# LANGUAGE: AN OVERHAUL OF LINGUISTIC PHILOSOPHY

by

#### PETER AHUMADA

(Under the Direction of Richard Winfield)

#### ABSTRACT

The discovery of rigidification by Kripke and its formalization by Kaplan in the case of a definite description was misinterpreted as providing a pretext for the theory of austere direct reference for names, according to which the meaning of a name is nothing more than the bearer of the name and its mode of presentation to the speaker is presumed irrelevant to effecting successful reference or to the thoughts the speaker is actually thinking about the object. Indeed, descriptions are dispensed with entirely in the approach which came to dominate linguistic philosophy. The austere approach, however, completely ignores the role parasitic reference plays in securing reference. The causal theory, meanwhile, has a number of flaws, including epistemic opacity and complete degeneracy with descriptivism once the links in its chains are articulated. To understand the theoretical implications of rigidification, a possible worlds semantics is created with the power set of possible worlds on both the domain and range sides of a language function. It allows Kripke's examples where he uses a description to fix a reference, the contingent a priori and the necessary a posteriori, to be understood. The application of *Dthat* to a definite description creates a situation where the essential set of the object selected is present on the domain side of the function as well as on the range side. Since

the set is on the domain side and since it is generally hidden, the result is a hidden word in your sentence. Since the set is on the range side, the result is that you do not know what you mean. You can know something about what you mean, however, and, as Kripke says, you might know your sentence is true automatically. Throughout the work, the hidden nature of these sentences is explored, and the so-called naïve view of names is rejected.

INDEX WORDS: Philosophy of language, names, Kripke, Kaplan, Dthat, rigidified descriptivism, austere direct reference, parasitic reference, causal theory, contingent *a priori*, necessary *a posteriori*, Donnellan, empty names, Frege's puzzle

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# CHAPTER 1

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In the dissertation to follow, Kripke's idea of using a reference to fix a description will be explored in detail. Kaplan also grappled with the idea, and he called the operation *Dthat*. Names are fixed and rigid, as Kripke brought to our attention in *Naming and Necessity*. Aristotle need not have gone into philosophy or pedagogy. Counterfactually, he might have grown up to be a poor shepherd. Thus, *the greatest philosopher of antiquity* is not the meaning of *Aristotle*. One is not an abbreviation for the other. We use the description to fix the reference. Russell's account of names is going to be improved along the lines Kripke suggests.

In the dissertation, we part ways with Kripke over his claim that descriptions do not provide a backing for a name. His arguments toward this conclusion are misleading, and we will explore the reasons why. We will defend descriptivism, and the reasoning is not new. Searle answered the attack on descriptivism immediately, and he said people were ignoring the role of parasitic reference. But people ignored Searle, and it is not clear why they did. Searle was entirely right, and we defend his approach.

We develop an attack on the causal theory for names. Various weaknesses are exposed. It is epistemically opaque. It behaves strangely with respect to living things. It is never adequately stated. It appears the links in its chain succeed if and only if a description is present in the mind of a speaker, which renders it superfluous with respect

to the descriptivist theory. There are a host of problems, and, taken together, we see great difficulties for the causal theory.

Language is going to be discussed in a new way. Rigidification of a description is simply an operation one can do. It is an operation that a language can have. Kripke and Kaplan say English has rigidification, and it is not my purpose to quibble with them. Some languages have rigidification, and some do not. In the dissertation, we develop a formalism we can use to talk about all languages. We generalize the possible worlds approach of Stalnaker and others in such a way that possible worlds are on the domain side of the function, too. After all, there are possible worlds where a sentence is present and possible worlds where the sentence is absent.

Utilizing our formalization, Kripke's discussion of using a description to fix a reference is easily understood. His discussion about necessary *a posteriori* sentences and about contingent sentences whose truth can be known *a priori* becomes clear. In the forthcoming technical jargon, it will be seen that these are evident sentential overlays with hidden context, and it will be seen that these exhibit quite obvious and predictable behaviors.

The formalization has a great deal of power, and it will be used in the dissertation to clear up a number of confusions in linguistic philosophy. A general target of the dissertation is the theory of austere direct reference for names, which obviates and denies the importance of any cognitive significance for a name. The meaning is just the referent. Kaplan attacks the theory. Words convey thoughts, he says, and we are thinking different thoughts about a man whom we saw in the shadows by the doorway

and about a man whom we saw under bright lights drinking a martini — even if we have named them both and they turn out to be the same man.

Swirling around this puzzle, which has been named Frege's Puzzle in the literature, (when it is posed under the guise of asking how it is an identity between two names can be informative) there are a host of ancillary issues. One of the most interesting is the philosophical fascination with *identifying reference*, which we see in Donnellan and others, and the ultimate relevance of this matter to our own discussion of names and rigidity will eventually be made clear. Another difficulty in the vicinity was first raised by Searle in *Proper Names* when he mulls over (non-counterfactually!) what sort of qualities Aristotle must have had. In our technical jargon, this difficulty will be known as the problem of the ring.

After exploring various issues, we return to a quite thorough discussion of names. They are somewhat paradoxical linguistic creatures. For proper counterfactual truth conditions, it is required that the essence of the object be embedded in the name, somehow. However, the communicative purpose is never (or hardly ever) about essential characteristics. Non-essential characteristics (*laundry*) are communicated when names are used. Appreciating such a fact helps us better understand what we will eventually see is a clear clash between the communication achieved and the semantic values. Once again, it is a natural result of evident sentential overlays with hidden context, which is not surprising because the application of *Dthat* to fix a reference yields a special case of an evident sentential overlay with hidden context. Moreover, we are taking the moment when Kripke tells us exactly when we are truly using 'Hesperus' as a name as stipulative, which renders a name a special case, too.

Further exploration of this communicative purpose leads, quite suggestively, to a compelling desire to treat name denial statements differently. A mixed language would be handy. Since our discussion is an *a priori* treatment of every conceivable language, no judgments are proffered. Instead, those who dogmatically supply the answer here are attacked mercilessly for launching a philosophical pseudo-problem and for thinking they know far better what people mean with their words than the people themselves.

In the last part of the dissertation, Frege's Puzzle is solved, since it was always trivial with descriptivist resource, and the deep issues of rigidfication are explored. Epistemology is central. It never should have been suppressed, anyway. Essences are hidden. Pieces on the domain side of the sentences are hidden. Post-propositional meanings are hidden. Quite a lot is hidden. One of the most interesting things to reflect on is our psychological response to contemplating sentences where things are hidden on the domain and range sides. It troubles us the least when it is not the sort of thing we could ever know! It is quite odd. So, the exploration begins with crashing the psychological party and by rigidifying to things you feel bad about not knowing. It troubles you — I hope — to rigidify to a color you cannot see.

By the end, we have taken a journey through linguistic philosophy by way of the issue Kripke thought was of the utmost importance: using a description to fix a reference. To take an *a priori* journey, we have to say precisely what we mean by a *language*, a *sentence*, a *word*, a *meaning*, a *linguistic object*, and so forth. It allows us to be clear about exactly what we are doing, linguistically, when we use a description to fix a reference. The result of fixing a reference is a curious beast. The essential set of the object is found on both sides of the language function, on the domain side and on the

range side. This set turns out to be a linguistic entity that we call a *monomorphic word*. It is a hidden monomorphic word, and certain perplexing riddles should come clear in your mind once you see that key words in your sentence are hidden. After all, if you don't know all the words in a sentence, how can you be expected to know what the sentence means?

In the dissertation, we do battle with Kripke from time to time, but it is only over minor musings to which he did not devote much energy. His central idea has become the central idea of the dissertation. His observation that an unrigidified description is an inadequate characterization of a name is what has led to this work. He and Kaplan were fascinated by the peculiar repercussions that ensue from using a description to *fix* a reference. These repercussions arise in names, quite obviously, if you define them to arise rigidly from descriptions. (They do *not* arise if you define a `name' to be something else — again, quite obviously. Call anything you like a `name', but tell me why I should care.)

This dissertation is the fruit of Kripke's fundamental obsession. It is Kaplan's ever present muse, too, and it should be no surprise that Kaplan's insistence on what one's words and thoughts are about (in terms of cognitive significance) when contemplating the man in the doorway and the man holding the martini — even if you have named him — are wholly endorsed and that the overly simplistic view of the austere direct referentialist is rejected.

# CHAPTER 2

#### DEFENDING DESCRIPTIVISM

In this chapter, I will look at the most important attacks that were offered against descriptivism, and I will defend descriptivism against these attacks. In the first section, three arguments will be taken together. They are the argument of ignorance, the argument of error, and the epistemic argument, and they all stem directly from Kripke's exposition in *Naming and Necessity*. They are to be taken together because the answer to each involves the same notion: parasitic reference, as explicated by Searle.<sup>1</sup> These arguments will be presented, their interrelationships will be observed, and their force will be blunted by attending to Searle's basic message, which is that we need to understand and to acknowledge the presence of *all* descriptive facts about the referent, and included among these facts is the fact that the object has been previously named by others.

In the second section, I will examine an argument made by Evans against the descriptive theory.<sup>2</sup> I will first criticize Evans' explication of the voting and ranking scheme that Kripke envisions for the descriptivist proposal. Evans' voting scheme to assign reference is not the one Kripke depicts, and it is not relevant to descriptivism, I will argue. I will examine Evans' claim that descriptivism will and must perforce take us away from the intuitive referent and, working within the proper voting and ranking scheme, I will show it is not the case. Instead, it will be clear Evans is biasing his example by failing to consider various descriptions of an obvious and natural sort. Once

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See Searle 1983.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See Evans 1973.

again, there is a sort of near-sightedness at work that leads to the missing of these descriptions.

The intent of the current chapter is to leave the reader in the following state of mind. The prominent arguments against descriptivism for names, the most prominent of which are the arguments of ignorance and error, are shown to be quite weak. Indeed, they were answered nicely and effectively by Searle a decade after they were initially propounded by Kripke. Parasitic reference leads us to the intuitive referent in all cases. Evans' argument, too, is weak and for an entirely similar reason: linguistically important descriptive facts are being overlooked by those who would assail a descriptive backing for a name.

Searle's thoughts on the matter, it turns out, have been largely ignored. But are we allowed to ignore a potent point in philosophy? Are we allowed to act as if Searle's response (which appears to be entirely correct!) did not happen? People are ignoring it. I have read time and time again that the arguments of ignorance and error have settled the matter and that we are all causal theorists now.

Overall, in our first chapter the reader is intended to achieve a state of mind wherein the frailty of several attacks on descriptivism is apparent. It is notable just how weak the assault has been! I hope to persuade the reader that descriptivism is alive and well and that nothing serious has been said against it.

## Parasitic Reference

Here, in the first section, I present the arguments of ignorance and error, and I explicate how the epistemic argument found in Soames is a slight variation thereof. I proceed to show how parasitic reference easily solves these purported riddles. The

riddle, in the cases of ignorance and error, is that descriptivism would put the reference in the wrong place, far from the intuitive referent, and it will be easily seen that parasitic reference moves the referent back to the proper place in an intuitively obvious way. The riddle in the case of the epistemic argument is a bit different, but the solution is entirely the same.

Parasitic reference is the notion that one speaker depends on another speaker's successful reference for her own reference. A first person has named an object: 'NN'. A second person refers to that object only insofar as it is the object so-named by another. (Usually and almost invariably, the second person utilizes the name, 'NN', again.)

To characterize parasitic reference, we simply talk about the presence in a speaker's dossier (under a particular name) of a description that involves a name. We could call these name related facts: *Namenfacts*. They are facts about an object. They can be used by a speaker to help her narrow down the field and to ultimately secure reference. Namenfacts in a speaker's dossier are fair game, and they are important.

Indeed, I will soon argue strong social utilities press for certain Namenfacts to be ranked at the very top of any ranking scheme our speaker might have in mind for her dossier. A ranking scheme, as Kripke explained in the second lecture of *Naming and Necessity*, is important because the speaker needs some notion in advance of what she is going to do should she discover or come to believe no object meets the conjunction of all the qualities mentioned in her dossier.

For instance, if you believe that Mom knocked a glass of milk over, then *being your mother* and *knocking the glass of milk over* are, at the moment, both in your dossier under the name `Mom'. You later come to believe a visiting cat knocked over the milk.

So, you are going to split up the facts in your dossier. It is a logical imperative, given your new view of the world, namely that being your mother and knocking over the milk are not properties held by the same object. So, you separate these facts and put them into two dossiers.

Yet, once these two facts have been placed into two separate dossiers, you have more work to do. It involves a decision. You have got to make a choice. (I am proposing you have your mind made up already.) You need to affix the name 'Mom' to one of these dossiers. You *could* move the name 'Mom' to the cat who came through. Had you planned to do so all along, we would say 'Mom', for you, was the name of whatever creature knocked the milk over. But you could stick the name 'Mom' to the dossier of the woman who bore you. Had you planned to do it all along, we would say that what you meant by the word 'Mom' was your mother.

It is pretty simple. Under the latter assumption, being your mother has linguistic importance. It is the core of your meaning of your word. It is the descriptive backing for `Mom'. The description about knocking the milk over was in your dossier at some point, but it was linguistically peripheral.

We may proceed now to an observation that will help us understand both the argument of ignorance and the epistemic argument. I will argue that when everyone else in society is calling a person 'NN', such a fact is generally known to a speaker, — it is a Namenfact — and it generally behooves a speaker to give top linguistic priority to the Namenfact: *called `NN' by others*. We might not think about the issue much, but it is, quite intuitively, the obvious way to go. When everyone else is calling a certain person 'Béla Bartók', then I would like to do so, too. I shouldn't, intuitively, like to put the

linguistic core, *called `Béla Bartók' by a lot of people*, under my name `Abraham Lincoln'. Such a move, intuitively, would be a rather boneheaded thing to do. Really, it would never be done!

Our simple claim is important to our subsequent arguments, and I do not think it is an unwise or counterintuitive observation of the tendencies of human behavior. The linguistic core of a great number of my names, e.g. 'NN', is simply going to be: *called* '*NN'* by a lot of other people.

## Arranging the Arguments

The arguments of ignorance, error and episteme can be arranged in a two-by-two matrix according to the resolution of two questions. The first question asks whether or not the non-Namenfacts in the dossier are true of the intuitive referent. The second question asks whether or not the non-Namenfacts are specific enough to select a unique object from the world. Looked at in this light, we arrange the three arguments as follows:

	Are the non-Namenfacts specific?		
		Yes	No
Are the non-Namenfacts	Yes	Episteme	Ignorance
true of the object?	No	Error	???

Our basic argument, of course, is that the Namenfacts assist in determining reference in the argument of ignorance and predominate in determining reference in the arguments of error and episteme. Namenfacts are ignored when these arguments are presented in the literature. They are suppressed. But they shouldn't be ignored. No descriptive fact should be ignored. Further, I will argue the absence of the fourth argument from our philosophical discourse is ultimately quite damaging to the anti-descriptivist cause. If you embrace descriptivism for names, you have a ready reason for why there is no fourth argument. However, if you embrace austere direct reference, you have no way to distinguish the missing argument from the argument of error. Why should it matter if your incorrect description fails to uniquely select an object in the world? It was incorrect, anyway.

And there does not appear to be much of a distinction between the missing argument and the argument from ignorance. In one case, you have an intuitive referent about which you are ignorant. Why should the level of ignorance change if the unspecific fact is also wrong?

Yet, once you admit there is a descriptive backing for names, it becomes quite easy to see why there should be no fourth argument. The plausibility of the other three arguments stems, you see, from their being portrayed in a way that encourages the reader to be insensitive to the presence of Namenfacts. The other facts are talked about, instead. The magician always wants you to watch the other hand. But, in the fourth argument, there is no other hand to wave. The Namenfact is all that is true about the object under discussion. It will spring to the fore.

If the example contains no Namenfact true of the object (which is possible, I suppose), then it will not spring to the fore, of course. But then the example will not succeed to persuade the reader anybody is being talked about at all. It will not succeed in the slightest! Precisely as descriptivism would suggest.

So, the fourth argument is hung on the horns of a dilemma. Tell a story where a Namenfact secures reference. Then, it will be clear a Namenfact is securing reference,

and it spoils all the fun. Tell a story where no Namenfact is used. Then, you have told a vapid story about nothing. The reader looks at you blankly.

It might be helpful to see the arguments presented with their tacit Namenfacts (and other tacitly believed facts) explicitly voiced in gray. The reader will see immediately how, in any intuitive and plausible scenario, our man on the street would quite naturally have these descriptive facts in mind.

Epistemic	Ignorance
Called `Christopher Columbus' by lot of people.	Called `Feynman' by a lot of people.
Famous.	Famous.
The first European to discover America.	A physicist.
Error	Mystery
Called `Gödel' by a lot of people.	A Namenfact or nothing.
Famous.	
Widely believed to have proved incompleteness theorem.	
Proved the incompleteness of arithmetic.	Something false.

In these examples, the man on the street has the name 'Feynman' or 'Gödel' or 'Christopher Columbus' upon his lips. We are supposed to consult our intuitions in these examples. We are supposed to consider what is plausible, and it is exceedingly implausible to suggest our man on the street has the name 'Feynman' at the tip of his tongue without fame being the reason why it is there. The same holds for 'Gödel' and 'Christopher Columbus'. It would be rather surprising, too, and quite unintuitive for our man on the street to believe a man named 'Gödel' proved the incompleteness of arithmetic whilst at the same time not believing this man named `Gödel' is widely *thought* to have proved the incompleteness of arithmetic. The opinions of the man on the street presumably reflect what is widely thought, after all.

To claim otherwise were to suggest the man on the street's frame of mind is one where he believes there is a famous man named `Gödel' and he himself alone is privy to an interesting secret about this man — which nobody else believes! — namely, the man proved the existence of non-isomorphic models of arithmetic. It is an unintuitive position, and I scarcely think I need to argue the point further.

Looking closely at the grey matter in the second tableau, therefore, I do not think it is difficult to see in each of these discussions where the intuitive referent comes from. It arises, as the descriptivist thesis maintains, from the conjunction of facts a speaker has in her dossier under the name. The referent is the unique object true of these facts, and linguistically peripheral facts are to be shorn until reference of the remaining dossier is secured.

#### The Argument of Ignorance

We see Kripke make the case in *Naming and Necessity* that a speaker can refer successfully to an object without having any description of the object in mind. Kripke claims a man can and does refer to Richard Feynman when he utters the word, `Feynman'. He goes on to claim the man on the street does not possess a dossier under the name `Feynman' specific enough to resolve to anything at all, let alone to the famous physicist we all call `Feynman'.

Kripke imagines the example as follows:

However, the man on the street, not possessing these abilities, may still use the name 'Feynman'. When asked he will say: well he's a physicist

or something. He may not think that this picks out anyone uniquely. I still think he uses the name 'Feynman' as a name for Feynman.<sup>3</sup>

I agree with the intuitive premise that 'Feynman' in this case is being used to refer to the famous physicist many of us call 'Feynman'. There is no reason for an advocate of a descriptive backing to names to bite the bullet, as Devitt says, and maintain our man on the street is not using the name as a name for Feynman. We can surely agree the intuitive referent of 'Feynman' is the famous physicist many of us call 'Feynman'. But it won't be a problem.

Kripke hedges slightly in the passage above, and it is interesting. He considers what the man on the street will *say* when queried, but, presumably, Kripke is not a behaviorist. Presumably, he would agree that people can think various thoughts and be silent about them. Therefore, Kripke is skirting the central issue when he mentions the man on the street's reflections about the uniqueness of "a physicist or something." The issue is not whether the man on the street believes this phrase picks out anyone uniquely.

The issue is whether or not the man on the street *has* a uniquely constraining description in mind. We, as philosophers, have an intuitive referent of the man's use of the name. How, we ask, could the man be referring to our intuitive referent when he talks? How could he be referring to the famous physicist many of us call `Feynman'?

I am referring to *the famous physicist many of us call `Feynman'*. But how is he? The claim made by those who advocate the argument of ignorance is that the only item that we can plausibly see in our man's dossier under `Feynman' is: *the object is a physicist*. But I think it is entirely implausible to suggest this descriptive fact is the only fact in the man's mental arsenal. It is *utterly* counterintuitive to suggest he does not think

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 81.

that others call the object 'Feynman', and it is difficult to see how our scenario could have ever come to pass unless our man on the street were telling us about a person who was famous and whom he thought was famous.

The riddle of our inquiry as to how he could be referring to *the famous physicist many of us call `Feynman'* is understood by noticing he is surely aware of the descriptive fact in italics, which I have been using to direct your attention to Feynman. Our man on the street is aware that he is being queried about someone famous. He is aware other people call the man `Feynman'. He is aware the man is a physicist or something.

Do these descriptive facts select an object in the world? Do we have uniqueness? Brief reflection on the matter should prove affirmative, I would think. We might consider the list of famous physicists. It would go as follows — although I do not pretend to a full cognizance of the list. Heisenberg, Einstein, Newton, Rutherford, Ampere, Watt, Hawking, Feynman, Fermi, Dirac, Coulomb, Curie, and Werner von Braun. The issue of uniqueness, given such a list, turns swiftly on how many people on the list are named `Feynman'. A careful examination of the list will show, I believe, only one element is named `Feynman'. Ergo, uniqueness.

Hence, the intuitive referent of the philosophers and the referent secured by taking the coordinated conjunction of all the descriptive facts our man on the street has under the name 'Feynman' are indeed one and the same. The argument of ignorance dissolves. We turn next to the argument of error.

#### The Argument of Error

Kripke offers an argument the premise of which is that, unknown to us all, the man whom we call `Gödel' and who is widely believed to have been an exceptionally

skilled mathematician (and who, in particular, is believed to have proved the incompleteness of arithmetic) did *not* actually devise the first proof of the incompleteness of arithmetic by cleverly encoding into integers all the proofs in the axiom system of arithmetic. According to the example Kripke considers, the person who is widely called `Gödel' by others and who is thought of as a pre-eminent mathematician really committed intellectual burglary upon a man named `Schmidt' in Vienna long ago. Kripke tells us a story:

Suppose that Gödel was not in fact the author of this theorem. A man named `Schmidt', whose body was found in Vienna under mysterious circumstances many years ago, actually did the work in question. His friend Gödel somehow got hold of the manuscript and it was thereafter attributed to Gödel. On the view in question, then, when our ordinary man uses the name `Gödel', he really means to refer to Schmidt, because Schmidt is the unique person satisfying the description, `the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic'. ... So, since the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic is in fact Schmidt, we, when we talk about `Gödel', are in fact always referring to Schmidt. But it seems to me that we are not. We simply are not.<sup>4</sup>

It is said that descriptivism would have the referent of `Gödel', as used by the man on the street, be the discoverer of the incompleteness of arithmetic — namely, a man named `Schmidt', which is an error. The intuitive referent, it is claimed, is the man named `Gödel'.

So, as in the previous case, the defender of a descriptive backing for names will agree with Kripke that our man on the street, employing the name `Gödel', is successfully referring to the person who is widely called `Gödel' and who is widely believed to have proved the incompleteness of arithmetic.

Hmm. How does he do it? The man on the street, you see, is aware of these very descriptions that I have been using. He has them in mind.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 83-4.

But there is a wrinkle in the case of error not present in the case of ignorance.

The wrinkle is that the conjunction of all the descriptive qualities in our speaker's dossier does not refer to an object in the world. So, if our man on the street were aware of this point, he would have a few decisions to make. He would need to remove various descriptive facts from his dossier (in some order) until the remaining ones refer. We claim there is an obvious and intuitive way we expect the man on the street to perform the task. To the extent he already has this ordering in mind, the meaning of his name is determined.

It is to be argued that our man on the street has the following four descriptive facts in mind and that it is wholly implausible to suggest otherwise. He mentally apprises the following:

- i) Widely called `Gödel'.
- ii) Famous.
- iii) Proved the incompleteness of Arithmetic.
- iv) Widely believed to have proved the incompleteness of Arithmetic.

Now, I believe it is sufficient — and I think the real world will back me up, here — to have in mind that a certain person is widely called 'Gödel' and that he is famous. I don't think anyone believes this conjunction is insufficient to secure uniqueness. But (iv) is there, just in case.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it remains to show our descriptions (i) and (ii) could quite intuitively serve as the core of meaning for our speaker. And description (iii) would be peeled off earlier and tossed out of the dossier, if need be. Description (iii) would obviously be tossed out of the dossier before (iv) would be cast out, in a story such as Kripke's.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> I am not up on popular culture, as I used to be, and there might be a famous NASCAR driver named Gödel.

We have already discussed the matter, really. It is quite intuitive. The most obvious, intuitive and socially responsible maneuver that a speaker can perform is to put off to the bitter end any abandonment of the description: *called `NN' by others*. It is precisely the sort of thing we now expect from our man on the street.

To take an example, if we were to ask our man on the street, "By `Marilyn Monroe' do you mean the person everyone else calls `Marilyn Monroe' or do you mean the starlet who was born in 1926 and who died in 1962?" — our man on the street, not entirely certain when Marilyn lived and died, would privilege the former. He doesn't want to fall victim to a Kripke-like tale where Marilyn lied about her age. Or faked her death and moved to Argentina to lose her beauty in peace.

It would be setting one's self up for a lot of trouble to dispense with property (i) at the drop of a hat and at the first sign of trouble! If you do, the person you call 'Gödel' is going to be someone nobody else calls 'Gödel', and you begin to have a lot to remember and, in general, a lot of explaining to do. You have to tell people that by 'Barack Obama', you do not personally have in mind the president of the United States but, rather, his best friend in high school. You have to keep track of the fact that by 'Tom Cruise', you mean to refer to whomever lots of other people call 'George Carlin'. By 'Nipsey Russell', you are talking about whoever wrote the Egmont Overture. Unless you have a *superb* memory, you obviously wish to maintain the dominance of the popular Namenfact! I could scarcely think of any reason for a speaker to do otherwise.

We assume our speaker is going to do this, we simply do it for him, and we say he is referring to Gödel when all he can think of is — since the Namenfact is springing

neither to his mind nor to his mouth<sup>6</sup> — that he proved the incompleteness of arithmetic, or something.

Look back. How did I focus your attention upon what the philosophers claim to be the intuitive referent? I said there is an object *who is a man whom we call `Gödel' and who is widely believed to have been an exceptional mathematician and, in particular, is believed to have proved the incompleteness of arithmetic.* I gave you a description. You nodded in assent. You had in mind what I had in mind.

I did not ever use `Gödel' as a name. It was a Namenfact in a description. Over and over, I described to you the referent that we were bestowing on the man on the street. I gave you a unique description! If it weren't unique, we would have some problems. And why did we bestow this referent to the man on the street? Because he had this very description in mind, too.

He doesn't behave properly. Men on the street tend to misbehave. He stutters. He answers with random facts about grapes. He doesn't want to sound like a dunce. He doesn't shoot back the linguistically central Namenfact. He presumes you are not asking about something it is entirely obvious both of you already know.

Kripke mentions that we all believe — a lot of us do, anyway — the aforementioned man called `Gödel' proved the incompleteness of arithmetic. He says we might consider the description, `the man to whom the incompleteness of arithmetic is commonly attributed' in order to secure uniqueness (whilst conforming to intuitive

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Philosophers impugning descriptivism often resort to behaviorism here, assigning great philosophical weight to whatever comes out of the mouth of someone who has just been asked, "What do you know about Albert Einstein?" which seems rather unfair to stutterers and paralytics. Also, (although we are getting ahead of ourselves) since a tremendous knowledge of Gricean pragmatics is used to save the Millian direct approach in the end, it is queer our critics display no sense of the Gricean pragmatics operating upon a person who answers such a question. A person queried is liable to think he is going to get low marks for answering, "Well, he was called `Albert Einstein' by a lot people." He would fear to come across as a dunce and to be laughed at.

linguistic priorities) in the face of banishing from our dossier the claim that he actually proved it (Kripke 1980, 84). Kripke is spot on, here! But he was short on time, and he didn't get back to it.

Famous people have peculiar dossiers. If in your dossier on a famous person you find: *lover of Yoko Ono*, you will also find: *widely believed to have been the lover of Yoko Ono*. It is how fame works. Most people know the stuff that most people know. Therefore, the supplemental assertion of `widely believed to have done such-and-such', works for most facts in most people's dossiers. Therefore, the description entertained by Kripke is actually present and — due to social considerations and memory limitations — is the intuitively natural description to leave in one's dossier in order to continue to secure uniqueness whilst denying he actually did such-and-such. It is pretty easy.

I believe all the assumptions I have made are entirely intuitive and that it is clear the intuitive referent matches the object that meets the conjunction of the descriptions our speaker has under `Gödel' subject to his natural tendencies to winnow away certain descriptions of lesser linguistic importance.

The argument of error dissolves. We turn now to the epistemic argument.

#### The Epistemic Argument

Kripke does not really separate out what Soames calls the "epistemic argument" from the argument of error in the text of *Naming and Necessity*. He merely employs the example Soames relates as an example of error, and yet one can look within his footnote on page eighty-five to notice Kripke states that, as a consequence of the description theory, a certain sentence about Peano would "express a trivial truth."<sup>7</sup> In this spirit, one can consider a distinct argument where the inherent triviality — the a priori nature — of a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 85n.

sentence is the central issue, which is precisely what Soames is doing. Soames asserts there is a third argument in Kripke's lectures besides the two arguments of ignorance and error. Soames says descriptivism fails because "the epistemic status of (the proposition semantically expressed by) sentences containing names typically is different from the epistemic status of (the propositions semantically expressed by) corresponding sentences containing descriptions."<sup>8</sup>

One can separate the argument out, but the solution is the same.

The argument occupies the top left spot in our tableau because, ex hypothesi, both the Namenfact and the non-Namenfact refer uniquely. The difficulties of ignorance and error cannot be invoked. However, a different sort of problem can be envisaged. When the name itself and the non-Namenfact in the tableau are both used in the same sentence (and identity is claimed, perhaps), we may wonder whether or not the speaker is saying a truth that he can understand a priori. Consider the sentence:

(1) Christopher Columbus was the first European to discover America. The claim, the objection runs, is that the sentence is not an a priori truth. But, according to descriptivism, it is said, the sentence *must* be a priori for the speaker since the property of being the first European to discover America is the descriptive backing for the name.

In answering the objection, the descriptivist accepts the fact that sentence (1) is not analytic. The point is granted. A further point is made — as I am sure the reader can guess by now — that the descriptive property of *being the first European to discover America* is just a peripheral fact in our speaker's dossier. It is like knocking the milk over. The Namenfact, instead, is dominant, and it aligns the speaker's name with everyone else's usage of the famous name. That a person is widely known as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Soames 2005, p. 21.

'Christopher Columbus' is his dominant linguistic fact! He has decided to use the name that other people were using. He did not feel like calling him 'Nipsey Russell'. He has decided to use 'Christopher Columbus', and it is going to be backed a linguistic core. The core of his dossier is: *there was a guy who got famous around 1492 and whom a lot of people have called 'Christopher Columbus'*. The core is not: *the first European to see America*. That's just milk.

Our man is uneducated. He has never heard of Leif Ericson. He has certainly never heard of Prince Madoc.

There *is* an a priori relationship between the core of the dossier for a name and the name itself. We will grant that. But there is not an a priori relationship between an element in the periphery and the name. Ergo, under the linguistic priorities we are now considering, sentence (1) is not analytic. Precisely, as you would expect.

The peripheral element might be the most important thing about a person! It is not particularly important that his mother did not name him 'Giuseppe' but, instead, named him 'Christopher'. Likewise, the most important thing about Neil Armstrong — my name for a certain man whose face I recognize and whom I believe is called 'Neil Armstrong' by millions of people — is that he was the first man on the moon. That's really important! Yet if that man whose face I recognize (and let's suppose people *do* call him 'Neil Armstrong' and that he worked for NASA, too) did not actually go to the moon (and he just took credit for it), then:

(2) Neil Armstrong was the first man on the moon. is false.

Sentence (2) is not an automatic truth. Descriptivism never said it was. *Soames* said that descriptivism said it was. And there is quite a difference.

The argument of Soames goes as follows:

One example of this type is provided by the name *Christopher Columbus* and the description *the first European to discover America*. Although this description represents the most important thing that most people think about Columbus, the claim that if there was such a person as Columbus, then Columbus was the first European to discover America clearly rests on empirical evidence, and thus is the sort of proposition that could, in principle, be shown to be false by further empirical investigation. (In fact, Kripke notes that it may well be false.) Consequently, it is not knowable a priori, and the semantic contents of sentences containing *Columbus* are not the same as the semantic contents of corresponding sentences containing the description *the first European to discover America*. Kripke contends that the same could be said for other descriptions that speakers associate with this name.<sup>9</sup>

The fallacy above seems to be a bit of trickery about conflating the most important thing that people think about someone with the item of greatest linguistic importance. They are hardly ever the same. It scarcely matters to world history what mothers name their sons. Unless he grows up with a chip on his shoulder and murders millions. It is always of the greatest linguistic importance, however.

So, it is really quite easy. With respect to the intuitive and plausible descriptive

backing for 'Christopher Columbus', our sentence:

(1) Christopher Columbus was the first European to discover America.

is *not* reached analytically by our speaker. In fact, as Kripke points out when he discusses the example, most people today think Leif Erikson was the first European to discover America, which transforms Soames' example into an argument of error. Sentence (1) is an example of the argument of error, really. Therefore, it should come as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 21-2.

no surprise the epistemic argument dissolves in exactly the same way as the argument of error.

It is simple. Pay proper attention to Namenfacts. (Don't leave out any descriptions.) Think about the intuitive ranking in the dossier. (Put the Namenfacts first.) The epistemic argument dissolves.

#### The Missing Argument

An adherent of direct reference for names has no explanation for why the fourth argument is not employed in the literature to impugn descriptivism. If you *are* a descriptivist, however, the absence of the fourth argument is clearly understood. At the top left of the tableau, we are invited to consider an example where the non-Namenfact is fully specific and is true of the object presumed to be the intuitive referent. It is not hard, in the example, to get across to the reader what intuitive referent the philosopher would like her to consider. The non-Namenfact will do.

However, as we move either down or to the right, the tenacity and power of the descriptions the philosopher is bringing to bear in the example (whether he admits their presence or not) is steadily weakened. Moving right, the non-Namenfact description is too general and does not suffice on its own. Moving down, the non-Namenfact description is untrue, and it is less easy to cobble together some sort of derivative claim (such as being *thought* true) and it is generally less easy to generate an intuitive referent when a description is not true.

Such observations follow from descriptivism, and the advocate of direct reference has no line of thinking here that explains why an intuitive referent should fail to arise as we move both rightward and downward.

For the advocate of descriptivism, however, it is quite clear, and it is to be expected that an example situated in the fourth spot in the tableau will either fail to have any intuitive referent, at all, or will depend on such brash utilization of the core Namenfact to produce the intuitive referent that it will fail to be a persuasive example in favor of the direct theory.

The two cases are to be explored as follows. In the first case, there is no Namenfact concerning the usage of the name by others. Let me see if I can sketch the argument that an opponent of descriptivism would use here, although the whole point is that it is difficult to do so!

*Example*. Our man on the street is using the name 'Milton'. I ask him if he has in mind *the* Milton, the author of *Paradise Lost*. He says, no, he was not aware there was a famous Milton. He says he was playing Boggle last night, and he punched the plastic bubble. The word 'Milton' appeared before him. He thought it was a lovely name. He is now using it, he says. He says to me:

(3) Milton rolled over like a dog.

He utters the sentence, and he is talking about Milton.

The descriptivist is in quite a bind. When I ask the man on the street what he knows about Milton, he says all he knows is that he is not a dog. He may not think this picks out anyone uniquely. (It does not.) In our example, he is wrong. Milton is a dog. But I still think he uses the name 'Milton' as a name for Milton.

Ergo, descriptivism is wrong. End of example.

This argument against descriptivism is implausible. It is downright ridiculous. The philosopher says `Milton' is a name for Milton, but the reader has *no* idea who or
what the intuitive referent of `Milton' is supposed to be. The reader is ignorant. The reader suddenly gets hit in the face with the fact that Milton is a dog. But *what* dog? *Who* is Milton? The reader has no clue who Milton is supposed to be! The reader is ignorant. It is a true example of ignorance. No facts have been surreptitiously slipped in. There are no unarticulated but fully present facts about a person being famous and about his having a rare name. No tacit Namenfacts are buried in the example. So, there is simply no intuitive referent to be had.

Descriptivism says there is no referent, and there *is* no intuitive referent. It doesn't really look so bad for descriptivism.

The fourth argument, I suppose, could be formulated another way. It could be formulated so a reader *does* feel there is an intuitive referent to be had. However, if one were to use the argument under consideration, given the paucity of other descriptive facts to clutter things up, the framer would have to so blatantly rely on Namenfacts it would be immediately obvious to any reader that various unique Namenfacts, tacitly held in mind, were determining the intuitive referent.

*Example.* Our man on the street is using the name 'Mary Todd Lincoln'. He is walking out of a movie house that was playing *Lincoln* by Spielberg. We hear him say, "Mary Todd Lincoln was sad." He utters the sentence to his friend, and he is talking about Mary Todd Lincoln.

The descriptivist is in quite a bind. We stop the man on the street, and we ask him what he knows about Mary Todd Lincoln. He stutters violently. His arms fall limp to his side. He says, "A man." He may not think this picks out anyone uniquely! It does not.

Being a man is not unique. And it is not true. Mary Todd was a woman. But I still think he uses the name 'Mary Todd Lincoln' as a name for Mary Todd Lincoln.

Descriptivism says otherwise, and it is wrong from the fundamentals. *End of example*.

I should think this type of argument does not get made because it has no plausibility. The plausibility of these examples stems from *hiding* the Namenfacts and yet using them, nonetheless. But he is standing in front of the movie house! There are names up in lights. He just watched the movie. An intuitive presumption about our ordinary man's underlying knowledge of the way other people use the name `Mary Todd Lincoln' comes to the fore. It becomes quite ridiculous to conclude that there is no descriptive backing for our ordinary speaker while he employs this name. It is not captured by his behavior, of course. But it is there, nonetheless.

Anyway, descriptivism gives us the reason why the fourth argument would never get made. If you advocate direct reference for names, you really cannot justify why the missing argument has gone missing.

# Conclusion

Altogether, the arguments of ignorance, error, and episteme are answered in the same way. We have seen the intuitive referent is brought up in the mind of the reader in virtue of the fact that the reader has made a few perfectly natural assumptions about various Namenfacts to be found in the mind of the speaker. These Namenfacts often suffice to secure reference in themselves, since examples almost invariably involve famous people, and very few famous people have exactly the same name. However, unique reference is certainly obtained when the entire conjunction of facts in the dossier

is elucidated and explored. To resolve the examples of error and episteme, a further natural and intuitive presumption is required of the reader. She is to assume that the natural dominant linguistic ranking of facts in the dossier is such that keeping one's usage of famous name in sync with others is given the utmost importance.

These are all natural and intuitive presumptions, and the intuitive referent arises in the mind of the reader as a result of these presumptions. These three arguments fail to impugn descriptivism because the recipe that produces the intuitive referent is the very same recipe that descriptivism advocates for the backing of names.

A fourth missing argument has also been considered, and its absence has been explained by descriptivism. Indeed, absent descriptivism, there is no good reason for its disuse. In the course of discussing the missing argument, we considered a case that is *truly* a case of ignorance. It was clear therein that there was no intuitive referent to be had, just as descriptivism would suggest. All in all, descriptivism does not seem to be in quite so much of a bind as the advocates of these arguments suggest. To the contrary, a judicious and intuitively obvious explication of the presence and role of parasitic reference in these examples dissolves each and every one of them, rendering them, as Searle observed decades ago, impotent and irrelevant.

#### Evans and Causing the Information

In the second section, I examine an argument by Evans against descriptivism that is interesting insofar as it is situated by Evans within various criticisms of the causal theory, one of which is the famous counterexample of `Madagascar' that, by a strict reading of Kripke's principles, should refer to a city on the African continent. I relate the argument, as Evans understands it, and go on to show its unarticulated error is not unlike

the examples we have recently considered, namely that, for reasons not altogether clear, Evans is limiting his view on what sort of descriptive notions are present in the mind of the speaker. Before I go into the argument itself and discuss where it is appropriate that the notion of causality should lie, I shall point out that Evans' criticism misrepresents the descriptivist position for names at the outset. In evaluating what he claims follows from an application of descriptivism, Evans echoes Kripke's words, to be sure, but he does not adhere to the meaning and intent that Kripke fulsomely explicated and clarified, and, correspondingly, he does not manage to stay on the topic and to criticize the true position of the advocate of a descriptive backing for names.

## Straw Man

Evans' argument begins with a straw man misappraisal of the winnowing mechanism to be utilized by the speaker to secure reference when a large conjunction of facts is believed by the speaker to have no joint referent. The proper view of the winnowing scheme involves a system of weights of importance at the discretion of the speaker herself, according to what she deep down would like to talk about. The improper view, meanwhile, is predicated on — it must be surmised — writing everything believed true of the object in a list of sentences and counting these sentences up numerically. The scheme involves maximizing the number to be preserved in the dossier on the name. It is obviously unclear how many "sentences" a fact like *a physicist or something* would consist of. Is humanity implicit? Is it a separate fact? Is being massive? Is having a profession beginning with a 'p' a sentence-awarding fact? None of this is made clear. Fortunately for the descriptivist, none of this must be made clear. The position of the descriptivist backing of names, as Kripke clearly explained in his lectures in *Naming* 

*Necessity*, invokes a "weighted most"<sup>10</sup> of the various facts believed by the speaker in the dossier on the name.

Strawson evidently had a strictly numerical and non-weighted scheme in mind.<sup>11</sup> Kripke criticizes Strawson and responds, "Surely it is more plausible to suppose that there is some weighting. Let's say democracy doesn't necessarily rule."<sup>12</sup> It is important, obviously, that democracy not rule because the decision would be determined by the initial carving up of the speaker's thoughts into an enumerated set of sentences, and I cannot think of any rational algorithm to accomplish this task which could not be replaced by still another plausible algorithm that gives a different voting result.

While one can certainly find Kripke speaking later, unguardedly, about the fact that "most of the  $\varphi$ 's are satisfied by a unique object,"<sup>13</sup> one should certainly defer to Kripke's previous explication of the issue in order to understand his position and to understand what he is trying to get across in the later passage. Evans, when he talks about fitting the majority of descriptions, is nominally employing Kripke's words. However, since Evans is not sensitive to the issue of weighting, the result is a straw man portrayal of the position of the descriptive backing for names.

### The Problem According to Evans

Evans characterizes the descriptivist argument in terms of the rule of democracy, and his ensuing claim is that, upon such grounds, the ensuing referent (after a small bit of pruning) might well be an object extant in the universe but so very far off in a galaxy long, long ago and far, far away that it did not interact with the speaker causally and is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 64. <sup>11</sup> Strawson 1963, p. 195-6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 65.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

clearly not the intended referent of her use of the name. Because descriptivism for names demands this, he says, and since under the descriptivist stricture the far off object is the referent, although we all agree it is not (but that it is something else closer to home), he concludes descriptivism is wrong.

Evans begins by setting out the descriptivist thesis in a manner not unlike Kripke's presentation at the beginning of lecture two in *Naming and Necessity*. He writes:

We can see undifferentiated Description Theory as the expression of two thoughts.

- (a) The denotation of a name is determined by what speakers intend to refer to by using the name.
- (b) The object a speaker intends to refer to by his use of a name is that which satisfies or fits the majority of descriptions which make up the cluster of information which the speaker has associated with the name.<sup>14</sup>

The difference, of course, is that where Kripke offers the descriptivist constraint on the meaning of a name 'X' as implying that "If most, or a weighted most, of the  $\varphi$ 's are satisfied by one unique object *y*, then *y* is the referent of 'X',"<sup>15</sup> Evans couches descriptivism as directing reference to what fits the *majority* of descriptions.

The result, says Evans, is untenable. Under such a scheme, there could be an object in a remote galaxy that fits a larger number of sentences than a nearby object, the one which is presumably the object the speaker intends to refer to. Evans does not employ the imagery of a remote galaxy, but it would seem to be the canonical explication of the sort of idea he is trying to get across. I think he believes a counterexample to the descriptivist backing for names is a case where, in some remote galaxy, a person composed various symphonies, went deaf, spoke in German, had wild hair, etcetera, all of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Evans 1973, p. 197.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 71.

which are facts found in a dossier of a young female speaker under the name of 'Beethoven'. In addition, she has the fact that he composed thirty-two piano sonatas, the precise number of which the man in the remote galaxy did, in fact, compose, but which is not true of Ludwig in our world, as a result of one of the piano sonatas having gone missing. Evans argues that, under the inexorable application of descriptivist demands (and expanding the example if need be to augment the list with an increased number of sentences involving sixteen string quartets and nine symphonies), the intended referent of our speaker is the man in another galaxy, while intuition (surely!) would suggest it is not.

Evans mentions Aristotle as an example and states it would be absurd to suggest the speaker intends to refer to an object "whose doings are causally isolated from our body of information"<sup>16</sup> even though happenstance and outrageous luck should have conspired to fit a majority of her dossier sentences to such a creature.

# Evans' Answer to the Problem

Evans' argument against descriptivism unfolds, and yet Evans is not content with merely refuting the descriptivist position. Evans, too, maintains in his essay that Kripke's response is inadequate. The appropriate remedy, Evans suggests, is not to deny the importance of the presence of vital facts in the dossier of a speaker who intends to refer to something. Rather, the importance of causality must be acknowledged, and the solution, maintains Evans, is to insist upon, for successful reference and the proper fixation of the object to which the speaker intends to refer, the presence of a causal link between the object and the *information* the speaker has assembled in her dossier under the name.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Evans 1973, p. 198.

Evans concludes that descriptivism is flawed. Unlike Kripke, he does not dispense with the dossier, the associated information, but, instead, he asserts that the weakness of the descriptivist account really lies:

[n]ot so much in the idea that the intended referent is determined in a more or less complicated way by the associated information, but the specific form the determination was supposed to take: *fit*. There is something absurd in supposing that the intended referent of some perfectly ordinary use of a name by a speaker could be some item utterly isolated (causally) from the user's community and culture simply in virtue of the fact that it fits better than anything else the cluster of descriptions he associates with the name.<sup>17</sup>

To resolve the absurdity in the types of examples we have just considered, Evans proposes an added theoretical demand. We have a dossier relevant to the object claimed to be the referent. In addition, Evan demands that the object be the causal origin of the information in the dossier.

Evans believes Kripke has gotten it wrong. While he compliments Kripke for a

sensitivity to the problem of causation, Evans thinks the associated information, the

dossier, cannot be tossed away so easily. Evans explains his own position, as follows:

I would agree with Kripke in thinking that the absurdity resides in the absence of the causal relation between the item concerned and the speaker. But it seems to me that he has mislocated the causal relation; the important causal relation lies between that item's states and doings and the speaker's body of information — not between the item's being dubbed with a name and the speaker's contemporary use of it.<sup>18</sup>

Kripke's approach is off the mark, according to Evans. The real solution is to retain the vital importance of the descriptive dossier and to insist it be caused by the object the speaker intends to refer to. Evans' position modifies slightly the key points he labels (a) and (b) above and stipulates a further requirement on the object that a speaker *S* intends

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 197.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Ibid.

to refer to when using a name, namely that the object "should be the source of the causal origin of the body of information that *S* has associated with the name."<sup>19</sup>

# The Flaw in Evans' Answer

Given that the actual position of a descriptivist backing to a name involves a ranking scheme supplied by the speaker to determine what she intends to refer to by her use of a name, the imagined impotence and apoplexy of descriptivism in the face of these examples imagined by Evans is not present. Were we to suppose she has no description that incorporates even the slightest mention of her own causal interactions with the world, it would leave us staring at the problem Evans considers. However, the answer is not to modify the strictures (a) and (b) and to devolve to a position which is less than descriptivist (while nonetheless maintaining a vital role of the attendant information) as Evans does. Instead, the answer is to question the predominance and frequency with which ordinary speakers tend to name objects with which they have had no causal interaction.

It would seem that, as a matter of sheer practical numbers, people tend to name things they causally interact with. When people name a pet, for instance, they usually have in mind a pet in their own house or a pet in their arms or a pet they hear calling loudly for food or a pet that scratched them recently. I cannot think, off hand, of people I know who tend to name pets in an abstract way, intending to refer (if luck would have it) to creatures they do not know personally and who might be in the Andromeda galaxy.

While I have not ruled out the existence of such pet "owners" and namers, it is not necessary for my present argument that I do so. Instead, people who have no and who prize no causally imbued descriptive notions within their dossier for a name could easily

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 198.

be argued not to be referring to things in our own galaxy. If they would not rank our galaxy as important, if such a ranking and scheme is in the example, ex hypothesi, I do not see why it would be problematic to accede to their referring to things far away.

