I mean sentence-nominals that refer to events.

Following Vendler, I take it that these will be perfect and not imperfect nominals. Quisling’s betrayal of Norway (perfect) was an event; Quisling’s betraying Norway (imperfect) is a fact, namely the fact that Quisling betrayed Norway. Quisling’s betraying Norway is different from his doing Norway a disservice; these are two facts. His betrayal of Norway was his disservice to Norway; there was only the one event.

**(2)** According to the ‘Fregean’ concept of fact, two imperfect nominals pick out the same fact only if they are logically equivalent to one another. Thus, the whole intrinsic nature of any fact can be read off from the nominal that refers to it: what you see is what you get. The ‘Russellian’ fact concept is coarser: according to it, the fact that De Gaulle shouts ‘*Vive le Québec libre!*’ is the fact that the tallest French politician shouts ‘*Vive le Québec libre!*’ if De Gaulle is the tallest French politician. So a Russellian fact name does not declare the whole intrinsic nature of the named fact. The ‘highlighted’

fact concept is finer than the Fregean one: it distinguishes the fact that it was Mary who stole the bicycle from the fact that it was the bicycle that Mary stole. I offer an account of what highlighting amounts to, in support of my conviction that it is not important.

**(3)** Fact-causation statements—‘P’s being the case led causally to Q’s being the case’—admit of two analyses. **(i)** The NS analysis focuses on the idea that P’s being the case is a necessary part of a sufficient condition for Q’s being the case. This is adapted from Mackie’s theory of INUS conditions, with the vowels removed because what they stand for should not occur in the analysis. For a little more on this, see **2.1** in my reply to reviewers. **(ii)** The counterfactual analysis focuses on the statement that if P had not been the case Q would not have been the case.

**(4)** Event causation statements—e.g. ‘The explosion caused the fire’—have also been given two different analyses. **(i)** According to the relational analysis ‘ $e_1$  caused  $e_2$ ’ asserts that a certain triadic relation holds amongst  $e_1$ ,  $e_2$  and the totality of true causal laws. Attempts to define that relation

get bogged down, and a solution is postponed until chapter 9.

**(ii)** The counterfactual analysis ties ‘ $e_1$  caused  $e_2$ ’ to ‘If  $e_1$  had not occurred  $e_2$  would not have occurred’. I criticize this on the grounds that it needs to attribute essences to individual events, while our everyday event concept makes no provision for this—we have the thought ‘If she hadn’t waved. . .’ but not the thought ‘If that wave of hers hadn’t occurred. . .’. This connects with a discussion of Lewis’s work in this area.

**(5)** Kim maintains that two nominals can pick out a single event only if (roughly speaking) their predicative parts are equivalent: so it cannot be true that the kick he gave her was the assault he made on her. I argue against this, contending that most of Kim’s *prima facie* evidence for it depends on his running events together with facts. It is beyond dispute that his kicking her is not the same as his assaulting her, these being different *facts*.

**(6)** An event is a trope, a property instance. That hypothesis best explains why most events are abstract (in Locke’s sense), why they are particulars, why they have subjects, and so on. An alternative that Kim has mentioned—namely that an event is a triple whose members are a substance, a property and a time—is also a contender, but does not fare so well. The metaphysical view that events are tropes is Kim’s (he calls them ‘exemplifications of properties’), and he and others have thought that it entails the semantics discussed in chapter 5. But it doesn’t, for a reason that I give in section 37 of the book and again in 4.3 below. In this chapter I also attack the confused notion of ‘identity criteria for events’.

**(7)** Quine identifies events with spatiotemporal zones, which implies that if  $e_1$  is co-located in space-time with  $e_2$  then  $e_1$  is  $e_2$ . This implies that a swim might be identical with the onset of a cold, so that the onset of the cold might be famous, set a record, be done in back stroke, and so on.

Each of these can be defended, but some of the defenses sound like special pleading: Quine is evidently not correctly describing our actual event concept. Nor does he mean to be. He is offering an excisionary proposal, ignoring abstract events and emphasizing ones that incorporate the whole of what obtains at a zone. This is motivated by his interest in a certain view of physical objects, including the idea that they have temporal parts.

**(8)** Most writers on events have sought a position that implies (against Quine) that her swim was not the onset of her cold and (against Kim) that it was her journey. (This raises metaphysical questions: How abstract can an event be? How unabstract or ‘concrete’? Also semantic ones: What must two event names be like to be able to name the same event? The two kinds of question are often confused in the literature.) Previous attempts to stake out a precise position between Quine and Kim have failed. They were bound to, because our event concept is indeterminate about just where the line falls, so that some questions about co-reference of event names (or about ‘event identity’) have no unique answer. Corresponding to any event name there is a rich fact (the event’s ‘companion fact’) about what goes on at the zone to which the name points; and the companion fact’s intrinsic nature determines what is true of the event. The predicative content of the event name does not express the whole of the companion fact (what you see is not all that you get), and the latter is not the whole of what is the case at the relevant zone. Just how far short of that it falls is subject to the indeterminacy mentioned above.

**(9)** Event causation is best analyzed in terms of the fact causation. To say that  $e_1$  caused  $x$  is to say that some part of  $e_1$ ’s companion fact was an NS condition of  $x$ . Reasons are given for not identifying the event with its companion fact. Event causation statements are less informative than fact

causation statements, not only because of the indeterminacy. That relative uninformativeness is what gives them such utility as they possess, but it makes them inferior to fact causation statements for most serious purposes. Moral philosophy, especially, has been harmed when questions have been raised about people's actions (events) rather about how they behave (facts).

