

## **Saving the Intuitions: Polythetic Reference**

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In this paper, I mull over the relationship between scientific realism and theories of reference. I begin by surveying the dominant theories of reference, identifying some of their main strengths and weaknesses, especially in the context of scientific term reference. I then proceed to an analysis of the aetiology of those strengths and weaknesses. I point out that a great deal can be attributed to the conflicting intuitions different theories of reference aspire to satisfy. Assuming that intuitions play a crucial role in pinning down the concept of reference, two options become available: Either establish a consistent set of intuitions by rejecting at least some of them or find a radical way to accommodate all of them. The former option has been the primary focus of research up to now. I will explore the latter option, arguing that reference might not be a monolithic notion. Conflicting intuitions can be separated and allocated to different notions of reference thereby resolving the original tension. With this aim in mind, I will present an outline of some candidate notions, from those that make reference a breeze to those that set lofty standards. Particular attention will be paid to derivative notions of *referential continuity* as these are important in securing the scientific realist agenda.