Contrariwise, when imminence and causality is part of what our speaker values in a name, when causal interactions comprise a deep component of a prized and highly weighted description, such as *the baby I bore* or the *frog in my hand* or the *doggy left on my doorstep and now placing his chin on my knee asking to go out*, it does not seem that we have to look far to theorize just how to get to the object a speaker intends to refer to by his use of a name.

Evans' alternate scheme preserves the importance of the dossier, and such a move is welcome. However, to claim that descriptivism is obviously flailing and failing in numerous intuitive cases to get to the appropriate reference would seem to be overstating the frequency with which people name things with no presumption that they have interacted with them in some way. Perhaps it is so obvious that a person would not think to answer along these lines when queried, but we have already seen the failure of speakers to give obvious answers to questions about their knowledge — *e.g. Q.* What do you know about George Washington? *A.* That he was called 'George Washington' by a lot of people. *Q.* What do you know about his white horse? *A.* Well, I know it was white and that it was a horse. — does *not* confer a logical and philosophical denial of their cognitive purchase on these facts.

Quite to the contrary, if we are searching for an algorithm that alights on the object that a speaker intends to refer to by his use of a name, we will never do poorly in the real world and in intuitively frequent cases by assuming that the person is naming *his* 

cat or *his* child or is striving to learn the name of some important historical figure who sent *his* great-grandfather marching along the trail of tears toward Oklahoma or to learn the name of another important historical object who sent *his* maternal grandmother to Buchenwald in 1943 to be gassed.

Evans' algorithm is simply insensitive to the fact that speakers weigh these things highly and that the desire to talk about and name objects with which and with whom we causally interact is intimately part and parcel of our dominant and defining associated information for each name.<sup>20</sup>

Evans' maneuver of putting the causal stricture *outside* the dossier and maintaining that the dossier itself must arise, causally, as a result of the object is an attempt to solve a problem that is definitely not there. There is absolutely no reason to imagine that causal concerns are not thoughtfully included in a speaker's associated information and that they thereby determine the object the speaker intends to refer to. Causal notions can be in the associated information itself! The dossier can be full of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> In an accompanying essay (Evans and Altham 1973, p. 213), Altham makes this very point. However, I doubt anybody reads the second essay, anymore.

Altham p. 213: The notion of dominance can be used independently of the causal theory. Indeed, the notion of certain description being particularly important for fixing the denotation of a name is very close to it. Suppose many descriptions are associated with a name, and it turns out that some are co-satisfied by one item, while the rest are co-satisfied by another. If our reaction is that the former is the denotation of the name, and we had false beliefs about it expressible in terms of the latter set of descriptions, then the former descriptions are dominant. In such a way can the notion of dominance be used without benefit of causality.

Let us now reformulate the attempt to contrast the descriptive with the eclectic theory [of Evans]. Suppose we have a set of descriptions associated with a name. Suppose the object which satisfies the dominant descriptions is *X*, but the dominant source of the beliefs in which the name occurs is a different object *Y*, which we also suppose to satisfy some of the descriptions. Which item is the denotation of the name? The answer is that the situation cannot arise. For if the denotation is *Y*, this would show that the allegedly dominant descriptions were not after all dominant, since dominance is explained by reference to our reactions to discoveries. Similarly, if the denotation is *X*, this would show that the allegedly dominant source was not after all dominant. Consequently, the eclectic theory has neither more nor less explanatory accuracy than the descriptive theory.

causal stipulations, and, in the normal state of normal speakers using normally conceived names, causal notions are rampant and dominant.

To conclude, Evans' answer is a half measure to no purpose. I fail to see how any of his concerns significantly weaken the account of a descriptive backing for names, unless it is artificially limited. Firstly, he proposes a straw man by failing to appreciate the weighting scheme that places a huge amount of intent and power into the hands of the speaker herself. He does so despite Kripke having paved the way and having been obviously sensitive to the issue. Secondly, he gives a solution to a non-problem and ignores the capacity of the speaker to intend to refer to an object that matches some description involving causation and involving the speaker's interaction with the world.

As a style of argumentation against descriptivism, it is not unlike the issue involving Namenfacts insofar as it does not peer very deeply, does not look around for a description very assiduously, and generally neglects the latent powers of descriptions to select objects in the world.

## Evaluating the Anti-Descriptivist Arguments

I have examined various anti-descriptivist arguments, most of which originated in Kripke's *Naming and Necessity*. Evans added his own argument about causation. There are the arguments of ignorance and error. There is the epistemic argument. There is Evans' proposal to demand that the accompanying descriptive dossier be caused by the object. The first three arguments are resolved by an attention to various Namenfacts found in the speaker's dossier on the name. A non-unique description combined with the obvious Namenfact will yield uniqueness in the so-called case of ignorance. The Namenfact is considered again to resolve the so-called case of error. In this case, the

Namenfact must be given linguistic priority by our speaker, which is a natural assumption given the way people like to organize their names in accord with various social concerns. The epistemic case is resolved, once again, by considering the Namenfact and giving it linguistic importance. Thus, these arguments against descriptivism are all handled by the mechanism Searle proposed. He pointed out that we should not be forgetting the power of parasitic reference and we should not be omitting it from our descriptions.

The other arguments are easily resolved, too. Evans' stricture that the dossier must be caused by the object is shown to be irrelevant, since the speaker's dossier would contain statements about causation, and they would be prized.

All told, in the context of Searle's swift rebuttals and his correct explication of parasitic reference, the arguments against descriptivism are, taken together, exceedingly weak. Nonetheless, time and time again, one sees an appeal made to the argument of ignorance and the argument of error as if they decisively settled the matter. Once the arguments of ignorance and error are mentioned, an author today simply goes on to say it is common knowledge and common opinion that the notion of a descriptive backing for a name has been utterly discredited, that it is wrong from the fundamentals, and that we need to find a better way. Several pages of various modal arguments, which are irrelevant because we embrace rigidification, might ensue.

The modal argument was the great achievement of Kripke in *Naming and Necessity*. We are going to rigidify. We are going to abandon the modally naïve version of descriptivism we see in Russell and Frege. It needs to be updated and altered. Kaplan gives us the exact linguistic tool to accomplish the task: *Dthat*. Some very interesting problems arise when you rigidify with *Dthat*. We will do it, a priori, and explore all these

problems. We can investigate, a priori, the logical consequences of applying Kaplan's *Dthat* operator to a descriptive dossier. You get a host of very curious problems. And these are all the problems we see in names.

However, the momentary lesson of our current chapter is that each of the various arguments that have been launched against descriptivism is easily refuted with a proper attention to Namenfacts, a proper attention to utilizing any and all descriptive powers, and a proper attention to logic. I have tried to show descriptivism has been repeatedly and unfairly attacked and that there is no reason still standing why descriptions in the mind of a speaker do not serve as the backing for a name. The arguments from ignorance and from error have done the most damage, historically, and Searle's parasitic reference deals with their issues more than adequately. In general, an argument against descriptivism looks to deny, quite arbitrarily and unfairly, some description a speaker might employ. An attempt is usually made to limit the descriptivist arsenal. However, there is never any reason to deny a speaker some description, such as one that contains a Namenfact. All facts are fair game. All descriptions have worth. To claim otherwise is simply not to do battle with descriptivism. To claim otherwise is to miss the point. It is the burden henceforth of those who would dismiss descriptivism to come up with an argument that is relevant.

# CHAPTER 3

# ATTACKING THE CAUSAL THEORY

In this chapter, I will first examine various epistemic flaws in the causal theory. In particular, Kripke's extension of his naming theory to species terms and to mass terms brings up serious epistemic issues. After all, one really would like to know something about tigers, don't you think? After exploring these problems, I will show, by considering the essays of Donnellan, Putnam and Kripke, that all these authors are using words whose source and origin of meaning is scientific concept replacement, which is a competing approach to giving these sorts of words a meaning and which allows the speaker to know something about tigers.<sup>21</sup> Hence, in the first section, I will point out severe problems with the causal theory and note the virtues of its rival.

In the second section, a more important result is obtained after the causal theory is given some meat and some detail, which its advocates have been remiss in not providing. I shall simply ask: in virtue of *what* does a baptism succeed and in virtue of *what* is a link in the causal chain extended? It will be quite easily seen that the only plausible account of success is one that postulates a description in the mind of a speaker as a necessary and sufficient condition for success. Therefore, it follows that, once we retreat from the vague generality of a causal theory in the abstract to a specific version with real details, the causal theory can be completely subsumed under the mantle of descriptivism. One might call it a causal theory, I suppose, but every answer it gives would be given, too, by the descriptive theory applied to a speaker within the chain.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> See Donnellan 1962, Putnam 1962 and Kripke 1980.

In the third section, I will draw various interpretive strands together. There are problems with the causal theory. Its competition, which lacks these problems, is being used actively in our language. The causal theory, moreover, is illusory insofar as its links are descriptivist. When the links are individuals who have descriptions in mind, one could still talk about a causal theory, but it would not compete with descriptivism. The two would be hand in glove, and there would be no difference between them. So, I will try to judge the history of the debate between the causal theory and the descriptive theory for names, and I will review the difficulties we found in the last chapter for the purported arguments against a descriptive backing for names. My conclusion, in short, will be that the causal theory is weak, the attacks on descriptivism were weak, the claim that the causal theory is distinct from descriptivism is weak, and that philosophers should take another look at the role of descriptions, appropriately rigidified, in providing the backing for a name.

#### The Epistemic Weakness of the Causal Theory for Natural Stuff

In this section, I explore the consequences of adhering to the causal theory. I consider what Kripke's causal theory means for our epistemic purchase on species terms. I proceed to mass terms and show, in the same sort of way, how Kripke's view leads to severe epistemic opacity for these terms, too. I return to the theme of biology and go on to examine the curious problem presented by the presence of other clade words up and down the spectrum. After all, there are a lot of words between a species term at the bottom and a kingdom term at the top! The mere presence of these words is a difficulty and a dilemma for the causal theory.

As you go up the scale, you see, at some point you must presumably leave the causal theory behind. According to Kripke's doctrine, a word latches onto the species. According to Kripke, you leave the causal theory behind when you take the first step up from a species to a more general clade. All our authors take a step up and leave the causal theory behind at some point! That to which you move, linguistically speaking, would have to be a collection of descriptive characteristics that have been opportunistically settled upon and encapsulated into a word, based on the latest scientific viewpoint. Insofar as the viewpoint might change — and, after all, Kripke says, "The whole theory of protons, of atomic numbers, the whole theory of molecular structure and of atomic structure, on which such views are based, could *all* turn out to be false"<sup>22</sup> we should view these words as subject to concept replacement, which Kripke says is a view in competition with his own. So, the argument will be made that we do have these words. They are not going away. We have scientific replacement words. Therefore, we may ask why their role might not also extend to those very terms Kripke wishes to say are causally determined, those at the species level.

In short, we will see the epistemic flaws in Kripke's account become evident as he extends his dubbings to biological and mass terms. Kripke is perfectly clear about his recipe, and it only remains to take him at his word. We do have scientific concept replacement words in our language. We have them in abundance. And there appears to be no reason why we could not employ scientific replacement at any level, including the level at which the dubbings are said to operate. The epistemic opacity would go away. We would know something about tigers. The overall conclusion of the section is to see

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 123.

that Kripke's approach has grave flaws and that there is no reason not to employ scientific concept replacement, which lacks these flaws, as the source of our meanings. What Is a Tiger?

According to Kripke (and we will just have to accept this part for the sake of argument), there was a moment in time where a few explorers made first contact with a certain species of animal on behalf of the English speakers of today and dubbed it a ... tiger. Before this point, there were no tigers in the English language. After this point, according to Kripke, no other species of animal could ever become a tiger, linguistically. The explorers did the deed, 'tiger' entered the English language, and the species to which they pointed and said something like, "Lo, a tiger!" *is* the species that is the referent of the word `tiger'.

It is pretty simple. There is not much room to wiggle. None, really. Kripke explicates his position clearly. It only remains for us to examine and to understand the epistemic implications of his linguistic view.

The qualities the explorers believe are possessed by the species to which they are pointing are irrelevant, by Kripke's account. They might *think* the object has such-andsuch a shape, but what they think is not important, linguistically, according to Kripke. He writes:

Is it even a contradiction to suppose that we should discover that tigers *never* have four legs? Suppose the explorers who attributed these properties to tigers were deceived by an optical illusion, and that the animals they saw were from a three-legged species, would we then say that there turned out to be no tigers after all? I think we would say that in spite of the optical illusion which had deceived the explorers, tigers in fact have three legs.<sup>23</sup>

According to Kripke, you see, a tiger just is the species pointed to by our explorers. If

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 120.

there was an optical illusion and they pointed to a three legged beast, then we should say tigers have three legs.

According to Kripke's account, if the species had no legs at all (and it was some kind of a giant worm, which the optical illusion portrayed in different sort of way), then we should say that, in spite of the optical illusion that had deceived the explorers, tigers are giant worms.

According to Kripke's account, if they were yellow and black on the outside (or even if they weren't) and if they were reptilian on the inside, then *that* is the internal structure of a tiger, and it does not matter that we do not know this structure at first. It nonetheless comprises the concept of a tiger. The baptismal event and the creature present at the baptism simply determine the species meaning of the word `tiger'. Later study is not relevant. He writes:

I think this is true of the concept of tiger *before* the internal structure of tigers has been investigated. Even though we don't *know* the internal structure of tigers, we suppose—and let us suppose that we are right—that tigers form a certain species or natural kind. We then can imagine that there should be a creature which, though having all the external appearance of tigers, differs from them internally enough that we should say that it is not the same kind of thing. We can imagine it without knowing anything about this internal structure—what this internal structure is. We can say in advance that we use the term 'tiger' to designate a species, and that anything not of this species, even though it may look like a tiger, is not in fact a tiger.<sup>24</sup>

Hence, in the case where what was baptized by the explorers was yellow and black on the outside and reptilian on the inside, anything not of this species, even though it may look like a tiger, is not in fact a tiger. Subsequent discovery of another creature, yellow and black on the outside and mammalian on the inside, would simply be another creature,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 120-1.

linguistically, for Kripke. It is not of the species originally baptized. (Kripke imagines the reverse but, obviously, it doesn't matter.) Even though it may look like a tiger, it is not in fact a tiger.

According to Kripke's account, everything depends upon the structure of the creature that was baptized by the explorers. The explorers might not know its characteristics. It might have run away. There might have been optical illusions. These illusions might have been placed into the minds of the explorers by the worms from another planet, which species was labeled a tiger. The worms might have beamed up and left. Anything else that somebody else called a tiger later was called a tiger erroneously, says Kripke. When the worms left, a person who called a large furry cat a tiger was making a linguistic error.

It all follows precisely from Kripke's account, and there is no way to run away from it without simply trashing the account.

Note, too, that when it comes to pass that when the whole theory of molecular structure and atomic structure is viewed as false and when the optical illusions are revealed and when a large worm from another planet tells you what really happened, she might not be a tiger. She might not be able to interbreed with those worms who visited our planet long ago, and she might be as different from them as a banana is from a strawberry. According to Kripke, you still have not yet met a tiger.

We are considering the case of extraterrestrial worms merely to open up to the reader the immensity of the epistemic shrouding of whatever species Kripke claims was named a tiger. Obviously, a more mundane mistake could have beset our explorers. A goat could have been rustling in the bushes, and they said, "Lo, a tiger!" and they got a

bushman who could not draw very well to make a sketch. Later, they tried to find another tiger, according to the sketch. It was much later due to a certain tendency of these explorers toward alcoholism. Another native, who could not speak English, guided them to what he thought the sketch was about. It was a large cat the explorers had never seen before. It was not a tiger, according to Kripke, but somehow this cat is still wrongly talked about today.

Linguistically, according to Kripke's account, optical illusions and bad bushmen sketch artists notwithstanding, he thinks we would say that, in spite of the optical illusions and the poor sketches that had deceived the explorers, tigers are in fact a species of goat.

People today are talking about fool's tigers in the zoo. The mistake might have been more mundane still, and the things we now call leopards are tigers.

How do we know this is not happening? How do we know, given Kripke's account, that the species designated a tiger (or a lemur or a hummingbird or an iguana) by various explorers at some precise moment in history on behalf of the Queen of England and all speakers of the English language is the sort of thing we believe it to be today? Well, obviously all the things that have ever been baptized have run away! Some of these baptisms happened long ago. The creatures have died, and nobody thought to save the remains so we would all know what we are talking about. Hence, I think it is universally clear that every word in the English language that comports to Kripke's account must be epistemically in the dark. Kripke is absolutely clear. The species the explorers baptized *is* the species for the word in question. The qualities the explorers thought it had are irrelevant.

The qualities that once had yet to be investigated are irrelevant, too. (Our lack of knowledge at the time of its internal structure was explicitly not important to the concept, tiger. See above.) Neither is our subsequent and present lack of knowledge (since it was lost) of the internal structure of the creature that we baptized of any importance. Opinions about qualities are simply never relevant, according to Kripke's account. The only quality that matters is that of being the species that the canonical explorers dubbed.

That's it. That is Kripke's theory. And he is not unclear. Hence, anyone who wishes to advocate the causal theory for a species term may do so. However, he needs to understand that neither he nor anybody alive will ever know what sort of qualities one might need to have, in a here and now sort of way, to be a tiger. We know the definition of tiger-dom. It is *the* species of the creature the explorers dubbed. We know this in advance. This is the only "quality" that matters. What we do *not* know is what sort creatures these were and, hence, are — what sort of local and present properties they have. They might be slime molds. They might be goats. They might be worms. We just have to get used to this if we wish to embrace a causal theory of species terms. It all follows logically, and you simply have to embrace the beast.

### Fool's Gold

Kripke says the same linguistic principle he applies to natural creatures should be applied to mass terms. Hence, there should be an archetypal dubbing or baptism for each mass term on behalf of the speakers of the English language. If not, we are presumably absolutely nowhere, and the entire theory is incoherent. Therefore, let us assume that for each mass term there *was* a dubbing. Specifically, let us suppose the person who dubbed

gold was named Boris. In fact, we could make Boris a descriptive name for this very individual!

But how is this supposed to have worked? There must have been some stuff nearby, and Boris must have waved his hands toward the stuff and said aloud, "You are gold, now and forever, for the glory of the Queen of England, amen." Or something like that. What more can we say?

Unfortunately, we can say very little. According to Kripke, there might have been more of those pesky optical illusions. Gold might be blue, he says.<sup>25</sup> Need the sample have been a metal? One cannot insist upon it without doing violence to Kripke's scheme. Need it have been an element? Hardly. We can baptize stuff like fool's gold, can't we?

Then what do we require of gold? I cannot think of a single thing other than that it conform to being the sort of mass-like thing to which mass terms apply. (Whatever that might be.) And that it was baptized by Boris.

Therefore, we are involved in the same conundrum we encountered with tigers, which is hardly surprising because the accounts are the same. Just as we had a few explorers pointing to a thing in the jungle that looked yellow and black (but which need not have been), we now have Boris pointing to stuff which to him looks yellow and metallic but need not be. Illusions and such.

Once again, we have a lost baptism. There is no canonical sample of gold in Paris or London. The stuff with which I who say "gold" am in derivative causal contact has gone its merry way. It is lost, so to speak. Given it is lost, given this key premise, there is no one alive today who can say that what a certain Sven baptized as albite is not the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 118.

same stuff Boris baptized as gold. A hard white  $\operatorname{rock}^{26}$  might have looked like a vellow metal to Boris. We don't know much about Boris. And we don't know what illusions he suffered.

You might say that in your opinion one (or the other) of these baptisms does not count. Perhaps you feel the word `gold' has moved on to another substance if Boris was on a bender when he pointed to a white rock. But we saw earlier that gold might be blue even though it initially looked yellow. So why shouldn't gold be white even though it initially looked (to Boris<sup>27</sup>) yellow? You would be violating quite explicitly Kripke's thoughts on the matter, you see, if you were to suggest that the word moves on. He doesn't allow it.

Here is Kripke's example. Suppose the mass that was declared to be gold looked yellow and metallic. Suppose you later encounter some other stuff that also looks yellow and metallic. Is it gold, too? Is it a different kind of gold?

Kripke is clear with his opinion. He writes:

[T]here might be a substance which has all the identifying marks we commonly attributed to gold and used to identify it in the first place, but which is not the same kind of thing, which is not the same substance. We would say of such a thing that though it has all the appearances we initially used to identify gold, it is not gold. Such a thing is, for example, as we well know, iron pyrite or fool's gold. This is not another kind of gold. It's a completely different thing which to the uninitiated person looks just like the substance which we discovered and called gold.<sup>28</sup>

Kripke is unambiguous. It is not gold.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Obviously, we don't know that albite was a hard white rock. Sven might have been a hard drinking Swede who was deputized by the Queen in a whimsical moment. He did as she wished, and he called something `albite' but he didn't save us a sample. Very likely, he suffered from optical illusions. At least, we don't know otherwise.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> It is redundant to say "appeared initially" and "appeared to Boris". He is, by definition, our initial person. <sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 119.

Presumably, it's also a completely different thing if it we just *thought* it looked like the substance which we discovered and called gold.

There are a few important points to observe in the passage above. First is the latent presupposition that we identified gold in the first place. There *was* a substance we discovered and called gold. There is a baptismal step! This is where Boris comes in and names a substance gold. Kripke is committed to this. He says it happened. He says "we discovered and called gold" some particular substance. We need this moment for Kripke's account to have any coherence, whatsoever.

Second, if some other substance has all the appearances we initially used to identify gold, it is *not* gold. It is not gold because it is not the same substance we discovered earlier and called gold. This is firm. It is a solid Kripkean point!

Third, consider now the importance of the passage where Kripke says gold might be blue. We see that we commonly attributed various identifying marks to gold, e.g. yellow and metallic, but that they are *attributed*, not necessarily possessed. So, not only could we discover our first baptized stuff has certain properties true of it in addition to these initial identifying marks, we could also discover our first baptized stuff has various properties *instead* of the impressions by which we singled it out. (And, if we didn't get around to discovering it, it would still be true.)

Hence, the later stuff someone calls "gold" is called it erroneously no matter how close the resemblance might be. (Or how little resemblance there might be.) This logic rules out your intuition that `gold' can move on to another substance. According to Kripke's theses, it cannot. It sticks with the original substance, quite possibly neither yellow nor metal.

You might worry. How shall we *know* what the original gold was? If it might have been blue and it might have been albite, what hope is there for any of us alive today to know precisely (or even approximately, really) which substance it was we discovered long ago and called gold?

Of course, we cannot know. The issue is epistemically dark.

People who worry about such things will never make good Kripke acolytes. These are mighty epistemic flaws in Kripke's system (unless you don't mind them, of course), and they really had better be ignored. The answers are, as in the tiger case before (and quite naturally as a logical result of lost baptisms), that we will never know such things. The causal theory is simple. It is direct. It is unambiguous. There is some stuff, and there is a word. The two get hooked together at the baptism, and that is all. If the word, later, gets used differently, it gets used incorrectly. If the stuff gets lost — and, in the case of mass terms, how can it *not* get lost? — the word signifies the original stuff still.

Put another way, just as nobody ever kept track of the baptismal moments for lemurs or hummingbirds or iguanas, nobody ever kept track of the mass term baptismal moments, either, and it would naturally follow that there is now no known way of characterizing the stuff except by the descriptive fact that it was stuff we discovered long ago and called gold. Being called gold long ago is the only quality that matters, according to Kripke.

*What* did we call gold, in terms of descriptive qualities in a here and now sort of way? — you might wish to know. A good question, but nobody knows.

Of course, we might venture to say a few things about the stuff, but our success, should it arise, would be dumb luck. We cannot be sure of any quality we now claim to be true of gold. There is only the "quality" that it was once baptized as gold. This we know. The causal theory is rigid. It is absolutely rigid. There is a dubbing — generally long before you and I were born — early in the mists of time where the name gets attached to an object or to a species or to a mass-type. There is a causal chain. Your use of the word (and mine) now is *determined* by the identity of the very thing that was linked causally to the word. That's it. That is the theory.

Since the theory does not rule out lost baptisms — and how could it possible do so? — it needs to embrace their natural effects and conclusions. Their indisputable effect is that you do not know, truly, anything about the qualitative identity of any item you might now claim falls under the meaning of your term. A Kripke-inspired theorist has to get used to this.

I find it objectionable, of course, but one *can* speak this way. Kripke-theorists need to get used to the repercussions of their theory and to embrace them. Or trash the theory. If you don't like not knowing whether when you use the word `tiger' you mean a worm from Venus or when you say `gold' you mean butter or neon, you might want to abandon Kripke's approach to names, species and mass terms, altogether.

#### Up the Biological Staircase

In this section, I shall turn to a curious issue that concerns our verbiage about biology. I shall examine the writings of Donnellan, Putnam and Kripke, who are all concerned with the question of the relationship between lower and higher clade terms. They are interested in questions such as, "Are all whales mammals?" and "Are all cats

animals?" They are concerned with the analyticity of these questions. For it would seem to follow from the view that these terms embody lists of concepts that such sentences would be trivial and analytic. Hence, their approach initially seems to be just the sort of thought process one would use to undermine the claims of those who view the words, `whale' and `cat', as conveniently apportioned scientific concepts.

However, if one shifts the emphasis of concern to the second term in each sentence above, one sees a rather different argument unfolding. Here, we find the words, `mammal' and `animal'. If one claims a non-trivial relationship between being a whale and being a mammal or between being a cat and being an animal, then it naturally follows that `mammal' and `animal' are scientifically inspired and occasionally replaced concept terms. If they are, contrariwise, trivially gained from the world by pointing, then all the words under consideration above are obtained by pointing, and the relationships in these sentences would be trivial, too, on the grounds that — for instance — when one points to *animals*, one has pointed to a group of creatures that includes the very creatures one points to when one baptismally points to *cats*. The ensuing claim that all cats are animals would be trivial.

However, in Kripke's account, there is no pointing whatsoever to higher clades. One does not point to Animalia or to Mammalia, according to Kripke. After all, mental intention is not relevant to the act of pointing. The linguistic mechanism of natural kinds, if it makes any sense, does the operation for you. It is important that the mechanism not be reflective and mental for these various arguments. It is important that nature does it for you, somehow.

Hence, I shall be looking at the very same examples as Donnellan, Putnam and Kripke. Yet I shall be looking at them while emphasizing the second words instead of the first. These words must have gotten their meaning by selecting various scientific concepts. These words must embody the concept replacement view. Hence, scientific concept replacement terms *are* in the English language.

It remains for us to push down toward increased clade specificity and, as we do, inquire about the nature of the term we find there. If the rigidified terms, a lá Kripke, Donnellan and Putnam, are truly present, they must push right up against (at some point) the scientific concept replacement terms. They must be side-by-side juxtaposed.

Once we see this, we may ask what prevents us from adjusting the location of the dividing line. If we push upward, it is not very interesting (although, presumably, it would be interesting to hear Kripke's argument about why it cannot be done). If we push downward, the baptismal ostensive term disappears. That is curious.

If there is nothing wrong with the presupposition of actually pointing to a set of creatures, then one could push upwards, and why do we not see this from time to time? If there *is* something wrong with the notion of natural kinds, however, and if it amounts to a Hail Mary pass that incorporates pseudo-scientific and linguistic mumbo jumbo, then we could surely push downwards and get rid of the ostensive term. Actually, one can push downwards even if natural kinds *do* make sense, and so we have to ask why we may not do so. Surely, we may do so.

If natural kinds do not make sense, we must do so.

Hence, irrespective of the issue of natural kinds, the present discussion puts pressure on the thesis put forth by Kripke, et al., about species terms. Just above, clade-

wise, there is an occasionally replaced scientific concept term. So, why not treat the species term as an occasionally replaced scientific concept term, too, and merely replace it a trifle more often.

# Donnellan and Putnam

In *Necessity and Criteria*, Donnellan contemplates a sailor's view of a whale and contrasts it with a scientist's. Donnellan talks about the gestalt of a whale, and the word `whale' as the sailor uses it appears to mean: whatever species of thing makes me see a certain gestalt. Donnellan is concerned with amplifying this sort of meaning. Under its guise, it is not a necessary truth that a whale is a mammal.

In an article written directly thereafter in the same journal, Putnam picks up the theme. He recasts the problem using a different sentence: 'All cats are animals.' While one might think of it as having a meaning that is analytic, Putnam says, surely it is otherwise! Putnam says that, after all, cats could be little robots controlled by joysticks from Mars. (There is quite a time delay on a signal from Mars, so shouldn't there be some local computation, given that cats' reflexes are so terribly quick?) Anyway, Putnam says cats might be robots.

Meanwhile, Donnellan is quite clear in spelling out what his sailor's take on a whale is. It means: whatever looks whale-like. Our sailor is keen and is practiced at grouping his visual scenes. He has some anthropomorphic tendency to naturally put various things into a group and say "These look like whales."

In the same way, Putnam is utilizing a notion of *cat* that relies on the gestalt of a cat. When he says cats could be automata, he means the little cat-gestalt causing

creatures that laze about in people's houses might be machines directed by rational minds on Mars.

Therefore, both our authors are using the words, *whale* and *cat*, quite differently from Kripke who said the visual gestalt of a thing was utterly irrelevant to the meaning of a species term! There might have been optical illusions. The linguistic explorers baptized *something*, Kripke says, and called it a whale. The shapes of the things we call whales today are utterly irrelevant to Kripke's proposed meaning for the word `whale'.

So, there is quite a divergence in the accounts we are considering for the lower term, the species term. But, as we said, the thrust of our current section is to focus on the second word, not the first. What kind of words are they? What is the account of their meaning?

Kripke says he shares Putnam's view that it could turn out that cats are not animals.<sup>29</sup> To be a remote controlled robot is not to be animal. Hence, it follows from this simple claim of Kripke (and Putnam) that the word 'animal' must have its origin as a scientific concept term and not have its origin ostensively, to be fleshed out when we discover the characteristics of the things we pointed to — if we manage to discover it some day (but, really, I don't see how we could). To be an animal is not to be an electronic robot. I am fine with that. What is to be an animal, then?

The higher level biological classifications of kingdom, phylum and order need to be scientifically inspired. They need to be statements about various properties held by a creature in question. When you say a creature is a chordate, you are really saying it has a backbone. You are not saying it has the visual gestalt of a chordate. You are giving forth a concept.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 123.

When Putnam claims cats might not be chordates — let's suppose he were to say it — he is saying those cat-gestalt looking things might not have backbones. It is an intelligible claim. It follows from his visual gestalt meaning for a *cat* and his conceptual meaning for *Chordata*. Since Kripke agrees with Putnam on this point, Kripke must have various abstract scientific conceptual terms in his English lexicon, too.

Moreover, these terms are subject to concept replacement as our scientific view of the world changes. Biology is curious because the concepts are so often replaced when there is no fundamental change in the underlying physical theory. Concepts get changed merely due to what physicists call initial conditions or boundary conditions, which is just a description, really, of the stuff in the world.

Hence, a scientist might decide it will be easier to talk in the future about what is really interesting if we change the meaning of *Chordata* slightly and move a few more beings into its clutches. So, instead of meaning a creature with a backbone, we shall weaken it slightly and stipulate that the creature have a notochord and a few other features, which encapsulates all the backbone creatures as before and tosses in a few other creatures.

Kripke has these concept replacement words. Putnam does, too. Donnellan has them, surely, because he says the sailor's whale might not be a mammal, and he means it might not be the case that all the whale-gestalt looking things in the world have mammary glands. Ergo, the sailor's 'whale' is a word for a whale-gestalt looking thing, and the word 'mammal' is a scientific concept word for having a gland that makes milk.

## They All Have Scientific Concept Replacement Words

Given each author has scientific replacement words in his version of the English language, it would seem a lot is gained thereby in support of a proposal that runs counter to Kripke's view of species terms. Kripke mentions the competing view. He writes:

This may make some people think right away that there are really two concepts of metal operating here, a phenomenological one and a scientific one which then replaces it. This I reject, but ... the move will tempt many, and can be refuted only after I develop my own views.<sup>30</sup>

It is an exceedingly interesting view to consider! I do not believe Kripke ever really gets around to refuting it in *Naming and Necessity*. He does get around to explicating his own view (which we just examined in detail) concerning tigers and gold, and he likely thinks his discussion sufficed to reject the competing view of scientific replacement. But it doesn't, really.

Anyway, Donnellan and Putnam are loath to give up the phenomenological concepts. They persist in maintaining the sailor's meaning of *whale* and *cat* involves directly the notions of whale-gestalt and cat-gestalt. So, Kripke is going his own way, entirely.

Yet all three do have scientific concept terms! And none of them are upset, I think, when Chordata gets broadened to some small extent by thoughtful scientists or when Pluto gets cast out of the panoply of planets. Consider the sentence, `All whales are whippomorpha'. I think each of these authors would say it is a contingent matter, and the contingency stems from one crucial component, namely, that *Whippomorpha* is a scientific-replacement concept. If whale-looking things are robots controlled from Mars, Putnam would say they are not whippomorpha.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 118.

Now, if Putnam says otherwise, I simply move upward until I get to one of his biological words that *is* a scientific-replacement concept. I do not care where the line is drawn. It only matters to our argument that each author *has* scientific concept words that might admit of alteration and replacement. Putnam clearly has such a term near the very top: *animal*.

Strangely, we should note in passing that Donnellan takes a different view of the top and declares that "what has the gestalt of a cat has thereby the gestalt of an animal."<sup>31</sup> I do know what a cat-gestalt is (at least, to me) but I have no idea what Donnellan has in mind by the gestalt of an animal. I do not know if Donnellan considers sponges and sea anemones to be animals. Basically, I have no what Donnellan means by an animal. As long as he has something in mind, it is fine with me. He clearly has a scientific concept word further down. He has the word *mammal*. It is quite odd to have an inversion as one climbs the biological staircase. Donnellan goes from phenomenological to scientificconcept and back to phenomenological. If Donnellan wishes to do so in his flavor of English, it is of little concern to me. Just as there is a divide across the pond over the word, 'boot', there can be divides within our own continent, as well, over other words. To me, the essence of being an animal lies in the way one obtains one's energy. One has to eat things. One cannot sit in the sun, photosynthesize for a while, pull carbon dioxide out of the air and put on few pounds. If you do *that*, you are not an animal, as far as I am concerned. To me, it is not what something looks like. It is what something does.

But Donnellan may speak as he likes. And if I never understand what he is saying, I don't see how it matters. It won't a ruin a single lovely morning with pancakes, Vivaldi and tea.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Donnellan 1962, p. 653.

### What To Do with Them?

Above, Kripke suggests we might have two notions, a phenomenological one and a technical and conceptual one. Donnellan calls the phenomenological one the sailor's whale, and he calls the conceptual one the scientist's whale. Kripke goes on to suggest that, according to the view competing with his own, the scientist's term might well replace the sailor's term. Surely, we do have the sailor's term, since there *are* various gestalt equivalence classes a person might entertain (and your boundaries might be similar to mine because of our anthropomorphic similarity), and surely we just showed there are also scientific terms in English. The interesting question, then, is what has to happen betwixt the two of them.

One alternative is that both terms can coexist and that English speech can be ambiguous as to which sense is being employed at any given time. Accordingly, when a swarthy seafaring fellow comes up to you and asks, "Are all whales mammals?" you would likely resolve the ambiguity in his sentence by surmising that by `whale' he means things with a whale-gestalt. You would tell him yes, and you would think to yourself that you had answered with a contingent truth.

If somebody asks you, "Are all cetaceans chordata?" you might not see any ambiguity, at all. You might just respond yes, and you would think to yourself that you had answered with an analytic truth.

When a blind girl, who for some sad reason is trying to learn about the world without experiencing it, asks you, "Are all whales mammals?" you would likely resolve the ambiguity by thinking she had not yet learned the scientific word `whale' and should

like some guidance. You would tell her yes, and the proposition you expressed thereby would be analytic.

So, you might think Kripke need not say our scientist's words for *cat* and for *whale* should ever have to replace the phenomenological concepts. You might think both of them could coexist and that various statements could be made with the intent to use one or the other, as the speaker sees fit. When Putnam says a cat might be a remote controlled robot, as a listener, you simply gravitate to the phenomenological meaning in order to politely entertain the notion that Putnam has said something true.

Wouldn't that solve everything? Well, it does seem to do a good job in the case of whales and cats. I do not think there is anything in Donnellan's paper that cannot be solved by a judicious and scrupulous attention to the context and usage of *whale*<sub>1</sub> and *whale*<sub>2</sub>, the terms he gives for the sailor's meaning and the scientist's meaning, respectively. So, you would think that we could be done with the matter and that Kripke was simply too hasty when he suggested the scientific word would supplant the phenomenological meaning at some point. Instead, it would initially seem the two concepts could be perfectly happy to coexist side by side.

Firstly, we have a phenomenally inspired word. We have anthropomorphically created equivalence classes of various gestalts. We use these gestalts to construct that-which-caused-the-gestalt equivalence classes of objects in the world. Whale-gestalt is prior to the sailor's concept of a whale. Cat-gestalt is prior to the sailor's concept of a cat. The whale-gestalt is range of visual experience (and I am supposing you know it when you see it), and the same holds true for the cat-gestalt. The word `whale-gestalt' does not presuppose the existence of whales. It is about visual experience, circumscribed
by arbitrary parameters. Since it does not presuppose the existence of whales, I have latched on to Donnellan's jargon as superior to talking about "looking like a whale," which would be quite confusing after a while. A whale, for a sailor, is defined in terms of the whale-gestalt. It is not the other way around.

As we said, the phenomenological concept can coexist with the scientific one when we stick to the animal kingdom or, at the very least, continue to talk about whales and cats. However, we immediately run into quite a problem when we shift over to mass terms and attempt to give a name to anything that is a shiny silvery metal or a white powder!

We can no longer say, in this case, that we can happily juxtapose the meaning of *tartaric acid* on the phenomenological side, namely, whatever has the tartaric-acid-gestalt, with the scientific meaning spelled out as a geometric relationship amongst carbon, hydrogen and oxygen atoms. We cannot do this because tartaric-acid-gestalt is merely to look like a white powder. Nor can we juxtapose the meaning of *gallium* on the phenomenological side with its scientific meaning and simply go back and forth, according to our linguistic aims, because gallium-gestalt is to look silvery and metallic. Yet there are so many white powders and so many silvery metals! The phenomenological/scientific dichotomy breaks down.

Eventually, for things like this, the scientific concept pushes its way in and takes over. You cannot, linguistically, wonder if all tartaric acid contains oxygen. It is not like wondering whether or not all whales are mammals. In the latter case, you could think about a whale-looking thing and wonder if all (or any) of them are mammals. But when we move to `tartaric acid', we are operating under a starker linguistic constraint. Perhaps

there are white powders that do not contain oxygen. Yet holding a sample in one's hand does not constitute a counterexample to `All tartaric acid contains oxygen' in the way that (one can interpret one's words so that) holding a whale-looking thing could be a counterexample to the claim about mammals.

To be a counterexample, you have to be holding *tartaric acid* in your hand, not just a white powder. There is no complete phenomenological sketch to be had, really. So, in the case of these sorts of words, the scientific concept intrudes and takes over. Can gallium have atomic number three? Hmmm. If you are holding a shiny silvery metal in your hand with atomic number three, it is not going to be gallium with atomic number three. It is not like a whale or a cat. It is just going to be lithium.

All in all, Kripke is right in noticing there are going to be some interesting cases where the phenomenological concept must be completely supplanted, it would seem, by a scientific one. The point we are making is that Kripke and others already have scientific terms in abundance: *Whippomorpha, Animalia,* and *Gobiconodonta,* etcetera. And these terms must butt up against the phenomenological terms of Donnellan and Putnam or the long ago baptized terms of Kripke. Hence, there is little conceptual difficulty in imagining and proposing these terms might push down and thoroughly replace various species terms or mass terms. There is no reason why they might not push all the way down to the bottom. It is curious that Donnellan's gestalt words must yield for white powders and silvery metals. I see no reason why Kripke's terms might not yield, too. After all, it is much easier to conceive of what I mean by tartaric acid when I imagine an arrangement of carbons, hydrogens and oxygens, and it is less easy to conceive of what I mean by tartaric acid when its meaning is just that it is whatever substance was first

named `tartaric acid' by a half-English, half-Tatar, explorer named Ilgiz on behalf of our beloved queen.

## The Causal Theory for Names Is Descriptivist

In this section, I shall argue a point which is potentially the most devastating of all to those who would advocate a causal chain theory of names. Its proponents seldom spell out precisely just what extends a causal chain in a causal theory. As to the origin of a chain, it is merely mentioned that there is a baptismal ceremony, but the states of mind of those participating in the ceremony are seldom investigated. Surely, these people have to be in some sort of state of mind, contemplating various things in a quite particular way. Otherwise, we would not call it a baptismal naming ceremony. And when you look closely at the origin of a chain and or at the links in a chain, it jumps out immediately that the baptism succeeds and the links succeed if and only if unique descriptive content that selects the object is acquired by the thinker who is the next (or first) link in the chain. If the speaker has a proper unique description and if she creates a dossier with it for the name in question, then the chain of the name has been extended. If a person attends to the baptism and can thoughtfully describe the object so selected thereby, then the baptism is successful and the chain has been (trivially and initially) extended. As to the converse, I will show that possessing (and highly ranking) a description that does *not* select the object in question does not extend the chain for a name. Also, if you fail to pay attention at the baptism, you are not an initial link to a chain.

Once these parameters for chain extension are evident, I argue that the causal chain, as a separate notion, becomes irrelevant. The interesting linguistic question is to ask of each individual speaker what it is that determines her meaning of a name. In each

and every case, whether the speaker baptized the object or whether the speaker is a later link in a chain, the speaker's meaning is simply determined by her possessing a unique description of the object in her dossier under that name (and ranking it the most highly). Such a determination of the meaning of a name simply *is* the descriptivist position.

It suffices to go through all the cases one by one. Firstly, we may consider the baptismal step. I see no more than a few cases here. Most authors admit the possibility of descriptive names, which is to say that there is an admission that the baptismal step can consist merely of saying that the name is being assigned to the unique object of some descriptive phrase being contemplated, *e.g.* the cause of the perturbation in the orbit of Uranus. It is obvious that an overtly descriptive baptism of this sort is descriptive.

Secondly, there is an ostensive baptism where some context — perhaps a few phrases — succeeds in getting a person to think about some object. There might be a banana in the center of an otherwise empty white table. A person might say aloud, "I shall, henceforth, call this banana, Norma Jean." The baptism succeeds because the person who does the baptism has a thought in mind which could conceivably be written in the form of a description. A dossier is created, and a description is placed into the dossier. The thought of being the only banana I saw at that time whilst I heard the name `Norma Jean' resound in my ears is a perfectly good descriptive thought, and it is the very sort of thought that *would* get put into a dossier of `Norma Jean' at a baptism. The very same logic we apply to the baptizer applies to an audience member at the baptism.

Thirdly, it is important to consider a speaker who is in attendance at the baptism but who does not know what the baptizer is pointing to and who, indeed, gets it wrong.

He thinks the table was baptized! He is wrong about this, and his usage of `Norma Jean' is not in synchrony with others who attended the baptism.

For simplicity, let us assume all who attended the baptism — with the exception of this speaker alone — perish immediately afterwards. In such a case, the referent of `Norma Jean' is really the table, and when our speaker introduces the word `Norma Jean' to others and when he shows them the table (the banana having long gone missing) or he merely describes it as the table he took home and put in his living room, then the referent of `Norma Jean' is *not* the banana. It is the table because the table matches the description the speaker at the baptism has in mind.

Fourthly, we can imagine a speaker who wasn't paying attention at the baptism, and we can imagine for simplicity (and so as not to kill a lot of people) that some machines staged the entire event and that she was supposed to pay attention. There were no other humans, then. However, she didn't pay attention, and now she has no description whatsoever in her mind to back the name 'Norma Jean'. She saw the banana, of course. You can't very well miss a banana. But she saw a great many other things, too, and none of them struck her as particularly salient or interesting. She wasn't paying attention at all, you see. She was distraught because her cat died recently.

What should we say is the referent of `Norma Jean'? I think we should say `Norma Jean' has no referent because the baptismal step failed. Why did the baptismal step fail? It failed because the first speaker had no unique description in mind. She wasn't looking, really, and has no description in mind, at all.

A description in mind results in a baptism. No description in mind results in no baptism. Hmmm.

Turning now to characterize the non-trivial links in the chain of a name's propagation, I think we will see precisely the same sort of issues arise. In general, the link succeeds in extending the use of a name, 'NN', whenever a new speaker obtains a description that is uniquely satisfied by NN, and the link fails when she does not so succeed. Suppose I have a best friend from high school whom I call 'Ken'. Suppose I wish you to use the word 'Ken' as I do, which is to say, to use the word 'Ken' to designate the same object I do. It seems that if I tell you to use the word 'Ken' as a name for my best friend in high school, it would do the trick. Under the assumption that you hear me correctly and you place such a description in your mind as a backing for the name 'Ken', it would seem that we have extended the chain! Surely, the chain has been extended.

Looking at the converse, now, suppose I tell you to use the name `Ken' as I do, and I tell you to have in mind my best friend from high school, and yet somehow an atmospheric disturbance disturbs things, and you hear me tell you that the object is the worst fiend known by Lao Tzu. You are happy to call him Ken, and you do so.

Now things get tricky. Did the chain get extended or not? If the answer is no, then it should be clear why it did not get extended. It did not get extended because you did not acquire a descriptive backing that would select the same object I was designating with the name, `Ken'.

If the answer is yes, however, it is yes only by virtue of parasitic reference. We could say, I suppose, that the name chain *did* get extended, but we would have to appeal to your ranking under your dossier for `Ken' the description *whatever object Peter calls Ken, since it was windy and I am not quite sure what he said.* If this is, indeed, the most

privileged and highest ranked description in the mind of you, as a speaker, then I believe we could say the name `Ken' has moved on and has been extended. There is a unique description, and the chain was extended.

However, if you are quite sure (falsely) that I said Ken was despised by Lao Tzu and you go on later to forget about me (which is obviously possible) and you begin to lecture people about Chinese history and you tell your audience, "Ken was the very worst person Lao Tzu ever knew, and we see a clear reference to him on page forty-two of the *Art of War*," it seems the name `Ken' has not been extended! If you are not the sort of person who cares to talk as other people talk and if you prize no Namenfacts in the names you use (at least, none in this case), then it appears that `Ken' is nothing more than a descriptive name for you at this point, one that refers to the worst fiend known by Lao Tzu.

It is hard for a causal theorist to claim otherwise. It does not do for them to say merely that the name itself got bounced around through history. It needs to refer to the original object, does it not? It needs to have the proper causal antecedents. It needs, as Donnellan would say, not to end in a block. Surely, tracing `Ken' back from the point of view of one of your students of Chinese history, Donnellan would say that `Ken' ends in a block because his teacher heard random syllables on the wind.

So, links are *not* extended when there is no unique description that settles on the original object. Links *are* extended when there is a unique description of the original object. Taking the baptism as a trivial link, we see the same result. For all links in the causal theory, then, the link is extended if and only if a new description of the initial object is created as a backing in the mind of the speaker.

Thus, the causal theorist for names is in quite a bind. The argument is advertised as opposing the description theory for names. However, closer inspection is revealing it not to be the case. The vague talk of the causal theorist about d-chains and blocks turns out to be a characterization of moments of descriptivist success or failure. A failure to appreciate the importance of Namenfacts might have concealed this to those who were entertaining the causal view, naturally, but once these are appreciated, the crucial importance of a new speaker acquiring a new descriptive backing for the original object is clear.

The importance of this observation is that the causal theory is essentially reduced to descriptivism. The casual theory becomes merely an annotation and an observation that descriptions can occur successively and that people can cause other people to have suitable descriptions. It is an interesting observation, I suppose, but it apparently has no linguistic force of its own.

As Searle put it long ago:

From the point of view of the descriptivist theory, what the causal analysis amounts to is the following: *the "causal chain of communication" is simply a characterization of the parasitic cases seen from an external point of view.*<sup>32</sup>

Not merely the pure parasitic cases, of course, because you can teach someone quite a lot about an object when you pass its name along. You can introduce them to your cat and say, "This is our cat, Nana." However, Searle has his finger on the most important point. One *can* shift to an external point of view. But why bother, and what is the point? The interesting linguistic question to ask is to ask, for each speaker, what is the source of her meaning for the name, `NN'? The obvious answer, in each and every case, is that the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Searle 1983, p. 244.

speaker has a description in her dossier under `NN' that selects such-and-such a unique object. The causal discussion melts away as irrelevant once the links in its chains are understood.

## Cumulative Conclusions of the Last Two Chapters

Evans thought of a devastating counterexample to Kripke's causal theory. He suggested the name 'Madagascar' once referred to a point on mainland Africa (Mogadishu, I believe) and Marco Polo was confused and thought these people were talking about a large, nearby island. According to Kripke's approach to names, such confusion simply makes you a fool. You are simply calling fool's gold "gold," but it is not gold, says Kripke. Therefore, according to Kripke, speakers today *are* referring to Mogadishu, and they are not referring to the big island when they say, "Madagascar." But Evans' position is a speaker today *is* referring to the island when he says, "Madagascar," and thus Kripke's account is wrong.