**(10)** When two abstract events completely fill the same zone (the spin of a top and its movement across the floor) there may be a single richer event that includes them both (the top's entire movement at that time). This is nonzonal fusion. A theory of Lombard's about the limits on nonzonal fusion is critically discussed. The converse of nonzonal fusion is nonzonal fission: the limits on this also are an explorable topic, though there may be little to be gained from exploring it. Then there is zonal fusion. (Dempsey's movements fuse with Firpo's to yield the fight between them), and its converse, zonal fission. Philosophers vary in how far they will go with zonal fusion, from Lombard, who holds that a single event must involve a property's being exemplified by a single object (understood conservatively), through to Judith Thomson, who almost says that for any two events there is an event that is their zonal fusion. This chapter discusses Thomson's mereology of events.

**(11)** Davidson has argued that the best way to understand how 'John walks slowly' entails 'John walks' is to represent it as the entailment by 'There is a slow walk of which John is the subject' of 'There is a walk of which John is the subject', which can be handled in standard logic. Reichenbach's earlier theory that adverbs involve quantification over properties turns out to be formally indistinguishable from Davidson's account which quantifies over events. They are inferior to a theory about 'predicate modifiers', stemming from work by Montague. This, unlike Davidson's doctrine, unifies adverbs

with some other phenomena that I think belong with them. Another objection to Davidson's approach is adduced, resting on the indeterminacy thesis of chapter 8.

**(12)** The Anscombe thesis concerns the 'by' -locution, that is, statements like 'He woke her by turning on the radio'. It says that if someone [end]s by [means]ing, and if  $A_e$  is the action of his which makes it true that he [end]s and  $A_m$  is the action which makes it true that he [means]s, then  $A_e$  is  $A_m$ . The arguments around this are all inconclusive, and all point to one conclusion: that the thesis itself is a shallow semantic triviality, with nothing substantial hanging on it. If he fells the tree by sawing most of the way through its trunk, there is a course of events that stops when the saw stops moving, and another that stops when the tree falls, and we know how those relate to one another. The dispute is about which of them is referred to by 'His felling of the tree'. Why should we care? There is an untrivial question about when he stopped felling the tree. The right answer is that he stopped felling the tree when he stopped sawing. That kills one argument against the Anscombe thesis, but it doesn't imply that the felling was the sawing or, therefore, that the Anscombe thesis is true.

**(13)** Goldman, on the strength of a semantics of events like Kim's, denies many statements of the form ' $e_1$  is  $e_2$ ' that seem intuitively to be true, and he has a theory about what relation does hold between the members of these pairs of events. It says that in each case one of the events *generates* the other, and distinguishes four species of generation. Three of them involve the 'by' -locution, and I argue that the fourth should not be part of this theory, which would fare better as a treatment just of events (or actions) involved in the 'by' -locution than as a treatment of all the apparent identities that are denied by Kim's semantics. A second of the four can be absorbed into one of the remaining two. The latter

are *causal* and *noncausal*. The line between these marks a real distinction, e.g. between ‘I hurt him by punching him’ and ‘I broke the law by punching him’. Even while we reject the underlying semantics, we might hope that Goldman’s (amended) theory of generation would throw some light on the ‘by’-locution; but it turns out to have defects that prevent it from helping us much except negatively.

**(14)** According to my analysis, ‘He felled the tree’ means ‘Some fact about his conduct had a K role in the tree’s falling’ (where K is short for a longish story that is needed in causal cases; I tell it in sections 82-85 of the book), and ‘... by

sawing most of the way through its trunk’ means ‘... namely the fact that he sawed most of the way through its trunk’. So the ‘end’ clause *quantifies* over facts about the person’s behavior, while the ‘means’ clause *names* the fact that makes the ‘end’ clause true. Another example, this time noncausal: ‘She broke the silence. . . by shouting “Eureka!”’ means ‘Some fact about her conduct made it the case that the silence was broken. . . namely the fact that she shouted “Eureka!”.’ The ‘by’-locution is central, load-bearing and important in our thought and talk; it is no coincidence that it depends on the concept of fact and not that of event.

## Reply to Reviewers

I am grateful to the other contributors to this symposium for the time, care, and energy that they have devoted to *Events and Their Names*, and for their good words about it. I shall respond to them one by one. Their comments don’t overlap much, so I am not under pressure to group the materials by topic rather than by author.

### 1. Parsons

**1.1.** When I said that ‘events are tropes’ is hardly controversial, that was a bit of bullying, and now that Terry Parsons is taking it seriously I apologize and withdraw. I should have said merely that it is a quite widespread view among event theorists, and that I can find no considerable rivals to it.

**1.2** I certainly didn’t intend tropes to be highly determinate *properties*; that would make them universals, whereas events are particulars. But I am not moved by Parson’s reason why they cannot be properties, namely that if they were, that would license substitutions that turn acceptable turns of phrase into peculiar ones. If this argument of Parsons’

succeeds, it could be turned against the view of tropes that I do hold, so I need to show why it fails.