It sounds perfectly correct to me. It sounds as if Kripke is wrong. If you are going to embrace Kripke, remember, you have to admit you never know what you are talking about.

The Stanford Encyclopedia used to relate this example and say it is an apparent counterexample to Kripke's account. Why did they not say that it *is* a counterexample? I don't mean Mogadishu? Do you? And how do you distinguish an apparent counterexample from a real one? It seems to me the Encyclopedia was being overly polite and extremely deferential to Kripke — since his view was and is today the dominant view. It took some courage for them to write, "The most serious problem with the causal theory of reference (as sketched by Kripke) is that it appears to be at odds with

the phenomenon of reference change."<sup>33</sup> The Encyclopedia went on to explain Evans' example of Madagascar. I suppose I should be happy that they called it a serious problem. I am glad they did not say it was trifling.

However, the word "appears" still rankles. Why does Kripke's account merely *appear* to be at odds with reference change? Kripke's account explicitly denies reference change! Kripke's account *is* at odds with reference change. Kripke tells us quite plainly what we should do if we are misled into thinking something has the qualities of the initial item that we, as a society, baptized. Should we get confused and move our words over to the new thing, we would simply be wrong. He writes:

We thus as part of a community of speakers have a certain connection between ourselves and a certain kind of thing. The kind of thing is *thought* to have certain identifying marks. Some of these marks may not really be true of gold. We might discover that we are wrong about them. Further, there might be a substance which as all the identifying marks we commonly attributed to gold and used to identify it in the first place, but which is not the same kind of thing, which is not the same substance. We would say of such a thing that though it has all the appearances we initially used to identify gold, it is not gold. Such a thing is, for example, as we well know, iron pyrites or fool's gold. This is not another kind of gold. It's a completely different thing which to the uninitiated person looks just like the substance which we discovered and called gold.<sup>34</sup>

It merely remains to examine the clash between Mogadishu and the Big Island in such terms.

In Evans' example, we are part of a community of speakers, and we have a causal connection to the initial baptism of Mogadishu under the name of 'Madagascar'. The thing is thought to have certain identifying marks. To Marco Polo, the thing *did* have various identifying marks. It was the thing everyone was talking about. Yet he did not know what it was, really, just as a person who knows he is looking for some yellow shiny

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> S.E.P., <u>http://stanford.library.usyd.edu.au/archives/sum2008/entries/reference/</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 118-9.

stuff does not really know what he is looking for. Such a person finds something yellow and proceeds to investigate it (and he might call it gold); Marco Polo found something that *somebody* was talking about and proceeded to investigate it. He fleshed it out with a description of the big island (and he called it 'Madagascar'). So, what does Kripke say? The iron pyrite is not gold. The Big Island is not Madagascar. It is not Madagascar. It is a completely different thing which to the uninitiated and uninformed might be called 'Madagascar'. But it is not.

Kripke is never ambiguous. The meaning of a term goes back to the baptism and to the object that was baptized. Marco Polo was not at the baptism. Marco Polo was a link in the chain, and the fact that an incorrect description got attached should be completely irrelevant. Descriptions are the enemy, after all. (The central claim of the causal theory is that a description, attached or unattached, is irrelevant.) If Marco Polo attaches the description, "the discoverer of the Incompleteness of Arithmetic" to the name 'Madagascar', then, according to the causal theory, such an addition is irrelevant. According to the causal theory, in this case, Madagascar is not Schmidt. The referent of 'Madagascar' is *not* Schmidt. It is still Mogadishu, since Mogadishu was the object originally baptized at the beginning of the chain.

This is Kripke's position, and he is never unclear about it. In Evans' example, the referent of 'Madagascar' is not the Big Island. It is still Mogadishu, since Mogadishu was the object originally baptized at the beginning of the chain.

The Encyclopedia is treading lightly, and, for its sake, I suppose there is a way to claim diplomatically that things merely appear to be at odds. We could, as a society, disown those people before Marco Polo. I don't know who they were, and I *do* like

Marco Polo. Let us simply cast them out of our community. Let us simply arbitrarily move the baptism up to Marco Polo himself. Let us declare baptisms can happen even when the baptizer himself is under the impression he is following someone else. Let us make an exception for famous people, at least. If someone as famous as Marco Polo is saying New York is New Brunswick or Madagascar is the Big Island, let's all switch over! In this vein, let us declare all the people previous to Marco Polo are not part of *my* community and that however Marco Polo used his words is simply going to be seminal and baptismal. How about that? So, the situation *did* merely appear to be at odds with the phenomenon of reference change. Strictly speaking, if you recast your linguistic community, you wind up seeing that reference has not changed! We had a baptism, that's all. Marco Polo baptized the Big Island as 'Madagascar'. A causal chain issued from his baptism. It was merely an apparent counterexample. Kripke's view is completely intact.

With such a maneuver, we could accommodate the Encyclopedia's reticence to call Evans' example a counterexample to Kripke's approach. Kripke, after all, never gave us a recipe for just whom it is we are claiming to be the baptizer of an object for the English speaking peoples. That portion of his view certainly was rather sketchy. And, in this example, I don't think anyone was speaking English off the coast of Africa. At least, they were not talking to Marco Polo.

Hence, could we not save Kripke's view by letting Marco Polo be the baptizer of the Big Island in this case? And, quite analogously, even if there had been a formal dubbing ceremony with the Queen in attendance and if Boris baptized some substance `gold', which actually was a sample of pure butter (or nearly pure albite), could we not

look further down our chain and notice where some twit named Marvin started to use the word for our precious metal? Even though he was trying to speak as everyone else spoke, couldn't we select *him* to be the baptizer of `gold' on behalf of the English peoples who are talking today? Could we not do this with every word where the initial baptism (whose parameters Kripke would have to specify, anyway, for the causal account to make any sense) no longer lines up with the sort of things we presume we are talking about today? Couldn't we treat the baptizer himself as a parameter to be varied and thusly make `Madagascar' refer to the island and make `gold' refer to a lovely metal with atomic number 79? Couldn't we do this and save Kripke's theory?

We certainly could do this. I would argue it would not save Kripke's theory. The central idea is to look inside our minds and see a concept, such as *a big island off Africa* or *a metal with seventy-nine protons in the nucleus*, and then, upon the assumption other people have used the very same name for these concepts, we follow the chain as far back in time as we can go until some bloke is using the word in a different way. We choose the first person who talks our way — Marco Polo, say — and declare he has baptized our word. We then say the causal theory is intact.

Yet it is *mightily* convenient all baptisms get decommissioned if they do not match one's current conception of gold. One gets the illusion of maintaining a causal theory of a word's meaning by tracing it back to some nascent baptismal event and thence returning to the present by way of causation. However, since an arbitrary number of baptisms are lopped off, decommissioned on the grounds that they do not really count, we find ourselves simply defining gold *conceptually* and then playing a false and irrelevant game of tracing back to the first time the concept was put into play.

At this point, people are straining to preserve Kripke's view of names, and I am not sure why. Obviously, you are nowhere near the causal theory in its pure sense. Since the causal theory does not work in its pure sense, since it is epistemically dark, people have been proposing various accounts they say preserve parts of the causal theory, here and there. They call them hybrid theories. However, people do not seem to understand these modifications do not preserve the causal theory, at all. If, to enact your recipe for meaning, you start with your concepts and you end with your concepts, it does not matter that somewhere in the interior of your algorithm you played a trivial game wherein you wandered to the first person who held your concept and wandered back through time. Time is irrelevant, really. Your algorithm starts with a concept, and it ends with a concept.

Once the Encyclopedia contemplates this point, I should think they would upgrade the status of Evans' example from being a case where Kripke's view *appears* to be at odds with the phenomenon of reference change and go ahead to say it *is truly* at odds with reference change.

For there seems to be quite an unbelievable prejudice against any advocate for the descriptive backing of names, nowadays! It seems you can talk until you are blue in the face, but people in the philosophical community will dismiss you and move on. What was he saying? Something about descriptivism and names. Oh, *that*. That is already decided. The causal theory is the way to go, right? Oh, yes.

Searle did talk until he was blue in the face, and what happened? The Encyclopedia sums him up tersely as follows:

Despite Searle's ingenious defense of the description theory, many have found it ultimately implausible. Although there has been surprisingly little response to Searle's vigorous defense of his particular version of descriptivism, the general sentiment among contemporary philosophers of language seems to be skepticism about *any* version of descriptivism for proper names.<sup>35</sup>

It is a very weird thing to say. The Encyclopedia points out — correctly, if my sampling of the literature is indicative — that there has been surprisingly little argumentative response to Searle's suggestion that parasitic reference has saved descriptivism adequately and entirely from the semantic ravages portrayed in *Naming and Necessity*.

Am I being obtuse to say the proper conclusion we should draw is that a descriptive backing for a name still stands as the obvious and intuitive reason for a name to have such-and-such a referent? If all the non-modal arguments Kripke gave were wrong due to the fact that he was insensitive to the role of Namenfacts, then should we not cast all those arguments aside? Was not Kripke most excited about his modal discovery,<sup>36</sup> and was not it entirely correct?

Far from being obtuse, I think I am being intellectually incisive when I point out that the descriptive backing for a name is *the* backing for a name, given the intellectual dialectic that has come to pass. Kripke left something out. Searle spotted it and put it back. Evans thought descriptions wouldn't hone in on the right object and that descriptions would go awry, but it is not hard to spot what descriptivism needs to do. A description can talk about a cause, surely. The only lesson from the dialectic appears to be that if you ignore certain descriptions and unfairly circumscribe a speaker's descriptive powers, it can look bad for descriptivism. So, you spot what the critic left out, put it back in, and go on as before.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> S.E.P., http://stanford.library.usyd.edu.au/archives/sum2008/entries/reference/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> What does Kripke talk about in his 1980 preface? He goes on for twenty pages about modality and about using a description to fix a reference. Does he defend his bashing of descriptivism? Not a bit.

It is not particularly ingenious.<sup>37</sup> It is simple. So, given the historical argument has transpired as it has, what is the proper intellectual response? It seems obvious the proper intellectual posture is to go forward with the descriptive backing for names, rigidified, until some author cogently, explicitly and logically dismantles the parasitic response. The inclusion of Namenfacts and interaction-with-the-world statements needs to be ruled out for some reason or it needs to be shown, quite clearly, why the inclusion of these descriptive notions does not lead to the intuitive referent. I would hope no author who attempts such a task would venture to claim these descriptions should be ruled out, since the thesis of the descriptive backing for a name is merely that all descriptions a speaker has in mind are coordinated and conjoined to effect reference to a unique object. Such an author would be battling a straw man. Thus, to raise the causal standard again, an author needs to say why these descriptive notions do not succeed in securing reference.

As the Encyclopedia has pointed out, no author appears to have done this. Therefore, I do not believe I am being obtuse when I say that, in terms of the logical ebb and flow of things, we are now at a state where the descriptive backing for names is in ascendance. The attacks have been rebuffed, with clarity and success, and no further ones have been issued. Meanwhile, backers of the causal theory have never followed through on their promises to flesh out the theory and to make it more specific. It is not specific, at all, and one criticism (which I think is valid but which is not pursued in our present discussion) is that the causal theory itself is something of an illusion. Once you attempt to take the initiative and to flesh out its details, it becomes immediately and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> The Encyclopedia calls it ingenious because if they called it simple, they would have to recognize it as true. Flattery becomes a nice rondel dagger.

readily apparent that every important juncture of the causal theory is a moment when a unique description of the object to which the name refers is created and is entertained in the mind of some speaker.

Hence, it should become obvious upon reflection that, if ever one looks at what the causal theory requires *from any given individual's point of view* (where such an individual is a member of the chain of reference), the property that confers reference for that individual speaker is the property that she has a unique description in mind of the referent of the name.

Hence, when one fleshes out the causal theory, one sees the causal theory is something of a chimera. It degenerates into the same position as the descriptive theory. Perhaps such an eventuality is the reason why no author ever spelt out the causal theory in any significant or intelligible detail.

Moreover, people have lost sight of Kripke's causal theory. He was clear about what he said, but people do not follow where it leads and embrace its consequences. The consequence, obvious upon the least reflection, is that the causal theory is epistemically opaque. God knows what any baptizer of any word was actually pointing to, but the rest of us do not. None of us know these things, none of us who aren't God. Such is the causal theory. Yet people do not seem to admit it.

Hence, the causal theory is, when you think about it, quite bizarre. And, as I said, in the logical ebb and flow of things, the descriptivist position about the backing of a name is standing strong, occupying the field, and waiting for a philosopher to tell us why parasitic reference and interaction-with-the-world statements fail to solve the problem. Yet nobody has picked up the glove. Any philosopher today who advocates the causal

theory must, given the logical dialectic, show why Namenfacts fail and why we should take seriously some attempted reformulation of the problems of ignorance and error.

However, the logical state of things does not seem to inform the positions held by the majority of philosophers. The problems of ignorance and error are simply recited again and again as the reason we had to throw descriptivism out the window. Searle, despite his straightforward defense, is simply ignored. He is not answered. He is ignored. In the logical flow of things, there should now be some reasonable and interesting repost to Searle. However, as the Encyclopedia points out, there has been surprisingly little in the way of this sort of argument, which is downright astonishing! Logically speaking, it is a prerequisite to holding and advocating the causal position that a forthright answer to Searle be articulated.

The only conclusion one can draw from all this is that there is a noted divergence between the logical state of things and the popularly held positions of philosophers. The general sentiment among philosophers of language *is* a skepticism for the descriptivist view of names. Descriptivism for names *is* completely ignored and has almost been pushed off the agenda. The Encyclopedia appears to be quite right in pointing out this regrettable fact. Therefore, it seems that one of the most urgent matters in the philosophy of language is to get the political dynamic back in synchrony with the logical dialectic of reason. Searle must not be ignored. His view must be confronted. Kripke's epistemic darkness must be admitted, too, and understood.

The goal of our last two chapters has been to review some pretty grievous weaknesses in the initial semantic attack on descriptivism. Ignorance, error and epistemic arguments have been shown up lacking in the face of Searle's explication of

parasitic reference. Evans' attack had two things wrong with it: 1) a mischaracterization of prioritization and ranking of descriptions in the dossier, and 2) a failure to allow descriptive statements about one's interactions with the world. When these misconceptions are addressed, the position of descriptivism for names emerges once again as utterly cogent and plausible. Logically speaking, unless an opponent to the idea of a descriptivist backing for names can explicitly say what is wrong with Searle and what is wrong with these other points, it would seem descriptivism must be taken seriously. That the popular state of things is otherwise, presumably, is a failure that needs to be changed.

It is hard to find anybody in the literature who has answered Searle, and certainly not recently. A large amount of time and space is always given to the modal argument against descriptivism, to elucidating the contrast between the rigid behavior of names and the characterization of names by Frege and Russell as descriptions that would pick out different people and objects in different possible worlds. Yet I do not know anybody who is arguing against Kripke on this point today, and I would be happy to join forces with those who would oppose such philosophers. Since we all agree Kripke was right and that his insight was one of the most important revolutions in language, let us move on to the next issue.

The issue is whether or not we are rigidifying a description when we produce a name. I believe, in these chapters, I have successfully shown that the most often cited arguments against descriptivism fail to hold water and that Searle has already told us why. Evans' argument fails to hold water, too, for an entirely similar reason, which is a conspicuous ignoring of certain descriptive facts in the dossier of the speaker. At this

point, there is no impediment to viewing a name as a unique description upon which Kaplan's *Dthat* operator has acted. Contrariwise, there are a host of problems with the causal theory that range from epistemic darkness to the general sloppiness of the causal theory — it took quite a suspension of disbelief to posit these formal baptisms in the name of the Queen, after all! — to its eventual and trivial subsumption under the descriptive theory. Until these matter are explicitly, clearly and cogently addressed by its advocates, I think we should operate from now on as if the view that it is essential for a name to have a descriptive backing (in the mind of the speaker) is the dominant and utterly natural view to have.

## CHAPTER 4

### TOWARDS AN A PRIORI DISCUSSION OF LANGUAGE

I think we have arrived at an important result in linguistic philosophy. To arrive at further results, I think it is crucial to add rigor to our discussion. Riddles in linguistic philosophy stem, as far as I can tell, from inattention to detail and from merging and manipulating hazy ideas. In the next chapter, I introduce a new way of speaking about language. It is hoped the terminology is sufficiently general anyone carrying on a conversation in this intellectual neck of the woods will be able to see what *they* are talking about is a narrow type or not so difficult arrangement of the notions I am talking about. My notions, therefore, need to be pure, unadulterated and elegant. They need to be able to serve as a basis — as building blocks — for the notions others might be thinking.

In the previous chapters, I got away with talking about sentences, objects, meanings, descriptions, rigidification and the like without being so very precise. However, as we go deeper into these issues, it is the lack of precision by people who use these words and the inevitable equivocations and confusions that ensue that make our various riddles arise in the first place. Therefore, I am of the opinion there is very little point in discussing these other worries in linguistic philosophy without first creating a very clear template of elegant notions. The discussions of others can be pressed upon the template, and the rigidity of the basis should clarify the discussion, purge equivocation, dissolve confusion, etcetera.

It is a great deal of work to comprehend the compendium of notions I shall codify and label for their easy use in linguistic discussions. I think it is entirely worth the effort, but I should hope to persuade the reader of this perspective in advance. Unfortunately, I do not think there is any way to do so. Either you have the temperament for plodding dryness and the eventual hope of clarity or you do not. For some, the arid trek is not so terrible because these people find the intricacies of the notions themselves beguiling and a sort of curiosity takes possession of their spirit, and it leads them deep into the matter. They tend to forget just why they started, and the novelty of putting new things together in new ways has its own enjoyment. Such a person's intuition tells him or her the whole thing is leading somewhere, but just why or where they cannot say. It happens in mathematics, and some people enjoy putting it all together, and it becomes, as Bertrand Russell said, its own reward.

We have before us now the question of whether it is worth it to formalize and codify our thought about language in a manner pure enough to form a basis for the entire discussion. For some, it will not be worth it. However, I do not see any other way to dissolve the riddles that beset linguistic philosophy. Since it seems to me they dissolve in end, after an assiduous use of this approach, I should like to know how it seems to you. I would like to have a meeting of the minds on the topic, and I do not know how are our minds are going to meet if you do not learn all these terms of art. Perhaps there is some place they could meet, some street corner, but I don't see it.

Therefore, unless there is a terribly easy way to do all this, which at present escapes me, I feel I have to invite you to learn various notions. To make it more fun, to make it more practical, I should like to display a riddle that is solved, basically, within

the first two pages of our definitions. It is Kripke's riddle of Hesperus and Phosphorus, and it is a riddle about how we can possibly be saying a necessary truth without knowing we are.

## Kripke and Goldbach

In the first lecture of *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke discusses the a priori, the a posteriori, the necessary, the certain, and the contingent. He says it is not so simple as some might think. He says there might be sentences that are a priori true and yet are contingent, and there might be sentences that are a posteriori and yet are necessary. Certainly, he says, there are sentences that might be necessary and whose truth (and necessity) are unknown to us. He gives us the example of Goldbach's conjecture.

(1) G = Every even number greater than two is the sum of two primes. Is G true? Is it false? I do not know. Kripke claims, quite correctly, that *if* G is true, it is necessarily true and *if* G is false, it is necessarily false. We might write the first part as:

$$(2) \qquad \mathbf{G} \supset \Box \mathbf{G} \,.$$

The worry, of course, comes in when you try to explain it to another person and when you find yourself saying: it is possible G is true and it is possible G is necessarily false. The diamonds and squares from Kripke's possible world semantics do not work out here, according to  $S_5$ , and it does seem perfectly insane to leave  $S_5$  when you are talking about what is logically possible.

Kripke is well aware of this. Accordingly, he makes a distinction between an epistemic possibility and a metaphysical possibility. The first expresses a limitation on knowledge. I do not know whether Goldbach's conjecture is true or false. I know 12 = 5

+7, but it does not get me as far as I would like it to. Such cloudy views of mathematical reality (since Kripke assumes there is a mathematical reality) are not real metaphysical possibilities. The metaphysical possibilities, as he calls them, are stark, and they go one way or the other. We just don't know which way. He writes:

If the Goldbach conjecture is false, then there is an even number, n, greater than 2, such that for not primes .... This fact about n, if true, is verifiable by direct computation, and thus is necessary if the results of arithmetical computations are necessary. On the other hand, if the conjecture is true, then every even number exceeding 2 is the sum of two primes. Could it then be the case that, although in fact every such even number is the sum of two primes, there might have been such an even number which was not the sum of two primes? What would that mean? Such a number would have to be one of 4, 6, 8, 10, ...; and by hypothesis, since we are assuming Goldbach's conjecture to be true, each of these can be shown, again by direct computation, to be the sum of two primes. Goldbach's conjecture, then, cannot be contingently true or false; whatever truth-value it has belongs to it by necessity.

But what we can say, of course, is that right now, as far as we know, the question can come out either way.<sup>38</sup>

Therefore, when we say G is possible (after having computed things up to 26), we are talking in an epistemic sense, and we should not write our thoughts as  $\diamond$  G. There are sentences, such as G, that contain within them deep contradictions, and higher mathematics can put this contradiction beyond our ken, and we really cannot say whether we have a sentence G that belongs in our list of true sentences about a possible world or that belongs outside of it. When Kripke builds his model to show the completeness of modal logic, he leaves these sentences out. In some sense, they are not the stuff out of which possible worlds are made.

In short, a sentence G that states Goldbach's conjecture, which is possibly true and possibly false, is not the sort of sentence about which we can write:

 $(3) \qquad \diamond G \& \diamond \neg G .$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 36-7.

The possibility we have in mind is a different kind. We are musing epistemically, not logically.

# Hesperus and Phosphorus or Bread Mouse and Cheese Mouse

If we consider the sentence,  $S_0$ , to be `Hesperus is Phosphorus', the situation appears to be quite analogous. Once again, we have:

$$(4) \qquad \mathbf{S}_0 \supset \square \mathbf{S}_0 \,.$$

'Hesperus' was the Greek's name for the evening star, and 'Phosphorus' was the Greek's name for the morning star. If they are the same star, says Kripke, then they are necessarily the same star. Similarly, if they are not the same star, then they are not and quite necessarily so. I entirely agree.

Continuing a theme of an earlier chapter, we can imagine a pair of lost baptisms.<sup>39</sup> You left a morsel of bread on the coffee table last month, and you are rather sure it was stolen by a mouse and consumed. A week ago, you left a bit of cheese on the counter. It disappeared, and once again you believe it was consumed by a mouse. Your daughter names the first mouse, Bread Mouse, and she names the second mouse, Cheese Mouse. Eventually, you discover a colony of mice under your house and within the walls! Considering the sentence,  $S_1$ , to be `Bread Mouse is Cheese Mouse', once again, we have:

 $(5) \qquad S_1 \supset \square \ S_1 \, .$ 

If it is true, it is necessarily true. If it is false, it is necessarily false. Which is it? You do not know.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Our discussion shifts to Bread Mouse and Cheese Mouse because the naming of a planet is a canonical case of a baptism that is *not* lost.

A disanalogy intrudes. On the one hand, we had a host of even numbers. On the other hand, we have a host of mice. They appear to be quite different. I cannot go through all the even numbers in my mind, and it might be the case there is no proof to be had in support of the conjecture. So, it is not unreasonable to suggest our sentence about the relationships between odd numbers and even numbers should contain within it a deep contradiction about the way numbers behave. However, there does not seem to be a corresponding contradiction to be had in the way mice behave. It would seem I could be someday confronted with photographic evidence, a movie perhaps, that reveals which mouse in my house ate which food on which day. It seems it is not a possibility that is terribly hard to imagine. Hence, it does not seem to be an epistemic possibility, merely, that Bread Mouse is Cheese Mouse. It appears to be a real possibility that a certain mouse ran into my living room, ate some bread and that, later, she ran into my kitchen and ate some cheese.

I am not making hopeful assertions about unspecified prime numbers. It seems that if various mice did various things, which don't involve contradictions, then Bread Mouse is Cheese Mouse. There does not seem to be an epistemic veneer over the mysteries of the mathematical world. It seems to be about a few mice and what they had for supper.

If it *is* a perfectly good possibility, which we can express by saying  $S_1$  is true, then we can say  $\Diamond S_1$ . Meanwhile, the other behaviors of mice would be a perfectly good possibility, too, that we could express by  $\Diamond - S_1$ . We can say:

 $(6) \qquad \diamond S_1 \& \diamond \neg S_1,$ 

and, of course, we also have  $S_1 \supset \Box S_1$ ,  $\neg S_1 \supset \Box \neg S_1$ , and  $S_1 \lor \neg S_1$ . So, something

has to give! We have a contradiction. It is not clear what has to give. And so we have a riddle. It was perfectly clear that the mathematical world has epistemic issues which prevent us from carving out a possible world with our oh, too powerful words about numbers. However, it does not seem our words about mice should have such comprehensive destructive powers. Admittedly, it might be impossible to trisect an angle with an ideal ruler and compass, but it does not seem to be impossible for a mouse to eat some bread and to later eat some cheese.

#### <u>`Stick S is one meter long at t<sub>0</sub>' and a Bit More</u>

Kripke tells us if we define the meter to be the length of a certain stick, S, at a certain time  $t_0$ , we know *automatically* that S is one meter long.<sup>40</sup> He coins a new word to describe the knowledge. He does not call it *analytic* because he would like analytic knowledge to be both a priori and necessary. The knowledge does not require further investigation. However, Kripke notices it is a contingent sentence to say `S is one meter long.' On a cold day, S is shorter. On a hot day, S is longer. We could imagine a counterfactual day where, at  $t_0$ , the day in question is in colder and S is shorter than S actually was at  $t_0$  in the real world. Therefore, if we take sentence  $S_2$  to be `Stick S is one meter long at  $t_0$ ', then  $S_2$  is something we know automatically. As we said at the beginning, Kripke has found sentences that are true a priori and are contingent, and he has also found sentences that are necessary (or necessarily false) but whose truth (or falsity) is an a posteriori matter. We have sentences  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , and it appears something has to give. It appears we do not have epistemic possibilities of the properly mysterious sort. Therefore, it seems our sentences get us to a contradiction.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

Such is the riddle. The solution is found in our technical section within the exercises. The solution will be that it is improper to call  $S_1$  or  $S_2$  a sentence. These are *not* sentences, pure sentences about possible worlds. Rather, they are collections of sentences, instead, and one sentence over here is one thing, and another sentence over there is another — and we talk about them all loosely using the words in  $S_1$  or using the words in  $S_2$ . Unfortunately and ultimately,  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  are not sentences. The real sentences, meanwhile, are made out of the viscera of mice and out of molecules of metal. However, since I am sure you are terribly troubled by this already, since I am introducing a new way of speaking and since you are happier with your hazy ideas, long familiar, I should probably stop now. It follows, however, that  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  are *not* the sort of things to which the  $\Diamond$  operator applies, and so we can happily avoid the contradiction.

What we are left with is far more interesting. We are left with two notions of meaning, the first I call the meaning of a sentence and the second I call the sentential meaning of a sentential overlay. The first one is necessary in the case of Hesperus and Phosphorus and is contingent in the case of the stick that is a meter long. The second is sententially contingent in the case of Hesperus and Phosphorus and is sententially necessary in the case of the stick. I, too, like Kripke, had to coin a few new words, but the gist, geist and spirit of it is that when you have a sententially necessary sentential overlay such as S<sub>2</sub>, you know it is true automatically. Similarly, when you have a sententially contingent set of words about Bread Mouse and Cheese Mouse, you might be at a loss.

You are at a loss about real possibilities in the world, not about the status of all even numbers as the sum of two primes. However, it will become clear why you may not put a  $\Diamond$  in front of these possibilities even though they are real states about the real world.

It follows quite naturally, really, from the assumption that a name is the Dthat rigidification of a description you had in mind. The resources to make such a statement precise, however, are not to be found in a mere two pages. We will need to say what a word is and what a description is. A description takes us to an object, and the strangest thing of all, linguistically, is to say what an object is! Trivially, a linguistic object is the sort of thing that makes a certain kind of sentence true. That very kind of sentence, a hook sentence, meanwhile, is the sort that needs these linguistic objects in order to be evaluated as true in a possible world.

It all makes sense when you make some choices about what gets to be an object and what does not and when you make the object small enough compared to the size of the rest of the universe to be interesting.

The rubber hits the road when you start with an intuitive set of objects. Since my burden is to be general and pure, these can be just about anything at all, really, across time and across possible worlds. If you would like to say a ball is the same from one moment to the next, I am sure I will be able to accommodate you, linguistically. If you would like to be able to say you have the same ball with a dent in it or under any counterfactual situation, I can likewise accommodate you, linguistically.

The exciting thing, if you get excited about this sort of thing, is that when objects are constructed rather than assumed in a brute way (which appears to have happened in older treatments of language), you gain an amazing power to talk about whatever sorts of

shapes you have in mind in such a way that you truly have these shapes in mind. After all, we do so often like to talk about objects that have one shape or another!

It is a great advantage over the old way, and, once you have constructed the notion of a linguistic object and fleshed it out in terms of possible worlds, you can have it be the meaning of your sentence (as the direct reference people wished so fervently) without ever leaving the schema of possible worlds for a moment. You can have it be the meaning of your sentence without ever forgetting how you got there, via a description, in the first place. The description stays with you as the sentential meaning, which we just discussed, and the subject matter we cover in the first two pages of the technical section comes to the fore once again. You don't have to say Benjamin Franklin is part of your proposition. The set is an input which, when composed with other inputs, produces your proposition. The proposition is a set of possible worlds, and the set of possible worlds where Franklin is found was considered en route to the consideration of this proposition. It becomes rather elegant.

I hope I have persuaded you, dear reader, to read a little further, since I would really like to talk about this with somebody someday. The trick, as far as I can tell, is to identify objects with the set of possible worlds wherein they reside so that possible worlds semantics becomes a map where simply everything maps to possible worlds. The other trick is to identify the sentence itself with a set of possible worlds so that our semantic regimen now becomes a map *from* sets of possible worlds into sets of possible worlds. It is turtles all the way down. Once the symmetry is achieved, all the skeletal structure of first order logic dissolves. We merely consider a partial function from the

power set of possible worlds into itself. There are no objects. There are only linguistic objects to help people who like to talk about that sort of thing.

There *are* objects in the world, naturally. There are quarks, I believe. But the last time anybody wanted to have a serious talk with me about a quark or about an electron was so long ago, I have forgotten what she said. It doesn't matter, anyhow. A single quark *can* be a linguistic object. A thing that truly possesses identity across possible worlds can also be given a linguistic identity across possible worlds. I wouldn't have left such building blocks out.

I am getting ahead of myself. I wish to postpone the substance for later. The purpose of the current chapter is to inspire the reader to tackle the technical chapter. Once you master the technical chapter, I cannot imagine you would stop. From then on, it is like skiing down a mountain. I am trying to put an end to hazy ideas and to hazy discussions about language. I am trying to solve riddles and put various confusions to rest. I know some readers will find the technical section dreadfully exciting, and the symbolism of higher mathematics, quite ordinarily applied to a space of possible worlds, will simply leap off the page! However, I thought some readers would like a bit of encouragement. For them, just now, I have included a sample of the perplexing linguistic puzzles we can solve and solve quite easily once we develop the machinery.

A good deal more can be done, as you will see. But first we need a lot of machinery.

# CHAPTER 5

## OUR TERMS OF ART

### Language

Write the set of all possible worlds as  $\mathbb{W}$ . The *power set* of *A* is the set of all possible subsets of *A* and is written  $\mathcal{P}(A)$ .

A *language* is a partial function from the power set of  $\Psi$  to itself. Hence, it is a map from one subset of possible worlds to another subset of possible worlds. It is a map from one way the world can be to another.

$$L: \mathscr{D}(\mathbb{W}) \to \mathscr{D}(\mathbb{W})$$
$$A \longmapsto B$$

A language *L* consists of ordered pairs,  $\langle A, B \rangle \in \mathcal{D}(\mathbb{W}) \times \mathcal{D}(\mathbb{W})$ , to be called *sentence pairs*. The first element is the *sentence*, and the second element is the *meaning* of the sentence. The meaning of *A* is the image of *A* under the language map *L* and is written L(A). Above, B = L(A). The actual world is written as  $w_{\alpha} \in \mathbb{W}$ . A sentence *A* is *true* when  $w_{\alpha} \in L(A)$  and *false* otherwise.

A sentence A is *present* if  $w_{\alpha} \in A$ . A sentence A is *necessary* if  $L(A) = \bigcup$ . A sentence A is *necessarily false* or *contradictory* if  $L(A) = \emptyset$ . A sentence is *contingent* if it is neither necessary nor necessarily false. A sentence A is *factically true* if  $A \subset L(A)$ . A sentence A is *factically false* if  $A \subset L(A)^c$ . A sentence is *factical* if it is either factically true or factically false.

A sentential overlay  $< \mathcal{V}, \mathfrak{S} >$  in a language *L* is an ordered pair consisting of a

set  $\mathcal{V} \subset \mathfrak{W}$  and a subset  $\mathfrak{S}$  of the rule of assignment of *L* whose ordered pairs,  $\langle c_i, B_i \rangle \in$ 

 $\mathfrak{S}$ , are such that the  $c_i$ 's form a partition of  $\mathcal{V}$ . The set  $\mathcal{V}$  is known as the *overlay set*. The set  $\mathfrak{S}$  is the *overlay rule*. Each  $c_i$  is a *context* of the overlay. Each  $c_i$  is a sentence, of course, and each  $B_i$  is its meaning in the language *L*.

A sentential overlay  $\langle \mathcal{V}, \mathfrak{S} \rangle$  is *trivial* if  $\mathfrak{S}$  contains only one sentence. The trivial sentential overlay of a sentence A in a language L is the unique trivial sentential overlay containing only that sentence A. A sentential overlay  $\langle \mathcal{V}, \mathfrak{S} \rangle$  is *semi-trivial* if the meanings of all the sentences in  $\mathfrak{S}$  are the same.

A partial sentential overlay,  $\mathcal{O} = \langle \mathcal{V}, \mathfrak{S} \rangle$ , in a language *L* is an ordered pair consisting of  $\mathcal{V} \subset \mathfrak{W}$  and  $\mathfrak{S} = \{\langle D, null \rangle, \langle c_1, B_1 \rangle \langle c_2, B_2 \rangle, \dots, \langle c_n, B_n \rangle\}$  such that  $\{D, c_1, c_2, \dots, c_n\}$  is a partition of  $\mathcal{V}$ , such that each  $c_i$  is a sentence in *L*, and such that *D* is not a sentence of *L*.

An *indexical* is a sentential overlay that is not semi-trivial. Given an indexical  $\langle I, \mathfrak{S} \rangle$ , the *character* of the indexical is a function with domain *I*, range  $\mathscr{P}(\mathfrak{W})$ , and rule of assignment  $\mathfrak{S}$ .

We might speak of an indexical  $\langle I, \mathfrak{S} \rangle$  as follows. The character of *I* assigns to *w*, when *w* is considered as a context of its utterance, the proposition *B*. By this, we simply mean that  $\langle w, B \rangle \in \mathfrak{S}$ .

A sentential overlay  $\langle \mathcal{V}, \mathfrak{S} \rangle$  is *evident* if the fact that the actual world belongs to  $\mathcal{V}$  is obviously true with respect to some level of certainty, possibly the most strict. In this case, we may speak of a sentential overlay as being *evidently present*.

The *sentential meaning* of an overlay  $\langle \mathcal{V}, \mathfrak{S} \rangle$  where  $\mathfrak{S} = \{\langle A_i, B_i \rangle\}$  is  $\bigcup \{A_i \cap B_i\}$ . Write the sentential meaning of  $\mathcal{V}$  as  $\mathfrak{L}(\mathcal{V})$ .

An overlay  $\mathcal{V}$  is sententially necessary if  $\mathfrak{L}(\mathcal{V}) = \mathcal{V}$ . An overlay  $\mathcal{V}$  is sententially contradictory if  $\mathfrak{L}(\mathcal{V}) = \emptyset$ . An overlay V is sententially contingent if L(V) ≠ Ø and L(V) ≠ V.
A sentential overlay is necessarily-true if it is evident and sententially necessary.
A sentential overlay is necessarily-false if it is evident and sententially contradictory.
A sentential overlay is up for grabs if it is evident and sententially contingent.
A sentence is necessarily-true if its trivial sentential overlay is necessarily-true.
A sentence is necessarily-false if its trivial sentential overlay is necessarily-true.
A sentence is necessarily-false if its trivial sentential overlay is necessarily-false.
A sentence is up for grabs if its trivial sentential overlay is up for grabs

#### <u>That's It!</u>

In our scheme, we are simply mapping sets of possible worlds to sets of possible worlds. There are sets of possible worlds where a sentence is present. There are sets of possible worlds where the sentence is true. And different languages make different assignments.

At this point, we have two notions of necessity and two notions of meaning.

Kripke's notion of necessity applies to sentences, and it means the sentence is true in all possible worlds. The other notion of necessity is the stipulation that the sentence simply must be true as it stands. It is not a claim about counterfactual behavior. It simply says that a sentence, which is before me, must be true.

If the reader would like to get acquainted with the rigor of the new scheme and acquire some facility with it, she may explore the theorems and exercises. But, after that, we are going to discuss specific languages and work our way steadily closer to English. The first step along this route is to consider a language with an infinite number of sentences which you can nonetheless learn because you learn a finite number of pieces and some rules for their combinations. These pieces that affect the meaning of a sentence will be called: *words*.

## Theorems and Exercises

## Theorems:

- 1) The sentential meaning of  $\mathcal{V}$  is the set of possible worlds such that a context of  $\mathcal{V}$  is both present and true.
- 2) If a sentence is up for grabs, it is evident and contingent. The converse does not hold.
- 3) An overlay  $< \mathcal{V}, \mathfrak{S} >$  with  $\mathfrak{S} = < A_i, B_i >$  is sententially necessary if and only if each sentence  $A_i$  is factically true.
- 4) An overlay  $\langle \mathcal{V}, \mathfrak{S} \rangle$  with  $\mathfrak{S} = \langle A_i, B_i \rangle$  is sententially contradictory if and only if each sentence  $A_i$  is factically false.

Proofs:

- Let < V, S > be an overlay with S = < A<sub>i</sub>, B<sub>i</sub> >. Suppose w belongs to a context set A<sub>i</sub> of V and that w is true at A<sub>i</sub>. Then, w ∈ A<sub>i</sub> and w ∈ B<sub>i</sub>. Hence, w ∈ A<sub>i</sub> ∩ B<sub>i</sub>. Thus, w ∈ U{A<sub>i</sub> ∩ B<sub>i</sub>}, as desired. For the converse, suppose w ∈ U{A<sub>i</sub> ∩ B<sub>i</sub>}. Then there is some context A<sub>i</sub> of V such that w ∈ A<sub>i</sub> ∩ B<sub>i</sub>. It follows that w ∈ A<sub>i</sub> and w ∈ B<sub>i</sub>, and since to say w belongs to B<sub>i</sub> is to say that the contextual sentence A<sub>i</sub> is true at w, the result follows.
- 2) If a trivial sentential overlay < V, S > with S = { < A, B >} is evident, then A is evident since it equals V, and neither L(V) = Ø nor L(V) = V. If A is contradictory, then L(V) = A ∩ B = V ∩ Ø = Ø. If A is necessary, then L(A) = ₩, and L(V) = A ∩ B = V ∩ ₩ = V. Hence, A is neither contradictory nor necessary. Hence, A is contingent. The result follows, and the converse does not hold since an evident, contingent factical truth is a counterexample.
- 3) Let < V, S > be an overlay with S = < A<sub>i</sub>, B<sub>i</sub> >. Suppose each sentence A<sub>i</sub> is factically true. Then, A<sub>i</sub> ⊂ B<sub>i</sub> and A<sub>i</sub> ∩ B<sub>i</sub> = A<sub>i</sub>. Since UA<sub>i</sub> = V, we see that Ω(V) = V, as desired. Suppose there is a sentence A<sub>j</sub> such that A<sub>j</sub> ⊄ B<sub>j</sub>. Then, there is a w ∈ ₩ such that w ∈ A<sub>j</sub> and w ∉ B<sub>j</sub>. Clearly, w ∉ A<sub>j</sub>∩B<sub>j</sub>. Since the context sets are mutually disjoint, we see that w ∉ A<sub>i</sub> for all i ≠ j. Hence, for all i, w does not belong to A<sub>i</sub> ∩ B<sub>i</sub>. Thus, w ∉ U{A<sub>i</sub> ∩ B<sub>i</sub>}, and accordingly w ∉ Ω(V). But since each context set is a subset of V, we have w ∈ V, and thus it must be the case that Ω(V) ≠ V. The overlay is not sententially necessary, as desired.
- 4) Let < V, S > be an overlay with S = < A<sub>i</sub>, B<sub>i</sub> >. Suppose each sentence A<sub>i</sub> is factically false. Then, A<sub>i</sub> ⊂ B<sub>i</sub><sup>c</sup> and A<sub>i</sub> ∩ B<sub>i</sub> = Ø. Hence L(V) = Ø, as desired. Suppose there is a sentence A<sub>j</sub> such that A<sub>j</sub> ⊄ B<sub>j</sub><sup>c</sup>. Then, there is a w ∈ ₩ such that w ∈ A<sub>j</sub> and w ∈ B<sub>j</sub>. For some i, w ∈ A<sub>j</sub> is non-empty. Hence, L(V) = U{A<sub>i</sub> ∩ B<sub>i</sub>} ≠ Ø. The overlay is not sententially contradictory, as desired.

Exercises:

1) Create two different languages where no sentence is necessary and where every sentence that is present is true. Construct one of the languages so that a sentence is present in every possible world.

- 2) Create two different languages where no sentence is contradictory and where very sentence that is present is false. Construct one of the languages so that a sentence is present in every possible world.
- 3) Create a sentential overlay consisting of at least five sentences such that every sentence is either necessary or contradictory and the overlay is sententially contingent.
- 4) Create a sentential overlay consisting of at least five sentences such that every sentence is contingent and the overlay is necessarily-true.
- 5) (Optional) Consider a language with twenty-five sentences. The first five are:



Two of the next five are:  $\bullet \rightarrow \land$  $\bullet \rightarrow \land$ 

Continue the pattern, and create the rest of our twenty-five sentences. Look at the sentences closely. There is a close analogy between the relationship between sentence one and sentence six and the relationship between **Snow is falling** and **`Snow is falling' is true.** Continuing the analogy, to what English sentence would sentence eleven correspond? If we doubled the number of sentences in the language with such entries as  $\textcircled{\bullet} \rightarrow \blacksquare$  and  $\textcircled{\bullet} \rightarrow \blacksquare$ , why are these sentences short while their corresponding English sentences get longer at a much faster rate? Why is  $\textcircled{\bullet}$  a special sentence? Interpret the empty space around  $\textcircled{\bullet}$  as permitting any colors nearby.

### Words

The first entry, A, of a sentence pair is called the sentence. The first entry, A, in a word *n*-tuple is called the word. Each is a set of possible worlds. The set, A, is the set of possible worlds where the sentence is present. The set, A, is the set of possible worlds where the word is present. For the word to be a word in the sentence, it must be that
$A \subset \mathcal{A}$  The intersection of all the words,  $\mathcal{A}_i$ , in the sentence gives us the sentence, A. Anything that affects the meaning of a sentence is a word. The sentence itself is a word.

One learns words as one would learn a language itself. They are inputs to a recursive algorithm, and a meaning is the output.

A word *n*-tuple of *L* is an *n*-tuple  $\mathcal{W} = \langle \mathcal{A}, ... \rangle$  with  $\mathcal{A} \subset \mathfrak{W}$  such that there is some sentence *A* for which  $A \subset \mathcal{A}$ . There are no particular restrictions on the rest of the components. They are there merely to hold any extra information that the recursive algorithm might require. The set  $\mathcal{A}$  is a *word*. The rest of the *n*-tuple is the *syntax* of  $\mathcal{A}$ .

Often a word tuple will be of the form,  $\mathcal{W} = \langle \mathcal{A}, B, ... \rangle$  where  $B \subset \mathbb{W}$  and where the set *B* is transformed by the recursive algorithm into the eventual meaning. A set in the syntax with this characteristic will be called the *active meaning* of the word  $\mathcal{A}$ .

A word decomposition of a sentence A is a set of word tuples,  $W_i = \langle A_i, ... \rangle$ , such that  $A = \bigcap A_i$  and the syntax of these words sparks the algorithm to produce the meaning of A.

### Localized Intersection

Here is a very English-like thing to do. Imagine two words, one that states a certain quality is present in the universe and the other that states another quality is present in the universe. Now, you might take their conjunction and state that both qualities are present in the universe. However, this is not what English does most of the time. It does it from time to time, naturally. It is what `and' is for. `And' gives us the intersection of two meaning sets. However, a great deal of the apparatus of English is designed for a peculiar type of intersection.

The best way to think about it is to simply consider a proper part of the universe, imagine it being all that there is, and carry out an intersection of two subsets of possible worlds. One might think of a physical volume and consider everything inside it. One might imagine sentences that only restrict the possible ways this less-than-entire-universe thing can be. They do not restrict the rest of the universe. They only act locally. So, if you use two of these sentences (or words) and somehow signal that they are to be applied to the *same* less-than-entire-universe thing, you get an interesting way of talking. You get an English-like way of talking. It is intersection — if that thing were the entire universe, which it is not. It is intersection taking place locally. We will call it *localized intersection*.

#### Linguistic Objects

Once you decide you want to have localized intersection, you need some place to do it. You need some rules — and it really doesn't matter what they are — according to which a word is going to carry extra information about what sort of less-than-entire-universe portions the listener should consider.

So, English has a fabulously rich set of physical volumes that spring to mind, and you are just supposed to know what they are. When a person talks about a 'zebra' or an 'ant colony', I, as an English speaker, call up the less-than-entire-universe portion the speaker has in mind. I restrict this portion of the universe with 'less mass than 600 kg' and also with 'contains carbon' when I combine these words. I don't take the intersection of the concepts. I do it locally.

Once you have these volumes associated with linguistic objects in your sentences, you do not need to constrain yourself to localized intersection. You can construct words

that represent any relation between the various volumes, too. So, words like `on top of' start to make sense. But it seems the first and primary motivation for linguistic objects in the English language was to combine intrinsic qualities within the same object — to do localized intersection — and to talk efficiently about cubes of ice.

Linguistic objects are a heuristic for learning a language. It doesn't matter what they are. Different linguistic objects will result in different languages. You might need to learn them all in order to learn a certain languages.

#### Phase Space and Localized Phase Space

Another aspect of English stems from the success of our science. Our science has no history. You get to the next step if you know where everything is now. (Quantum fluctuations do not appeal to history.) So, it becomes really important to be able to talk about sets of possible worlds that are lumped together into an equivalence class based on how the world is right now. All these worlds are taken together and considered as a single point. This point is a point in *phase space*. Points in phase space differ only insofar as there is something present in the world that is different. The dimensions of the phase space depend on the scientific reality you are considering. For one classical particle, there is just momentum and position. But each new particle augments the dimension of the space. And the more dimensions you have for physical space, the more dimensions you get for phase space. E. g., two classical particles in three-dimensional physical space have a six-dimensional phase space.

It is important to understand the concept of phase space because it allows us to talk rigorously about arrangements. And arrangements are what the English language likes to talk about all the time.

Once again, English has a focus on the local. It has localized intersection, so it is no surprise it would have local arrangements, which one can locally intersect. So, once you constrain yourself to a physical sub-volume of the universe via a linguistic object or what-have-you, you can think about that volume as if it were all there is. You can apply the notion of phase space to that volume. *Localized phase space* is phase space constrained to a particular physical volume of the universe. For instance, when I talk about ice being present, I mean that a certain physical volume of the universe is currently in one of many ways. A particular way everything in that physical volume might be is a point in localized phase space. Thus, when I say a physical volume consists of ice, I am saying we are somewhere now inside a volume of localized phase space. There are, after all, many particular ways that the stuff in the physical volume can be and still be ice. A huge number of words in English constrain localized phase space to one volume or another. Once a linguistic object is proposed, we are supposed to perform localized intersection. We take the intersection of two volumes of localized phase space.

## Objects and Dings

At any given moment in time, localized intersection takes place in a small part of the universe. A linguistic object must contain a rule for telling us just where that is, after a fashion. If I ask you to consider a 'zebra' or a 'plamzicon', you do not need to know *where* it is. You just need to know when I tell you it is 'hot' that the fast moving molecules are found within a zebra-shape or a plamzicon-shape. And you are supposed to know, off hand, what these shapes are.

Oddly, you are also supposed to come to the party, too, with a set of constraints that rigorously produce a meaning set when English asserts of a linguistic object that it

was cold at one time and is hot now. So, two things are packed into linguistic objects in English. If you run two arrangements simultaneously through the construction, you are supposed to have some sort of idea of the sub-volume of the physical world wherein localized intersection is to take place, and, if you mention arrangements at different places and different times, you are supposed to be able to tie them together. Now, these arrangements can be on different pieces of matter, too. But, if you speak English, you are supposed to have all this down. When someone says the tsunami started off of Japan and later hit Hawaii, you are supposed to know what they mean. You are supposed to draw, quite naturally, from your common anthropomorphic intelligence and cobble together the same linguistic object.

Now, it is pointless for me to explicate any particular linguistic object that is utilized in the English language. I simply want to point out a general feature of a broad type of English-like languages. They have linguistic things that narrow discourse about arrangements to a small volume, and each comes with a pre-fabricated notion of what it means to be the same linguistic thing across time so that you may talk about such things on the cheap.

No one seems to care about the underlying ontology. No one knows much about dynamic equilibrium, anyway. So, there is little point in restricting it. Anyway, we are talking about a general set of languages. If you restrict the linguistic objects further, you simply restrict the set of languages we are talking about. (But if you restrict the underlying ontology, you are probably going to leave English in a hurry.)

So, we really need to a talk about linguistic objects at a level where you may call any arrangement of any stuff whatsoever across time the very same linguistic object. It is

easy. You just do it. You just take a set of possible worlds,  $\mathcal{D}$ . Then, at each  $w \in \mathcal{D}$  and each time therein, you specify a physical volume to consider.

The result is a construct we are going to call a *ding*. It is perhaps best to think of it as an ordered pair,  $\mathfrak{D} = \langle \mathcal{D}, B \rangle$ , The *ding set*,  $\mathcal{D}$ , is the set of possible worlds where the linguistic object is present, and *B* is some rule of assignment from each possible world in  $\mathcal{D}$  and each moment in time<sup>41</sup> to the linguistic physical volume that we are supposed to consider. (I am not saying that this construction exhausts all the linguistic objects in English. But it is going to work for a lot of them: *horses, puddles,* and such-like.)

Now, you might talk about the ding set,  $\mathcal{D}$ , as being the set of possible worlds where our object is present. Of course, it is. But if you talk about it this way, you are liable to get the construction somewhat backwards. We just took any old set of possible worlds. We just took any old volume here and there throughout time. We tie a bow around them, and they become the same linguistic object.

Of course, the easier you make the rules by which you do this, the easier it is to learn all the linguistic objects that your language allows, and the more quickly you can digest all the background knowledge you need in order to get to the meaning of your sentences.

Dings are linguistic entities that provide heuristics for some language *L*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> I hope this sounds a lot like Montague semantics at this point.

#### Hook Words

For some reason, Germanic nomenclature helps me think better. I will call localized intersection: *hooked intersection*. And I will call the words that accomplish the task: *hook words*. When you combined two hook words, you hook them together.

Suppose you have a background list of linguistic objects for a particular hook word, which is to say that if you were to think through the vicissitudes of each and every possible world and consider the various times therein, you could spot the "objects" for the hook word. For instance, for the hook word, *cube*, you could spot all the cubes. You can also consider another hook word, and you can notice in each possible world (and time) that you have before you in your imagination all the various "objects" for the second hook word. For instance, for *ice*, you spot all the objects that are made of ice. When you hook the two words together, you get a new set of possible worlds and a new list of corresponding objects and times t in each world. It is not just the intersection of the two sets of possible worlds! It is not just  $D_1 \cap D_2$ , say. Instead, for each world in both such sets, you have to run through each object at each time and notice that you have the same linguistic object (at the same time) in each hook word. If this is indeed the case (for some  $w \in D_1 \cap D_2$ ), you create a new set  $D_3$  by tossing w into it. You augment  $D_3$ , too, with a rule of assignment that sends each moment in each possible world in  $D_3$  to a list of linguistic objects. To do this is quite simple. You use the two rules of assignment that are packed into each of the two previous hook words. Your new rule contains a map from each  $w \in D_1 \cap D_2$  and each t in w to those linguistic objects that are found in *both* your previous hook words.

So, the result of hooking together two hook words is itself a hook word.

For a given hook word  $\mathcal{H}^*$  that expresses a certain quality, we may write the set of all dings with that quality in world w at time t as  $\mathbb{D}_{\mathcal{H} w,t}$ . A *hook word*, then, is a word,  $\mathcal{H}^* = \langle \mathcal{H}, B_{\mathcal{H}}, \mathcal{R}_{B_{\mathcal{H}} \times T}, ... \rangle$ , where  $B_{\mathcal{H}} \subset \forall \forall$  is a set of possible worlds (where the quality is present) and  $\mathcal{R}_{B_{\mathcal{H}} \times T}$  is a rule of assignment from each  $\langle w \times t \rangle$ , where  $w \in B_{\mathcal{H}}$  and t is a time in w, to  $\mathbb{D}_{\mathcal{H} w,t}$ .

We write hooked intersection as  $\mathcal{H}^* = \mathcal{H}_1^* \cap \mathcal{H}_2^*$ . But, equivalently, we may write it in terms of the sets of possible words where the hook word's quality is present. We may write hooked intersection as  $B_{\mathcal{H}} = B_{\mathcal{H}_1} \cap B_{\mathcal{H}_2}$ . When we write it this way, we are narrowing our sets of possible worlds. If the qualities are cubes and ice, say, the transformation  $\cap$  is taking us from the possible worlds where ice is present and the possible worlds where cubes are present to the possible worlds where ice-ness and cubeness are present in the very same object. This is not  $B_{\mathcal{H}_1} \cap B_{\mathcal{H}_2}$ , which is merely the possible worlds where some ice and some cubes are present.<sup>42</sup>

The hooked intersection runs through a linguistic object that is common to the two of them. Both the hook words might be intrinsic. But, since we now have extrinsic relations, such as `in a steel box', the hook words might be extrinsic, too. When I say  $\mathcal{H}^* = \mathcal{H}_1^* \cap \mathcal{H}_2^*$ , I am saying there is a ding  $\mathfrak{D}$  common to  $\mathcal{H}^*, \mathcal{H}_1^*$ , and  $\mathcal{H}_2^*$ . Hence, although you might not initially think of the ding as a hook word, one might naturally do so. It has only the potential to cough up one ding, though. So, there can only be one circumstance where  $\mathcal{H}^* \cap D_i$  is true, namely when the object  $D_i$  is true of the description inherent in the hook word,  $\mathcal{H}^*$ . It is quite useful to notice that  $B_{\mathcal{H}} \cap D_i$  is a short-hand way for saying that a description is satisfied by a particular object in the world.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> When both  $\cap$  and  $\square$  are used in an expression, assume  $\square$  binds more tightly than  $\cap$ .

### Definite Descriptions

A hook word, even if we restrict it to a particular time, can summon many dings. There can be many linguistic objects in  $\mathbb{D}_{\mathcal{H} w,t}$ , and you can see them quite clearly when you imagine all the details of some possible world w in your mind's eye. But you can notice, too, that there are some worlds and times,  $\langle w \times t \rangle$ , where there is only one linguistic object that satisfies the hook word. A definite description is a version of a hook word that assumes there is only one referent.

What your language does if this assumption does not hold depends upon the language. What you *do* with any empty definite description is up to you. But, assuming no breakage due to empty or multiple concerns, the definite description is a hook word that asserts there is only one linguistic object that satisfies the descriptive constraints built into the hook word.

The *referent* of a definite description at w or at  $\langle w \times t \rangle$ , is the ding that it summons for localized intersection at this world or at this world and time. We write the referent of a hook word as  $\upharpoonright_1 B_{\mathcal{H}}$ . A linguistic object is a referent. Hence, when we say  $D_i = \upharpoonright_1 B_{\mathcal{H}}$ , we are saying  $D_i$  is the referent of the hook word,  $\mathcal{H}$ .

### **<u>Rigidified Definite Descriptions</u>**

The active meaning of a definite description  $\mathcal{J}^*$  is  $B_{\mathcal{J}}$ . It is the set of possible worlds where the quality is present and is selecting only one referent. A typical sentence with a definite description would use that set of possible worlds and transform it in some way. It might perform hooked intersection on this set with some other quality. It might say the object is cold. The meaning set, in such a case would be,  $B_{\mathcal{J}} \cap B_{\mathcal{H}}$ . If  $\mathcal{J}$  is the claim that the universe has a single inventor of bifocals and  $\mathcal{H}$  is the claim that some

things are cold, then the meaning set is the proposition that, in our universe, there is a single inventor of bifocals and that this object is cold.

Suppose there is a single referent of  $\mathcal{J}$ . Let it be  $D_i$ . The meaning set of our previous remark is, as we said,  $B_{\mathcal{J}} \cap B_{\mathcal{H}}$ . However, we *could* let the meaning set, instead, be  $D_i \cap B_{\mathcal{H}}$ . In general, when there is a single referent in the world for  $\mathcal{J}$ ,  $D_i = \int_1 B_{\mathcal{J}}$ , we could construct a word whose active meaning is not  $B_{\mathcal{J}}$  but is  $D_i$ , instead. The ding springs to the fore. We call this a *rigidified definite description*.

When we rigidify English-like text, we will write the rigidification of a definite description, `the such and such', as: dthat (the such and such). Or we write it as: the such and such.

A *proposition* expressed by a sentence is the meaning of the sentence.

Consider a sentence, *A*, that contains a rigidified definite description. The meaning of such a sentence is also called the *post-proposition*. The meaning of the corresponding sentence that does not involve rigidification is the *pre-proposition* of *A*. An Interesting Remark about Rigidified Definite Descriptions

Let  $\mathcal{J}$  be a definite description that is present in the world. Let  $D_i = \uparrow_1 B_{\mathcal{J}}$ . Let  $\gamma_i$ be the set of possible worlds where  $D_i$  is the referent of  $\mathcal{J}$ . Let  $\Gamma = \{\gamma_i\}$  be the collection that consists of all possible referents of  $\mathcal{J}$ . Let  $\mathcal{J}' = \mathcal{J} \cap B_{\mathcal{J}}$  be the restriction of the presence of the definite description to those worlds where there is a single referent. Note that  $\Gamma$  partitions  $\mathcal{J}'$ .

Then rigidification of  $\mathcal{J}$  corresponds to a sequence of words,  $\mathcal{J}' \cap D_i$ , for all *i* in  $\Gamma$ . The active meaning of each of these words is  $D_i$ .

When rigidification is part of a complete sentence, the result is a sentential overlay. Suppose a sentence, A, can be written as two words,  $\mathcal{J}$  and  $\mathcal{H}$ . That is,  $A = \mathcal{J} \cap \mathcal{H}$ . Suppose  $\mathcal{J}$  is a rigidified definite description and that  $\mathcal{H}$  is some hook word. Unrigidified, the meaning of the sentence would be  $B_{\mathcal{J}} \cap B_{\mathcal{H}}$ . Rigidified,  $\mathcal{J} \cap B_{\mathcal{J}}$  is the overlay set of a sentential overlay. The sentences in this overlay, for each referent,  $D_i$ , are:

$$\mathcal{J} \cap \mathcal{H} \cap B_{\mathcal{J}} \cap D_i \to D_i \cap B_{\mathcal{H}}$$

Obviously, if the description in  $\mathcal{H}$  is a weaker fragment of  $\mathcal{J}$ , you obtain a factically true sentence. Furthermore, you wind up with a sentential overlay that is sententially necessary.

One further interesting point is the following. Let a word  $\mathcal{W} = \langle A, B, ... \rangle$  with active meaning  $B \subset \mathfrak{W}$  be *monomorphic* if A = B and *bimorphic* if  $A \neq B$ . In the example we have just considered,  $D_i$  is a monomorphic word.

### Abbreviated Rigidified Definite Descriptions

There are languages where the words themselves express, quite separately, the definite description and the suggestion that it be rigidified. There is a language where

(3) Dthat (the inventor of the zip) exists.

means exactly what we said earlier that we would like it to mean. Yet, for some reason, people get tired of saying this over and over. Instead, people — for some reason — just want to say, "Julius" and have it mean exactly what sentential overlay (3) means. Such a maneuver is an *abbreviated rigidified definite description*. Note that we would like to use `Julius' in precisely this manner even when the sentences in collection (3) are not present in our language. So, our abbreviations can incorporate definite descriptions from

a language that is not the language under study. They can come from any old language, at all.

Consider an abbreviation for:

(3) Dthat (the inventor of the zip and the first person on the moon) Take a list of descriptions, apply Dthat-rigidification and coin an abbreviation. Things get awkward if you come to believe someday that there is no object that fits the list of descriptions! What are you going to do?

More generally, we might imagine that you are always composing list of descriptions you think are jointly satisfied by some particular object in the world. Your world view is made up of these lists. There is no problem, though. When you think that one object invented the zip and another object was the first person on the moon, you *separate* the two descriptions and place them into separate dossiers. Into each respective dossier, you throw various other descriptive facts you think are true of the object.

But when you have named the object, you are really in quite a bind! When you have coined an abbreviation for the rigidification of a non-trivial list of descriptions, you have to make a serious choice about what to do when your physical theory demands you break up the list!

Why is that? Well, if we were computers, it would not be a problem. We would have a single abbreviation for each and every different list of descriptions whose conjunction we rigidify. We would never reuse an abbreviation. Should we come to believe no single object invented the zip and landed first on the moon, we would retire the abbreviation. We would never use it again.

But we are humans, and we are terribly lazy. For some reason, no matter what illogical and messy complications are bound to ensue, we wish to reuse the abbreviations — even though we are going to change what they are abbreviations *for*. We are going to alter their essence and keep on plugging away as if nothing has happened. What a stupid thing to do! What a human thing to do! We do it, though. So, let us try to coin some jargon and get a handle on what is going on here.

Of course, there is a solution. We have in mind various dossiers on the various objects we believe to be in the world. But we do not have to rigidify the entire dossier. We do not have to rigidify the entire conjunction. We could just choose a proper subset of the dossier and rigidify *that*. Various other facts could come and go, as my theories change. There does not have to be an associated linguistic change. The dossier, which is associated with a linguistic abbreviation, can be separated into two sets of descriptions. One set of descriptions is core to the linguistic abbreviation, and the other is peripheral. So, there is no problem.

An excellent solution. But, of course, humans do not follow it perfectly. They do not think through in advance all the circumstances that would lead them to retire an abbreviation. They might think through some of them, and we might call these the linguistic core of their abbreviation. And they might surely consider some facts to be linguistically peripheral — such as leaving the refrigerator door open. But humans also have some things that they do not think out clearly in advance. There are descriptions that might lead them to retire the abbreviation and yet might not! Nobody knows until it happens. And there is no right answer. The right thing to do is to reflect on your core and to retire a name whenever you think the core is not satisfied. It is what a computer

would do. But we are lazy, and we want to use the same words to abbreviate different collections of descriptions. We fall in love with the names, I suppose, and we want them to roll off our tongues even though they mean something different. There is no harm in it, but we need to introduce a temporal, non-logical decision. The speaker is (or is not) going to retire a name upon learning a conjunction does not refer. For each speaker, then, there are various non-logical and arbitrary decisions that, ex hypothesi, she has not thought out in advance, and we are going to characterize the descriptions in her dossier according to these actions that she is going to do in the future.

For an individual speaker, there is an abbreviation, *A*, and a corresponding dossier that contains all the descriptions she believes true of some object. To the extent that our speaker has thought the matter through in advance, she has already made some decisions about the descriptions. We may characterize these decisions as follows:

The *core* of a dossier on A is the set of all entries  $B_i$  such that to remove  $B_i$  is to retire A.

The *periphery* of a dossier on *A* is the maximal subset of descriptions such that to remove all of them from the dossier does not retire *A*.

The *ring* of a dossier on *A* is the set of all descriptions that are neither in the core nor in the periphery.

The ring, therefore, is a zone that has not been thought through in advance.

Now, more than one abbreviation could be attached to the same dossier. But various things could be thought through in advance, and the core of one abbreviation might be different from the core of the other.

*Example.* A linguistic agent could have a dossier with both 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' as names of the same individual. But she could have a latent notion that 'Superman' goes with one set of descriptions and that 'Clark Kent' goes with another. If she comes to believe they are different objects — by a powerful kiss that wipes out her memory — she fractures her dossier and apportions one part of the body to 'Superman' and the other part to 'Clark Kent'. *End of example.* 

The ring is a strange thing. There are multiple elements in the ring of a dossier such that their collective removal dissolves the dossier. But we don't know which ones will do it. (If she knew, they wouldn't be in the ring.) And no single one will do it alone. Moreover, we know that one of them *must* be true. But this necessity is not the Kripkenecessity of a sentence being true in all possible worlds nor is it the sentential necessity of some sentential overlay. We really have no words for this type of necessity.

*Example.* Suppose nothing more is known or claimed about Aristotle other than that he or she (or an alien from space) wrote a litany of ancient philosophical texts. Suppose a linguistic agent would not dissolve her dossier if she came to believe *De Anima* were not written by the same author as all the others. Suppose an ensuing lack of dissolution is true, too, of *Prior Analytics* and more generally of any particular work in the canon. Suppose, however, if our agent were to believe that each of the works in the canon had a different author, she would withhold the name 'Aristotle' entirely. Then, each specific claim of authorship lies in the ring of her dossier on 'Aristotle'. *End of example*.

A *name* is an abbreviation for a rigidified definite description. The dossier of these descriptions can have a non-empty ring. A name is a word in a language  $L_1$  but the descriptions may be expressed in another language  $L_2$ .

# CHAPTER 6

# UNDERSTANDING THE RIDDLE OF THE NECESSARY A POSTERIORI

In this chapter, I will introduce a type of sentence that Kripke examined in *Naming and Necessity*, which are commonly called necessary a posteriori sentences. I will explore the controversy that ensued immediately, in which various authors claimed that these propositions should not be called necessary a posteriori sentences. Call them what you will, however, we do appear to have sentences of the type, `Hesperus is Phosphorus', and the evaluation of these sentences does require a posteriori investigation. So, we have an oddity insofar as, historically, experience and experiment were not thought relevant to assess necessary truths.

In fact, on precisely this account, Quine considered this very sentence not to be necessary. It took a great insight by Kripke to see that 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' is necessarily true, if it is true at all. Quine had stated otherwise. Much earlier, in 1943, Quine grappled with these issues, and he came to a different conclusion. Quine wrote:

On the other hand the statements:

- (23) The number of planets is necessarily greater than 7,
- (24) Necessarily, if there is life on the Evening Star then there is life on the Morning Star

are false, since the statements:

The number of planets is greater than 7,

If there is life on the Evening Star, then there is life on the Morning Star

are true only because of circumstances outside logic.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Quine 1943, p. 121.

Therefore, Kripke had come upon something quite interesting and important. If Quine makes a mistake, it is generally a big deal.

In the current chapter, the peculiarity of our riddle will be dissolved. Using linguistic machinery developed in the sixth chapter, it will become evident the items philosophers are calling sentences (in their own jargon) are decidedly more general than what we have just defined a sentence to be. They are sentential overlays, instead. The simple precision allows us to maintain the historical viewpoint. Sentences, as we have defined them, are still entities such that, in the necessary case, experience and experiment are not relevant to assessing their truth. Sentential overlays, meanwhile, in the case of hidden context, exhibit the curious behavior we have just noted.

### Controversy

As we said, the notion of an a posteriori necessary truth has been controversial. The notion follows from rigid designation. Suppose you are living long ago and you name the first heavenly object you see in the evening 'Phosphorus' and you name the last heavenly object you see before the sun rises 'Hesperus'. Suppose you do not suspect you have named a single object twice, although you wouldn't rule it out. Suppose the English language is alive and well. You consider the sentence:

(1) Hesperus is Phosphorus.

Given naming is rigid, sentence (1) is either necessarily true or necessarily false. Also, presumably, it requires a posteriori investigation to have an opinion one way or another. Ergo, the necessary a posteriori.

It seems uncontroversial, but immediately controversy ensued. Putnam is often quoted in this regard. He called it startling. He wrote:

Since Kant there has been a big split between philosophers who thought that all necessary truths were analytic and philosophers who thought that some necessary truths were synthetic a priori. But none of these philosophers thought that a (metaphysically) necessary truth could fail to be a priori.<sup>44</sup>

A necessary truth seems, at first blush, to demand an a priori treatment. If it is true in all worlds, the thought goes, you shouldn't need to investigate the world to find out if it is true. That's what Quine thought.

However, our explication seems persuasive. What gives? Certain philosophers thought immediately that the a posteriori aspect of (1) should give way. Fitch and Tye both argued that, under their view of the a posteriori, an a posteriori truth cannot be known without experience .<sup>45</sup> On their shared view, the basic hypothesis of rigid designation entails immediately that:

(2) Phosphorus is Phosphorus.

has exactly the same meaning as sentence (1). Identifying the truth to be ascertained as the proposition expressed by sentence (1) and hence also as the proposition expressed by sentence (2), these authors conclude that the proposition expressed by (1) *can* be known prior to experience. Therefore, it is not a posteriori.

However, it does appear to be splitting hairs to claim the proposition expressed by (1) can be known a priori if only one were to contemplate the proposition in another way and by virtue of another sentence. The question still remains: how do I know sentence (1) and sentence (2) express the same proposition? Such a question needs to be

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Putnam 1975, p. 151.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> See Fitch 1976 and Tye 1978.

investigated by a posteriori means. Therefore, if the truth of sentence (1) is not known except by a posteriori investigation, it seems churlish to say the proposition expressed by (1) is known a priori — except that the speaker did not actually know sentence (1) expresses that very proposition.

It is a bit confusing, and the purpose of the current chapter is merely to point out that there *are* some sentences that are called necessary a posteriori sentences by some important people and that they are so-called for a very good reason. Fitch makes some good points to the effect that — on the assumption that names have no descriptive content, whatsoever — it is quite hard to see any good reasons not to proceed immediately to an identification of (2) with (1) and to evaluate each in precisely the same way. But he says if one *does* assume descriptive content, the admittedly "strange" problem goes away.<sup>46</sup> He says one gets the natural and intuitive result, which — most important of all! — explains exactly just what is to be investigated, a posteriori, in order to know that sentence (1) is true. However, Fitch notes that a strict adherence to the new Kripke doctrine of a non-descriptivism for names will preclude us from getting to this intuitive result.

Fitch writes:

One would be hard pressed to explain why two sentences which do not differ with respect to descriptive content express different propositions. If two different expressions both rigidily designate the same object, and neither has descriptive content, it would seem that two sentences which differ only with respect to the occurrences of these expressions would express the same proposition.<sup>47</sup>

Of course, if one does allow names to have descriptive content, the problem goes away.

The argument that leads to the dilemma dissolves. Fitch considers the obvious

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Fitch 1976, p. 245.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Ibid.

descriptive backing that one might have for `Hesperus' and goes on to say:

If one takes the expression 'Hesperus' to be an abbreviation of the expression "the heavenly body first seen in the evening" then the argument fails, since 'Hesperus' is no longer a rigid designator. While this line of reply is the most plausible of the three, according to it the sentence "Hesperus is Phosphorus" does not express a necessary truth.<sup>48</sup> Fitch has lost the necessity of the sentence, but he says we now have precisely before us

the a posteriori fact that a speaker needs to discover. He writes:

This view also explains what it is we are said to discover. We learn that a certain object which has some unique characteristics is the same as the objet we named 'Phosphorus'. In any case, on this view there is a proposition, which is known only *a posteriori*, but that proposition is contingent.<sup>49</sup>

In short, if one discovers that the brightest morning star and the brightest evening are the

same, which is a posteriori knowledge, one has precisely what one needs. Unfortunately,

Fitch says, such a fact is contingent. One needs to know:

(3) The brightest morning star is the brightest evening star.

and it is a contingent proposition. However, once we know it, we do know:

(4) Dthat (the brightest morning star) is dthat (the brightest evening star).

and, obviously, if sentence (1) means precisely what sentence (4) means — because the names, 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus', are defined thusly — we have the solution to our problem. Although Fitch does not consider this move, the reason he gives for *not* considering it is clear. He is considering the problem Kripke gives us from the point of view of non-descriptivist names. He says, within such a constraint, that "until further arguments are presented, we should not accept the view that there are necessary *a posteriori* truths."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 246.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 247.

Yet, if one operates within the assumption that names are abbreviations for a rigidified description, the key problem goes away. Employing our recent jargon, we can say the pre-proposition expresses what we need to learn, a posteriori, to discover that the post-proposition is necessary.

We will see shortly that rigidification of a description is not the only situation in which we find this linguistic phenomenon. We will turn next to the most general case of all of the necessary a posteriori, and we will see by looking at the more general case that it is a decidedly un-mysterious phenomenon. There is less to it than meets the eye.

Actually, once you label your sentences precisely, you will see what is commonly called a necessary a posteriori sentence is not a sentence, at all. It is a sentential overlay. The a posteriori angle arises merely from your subsequent experience of completing the sentence.

## Teasing apart the Riddle: Evident Sentential Overlays with Evident Context

The situation becomes clearer when you look at an example seldom considered by linguistic philosophers: the evident sentential overlay with evident context. People most often consider the case where the context is hidden. However, the overall situation is best understood when both aspects are evident. After looking at the more obvious case, the natural and expected behavior of the hidden case can be better understood. By exploring evident sentential overlays with evident context, we improve our purchase upon the less evident cases.

*Example.* Suppose we have a language with two sentences:



The first sentence sends the set of possible worlds where  $\square \bullet$  exists to itself. The second sends the set of possible worlds where  $\blacktriangle \bullet$  exists to its complement.

We may consider  $\bullet$  as defining an evident sentential overlay. The overlay contains two sentences. The context set has two elements, the set where  $\Box$  is immediately to the left of  $\bullet$ , and the set where  $\blacktriangle$  is immediately to the left of  $\bullet$ . The sentential meaning of the sentence overlay is  $\bigcup \{A_i \cap B_i\}$ , which is to assert  $\Box \bullet$ , which, if you view  $\bullet$  as doing the talking, says that  $\Box$  is over there to its left.

*Remarks.* However, that is the complicated way to look at things. We could just think of them as two separate sentences. We could think of them as two separate evident trivial sentential overlays, instead, if overlays need be considered. Language is independent of overlays. The latter are used only to talk about languages in a helpful way.

Plunging ahead, however, we see that we might talk about evident overlays with evident context.

*Example.* Suppose we have a language with two sentences:



The first sentence sends the set of possible worlds where  $\square \bullet$  exists to the set of all possible worlds, #. The second sentence sends the set of possible worlds where  $\blacktriangle \bullet$  exists to the null set,  $\emptyset$ .

*Remarks.* Our second example is similar to the first. Here, there are contexts where the resolution of the sentential overlay is a necessary sentence. The sentential

overlay • is not necessarily-true, however. It is up for grabs. Its truth depends on various factors in the world, and it needs them to turn out one way or the other.

When they are present, however, these factors are evident. So, when we have:



we have a necessary sentence.

We have an up for grabs evident sentential overlay and an evident necessary sentence. The sentence is necessarily-true, of course, but it is by virtue of a different overlay being necessarily-true. The overlay we are considering is up for grabs.

*Example.* Suppose we have a language with two sentences:



Looking at these sentences again through the prism of the evident sentential overlay •, we see the vision has to proceed quite a ways before the context is encountered. It is not so far, of course, but it allows you to imagine various languages with longer to go.

*Remarks.* What is the status of one's knowledge about • with respect to experience? Well, after you have seen the green, you know the sentence you are reading is either necessary or necessarily false. Experience passes, and the issue is resolved.

*Example.* Suppose we do go further and consider a language with two sentences:



where the yellow square completes the sentence mapping to all possible worlds and the red triangle completes the sentence mapping to none of them.

Here they are over on the other page! The blink of an eye separates the overlay from its context. Yet experience is at play, surely. With respect to the overlay set alone, we might talk of the a posteriori resolution of the context of the overlay.

There is nothing to prevent our talking this way. However, when the context is evident, it seems a bit silly. We are just trying to experience the sentence, after all. Our empiricism is not extending to the world.

However, with respect to the green circle itself, you could call it necessary a posteriori knowledge. The knowledge that our second green circle is never true is necessary a posteriori knowledge. You see, in common parlance, the green circle is called the sentence. It is not a sentence in our jargon. But it is what people *call* a sentence. People call certain sentential overlays: sentences. Then, they say the sentence **o** constitutes necessary a posteriori knowledge. Why does experience play a role in determining its necessary truth? Well, you have to be patient to eventually experience **o**. There! Our green sentence was a necessary one.

# "Sentences" and the Ensuing Riddle

People who talk about such things typically call one portion of the sentence, like the green circle above, the *sentence*. Their jargon obscures the fact that you really need to know what is going to happen later, too, and, since the entire ensemble of information is requisite for me to figure out what I am saying, it would really make sense to call the whole thing a sentence. Am I going to see a red triangle or a yellow square? I would really like to know. However, due to prior commitments and dispositions, only a portion of the sentence bears the name. The typical insistence is not on the color green, naturally. It is on the colors, black and white, instead. Various black and white inscribed marks are given priority, and various arrangements of these marks are called "sentences". However, it is quite irrelevant to call some marks (like green ones) the sentence if, as a matter of linguistic fact, more of the universe is involved in determining the meaning of what is being said.

If you *do* call some arbitrary proper subset of your experiences a "sentence" and if, having experienced that, you still need to experience more (such as a yellow square) in order to know what is being said, then to call it a "sentence" is just random and misleading, and it naturally gives off the air of a riddle.

Of course, you can imagine a race of people who only writes "sentences" in green, while bits of red and yellow are absolutely vital in determining the meaning that is attached to the "sentence". Part of these people's definition of a "sentence" is simply that anything not green is not part of a "sentence". However, when it comes down to their actual language, red and yellow marks are absolutely important in determining the meaning of what is said!

It is all a bit strange. However, you might be a little less harsh on them if, as a matter of history, they tried very hard to write all their sentences in green and if a little known device, which they had been using all along but which was little appreciated until the middle of the twentieth century, had resulted in the colors red and yellow being tremendously important in determining the meanings of their linguistic sentences.

Hence, you could understand why they were calling their "sentences" necessary and a posteriori. It is because their "sentences" aren't sentences.

### Evident Sentential Overlays with Hidden Context

In the approach explained in chapter six, our languages have no constraint whatsoever upon what is allowed to be the sentence, save the important one, that it have a corresponding meaning. Much of a sentence can be hidden to the person who is considering it or who is "speaking" it. If only a portion of what is needed to narrow down the sentence to a particular meaning is clearly evident, we talk about that part alone as a sentential overlay. The rest, the hidden part, is the context of the sentential overlay. For simplicity, we generally presume to put all the evident aspects into the sentential overlay, and we generally leave all the hidden aspects in the contextual resolutions thereof. It would be strange to do otherwise.

What can we say about this case? The analogy is extremely tight to the case we just explored where we considered a collection of sentences, which are entirely evident and which we have nonetheless split along the lines of an evident overly and evident context. Again, one is confronted with the riddle of the necessary a posteriori. You look at the evident overlay. Your sentence might be necessary, and it might be otherwise. It is going to take some experience of the world to get to the bottom of this.

Yet, since we have allowed anything at all to be part of our sentence, we might not get to the bottom of it, actually! What if the stuff on the domain side is hidden? What then? In such a case one never really knows the meaning of one's sentence. One does not know important aspects on the domain side of the language map. One does not know what one is saying.

There is a middle ground, too. Most of the sentence might be written in bright and fresh colors. It might be written in black and white or in bright green, and the truth of the prevailing physical theory about what causes these colors is not relevant. However, you could imagine a language where part of the sentence on the domain side is writ in actual physical happenings of an utterly specific sort. Priestly might have imagined a language where the presence of phlogiston makes the rest of the sentence mean: your dog is fat. The presence of oxygen, meanwhile, would make the sentence mean: your cat is thin. So, there are languages where the meaning of sentences depends upon what *is* happening on the domain side but where we merely issue theories about what is happening, physics-wise, on the domain side. As Kripke says, our whole theory of atomic structure could be wrong.<sup>51</sup>

When we talk about these sentences and what they might mean, it is helpful to do experiments. It would seem that we only theorize about what sentence we have at any given time.

Scientific revolutions always waiting in the wings, presumably, in such a case, I do not really know what my sentence is doing on the domain side. I make predictions, however. A posteriori experience might help and is the only way forward. However, it might lead me astray. I don't have an exhaustive theoretical structure that explains why one scientific guess is probabilistically better than another. In the end, I find myself somewhat randomly theorizing about my sentence's behavior on the domain side, even as I make the evident colorful part myself.

Suppose, by some unfathomable quirk of probabilistic luck (which I don't understand because I have not yet formalized the mathematical manifold of scientific

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Krike 1980, p. 123.

progress), I theorize correctly that a certain atom is in a certain way or that phlogiston is present. Suppose further that if the world is in that very way, then, in conjunction with the colors I have just drawn before my eyes, the result is a necessary sentence. Then, when I say I have a necessary sentence, I am right.

Voilá, a case of necessary a posteriori knowledge.

### **Dthat Does That**

It is not much of a riddle when you look at it in this light. Your sentence on the domain side is having issues. In one case, you arbitrarily treated some evident stuff as if it weren't part of the sentence, and now you have issues. In another case, your reach exceeded your grasp, and now you don't know what you are saying. (You might issue a theory but, like Priestly, in two hundred years, everyone will be laughing at you.) You do not know what is going on over on the domain side of your sentence! It is a problem, surely. It is not a riddle.

Therefore, it remains to clarify for the reader that the rigidification maneuver defined in the technical section on language serves the purpose of bringing unknown and non-evident stuff over to the domain side. A close look at the formalization of the rigidification reveals that the ding set of possible worlds is not only on the range side, the meaning side, but it is also the feature on the domain side that splits the overlay into various sentences. The overlay:

(5) Dthat (The closest girl to the White House lawn) is wearing a blue dress. has a different meaning in possible world #1 than does:

(6) Dthat (The closest girl to the White House lawn) is wearing a blue dress.in possible world #2, where a different girl is nearer the White House. Sentence (5) is

true in all possible worlds where girl #1 is wearing a blue dress. Sentence (6) is true in all possible worlds where girl #2 is wearing a blue dress. They are different sentences.

Consider again the definition of a rigidified description:

Let  $\mathcal{J}$  be a definite description whose descriptive context set is  $\Gamma = \{\gamma_i\}$ . The *rigidification* of  $\mathcal{J}$  is a word  $\mathcal{K} = \langle \mathcal{V}, \mathfrak{S}, ... \rangle$  such that  $\mathcal{V}$ and  $\mathfrak{S}$  is a sentential overlay and such that each ordered pair in  $\mathfrak{S}$  is  $\langle \gamma_i \cap \mathcal{V}, \mathfrak{D}_i \rangle$ , where  $\mathfrak{D}_i$  is the referent of  $\mathcal{J}$  at  $\gamma_i$ .

In our current example,  $\mathcal{J}$  is the definite description: *the closest girl to the White House lawn*. The descriptive context set  $\{\gamma_i\}$  is the set of fibres of the function that sends each possible world *w* where there is one and only one girl closest to the White House lawn to the referent of  $\mathcal{J}$  at world *w*.

The referent  $\mathfrak{D}_i$  is the ding set of the individual referent. It is, basically, the set of all possible worlds where the referent — the very girl nearest to the White House lawn in w — plus some extra information that allows us to pinpoint her volume and performed hooked intersection. When it is the second element in an ordered pair within the sentential overlay  $\mathfrak{S}$ , it is the contribution of the phrase  $\mathcal{J}$  to the meaning of the sentence. In our case, the essential set of this very girl is to be hooked intersected with the predicate of wearing a blue dress. It is not normal intersection. We are not considering worlds where this very girl exists and where someone is somewhere wearing a blue dress. We are considering hooked intersection where this very girl is wrapped up in a blue dress.

As the second element of the ordered pair within  $\mathfrak{S}$ , our set  $\mathfrak{D}_i$  is a meaning. What we are concerned with now is the explication of precisely what is transpiring on the domain side. To see this, we need to look closely at the first element of the ordered pair,  $\gamma_i \cap \mathcal{V}$ . It is the domain part. It is the sentence. (Well, once we combine it with *is wearing a blue dress*, it is a full sentence.)

Now, in our example,  $\mathcal{V}$  is simply *Dthat (The closest girl to the White House lawn)*. It is the phrase itself, present in our world for our contemplation. So, the expression  $\gamma_i \cap \mathcal{V}$ , is telling us that when the world is in some way,  $\gamma_i$ , and the phrase itself is present, our sentential overally  $\mathfrak{S}$  is going to contribute  $\mathfrak{D}_i$  to the meaning of the overall sentence.

What way is this? What is  $\gamma_i$ ? In what way must the world be in order to contribute the essential set of some particular girl, some  $\mathfrak{D}_i$ , to the meaning of the sentence in *w*?

The function that sends each w from the set of worlds where one and only one girl is closest to the White House lawn to the essential set of that girl is  $S_J$ , and each  $\gamma_i$  is the pre-image of a fibre of  $S_J$ . Hence, a  $\gamma_i$  is the set of all such worlds w where that very girl is the one and only girl closest to the White House lawn. In short,  $\gamma_i$  is the hooked intersection of the girl's essential set,  $\mathfrak{D}_i$ , with the description, *the closest girl to the White House lawn* 

The fact that the girl's essence is instantiated in the world is a component part of our sentence. It is this fact, the presence of  $\mathfrak{D}_i$  in the world, that leads to  $\mathfrak{D}_i$  being involved compositionally in the production of the eventual meaning of the sentence. The fact that our actual world falls within the ding set of the referent resolves the sentential overlay into a sentence. In short, the girl's essence is part of our sentence.

It is a hidden part. I do not know this girl's essence. I could not pick her out through a priori contemplation of all possible worlds. I could pick out the buckyballs, though. I could pick out the yellow squares. Therefore, while a sentence such as:

(7) The closest girl to the White House lawn is wearing a blue dress.
does not have a hidden component on the domain side, its Dthat rigidified cousin does.
The entirely of the domain side of sentence (7) is hanging before my eyes in black and white. Once it is rigidified, however, I need to know the essence of a certain girl. A goodly portion of the sentence on the domain side is epistemologically hidden to me.

Hence, when I also consider a sentence such as:

(8) Dthat (The most talented juggler in Washington, D.C.) is dthat (the closest girl to the White House lawn).

a goodly portion of the sentence is written in the body and soul of a girl far away. I do not know what the sentence is. It is not hanging before me in black and white. I know, by other considerations, that I have produced part of a sentence that is either necessarily false or necessarily true. I have to theorize, however, about the rest of the sentence. I have to speculate, theoretically and perhaps foolishly, about the remainder of the domain side.

Enter the necessary a posteriori. I might have said something true just now, true in all possible worlds. I might have something false. I have to employ experience next! I have to experience the rest of my sentence. If I cannot experience the rest of my sentence, I will instead have certain experiences that lead me to (pompously and ridiculously) claim, even though there are possible worlds where I have these very experiences and am wrong, that my theory about what has happened on the domain side is correct. The result, my friends, is called necessary a posteriori knowledge. It is not much of a riddle.

It certainly is a problem, though.

## Conclusion

Our new nomenclature allows us to talk precisely about the issue that is called the necessary a posteriori sentence in the literature. It caused a great deal of controversy. Authors such as Fitch, Tye and Soames have taken pains to deny such things exist. Ignoring their worries, I have concentrated instead on explicating precisely what it is that does exist. Linguistically, there are sentence overlays under consideration. These are evident sentential overlays, and the context is hidden. At best, in the cases under discussion, it is merely theorized about. Kripke speaks of people who "have exactly the same evidence, qualitatively speaking"<sup>52</sup> as we do and for whom it turns out "that Hesperus was not Phosphorus,"<sup>53</sup> speaking as they speak and not as we presume to speak. If this is the case and under the assumption that we *are* people who have exactly the same evidence, qualitatively speaking, as we do, cannot it not similarly turn out that we are speaking as we speak and not as we presume to speak? Whenever we don't know something for sure and for absolutely certain, cannot it be otherwise?

Suppose you are convinced the most talented juggler in Washington D. C. is the closest girl to the White House lawn, and suppose you name the first 'Alicia' and the second 'Morticia', then you are convinced, similarly, that 'Alice is Morticia' is necessary. You are convinced it is necessary knowledge. You might be right. I don't know for sure. You might be right. You might know something necessary. You *might* know it. I don't know whether you know it or not. I myself have no intense feelings about the matter.

I think it is rather odd to say you know things when you could be wrong, but I know my way of speaking has fallen out of fashion. People wind up "knowing" more

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 104. <sup>53</sup> Ibid.

things than I do because they have lower standards. They have more emotions, and so they "know" more. It is odd, is it not? A low standard for belief leads to wisdom. (It is better to believe six impossible things before breakfast.)

Yet a discussion of these issues would take us far afield. I do not think it is important that we explore the matter. Instead, I think we have gotten to the heart of the issue of the necessary a posteriori sentence. Our terms of art, recently coined, have helped. The worrisome beasts are not sentences, at all. They are incomplete sentential overlays. The rest of the sentence has not arrived yet, and it might never arrive to the speaker's satisfaction (if she has high standards). One of the possible resolutions of what she's got so far is a necessary sentence, but not all of them are. Perhaps the sentence will become evident, eventually. Perhaps, it will not. Here is all the riddle is made of. Parts of the sentence are hidden.

I hope the reader now sees whatever puzzles she had initially have dissolved amid the clarity imposed by our terms of art. I hope to utilize the same style of argumentation in future chapters.

### One More Thing: Hidden Bimorphic Words vs. Hidden Monomorphic Words

A hidden word is always a problem when one is trying to evaluate a sentence. It does not matter whether the word is bimorphic or monomorphic. The active meaning of a bimorphic word is a set of possible worlds that is different from the set that determines the word. For instance, the word `frog' in English is bimorphic. The set of possible worlds where the word is present is easily summoned and cannot swim. The active meaning of the word, on the other hand, is an amphibian. It can swim and is not so easily summoned. Words are just words. So, it might be helpful to think through these so-

called riddles of sentential overlays with hidden context for the bimorphic case. Since the monomorphic case is entirely similar, a better perspective might be gained.

Nobody is confused about the bimorphic case. Suppose you write a portion of a sentence, such as `I have eaten a', and suppose the last part of your sentence is being produced by mechanical means — by a mechanical arm plucking whole words out of a hat — and the catch is that the last word is tossed deep into a dark cave, and it is lying there at the bottom.

What is the truth of your sentence? Obviously, the short answer is that you don't know because the last word is hidden at the bottom of a cave! It is *there*, of course, but you don't know what it is. So, the sentence *means* something, but you don't know what it might be. Now, suppose the hat contains a host of animal words. Some of these animals you have eaten, and some you haven't. You do not know the truth of your sentence. You do not know its counterfactual behavior. You do not know what your sentence means.

A word is hidden, and you don't know what your sentence means! It is a sentential overlay with hidden context. (I am not sure why people are calling these important words "context." It was terribly bad nomenclature from the very beginning, and now a lot of people are confused.) Anyway, there *is* a word lying in a cold puddle at the bottom of a cave. It is a bimorphic word, and its meaning is a type of animal. Your sentence claims you have eaten this animal.

If the phrase in front of you reads, `The animal mentioned by the word at the bottom of the cave is a', then you have a case of the contingent a priori. (Up to the assumption that there is bimorphic word at the bottom of the cave and that it is about an animal.)

Suppose, instead, that the mechanical arm picks bimorphic words about colors out of a hat and tosses them deep into a damp cave. Suppose one word is lying now at the bottom. Suppose — unbeknownst to us — the word is `red'. It is a hidden word. Suppose I have constructed the rest of the sentence before my eyes, and it reads `The color blue is often'. My sentence might be true in all possible worlds. It might be false in all possible worlds. Gosh knows. Yet *why* is it always true if it is true? The necessity arises from the fact that the adjective in the sentence is an essential quality. If the damp bimorphic word signifies an essential quality, we have a necessary sentence or a necessarily false one.

Consider the phrase, `is a warm color', where a warm color is defined to be yellow or orange or red. We are going to use the phrase to complete a sentence, and the first word of our sentence is lying at the bottom of the cave. Now, it might be `yellow', and we might have a necessary sentence. It might be `blue', and we have a necessarily false sentence

These instances of hidden bimorphic words are not riddles. Are they? These sentences are a posteriori in so far as we have chosen to define the process of going to the bottom of a cave in order to read a word in our sentence an a posteriori maneuver.

It should be no different with a monomorphic word. Therefore, let's put a few monomorphic color words into a hat and allow the mechanical arm to toss them deep into a well. A monomorphic color word is just a piece of color. So, there is a swath of yellow at the bottom of the well. Or there is a swath of blue. The sentence (at our end) reads `is a warm color', and the sentence might be necessarily false or it might be necessarily true.

Kaplan's Dthat operator allows us to effectively speak in this language without
utilizing the custom that our first (or last) word is lying at the bottom of a well, plucked by a mechanical arm from a hat of relevant words. Kaplan allows us to bypass this cumbersome linguistic convention and simply say:

(16) Dthat (the color of the swath selected by the mechanical arm and lying at the bottom of the well) is a warm color.

Kaplan allows us to articulate the presence of our monomorphic word. The rest is pretty easy. If the color is yellow or orange or red, we have a necessarily truth sentence. If the color is blue or green or purple, we have a necessarily false sentence. The entire sentential overlay is necessary a posteriori (or necessarily false and a posteriori), up to the conceit that we are going to call the search for a few of our words an a posteriori matter.

Ultimately, it is silly to treat monomorphic words any different from how we treat bimorphic words. Hidden words are simply hidden words. They are going to be a big problem for anyone who acts like he knows what he is saying when in fact he doesn't.

Suppose there were a bimorphic word such as `yellow' lying at the bottom of the well. Let's coin an operator, bthat, to complete our sentential overlay and make it a sentence by using a bimorphic word found in a particular place. Then,

(17) Bthat (the color word selected by the mechanical arm and lying at the bottom of the well) is a warm color.

*might* be a necessary truth, and it might not be. The claim:

(18) It is possible bthat (the color word selected by the mechanical arm and lying at the bottom of the well) is a warm color.

could well be false. To say that (17) might be true is not equivalent to saying that (18) is true. It is the same tension we saw between "sentences" (11) and (13). But there is no riddle!

The word in the cold puddle might be `yellow'. Hence, sentence (17) might be a necessary truth because: `Yellow is a warm color' is a necessary truth. The word in the cold puddle might be `blue'. If it is, the sentence (18) is false. Why? `Blue is a warm color' is false in all possible worlds.

The space of logical possibilities is being used twice over. When I say `might', I am talking about the domain side! I mean that there might be one word present in my sentence and that there might be another. I am using the space of logical possibilities to characterize the domain side of my sentence. The space of logical possibilities is getting used again, naturally, to evaluate the sentence, too. If the word is `blue', I move to the range side, and I run through the space of logical possibilities again. I notice that blue is never a warm color, and declare it is not possible for my sentence to be true.

So, there are two steps. It is possible for my sentence to be one thing, and it is possible for my sentence to be another thing. (These are logical possibilities.) If these possibilities play out one way, then it is *impossible* for my sentence to be true. If these possibilities play out another way, then it is *impossible* for my sentence to be false. (These are logical possibilities, once again.) The latter possibilities are on the range side of one's sentence, and one mustn't equivocate between the two notions of possibility. Otherwise, one is liable to get confused.

People do get confused, of course, and the reason they get confused is they do not realize the thing they call the context is simply a monomorphic word. It all started because people used the word `context' when there was no reason for it. They decided to use `sentence' for things that weren't sentences. If they had just called the right things *sentences* from the beginning, there would have been a bunch of hidden words, and no

one would have been surprised we had to look for them in order to know what we were saying.

# CHAPTER 7

# **IDENTIFYING REFERENCE AND FAUX RIGIDIFICATION**

"Identifying Reference"

In this chapter, I will examine a discussion that, for some authors, takes on philosophical and linguistic importance. I argue, quite to the contrary, that not much of importance is going on. It is not to be argued that nothing is going on. For instance, Donnellan has some distinction in mind when he proclaims a difference between his referential use of a definite description and his attributive use of a definite description.<sup>54</sup> He says the difference is not to be found in the sentence itself. He says it is to be found in the way the sentence is used. Kripke feels he understands Donnellan's difference. Kripke thinks it is just the fact that the speaker has a particular object in mind in one case, which he does not have in another.<sup>55</sup> Kripke thinks this is not a linguistic matter, and he is a bit confused why Donnellan is going on and on. I agree with Kripke on this point. After all, Donnellan says the difference is found in the way a sentence is *used*. But you can use a sentence to do a zillion different things. Not all the distinctions are linguistic.