There are two substitutions to be discussed. **(i)** Lady Godiva possesses the property *rides*, but it is odd to say that she ‘possesses the event of her riding’. For a start, I replace the pidgin English phrase ‘the event of her riding’ by the idiomatic ‘her ride’. Parsons may find it implausible to say that she possessed her ride, but is it? It was certainly *her* ride. Anyway, I can’t get philosophical results from such superficial verbal niceties. It is more natural to say ‘He took a walk’ than to say ‘He took a dance’, but obviously a walker’s relation to his walk is the same as a dancer’s to his dance. This kind of verbal point isn’t where the action is (see **3.5** below). **(ii)** People saw the assassination of Kennedy but they didn’t ‘see a property of Oswald’. (Let’s pretend to think that Oswald killed Kennedy.) The people in question didn’t see a property of Oswald, or a relation between him and Kennedy, because they didn’t see Oswald. For just that reason, they didn’t see the assassination. What they saw

was the break-up of Kennedy's skull. They might say in later years 'I saw the assassination of Kennedy', but that would not be strictly true. If Parsons insists that such an innocent claim should be allowed a meaning that makes it true, then I reply that 'the assassination of Kennedy' in that meaning of the phrase does not stand for an event with Oswald as subject. Either way, the alleged counterexample fails.

**1.3** Parsons rightly says that I hold tropes to be something different both from universals and from substances, and he undertakes to say what they must be. I think I agree with his positive account, though he is less explicit than I would like regarding which part of the account actually says what tropes are. Following Williams, Campbell and others, I hold that a trope is a property instance. The instance of *riding naked through a town*. . . etc. which is Lady Godiva's ride differs from her in being somewhat abstract (in Locke's and my sense of that term), and it differs from its parent universal in being particular, as is shown by its being spatio-temporally located. That is Parson's view too, I gather, but I wish he had paraded it more openly and centrally, instead of leaving it lurking around the fringe of the true things he says about how descriptions of tropes relate to descriptions of substances.

**1.4** We do elucidate events by reference to tropes, I submit. We can explain 'trope' without bringing in events—I have just done it—and the hypothesis that events are tropes can help to explain things about events that might otherwise be puzzling: events are particulars and yet abstract, every event must have a subject, there is a systematic relation between certain truths about events and truths about their subjects, the difference between events and states seems to be fairly shallow and unimportant. How explanatory can an identification be?

Now for the difficulty about supervenience. I said in the book—agreeing with Lombard and others—that events are supervenient on substances and properties. Part of what I meant is that two worlds couldn't be exactly alike in what substances they contain and what properties those substances have at each time yet unlike in what events occur at them. Parsons would agree with that much, I think. But the supervenience claim implies an order of dependence—such and such events occur *because of* various facts about what properties various substances have at various times—and Parsons thinks that I have this the wrong way around. He thinks that what makes it the case that the sparrow falls is that there is a fall of which the sparrow is the subject. If he is right, then it must be wrong to say that what makes it the case that the sparrow's fall occurs is the fact that the sparrow falls.

But is he right? I don't think we have yet been given good reason to accept what Parsons is relying on, namely the Davidsonian reduction of monadic predications to relations of substances to tropes. I don't accept Davidson's case for it, namely that it does the best job of explaining adverb-dropping inferences. My reasons for disbelief in that, partly learned from earlier work by Parsons himself, are given in my book; Parsons has evidently changed his mind about this, but I don't know why. Perhaps it is because he has come to believe—as he evidently has—that he needs the Davidsonian reduction in order to make it clear that events are tropes. If he were right about that I must be wrong about supervenience, but I don't think he is right and don't see why he holds this view.

When I try to muster sympathy for the thesis that tropes are more basic than properties, it comes in the form of sympathy for the still more radical doctrine that tropes are more basic than properties and than substances—the

idea being that universals and substances are each one kind of construction out of tropes. Because I couldn't rule that out, I wrote: 'I assert my supervenience thesis in a conditional form: events are supervenient on substances and properties, unless the supervenience runs the other way because tropes are more fundamental than substances and properties.' (p. 16)

## 2. Sanford

David Sanford briskly picks up four things that he thinks are wrong in my book.

**2.1** He challenges my analysis of fact causation in terms of NS conditions, as I called them, because it makes true infinitely many causal statements that no sane person would accept. He rightly compares his proof of this with a trivialization by Castañeda of a certain formula of Goldman's. In the book I said that it had been a mistake trying to fend off Castañeda with pure logic, and that the work must be done at a shallower level where edges are less sharp, e.g. by recourse to the concept of an 'honestly free-standing condition' as distinct from one that is rigged up by logical operations on other conditions. It is along those lines that I must amend my NS analysis so as to defend it against Sanford's attack, the price of the defense being that the analysis is less clean and deep than I had wanted it to be.

The repaired analysis may still be right. There is no reason in principle why our concept of fact causation should not include in it some such notion as that of a real, natural, uncontrived condition. If the latter doesn't belong to deep metaphysics, then nor does the concept of fact causation; but then what entitles us to say otherwise?

Still, the suggested repair admits into the NS account of causation an indeterminacy and softness that resembles what one finds in the counterfactual analysis of fact

causation, and was part of the basis for my dislike of the latter. On p. 50 I wrote: 'If the two [analyses] are not equivalent, I am pretty sure that the NS analysis is preferable.' Sanford's intervention has left me with no reason I can give for preferring the NS analysis, but also—more cheerfully—it has slightly strengthened the grounds for conjecturing that the two are equivalent.