My issue in the current chapter has to do with a recurring phrase in linguistic philosophy: identifying reference. For instance, when Kripke talks about speaker's reference, he takes as a given that the speaker has some object in mind. Obviously, people can have objects in mind. However, just as obviously it is not as if the object has been inserted into one's skull and is protruding therefrom. Therefore, it is not trivial to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> See Donnellan 1966.
<sup>55</sup> See Kripke 1977.

investigate what sort of cognitive purchase I might have upon some object or another, and it not obvious or trivial what sort of purchase sparks me to say I have "identified" some object and what sort of purchase does not. And, of course, I can say I have identified an object when it is not important in any philosophical way.

The point I shall eventually make is that most of what is called identification is actually re-identification, and re-identification does not seem to have anywhere near the same pretentions to philosophical importance as identification might have. The point can be made even more strictly with the use of our recently coined terms. However, it is helpful to have one more term at our disposal. Facts believed true of an object that are not included in or not sufficient to constitute its essence are *laundry*. In this chapter, I shall explore the role that laundry serves in sparking claims of object identification.

The eventual conclusion will be that we have a lot of laundry, generally, and very little else — most likely, nothing at all — which is interesting in and of itself. I am interested primarily in the case where the speaker gives a definite description of an object. Yet, for some reason which I do not quite understand, the usage of a unique description by a speaker is often talked about in the same breath with the usage of a sloppy demonstrative or a name. A *sloppy demonstrative* is a bit of language that relies entirely on the anthropomorphic similarity between the speaker and the listener to get the idea in the mind of the speaker communicated to the listener. Since we are all humans and we are exceptionally clever, we manage to use them a lot. Recently, my three year old son said, "What's that?" And I said, "It's the heat coming on." I do not see how you could have had such a conversation with an alien. The room was awash with any number

of sounds. He could have been considering another sensory modality, altogether! However, we had — I think — a perfectly successful conversation.

In describing these situations, linguistic philosophers often use the phrase "identifying reference." I am supposed to have identified the referent of my son's query. Identifying reference is truly important with respect to the usage and success of sloppy demonstratives. I am talking to somebody. What *is* she thinking? The basic premise of language is that the language itself is supposed to tell us. However, since we are lazy, a girl can get the idea in her mind across to me without really saying anything. It is a miracle, really. I am disinclined to analyze sloppy demonstratives as linguistic. I think of these phrases as lucky and happy uses of language. You say *something*, and the other person realizes you have lost your keys and would like to sell short on the Chicago stock exchange. What you said, however, doesn't really mean that, and there is no point in pretending it does. I do not know why anybody bothers to analyze these words. It is just anthropomorphism and ridiculously good luck that are operating. You had some meaning, some idea, in mind. You didn't say it. I just guessed it.

Strawson is always getting back his idea that the listener has a lot of presupposed objects already in mind.<sup>56</sup> I am sure she does, but I do not ever see why it is important. Obviously, it is important in the case of sloppy demonstratives because the listener is never going to venture a guess about an object she doesn't have in mind. However, I just said that I am going to ignore sloppy demonstratives. They involve luck. Sometimes I don't even need to move my mouth, and people know what I am thinking. It is an anthropomorphic miracle.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> See Strawson 1959, p. 185 and Strawson 1971, p. 78-9.

Recanati writes the following:

Recall that, when a term is referential, understanding the utterance involves identifying the reference of the term. In his identification of the reference, the hearer is helped by the meaning<sup>57</sup> of the referential term. In some cases at least, a referential term indicates not only (via the feature REF) *that there* is an object such that the utterance is true if and only if this object has a certain property; it also indicates *how* this object can be identified.<sup>58</sup>

I find the passage curious because it is exactly the sort of thing one might write about a sloppy demonstrative. However, in our terminology (and in Kaplan's), one should not be talking about the meaning of the referential term here. One should talk about its character. Not all demonstratives are sloppy. There are `*I*' and `*your mother*', for instance. They have a certain character. Yet, surely, if a sloppy demonstrative such as `*that*' is being employed, one really needs to identify the referent in order to understand the utterance.

Once a definite character is involved, however, I think we are more charitable about our claims of understanding. Suppose you are reading a letter from the early twentieth century written on stationary faintly stamped with roses. Suppose, in perfect penmanship, you read:

I never thought it would happen to me. I was always healthy. I have never been to Spain, and I thought the flu was something you got over in a few days' time. I feel terribly weak now. I feel this bowl of soup could be my last. It is a strange relationship to have to warm broccoli, which I never much liked. It is quite odd that a communion with warm broccoli is my last conversation with the world. I do have a pretty yellow room. I wished to have children, and I thought I would. Yet I believe I am about to die. No time for that now.

It is somewhat pedantic to say we do not understand these utterances. They are not to be resolved beyond the character of  $\hat{I}$ , of course. Yet there is understanding, and there is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> The unrigidified pre-proposition.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Recanati 1993, p. 17.

understanding. I understand she is dying, and I understand it is a bad thing. Do I have to identify the referent of I' in order to understand these words? By that standard, do I understand any words from historical times? I do not know. Recanati raises some interesting issues.

The most curious thing, when I read Recanati, is his meandering back and forth — is it equivocation? — among three utterly distinct linguistic notions. 1) sloppy demonstratives. 2) the Dthat operator. 3) "identification" of an object being talked about by way of a unique description. One can read the passage above by Recanati three times through, each time thinking about a different one of these three notions. It sounds plausible each time. (For some reason, Recanati has renamed Kaplan's operator: REF.) If one drops the remark about REF, it sounds exactly like the sort of thing Donnellan would write to explicate his notion of referential use of a definite description. If one is talking about sloppy demonstratives, instead, the passage works nicely. Sloppy demonstratives are invariably given a rigidified interpretation when a meaning is assigned. You cannot very well talk about the character of a sloppy demonstrative, since there is none. Finally, if you do employ Dthat, then (strictly speaking) you do not understand your sentence until you have comprehended the ding set. Recanati's passage reads quite nicely, assuming this notion in the background, too.

However, it is quite a problem when different interpretations work equally well. It leaves the reader at a bit of a loss to know what the author means by "when a term is referential."

I am going to set aside sloppy demonstratives because I do not have anything interesting to say about them. In the rest of the chapter, then, I wish to concentrate on the

difference between the utilization of the Dthat operator and the "identification" of the referent of a unique description.

#### Picking Things Out of a Lineup

It would be helpful to consider an example to elucidate the difference between these two notions. (They are quite distinct, however. One is using Dthat, and the other is not.) Suppose I issue the sentence:

(1) Dthat (the color of the third shape from the left at the bottom of the next page) is orange.

In order to comprehend the meaning of the sentence, one needs to know the ding associated with the pre-propositional definite description because the meaning *is* the ding, really. Sentence 1) is necessarily false. It means the same as `Blue is orange', which, if you think about it, is never going to be true in any possible world.

Moving to the next notion, then, I can issue the sentence:

(2) The color of the third shape from the left at the bottom of the page is orange.

The definite description is not rigidified. The entire sentence is found above. No part of the domain-side expression is written below. Sentence (2) is an example of "identification" of reference so much talked about by Donnellan and others. The sentence enables you to pick a shape out a lineup. These philosophers say it is different when you can pick something out of a lineup.

I am not saying it is not different. Far from it! I think I would be guilty of a contradiction if I were to say, after somebody points out a different way of using a sentence, that there is no difference. Vive la différence. There are sentences (with definite descriptions) uttered on top of Mount Everest, and there are sentences that are not. I could call the former the *everestal* use of the definite description, and I could call



the latter the *reverestal* use of the definite description. I could wonder aloud why Russell failed to notice the distinction.

I do not think I am going out on a limb to say a philosopher needs to say more than that he or she has in mind a different way of using a definite description.<sup>59</sup> The difference needs to be linguistic, and I hope the reader does not mind if I tell her precisely what I mean by these words. A definite description is a word — commonly called: a phrase — and it is part of a sentence. Suppose the same definite description is used in two sentences,  $A_1$  and  $A_2$ . Suppose  $B_1$  and  $B_2$  are the meanings of  $A_1$  and  $A_2$ , respectively. There is a *linguistic difference* between the way the two sentences are used if either  $A_1 \neq A_2$  or  $B_1 \neq B_2$ . The former linguistic difference is rather unimportant, I should think. The latter is extremely important. If neither the sentence nor the meaning has been changed by the advent of some difference or other, I say that there has been no linguistic difference.

Accordingly, I say there is no linguistic difference between the following two sentences:

(3) The color of the third shape from the left on my refrigerator door is orange.

after my son, unbeknownst to me, painted colorful shapes across my refrigerator door, and

# (4) The color of the third shape from the left on my refrigerator door is orange.

after I, myself, did so. The oft talked about notion of "identification," however, clearly comes in to play in the latter case, and it is absent in the former case. Hence, I am

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> There are also the definite descriptions spoken near toast and those that are not. Russell forgot that distinction.

reasonably sure that Donnellan would say sentence (4) and its milieu of usage constitute a referential use of the definite description, while sentence (3) and its milieu of usage are canonically attributive.

After all, Donnellan says the attributive case concerns a sentence where there is some object or other, whatever it might be, that satisfies the definite description. In contrast, he says the referential use is a situation "in which we expect and intend our audience to realize whom we have in mind"<sup>60</sup> while we employ the definite description. So, sentence (2) is referential because I expect you to know I have Clifford in mind. He is the big blue circle. Thus, a lá Donnellan, sentence (4) should be referential if I am talking to myself. Or it is referential if you have visited my house and seen my refrigerator. Or if I have become a famous artist and simply everybody knows the colorful shapes I once painted on my refrigerator door. Sentence (3), however, is generally an attributive usage of the definite description. It is designed so that you and I are ignorant about which shapes are there. (Just assume my son *did* paint on my refrigerator yesterday.) He painted some shapes or other on the refrigerator, and I am talking about them, whatever they might be.

#### Strawson's "Identifying Reference" and Dossiers on the World

In *Logico-Linguistic Papers*, Strawson gives an earlier treatment of an entirely similar approach to reference, and it might be helpful to see what he was talking about. Strawson writes:

When people talk to each other they commonly and rightly assume a large community of identifying knowledge of particular items. Very often a speaker knows or assumes that a thing of which he has such knowledge is also a thing of which his audience has such knowledge. Knowing or assuming this, he may wish to state some particular fact regarding such a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Donnellan 1966, p. 285.

thing, for example, that it is thus-and-so; and he will then normally include in this utterance an expression which he regards as adequate, in the circumstances of utterance, to indicate to the audience *which* thing it is, of all the things in the scope of the audience's identifying knowledge, that he is declaring to be thus-and-so.

When an expression of one of these classes *is* used in this way, I shall say that it is used to *invoke* identifying knowledge known or presumed to be in the possession of an audience. It would now be easy to define identifying reference so that only when an expression is used to invoke identifying knowledge is it used to perform the function of identifying reference.<sup>61</sup>

Strawson has defined what he calls "identifying reference." Strawson goes on to make

clear that the standard of knowledge need not be very high. Theories and conjectured

facts are fair game.

Again, there are cases in which an audience cannot exactly be credited with *knowledge* of the existence of a certain item unique in a certain respect, but can be credited with a strong *presumption* to this effect, can be credited, we might say, with *identifying presumption* rather than identifying knowledge. Such presumed presumption can be invoked in the same style as such knowledge can be invoked.<sup>62</sup>

It would seem as though, given the explication above, that Strawson would label sentence

(2) as a case of identifying reference.

It seems to me that Strawson's notion of identifying reference and Donnellan's

notion of referential usage are pretty much the same. After all, Donnellan writes:

A speaker who uses a definite description referentially in an assertion  $\dots$  uses the description to enable his audience to pick out whom or what he is talking about and states something about that person or thing.<sup>63</sup>

There are certain items in the world, then, and they are unique in various respects. At

least, we presume they are unique in one respect or another. There are things in the

world, and they are thought about in various ways.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Strawson 1971, p. 78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Donnellan 1976, p. 285.

I first introduced the idea of a dossier when I wished to define a name. However, it seems we could talk about dossiers on all sorts of things whether I have assigned them a name or not. I have a long dossier of definite descriptions on Queen Elizabeth, and I suppose I could have had them even if I had never named her Queen Elizabeth. I have a dossier of descriptions about my sofa, and I never thought to name my sofa. I have a dossier of descriptions on the shortest man who lives in Stratford on the Avon, and I never thought about this man until just now. The dossier of definite descriptions is:

(D) the shortest man who lives in Stratford on the Avon.

Therefore, once we start to look at the notion that Strawson and Donnellan are considering and once we think about mental dossiers, we see definite descriptions are involved in two ways. A definite description brings up a dossier. So, we can speak of a mental dossier being *under* a definite description. Also, a definite description can be *in* a dossier. It can be an entry.

It is not strictly true, perhaps, that I have never thought about the shortest man who lives in Stratford on the Avon. The other day I was musing to a friend about the owner of the fourteenth fastest Weimaraner in the world. They might be the same man. So, we have to be careful about how we talk about such things. My larger point is that I wish to be exceptionally careful, indeed. I feel philosophers are not being careful enough.

We could say each and every definite description brings up a dossier. It need not have been thought about before, but it could have been. When it is fresh, I assume the only thing in the dossier is the definite description that originated and summoned the dossier. The definite description that brings a dossier to mind is the *phrase-wise* definite

description. When the content of a dossier under a phrase-wise definite description is the phrase-wise description alone, the dossier is *trivial*. When one could, from the contents of a dossier, cobble together a definite description that is not a subset of the phrase-wise description, the contents are *substantial*. These descriptions cobbled together are *non-phrase-wise* or *alternate* descriptions.

Let us imagine every speaker and every listener has his or her own collection of dossiers under every definite description imaginable, and let us give them trivial dossiers under definite descriptions which they have not even thought to contemplate. Is this enough to allow us to frame Donnellan's distinction? Can we frame Donnellan's distinction on this basis alone? I don't think people need to be right about anything. I don't think we need to specify which objects are in the world and which are not. We are not going to use the Dthat operator, so the meaning of our sentence is not a function of the presence of an object. I think Donnellan's issue has to do with what his linguistic agents *believe* to be in the world. I do not think anybody needs to have murdered Smith, actually. If you and I believe someone is guilty before he is tried — and there he is, over there! — we can have a conversation about "Smith's murderer," if we like. We can talk about an object and call it "the man who is drinking a martini," even if nobody is drinking, at all. We can talk about an object and call it "her husband." even if it is not. In Donnellan's scheme, I do not think the actual objects in the real world matter.

Therefore, I am going to explicate the distinction only in terms of what people *think* are the case about objects. I am going to cache it out entirely in terms of dossiers, thereby reducing it entirely to beliefs alone. It matters not at all how many of these dossiers have actual objects associated with them in the real world. It doesn't matter how

accurate my view of the world is or yours. We believe certain things, and we are talking. I think we will still exemplify Donnellan's distinction, and I'll spell out exactly how.

#### Particularity and Recognition

Perhaps I should just go ahead and say the difference I am considering to be Donnellan's is the difference between a speaker considering a definite description which is trivial and a speaker considering a definite description which, according to the dossiers in her mind, has an alternate description under it. I believe I have summed up what Donnellan is getting at. For instance, when explicating the attributive use of the definite description, Donnellan says:

If there is anything which might be identified as reference here, it is reference in a very weak sense — namely, reference to *whatever* is the one and only one  $\phi$ , if there is any such.<sup>64</sup>

You say *whatever* is phrase-wise such-and-such because you have nothing else under the dossier to talk about. You cannot talk about the object by way of an alternate description. Donnellan says the attributive case has a "lack of particularity," and he issues the following contrast with his referential case.

But this lack of particularity is absent from the referential use of definite descriptions precisely because the description is here merely a device for getting one's audience to pick out or think of the thing to be spoken about.<sup>65</sup>

Earlier, he said that in the referential case the speaker needs "to get his audience to recognize what he is referring to."<sup>66</sup> I believe recognition happens when a listener describes to himself the object under an alternate description and says, "Oh, *that* is what you are talking about."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 303.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 292.

Is Donnellan succeeding in getting his difference across? Perhaps so. However, the words he uses — *particular, pick out, recognize, identify* — all trouble me. The words seem to be less than precise. For instance, I have spent too many years in a lonely tower studying mathematics, and I do not see how a person can fail to be a particular person. I do not understand the difference between "someone" and "someone in particular." Perhaps I should sum up all my worries by telling a little story.

#### Low Resolution Vision and Snakes

Let's imagine an example. Consider the description: the fastest snake in Detroit. Did I pick out something particular just now? I believe so. I am not talking about the man in Quine's imaginary doorway. I am talking about a particular snake. Did I identify the snake? Well, again, I believe so. I identified it as the fastest snake in Detroit.

Could my audience pick it out of a line up? Well, that is a curious question! It brings up an entire paradigm. Who is my audience, and from what sort of lineups are they picking out my snake?

Is it a lineup of snakes from Detroit? Is it a lineup of snakes my interlocutor has met? Is it a lineup of snakes she has touched only briefly? How good is her eyesight? How closely does she scrutinize snakes in general, and how good is her memory?

In the story I am telling, my listener has low resolution vision. When she looks at snakes, each snake appears as forty-two squarish pixels, and each snake can have a different color. She is looking right now at eight snakes. She is seeing eight distinct blotches of color. Each blotch is a snake.

However, we speak imprecisely and not philosophically when we say a blotch of color is a snake. Rather, philosophically and exactly, there is a different situation,

entirely. She has several dossiers in her mind. She has various definite descriptions, e.g.:

- i) The snake now causing the green blot.
- ii) The snake now causing the aquamarine blot.
- iii) The snake now causing the olive blot.

and so forth. The snakes are in some geometric order, which she supposes corresponds to the order the colors have on her visual field. She also has these other definite descriptions, too:

- i) The snake on the left.
- ii) The snake the second from the left.
- iii) The snake the third from the left.

Let us suppose she has given each snake a name. Why not? So, let us consider the sentence:

(5) The snake on the far left is a cow.

Do we now have an instance that Donnellan would describe as referential? Judging by his words, I would think so. Donnellan says a speaker is using a definite description attributively when thoughts of the existence of the thing so described do "not arise ... from a more specific presumption that he believes ... [there is] someone else whom he can name or identify"<sup>67</sup> as being such a thing. Contrariwise, in the referential case, there *is* a more specific way to name and identify the object. What about our case? Our girl can identify the snake! She would call it: the snake on the left. And, as we said before, she has named them all. So, the snake is an object that she can name and identify.

However, something tells me Donnellan would not approve. What about the sentence:

(6) The aquamarine snake is a cow.

Is it an instance of referential use? We are supposing she named it Ferd.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 291.

It is a rather curious proposal to assert a philosophical distinction that arises from picking out things. I am not the one who suggested it. I am only saying it gets rather curious and odd when you think about it. Suppose our girl, six years ago, saw a snake win a race in Detroit. Suppose the snake was (to her) aquamarine, and suppose she saw it in a forty-two pixelish way. She is now looking at a lineup of snakes, as we said. She believes she is seeing the snake again. Suppose she is saying to herself or to her identical twin who sees everything the same way and who accompanies her all the time:

(7) The fastest snake in Detroit is a cow.

Is it an example of Donnellan's referential use? I should think so. The speedy snake had been named Ashley. The announcer called it Ashley. She presumes Ferd is Ashley. She has an identifying presumption, as Strawson would say.

She says to her sister, "The fastest snake in Detroit is a cow," and her sister is thinking about the snake that is causing her, too, to see an aquamarine blotch, and she is thinking it false that said snake is a cow. It sounds entirely referential.

Will not any alternate and secondary description do to make a usage referential? Suppose both she and her sister think the fastest snake in Chicago was eaten by the Queen. (It escaped, somehow.) Does that fact not make every usage by our sisters of "the fastest snake in Chicago" a referential one? It seems to me this would be the case. Suppose one sister says:

(8) The fastest snake in Chicago was a cow.

The other sister is now thinking about the snake eaten by the Queen, and she is thinking it false that said snake is a cow. It sounds entirely referential again. (Assume the Queen has eaten only one snake in her life.)

I feel Donnellan wouldn't approve, but I really can't see why. Suppose one sister says:

(9) The fastest snake in Chicago ever eaten by the Queen is a cow. This is attributive, right? If one combines all the descriptive facts in a speaker's dossier within the subject of our sentence, you are back to the attributive case, right?

It is all rather queer. Donnellan says if you can recognize the object, the usage is referential. However, I am unclear on this. Is it that you *think* you can recognize the object? Or that *we* who are judging and calling it referential think you can recognize the object? Or is it that you can actually recognize the object, whether you think so or not? For it is quite a tricky muddle to say whether or not someone can actually recognize and pick out something. It is far easier to say merely that they think they can.

Our girl might think aquamarine is a peculiar color for a snake and that she is seeing Ashley again. She might be recognizing Ashley. She might think she is, anyway. I do not know how rare it is for a snake to cause the color aquamarine in low pixelated mutants. I really don't know. So, I don't have an opinion one way or the other as to whether or not our girl *is* recognizing the snake. Recognizing is such a strange notion, anyway. It is a negative notion. The claim is being made that nothing in the world other some such thing that falls under some sundry description can cause me to see what I am seeing. I don't know when this is true and when it is false. I don't believe anybody knows, although we all certainly act as if we do. It all depends on how many twins are out there, unbeknownst to me and you. It depends even more strongly on the resolution of our senses, since things don't actually have to be identical to trick us in this regard. Their similarity needs only to defeat the resolution of my senses. As I said, it is a

negative proposal to say I can recognize somebody. It is a statement about the entire universe dressed up as a comment about a particular thing. It is a statement about what is *not* in the universe. I think I can say: I can recognize some object as long as other similar objects stay far enough away. However, that is not saying much. Is it? Should we say I can recognize my sister even if it turns out there is an entire planet full of beings orbiting Alpha Centauri, each of which (to my dim eyes) looks exactly like her?

The girl thinks she can recognize the snake. I am fine with that. Does this make it a referential usage?

Hard to say. I do not have the answer. People who postulate philosophical distinctions predicated on picking snakes out of a lineup will need to tell us. Not Linguistic

I am not sure we need to bother about any of this, though, because, as I said, the difference is not linguistic. An application of the Dthat operator would change the meaning of the sentence. However, merely using a sentence while something or other is going on in the world is not linguistic. I have no idea why people are talking about it. Kripke certainly thought the issue was not linguistic. If the speaker is thinking of his mother while he says, "The woman who has eaten the most cheese in the world likes me," and the listener thinks the speaker is the sort of person who *would* call his mother the woman who has eaten the most cheese in the world is obviously not true, then we have a case of speaker's reference and a case of successful transfer of thought to the listener — despite the conventions of language to the contrary. Similarly, Donnellan says the phrase 'her husband' refers to a man whom a woman is walking close to and continuously with at a party, even if he is not her husband, which I suppose was

more persuasive in a time when women did not do such things with anybody other than their husbands.

The real purpose of the current chapter is to investigate why it is philosophers are so tempted to say "identification" is going on when a girl is seeing forty-two squares or when an interesting odor is being experienced or what have you. The psychological temptation follows from the presence of a case where you would like to talk about an object (under some description) and where you do not have mental access to the essence of the thing you are talking about. You do not have cognitive purchase on the ding. When was the last time you mentally encountered the essence of a snake? Not recently.

Therefore, the problem, which is the true subject of our chapter, is one that arises ubiquitously. There are not many ding sets upon which you have a cognitive purchase. You see a worm in your garden. You may talk about the worm, of course. But do you really grok the essence of the worm? Even the best of gardeners, I feel, must say no. Could you identify the worm? By this I mean: if you ran through all the possible arrangements of everything that is fundamental in your mind's eye — if you envisioned in your mind's eye each possible world — could you spot this very worm? Do you know its essence? Doubtful.

An interesting problem arises because we scarcely ever are familiar with the essence of the things we like to talk about. Dings are hidden. Think about the dossiers you have on various objects. Think about these lists in your mind. Each list is a list of laundry. Think about the president. You have a list of laundry on the man. Think about a pebble you once saw on a beach. More laundry. Think about something that caused you to see forty-two squares the other day. It does not matter how many squares of color

you saw! It does not matter many pixels you experienced. It is always laundry. Almost invariably, our dossiers are lists of laundry.

Therefore, the interesting thing about "identification" is that we use the word at all when we have lists of laundry. We *do* use it, and we seem to use it when there is a whole *lot* of laundry. However, there seems to be no interesting philosophical basis for our ordinary usage of the word, and this is the reason why we were able to put our various philosophers' usage of "identification" under such intense and unrelenting pressure.

An astute observer of the English language would notice that definite descriptions can be used perfectly well without cognizance of the ding set. I can talk about the mouse that ate my bread the other day and I can say of the mouse that he later ate some cheese. I do not need to be able to pick *that very* mouse out of a random possible world in order to have such a conversation. I can talk about colors, too, on your refrigerator door without knowing what they are. If you think about it, most essences are completely hidden to the speaker. We talk perfectly well about these things, nonetheless. A gardener can talk about the worms in his garden.

I keep returning to examples that involve color because the essence of yellow is one of the few things one actually knows! English words employ localized intersection, but you do not need to know the ding or to identify it in order to understand these English words or to understand a sentence containing them. You simply have to presume it is there.

In short, identifying the ding is generally not a linguistic pursuit, and it is a good thing because most dings are pretty much unknowable.

#### **Rigidification**

All this is helpful to keep in mind when we add rigidification to our language. As we have said so frequently, a rigidified sentence has the essence of the thing as its meaning! The ding springs to the fore. The set of possible worlds where that very worm is alive is entirely relevant. However, even the gardener does *not* know what it is. When the gardener is talking in an ordinary way about the worm, it does not matter. You do not need to grok the ding in order to understand the sentence. However, once the gardener says:

(10) Dthat (the worm who crawled across my hand an hour ago) was purple. something radically different is happening. The pre-proposition is clearly understood. The gardener understands in what sort of possible worlds a purple worm crawled across his hand. I can imagine he can run through these various possible worlds in his mind's eye. However — and this is one of the most important points of this entire book — the gardener does not understand the post-proposition. He would need acquaintance with the ding for that. The gardener does not understand the meaning of his sentence.

Nobody understands the meaning of sentence (10). The reason is that nobody knows what sentence (10) is! Dthat affects the domain side, too. The viscera of the worm are part of sentence (10). Accordingly, the gardener does not know what he is saying. Accordingly, the gardener does not know the meaning of his words. Accordingly, the gardener is not able, in abstracto, to conceive of the possible worlds where sentence (10) is true.

The gardener knows the pre-proposition of sentence (10) since it is written in black and white. Therefore, he knows a great deal *about* sentence (10). Unrigidified pre-

propositions tell us a lot. They tell us interesting laundry. As we noted in the last section, we find laundry exceptionally interesting, and it is most often all we have about an object or an individual. We are content with it because it is all we have. When something is unknowable, you scarcely ever wish to know it. When you don't know the meaning of your sentence and you *cannot* know the meaning of your sentence, you don't really care to.

#### The Psychological Response of Faux Rigidification

Kripke has taught us that we have rigid sentences in English. Names are a good case in point. A name can be the subject of a sentence. Kaplan's Dthat operator can kick in from time to time, although English is somewhat ambiguous about when it does. I think I can say:

(11) The inventor of the light bulb might not have invented the light bulb, and we all would have been in the dark.

More to the point, I think I can say:

(12) The inventor of the light bulb might not have invented the light bulb, but somebody else would have by now.

The interesting thing is what happens *psychologically* when we rigidify on a definite description and when we think about the behavior of the sentence we are saying.

Although people do not have epistemological access to the subject of these sentences, they tend not to notice this fact. After all, the pre-proposition is clear. Moreover, although there are actually rare cases where the epistemological failure can be made evident, such as a rigidified reference to a color that is not in my grasp (which we will look at later, via the color *shmink*), people tend not to notice the epistemological failure when the object is not the type of thing one could ever grasp, anyway. Psychologically, a curious substitute for the rigidified subset intervenes. By construction, rigidification gives us the subset that comprises the essence of the individual that uniquely meets the description. Not having this cognitively, the speaker, when conceptualizing the transition from the pre-proposition to the post-proposition, tends to insert into the post-proposition other facts from the dossier he has assembled about the object so-described. I call this psychological effect: *faux rigidification*.

One way of putting it is that we think about the behavior of the sentence without truly considering the sentence itself. You think *about* your sentence. You don't really think your sentence. It is the fundamental ignorance that results from instituting rigidification which is the source a great many riddles in linguistic philosophy. The Stock Character

Identifying the ding — and understanding the sentence — is not merely a matter of considering the object under different or independent information, under a second description. Moreover, if the necessary illumination is not provided by a second identifying phrase, I fail to see how it can work for *n* additional identifying phrases, where I am assuming these phrases to be contingent and not essential. Almost all the dossiers a person has on various objects are lists of laundry. So, what do you do when you think about a rigidified sentence? The laundry doesn't really apply. You would like to be thinking about the meaning of the sentence. You would like to be thinking about, in abstracto, the possible worlds where the essential set exists and is doing what the predicate says it is doing. But you cannot think about this directly, generally, because you don't know what the essential set is.

However, this does *not* prevent people from rigidifying their words and thinking about them in some such way. It seems that, psychologically, what we in fact do is to

create various stock characters that inhabit our mind. Our dossiers morph into little people. I have one named Leif Ericson. My Leif Ericson is blond, and he is not as tall as you would think he might be. Some of my stock characters are surprising. I had one for many years on John Greco. He was a tall, thin, pallid man with receding black hair. Often correct, but never happy. A thin nose and a very British face. Sosa was chubby, meanwhile, sort of a bulldog by comparison. Whenever I would read an article by Greco, the stock character appeared and talked to me. After I met John Greco — who is short, tan and athletic — the stock character, all six foot four of him, pale and gangly, did not fail to reappear when I read the philosophical works. He would not be dislodged! He was ingrained in my mind as the author of these works, and I would have to deal with it. It was all rather peculiar.

We have these stock characters. I am sure you have one for Eadgifu of Wessex. When we contemplate a sentence with rigidity, we invoke the stock character. When you think about the sentence:

#### (13) Eadgifu of Wessex drowned on a Thursday.

you try, in your mind's eye, to imagine the possible worlds where it is true. You imagine each and every world where *this very lady* drowns on a Thursday. You imagine worlds where she had rickets and did not grow quite as tall. You imagine worlds where she was not named Eadgifu, thankfully, which I cannot imagine was ever a lovely name for a girl. You imagine worlds where she was born in Leeds and died on a Thursday. As long as *she* is in the possible world and the calendar reads Thursday when she dies (by drowning), then sentence (13) is true.

This is what you think to yourself as you contemplate the truth conditions of the meaning of — your sentence. Your stock character is important in this regard. She is running around in these worlds, often dressed in royal colors and wearing a crown, and she keeps drowning here and there, like Ophelia.

Stock characters are tremendously important. They are what we think about when we rigidify sentences. We do not think about the essential sets. We cannot think about the essential sets. Yet we are not going to think to ourselves:

(14) A lady from Wessex who was named `Eadgifu' drowned on a Thursday. which has quite a different behavior entirely, counterfactually! Any number of people can be the subject of sentence (14).

However, there is just one ding set involved in sentence (13). Nonetheless, you, as a speaker, do not know what it is. So, you summon your stock character for Eadgifu of Wessex — assuming you have a stock character for Eadgifu of Wessex — and you contemplate sentence (13). You are not really thinking the meaning of sentence (13), however. You are simply thinking *about* the meaning of sentence (13), and your friendly stock character is playing a role.

#### **Rigidifying to Hidden Stuff**

A language that rigidifies to hidden stuff is going to give us problems. Faux rigidification is a psychological response to the problem. The speaker believes the object under description has a host of other properties and other ways that it can be described. The speaker imagines the object under *these* other descriptions, instead, especially when considering counterfactual cases that deny the description now being rigidified.

In the most extreme cases, the speaker or listener, who cannot spell out the essential set of the individual in question, nevertheless, creates some sort of stock character in her mind. Often there is an emotional attachment. She feels the stock character is her friend. Extreme disappointment ensues should the description or name prove empty. More commonly, the mere possibility of such emptiness is abjectly denied by the speaker. The stock character is summoned whenever rigidification is demanded by the language. The stock character is felt to inhabit the possible worlds included in the counterfactual truth conditions of the sentence.

People feel they know Aristotle. Some people have a face in mind. Some people have a height and a complexion. They port it over and consider this face, that height, and that complexion when they imagine Aristotle himself in a counterfactual possible world. It is a pleasant illusion.

I am tempted to say our various philosophers are making claims of "identification" if and only if they already have a stock character for the object of the phrase-wise definite description in mind. It would explain why a mere second description presumed to apply does not confer so-called "identification." No one says "identification" has occurred when you realize Smith's murderer was also the driver of a white Ford Bronco.<sup>68</sup>

It simply takes a great deal of information — all of which is laundry, mind you before an abstract dossier of facts congeals into a little person who inhabits your mind. Once you have an ample stock character and have created a strong emotional attachment to (or repulsion from) him, her or it, you will say you have "identified" the referent of a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> However — now that I think about it — people might say identification has occurred if you are wondering who was the driver of the white Ford Bronco, and someone tells you, "Smith's murderer." It is all very strange.

phrase-wise definite description whenever the definite description brings up this ample stock characters. One or two ancillary descriptions does not do it.

As an example, let us take an object and hide it in a box. Let the essence of the object be a particular DNA sequence or a very strict and narrow arrangement of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and other atoms, or what have you. I do not care precisely what is to be the nature of the object in the box. I care only that it is hidden in a box and that I do not know the essential parameters of what is inside. The box has a thousand blinking lights on the outside. Or a million. Or a billion. They are connected to the object, and the object can make these lights flash in an endless number of ways.

The hidden essence causes these lights to blink. They shimmer and dance. They blink in a complex, beautiful, fascinating and appealing way. I currently have a dossier on the object, and the list of facts includes:

- i) The object causing these external lights to blink as I see them in interval  $t_0$ .
- ii) The object causing these external lights to blink as I see them in interval  $t_1$ .
- iii) The object causing these external lights to blink as I see them in interval  $t_2$ .

iv) The object causing these external lights to blink as I see them in interval  $t_3$ . etcetera, ...

I have an exceptionally rich dossier, which I assume is all about the same object. It consists of a great number of uniquely identifying descriptions. Suppose I rigidify my dossier with a name. Or suppose, instead, I consider the phrase:

(15) Dthat (The object causing these external lights to blink as I have seen them) is a gerbil.

Obviously, I am going to have a problem comprehending the meaning of my sentence!

Why? The answer is obvious. I am not talking about comprehending the pre-

proposition. I am talking about understanding the meaning of the sentence, the post-

proposition. The ding is hidden. I am not going to get there.

I cannot consider one possible world after another, notice where the carbon atoms are located, declare the essence present in the world, and point out that it is a gerbil. I only know a contingent, non-essential description about that equivalence class in the actual world, which is pretty useless.

The pre-proposition is a different sentence. The pre-proposition is true if there is a gerbil in the box. The pre-proposition is true, counterfactually, if the object in the box is not in the box, and there is a gerbil in the box. I can comprehend the pre-proposition. It is easy.

Yet, under our initial hypothesis that the essence of the object is hidden to me, I simply cannot understand the rigidified post-proposition. I don't know what needs to be wrapped up into the skin of a gerbil, counterfactually, to make the sentence true. I just see a bunch of blinking lights.

One non-solution is to claim these descriptions involving visual appearances are non-descriptive. It is boldly untrue. It does seem, however, to be a strategy implicitly appealed to time and time again. People often make a presumed distinction between the ostensive and the descriptive, but it seems obvious to me the ostensive is descriptive in precisely the manner I have just detailed above.

I am merely using a rigidification operator that has been defined from scratch. I am merely imagining what happens in a case where I do not have epistemic access to the essence of some object or another. I am thinking about all this *a priori*. I am creating sentences, such as (13) and (15), whose ding sets are unknown to me. I am contemplating, *a priori*, evident sentential overlays with hidden context. I am thinking

about what must perforce follow from such assumptions. It is obvious that, by construction, the meaning of these sentences cannot be known.

Faced with such a language, a natural, though erroneous, response would be to exaggerate one's grasp of the rigidified proposition by imagining various dossier facts holding true as one tries (vainly!) to imagine the counterfactual truth behavior of one's sentence. Another erroneous response would be to create a stock character, a personality, if you will, that merely represents the "object" in a comforting way when one considers counterfactual possibilities. Another erroneous response would be to claim that looking at something "ostensively" differs from the descriptivist realm. These would all be natural responses, but they would obviously be wrong. However, since all people have is the laundry, it is natural to overestimate the importance of the non-essential facts.

Taking the Queen's DNA to be an exemplary essence unknown to me, let me put it this way. Even if I were to say, "Hello, how do you do?" to the queen of England and I were to see various colors for as many dozens of seconds as you would care to imagine, I would *not* know the essence of the queen. I would not be acquainted with the rigidification of "the regent of England" in any way that matters, linguistically.

# CHAPTER 8

# "RUSSELLIANISM"

### Russell

It might be instructive to examine a bit of jargon that arose in the last fifty years. One school of thought on the matter of names has come to be called Russellianism or neo-Russellianism. It is the view that ordinary proper names, such as 'Mildred Owens' and 'Richard Feynman' have no linguistic intermediary other than their referent, the object for which they stand. Fregeanism, meanwhile, is jargon for the view that some sort of descriptive intermediary, some sort of Sinn, intervenes and gets us to the referent somehow.

The first jargon is interesting because, if you know Russell's line of thought, you are aware he did *not* think an ordinary name such as 'Mildred Owens' was unmediated by descriptive lore. Quite to the contrary, he thought a person who utilized such a name must have in mind some description, e.g, the frumpy housewife of 136 Abercrombie Lane, Glasgow, Scotland, or the wife of the minister of education for the Glasgow municipal government, or the woman concerning whom my interlocutor has a unique description under the name, 'Mildred Owens', and suchlike. It is illustrative to inquire how it came about a position Russell would find anathema to his own came to be named after him.

It is peculiar. Russell thought ordinary English names were disguised descriptors. When you spoke of Romulus, he said, you were describing a character in the past, and it

would be fine if you were wrong about its existence. You would still be saying something and meaning something.

Russell also had a technical device within his adaptation of Frege's first order logic, the 0-ary functions, which, in moments of laziness, he liked to call names.

If I am not mistaken, subsequent philosophers have not been able to keep these concepts separate. (They strike me as being as different as jet propulsion and elderberries.) Frege, if I recall, called every definite description in the subject position a proper name. No harm there, but things *are* getting confusing. I recall Searle talking about Frege and proper names without noting and, quite possibly, without being aware Frege was generally talking about something other than everyday names.<sup>69</sup>

If I understand the current jargon in philosophy rightly, Russellianism is now the view that everyday names are unmediated by descriptive content. Russellianism for names is austere direct reference. Russell thought this sort of thing was utterly impossible for the sorts of things we tend to name in everyday situations!

If I understand what happened, it is this. Russell decided to use the word, 'name', in a very specialized sense. In his own jargon, a *name* was simply a word that summoned its meaning directly, without intervention. Hence, it is not a position for Russell that names, as he uses the word, have a direct, unmediated link to their meaning. It is a definition.

In mathematical logic, it would simply be a 0-ary function that summons an element of the universe. First order mathematical logic simply makes no sense if your 0-ary functions might not give you an element of the universe. You cannot prove theorems

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> See the opening page of Searle 1958.

about dense linear orderings. You cannot prove much of anything of interest to metamathematicians.

As was the fashion of the day, first order logic was thought by many, including Russell, to be a promising arena wherein the English language might be modeled. If, however, one were to force English into these metamathematical strictures, thought Russell, you would have to respect the way the system naturally gives you elements of the universe directly and for free. It wouldn't do to throw English hook, line and sinker into first order logic and expect anything but a random, chaotic mess. Frege basically tried to do this. Frege waved his hands and said a good scientific language would be shorn of all unreferring terms on the subject side. But, since I can't even find my keys now and then, it would be a pretty hopeless task.

If you were going to use first order logic as your scheme and press English forcibly into it, thought Russell, then you should reserve your constants (0-ary functions) for things you could summon directly. It occurred to him the only sort of thing one could actually summon directly in an unmediated way would be those little bits of perceptual flotsam and jetsam flitting about in one's perceptual, private world. *This* yellow or *that* blue.

Russell wanted absolutely no doubt to intervene when a thing was summoned. After all, in mathematical logic, a constant simply *gets* you to its object. He thus deemed it necessary to reserve only the highest standard of knowledge, complete indubitability, to the things so summoned. He called the very highest standard of knowledge, in his jargon, *acquaintance*. In his manner of talking, I am acquainted with yellow when I am seeing yellow.

#### If That Is Russell, What Is Russellianism?

Eventually, the dominant usage of the word, `name', won out. Today, when a philosopher talks about a name, he is always talking about the sort of appellation we bestow upon our cats, our libraries, and our historical figures. A name is now an ordinary proper name. Similarly, the dominant use of the word, `acquaintance', has won out. When Soames tells his stories involving Tom, Dick and Harry and their usage of the names, `Peter Hempel' and `Carl Hempel', he talks about them being acquainted with the elderly, white-haired gentleman .<sup>70</sup>

When you throw in the presumably false presupposition that to have seen someone in an ostensive way is fundamentally not descriptive, you have a curious brew that echoes Russell in all the words he used but in none of the concepts he employed. The new position states:

(1) Names have no descriptive meaning but instead directly summon their bearer, an object with which the speaker has acquaintance.

Put a little differently, the claim is that:

(2) Ordinary proper names have no descriptive meaning but instead directly summon their bearer, an object the speaker theorizes to exist because he saw some colors in such-and-such a way at a café.

The position is Russellianism. It sounds like Russell, to be sure. The first sentence sounds exactly like Russell, and it *is* Russell if you plug his concepts in for *name* and *acquaintance*. It is his definition of 'name' in terms of his concept of acquaintance. With Russell's notions, however, it is not a position. It is a definition.

Fleshed out with the concepts expressed in sentence (2), however, expression (1) *does* become a position. It becomes a bold claim about ordinary names! It becomes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Soames 2002, p. 216 and 222.

austere direct reference. It becomes the position known today as Russellianism. It does sound like Russell. However, the meaning of *name* has changed,<sup>71</sup> and the meaning of *acquaintance* has changed.<sup>72</sup> So, it is not Russell. Other than the fact that none of the crucial words mean what they did before, we have a philosophical position associated with Russell.

The caveats are, historically, that Russell did *not* consider ordinary names to be names, that Russell thought ordinary names *do* have descriptive backing and meaning for each speaker, and that Russell thought ordinary names should definitely *not* have their bearers as their cognitive meaning precisely because one cannot be acquainted with them in the absolutist manner which Russell intended the word to convey.

These caveats were evidently not enough to deter philosophers in the late twentieth century from describing their own views as Russellian. I cannot imagine what sort of caveats would be sufficient! I did say, unfortunately, that it matters not one whit to quibble over a word or a piece of jargon. Is there some philosophical problem under the surface that might be relevant?

I am not sure. Perhaps I am a trifle upset at the cognitive dissonance I must maintain when I am told a particular author's position is Russellian. However, I do know certain authors in the late twentieth century tended to think the new position they called Russellian *improved* upon Russell's own position.<sup>73</sup>

They seemed to castigate him for saying ordinary proper names were not names. They seemed to ridicule him for thinking one could not be acquainted with people. In so

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> From a technical 0-ary function of first order logic to an ordinary English name.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> From the infallible intimacy of conscious experience to saying hello in a café.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Donnellan writes: "I believe that much of Russell's theory has been accepted by many philosophers with the thought that there was a certain excrescence that could be ignored." (Donnellan 1974, p. 9)
far as these philosophers, in appropriating Russell's moniker to their own position, thought he was making a mistake when he was merely talking within the confines of his own specialized and peculiar jargon — and talking correctly! — their usage of the jargon "Russellian" does involve some sort of philosophical mistake.

When Russell said ordinary proper names were not names in his jargon, he was being entirely correct. He was not to be corrected! Similarly, with people and acquaintance. Philosophers seemed to criticize Russell's use of words. They seemed to say he shouldn't speak the way he spoke. They placed their *own* concepts into the words he arranged. The result was *their own view* about ordinary proper names. They used Russell's jargon (according to which he said something completely different), changed the meaning of the jargon and proceeded to state their own view. His view was the exact opposite of their view! Yet they did not like the fact that when he talked and when he used certain words, *e.g.* `name' and `acquaintance', he was not invoking the same ideas they were. But it is just the way he talked. He was not to be corrected about it. Yet correct him they did.

Perhaps none of it matters. The Holy Roman Empire was not Roman, not holy and not an empire. It was just a bunch of petty German states. Russell's position about the things he called names did not involve the sort of relationship you have to people whom have occasionally seen at a bookstore-café. Neither did it hold for the names 'Romulus' or 'Nixon'. Meanwhile, the modern neo-Russellian is using the words completely differently and has a position about ordinary proper names that denies any descriptive content to their cognitive purchase.

It is hard to keep all this straight. I mention it because I have a nagging suspicion not every philosopher who writes on these issues is keeping it straight. As we will stress two chapters from now, equivocation is a classic philosophical danger, and it should be avoided. One of our major goals of the dissertation is to point out the flaws in the Russellian doctrine on names. I paused to remind the reader the Russellian position on names is not a position of Russell and is as diametrically opposed to his own view as one could possibly imagine.

# CHAPTER 9

# THE PROBLEM OF THE RING

### The Ring

When defining a name as a rigidification of descriptive comments in a dossier, we divided the dossier into the core and the periphery. The meaning of the name is thought of as the rigidification of the conjunction of the core descriptions when there is ought else but a periphery. Once again, the language in which these descriptions are expressed does not have to be the language wherein the name resides. Such a feature allows us to put any coherent thought, at all, into the description.

We defined the core, the periphery and the ring in terms of the notion of dissolving the dossier. Since the dossier embodies a thinker's opinion that such-and-such an object with the attached name is an object that exists in the world, we consider the prospect of the thinker coming to believe the conjunction of all the facts in the dossier does not describe a thing in the world.

The next question is what to do about it. Obviously, the dossier needs to be broken up. However, it is less than obvious that it needs to be dissolved. Yet what are we saying? If we consider the dossier as the conjunction of all these facts, it *surely* needs to be dissolved.

There is a clear sense, taking all the elements in the dossier as defining the dossier, that there is no such thing a modifying a dossier which is believed to refer to nothing; there is only dissolution. Hence, even by using the phrase "modifying a

dossier," instead of dissolving it, we are implying some sort of equivalence class. We must ask ourselves if it is an arbitrary equivalence class — solely of emotional value — or if the equivalence class is the reflection of something interesting and deep about the world.

If the ring is null, the answer appears to be clear. In such a case, we have an equivalence class of same-ness of dossier that corresponds to any and all elements of the periphery being subtracted while preserving same-ness and any element of the core being subtracted thereby destroying same-ness. The substantive result that follows from these allowable and disallowed transformations between the particular instances of the equivalence class is the very concept defined by the conjunction of the core.

Hence, we have a rather roundabout way of saying that the unrigidified meaning of a name is the core of its dossier, in the case of an empty ring.

But what about a non-trivial ring? There is going to be a more complex algorithm that defines the equivalence class of same-ness of dossier. Yet we need to ask ourselves if we can find anything deep about the world emanating from these decisions. Decisions happen for odd and emotional reasons, after all. In the null ring case, the fact that we managed to assert, unreservedly, that the linguistic meaning *is* the core derives from the fact that our thinker has already reflected upon her dossier in such a way as to conceive of her core *as* the core and the periphery *as* the periphery for a particular name.

As a practical matter, such a practice would appear to be a bit suspect. However, in our terms, this is only to say that far more dossiers are ring-like than not in our ordinary world, but not that we should be looser about the core. We are going to be tight about the core, by definition. A person whose dossier on Julius is only that said object

invented the zip is going to have that very description in her core, and reflectively so. She later hears a rumor that the inventor of the zip had a tobacco problem, but she puts this fact over in her periphery on Julius.

The ring is a strange thing. We might need additional tools merely to talk about it. Consider a dossier with name, N, core,  $\{C_1, ..., C_n\}$ , ring,  $\{A, B, C, D\}$  and periphery,  $\{P_1, ..., P_m\}$ . Assuming A, B, C, and D are unrelated, we are asserting that the removal of A, for instance, does not necessitate the dissolving of the dossier, and likewise for B, C and D. However, the removal of A, B, C and D together would, indeed, dissolve in the dossier in the mind of our thinker.

Yet we must consider various other sentences, too. What about A & B? What about B & C? What about all the possible conjunctions of the elements of the ring? Surely, they are sentences, too, believed about the object of the dossier. Where do they fit in? Have we mis-phrased the question by imagining unrelated sentences in the core, the ring and the periphery?

With respect to the core and the periphery, the consideration of the conjunctions does not matter. The conjunction of two descriptions in the core is, once again, a description in the core. Similarly, the conjunction of two descriptions in the periphery is, once again, in the periphery.

Yet what about the ring? We stipulate the removal of A, B, C and D together would have to dissolve the dossier. Hence, shouldn't  $A \lor B \lor C \lor D$  be in the core of the dossier? Suppose that each triplet, upon removal, would dissolve the dossier. Shouldn't  $A\&B \lor A\&C \lor A\&D \lor B\&C \lor B\&D \lor C\&D$  be in the core, too? And, for simplicity, let us suppose that removing a doublet would not count towards dissolution, although it *is* rather odd. Suppose C and D would maintain the dossier in the face of A and B leaving, but their own leaving would not compromise the dossier. It is rather odd. Yet we might think of it as the core doing most of the psychological work and that, if either C and D are present or A and B are present, we have just enough for the person to claim that the *same* object is being talked about at one time when she uses the word and at another time when she uses the word. It is all very queer. What sort of psychology is this?

So, do we have all the rules basically coded up in the core? Well, it is an interesting possibility. Let us consider it. Suppose all the rules of the ring for dissolution of the dossier were coded up in the core by Boolean operations. (It rules out temporal and whimsical rules for the ring.) In this case — imagining a hierarchy among the core, the ring and periphery —the sentences in the ring are merely shadows of sentences higher up.

If the person is reflective about her core, which contains the ring coded up (and the notion of being reflective really *does* define the core), we should imagine that the core is doing all the work vis a vis the dissolution of the dossier. The ring is doing none of it. In fact, we might speak of the ring here as a phantom ring. It is not really removal of sentences from the ring that dissolves the dossier! It is the removal of a sentence from the core, and the shadow sentences, lower down, fade away.

Hence, we might need to tag sentences as primary and derivative to begin with. We might need to talk about descriptions and their shadows. Anything held higher up might cast a shadow lower down. Removal of a sentence from a higher valued sphere

could logically necessitate the removal of sentences from a lower sphere. Of course, the only higher/ lower dichotomy that could matter, really, is the core/ring distinction. So, let us define *phantom* elements of the ring to be those whose dossier-dissolving rules follow logically from sentences in the core.

Hence, we can imagine a purely phantom ring, and we should imagine, once again, that the preservation of the dossier as the backing of our linguistic element, the name, is linguistically aligned with viewing its non-rigidified meaning as the conjunction of the core of the dossier.

#### The Earthly Ring

What then of the non-phantom ring? We might call it the *earthly ring*. To have an earthly ring on a named object is, by definition, to be in a mental state that is not wholly reflective. Quite peculiar.

It seems necessary to embark upon a discussion that involves degrees of reflection. Hence, we need to ask ourselves whether or not reflection admits of degrees, other than zero and one. Is there just one middle zone of reflection? Are there two? Is it a continuum? If it is the latter, then our linguistic account will have to be sensitive to a continuum. Quite odd.

To begin, I suppose the easiest spot is a digital break between reflective and unreflective. Reflective purchase upon the rules of elements of a ring turns them into shadows. It follows, in this case, that the earthly ring is entirely unreflective.

What could this mean! Looking back, we defined the core, the ring, and the periphery with words that implied a time evolution. Firstly, a certain opinion about the referential success of a collection of facts dawns on the thinker. Secondly, an action is

taken vis a vis the dossier. An equivalence class, *same-ness of dossier*, is generated thereby. Of course, we weren't exactly thinking of it as a time evolution. If one adds mental reflection to the mix, then the time delay between assuming a fact and dissolving (or preserving) a dossier, is a time during which various logical relations are considered and various deductions performed. We speak in terms of the time metaphor, but we really are talking about certain logical relationships that hold.

However, in the non-reflective case, presumably the logical relationships go out the window, and all we really have are the actual time relationships. We have facts opined and, subsequently, dossier revisions made. That is peculiar. Things don't need to be logical, at this point.

Which is to say what? The dossier revisions (or total dissolutions) are stipulated to happen at time  $t_2$ , and it is further stipulated that they are not happening due to a logical deduction that arises from reflecting about something relevant. Hence, they are just happening. The girl needs to get on with her life. She simply needs to make *some* decision about dissolving the dossier or about preserving it. And she *makes* it. Sort of the way you decide to have an omelet today, instead of eggs over easy. A whim kicks in, and you stir the eggs you cracked into the bowl. It is like the decision between having ham in the morning instead of blueberries. You just *felt* like having ham today. So, the temporal domain marches on, and the thinker just *feels* like dissolving her dossier once a few elements of the earthly ring won't fit. Or she just *feels* like preserving it today. Blueberries it is. The question is not decided logically in advance.

Therefore, I do not see how the earthly ring can be characterized in any terms other than concept replacement. Yet it isn't concept replacement, exactly — starting with

one definite concept as the meaning and subsequently moving to another — since the only definite concepts are in the core. However, we should liken it to concept replacement in so far as the conjunction of all the non-peripheral descriptions *is* one concept, and you have moved to another after purging one or two items from the ring.

We could call the conjunction of the non-peripheral elements the *body* of the dossier. Hence, in the case we are considering, the body of the name is changing. It is changing for reasons that are not pre-reflectively logical. Hence, the body is just being replaced by another body because the speaker wishes to move on with her linguistic life. (Or the body does not change, and the name is retired.) Hence, the presence of an earthly ring in a dossier on a name simply means that certain re-appraisals of the world might trigger new bodies to arise, and the speaker is, prima facie, just as surprised at the result as we are.

A temptation arises, since the core conjunction is unambiguously a concept behind the name, in the case of the empty earthly ring, to call the body (in the case of the non-empty earthly ring) a *pseudo-concept* behind the name. The derogatory hint arises from the unreflective origin of the changes. A concept is a strict concept.

A pseudo-concept, meanwhile, is the descriptive backing of a name, but it is subject to change. It is not quite a concept because the thinker is not reflectively aware of the backing. However, since we are defining the migration from one pseudo-concept to another as lacking pre-reflective logical sense, there is something happening that is entirely akin to concept replacement for a term. In concept replacement, a speaker gets tired of using `awesome' for terrifying things and starts to use the word for fun things. Ditto with `terrific'. In the case we are considering, there is a moment where a whim

kicks in, and the backing either changes in some way or the name is retired. The survival of the term depends upon pseudo-concept replacement.

There is also the case where more than one disjoint subset of the initial body is suddenly believed to be satisfied in the world. In such a case, the whim might have to choose which fractured body is going to bear the name. As Searle puts it,

To use a proper name referringly is to presuppose the truth of certain uniquely referring descriptive statements, but it is not ordinarily to assert these statements or even to indicate which exactly are presupposed. And herein lies most of the difficulty. The question of what constitutes the criteria for "Aristotle " is generally left open, indeed it seldom in fact arises, and when it does arise it is we, the users of the name, who decide more or less arbitrarily what these criteria shall be. If, for example, of the characteristics agreed to be true of Aristotle, half should be discovered to be true of one man and half true of another, which would we say was Aristotle? Neither? The question is not decided for us in advance.<sup>74</sup>

We are considering, I believe, the case where the decision is entirely arbitrary. It is whimsical. It is a quest for blueberries. That said, given that people have intense fondness for imaginary friends, the object that does get chosen to continue the name will continue to get the same affection (or revulsion) it was receiving before, while the new entity who needs a new name will be treated as a stranger. Also, if a decision is made to discontinue a dossier — which is not necessary, by the definition of the earthly ring — a friend is liable to be lost, and great sadness might ensue.

Since the rules of the ring are no longer logical, we can imagine losing two facts in a different order over time might make a difference as to whether or not a speaker retires a name. There might be a frog-in-the-kettle effect. If you were to learn, all at once, that a certain supposed author did not write ninety percent of what you thought he did, you might make him an un-person. However, if you slowly and steadily peel off

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Searle 1958, p. 171.

these works during the course of a decade, you might leave the dossier intact. Perhaps we are unreflective and unaware just which facts we hold dear. Perhaps a woman thinks she was kissed by a great man in the darkness at a party, and she also associates with his name (a pet name she assigned) many astounding achievements. Should she someday come to believe each of these several achievements were done by different people, she might continue to reserve the name for the very person (with a single achievement) whom she thinks kissed her that night. She never saw the man, of course. The achievements, mere rumors. When does she retire her pet name for her prince charming? When does she think that no great man ever actually loved her? It is an emotional affair.

Evans details various people swapping places along the time line of the accomplishments of Napoleon.<sup>75</sup> Suppose there were millions of people involved in creating the accomplishments of Napoleon. Suppose there were seventeen. When, emotionally, do you retire the name, Napoleon Bonaparte? Evans picks out a few whom he wishes to call Napoleon at the expense of a time-swapping competitor. It is fine with me. Knock yourself out. Make your own pre-thought out dossier as reflective as you wish it to be. Demote as many elements to the shadows as you can. Yet I do not think you can stay ahead of all the contingencies for the ring of Napoleon. If you think through the case of 176 early imposters, there is always the case of 177 not-so-early imposters. What then?

Evans thinks through his examples to discredit the causal theory, and I applaud the effort. However, it does raise the next issue concerning the way names work in virtue of the descriptive content associated by a speaker. First off, speakers may differ. That's

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Evans 1973, p. 201-2.

obvious, and there is no right answer. You and I may disagree about just when Homer or Romulus becomes a non-person.

The problem under discussion right now, though, is the unreflective aspect of two or three or five Napoleon imposters doing various stuff, some important, some not, at different times. Why are we calling them imposters if we are not sure who the real Napoleon was? Why are we calling him the real Napoleon when the whole point of our discussion is to say, when the ring is stressed, that there is no *real* Napoleon. There is only the sub-description *you* are going to hook up into the same equivalence class with a previously believed referring, but now believed non-referring, conjunction of qualities. That is not *real*.

We are considering the case where whimsy is our guide, are we not? Then, to say that your time-elapsed chosen restriction of the ring now selects the *real* Napoleon is merely an emotional gushing, is it not? Other people might gush the same way, to be sure. But is it any more than gushing?

### One Gedanken Experiment against Descriptivism for Names

A classic way to define a concept behind a word is to inquire whether or not you would assert the word — in some trivial existence statement — under such-and-such circumstances. It is intended to be, quite simply, a counterfactual journey through the conceptual space of the word. Unfortunately, the thought experiment is posed with the time metaphor. The world is theorized to be such-and-such a way. *Then,* you are asked to say something.

Suppose — for whatever reason — you were inclined to undergo a concept replacement for the word under discussion. Well, obviously, your impending answer

would have nothing to do with demarcating the earlier concept possessed by the word. That's obvious. So, when we philosophers do what-would-you-say thought experiments, we need to guard against true temporal progression and the temporal arrival of concept replacement for sundry reasons.

Suppose a person tells me my theory about the heavenly vaults is wrong. Suppose she tells me a radical new theory and asks me which elements of her new theory I would call *planets*. I do not believe there is a correct answer. If the theory is Anaximander's and the circular lights are due to un-occluded vents, I might choose to have no planets, at all. The gedanken experiment is told under conditions of conceptual revision and concept replacement.

My point is that, if you were to pursue this style of gedanken experiment about a name with an earthly ring, you would *have* to be casting it into an atmosphere of pseudoconcept replacement. You are telling me my theories are wrong. You are telling me I have a non-referring dossier. It is ring-like non-referring! It follows that an inquiry into the *subsequent* conditions wherein I go forward and continue to use a name (or not) is not identical with an inquiry into the logical counterfactual conditions under which the word is used correctly (or not). The latter is a conceptual exploration. The former need not be. In the earthly ring case, it *is* not.

Hence, we should not commit an oh-so subtle equivocation of pretending that what-would-you-say questions reveal the boundaries of the concept behind a word when, in the case of true temporality, they do not.

One gedanken experiment employed against descriptivism for names involves a what-would-you-say approach. Consider a name `Jacoby' and a long list of

characteristics in the ring. The philosopher asks of each characteristic whether or not it is necessary for Jacoby to have the characteristic. But the query is *not* made in the sense of Kripkean necessity. We surely admit that the counterfactual behavior of `Jacoby' differs from these items on the list. We admit that, counterfactually, Aristotle could have been an unknown shepherd.

We are asking the question while invoking a different sense of necessity. The question is: does the name fail to refer if *right now* the object does not have such-and-such a quality? Taken temporally, a person might well say no. (She may say whatever she likes.) Pseudo-concept replacement might kick in. We repeat our little game for each concept in the core and in the ring.

But it sure looks bad for the descriptivist explanation of names. *No* descriptive quality is important! Reference succeeds no matter what. Ergo, reference is independent from description.

Of course, the reality is different. All these problems emanated directly from our decision to define a name in terms of the backing of a descriptive dossier. Hence, these problems cannot be used to deny descriptivism.

In *Proper Names*, Searle imagines a philosopher making such an argument, so I assume various of his contemporaries did so. Searle is making an argument wherein he ties names to characteristics. Without various characteristics in mind, he doesn't see how the name can be about anything, for a particular speaker. So, he has made this argument, and he issues the following conclusion:

So now it seems as if the rules for a proper name must somehow be logically tied to particular characteristics of the object in such a way that the name has a sense as well as a reference; indeed, it seems it could not have a reference unless it did have a sense, for how, unless the name has a sense, is it to be correlated with the object?<sup>76</sup>

Vis a vis our present purposes, his important discussion is about to follow. Searle

imagines the gedanken experiment we were just worrying about. He imagines a retort to

his argument. He puts the worry this way:

Suppose someone answers this argument as follows: "The characteristics located in teaching the name are not the rules for using the proper name: they are simply pedagogic devices employed in teaching the name to someone who does not know how to use it. Once our student has identified the object to which the name applies he can forget or ignore these various descriptions by means of which he identified the object, for they are not part of the sense of the name; the name does not have a sense. Suppose, for example, that we teach the name 'Aristotle ' by explaining that it refers to a Greek philosopher born in Stagira, and suppose that our student continues to use the name correctly, that he gathers more information about Aristotle, and so on. Let us suppose it is discovered later on that Aristotle was not born in Stagira at all, but in Thebes. We will not now say that the meaning of the name has changed, or that Aristotle did not really exist at all. In short, explaining the use of a name by citing characteristics of the object is not giving the rules for the name, for the rules contain no descriptive content at all. They simply correlate the name to the object independently of any descriptions of it.<sup>77</sup>

Notice how the talk above about "rules for the name" correspond to our rules for the ring

of a name. (Notice also the claim about identifying the object, identifying reference.)

Searle claims the argument is not convincing! He says that clearly there are cases

where we would withhold the name, 'Aristotle', entirely. We should say he did not exist,

at all, if nobody did anything in the ring. Perhaps we could drop Stagira. Perhaps we

could drop one little thing or another. But, surely, thinks Searle, there needs to be

somebody who did *something* from this list in order for 'Aristotle' to refer. He says:

I am suggesting it is a necessary fact that Aristotle has the logical sum, inclusive disjunction, of properties commonly attributed to him: any individual not having at least some of these properties could not be Aristotle.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Searle 1958, p. 168.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. 172.

The logical sum is a bit weak. Yet Searle is correct in demanding that there be a descriptive backing to the name, 'Aristotle'. One should not jump to the conclusion that reference succeeds independently of any descriptions.

However, Searle's argument we brutalized and ridiculed by Kripke because Kripke projected his own meaning of `necessary' on Searle. In *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke has a laugh and then — with the correctness of a mathematician — says that perhaps Searle had some other notion in mind. Searle did. Yet I am not sure why Searle did not point it out immediately. I speculate that Searle might have been a trifle confused. There are before us now three utterly distinct notions that are being called *necessary*. There is the matter of a sentence being true in all possible worlds. There is the matter of a sentential overlay being automatic and having sentential necessity. And there is the matter of at least one of a number of descriptive elements in the ring of a dossier being necessary to the preservation of the name, which is to say that reflection would surely discover a certain disjunction to be hard-coded in the core and that the ring contains various shadows.

### It Is Confusing

When the kitchen sink gets thrown at the descriptivist defense of names, it can get confusing. The earliest descriptivists were running afoul of the modal argument. None of the descriptions, said the attackers of descriptivism, were necessary — Kripke necessary — and philosophers unwisely disputed matter. Also, there was the attack that Searle was talking about. It sounds as if it is the same point, but it is not. So, there is a general assault. Descriptivists are constantly claiming necessities that are not present! They just don't get it!

It does not help that the rebuttal appears to be confused. Searle offers us a passage that is simply maddening. The word `contingent' must be used in the sense of Kripke-contingent, I should think, which leads the reader to imagine that Searle is using `necessary' in an opposite sense, namely Kripke-necessary. The remark precedes the one we just related.

Searle writes:

[S]uppose we agree to drop "Aristotle" and use, say, "the teacher of Alexander", then it is a necessary truth that the man referred to is Alexander's teacher — but it is a contingent fact that Aristotle ever went into pedagogy (though I am suggesting it is a necessary fact that Aristotle has the logical sum, inclusive disjunction, of properties commonly attributed to him: any individual not having at least some of these properties could not be Aristotle).<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps I shouldn't get too bent out of shape, but my exegesis of the passage involves postulating a lack of clarity on the type of necessities being imagined by Searle. Everyone is going to hear in his use of `contingent' the counterpart of Kripke-necessity. And, for all I know, it was there.

As I said, Kripke makes fun of this passage from Searle. He says that if Searle is

using 'necessary' as Kripke is using it in his lecture, then what he is saying is clearly

false. "(Unless he's got some very interesting essential property commonly attributed to

Aristotle.)<sup>"80</sup> Kripke goes on to make the modal argument:

Most of the things commonly attributed to Aristotle are things that Aristotle might not have done at all. In a situation in which he didn't do them, we would describe that as a situation in which *Aristotle* didn't do them.<sup>81</sup>

The solution is to see that Searle is not using `necessary' in Kripke's way. He is talking

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> Ibid.

actually, not counterfactually. When Searle worries about certain things not having been done, he is not thinking about their not being fulfilled in a counterfactual world. Searle is imagining our discovering that they are not fulfilled in the actual world. In such a situation, Searle's musings become relevant. "Would we not say for this reason that Aristotle did not exist after all, and that the name, though it has a conventional sense, refers to no one at all?"<sup>82</sup>

It is a good point. It so upsetting that Searle used the word `contingent' in the passage above. Naturally, Kripke was going to latch onto it. But if Searle is referring to the vagaries of an earthly ring, which would introduce a third necessary/non-necessary dichotomy, then he should have been more careful and more fulsome in his explanation. At the time, nobody had a word for *that* sort of thing, and calling it contingent was just not going to cut it.

It was going to lead to confusion and to people talking past each other. So, I hope the reader understands my need to counter the very gedanken experiment that Searle imagines going against descriptivism. I believe people were using this argument, and I believe Searle had a decent response to it. Moreover, I believe his response got misinterpreted as a failure to appreciate the modal argument. (But f I understand Searle rightly, he *did* fail to appreciate the modal argument. Gosh, it is confusing.) The modal argument, meanwhile, is not an argument against the current form of descriptivism.

It does get confusing. There are three types of necessity or lack thereof going on, linguistically, if you imagine the case of a name rigidifying a set of descriptions in a person's dossier. There are Kripke necessities that exist when different names actually succeed in getting the same object. There are sententially necessary statements, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Searle 1958, p. 168.

descriptive statements that are being rigidified by the Dthat operator. There is the sloppy, non-necessary, element imposed by the ring. The whims and contingencies that lead to a decision about the ring being resolved over time are surely different from the other two notions. Is there a fourth necessary/contingent dichotomy wrapped up in the idea that not necessarily every person has the same description for the same object? We haven't gotten to that yet. Needless to say, it should be quite easy for philosophers to talk past each other.

#### The Problem of the Ring Is Akin to Concept Replacement

Our overall issue in this chapter has been to explore the ring, the earthly ring, and it gives rise to one pseudo-concept after another. Moreover, these pseudo-concepts are indeed temporally related one to another. Various whims and obscure contingencies push the named dossier to and fro. This one is to be claimed equivalent to that one, and the same object is said to persist for emotional reasons. And you might surprise yourself. You certainly might surprise me.

You might say Santa Claus did exist. He was Saint Nicholas, and now people say a lot of untrue things about him.

But you are talking past the person who believes there was a Saint Nicholas and considers Santa Claus to have a radically different description. You see, you are lying to Virginia if you tell her there is a Santa Claus on that account.

If there is a thin Chinese man making presents on the North Pole, I might deny Santa Claus exists. I would be a bit of a racist. I might be immoral. But I could scarcely be *wrong*. The problem of the earthly ring is simply a matter of what concepts I *choose* to replace my earlier concepts with, whilst preserving the same name.

Most importantly, we need to be aware that what-would-you-say arguments are being made in philosophy. We must take care to scrutinize them to see whether or not they are overtly temporal and whether or not the solution of concept replacement should be considered, instead, to explain what people wind up saying. Kripke uses several of them, actually, when he moves his rigidification discussion over to the natural world over to tigers and gold. We might wish to revisit these arguments to see if concept replacement is the better description of what is going on.

# CHAPTER 10

## THE MARGINAL EXISTENCE OF NED AND JONAH

### Introduction

Now that we have the concept of the ring more firmly in hand, we can address a third discussion found in *Naming and Necessity* and elsewhere in Kripke's writings. One might consider the argument of ignorance to have two flavors. In the first, the claim is made that the speaker has a fact or two in her dossier but their descriptive force is so weak they do not come close to selecting anything uniquely. A physicist or something. There are a lot of physicists. An NBA basketball player or something. There are a lot of physicists. An NBA basketball player or something. There are a lot of NBA basketball players. The purported riddle is to wonder how a girl can refer to Kentavious Caldwell-Pope when she says, "Kentavious Caldwell-Pope is supposed to arrive," when all she can tell you about him is that he is an NBA basketball player or something. In the second flavor, there is instead an extensive dossier, and we presume the conjunction refers to nothing and, moreover, that no subset of the conjunction refers to anything, as well. The problem could also be viewed a second flavor of error, I suppose, with the error being that the descriptive theory should say there is nothing being referred to while Kripke maintains there is.

Anyway, there *is* a third argument that Kripke is using, and its solution is much different than in the case of the other two. Devitt, as a Kripkean apologist, stated that the only real alternative open to an advocate for the descriptive theory of names was to bite the bullet and to claim Oppenheimer and Schmidt are being referred to, not Einstein and

Gödel. Devitt said we could deny the claimed linguistic fact that 'Albert Einstein' and 'Kurt Friedrich Gödel' refer to Albert Einstein and Kurt Friedrich Gödel, respectively. We declined the offer. We retreated to the obvious Namenfacts, instead. We got to Albert and Kurt by the obvious route.

However, when confronted with Kripke's third argument, denial is a more natural way to go, and we shall not categorically accept the premise that 'Jonah' successfully refers upon agreeing that no one in particular prayed for three days to be vomited up by a whale and went on, after becoming human ambergris, to convince the sheep of Niveneh to fast.

Kripke's point is it *could* be true that some historian or other might wish to claim Jonah really existed whilst not doing the sort of stuff spoken of in the Bible. We agree. It could be true. But of course, as Kripke points out in *Reference and Existence*, there is no scholarly consensus on the matter.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the best way to understand the debate among the various historians is to view it as a problem of the ring. There are a few arbitrary decisions being made by opining historian, and it is a ring-like matter as to which way to go.

We need to make a distinction between ring-like matters and substantive matters. We investigate a difficulty we call the problem of marginal existence. Superficially, it resembles a substantive dispute about existence, but it is not itself a substantive dispute. In the problem of marginal existence of a named object, the question is simply how far a certain speaker is willing to go before she goes no further and declares the name not to refer. In a substantive dispute, you and your interlocutor are arguing over whether or not George Washington ever existed. You disagree about the facts. In a non-substantive

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>83</sup> Kripke 2013, p. 283n.

dispute, you are arguing about whether to call something by a certain name, given that you agree on all the facts.

In the current chapter, we bring up a few awkward aspects found in Kripke's discussions of Jonah and Moses. Then, we devote a good deal of time and space to establishing the proposition that he is walking a fine line right on the edge of marginal existence. We do so by making the case, with as much energy as we possibly can summon, that 'Jonah' does not refer and 'Moses' does not refer. Our motive in doing so is to establish a weaker point: that a reasonable sort of person might well choose to frame things in such a way.

A historian *could* frame things otherwise, and our reasonable sort of chap could continue operating within his own perspective. Our point is that it is false to claim the two views (or the two canonical statements involving the names, *e.g.* 'Venus exists') contradict. In a substantive debate about existence, there is indeed a contradiction when one man's sentence clashes with another's. In an exploration of marginal existence, the sentences will clash, naturally, but there will be no contradiction. And there will be no right answer.

Once you see there is no right answer, it changes everything. There are just a bunch of individuals making various non-substantive choices concerning marginal existence. The fact it is possible that some historian would write something to the effect that so-and-so existed has no weight. My reasonable chap can still rightfully claim soand-so did not exist. Kripke can make his choices. You can make your own. There is a different ring (and certainly a different resolution of a ring) in each person's linguistic dossier on any name. Especially, in the cases Kripke wants us to consider now. These are cases where lots of the things in the dossier are untrue. Is it really everything, as Kripke maintains? (If so, what is in the historian's dossier, and how does *he* manage to refer?) Is reference really a fact, at all, or is it an individual linguistic choice in these borderline and extremely mendacious cases? We'll answer these questions, and I think we'll see this third sort of argument against the descriptive theory of names fares no better than the other two.

Kripke's third argument depends on the flimsiest of distinctions. At the crux of the argument, he appeals to the difference between a legendary account of no one and a legendary account of a real person. He says a person *could* draw this distinction in one way. I say another person could draw it in another. All in all, it is a terribly unclear and fragile distinction which anyone may resolve and stipulatively decide howsoever he or she wishes. As I said earlier, the rush away from a descriptive backing for names was incredibly quick and poorly thought out. Ignorance, error, and this fabulously subtle distinction between lying about nobody and lying about somebody. With these weak points made, descriptivism for names was completely trashed. Somebody has a lot of explaining to do.

### One and Three: Namenfacts and Speaker's Reference

Our issues with Kripke at this juncture are three. The first is that the example of Jonah has a crucial Namenfact that presumably would make it refer, anyway. The second is that if one imagined such descriptive information were not present, the problem would be one which depended on various individuals choosing to resolve their rings on Jonah in various ways. The third is that Kripke's purported case of pure legend about a real

character has a lot of parallels to speaker reference in Donnellan's examples, which Kripke himself might not welcome.

As to the first issue, we should distinguish between what is said about Jonah in the book of Jonah and what is said about Jonah in the book of Kings II. If we momentarily agree everything in the book of Jonah is untrue, we still have an entry in the book of Kings II that states there was a man Jonah, son of Amittai, from Gath-hepher. Under the assumption that there were not terribly many people named `Jonah' and `Amittai' and not a multitude of towns named `Gath-hepher', the relation asserted in Kings II amongst these Namenfacts could well have been unique! A reader of the Bible could assign this description the very highest ranking in her dossier on Jonah. Under her purview, the name `Jonah' would *have* a referent. It would not be a case where nothing in the descriptive dossier is true of Jonah. To the contrary, there is a uniquely referring description which she privileges as her core.

Turning to the third issue, we see Kripke thinking it might be possible the book of Jonah is "one of the legendary accounts ... about a genuinely existing Hebrew prophet."<sup>84</sup> Yet, under the assumption that nothing in the story is true, how exactly do you get a legendary account about a real man? Whom is the fictitious account about? And what decides just whom it is about? A description?

Kripke says the story of Sherlock Holmes is about nobody, even if it matches a certain gentleman exactly, under the assumption that Conan Doyle did not have that very gentleman in mind when he made the stuff up. So, we must assume Kripke's stories that match absolutely nobody can, in fact, be "about" a certain person if the phantasm seized author has so-and-so in mind while he writes his fairy tale. Kripke says it remains to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

ascertain "whether the Biblical account is a legendary account of no person or a legendary account built on a real person."<sup>85</sup> Yet what does it mean to *build on* somebody? What could it possibly mean when, ex hypothesi, that which you erected is utterly untrue of that upon which you built? What is the foundation, then? In what sense is *A* built on *B*? Please give me a description of this.

I think the only sense one could possibly entertain — which I divine from Kripke's comments about invasion of privacy and Sherlock Holmes — is that the author *have so-and-so in mind* while he writes the fictitious fluff. Unfortunately, such an approach runs foresquare against Kripke's critique of Donnellan in *Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference*. Herein, Kripke completely dismisses Donnellan's view that the speaker's reference, the object had in mind by the speaker, should be viewed as the semantic reference of a description that does not refer to that object. Quite analogously, in asserting the semantic reference of 'Jonah' to be an individual upon whom a certain fiction was built — by virtue of the author having so-and-so in mind while he was writing the rambling silliness, I presume — Kripke is doing nothing other than letting the author's speaker's reference hold sway when descriptive reference fails. I don't know that Kripke really wants to do that.

Let's remove the example from the Bible. Let's remove it from print. Let it be a tall tale. Suppose my father tells me a story, and it begins, "There was a professor I knew at Stanford who ate beans and rice before it was fashionable." At some point in the story, my father names him `Mark'.

Now, what does Kripke say?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 67.

*Nothing* in the story is true! While telling it, my dad has in mind a girl he once fancied at the choir at the Wilshire Methodist Church in Los Angeles. The story of the professor is *built* on her. The speaker reference is now the semantic reference? Does Kripke really want to endorse a view where the secret speaker reference necessarily becomes the semantic reference? And does it matter that our story is not in print and that our story is quite brief?

May I quickly and curtly mention "the healthiest professor at Stanford" and semantically refer to whomever I, the author, have in mind? It is short story. I could be telling a falsehood about a conch. I do not like where it leads. And I do not see why we should privilege written tales or famous books written long ago and say speaker reference kicks in for these special cases.

I do believe Kripke's destruction of Donnellan was spot on. I do not think Kripke wants to embrace a view of names in which the name refers to whomever the author had in mind while he or she was writing pure fiction.

### Two: Quibbling about the Marginal Existence of Ned and Jonah

If he does, we could just part company. The historians, after all, aren't agreeing on the matter. I doubt anyone will agree on the matter. Our second point, since we took them out of order, is that nobody has to agree on this and that we all could be right.

It is the problem of the ring. We could have different rings, if we wish. More precisely, we may choose, when confronted with believing certain theories, to resolve our rings in different ways. One historian could say that "Moses was a historical figure, but ... that he had little to do with the exodus from Egypt, or most of the best-known things related about him in the Pentateuchal account. (The true core about him is "guidance into

the arable land")"<sup>86</sup> Another historian could deny the first historian and pronounce that, since the man being talked about was not named anything like 'Moses', was not adopted by the Pharaoh (nor adopted, at all), did none of the snake-staff or blood-in-the-water things, and only gave the departing Israelites a few passenger pigeons that were supposed to go back to Judea, we really shouldn't call him Moses. A certain Martin Noth, while agreeing on these facts would, nonetheless, insist we call him Moses. We can agree to disagree.

It need not be a substantive debate. Obviously, you are more likely to get funding if you say you have discovered Moses. But, just as obviously, the passenger pigeons didn't do a very good job if it took the people forty years to get there.

There are two different sorts of battles over whether or not something exists. One is a dispute about the various facts. Another is dispute about what is to be named what, given the facts. For instance, we can imagine two fundamentally different scenarios in which two protagonists are arguing about the existence of Venus. The facts might be in dispute. One person might theorize there is a hunk of matter (whose mass is on the order of a tera-tera-kilogram) in an orbit about a third of the way to the sun. He calls it Venus and says Venus exists. Another theorizes there is no significant chunk of matter between here and Mercury's orbit and says there is no Venus. It is a dispute about the facts. If they were to agree on the facts, they would agree on the existence of Venus.

However, there is another sort of debate and discussion where the protagonists agree on the facts and disagree about how to use the name `Venus'. We may imagine a grand series of possible theoretical scenarios in which the circles of light in the morning and the evening are caused by ever smaller chunks of matter ever closer to Earth. At

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Krpke 2013, p. 28n.

some point, while in agreement on their theoretical take on the putative facts, two people may disagree. One person could say of a teragram close to Earth that it is Venus. Another person could withhold the name, entirely. We need not stipulate precisely where, but certainly at some point various speakers are going to diverge in the resolution of their own rings. An especially determined person might say a kilogram of mass quite close to Earth *is* Venus because it causes (in some imprecise sense) the circles of light to be seen. Another person might say, upon the same facts, that there is no Venus and that the heavenly circles are optical illusions.

People will make different choices as to when to continue to assert that 'Venus' refers and when to withhold the appellation! No one is right, and no one is wrong. The linguistic situation is entirely analogous in the case of the historicity of Jonah.

Now, you *could* say there was a real Jonah and it was precisely whichever Hebrew man the author of that segment of the Bible was thinking about at the time he made up all this untrue stuff. You might have a very lax ring. I cannot gainsay your choices. Meanwhile, you could also — while agreeing with me about the facts of what happened long ago in Egypt — decide your ring on 'Moses' is so loose that some guy who saw a horde of Israelites preparing to leave and told them, "Second star to the right, and straight on 'til morning" was in fact Moses. If you wish to say so, I really don't mind.

My argument only depends on your realization that it is a ring issue. To this end, it might be helpful to recast the whole issue of ancient texts referring (since the patina of age might be leading to excessive generosity) to a current frame of mind. I propose we re-imagine our ring-like decisions concerning to whom our ancient texts refer by

considering a text written today and being treated as ancient several thousand years from now. Perhaps your ring won't be as forgiving. And you will have to ask yourself *why*. Perhaps you will continue to be just as forgiving. It doesn't matter. Anyway, I think it will show it is all a ring issue. You are not wrong if you say there is a Jonah, and I am not wrong if I say there is not, as long as when we are in agreement on the facts we are only resolving our respective rings along different lines.

I shall try to persuade you in what follows that a certain name considered far in the future does not refer to a person the author now has in mind. You can still claim it does, and you can still be right. It's your ring, after all. The cumulative effect of my argument to the contrary is not to establish a fact nor a linguistic datum but to only show that people who have a different ring are just as entitled to it as you are. And if you come over to the contrary side, so much the better. Nothing turns on it.

The name is 'Ned'. The author is myself.

Let me imagine a book being written now and later being accepted as gospel. Let me sit down and write a fabulous tale: *The Adventures of Ned, the Norseman of the Apocalypse*. Suppose nothing in the story is true, but while I sit there writing, I envision Michael Jackson as the lead hero in my mind's eye. I picture him battling the evil spawn of Grendor. I imagine him straining to shove a leather bit into the mouth of the Mare of Time. I imagine him o'erleaping the narrowest point in the chasm across the frothing River of Death. I imagine him caught in the vice-like mechanisms of the colossal Clockwork of Despair. It is terribly exciting!

I write a six hundred page book. All the while, I am imagining exploits being undertaken by Michael Jackson. Now, there is no trace of Michael Jackson in the text.

However, in a loose sense, he was with me every step of the way. I thought about him. If this fable is "built upon" somebody about whom no sentence in the story is true, you would say it was built upon Michael. He is the person I had in mind.

Insofar as one might make sense of Kripke's distinction between a completely legendary account of no person at all and a completely legendary account built on a real person, we are considering, I believe, a canonical case of the latter. It is a completely false tale built on Michael Jackson. I had Jacko in mind as I wrote it.

Let us suppose further that my book gains in popularity only after my death. Four thousand years from now, it is not merely popular. It is ubiquitously acclaimed. Most people think its words are true.

So, four thousand years from now, there is a young man named Knut who has read my book and who believes in Ned and all his adventures. He talks about Ned as if he really existed, as if there were some spiritual bond between Ned, himself and God. You get the feeling he might get distraught if he thought Ned did not exist. He thinks Ned lived an exciting and important life! He can recite Ned's adventures.

What would we say here? Would we say to Knut that Ned indeed existed? That his name was Michael Jackson? That he was a pop singer who sang a song called "Thriller"? That he had a nose job and a skin disease? And that he married Priscilla Presley?

I think it is fairer to say Ned never existed. I think it is a kinder and clearer thing to say to our credulous Knut. I think we should say, "Knut, old boy. The story is a fable. In ancient times, they had MTV and did the moonwalk. They did not live in ice caves and fight dragons. There was no "Ned," my fellow."

Suppose also there is no God. Suppose when I write *Ned, the Norseman of the Apocolypse*, I include a character of all powerful proportions whom I name `God'. Suppose further that, whenever I write about such a character, I have in mind my sixth grade teacher, Mrs. MacDonald. What should we tell Ned four thousand years hence?

Do we tell him, "Yes, Knut, old boy, God did actually exist. He was a she, and he had none of those powers nor did he ever do any of those things the story relates. Although his name is now `God', it used to be `Agnes MacDonald'. She died in a bicycle accident."

Is this the proper intuition? When *nothing* in a story is true, do we still get to say a story is *about* a particular person? If so, at what point does "about-ness" fail?

I think Knut would say his entire world view is shattered and that none of the characters and people he used to think populated his past actually did so. I think he would go around saying, "There is no Ned! There is no God!" I think he would gnash his teeth and wail. It does no good to choose two people essentially at random from four thousand years ago and declare they were Ned and God.

Kripke is doing exactly this, I believe. What makes is less offensive is that the people to whom we assign the fictitious characters, Jonah and Moses, are relatively unknown to us. If we actually *knew* these people, we would recoil. If one of them was a Kazakh boot salesman, named Khmnoojg, and the other was a Dravidian boy, Gurpreet, who had a fabulous recipe for chapati, and, if we were acquainted with these people and we saw they had no truisms in the Bible writ about them, we might well say they were *not* Jonah and Moses.

However, when we are not acquainted with people from long ago, it does less violence to our sensibilities to choose a person basically at random from Judea and environs and declare he or she was Jonah. You see, we *want* there to have been a Jonah. We want our world view to be intact. We have these stock characters from our youth, people who did such and such, and we really want to keep our friends around us. So we really want to say Jonah did exist. We might continue to say it, even if absolutely nothing in the Bible is true about him. It is a comforting thought.

Yet he is not going to be Jonah if he is black! If the causal recipe involving speaker's reference selects some hissing and clicking primitive boy from the Abidji tribe in the Ivory Coast, we don't want *him* to be Jonah. However, if it selects a nice Jewish boy — any nice Jewish boy will do — then we are all perfectly fine with a random, dull and ordinary person being Jonah.

We can accommodate the intellectual violence of saying a name, with an associated description untrue of anybody, refers to a particular individual, nonetheless, because we *want* so badly not to give up the name. When people use a name long enough, a stock character gets emblazoned into the user's mind. A personality of a sort develops, and people are loath to remove the stock character from their landscape of persons. How much easier it is to reassign the imaginary personality to a random person from the past, who of course had his or her *own* personality, one quite different!

Kripke, I believe, is doing this very mental maneuver in order to preserve the landscape of the personal characters he acquired in his youth. He clearly wants there to have been a Moses and a Jonah. He says, concerning the story of Jonah, that "there are

reasons for thinking this was about a real prophet.<sup>37</sup> The remark prompted me to run to *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* to look up the word `prophet'. It signifies, as I thought, a person who talks to god. Hence, Kripke is claiming there was a real person who really talked to god. It seems Kripke is straining to preserve a world view he acquired in his youth.

The bottom line is that, if positively nothing related about Jonah in the Bible is true and if you possess no true description that you think might have tied an actual person to the text (such as a Hebrew tradition of legends being somehow assigned to particular people in the real world), then it is beyond credulity to say your dossier description is *about* anyone or that the name is *of* anyone. It is just weird to choose some random schmoe in the past and say the name refers.

To indulge in name assigning, nonetheless, seems to stem more from a human desire to maintain the personae of various stock characters one has floating around in one's mind. It is a personal thing. Knut might wish to say Ned, the Norseman of the Apocalypse, did really exist four thousand years ago. He might be happy making the claim. However, you and I both know Michael Jackson. Just as Dan Quayle was no John Kennedy, Michael Jackson was no Ned, the Norseman of the Apocalypse, slayer of the spawn of Grendor, tamer of the Mare of Time, and delayer of the Clockwork of Despair. Do You Agree Now that It Is a Ring Issue?

Obviously, I have been a bit hard on Kripke just now. I take it back insofar as I merely intend to mock the entire process by which a linguistic datum is produced. Invariably, one can adduce arguments to the contrary with equal force. Decisions turn on poetry and wit. I do not believe it is a *datum* that, under certain circumstances, we could

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 67.

truly see we have before us a legendary account about a genuinely existing Hebrew prophet. I do not believe "about-ness" in these circumstances makes much sense. I do not think there are going to be any hard and fast rules for Kripke's distinction between a legendary account of no person and a legendary account built on a real person. I do not believe there are any hard and fast rules for "building" lies upon somebody. It is facile and disingenuous to claim these are real distinctions.

We could make up some rules, of course.

We could *say* we have before us a legendary account of a real and genuine Hebrew prophet who was, in fact, being held in mind by the author of the fiction as he wrote the fanciful stuff and whom he thought about, in the way I thought about Michael Jackson, while he penned the unrelated text. You may *say* it and thereby keep your ring. You could privilege speaker's reference. I may say otherwise, break my ring, and vitiate the name. It's all good.

It is a problem of the ring. It is not a general linguistic datum. It is not a counterexample to the descriptive theory of names. It is *your* datum. It is your ring. If you would like to keep various imaginary personae around in your mind, you certainly may. As Searle said, the question of the criteria for a name is open, the question is not decided for us in advance, and when it does arise it is we, the users of the name, who decide more or less arbitrarily what these criteria shall be.<sup>88</sup> A linguistic datum of this sort is an individual affair, and you may incorporate it into the resolution of your ring howsoever you wish and how you see fit.

Kripke may declare a datum for his version of the name 'Jonah'. Should he employ a less strict definition of a prophet, then his Jonah might well exist, according to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Searle 1958, p. 171.

my own view of the world. However, upon my own resolution of the ring, my 'Jonah' may continue not to refer (in such a world, on whose facts we agree). It is all good. It is a ring issue.

You could make up some rules. You could say the speaker's reference, for ancient texts, is necessarily the semantic reference of a name found in the text. But I can bite the bullet and say these names do not refer. We are both right. You can *say* they refer. I can say otherwise. It is not a challenge to descriptivism. It is merely a consequence of the definition of the ring. Your rules are *your* rules about your own ring.

### When Both Views Are Right, It Leads to Equivocation

Kripke is beguiled by a subtle point. He thinks he does not need to show that 'Jonah' refers. He thinks he only needs to show that it is possible 'Jonah' refers, while nothing in the book of Jonah in the Bible is true of him. (Or of it. I see no reason why Jonah might not be a turnip.) He thinks he only needs to show the far weaker claim, and how could he fail to do that? Yet the result is misleading. A possibility of Jonah referring while the book of Jonah is not true does not get the conclusion Kripke requires. First off, there could be another book in the Bible that does have a unique identifying description. (As it appears there is.) Yet suppose it were not the case. Then, there could be a postulated relationship to the ancient text that is in Kripke's ring such that if it were true, Kripke would say 'Jonah' refers. Surely, this is not a rejection of descriptivism for names, either.

Kripke's ring has coded up within it a liberal notion that secures reference in cases where nothing in the book of Jonah is true. (Although, Kripke *is* stingy about Santa Claus.) The result is not adverse to descriptivism because we should not identify the
sentences *in* the book of Jonah with the maximal list of sentences one can have *in one's dossier*.

Such a gap is probably why the example depends so heavily for its plausibility on the sentences being in a book and an ancient book, too, upon which interesting historical relationships might intrude, such clutter winding up in the dossier. As we might expect, the example loses its plausibility once it is recast as a verbal story recently told.

Here is a brief story. "A professor from Stanford whom I saw drinking a martini played bridge with Patrick Suppes."

That's it! That is the story. Our story now has less wiggle room than an ancient text (for some reason), and it is presumably *not* in Kripke's ring on the person in the story — should I name him 'Carlos' at some point — that my speaker's reference will automatically be the semantic reference of the name. (The truth is, as I wrote these words, I was thinking of my mother. I was building a legendary account upon *her*. Somehow, I doubt Kripke will let my mother be the semantic value of the name in the story.)

But our current point is not that some names in false stories are given a referent by Kripke due to external relationships in his dossier about the way the story was created and some names in false stories are not. (Why doesn't 'Santa Claus' refer to Saint Nicholas, anyway? I don't get the consistency, here.) It is that if *everyone* were to agree a certain relationship to the author who is telling the story is sufficient for successful reference in totally false stories, Kripke would not be able to make his point.

He would not be able to say there is *no* description in the story and yet reference occurs. Everyone would say, "Well, duh. The story is irrelevant. If the such-and-such

relationship to the author is satisfied, then we have reference." Everyone would tell him they have such-and-such relationship in their ring already, perhaps even in their core — given that everyone agrees — and *that* is what secures reference.

Kripke can only get his point across when not everyone agrees about this. He can only get his point across when people resolve their rings in different ways. So, I think he must be invoking an equivocation. It is the only way his discussion works. I think that when he claims there is no description of Jonah to be found, he must be getting his readers to look at things from the perspective of a person whose ring is thin and quite liable to break. There *is* no description satisfied under this perspective. Nothing in the book is true, after all. We could just choose some child at random in ancient history but *he* wouldn't be Jonah. Under this perspective, the reader agrees with Kripke's first premise that there is no successful description to be had.

Next, Kripke gets the reader to imagine things from the point of view of a person with a large, loose and lax ring. A historian argues `Moses' refers to a certain someone at whose house the departing Jewish nation stopped briefly to ask for directions. And perhaps the author of the book of Jonah had *someone* in mind while he wrote it. The speaker's reference is the referent of `Jonah'. Under the second perspective, also quite plausible, the reader agrees that the name `Jonah' refers. We *can* just choose some child at random in ancient history, and he will be Jonah.

However, if you maintain the same frame of mind throughout, the point no longer makes any sense. If you think Ned was not Jacko and indeed was no one, then Kripke can convince you there is no one who meets any appropriate description but he cannot convince you that `Ned' refers. If you think Ned *was* Jacko, then Kripke cannot convince

you there is no one who meets the appropriate description. For you, it is a good enough description that the author was thinking about Michael Jackson while he wrote the tale. Your ring has these loose descriptions.

I claim Kripke's point only comes across with an air of plausibility due to the reader's equivocation between the perspective of someone with a thin ring and someone with a thick ring. Both perspectives are entirely plausible because each is allowed to be right.

Perhaps Kripke's point is strengthened, too, by an even more obvious equivocation. In the first part, you stick to the descriptions listed *in* the story. In the second part, you allow descriptions *about* the story, including the author, his mind set, and various literary tendencies of Hebrew authors back in the day. If it depends upon this equivocation, it would clearly tend to be more plausible when the story is in written form and as far back in time as you can place it. Yet if it depends upon this equivocation, it is surely worthless.

One moral, which is quite important here, is that you may do what you please. You may resolve your ring how you wish. If you wish to say `Santa Claus' refers to Saint Nicholas of Cusa and that many untrue things are now said about him, you may. If you wish to choose some child at random from Judea and call him `Jonah', you may. If you wish to defer to the author's speaker reference, you may. If you wish to select an Abdiji tribe member, you may. If you wish to be strict, instead, and say, on the grounds that the book of Jonah was totally false, that there was no Jonah, it is fine with me. If Knut thinks there is no God now that he has discovered the truth, I can be happy with that. If a historian can obtain gainful employment by asserting God was a slightly

overweight grade school teacher, more power to him. These are questions of the ring. These are questions of marginal existence. They are not debates about existence in the conventional sense. They are merely personal statements about how individuals are recasting their dossiers in the face of possible linguistic extermination. It is nothing substantive. There is nothing substantive about the so-called issue of whether Nicolas of Cusa was *in fact* Santa Claus (who could sue people for lying about him) or whether `Santa Claus' does not refer! There is nothing substantive about the so-called issue of whether or not it is *correct* to choose a random Jewish boy and call him Jonah. I am fine with any of it.

It is not linguistic data.

It is a ring issue. Each person can make his or her own decision and talk in his or her own way. Should one person decide there is no description in his dossier under `Jonah' that uniquely selects anybody or anything and should another person, believing the same facts, decide (because she has a description that involves a looser relationship) that the name `Jonah' refers, we should not proceed to conclude that there is no description in the dossier under `Jonah' and yet the name `Jonah' refers, anyway. Ergo, descriptivism for names is wrong.

We need to be clear we are talking about two different people at two different times. Ergo, there is no problem for descriptivism, at all. Everybody has a different ring. None of this is linguistic data of a general sort. Each claim is merely a linguistic datum for an individual about his or her own ring on a particular name. Me? I am going with Jonah, son of Amitai from Gath-hepher. If those names and places were entirely made up and our author was thinking about a beetle who was walking near his cat whilst he wrote

the book of Jonah, then — wait a second — I am going with: Jonah did not exist. I'm opting out even if he was thinking about the cat. I'm opting out even if the cat was an illusion, and an intelligent alien who occasionally talked to God was lying on his carpet. Gosh, I'm strict.