**2.2** Sanford shows that there is something wrong in my attempt to cut highlighting down to size. He puts an accurate finger on the trouble:

Wanting to represent a propositional attitude towards  $Q$  by someone who somehow takes it for granted that  $P$ , I took it that the attitude was to  $(P \supset Q)$ , but as soon as that is turned into  $(\text{not-}P \text{ or } Q)$  it can be seen to be wrong. I ought to have suspected that the story I told was too short to capture the truth. Some much deeper and probably more complex account of background/foreground is needed, and I don't know what it is. My bones still tell me, clamorously, that highlighting is not important to the theory of events, but Sanford has transmuted that from a reasoned belief into a mere hunch.

**2.3** Sanford sees my book as repeatedly implying that 'the idiom of causal flow or transmission from zone to zone' is appropriate for all cases of causation, whereas in many cases of causation there is no 'flow of something such as energy from zone to zone'. I don't in fact use 'causal flow' to mean 'flow of something such as energy'. For me, 'flow' is a metaphor, a way of talking about causal relatedness and building in an indication of causal direction. When in an earlier book I referred to Spinoza's denial that there is any causal flow across the boundary between the attributes, it will have been clear to those readers that the topic was causal relevance in general, not specifically energy transfer. I even

alluded to Spinoza's denial that there is any *logico-causal* flow between attributes, which puts energy transfer still further out of sight. I explain the metaphor in my events book, by writing '... that there is some causal flow from one zone to another, i.e. that undeclared features of two zones are causally relevant to one another in a certain way'. But this is perhaps too brief and inexplicit; I apologize to Sanford and Campbell for misleading them about it.

However, Sanford's challenge has caused me to rethink the metaphor and to conclude that it is a bad one. Not because of his example, in which an event is caused by the cessation of a transfer of energy. It is essential to that example that in it energy was being transferred right up to the moment on which Sanford fastens; the fact that at that moment the transfer stops doesn't greatly incline me to withdraw my 'flow' metaphor. The real trouble for the metaphor comes from a consideration that Sanford does not bring against me, and may not even agree with. I shall explain.

According to my NS account of fact causation or any plausible successor to it, zone  $Z_1$  has a causal bearing on zone  $Z_2$  if a complete causal explanation for how  $Z_2$  is, omitting nothing relevant, must include some facts about  $Z_1$ . According to the counterfactual analysis,  $Z_1$  has a causal bearing on  $Z_2$  if: if  $Z_1$  had been different in certain ways, this would have led to  $Z_2$ 's being different. Each of these strikes me as perfectly plausible, and of course they may be equivalent. Now, each of them implies that a zone at which no change occurs may have a causal bearing on a change that does occur at some other zone. Although nothing happens at  $Z_1$  it is causally relevant to a change C at  $Z_2$  because (in NS terms) a complete causal explanation for C

involves the fact that nothing happened at  $Z_1$  or because (in counterfactual terms) if a certain change had occurred at  $Z_1$  then C would not have occurred at  $Z_2$ . I am comfortable with this result. Granted, it seems a bit odd to say that a person helped to cause a disaster by staying still, and some moral philosophers have even drawn substantive moral conclusions from that intuition of oddity. But the intuition comes from the shallowest pragmatic level, owes nothing to semantics or metaphysics, and does not support anything. Or so I believe. If I am right, it is seriously misleading to speak of causal relevance in terms of 'flow', and I should mend my ways.

**2.4** Sanford gives a counterexample to this statement of mine: 'Of all the events that cause x's acquisition of P, one that did so by preventing x from acquiring P earlier will be lengthily, remotely, unsaliently related to its eventual acquisition of P, and that will make us hesitate to say that it caused the acquisition...'. I accept the counterexample. Just before the quoted statement I wrote: 'Of course there is a temporal asymmetry in what we are ordinarily prepared to say about causes...—I call attention to 'ordinarily,' which I ought to have repeated in the sentence that Sanford has picked on, so that it read: 'Of all the events that cause x's acquisition of P, one that did so by preventing x from acquiring P earlier will *ordinarily* be lengthily... ' etc.

Back when I believed that delayers are not causes (rather than, as in the book, that we aren't happy about calling delayers 'causes'), I knew that this couldn't be unrestrictedly true because of examples like Sanford's. I quote one of my own examples: 'A massage dislodges a blood clot that would have killed the patient within ten minutes, but also starts another chain of events that kills him two hours later.'<sup>1</sup> That is essentially Sanford's example, temporally compressed.

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Bennett, 'Event Causation: The Counterfactual Analysis', *Philosophical Perspectives* 1 (1987), pp. 367–86.

In the passage Sanford picks out in the book, I was mainly concerned to replace my previous thesis that there is an implication  $R_1$  between ‘x is a delayer of y’ and ‘x is not a cause of y’ by the thesis that there is an implication  $R_2$  between ‘x is a delayer of y’ and ‘x is not a salient cause of y’ and another  $R_3$  between that and ‘x is not something we would naturally describe as “a cause of y”.’ Sanford’s counterexample shows that  $R_2$  is not an exceptionless implication, which is what my similar examples showed about the supposed relation  $R_1$ . This doesn’t touch the main point, which was (i) to replace a direct implication by a mediated one and (ii) to shift the implicatum from metaphysics to pragmatics.

### 3. Campbell

Keith Campbell’s deepest concern about my book is that it manifests a fatal indecisiveness about how far language can take us. His remarks about this show me that I played my cards too close to my chest; I shall lay them on the table soon, but first some lesser matters should be cleared up.