Clearly, I'll never get employment in a history department. I just read in the *Journal of the German Palestinian Society* that the Ark of the Covenant was a matchbox. It did not survive. It had no special powers. Who knew? These archeologists are amazing.

Ark of the Convenant, yes. Jonah, no. That's my ring.

# CHAPTER 11

## KAPLAN'S NON-DESCRIPTIVE IS OUR DESCRIPTIVE

### Kaplan Spoils a Party

There are various confusions in linguistic philosophy, some of which are merely terminological. When you are reading Kaplan's festschrift, *An Idea of Donnellan*, found in a collection of essays celebrating Donnellan, it is easy to get lost as to which side of the fence he is on. Kaplan speaks of singular thoughts and nondescriptive thoughts. The first phrase is the calling card of the austere direct reference theorist. The second phrase, too, sounds as if it would be employed against descriptivism for names. However, things are not what they seem.

Kaplan is using the word, *singular*, merely to signify the truth conditions of the thought. He uses it to signify rigidity. If he were using it to talk about a descriptive thought, such as the kind often proposed by Donnellan in his examples, he would be applying to it his Dthat operator. A singular thought, for Kaplan, has rigid counterfactual truth conditions.

Kaplan explicitly states he is going his own way with his nomenclature:

A drawback to my nomenclature is that the term *singular thought* misleadingly suggests that such a thought amounts to nothing more than our entertaining a Russellian singular proposition, a proposition containing an individual. This is exactly what Russell believed and may be what Donnellan believes, but it isn't what I believe, so please don't read it that way. (I don't believe that thoughts are Russellian propositions.)<sup>89</sup>

Kaplan is "concerned with the sort of meaning that we grasp"<sup>90</sup> and the sort of thoughts

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Kaplan 2012, p. 127.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>90</sup> Ibid, p. 128.

that could govern our behavior. Accordingly, he does not declare two singular thoughts to be equivalent if they have the same truth values. Quite to the contrary, he thinks two such thoughts could have entirely different cognitive significance! Ergo, in some far more important and interesting sense, they are different thoughts.

Kaplan explains his view:

A singular (*de re*) thought involving one nondescriptive way of having Ortcutt in mind may be among our beliefs, whereas the thought resulting from the substitution of a different nondescriptive way of having Ortcutt in mind may fail to be among our beliefs. Both thoughts are singular and have the same truth conditions. Yet we may believe the one and fail to believe the other (or even believe the negation of the other) without irrationality. This is not because a thought can both be and not be among our beliefs. It cannot. Nor is it because we can have contradictory singular beliefs without being irrational. We cannot. It is because they are different thoughts. The case for rationality here is exactly the same as it would have been if the distinct, not logically equivalent, *nondescriptive* ways of having Ortcutt in mind had been distinct, not logically equivalent, *descriptive* ways of having Ortcutt in mind.<sup>91</sup> (Underline mine.)

Kaplan is identifying thoughts with cognitive significance. If it has a different cognitive significance, it is a different thought. A descriptive thought, for Kaplan, is different from another descriptive thought, even if both are presumed to be acted upon by the Dthat operator and if we happen to live in a world where the operation alights upon the very same object so that the two singular thoughts have the very same truth values. Kaplan does not believe thoughts are Russellian propositions that *include* the object to which Dthat takes you. Kaplan opposes Donnellan's idea. Kaplan would not believe either that they are, in possible world semantics, a construct involving the set of all possible worlds containing such an object. For Kaplan, the thought is tied up with the cognitive significance, not the truth values.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> Ibid, p. 132.

It might sound as if Kaplan is putting down Russell, too. Once again, things are not what they seem. Throughout the essay, Kaplan is imagining a view he attributes to Russell in 1903. The constituents of the proposition are pieces of the world. Acquaintance is a parameter, the epistemic threshold of which you may set anywhere you like. He claims Russell thinks you can be acquainted with material objects. Kaplan fully acknowledges, however, that in 1912 Russell utterly repudiated the position being attributed to him. It is not clear (to me, anyway) that Russell ever held it in any serious way.

It would seem entirely academic, in the spurious sense, to debate whether or not Russell in 1903 considered thoughts to be Russellian propositions in the sense explicated by Kaplan above. The interesting question is whether or not thoughts are such things. Kaplan says they are not. Russell of 1912 says they most certainly are not! And, for what it is worth, I concur that the interesting notion of thought has nothing to do with such Russellian propositions.

Hence, with us all in agreement, let us move on. Now, we could sum all this up in terms of descriptions, rather than in terms of the so-called nondescriptive arena into which Kaplan has stepped. We can recapitulate Kaplan's central example and remind the reader that Kaplan and his friend met some man "with his face obscured, wearing a brown hat and an enveloping overcoat, standing in the shadows just inside the archway, and greeting certain of the guests" (Kaplan 2012, 129-30). Later, they see at the party some man who is sipping liquid from a martini glass. Kaplan stipulates that it is the same man, but that he and his friend do not know it. So, we might alter Kaplan's example

(only slightly) by stipulating that the shadowy man did, in fact, greet them at the doorway and the drinking man was, in fact, having a martini.

Such a maneuver allows us to cast Kaplan's worry about thoughts in descriptive terms. He is worried that the cognitive significance does not extend to the truth conditions of a singular thought. The thoughts, *the man who greeted us* and *the man drinking the martini*, are to Kaplan distinct and different thoughts. He imagines you trying to track down one man or the other and heading off in a different direction depending upon which of the two thoughts you are thinking. In our jargon, if we consider:

- (1) Dthat (the man who greeted us in the doorway)
- (2) Dthat (the man drinking a martini)

we have in Kaplan's example, as we have modified it, a case where the any preproposition involving these phrases, by definition, involves:

- (4) the man who greeted us in the doorway
- (5) the man drinking a martini

and the possible worlds these phrases circumscribe. According to Kaplan, one's thoughts involve the pre-propositions. It is the pre-propositions whose contemplation sends you walking one way instead of another. The pre-proposition is the cognitive significance. It is the pre-proposition that is grasped. It is the pre-proposition of

(6) Dthat (the man who greeted us in the doorway) is Dthat (the man drinking a martini).

which is the thought that can be cognitively grasped and rationally doubted.

He considers you walking one direction or another to hail one man or the other, and he proceeds to belabor his point about the thoughts you are actually thinking and grasping.

## Kaplan writes:

Furthermore, there would be no flaw in your reasoning if you thought *The man who greeted us in the doorway was friendly. The man drinking a martini looks interesting. But there seem to be no friendly, interesting-looking people at this party.* If, on the other hand, you had reasoned from just those two premises to the conclusion *Therefore there is a friendly, interesting-looking person at this party*, a logician would complain that your reasoning was flawed.<sup>92</sup>

If you are reasoning about your thoughts, says Kaplan, then you are reasoning about the

pre-propositions. You are reasoning about that which has cognitive significance.

Otherwise, you are reasoning poorly.

Kaplan finds another creative image to contrast the thoughts one understands and

thinks with the end result of our Dthat operation, the post-proposition. He continues:

For you to *understand* what I said, it does not suffice for you to simply represent the individuals I have in mind in your own ways; you must represent them in ways that coordinate with the ways I represent them. Suppose a loud noise had drowned out part of my request, and because we had been discussing "the man who greeted us," you thought I said "who greeted us" when I actually said "drinking a martini." In that case you would have misunderstood what I asked. You would have failed to grasp what I meant.<sup>93</sup>

In short, I would have failed to communicate to you what I was thinking — not implausible because you thought I said something completely different. The meaning and the thinking that Kaplan is contemplating here is the sentential meaning of a sentence containing a Dthat rigidified descriptive phrase. Kaplan is identifying a grasp of the preproposition with one's thoughts.

I agree entirely. It was the austere direct referentialists who were opposed to this. It was the people whose propositions involved dumbbells and corpses, the actual objects

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Ibid, p. 131.

themselves, and who did not entertain propositions consisting of possible worlds (and of pre-propositions involving same) who were opposed this. I agree with Kaplan entirely.

Kaplan comes out passionately and stridently against their Russellian view. He continues:

I have argued that a theory of meaning that aims to account for how we understand utterances and communicate with them, in a sense in which understanding and communicating can influence reasoning and behavior, must take account of the different ways we can have a given individual in mind. And a theory of cognitive states, which Russell's theory of propositional attitudes pretends to be, must do likewise. This is why Russell's identification of singular thoughts with singular propositions will not do.<sup>94</sup>

Kaplan is harsh here. He thinks these philosophers have completely missed the point and have completely failed to characterize thought. Whether Kaplan is being harsh on Russell in this intellectual journey is less than clear and is, I believe, irrelevant. A mature Russell did not think you could be acquainted with material objects. In his thirties, Russell thought you needed a description for such things. Russell thought that, in order to understand a proposition, you had to be acquainted with all its components. A proposition, therefore, for Russell had better be written in bright colors. Your sense data is, after all, the only thing to which you have epistemological access, says Russell.

But one can, as a matter of definition, assign the semantic content to vary as a function of things outside one's cognitive grasp. Part of the sentence can be hidden. A Dthat operator will do just that. In such a case, as Kaplan points out, you wind up with some notion of objective semantic content at a level where reason and rationality do not operate. Cognition operates at the previous level, at the pre-proposition, at the level

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Recanati called the mode of presentation. Kaplan beats this drum relentlessly:

If I observe Venus in the morning and wonder "Is that a planet?," and then observe it in the evening many months later and wonder "Is *that* a planet?," I might not take myself to be entertaining the same thought. But, according to Russell, it *is* the same thought. Cases like this, and my opening case of the man both "in the doorway" and "drinking a martini," seem so obvious that it is hard to understand why Russell didn't see that there could be distinct cognitive modes of *acquaintance* with the same object.<sup>95</sup>

Once again, I agree! Kaplan begins to muse, at this point, about Russell's

philosophical view:

It is interesting to speculate whether it was the recognition problem that drove Russell inward, drove him to eliminate external material objects as the objects of acquaintance.<sup>96</sup>

Well, of course! It was precisely Russell's concern. The recognition problem stems from the fact that there are many epistemically indistinguishable possible worlds, some where I see various colors caused by a guy in a doorway who later drinks a martini and some where I see those very same colors without such material machinations coming to pass. Analogous concerns confound the Venus example, too. As Kripke says, there are possible worlds where "we have exactly the same evidence, qualitatively speaking, [and] it could have turned out that Hesperus was not Phosphorus."<sup>97</sup> Put a bit more precisely, it would have turned out that the evening star is not the morning star in these possible worlds.

Hence, you have an intrinsic recognition problem whenever you rigidify and go "directly" to whatever is epistemically hidden. I doubt Russell thought about it in terms of rigidification and possible worlds or about there being numerous epistemically

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 134.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 104.

indistinguishable possible worlds. I think he just thought it was obvious that things which are epistemically hidden and might conceivably be otherwise are not directly apprehended or the object of my unmediated acquaintance in any sense of the word, *direct*, that could ever matter, philosophically.

### Nondescriptive Thoughts

When you see brown draped just so amidst shadows and you see drab colors flash this way and that, you can remember what you have seen. You have these thoughts in mind, and, as Kaplan points out on page 149, these images are prior to the giving of a name. Kaplan laments that nowadays he thinks about people in this manner most of the time and that he cannot remember their names. So, you and I saw various colors in the doorway and other colors in the central room of the party, and we jumped to various conclusions. Once again, the colors and experiences were prior. Kaplan, to emphasize this point, constructs his examples so that the descriptions that I employ to get you to think about what I want you to think about are actually unsatisfied. We were *not* being greeted, and no one was drinking a martini. At this point, Kaplan politely goes along with Donnellan, he allows speaker reference to dominate (at least for the sake of argument), and he suggests these thoughts have truth conditions. Unsurprisingly, they are modally rigid. Kaplan calls my thought about a man who responsible for brown colors moving just so in the shadows: a nondescriptive representation.

Kaplan contrasts such a representation with a descriptive representation, and by the latter I believe he has in mind that I actually assert a descriptive phrase in the language of English or that I first hear about the existence of so-and-so by contemplating a sentence in English. He proceeds to contrast the modal properties of what he has

labeled *nondescriptive* and *descriptive*. He contrasts their truth conditions across possible

worlds. He writes:

The one notable difference between descriptive and nondescriptive representations is in regard to truth conditions. My assertions, "The man drinking a martini is a spy" and "The man who greeted us in the doorway is a spy" have the same truth conditions (in virtue of the referential uses with a common referent in mind), whereas analogous assertions expressing descriptive thoughts would typically have distinct truth conditions.<sup>98</sup>

The designation of the nondescriptive representation across possible worlds is rigid while

the designation of the descriptive assertion is not rigid.

However, it is the comparison, not the contrast he makes between the two, which

for our purposes is far more important. (After all, we can always rigidify a description.)

Descriptive thought or nondescriptive thought, each one is the cognitive significance. It

is the mode of presentation (of Recanati and Frege) which Kaplan insists is the essence of

thought. He continues:

With the exception of truth conditions, all the reasons to distinguish thoughts involving distinct co-denoting definite descriptions are reasons to distinguish thoughts in which the thinker has the same individual in mind but in different nondescriptive ways.<sup>99</sup>

I agree entirely! The eventual object that gets assigned to the brown and dark colors that I remember is, ex hypothesi, the same object that gets assigned as the source of different colors later — a cardinal red jacket, say, and a glint off a silvery martini glass shape, tipped slightly. Yet the object is not the thought. Without saying a word, the thought might occur to me to track down the first object. I would head off in one direction. Without saying a word, the thought might occur to me to track down the second object. I would head off in the other direction. Kaplan is entirely correct in making, quite

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>98</sup> Kaplan 2012, p. 132.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

adamantly (and quite contrary to the positions of the other philosophers at the colloquium!), the point that nondescriptive thoughts such as these do *not* devolve essentially to their remote objects. Quite to the contrary, images in mind which are nondescriptive have the same form and function as thoughts brought to mind by a descriptive phrase.

The latter thoughts, when the description is rigidified with Kaplan's Dthat operator, are, of course, the pre-proposition. It is the contemplation of the pre-proposition that moves me hither and yon.

Hence, Kaplan and I have agreed on a great many things. Russell, too, agrees with us. Arrayed against us are various austere direct referentialists and advocates of the so-called naïve theory of semantics. There remains but one further matter to consider, and I am not sure whether it is substantive or not. Kaplan talks repeatedly about nondescriptive representations. What are they?

Kaplan appears to draw his line between descriptive and nondescriptive according to how information, purported to be about someone or something, winds up in my dossier. I say: *purported to be about someone*. You see, I might develop a dossier on the shortest Armenian taller than the tallest Swede. Yet there might be no such person! There might be a shortest Swede taller than the tallest Armenian. I have a dossier on him under the name, `Allfrid', my pet name for this person. It is presumably descriptive, in the sense of Kaplan.

I know roughly how much Allfrid, the shortest Swede, etcetera, weighs.<sup>100</sup> I know the path he will travel when he falls to Earth. I know the spot where he would hang

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>100</sup> You may use any description here that you think is probably fulfilled — as long as the object is massive. If it is massive, then I know a lot of facts about the object.

in geosynchronous orbit. I know a lot of facts about Allfrid. But these do not seem to be linguistically articulated facts. They are surely not *sentences* in my dossier on Allfrid. Are they?

Accordingly, I am generous in filling out my dossiers with thoughts that need not have been scratched out in the English language. It is not a precondition that I mumble an English sentence to myself in order to have a thought about an object in the dossier on that object!

After all, there are languages with only seven sentences. If I learn such a language and I talk to you in it, I still have an abundance of notions amongst the plethora of dossiers about the multitude of objects that I suspect and pretend to exist in the world. With respect to a brief language, I have, as Kaplan would call them, nondescriptive thoughts.

Yet I call them descriptive. My nomenclature is chosen because it suits my eventual philosophical goal. Kaplan might be pursuing a matter that has to do with the origin of one's thoughts. My best friend could approach me and say, "Pete, why don't you use the name 'Mervyn Calhoon' to signify the fattest Albanian closest to the Eiffel Tower?" and I would say, "Great idea! I'll do that." It is one way to think about something. On the other hand, I could see a terribly small red circle over there on the window sill, and theorize (perhaps incorrectly!) that she is a ladybug. I could go on to name her Heather.

One certainly can make a distinction along these lines! And I believe Kaplan is breaking things along this very axis when he uses the words *descriptive* and *nondescriptive*. However, I do not see anything philosophically promising that results

from fracturing matters along this axis — after all, Kaplan has given us the very tool with which we imbue a description with the so-called nondescriptive truth conditions! — and so I shall talk another way. I do not claim there is nothing philosophically promising. I just do not see it. Anyone may talk as he or she likes. I am not asking Kaplan to talk another way.

I am merely pointing out that I am talking in a different way and that when it *sounds* as if I am disagreeing with Kaplan, I am very likely not. I am concerned with and I lose sleep over languages with only four sentences. I would like to operate within them — if fashions change, say — and I would not like such a shift to disrupt my nomenclature because I cannot imagine how the shift would affect any philosophical problem or position.

Thus, a picky review of my own definition of a name as an abbreviation of the rigidification of a definite description will reveal that a name in one language may depend upon a description given in *another* language. While Kaplan's nomenclature aids a discussion about how various thoughts got into his mind, whether they be by pictorial images or by abstract imaginings of the wanderings of fat Albanians, my nomenclature aids a discussion of what we might say about such thoughts.

### Low Resolution Philosophy

Earlier, you see, I imagined an example that involved a friend of mine and various snakes subject to the conceit that she has very poor eyesight. (To us, it is poor. In her country, she is the best!) It is helpful to revisit this conceit, I believe, especially when one notices it is devilishly hard to see how one could ever get a substantive philosophical result by gradually increasing the number of pixels in her conscious visual field.

Consider the two of us, then, experiencing Kaplan's example, and let us imagine I, too, see in rough hewn colors. There is brown and black in some definite mix, thirty squares or "pixels" in all, and I correctly theorize that I have been greeted by a man in a doorway. Later, I see red, light grey, and a glint of silver, twenty pixels in all, and I correctly theorize that there is a man several paces away in the center of the room drinking a martini.

Ex hypothesi, let us suppose, it is the same man. However, on the cognitive level — as Kaplan so rightly points out — I am having two distinct thoughts. So, if I would like to see something very close to the brown and black color pattern that I saw before (and remember exquisitely), I would walk one way. If I would like to see something very close to the red and grey pattern that I saw before, I would walk the other way.

The two thoughts I am thinking are very different. One is about the source of brown and black squares. The other is about the source of red and grey. In English, one might rigidify on:

(7) The source of brown and black and on:

(8) The source of red and grey

and, ex hypothesi, we see that:

(9) Dthat (the source of brown and black) is Dthat (the source of red and grey).

is a true sentence in our story. However, as Kaplan points out, it is not a thought that is necessarily being thought by me. I might well be thinking and believing an unrigidified variant to the effect that:

(10) The source of brown and black is not the source of red and grey.

I might well think it. Let us suppose I do.

What interests me now is just how one could represent one's thoughts in various languages. Assuming a basis of twenty-six colors and ignoring for a moment the problem of arranging the pixels (which would take only a few bits), a pattern of brown (B) and black (K) could be expressed by the word, `BBBKKBKBKBBKBKBKBBKBK BKKKKBKKB'. The word's meaning could be an arrangement of squares of brown and black in a five by six array. Another word, `GRRGRRRGRRSGGRSSRRRG', could mean an arrangement of red, grey and silver in a four by five array. We could have these words in our language. So, using these words, I could tell you what I saw. I could think various thoughts, too, antecedent to putting them into words, just as Kaplan muses. A picture is worth a thousand words, of course, and conversely a thousand words make a picture. (How do you think digital television works?) There is no philosophical importance to the number one thousand. Being finite should suffice.

Therefore, if we take these visual notions in chunks, I see no reason why I cannot linguistically assign any shape, which I cognize, to the letters `fleur de lis'. You see, if I can view it in my mind's eye, then I can certainly craft and coin a language to describe (to myself, at the very least) what I am seeing. Hence, according to my definition, the recollected visual images that play such an important role in Kaplan's thoughts within Kaplan's story are *descriptive*. If it can be described in another language, I say it is descriptive.

It also follows that the names Kaplan introduces in his essay, 'Doorway Man' and 'Martini Man', *are* names insofar as I have formally defined the term in our technical chapter.

The major point that Kaplan makes is that we should treat his descriptive thoughts and his nondescriptive thoughts in precisely the same manner. Two different descriptive thoughts about a person are different thoughts, he says. Two different nondescriptive thoughts about a person are different thoughts, too. If our story, ex hypothesi, assigns them to the same person, it does not matter philosophically — Kaplan says — insofar as we are concerned with the cognitive thought, the realm of reason and rationality.

I agree entirely. The way I speak I have made it difficult to tease Kaplan's descriptive and nondescriptive thoughts apart. I agree with Kaplan's argument that there is no important reason to do so.

It remains to investigate what sort of sentences one might say in a language that rigidifies to Doorway Man and to Martini Man. Suppose I were operating in a language that could state the arrangement of brown and black colors in precisely the way I saw them consciously at the beginning of our story. Suppose the word that conveys such a conscious visual experience is `sloop'. A bit redundantly, I might say in such a language, "I saw sloop.' Further suppose we have a word that conveys the later, red tinged, visual experience and that the word is `blipe'. So, I might say, "I later saw blipe."

Interestingly, it will not do for our purposes to utilize the phrases:

- (11) Dthat (sloop)
- (12) Dthat (blipe)

because the rigidifications of these color patterns are, once again, the colors themselves. The rigidification of `yellow', after all, is yellow. So, to develop descriptions that successfully resolve to Doorway Man and Martini Man, respectively, is to consider what

Russell calls "the physical cause of our sensations."<sup>101</sup> After all, the theory under which I operate is that there is a complicated mechanism by which the arrangement of fermions several meters away eventually causes me to see sloop — and, in a quite similar fashion, I theorize that a different arrangement of fermions in the world is of the sort that eventually causes me to see blipe. Anyway, that is my theory, and I am sticking to it.

Working under such an assumption, we need further only some intuitive notion that restricts causation in such a way that, although the light *is* from the sun and the sun *does* cause me to see the colors, I intend to pick out only a nearby collection of fermions that reflects the light. (However, the collection *is* permitted to glow, I believe. It is quite arbitrary how this all works.) It is a messy notion, but we all know it when we see it. Using such a colloquial notion, I shall use the word *cause* to dignify and to select a nearby collection of fermions. I shall disregard what Feynman taught me about how light really travels.

Allowing all this, I can now articulate a sentence in some such language that describes Doorway Man. I can consider:

(13) Dthat (the remote physical cause of sloop earlier)to be the *meaning* of `Doorway Man'. Similarly, I can consider:

(14) Dthat (the remote physical cause of blipe a little later)to be the *meaning* of `Martini Man'.

I do not, at this point, see any reason why I might not perform this sort of operation in English (although it is not vital to the argument). After all, I can picture a fleur de lis and name it such. Therefore, I see no reason why we cannot take Kaplan's antecedent visual thoughts and give words to them. Surely, I could talk about the visual

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> Russell 1912, p. 29.

experience I had while I was at the doorway. I could talk about the visual experience I had later, which appeared to emanate from the center of the room. I could consider:

(15) Dthat (the remote physical cause of the brown and black colors I saw at the doorway)

and I could consider:

(16) Dthat (the remote physical cause of the red, grey and silver colors I saw later in the center of the room)

I see no reason why I could not rigidify on these very notions and have them define for me the names 'Doorway Man' and 'Martini Man', respectively.

## You Like Kaplan, Then?

Yes, I do. He is working very hard in *An Idea of Donnellan* to bring thoughts back into the mind and to save them from the externalists. I am not sure it is his primary purpose, but he is doing a very good job. I expect Kaplan and I have a few fine differences, but I am not sure what they are, and I would hope we could resolve them. All in all, he remains a beacon and, in the essay we are studying, he is adamantly and clearly stating that the people who would like to sweep things under the rug and to just go ahead and state my thoughts about Doorway Man and Martini Man are the *same* because they have the same referent are grossly mistaken! They are missing the essence of thought. If one defines the semantic content to be a remote object, one simply is no longer thinking directly about the remote object. It is the cognitive significance, the mental mode of presentation, the pre-proposition — call it whatever you want to call it that is the essential thought being thought. Such is Kaplan's position.

I agree. And I entirely forgive him for batting around Russell a bit. Russell appears to have said something when he was twenty, and people in their twenties deserve to be knocked upside the head. No one under forty is worth having dinner with,

anymore. If Russell was wayward as a youth, however, at thirty-seven he came around. In 1912 (according to his jargon at the time), he would have crafted the description he would have used to talk about Doorway Man and Martini Man with the words: "a physical object *corresponding* to the sense-data."<sup>102</sup> Russell most definitely would have talked about my mental purchase on Messrs. Doorway and Martini as descriptive! I do, too, of course, and for exactly the same reason. All in all, I see nothing substantive coming between Kaplan, Russell and myself on the issue.

#### Why Did Kaplan Call the Opposing Position *Russellian*?

Kaplan was at an important gathering, and Kaplan was outnumbered. The entire point of the party was to talk about how great Donnellan was — but Kaplan's take on thoughts diverged from Donnellan's in the most fundamental way. There was no getting around it. They inhabited the same circles, and Donnellan was Kaplan's friend. It takes a lot of skill to keep friendships alive in our discipline. Great rhetorical skill is required.

I suspect there were people in the audience with whom Kaplan disagreed. In a polite rhetorical twist, he referred to them as Russellian. He kept saying Russell was wrong! He gave good reasons why Russell was wrong, and they nodded their heads in agreement. Naturally, they could all agree that Russell was wrong. Each one opposed Russell, after all! (On other matters.) Yet Kaplan was skewering the people to whom he was talking. He was telling them they were wrong. I wish I could be so polite when I disagree intellectually with others. It is a skill I shall never attain. Thusly did Kaplan speak to a tribe of fierce enemies and level severe criticisms in their midst.

As for me, I suppose there is something to be said for mopping up after the initial breech in a fierce opposing line. There is something to be said for pouring into the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

breech and for trampling those remaining soldiers who are stunned and less sure of themselves.

Therefore — to sum things up — the terminological difference between myself and Kaplan over the words *nondescriptive* and *descriptive* is entirely unimportant and finds its resolution in our complete agreement — as far as I can see — on cognitive significance and its centrality in the essence of thought. I have redirected the word *descriptive* so that I can provide the appropriate cognitive backing for a name. But the maneuver is purely verbal.

We agree on the important issue. Together, Kaplan and I agree that when I think about the man in the doorway and when I think about the man with the martini, I am thinking different thoughts. Russell thought so, too. All in all, once the obscuring veils of our differences in nomenclature are pulled aside, I can see no absolutely no substantive differences between the views of myself, Kaplan and a mature Russell. Moreover, since Russell lived sixty years while holding his view, I see no reason not to attribute it to him. Therefore, let us be clear that Kaplan is attacking a "Russellian" philosophical position, associated with Donnellan and a number of other philosophers, according to which the external object itself is part of *the thought*, no matter how far away it may be and how many suppositions and theories might be required for our thinker to wanly postulate its existence. It is the mental side of austere direct reference. The philosophy of language has gotten mixed up with the philosophy of mind.

Anyway, Kaplan is against it. Linguistically, Kaplan's Dthat operator involves the world, but he explicitly warns us that his mental thoughts do not. He can think that the man in the doorway is not the man with the martini without having thought a

contradiction. More precisely (invoking rigidificaiton), he can think that Doorway Man is not Martini Man without rationality itself coming to a crashing halt. Why? Because his cognitive purchase is truly and essentially bound up in the pre-proposition, not in the post-proposition. The pre-proposition *is* his thought. And he can use his thought to reason about which way to go. A simple claim is being made by Kaplan here. It is the claim that one's thoughts are in one's mind.

# CHAPTER 12

# THE MENTAL LIVES OF OYSTERS

## Two Notions of Thinking About

External thoughts do not deliver as much as is promised. Some philosophers would like to talk about this sort of thing, and others do not. On the one hand, we have Stalnaker musing about something he calls *wide content*, and, on the other hand, we have Loar musing about *narrow content*. Stalnaker, in *Narrow Content* (1990), has a project where he explicates *thinking about* in external terms. It is fine with me. Coin yourself some jargon and get on with it. I would be the last to oppose such a project.

However, it simply doesn't describe what I wish to talk about. It doesn't delineate the germ that is philosophically interesting. It delineates *something*, of course. One cannot fail to delineate something. And there is no harm in it. There is nothing at all wrong with Stalnaker's project. He has a notion, and here it is. However, we are about to embark upon an exploration, and the goal of our exploration is to reveal that there is some other fascinating sense in which one's thoughts are about something.

Stalnaker has a project of describing thoughts in terms of causation emanating from the environment. He is working on a causal-information theoretic strategy (CITS) for meaning. It "will explain content in terms of counterfactual dependencies that tend to hold, under normal conditions, between thinker's internal states and their environments."<sup>103</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>103</sup> Stalnaker 1999, p. 204.

The ambitious aspects of the construct are, however, that it is rather tricky to define normality and it is also somewhat tricky to define the relevant environmental states without recourse to natural kinds — which has a host of problems associated with it. Yet, if anybody can do counterfactuals, Stalnaker can. (No pun, intended.)

Why define thought content in terms of causation emanating from the environment? Well, if all you've got is a memory bit getting turned off and on, the external description gets to be pretty attractive. You want to say, because nothing else comes to mind, that the bit is getting turned on by an approaching orca — and so the bit's container is thinking about an orca. It is all very natural.

Yet I think it must be missing something about the nature of my own thoughts, though. You will see that I find it interesting to consider another notion of `thinking about' vis a vis my own thoughts. I do not claim Stalnaker's notion cannot be talked about. Surely, it can and quite naturally!

I am talking about *another* notion. I do not believe either is superior. That doesn't make any sense. There is one notion, and there is another. They are as different as beetles and bullfrogs. Stalnaker is not wrong about anything. Our point is merely that there is something else to be right about.

The happy respect we accord Stalnaker's notion is likewise returned by him towards the notion that interests us. Stalnaker is wholly respectful of and initially quite sympathetic to the motivation behind narrow content. He writes,

The internalist project—the project of explicating a conception of narrow content and applying it to the explanation of intentionality—is an appealing one since it seems intuitively obvious that our thoughts and beliefs are wholly our own. What we see and know is partly a matter of what we are looking at, and what is true, and we can get it wrong. But we can't be wrong about what we think, or think we think about. When I retreat from saying how things are to saying how they seem—how they are *according to me*—I retreat from a claim about the world to a claim about my own mind, and I can tell that the claim is true by introspection—by observing what is internal to my mind.<sup>104</sup>

Although we will go our separate ways, Stalnaker has given us a glowing and thoughtful treatment of the internalist view. I cannot think of greater praise than to call a point intuitively obvious.

Again, the goal of our essay is not to gainsay Stalnaker's account of knowing about something and thinking about something. Surely, a Venus Flytrap knows it has a fly in its clutches. Surely, a thermostat knows it is getting cold. Rudimentary mechanical devices are thinking about a variety of things! In Stalnaker's sense of "thinking about", they are thinking about everything from ice cubes to insects. A device, under the CITS definition of "thinking about," is thinking about the objects with which it has had standard counterfactual causal links under normal circumstances. A bit is bullied by some thing. A plant is thinking that the sun has moved. A morning glory is thinking about the moving sun, pace Stalnaker.

As I just said, define a notion and have fun with it! How could I state my opposition to such a project?

Let me, for the moment, call the fruit of these Stalnaker thoughts: *machine knowledge*. It involves states and registers and mechanical interactions with the environment. Algae have machine knowledge. Amoebae have machine knowledge. A single cell in my body has machine knowledge of the world outside.

Our task is merely to introduce a notion of "thinking about" that — under certain linguistic contexts — turns out to be the primary notion that springs to one's mind. It is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 194.

simply another notion of "thinking about" that is of interest to intellectuals. Once the notion is grasped by the reader, the essential work of our chapter is done.

I have not come to bury the CITS notion of "thinking about." What would that mean? A viable notion is a viable notion. People may talk about it as much as they wish to. One can have a cake and eat a pie. There are simply two notions here, and I am about to explore one of them. There are two men called `Caesar' lying before us. I have come to praise the other notion.

### Oysters on the Serengeti

What is it like to be a bat? What is it like to be a piece of coral? Or a piece of kelp? I do not know the answers to these questions. In the abstract, one might assume that for some living machines, the answer is *nothing* and that for others it is a personal experience of some sort. The divide between the two might accompany ascending complexity. If it does, let us call the simplest persons who have a first person sense of what it is like to be themselves: *oysters*.

Might these be oysters, in the common, unphilosophical sense of the word? They might, indeed, which is why it is a suggestive bit of jargon. We are going to talk about oysters — philosophical oysters. We are going to talk about what they do and about what they know. We are going to talk about these little people who are living their little lives, as happy as a clam.

I set the scene on the Serengeti. Imagine an oyster lying there. It is a simple creature, physically speaking. By our definition, though, we may look inside its mind and see its world from its perspective. We may imagine it thinking its own thoughts.

We now take a look inside its mind. It is happy. Let us give it that. Let us give it colors to experience. Sounds. The smell of meatloaf.

By the smell of meatloaf, I do *not* mean to say anything about the world outside the oyster. It is a reflection of the impoverishment of my language that I talk in such a way. I only mean to choose a phenomenal smell *itself*, not to cast aspersions nor to imply constraints upon what brought the smell about. What causes the so-called smell of meatloaf in the oyster's mind? I cannot say. Anything but a loaf of meat. Indigestion, perhaps. Low blood sugar. A slow heart rate. A touch of absinthe. And when I talk about color, too, I have in mind the phenomenal experience only. I should not be taken to imply that there is any savory meatloaf lying upon the Serengeti plain nor any particular wavelengths of radiation outside our oyster's shell. I am trying to describe the phenomenal experience alone that our oyster is having within his first person point of view. Any experiences will do. I have plucked a few from my own mind. It matters not for the essay, but I prefer to paint in colors.

Our oyster is seeing yellow on a white background. It is seeing a pulsating yellow triangle. *This* is what it is like to be our oyster!

Give it a few more thoughts. Perhaps he is not the simplest of oysters. Perhaps he is capable of reflecting upon various things he has seen. He knows he has seen a blue triangle float by. He knows he is hearing a loud noise. He likes the smell of meatloaf and wonders if he shall experience it again.

He has a bunch of thoughts. His phenomenal day goes by. He wonders if he will ever see another red circle. A wavy blue line strikes him as *enormously* beautiful. That was great! But he worries about the return of pain.

Meanwhile, a lot is happening in Africa, and we need to get up to speed. The sun is rising and setting. The temperature goes up and down. Predators walk the plains of the Serengeti. Just five feet from our oyster is a colony of meerkats, who scramble busily. A hundred feet away, at the bend of a river, lurks a tremendous crocodile! Our oyster is well hidden, though. It blends in with the pebbles and stones that ring the meerkat complex. A hyena is approaching.

Our hero — Let's call him, "Jake" — knows none of this. He is an oyster, you see, and very little gets through his shell. He lives in a white world. A yellow triangle drifts by. A purple oval. You might think his life is quite tedious. Yet the occasional rush of excitement washes over his world with no obvious cause.

For Jake, there is no obvious cause of anything. He has no scientific theory, not even a rudimentary one. Even if he were a great scientist, no construct would apply. A few colorful shapes are drifting thither and yon. He does not think he is sitting on the plains of Africa. He does not see the hyena nearby nor can he even *imagine* her existence. He sees a white background and a piddling yellow triangle. He could be on the moon, for all he knows. He could be floating in interstellar space. He has got some red and purple — and that is just about it. He is no Stephen Hawking to be.

Every evening at dusk, the meerkats creep out of their tunnels and gather on a level patch of dust beside Jake. They have a jolly time, and they dance. They dance elaborate meerkat dances from prehistory.

We imagine now Jake's body is capable of being stimulated by these songs and by these dances. In an astoundingly precise way. Should a raccoon sing a simpler song, it would leave him unmoved. A rougher dance by a gerbil would have no effect. Yet

when these meerkat songs are wailed precisely, Jake smells burnt toast. When the meerkats dance so marvelously, Jake sees a red circle.

If Jake were to be put on another continent, the background color of his visual experience would be altered. In Europe, he would see aquamarine. In Australia, he would see puce.

Right now, Jake is thinking about a red circle that he sees against a white background. Was he a Japanese kamikaze in a previous life?

## <u>Thoughts</u>

What is Jake thinking about? What is the philosophically fascinating subject of Jake's little thoughts? If we apply the CITS notion here — and there is *absolutely* nothing wrong with it — then, on a night such as this, Jake is thinking about meerkats dancing.

When Jake sees a red spot drift by and he thinks it is beautiful, he is — on Stalnaker's account — thinking about meerkats dancing. When Jake is thinking about the fact that he sees white so much of the time, he is — on Stalnaker's account thinking about the fact that he is in Africa. We could postulate that when Jake sees a spinning green pentagon, he is — on Stalnaker's account — thinking about a hyena burping.

We have one Caesar before us. But there is another. There is a philosophically interesting notion according to which Jake is *not* thinking about such things. He does not know he is in Africa. He could be on the moon, for all he knows. Drifting in his white world, he could be drifting in space. What does he know? From his perspective, he has a

few colors, a sound, an occasional smell. When he thinks about a red circle, I believe the answer to the question is obvious.

What is Jake thinking about? Jake is thinking about a red circle.

Jake is not thinking about meerkats dancing. Is not to think about dancing, at least in one philosophical sense, to think about the way something moves upon its feet? I dare say such concepts are beyond our poor little oyster. Even though the white background, too, is causally related to Africa, Jake is thinking about the white background. He is not thinking about *Africa*. He doesn't know much about continental drift. *A*ccording to Stalnaker, he is thinking about the fact that he is in Africa. Yet I do not see how, as a phenomenally conscious fellow, he is thinking about Africa any more than he is thinking about Pangaea, and I presume he is not thinking about Pangaea, at all.

Of course, I am diverging dramatically from Stalnaker in the way I use these words. I have moved on to some other sense of what thoughts are about. There is nothing wrong with the Stalnaker perspective. Trivially, it is true. By construction, Jake's body is a tidy computational device. It is interacting with the environs of the African plain. States within it are normally triggered by external facts such as a meerkat dancing a peculiar dance, a hyena belching, and an omnipresent African continent. Hence, by Stalnaker's definitions, the computational device *has* mechanical thoughts about these various things. In particular, at the various times we are talking about, Jake is thinking about the causal antecedent thereof. Jake is thinking about meerkats dancing. Actually, an exceedingly particular kind of dancing, not about dancing in general. A frenetic meerkat rhumba.

Now, I admit in *some* sense Jake is thinking about meerkats doing a rhumba. I do

not wish to obviate CITS thoughts. For they undoubtably exist. Yet I do not believe, in the crucial sense I am worried about, that Jake is thinking about meerkats dancing. Jake knows nothing of meerkats. Most Americans don't, either. They couldn't tell a meerkat from a lemur. Meanwhile, ex hypothesi, Jake is seeing a red circle. He is thinking, "Wow, that is red!" or "Gee, that is a circle!" or something like that. The content of Jake's thoughts is a red circle.

Stalnaker is attracted to an externalism that proves too much. Stalnaker wants the contents of his thoughts to be meerkats dancing a frenetic rhumba. That is a lot for our poor little Jake. They are, in some sense, but not, I believe, in the crucial and interesting one. As a thinking conscious thing, Jake's thoughts are about something else. He is thinking about something more primitive. He is thinking about his own colors. He is just being happy. He is merely experiencing the smell of meatloaf. He is not thinking about the discovery of the Higgs boson in Switzerland because it normally accompanies and triggers such a smell.

I hope Stalnaker would see the phenomenally conscious being has his own issues. Stalnaker's project remains interesting. It should be fleshed out with counterfactuals. It should be purged of reliance upon natural kinds. It should characterize normality somehow.

Yet when there is something like it to *be* an entity, a new notion appears, and it is philosophically interesting to grapple with it. Jake is thinking about white. Jake is thinking about red. He is not thinking about Africa and frolicking meerkats. At least — in some interesting philosophical sense — this negative is true. It is precisely this sense we are obligated to explore.

Hence, I think it is clear there is a deeply important philosophical notion that comes to the fore in certain contexts which is precisely not the sort of "thinking about" explicated in the CITS account. It is the sense in which Jake, the oyster, is thinking about a spinning green pentagon on a white background and about precious little else. Stalnaker's initial sympathies come back into play. What he said earlier was right. It becomes intuitively obvious that our thoughts are our own. I cannot be wrong about the things I think. And when I retreat to saying how things seem, how they are according to me, to a claim about my own mind — about the red circle and the spinning green pentagon (without referring them to anything else beyond) — I can tell the claim is true by introspection. Our quote from Stalnaker is true regarding the second notion. Philosophy needs this additional notion. These, in fact, are the interesting thoughts to think about.

## CHAPTER 13

## WHAT ARE NAMES USED FOR?

Earlier, we defined a name to be the rigidification of a conjunction of descriptions in a dossier. In this chapter, we try to get at what names are used for, and we discover that what they are used for does not align perfectly with what we defined them to be. It is an oddity. In this chapter, I shall investigate names in the old fashioned way. I shall imagine actually using names in various ways. I shall contemplate what needs to be in place between two speakers for communication with names to, in fact, succeed. I shall see if people, under certain circumstances, ever change the core of a name — which runs a bit afoul of the definition. I shall imagine natural cases where people are denying the existence of the object described in the dossier. I shall look at names of people as they expire. Not the people, who are long dead in the examples I imagine, but as the *names* expire — as nobody any longer has any interesting description associated with the names.

The investigation of names is old school. I am introspecting about the typical ways in which I would use the things I call names. Not to keep the reader in suspense, the result is that the communication of the semantic value of a name is *not* what names are used for. Associated with the object named is a lot of laundry,<sup>105</sup> a lot of non-essential characteristics of the object. The practical language function of a name is to communicate and to highlight relationships among the laundry.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>105</sup> The *laundry* of an object is a non-essential characteristic asserted of an object.
The semantic value of a name, meanwhile, is the ding set into which all the essential characteristics are wrapped up, and it is not communicated. It is a good thing because these ding sets are hardly ever known.

Names are linguistic tools that allow us to hang the laundry.

## Crosswise Communication

Allow me to engage in a bit of introspection. The first example I would like to imagine is a case where two people are talking to each other about the same object, but where they are each using a different name. How does this exchange work? Surely, it can be done. What allows it to take place?

Suppose President Bush is talking to Vice President Cheney. Suppose they do not use the same name for the object they are discussing. However, suppose Bush knows Cheney calls the object *X*, while Cheney knows Bush calls the object *Y*. Then, we can have a conversation, eh? All it takes is an entry in Bush's dossier on the object: *called X by Cheney* and another entry in Cheney's dossier on the object: *called Y by Bush*. Let's define *crosswise* communication to be communication with names that depends upon *called Z by my interlocutor* in order to succeed.

Here is an example of crosswise communication:

Cheney:	Chirac is not going to participate in our coalition.
Bush:	Frankenstein? What does he have against us?
Cheney:	Chirac still views France as a competitor to the U.S
Bush:	I think you should waterboard Frankenstein

Names are useful even though the two people are not using the same name. It is a curiosity that one does not find the same effect when one thinks about other pieces of language.

Toulouse:	Your president is not going to participate in our coalition.
Lautrec:	Il? Pour quoi?

Toulouse:He still views France as a competitor to the U.S.Lautrec:C'est ne pas vrais. Nous sommes bon amis.

Although you do know what your interlocutor means when he uses his words, it is considered to be a different language. You are speaking English. He is speaking French. With names, the rules are different, however. If only you know what your interlocutor means by his name — which is not to say that you know the description he has in mind but only that an object, which meets some description in your mind, is selected by his description — then you both are speaking the same language.

So, being called Z by the interlocutor is sufficient to bring names into alignment and to enable communication. Is it necessary? I think the following conversation demonstrates it is necessary.

Girl:	I love Madonna.
Priest:	I love Madonna as much as I love Jesus.
Girl:	I love her in her leather outfits.
Priest:	I don't think she had leather outfits.

I conclude that all communication with names is enabled and necessarily so by having an entry in one's dossier under the name asserting that it is called Z by the person to whom you are talking. Moreover, the fact that your name for the object and her name for the object are the same is entirely irrelevant. Completely irrelevant! It is odd.

The core fact and presumption inherent in the causal theory of names, that it is the same name bouncing from person to person, is completely irrelevant when it comes to the efficacy of communication involving names.

# Mr. Mxyzptlk

Ted and Alice hear they are about to meet someone famous. They each mis-hear the announcement. They think the person they are about to meet is widely known as Mr. Mxyzptlk. They each have the same dossier:

# {a person, famous under the name `Mr. Mxyzptlk'}

They meet the man, and the three have dinner in a private compartment. They hear that

he is the best volleyball player in the world. Ted believes it, and Alice does not.

Their new dossiers<sup>106</sup> are:

Ted:	{ <b>the new person we had dinner with,</b> famous under the name `Mr. Mxyzptlk', the best volleyball player in the world, colled Mr. Mywzptlk by Alice)
	called MI. Mixyzpuk by Alice}
Alice:	{the new person we had dinner with,
	famous under the name `Mr. Mxyzptlk',
	the second best volleyball player in the world,
	called Mr. Mxyzptlk by Ted}
Notice the	ir cores have changed. They have revised their dossiers. In some sense, the

two of them have created a new name. One might say that they have obliterated the old name and have created a new one.

Chatting later about their dinner companion, they have the following

conversation:

Ted:Wow! Mr. Mxyzptlk is the best volleyball player in the world!Alice:Misty May is the best. Mr. Mxyzptlk is very good, though.

It seems that both Ted and Alice are now using `Mr. Mxyzptlk' to mean: dthat (the new

person we had dinner with). Suppose they soon learn they really misheard his name.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>106</sup> The core of the dossier is in bold.

They now no longer claim to know what he is called by others.<sup>107</sup> They drop this description from their lists. They now use the name `Mr. Mxyzptlk' between themselves to talk about the person with whom they had dinner.

The example is interesting because it is the opposite of parasitic reference. I *thought* everyone was using a certain name for a certain person. I was wrong. But I don't care. I am now using a certain name, under a certain description, for a certain object. I don't care that he wasn't called Mr. Mxyzptlk by anyone else. It is my name now. I'll decide how I am going to use it.

The interesting thing about this example is that the force of the logic I am using to go my own way (when everyone else uses a different name than I do for an object) has just as much force when people use the *same* name as I do for an object. So, whether other people use the same name as I do for an object appears to be fundamentally irrelevant.

Either way, I create a word and use it (rigidly) to talk about some object that I can think about under a definite description.

#### What Gets Communicated?

In the next examples, we notice that what is actually communicated from one person to another is a piece of descriptive content from the dossier. It is laundry. Imagine a conversation between two dim people whose dossiers on `Neptune' are utterly sparse. Each has "Called Neptune by everybody else" and "A planet" in their respective dossiers. That is all. (Together, these two remarks comprise the descriptive core.)

Smith:	I would like to live on Neptune someday.
Wesson:	I would like to live on Neptune, too.
Smith:	I think it is warm on Neptune.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> He is called Mr. Hamilton by the overwhelming majority of the world.

Wesson: I think there are nice beaches.

It appears the conversationalists communicate the cores of their dossiers when they use

the word `Neptune'. It looks as though they just now communicated:

Smith:	I would like to live on the planet widely called Neptune someday.
Wesson:	I would like to live on the planet widely called Neptune, too.
Smith:	I think it is warm on the planet widely called Neptune.
Wesson:	I think there are nice beaches.

So, is it just the core of a dossier that gets communicated?

You might think so. But it does not look like it. Consider the arrival of a third

person, Jones, who is more sophisticated and whose dossier on Neptune runs like this:

{a planet,	
in our solar system,	
immediately more distant that Uranus,	
bigger than earth,	
blue,	
gasseous,	
cold,	
called Neptune by nearly everybody, including Smith	1}

Jones' core differs from Smith's core. He is a brighter fellow. We imagine a

conversation between Smith and Jones:

Smith:	I would like to live on Neptune someday.
Jones:	Neptune is far out there, even further than Uranus.
Smith:	Are there nice beaches on Neptune?
Jones:	Neptune is cold and made of gas.

And it doesn't seem to be a stretch to say, as before, that the following was

communicated.

Smith:	I would like to live on the planet widely called `Neptune' someday.
Jones:	The planet widely called 'Neptune' is far out there, even further than
	Uranus.
Smith:	Are there nice beaches on the planet widely called `Neptune'?

Jones: The planet widely called `Neptune' is cold and is made of gas.

So, the core of Jones is not being communicated. Our example shows that the

communication cannot be characterized merely as the removal of rigidification from the core. It is not the mere de-crystallization of a name.