**3.1** Campbell seems to think that facts are tropes. He certainly thinks that I think so. In my book I entertained the idea that events are a sort of facts, which would imply that some (and so presumably all) facts are tropes, but I did reject that idea, and its implying that facts are tropes gives me an excellent further reason for doing so. Consider for example the fact that an instance of radioactivity occurs at zone Z: with what trope could that fact be identified? There is, it seems to me, no tolerable answer. I choke on the suggestion that facts (which are propositional) are tropes (which are located particulars).

**3.2** I agree with Campbell that the world sits there and its parts relate causally to one another independently of us. I don’t see what he wants to make of that fact. He sounds like a critic of a map who keeps insisting that the mountains

and rivers are there independently of what any cartographer may say or do, as though for him the land itself were its only acceptable map.

What I was working to understand in my book was what we say and think about how the world is causally hooked up. We have two rather different kinds of thought about this, expressible in event-causation and fact-causation statements respectively. The truth of those statements doesn’t depend on our ability to make them, but we do have that ability, and it is a legitimate topic of interest. Analogously, the distinction between fish and aquatic non-fish is one that we make; what line it is depends on us, for we are drawing it. But where the line falls is through the world; and the items on the two sides of it would differ from one another and interrelate with one another in just the same way if we hadn’t drawn the line. The differences and other relations are there in the world; we have chosen to pick them out.

Similarly, facts and events and the differences amongst them are out there in the world, and we pick them out. I am bewildered by Campbell’s attribution to me of the view that we can manufacture facts *ad libitum*. I think no such thing, except in the trivial sense that by raising my arm I can bring into existence the fact that I raise my arm. Campbell seems to credit me with believing that we can bring a fact into existence by constructing a name (in my enlarged sense of ‘name’) for it. I cannot see why he thinks that I hold this daft view. What I actually think is that the facts (other than ones about humans) exist independently of us, and we manufacture names to pick some of them out.

I do hold that fact names have a certain power that most other kinds of names lack, namely: a canonical Fregean fact name conveys, expresses, bears on its face, the entire intrinsic nature of the fact it picks out, if indeed it picks out any. (We must inspect the world to know whether a

given fact name actually names a fact.) This is a real and important power, but it is not a power to create facts.

**3.3** Campbell writes: ‘In a world without thought, without different ways of conceptualizing the same situation, there is no way to distinguish a given swim from the journey that it is.’ The point of the remark seems to be that I am allowing subjective, thought-dependent distinctions to masquerade as objective metaphysics. But I am not sure what the detailed bill of particulars is. If the swim is the journey then of course there is ‘no way to distinguish the swim from the journey’—thought or no thought! Quite generally, there cannot be a way to distinguish a thing from the thing that it is. Perhaps Campbell meant to speak not of distinguishing the swim from the journey but rather of having two ways of describing or thinking about that single event. To that I reply as follows. If there were no thought, it would not happen that a single event was brought under nonequivalent identifying thoughts; but it could easily happen that a single event had features making it capable of being brought under nonequivalent identifying thoughts if there were any thoughts. This is such plain sailing, so simple and obvious, that I fear that I must have misunderstood Campbell at this point.

**3.4** Campbell thinks items that supervene on more basic items are unsuitable as carriers of causal powers. ‘To claim that Xs are supervenient is one way of denying them independent being. On the other hand, to give them the role of causes is precisely to propose for them the best kind of independent reality—one’s own causal power. For Plato and many since, power is the mark of Being.’ In reply, I would note first that my thesis about the supervenience of events was qualified or conditional (see the end of 1.4 above). Also, throughout my book I mildly denigrate event causation

statements in favor of fact causation statements, which are a superior conceptual device. Campbell might say: ‘That is worse than ever. You surely don’t attribute to facts the best kind of independent reality, do you?’

It is hard to give a straight answer to this. It may seem intuitively evident that facts are supervenient entities: on the ground floor there are (perhaps) quarks moving about in space, and dependent on them there are facts about quarks moving around in space. But things are not so simple. The right way to express the supervenience of Fs on Gs is by saying that the facts about Fs depend on the facts about Gs: blushes, for example, are supervenient entities because the fact that a blush exists on a certain face depends on the fact that the face reddens in a certain way. If we now try to say that facts themselves, facts *per se*, are supervenient entities, we are forced into formulations that make little sense and cast no light:

The fact that there are facts about quarks moving around in space depends on the fact that there are quarks moving around in space.

I don’t know what to make of this. The supervenience or otherwise of facts is hard, perhaps impossible, to discuss.

Anyway, giving the palm to fact-causation statements is not saying that facts are the primary possessors of power. As I said in my book, I think that causal power is possessed, basically and centrally, by substances:

Some people have objected that facts are not the sorts of items that can cause anything. A fact is a true proposition (they say); it is not something in the world but is rather something about the world, which makes it categorially wrong for the role of a puller and shover and twister and bender. That rests on the mistaken assumption that causal statements must report relations between shovers and forcers. I grant

that facts cannot behave like elbows in the ribs, but we know what items do play that role—namely elbows. In our world the pushing and shoving and forcing are done by things—elementary particles and aggregates of them—and not by any relata of the causal relation. (p. 22)

So there the world sits, full of substances acting on one another. We are interested in saying more specific things about what acts upon what and how—things that will help us to predict and explain the world's various stages—and for this we need to find a good conceptual grid to throw over reality. The best grid I know of is that provided by fact causation statements. I see no reason to try to devise a kind of causation statement that picks out the fundamental bearers of causal power and talks about what they do to one another. Such statements would presumably pick out individual substances and say, minute by minute, how each moved or changed and how others moved or changed in consequence. They wouldn't be interesting because they wouldn't do enough. I want statements that are worth having; the ones most worth having are fact causation statements.

**3.5** Now for the question of where language fits in. Philosophy's metaphysical questions are not spurious, but they do 'have a distinctively linguistic content'. I don't know what philosophy can be if it is not analytic philosophy; analysis is of concepts and propositions; and the only handle we have on any decently complex concept is through language.

One might hope to use language to identify some concept which could then be investigated independently of its linguistic role. That is what Moore thought he could do:

I shall . . . use the word ['good'] in the sense in which I think it is ordinarily used; but at the same time

I am not anxious to discuss whether I am right in thinking that it is so used. My business is solely with that object or idea which I hold, rightly or wrongly, that the word is generally used to stand for. What I want to discover is the nature of that object or idea and about this I am extremely anxious to arrive at an agreement.<sup>1</sup>

If you think that concepts can be investigated independently of language, you have to be willing to talk as Moore does about this. His peculiarly open and innocent way of putting it helps us to see that the project is a chimera.

Objection (perhaps from Campbell): 'Concepts be damned! What we should be talking about is the world!' Meaning that a philosophical book on events should report how many floods there have been in Bangladesh this year, and whether market crises in Tokyo are caused by scandals in New York? Of course not. But, then, What? Well, perhaps: What basic sorts of events are there? But then tell me what kind of basicness is in question. If the question concerns what sorts of events, if any, will be taken as basic by true total final physics, I can only say that I have no idea, and that at my age I have no hope of finding out. When Campbell speaks of 'the change in how philosophy's problems are viewed, which has occurred over the last two decades', he doesn't say what change he has in mind; but his closing sentence strongly suggests that he takes philosophy to have 'changed' by abdicating in favor of physics. This is an understandable response to some of the pressures that analytic philosophy has been subjected to: from Quine's attack on analyticity, from embarrassment about the flimsy 'linguistic analysis' that emanated from Oxford around the middle of the century, from the universal failure to explain

<sup>1</sup> G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge University Press. 1903. p. 6.

clearly how necessity could arise from analyticity—to name just three. But philosophical things still happen that are not hand-maidens to physics; we haven't all lost our nerve; and the embarrassments should be confronted and overcome, not dealt with by flight.

Consider, for example, the thesis that events are tropes. I don't see how anyone could in good conscience claim to accept this because it helps him to 'integrate physical theory'. The basis for it, in the thought of Leibniz, D. C. Williams, Quinton, myself, and others, is that it provides the best explanation for what we see to be the main facts about our ordinary event concept. It is a paradigm of an analytic thesis. It is also sober metaphysics, and it is about the world. Campbell repeatedly implies that it can't be both, apparently relying on the view that analytic truths aren't about the world, lack content, don't say anything, etc. That view is a myth, entirely unsupported by argument; I think I refuted it thirty years ago.<sup>1</sup>

In my book I tried to learn what I could about events by *a priori* means; that confines me to finding out what the event concept permits and what it requires. Of course I am willing to tidy things up a bit, to be revisionary rather than descriptive—for example, to judge that if a white thing's change to being blue is an event then its staying white should also count as one, and if our event concept doesn't say so, so much the worse for it. But the descriptive endeavor is the main thing.

However, I strongly agree with Campbell's assertion that 'Conforming to existing usage cannot be a necessary condition on eligible proposals.' That is, superficial facts about the *mot juste* are negligible, having little to do with real philosophy. It is sad that philosophy ever wasted its time

on them. Many facts about language are not of that sort, however. They are deep and structural, and so they matter. A linguistic difference such as that between perfect and imperfect nominals has many consequences; one could not ignore it and still make everything come out all right by means of a few complementary adjustments of a routine sort. I contrast this with the nature of the linguistic fact that all events are changes. If it is incorrect English to apply 'event' to something described as a non-change, that is a merely lexicographic fact: we have this constraint that we put on things that we are to call 'events', but this is a mere preference for one way of using a particular word. There is little of importance that we have to say about changes that we can't also say about events\*—that is, items that are blocked from counting as events only by the fact that they are not changes. If that is so, it is a routine matter to implement the decision to use 'event' to mean what would previously have been meant by 'event or event\*'. In a nutshell: There are linguistic facts that make a difference to conceptual structure, and there are ones that merely determine whether *W* is the *mot juste*. I care greatly about the former, and little about the latter.

Campbell, without distinguishing them, gives the back of his hand to both. So, of course, what he is left with is not philosophy but physics.

**3.6** The move from language to the world is supposed (I gather) to be illustrated by Campbell's view about how many tropes there are in a zone. (I have inquired into the number of events in a zone, not the number of tropes. The questions differ, because some tropes don't fall under the event concept that we actually have or under any plausible successor to it.) The question of how many tropes there are

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Bennett, 'A Myth about Logical Necessity', *Analysis* 21 (1960–61).

in a given zone, or how many events, is indeed ‘a matter of substantial contingent fact’, and it is not one that I sought to answer for any actual zone. In the book I did, however, treat some conceptual questions that affect the counting of events in zones: questions about how to count events and about how many of them there could be in a zone.

Campbell offers some doctrine about how to count (not events, but) tropes in a zone. It is packed into the last sentence of this:

How many tropes there are in a zone. . . is a matter of substantial, contingent fact. The number will vary from zone to zone, and it requires an empirical research program—in, for example, unified field theory—to decide the matter provisionally. We should count each of the scientifically distinguished maximally specific (least abstract) tropes as one, but not recognize more and more general ways of referring to these specific tropes as involving new ones.

I gather from this, as it whips past, that there is to be no nonzonal fusion or fission: if the parachutist’s descent is one event and his rotation another, then there is no more comprehensive event of which his moving downwards is one aspect and his rotating is another. Well, that is a view that some have taken; but I don’t know why Campbell takes it or whether it connects with any of his other themes.

Nor do I see how, if only maximally specific tropes are to be counted, there can ever be more than one at a zone. If there can, there must be some barrier to always allowing any pair of tropes that are co-located in space-time to be fused into a single more specific trope. Perhaps Campbell thinks that this work is done by the phrase ‘scientifically distinguished’; I’m not in a position to say that this won’t work—only to report that I have tried to make it work and failed. Versions of this problem keep turning up in the

analysis of the event concept, and are discussed at intervals in my book.

The general spirit of Campbell’s proposal is one that I have no quarrel with. It may be that a good theory of event-counting will refer to causal laws, or to the basic principles of true total physics, or to properties that are ‘scientifically distinguished’, or the like. Our actual concept of event might have such a feature, just as our concepts of natural kinds of stuff have; and even if our actual concept isn’t like that, it might be better for us if it were.

If we use an event concept of that sort (whatever its provenance), doesn’t it follow that we can count the events in particular zones only with help from basic physical laws? No, it doesn’t quite follow, because the concept might bring in physical laws or what is ‘scientifically distinguished’ in such a way as to guarantee *a priori* that there can be only one event at a zone, come what may; I have suggested that Campbell’s concept may do that. But probably not. A law-involving concept is likely to make it an empirical matter how many events occur at a given zone. But the question of just how laws are involved in our event concept is still a philosophical one: physics won’t help us with it.

In my book I discuss a theory of Lombard’s about how our event concept involves a reference to laws, welcoming the general proposal but arguing that Lombard’s version of it doesn’t work. Campbell’s proposal seems to be different from Lombard’s, but his presentation of it is so brief and sketchy that I can’t be sure. Perhaps because he thinks that conceptual analysis is both dated and shameful, he rushes past the place where some of it ought to be done. I urge him to bite the bullet and do the work, laying out for us in patient detail his view about how many events there can be in a zone. It sounds potentially interesting. But—to return to the main point—it won’t illustrate a supplanting of conceptual

analysis by physics.

#### 4. Kim

I am glad that Jaegwon Kim has confronted, head on, my charge that he has inferred a false semantics of event names from a true metaphysics of events. It would have been better still if he had announced his conversion, but evidently I haven't yet earned that. I'll try again.

**4.1** My view is that each event is a trope, and that a perfect nominal through which we refer to a particular event does not wear on its face every detail of the trope that is named. In this respect, names of events are like names of physical objects: 'the Fabergé egg that is on the table over there' is silent about many features of the egg to which it refers; to know the rest of the facts about the egg, you must look at it. Exactly analogously, 'his descent from the ladder' is silent about many of the features of the descent to which it refers; to know more about it, e.g. to know whether it was a fall, you must investigate that particular descent.

Kim disagrees. He has *prima facie* evidence that 'his fall from the ladder' cannot name the same event as does 'his descent from the ladder', even if he fell only once and descended only once. However, most of us who have contributed to this literature think that the evidence is fairly weak, and can easily be explained differently. It looks weaker still when the examples are rewritten with perfect nominals used in place of all Kim's imperfect nominals.

Evidence against Kim's view of the semantics of events is strong. I attach a great deal of weight to the following kind of consideration:

Datum: He assaulted her once, which he did by kicking her, and at no other time did he either assault her or kick her.

That, I contend, makes the following answers to these questions inevitable:

- How many kicks did he give her? One.
- How many assaults did he make on her? One.
- Was that kick he gave her a joke? No, an assault.

The rightness of those answers, given the datum, seems to me solid and central and inescapable. I submit that it is a serious flaw in a theory if it says that any of the answers is not strictly true, must be reinterpreted a bit before being allowed, or the like. If all three answers are accepted, then elementary logic takes us to the conclusion that the kick that he gave her was the assault that he made on her; and that conflicts with Kim's semantics.

**4.2** Kim has a defense against this. In my datum situation, he holds, there are two events—a kick (K) and an assault (A). But I understand him also to allow that K was an assault and that A was a kick: and he really has to allow this, because it would be too implausible to deny it. However, he distinguishes the way in which K is a kick from the way in which it is an assault: its being a kick is part of its constitution, while its being an assault is not. Similarly, A's being an assault is part of its constitution while its being a kick is not.

This doesn't help much in making Kim's position plausible. It lets him give the answer I do to the third of the three questions, but he cannot agree with my answers to the first and second questions. Although the man kicked the woman only once and assaulted her only once, Kim must say that he gave her more than one kick and made more than one assault on her. So the case against his semantics stands.

While I am on this topic, I should explain why I said in the book that Kim's term 'constitute' belongs to his semantics. He rebuts this by giving an explanation of 'constitute' in terms that are plainly metaphysical rather than semantic,

but what I meant was reasonable. What I ought to have said, I suppose, is that Kim has only semantics and not metaphysics to back up his distinction—within the totality of what is true of an event—between what is and what is not constitutive. I can find nothing in the world that corresponds to the supposed distinction between K which is constitutively a kick and A which is a kick but not constitutively so, and I don't think Kim means us to find anything in the world that corresponds to it. Rather, he has a pair of event names that I'll symbolize by [kicking, {he;her}, T] and [assaulting, {he;her}, T],<sup>1</sup> and an insistence that the former refers to K and not A while the latter refers to A and not K. The alleged difference between the supposedly two events is demanded purely by semantics, I still think.

**4.3** So much for the case against Kim's semantics. In his contribution to this symposium, however, he implies that I cannot dissent from his semantics of event names while agreeing with him that events are tropes or property exemplifications. By adopting that combination of views, he says, I put myself into conflict with an 'uninformative but inescapable truism'. This argument is helpful: it enables me to make clear where and why we disagree, and perhaps even to win Kim over to my side. If I can persuade him that his metaphysic doesn't require his semantics, this may free him to see that his other evidence for the latter is weaker than the evidence against it.

The truism is this:

(E) 'The exemplification of P by S at T' (if it names anything) names the exemplification of P by S at T.

I would rather not deny this! But I don't accord it the power that Kim thinks it has, and I shall explain why.

The phrase 'exemplification of' can be taken thickly, as I shall say, so that a particular exemplification of P might also be an exemplification of a different property Q. Kim points to this **thick** reading when he asks: 'Is it possible for property exemplifications involving different properties. . . to be one and the same property exemplification?' The question is not rhetorical, it seems: Kim calls it 'interesting, and perhaps deep'. Still, I gather that his preferred answer is No. I answer Yes, though I prefer to reword the question slightly: Is it possible for an exemplification of one property also to be an exemplification of another? I find it obvious that this is possible: A divorce can be an exemplification of *is a legal procedure* and of *ends a marriage*. This reading is especially natural and compelling when one applies it, as I have just done, to events. There is also a **thin** understanding of 'exemplification of P' according to which nothing could be an exemplification of P and an exemplification of Q unless P is Q. I find it harder to make that reading sound natural except by taking 'the exemplification of P' to mean 'P's being exemplified,' which names the fact that P is exemplified. It is indisputable that the fact that P is exemplified is not the fact that Q is exemplified unless P is Q—but this, just because it pertains to facts and not events, is rather remote from our present concerns. Never mind. I need not deny that each reading, thick and thin, is legitimate.

I accept Kim's truism (E) in each of its two clean readings. That is, I accept the following:

When 'the exemplification of P by S at T' has its **thick** meaning, if it names anything it names the exemplification of P by S at T,

when its final phrase has its **thick** meaning. I also

<sup>1</sup> I don't know how to put them in untechnical English. I can't use 'the kick that he gave her' and 'the assault that he made on her', because those imply singularity whereas Kim has to say that there were at least two kicks and two assaults. The best I can do is 'the kick that he gave her and that was constitutively a kick,' etc.

accept this:

When ‘the exemplification of P by S at T’ has its **thin** meaning, if it names anything it names the exemplification of P by S at T,

when its final phrase has its **thin** meaning. Each of those versions of (E) is indeed a truism.

Kim must mean the final phrase to carry the thin meaning: only thus does he get such results as that the killing was not the murder, the answer was not the shout, and so on. Very well, then: I accept (E) on its thin reading, and the question is whether this pushes me towards Kim’s semantics.

It doesn’t. I say that the kick he gave her was the assault he made on her; I also say that the kick is a property exemplification and (of course) so is the assault. But if I am to use the ‘exemplification’ terminology thinly, I cannot say that the kick he gave her is an exemplification of the property *kicking*. Instead, shall say that it is an exemplification of a rich property one part or component of which is the property *kicking*. To determine what its other components are, I must investigate what went on at the relevant zone (and must also make some decisions that would locally tighten up the indeterminacy in our event concept that is described in chapter 8 of the book). If I do that, and if what happened at the zone conformed to the initial datum stated above, the result will be of the form:

The kick that he gave her was an exemplification of:  
*kicking hard with the right foot as an assault. . . , etc.*

Similarly, the assault that he made on her was an exempli-

fication not of *assaulting* but of a richer property of which that is a component. When all the facts are in, it will turn out that

The assault that he made on her was an exemplification of *assaulting by kicking hard with the right foot. . . etc.*

When fully spelled out, the two will be equivalent; they will refer to the very same property; so the kick that he gave her was the assault that he made on her. Thus, I stand by the thesis that events are tropes or property exemplifications, yet am not drawn into Kim’s semantics of event names.

This doesn’t show that my Davidsonian semantics of event names is right—merely that it is consistent with the metaphysical view that events are tropes, i.e. that the latter does not entail Kim’s semantics of event names.

Finally, Kim asks what I meant by ‘an S-P-T event name’. I meant a perfect nominal whose parent sentence has the form

[noun phrase] [verb phrase] [adverb of temporal location].

At least, I think that that is all I meant. I certainly meant S-P-T event names to belong to normal, idiomatic English, as does

the kick that Moe gave Joe yesterday,  
in contrast to such artificial contrivances as  
the exemplification of kicking that {Moe;Joe} instantiated yesterday.

I have explained how I will use the latter if I must use them; but I prefer not to, as they are a source of trouble and have no compensating advantages that I can see.