Once more, we have an example of crosswise communication. A description in my dossier about your use of your name is essential to our successful communication. It is packed into each dossier within the line, `widely called `Neptune''.

Facts in the dossier *are* being communicated, but the communicated facts might be peripheral to at least one person's dossier. We might call such an effect *dossier-wise communication*. It is not de-crystallization, which is interesting. We will explore the effect later. A very important point for us to notice now is the fact that the notions communicated are not essential. They are not even core qualities, in some cases, you see. They are just hanging around in a person's dossier.

In general, when a name is used as a crystallization, what gets communicated is not what is meant. The linguistic value of a name is the essence of the object! That certainly is not what gets communicated. Yet it looks as though we cannot even assert a weaker point to the effect that the de-rigidified core description is what gets communicated. It seems we are just communicating laundry. We might even be communicating peripheral laundry. That's odd.

#### Quibbling about Existence

Names become even more odd and peculiar if you should think that the object under the description in your dossier does not exist. The crystallization or rigidification of the description makes no sense to you, whatsoever. There is a temptation to enrich the meaning of the name at this juncture. There is a temptation to use the name to stand for the definite description in one's dossier, unrigidified.

(Example) Jones is a scientist. Unlike Smith, it is not core to his dossier on Neptune that it is called Neptune by other people. He has looked at scientific meters move and has pondered smudges on photographic paper. He believes Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus are planets. He believes there is a planet a billion miles beyond Uranus. He calls this planet, Neptune. He would do so even if everyone else were to die and if he were the last person on Earth.

Meanwhile, Smith uses 'Neptune' in a manner entirely parasitic on the usage of others. For him, it is just a planet that is called 'Neptune' by a whole lot of people. He does not know the order of the planets. He does not know how many there are. He knows there *are* planets out there, and he knows one of them is called Neptune by a whole lot of people. That is all he knows.

Suppose, now, Jones quite intelligently comes to believe that his entire cosmology is incorrect. He says to Smith:

Jones:	Neptune does not exist.
Smith:	Neptune does exist. Fox News said so.
Jones:	Neptune does not exist.
Smith:	Does so.

What has been communicated? What has been said? What are the meanings of these words?

Of course, there is a simpler case to consider where Jones *correctly* believes there are no planets other than Earth. In such a case, Jones clearly cannot be rigidifying. He must be using 'Neptune' to stand for an unrigidified description.

Yet, in our more difficult case, Jones merely believes that his dossier does not refer. He believes it is fictitious, and yet it is not. It is odd. What might we choose to be the meaning of his words in this case? We *could* let him obviate and dispense with rigidification, entirely. He could be permitted to mean that his dossier is not satisfied by anything. He might be trying to express this very idea to Smith, and we could let him mean it.

What does Smith mean, meanwhile? In our difficult case, Smith need not dispense with rigidification, quite naturally. However, it is rather difficult to argue that Smith is attempting to communicate anything other than the outright denial of Jones' sentence. Hence, we might let his words mean that his dossier on Neptune *is* satisfied. It is an option.

Of course, we may do anything we please. Each one is a different language. Put more precisely, Jones and Smith may do anything they please. The two of them, above, could be having a conversation where one is asserting a dossier is unsatisfied and the other is asserting a dossier is satisfied. It is what they *could* be doing, if they were to choose to do so.

#### Names Peter Out

Although I am not fond of using the word `peter' to signify a steady dissolution into insignificance, it seems to be a relevant case to explore. People assign steadily less descriptive content to a name as the years go by. We will all be forgotten. It is the curse of Ozymandias.

Consider a typical name: NN'. As time marches on, speakers have less and less in their core about the name. As centuries go by, an increasing number of people have a purely parasitic interest in the name. They overheard someone using it. They saw it scratched on a tree. One day, people will look around and realize that no speaker of NN'

has anything other than *called* `*NN*' *in the past*. Eventually, with or without such reflection, people stop using the name.

I claim that it happened to somebody named Miles Winthrop a hundred years ago. People had been using `Miles Winthrop' parasitically for fifty years — and they just stopped. It will happen to all of us. Ye mighty, despair.

It is not uncommon, then, and no one denigrates us as English speakers should we use these names. So, let us imagine hundreds of names in the final stage of disrepair. Let us further imagine our names have no associated traditions, e.g. 'Miles' is a boy's name and 'Winthrop' is English (very likely from Suffolk!). We don't want these sorts of clues to be built into the name. Imagine we live in a world where people name every sort of thing imaginable. A certain Gabby Muldoon was as likely to have been a teacup in Ceylon in the fifth century B.C. as an Irish midwife from the sixteen hundreds. So, our language is full of these names, and several of them are at the stage where they peter out: 'Patience Caldwell', 'Celia Xan', and 'Percy Thumblehead'.

Suppose you and I talk a language richly endowed with these names. A typical conversation goes as follows:

- I: Percy Thumblehead was shaken, not stirred.
- You: Celia Xan curled up one Thursday.
- I: Percy Thumblehead was enclosed in a letter.
- You: Celia Xan left the moon in a hurry.

What have we said to each other? What have we communicated? What have we meant? What is the counterfactual truth behavior of these sentences?

We ask these vital questions. We ask them about an extreme case in hopes it will help us to better understand the general case. The dossiers of these names have been eviscerated, ex hypothesi, and yet each name does refer to some object. An object within the last ten thousand years, let us say. They *do* refer because they have not wholly petered out. They are in a purely parasitic phase.

I overheard someone saying 'Percy Thumblehead', and I have, ex hypothesi, correctly presumed he or she was referring to some object. Ditto with you and 'Celia Xan'. You and I rightly believe these names were used by others. Ex hypothesi. But it is not much, eh? These are weak names.

It shouldn't matter but please notice that in the conversation above you and I are not trying to speak truthfully. If anybody thinks speaking truthfully has any effect on sentence meaning, I shall wholeheartedly disagree. It is not an issue. The issue is *what* we have said. When are our sentences counterfactually true? What have we dossier-wise crosswise communicated, etcetera?

Look at our conversation! Something certainly seems rotten in Denmark.

A critic might exclaim not much had been said, at all! Who are we to use these names when we believe so little extraneous information about these objects? The critic excoriates us for being impertinently pretentious name-users who should be ashamed of ourselves.

It certainly feels shameful! The counterfactual truth condition of one proposition includes a possible world where Percy Thumblehead *itself* was stuffed in a letter. But what sort of world is that?

I don't know. Do you? Do you know the ding set of Percy Thumblehead?

For this, the critic is getting on to us! His anger seems justified. It seems you and I are idly talking about nothing. It seems you and I are not communicating to each other. Talking with weak names appears to be a farce.

It feels like a farce, but why? We have done nothing wrong. Why does it feel like a farce?

#### Have We Abused What Names Are Used For?

The problem is not that I can't pick Percy's possible world out of the set of all possible worlds. I couldn't do that, anyway. Hence, the problem is not that I do not know what I mean. The problem appears to be that *being named `Celia Xan' at some point* is all you have in your dossier on Celia and *being named `Percy Thumblehead' at some point* is all I have in my dossier on Percy and that, even if such things are true,<sup>108</sup> it does not provide a basis for an interesting conversation.

The critic is upset because the meaning of a name — a rigidification to a hidden essence — is not the point of a name's usage. You do not communicate the meaning of a name, anyway! Instead, you use a name to communicate various facts about the bearer of a name, which is a different linguistic aspect entirely. Our weak names have almost no laundry. Of course, you need a bit of laundry in order to even have a name. One has to rigidify upon something. However, when you do not have any interesting laundry, you do not have an interesting conversation.

Did Celia Xan leave the moon in a hurry? It is unlikely, but I really don't know. You certainly have no idea. Sentences with `Percy Thumblehead' and `Celia Xan' are just not interesting.

My mother vexed me thusly last time she visited. We went to lunch, and, since I was taught be polite, as my mother sat there eating and talking about Priss, I had no idea who or what she was talking about. I ate my expensive hamburger, nodding. Eventually, she said, quite sadly, "Priss was lying in the middle of the road."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>108</sup> Surely these descriptions could be cross-wise dossier-wise communicated.

I hoped for Priss's sake she was a book. Or a nuclear submarine, which likely wouldn't be hurt lying in a road. Awkwardly, I asked my mother, "Who is Priss?"

My mom took no offense. "Our cat," she said.

I nodded solemnly and sadly.

Yet normally people *do* take offense. If you are not up to date on the laundry, you have defeated the whole point of communication involving names! I had broken my part of the bargain. One cannot drift along, parasitically, forever. At some point, you need the laundry in order to *get* what the other person is trying to communicate.

My mother was trying to communicate:

(1) The cat who lives with us was lying in the middle of the road.

She had frozen to death. Sentence (1) was *not* what my mother had said. Sentence (1) is not what she had meant. Sentence (1) has a very different counterfactual behavior from 'Priss was lying in the middle of the road.' Yet, really now, Sentence (1) was what my mother intended to communicate. Except she had forgotten the important part. I had missed the socially proper moment to inquire about it. Yet what she had forgotten was not *linguistically* important. I do not believe there is anything linguistically wrong with my rigidifying on *the thing my mom calls 'Priss'*. An extra-linguistic phenomenon is going on with names. There is an extra-linguistic aspect at the heart of name usage.

The important communicative use of names is not the conveyance of their semantic value. The important communicative use of names involves the laundry. The real practical use of a name is to inform me about and to make claims about various relationships being present in the world and holding amongst the laundry. This is what my mom was using the name for. This is why it feels so silly to use names that have

nothing more than parasitic laundry. This is why it feels so natural to adapt a name to an existence-denial sentence and thereby deny the laundry refers.

Names are used to hang the laundry. The practical usage of a name is not the conveyance of its semantic value.

# CHAPTER 14

# LOST BAPTISMS AND NEVER REPEATED NAMES

## Introduction

Going back to chapter three, you might recall that a host of problems beset our species and mass terms because the baptisms were lost. You might have gotten the impression that these problems only weigh down these sorts of terms, but they can weigh down ordinary names, too. We now look at what would happen if perfectly ordinary names were to have their baptisms lost. The result is unsettling.

We will also look closely at what follows from our observation that the basis of crosswise communication — knowing that the person you are talking to calls the object `NN' — is both necessary and sufficient for successful communication with names. Recall that whether you yourself call the object `NN', too, is utterly irrelevant! We had an example where George Bush was talking to Dick Cheney and each used a different name for the same object. Communication worked because a crosswise supposition was in place. Next, even if the names happen to be the same (e.g. `Madonna'), we saw the reason the communication works is that a crosswise supposition is in place. The utility of name usage depends only the crosswise supposition, and the names do not have to be the same.

Therefore, the obvious next step is to imagine the device of names in place — held together by any number of mutual crosswise suppositions — without the names

being the same. This *is* the essence of the naming institution. Why? Because crosswise suppositions are the necessary and sufficient condition for successful name use.

Naturally, some people *might* use the same name as other people do for the same object. A few identities could be scattered amongst the crosswise suppositions here and there. When a mathematician says, "Pick another name," it doesn't *have* to be different. However, the basic and essential theoretical framework of the naming institution is a web of crosswise suppositions wherein we pick *another* name at each and every juncture.

What follows from this? Once again, the result is unsettling — if you are the sort of person who is trying to justify the causal theory. The case where a single name is used over and over is merely a special case of the general naming institution. In the general case, the names people use are not the same. So, we have names, therefore, in the general case, and the causal theory cannot gain any traction because there is nothing for the causal theory to talk about! There is no single name bouncing along through time. Quite an interesting result!

So, we are going to look at two interesting results, i) lost baptisms and ii) never repeated names, and both of these issues make the causal theory look exceedingly weak. <u>The Gerbil Problem</u>

Does Kripke say you have to keep track of what you have named? What does it take to keep track of something? Well, at the very least, you would need to possess a description of the object as it is now. So, surely Kripke cannot ask us to keep track of what we have named without doing violence to the novelty of his causal theory! It follows that losing track of what you have baptized is not just not ruled out by Kripke. It

appears to follow that the causal theory only becomes interesting when you lose track of what you have baptized!

Hence, let us look at the case where you lose what you have baptized. How do names behave in this case? I will imagine a case where we have baptism after baptism — and each successive object gets lost.

I will continue to have a unique definite description of each object. But it will be unsettling. Somehow, it will not be enough. For some reason, the definite description simply won't do, and we want more. That is odd.

Imagine the following scenario. There are two Swedish scientists whose job it is to name gerbils. Every five minutes throughout the working day, with Germanic punctuality, Helga or Hedor pulls a gerbil from a vast pit of gerbils, names it quite ceremoniously with a name from their list, records the time, and returns the gerbil to the pit. These Swedes have been working on the project for three years.

There are twelve-thousand gerbils in the pit, and they all look alike. Our scientists take no steps to re-identify them. They name the little beasts and toss them back into a vast, tumultuous cage. They add a thousand names a day to our language, words such as `Plamsy' and `Fimmleton'. Helga — for instance — isolates a squirming gerbil from the pen, holds it up high, and ceremoniously baptizes it with a new name. She writes it down. She writes down the time, too. It creates a unique description because she baptizes only one gerbil at a time. She throws the gerbil back into the pen where it splashes into a brown sea and dissolves, informationally speaking.

Now, consider the sentence:

(1) Plamsy is Fimmelton.

Is it true? Is it false? Nobody knows. Certainly, the very same gerbil could have been

baptized twice. Hence, it might be necessary. It ain't necessarily necessary, though. But it definitely is not contingent. (I am placing the necessarily false outside of the contingent.) Names are rigid designators. Therefore, quite necessarily, the sentence is not contingent.

The gerbil problem is an interesting one. As in the case of weak names, it tends to strike us that nothing much at all is being said when you say a sentence that include 'Plamsy', 'Fimmelton', 'Snipper' and 'Nod'. It appears to be a completely sterile exercise.

However, looked at logically, this surely is not the case! These are perfectly good names from the logical point of view. We are Dthat-rigidifiying on a unique description. We are involving the ding set (both in the sentence and in its meaning), and it invovles the viscera of gerbils. It is all perfectly good.

However, once again, it feels like a farce. How could it be? Well, if the communicative use of a name is *not* its semantic value, we would see, in this case, that the various sentences, e. g.:

(2) Nod weighs nine ounces.

and

(3) Nod spent some time in a Stanford laboratory.

have the communicative goal of stating that the gerbil dubbed by Helga at 9:43 am on February 12, 2006 weighs nine ounces and spent some time in a Stanford laboratory.

It is not terrible to communicate these things — although you might not care. What makes it bad is that we *lost* the gerbil. One purpose of language is to convey facts

you know or believe. But nobody knows anything about Nod other than that he was baptized by Helga at 9:43 am on February 12, 2005.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that a few of the gerbils spent time at Stanford. It was an exchange program. But did Nod? Who knows? Nobody, not even the speaker, has the faintest notion as to whether or not sentence (2) or sentence (3) is true.

So, we wind up speaking sentences that *might* be true. He might have gone to Stanford. We even wind up speaking sentences that might be necessary.:

(4) Nod is Snipper.

He might be Snipper. But, just as in the case of the weak names we considered earlier, we do not have enough laundry to care. How odd. The problem appears to be that we just don't care.

Even if there *is* a fact that I strongly believe to be true of Nod (since it is true of all the gerbils), like his never having visited Mars, somehow when I say:

(5) Nod has never visited Mars.

it still feels like what I have communicated to my listener is: *none of these gerbils has visited Mars* — which is not really what I said. It is an oddity. Why do people want to point to a gerbil who is now skittering about in a pond of gerbils and say, "*That* one has never visited Mars" or "*That* one went to Stanford" but they become utterly uninterested (to the point of disdain!) when Helga did the pointing three years ago? I fail to see the difference.

There appears to be an emotional frisson that kicks in when you feel you have enough laundry to be compelling and interesting. So, it gets back to the various

emotional attachments we form with our stock characters and to the process of faux rigidification. It just has to feel right.

## The General Case of Names

Let us now turn to a serious issue that comes about when we do not disobey anything logically important but comes about when we disobey what is traditional. You see, as a mathematician, I look at the case where people use the same name to refer to the same object as a special case of a more general situation. As we have shown, two people need not use the same name to talk about the same object. Rather, it is the dossier facts that enable communication. They are sufficient. They are necessary. Two people are not communicating, but talking past each other, if each uses the word `Madonna' for a different woman.

Hence, the case of successful communication with the same name between two people is merely a special case of a larger construct. It is the case where each thinker has "Called `N' by the person to whom I am talking" in his or her dossier under the name `N'. Let us turn to the general case. The general case is what is truly important. The general case is what matters to an intellectual.

The general case is one where each speaker,  $x_i$ , has a different name,  $N_i$  and a belief with respect to the interlocutor, "Called  $N_j$  by  $x_j$ " which enables a discussion with  $x_j$ . Meanwhile, the interlocutor has the corresponding description, "Called  $N_i$  by  $x_i$ ," in her dossier under  $N_j$ . Further, each speaker might have arbitrarily many beliefs about what the object is called by any number of other people.

A single name used by a lot of people is a special case where  $N_1 = N_2 = \cdots = N_n$ . Obviously, the general case is more interesting, and the special case follows trivially

from the general one. The general case relies, as we said, on descriptive content in the dossier. It relies on Namenfacts in order for communication to succeed and for the discussion to be about the same person or object.

Obviously, what is interesting here is that general case of using names *is* the general case and that the general case has no trace of the causal theory. The causal theory of names, you see, assumes a single name. It assumes the name is passed from person to person. It attempts to describe how it is passed along (although it is notoriously vague about it). However, we see that in the general case, there is no solitary name being used.

In the general case, actually, it makes absolutely no sense to consider the causal theory! The causal theory is a discussion of the causal links in a chain of meaning for a single name propagating through time. The causal theory has some, as yet unspecified, scheme of what has to push upon what — what to causally interact with what — for a single name chain to be extended through time. The tracing back of such causality is claimed to get us to the referent of the name. But none of this has relevance to our general case because there is no single name drifting across time from one speaker to another. There is no corresponding causal chain to follow back.

Quite simply, the general case cannot even made sense of by way of the causal theory.

Yet we have just now made sense of it — easily and completely — by way of the descriptivist thesis for the backing of names. Each of us has her own descriptions of the object. It is crucial for our communication that one line in my dossier on  $N_1$  is that the object called  $N_2$  by you. (If I am being parasitic, it is my core.) Now, somebody else might call it  $N_3$ . We can communicate with them, too, if we know this crosswise fact.

So, we can explain the *entire* naming situation, and no one needs to be using the same name for the same object.

The general case is easy to understand. And to understand it, you must be a descriptivist. You simply cannot be a causal theorist. Moreover, the usually considered case — where everybody uses the same name — is explained in *exactly* the same way with exactly the same resources. The ordinary case is explained in the same way, inserting  $N_1 = N_2 = \cdots = N_n$ .

Now, I just said that it is the usual case, but I am not so sure that it is! It might be more normal and usual to require that names change. Socrates wasn't called Socrates, after all. That's what Kripke says. It *is* a problem for the causal theory, presumably, to accommodate these gradual changes across time. But there is absolutely no difficulty for our general account! It is merely a flavor of our general account. We are not troubled, at all, if a lot of people called Socrates `Mervyn' back then.

What is worse for the causal theory here? That it cannot explain the general case of name usage? Or that it has to come up with a magical reason why the special case does not inherit the underlying justification and reasoning from the general one?

I don't know. But I think it is time to stop doing the old style of philosophy where we perform these introspections upon this or that aspect of our own language. Let us now turn to thinking, a priori and in the abstract, about the various operations we could build into a language. If you think one of these operations fits with what you are doing at some point in your own flavor of the language you speak, that is swell.

# CHAPTER 15

## DENYING THE LAUNDRY REFERS

At some point in your life, you might wish to deny your laundry refers. You might have a dossier, and in the dossier you have a lot of facts. Your ring has gotten thin, and you come to believe the world is so comported and in such-and-such a way that the core of your dossier is not satisfied by anything in the world. What should you do?

Well, you are liable to break down in tears if you come to think you are not going to get any presents on Christmas. I am not saying you should break down in tears. I am not saying you shouldn't. My real question is not, "What should you do?" It is: what should you say in order to mean that you have decided to move certain elements in or out of the ring and that your newly decided firm core of a certain name is, as you understand the world, not satisfied by any object?

Well, those very words will do nicely. But they *are* rather cumbersome. What should you say, instead? What can you say? What could you say that could possibly mean this?

If you have understood the definition of a language, you see it is a trick question. The answer is obvious. You can say anything you like. You can say:

(1) Smipple do-gud fipple jum-jum.

and make it mean whatever you like. Each assignment pushes you into a different language. So, you see, it is a rather silly question.

Yet, as a matter of personal curiosity, you might wish to look inside your mind. You might wish to reflect upon the fact that, at some point in your life, you did encounter this very problem, and you did say a few words which meant (to you, anyway, and very likely to your interlocutor) precisely what I spelled out above. Think back, now. What did you say? It is unlikely you went on a metalinguistic tirade.

I believe my older brother said, "Santa Claus does not exist."

I think I muttered to myself, abjectly, "Santa Claus does not exist," and I meant precisely that a certain dossier I had in my mind does not refer. I could be wrong about that. I could have gone on a metalinguistic tirade. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if I am right or wrong about any of this.

It is only of interest that one *could* use the sentence:

(2) Santa Claus does not exist.

to mean precisely what I meant when I was six.

Why is that? Well, it makes no sense to rigidify to the ding of an object that does not exist. And it is a bit problematic to rigidify to the ding of an object you *think* does not exist. In the first case, the letters in black and white comprise the evident part of an evident sentential overlay which is partial and, indeed, which is empty and not a sentence, given the state of the world is such that the description upon which you are rigidifying is not satisfied by any object.

It was all well and good to say my meaning of `Santa Claus' is dthat (blah-blahblah) and go on to specify various descriptions in the core of my dossier on `Santa Claus'. One can do the same maneuver for any name. However, we must realize that we have offered a partial meaning of `Santa Claus' and of `Vulcan' and of `Pocahontas' and

of `Charles the Bald' and of `Eadgifu of Wessex' and we really haven't said anything, at all, with these words if the world is not to our liking and not up to our pretensions.

In short, the way we have defined a name, it is utterly stupid and vacant to say:

(3) NN does not exist.

for any name 'NN' if I am trying to say a true sentence. It perfectly fine to use such a sentence (whose form I'll call *name denial*) to say something false. It is perfectly fine to say, "Bertrand Russell never existed!" and go on to lament what a terrible world it would have been.

However, given the way we have defined a name, you cannot use name denial sentences and succeed in saying something true.

Given the propensity of language users to endeavor to say true sentences, it seems a waste. The null part of our partial sentential overlay is going to waste. It is valuable real estate, and we are not using it for anything.

I am not saying that *you* are not using it for anything. I am not saying that my brother is not using it for anything. I am saying that, insofar as I have bothered to formalize sentences that involve rigidified dossiers, I have not assigned any sentences to name denial overlays when the description does not refer.

It is rather lazy of me.

Let me try to think back. I believe I said, "Santa Claus does not exist," to my little sister. I believe it is what I said.

If we proceed upon this very supposition, we get a linguistic construction that fits rather nicely. It is not often you say, "Charles the Bald did not exist! What an unhappy world that would have been!"

So there *is* some real estate that is not being used much for things that do exist. And it is not being used, at all, for things that don't exist. We could fill it in with a different meaning entirely.

Of course, we could. So, let's do it.

We are considering and constructing (and some of us are using) a language where name denial sentences *mean* that the core of the dossier does not refer. Since we are being practical at the moment, we should talk about ambiguous languages (which are not languages, since they are not functions) and ambiguous sentences (which are not sentences, since they do not have a single meaning), which leave a minor choice open to our speaker as to what sentence she should like to be speaking at a certain time. It is important that the choice be minor — say, a choice between two alternatives. It is also important that our ambiguities have the potential to be resolved by clever interlocutors. (Although it is not terribly important if you are talking to yourself.)

Do not confuse ambiguous sentences with sentential overlays in need of a context. They are as different as jet propulsion and elderberries.

We are constructing a language where the preferred meaning of a name denial sentence is the dossier denial meaning. We make it an ambiguous language by allowing — but deprecating — a secondary meaning of a name denial sentence, which is the rigidification of the dossier.

We could speak it. I am sure a lot of people do.

While we are at it, we notice that, as a practical matter, people like to argue about what does and does not exist. I was at café recently, and everyone was arguing about

whether or not Romulus and Remus actually existed. I could scarcely get any work done. Hence, since we would like a typical argument, such as:

- (4) Romulus did not exist!
- (5) Romulus did exist!

to be one where each speaker is negating the other, we could bifurcate the meaning of a sentence such as (5), whose form I'll call a *name existence* sentence, and suggest a secondary meaning that is nothing other than the assertion that the corresponding dossier does, indeed, refer. It is secondary and deprecated meaning, however. One usually means it only when one is arguing with non-believers. One has to be careful because it has different counterfactual behavior from our normal, preferred meaning.

The dossier affirmation meaning of a name existence sentence is an especially useful sort of meaning to employ when you, yourself, as the speaker are bit of dullard about who and what exists in the world. But there *are* a lot of people who say Vulcan exists and God exists and who have named aliens whom they think beamed them up last Thursday, so it might be an especially useful sort of meaning to have around in your back pocket, as it were.

Hence, in general, we are considering a language, ambiguous for name denial and name existence sentences, and we are leaving it up to the speaker to decide what she is saying when she uses them. The choices are merely two. It is between dossier denial (or affirmation) and normal rigidification.

It is rather good we are doing this! You see, we are not entirely sure when we use `Eadgifu of Kent' or `Sigehelm' that we are really *doing* anything. I am not, anyway. As Kripke says, there might be lot of optical illusions around. These names certainly sound

like somebody's idea of a joke. So, I am not entirely sure I am rigidifying on anything when I talk with these names. Although, perhaps I am.

I am a bit of a dullard, I should think. I could be careful, as Kripke is, and only say: if Eadgifu of Kent is Sigehelm, then Eadgifu of Kent is necessarily Sigehelm. You don't catch him saying anything about the world without hedging his bets. So, perhaps whenever I use a name as the rigidification of a dossier, I should mention a caveat: provided so-and-so exists. I could do that.

It is not as if I ever know the essence to which I am rigidifying! The ding sets are hidden to me. When I consider the rigidification in my mind, it is merely faux rigidification. I manipulate a few stock characters and imagine them playing out their issues in various possible worlds. It is a pretty silly game. It is hard to make it intellectually respectable, even when it is working.

Yet my point is not that rigidification is pretentious when I hope it works. (Although, it *is* a pretty good point.) My point is that whenever I think it is not working, I should like to be able to say so. I should like to do so rather quickly. I would like it to be so easy even a six year old can do it.

I think my meaning for `Santa does not exist' is a swell idea! I shall mean dossier denial when I feel like it. I hope it catches on. We should teach it to our young children. They will certainly never think of it on their own.

# CHAPTER 16

## MILLIAN DESCRIPTIVISM

#### The Millian Descriptivists

There are an infinite number of languages. Adams and Dietrich have declared certain people are speaking a certain language.<sup>109</sup> Taylor agrees with them.<sup>110</sup> Braun says certain people are speaking a certain other language.<sup>111</sup> Their basic theses are not hard to master. We just now considered an ambiguous language, ambiguous with respect to name denial and name existence sentences. Adams takes us back to the language we started with, before we started getting fancy and creative. He is considering a nonambiguous language where the partial sentential overlay is null and devoid of sentences when there is no object to satisfy the description in the person's lore or dossier on the name. In these cases, the sentential overlay is meaningless.

Taylor imagines the same language. They diverge over a technicality to be explored later. Millian descriptivists, as we pointed out earlier, have associated with each name a set of descriptions (which these authors call the *lore*). Their names are rigid. Taylor actually borrows REF from Recanati, who borrowed Dthat from Kaplan. Taylor applies REF in order to obtain rigidity.

Obviously, I am happy to have the Millian descriptivists around! They are already on board with the observation that each name has an associated definite description. I don't have to persuade them there are not a lot of famous physicists named

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> See Adams and Dietrich 2004.<sup>110</sup> See Taylor 2000.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> See Braun 2005.

'Richard Feynman' and not a lot of NBA basketball players named 'Kentavious Caldwell-Pope'! I may go ahead with the presupposition that a speaker has a uniquely referring description in mind for each name she uses.

We also agree that the description is to be interpreted rigidly. Taylor is using the very same operator as we are. So, we are just having a bit of a tussle over which language is being spoken and by whom. They wish to imagine a language where names whose lore is not satisfied result in meaningless sentences.

I am fine with that.

Braun provides a contrast. Braun would like to consider a language where name existence assertions are meaningless if there is no referent and where name denial sentences, if there is no referent, are both meaningful and true. His heuristic for remembering this language is the following: negation says a thing is not true.

A meaningless expression is not true. Hence, the negation of a meaningless name existence assertion is true.

Braun admits to his critics that his language is ambiguous. Why? He says we could consider the lack of existence to be embedded in the predicate. He calls it: *choice negation*. The result is different from the case where the `not' acts externally on the sentence, which he calls *external negation*.

In Braun's scheme, we get a difference here. An empty name will result in a meaningless sentence when it is joined to a predicate that asserts non-existence. But if the negation is applied later to a meaningless sentence that putatively asserts existence, we get something true.

In Braun's language, the expression 'Pegasus does not exist' is ambiguous

between the choice negation version:

(1) Pegasus does not exist.

which has no meaning and the external negation version:

(2) Pegasus does not exist.

which, let us presume, is true.

Braun writes<sup>112</sup>:

Consider next the syntactically internal negation of (19), namely (21).

21. Vulcan does not exist.

It is reasonable to think that (21) is ambiguous. On one reading, (21) is synonymous with (20), and so expresses a *true* gappy proposition. On another reading, it expresses a gappy proposition that lacks truth value. So admitting that sentences that express atomic gappy propositions are neither true nor false would not force a Gappy Proposition theorist to say that all negations of those sentences are neither true nor false.<sup>113</sup>

The upshot of all this is that Braun believes:

(3) Pegasus lacks existence.

is meaningless and that:

(4) Pegasus does not exist.

(viewed as choice negation) means precisely the same thing. It is meaningless, too.

Hence, externally negating (3), we obtain:

(5) Pegasus does not lack existence.

which Braun says is true. Similarly, externally negating (4), we obtain:

(6) Pegasus does not not exist.

which Braun says is true.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Earlier, Braun gives us both (19) 'Vulcan exists.' and (20) 'It is not the case that Vulcan exists.'

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> Braun 2005, p. 606.

Additionally, we may externally negate (2) to obtain:

(7) Pegasus does not not exist.

which Braun says is false. So, one can construct an infinite number of sentence pairs, like (6) and (7), whose ambiguous interpretations are contradictory.

I am fine with that.

#### Who Is to Be the Master? — That's All

A dispute exists between Adams, Dietrich, Taylor and Braun — taken together — and myself, and it does not have do with the construction of this or that language. The dispute is as old as the conversation between Alice and Humpty Dumpty, and (although I do not like to associate myself with an inferior mathematician who had trouble adding one to three hundred sixty-four) I come down on the egg's side of things.

There are two parts to the issue. Adams, Dietrich, Taylor and Braun each say a certain language exists. In Braun's case, it is an ambiguous language that he constructs in a clever fashion. And they are certainly right. These languages exist. Each author goes on to assert, I believe, that various other people are using his or her language.

Now, *this* might be right, and it might be wrong. I am not sure what they are teaching in the public schools, nowadays. They might be teaching Braun's language. What do I know about today's youth?

But let me tell you a story. A long time ago, before the French invaded, an English speaker used to run out of lard, and he would say to his wife, "I will to the store go." She would reply sweetly, "I will it, too." Away he would go. These were happy times.

Linguists pointed out what everybody already understood. The man had said that he had a volition to go the store. "Well, duh," the people said. "Are you telling us how we talk? We already know how we talk." And so the great divide between the linguists and the people began.

A few hundred years passed. The English are a Germanic people, and, when a Germanic man resolves in his heart to accomplish a task, it gets done. He tells his wife about his volition, and he pragmatically implies it *is* going to get done. In a Romance language, people wax on and on about their emotions. They say they will remain by your side forever and will work hard. They pragmatically imply, as you know, that they are going to fool around behind your back and drink a lot of wine in the fields.

So, a funny thing happened. The thoughts of one kind fräulein after another went almost directly to the idea of her husband being at the store in the future buying lard. He didn't *say* it, but, as a Germanic man, it came to pass. Anyway, the girls, at some point, thought these thoughts directly, you see. Not almost directly. They actually thought these thoughts about the future. When they heard the words, blah-blah-blah, they thought these thoughts. And, this being what language is all about, soon enough, the very language itself had become a different sort of thing, a different function. The verb jumped to the middle — which is completely irrelevant and, indeed, happened long after — and the sentence became a sentence *about the future* and was false when certain things in the future did not come to pass.

During this time, Germanic husbands went out to shoot harts in the combe to please their wives with a hearty supper. If you told your husband to shoot a small deer, you had no idea what he was going to bring home.

I'm sure you all know the story. Even as late as 1904, the linguists were telling the hoi polloi they were *not* saying anything about the future when they said, "I will go to the store." They were saying a sentence about a *present* state of mind. There were asserting a volition. They were only pragmatically implying a future event! In Cambridge, I believe, you cannot find anyone who insists on the interpretation now. In Oxford, however, I believe it is still the dominant view. In 1904, meanwhile, James Joyce published the short story, *Eveline*, and people realized that if *Finnegan's Wake* were to be written sometime soon, we had all better get over these petty squabbles about the English language.

Linguists have hounded the hoi polloi for years on their lack of understanding about what they are saying. The hoi polloi don't get it! It is exasperating. You tell them precisely what they are saying. You tell them they are only pragmatically implying this other thing. They are dreadfully ignorant. They do not understand their own language. They do not understand, quite nicely, what sorts of things are properly linguistic and what sorts of things are boorishly pragmatic.

The people, meanwhile, have hounded the linguists. That is so twelfth century, they say! I'll talk however I want to talk. Get lost. The people say these things. They are a bit rude. But there is nothing more annoying than a linguist who wants to tell you your words are meaningless or that you are talking about the present or that you have just consented to marry his daughter, when, according to *your* version of language, you have done none of these things.

## A True Story

A gentleman and his servant were walking near the sea, trying to be scientific, and the gentleman espied a man seated, at quite a distance, on a rock jutting out from the bluff. The gentleman studied the man closely. He brought out his spy glass and stared through it. They crept closer. Finally, the gentleman said to his servant, "Look at the knuckles on his right hand!"

The servant took the spy glass.

"Do you see how he is moving them up and down?"

"I do," said the servant.

"And do you see how he is touching his ear from time to time?"

"I do," said the servant.

"Look at his hair."

"Yes!"

"By his general demeanor, then, I conclude he is thinking about toast," said the gentleman.

"About toast, sir?" said the servant.

"Yes," said the gentleman, "and I think I'll make my theory known at the Royal Society." They were going to London next week.

"Why propose a theory, though, sir?" replied the servant. "Why don't we go over there and ask him?" It was explained to the servant, however, that the man was clearly a member of the hoi polloi and, therefore, asking him would be of little use. The hoi polloi are not to be trusted on this matter. They are dreadfully ignorant. Yet, notwithstanding, the gentleman agreed it would be interesting, scientifically,

to see what the man had to say, and he and the servant walked over to the somber, seated man, who looked up from gazing out to sea.

"Good afternoon," said the man.

"Good afternoon," replied the servant. "I was wondering if you would tell us what you have been thinking about these last few moments."

"I have been thinking about death," he said. "It happens to us all, you know. And I have been thinking about nautical machinery."

"That's it?" asked the servant.

"That's it," answered the man.

"Nothing else?" queried the servant. "Just those two thoughts?"

"Just those two thoughts, back and forth, for nearly half an hour now."

The servant and the gentleman walked away. They headed back down the beach.

When they got to their original position, the gentleman produced the spy glass once again and had another look. "Yes, my theory — I do believe it is correct," he muttered.

"The theory about toast, sir?"

"Yes," explained the gentleman who, incidentally, was from Oxford. He went on. "I further now believe, judging from his shoes, that the poor man is from Liverpool. I theorize, moreover, that people of his height from Liverpool are misleadingly inclined to report they are thinking about nautical machinery and death whenever they are thinking about toast and queried about it by strangers on a beach."

"Really?" said the servant.

"Yes, it is a bit of an Intuition Problem. They have various intuitions, you see, and they issue various reports. These reports are not to be trusted, even when they are most vehemently maintained. In fact, these people often forget what they were thinking about. Toast is the most evanescent of thoughts, you know? And thoughts of death and nautical machinery are so often claimed and so seldom actually entertained. Yes, that is my solution to the IP problem."

"The IP problem, sir?"

"We Oxford linguists often have IP problems with the hoi polloi. They think they are saying things they are not. And they think they are thinking things they are not. A good scientist and a good linguist has to have an answer for this sort of thing. Every time you publish a theory — if you are from Oxford — you have to address the corresponding IP problem. I think I have got it this time, though."

"But he said he was thinking about death," said the servant.

"It is completely irrelevant," said the gentleman. "He could have been misleadingly inclined to report it."

"Misleadingly inclined?"

"Yes, our theory at Oxford is that most people are misleadingly inclined to report precisely what they are *not* thinking. Our evidence for this is that nobody's claims of what they are saying match up any longer with our codification of language in 842 A. D."

"He said he was thinking about death and nautical machinery."

"Oh, no," responded the gentleman. "He only pragmatically implied *that*. And you have been misleadingly inclined to consider it the semantic value of his sentence." The gentleman went on. "He *said* nothing at all, you see. Utterances so close to a beach
about the final nothingness that follows our conscious experience are, without exception, meaningless. And utterances about nautical machinery, this close to Lent, are meaningless, surely! Speakers of the English language rush to these thoughts, as you did, because they are misleadingly inclined to do so. They haven't kept up with the advances of linguistics since the great schism between the people and the linguistic cognoscenti of 842 which explicitly rule out semantic meanings for these various sentences under these various circumstances."

"You are terribly brilliant, sir," said the servant, amazed.

\* \* \*

The story is true. A few of the details have been changed, but linguists do issue theories about what people say — and what the people *say* they say is addressed in their linguistic papers as an IP problem.

### The Position of Adams and Dietrich

Adams and Dietrich decide to let all empty names have no semantic value and let each sentence in which they occur be meaningless. They recognize each name has a list of descriptive characteristics, the lore. They propose, when a name is empty, that a pragmatic process kicks in, in the mind of the listener, which cobbles a sentence together out of the descriptive components of the lore. In particular, a name denial sentence pragmatically implies the conjunction of the lore is not satisfied.

Their position is so like our own! They are clearly aware of parasitic reference. In the voice of Adams, the key point is made:

Suppose Laura and I overhear Joel telling a story about Henri. We do not hear the details of the story itself, but we do pick up that it is about Henri. Later Laura says to me "Henri doesn't exist." ...

We believe that when one acquires a name, to the best of one's abilities, one keeps a file of particulars: where, when, from whom one heard the name. So at the very least, Laura would associate with `Henri' the description `the one Joel was talking about'. If so, she would have pragmatically imparted, at a minimum, that there is no one named `Henri' whom Joel was talking about.<sup>114</sup>

The sentence, 'Henri doesn't exist', means nothing in Adams' flavor of language. It pragmatically imparts, however: there is no one named 'Henri' whom Joel was talking about.

As I said, I am fine with that. But there is also another language where `Henri doesn't exist' *means* the lore is not satisfied. There are a lot of languages.

Adams goes further. His position is stronger. He does not merely claim his language exists. He does not merely claim his language is spoken by certain people, such as Laura and himself. He begins to say it is spoken by everybody. I believe his position is that his language is spoken by *everybody*. Given the Brits don't even know what pudding is, the claim is quite a stretch. Does he really think the Australians are speaking *his* language? They are a bunch of criminals down there! God knows what they are speaking to each other. Has Adams even visited Australia? How did he teach them his and Laura's language? Did he write messages in a bottle and send them to Australia?

Adams and everybody who writes on this subject have a problem they call the IP problem. More fulsomely, it is called the Intuition Problem. They always have this problem when, after they deliver their theory, they ask the girl who said `Vulcan does not exist' what she means by that, and she says, "I *mean* there is no planet between Mercury and the sun that causes a deviation in the expected orbit of Mercury, as predicted by Newtonian mechanics, on the grounds that Mercury's orbit fits quite nicely with

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Adams and Dietrich 2004, p. 131-2.

Einstein's theory."<sup>115</sup> They need to dismiss her as having been misleadingly inclined to report all this.

They do. It is not hard. You write something about her being confused while she is pragmatically entertaining a valid proposition derived from the lore. More specifically, upon the supposition that we have winged horse of Greek mythology in our lore for the name, 'Pegasus', they write:

And if we utter 'Pegasus does not exist', we pragmatically imply that the winged horse of Greek mythology does not exist. We claim that this latter implied proposition is complete, true, and its truth misleadingly inclines us to think that a sentence such as 'Pegasus does not exist' says something true.116

There is a complete, true, descriptive proposition that is said in one language and that is merely implied in another language. Our girl is *not* speaking the first language (or deciding to use an ambiguous language in precisely this manner), according to Adams and Dietrich. Instead, she is speaking the second. Yet she is, by some mechanism, thinking an intelligible proposition a very short while after saying her sentence. The evident truth of this intelligible proposition misleads her. It inclines her to think the very thought expressed by the sentence in the first flavor of language is being expressed when 'Pegasus does not exist' pours from her lips. She is inclined to think the thought she is thinking *is* the meaning of what she is saying. She is misleadingly inclined. She is misleadingly inclined to think she is saying anything. The complete, true, descriptive proposition that sprang to her mind, in virtue of her contemplation of her lore on 'Pegasus', so shortly after she said various things is *not* the meaning of her sentence. She said nothing, at all.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> She seldom replies, "I mean the same thing that I mean when I say, 'Santa does not exist', which is to say, *nothing* at all." <sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 126.

We have an IP problem because she thinks she said something and can report her

meaning. However, we resolve the Intuition Problem by making the observation that the

girl was *misleadingly inclined* to say all this.

It all comes out neatly. What is it with these frauleins? Why do they think they

are saying what they think they are saying?

Adams and Dietrich point out that their flavor of language is good in a lot of

ways. They write:

We are attracted to this theory for several reasons. First, it offers a unified account of the meanings of names. It says that in all cases, the meaning of a name on an occasion of use is its bearer. Mixed accounts could say that the meaning of a filled name is its bearer, but the meaning of an empty name is a description. We are inclined to think that it would be preferable to say that names make the same type of contribution to what is expressed whether filled or empty. Our account lets us say this.<sup>117</sup>

Mixed accounts could say such things, yes. Mixed accounts could say that the meaning

of an empty name is a description. People could talk this way. Such languages could be

thought up and spoken amongst the people.

But the authors go on to say:

We believe that one should move to the mixed account only if a unified account fails. Part of our goal in this paper is to show that a unified account succeeds against several recent objections. Second, the account applies to fictional names as well as non-fictional names (Adams, *et al.*, 1997). Once again, one may propose a mixed view where the meanings of fictional names are descriptions or characters, or some other entities. We continue to believe that one should move to such a mixed view only if the unified view fails, and we will defend the unified view here.<sup>118</sup>

Gosh. It puts an awfully heavy burden on people who like the mixed flavor of language,

which incorporates descriptions, at times, whether ambiguously or no. The unified view

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 127.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>118</sup> Ibid.

is not going to *fail*. None of these flavors of language fail. None have any logical flaws. There are enough degrees of freedom to accomplish anything you like.

Failure is logically impossible.

Let me repeat this point: there are enough degrees of freedom to defend your linguistic view for as long as you like. There is *nothing* that can force you to change your mind. You have dismissed the hoi polloi, after all. You have a constructed a non-semantic alternate route — pragmatics — whereby true, complete propositions get entertained immediately after the sentence is spoken. You can maintain, for as long as you like, that people who claim they *say* these things are misled and mistaken. You can just ignore them and declare they are pragmatically implying the very things they claim they are saying.

You may continue to behave this way as long you like! There are enough degrees of freedom so that it is logically impossible to put any pressure on any linguistic approach. Do people not understand this? Do people not understand how ridiculous it all is?

You can just claim the people in Australia, without ever having met a single one, are talking a language where `Santa Claus is having dinner with us on Christmas' means exactly the same thing as `Satan will punish you horribly for having another bite of cheese', and you can claim two distinct and complete false propositions are being pragmatically expressed and considered in virtue of the common lore of these names. You can say you prefer it this way! You can say the Australians, themselves, do not matter, since they are, by and large, criminals and since everyone knows Australians are often *misleadingly inclined* to say things that are wrong. God knows, do not ask the

Australians what they are thinking. They will be misleadingly inclined to say various things. They'll go on and on about nautical machinery and death. They'll pragmatically imply various things about the future and vociferously claim they have actually said them. Their accent grates on the ears. Most of them came from Liverpool, you know, and they are generally insane. To a man (and a woman), they really don't like people from Oxford.

#### Braun's Account

Braun, meanwhile, likes his own account, and he dislikes all the others. He imagines an opposing linguist positing a flavor of language where a fictitious name such as 'Sherlock Holmes' is two-fold ambiguous. On the one hand, says the linguist, people sometimes employ it to mean a character in a book. Whenever they wish, though, they may employ it to mean that there was an actual person who did the deeds related in the book. When they use it the first way, the sentence, 'Sherlock Holmes was a detective' is true, subject to an elision that the description is true in the story. When they use it in the second way, it is usually false. For instance, if they say, 'Sherlock Holmes really existed,' it is false.

Braun doesn't like this. Neither does he like a view where the semantic meaning is tied solely to the fictional character, whilst allowing that one can pragmatically imply and intend to convey a claim about a real person so described. He likes his own view: nonsense for empty names and truth for their external negations. In what follows here, the first conjunct is 'There is no Sherlock Holmes' and the second conjunct is 'Sherlock Holmes does not exist'. Braun gets tough with an opposing female linguist:

[S]he might say that when ordinary speakers utter the first conjunct of (31), they intend to convey that there is no such *real person* (or *non*-

*fictional character*) as Sherlock Holmes, or that there is no person who did the things related by the stories. When they utter the second conjunct, they intend to convey that there does not exist a *real person* who is identical with Holmes.<sup>119</sup>

He thinks this is absurd! But I think an ordinary speaker might intend to convey that there is no real person, no person who did all the things in Conan Doyle's book, when he says, "There is no Sherlock Holmes." An ordinary person might. I certainly would.

Braun is having none of it. He rejects it:

None of these hypotheses is plausible. There is little or nothing in speakers' thoughts and intentions that indicates that the name 'Holmes' is ambiguous in their mouths. There is little or no evidence that speakers who utter (31) intend to convey some complicated proposition that is true under some favored philosophical theory.<sup>120</sup>

But I don't follow. How could these not be plausible hypotheses?

How could it not be *plausible* that a language is ambiguous as to whether a

believed fictional name is used for a character or used for flesh and blood? Sometimes

you mean Peter Pan never dies. Sometime you mean Peter Pan never existed.

To whose speaker's thoughts does Braun have access, anyway? Whose intentions is he divining? How can it not be *plausible* that a speaker intends to convey that there is no real person who did the things attributed to a certain Sherlock Holmes in Conan Doyle's books when she says, "There is no Sherlock Holmes"? What *else* would she intend to mean? That Capricorn is rising?

It is not a complicated proposition, either. Why does Braun suggest it is? What motive does he have? It is quite a simple proposition. It is exactly what you would expect her to mean.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Braun 2005, p. 613.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>120</sup> Ibid.

Braun splutters, like Adams and Dietrich, when the time comes to say why his flavor of language is better and why the other flavors are worse. He doesn't have a logical reason. He merely likes his own flavor of language. He says an ambiguity between character talk and real person talk is inconceivable and there is no evidence people are thinking in this way. Since asking the people — like myself, who do in fact think this way — is probably off limits, he'll never have any evidence, whatsoever.

The astonishing thing about Braun's distaste for a competing linguistic vision is his round disdain for the *ambiguity* that it posits. In the competing language, people make a choice, upon speaking, between two alternatives. Braun displays an Adams-like disdain for mixed linguistic approaches. Does he feel they are impure, as Adams does? Adams looks down on ambiguous languages.

But Braun's flavor of language has an infinite number of sentences whose ambiguous readings waffle between contradictories! If you are happy with *that* ambiguity, I cannot imagine the emotional grounds upon which you would castigate ambiguities found in other flavors of language. Glass houses, and all that.

These authors are having a hard time justifying their antipathies for the other's approaches. Everything works equally well, given the degrees of freedom that are allowed. Emotions are vented, instead. One flavor is said not to be plausible! Another flavor is said to be preferable! Hollow emotional words are used. Each author dislikes the other's account and likes his or her own and is going to stick with it until it is disproved.

But there are too many degrees of freedom here. Nothing is going to be disproved. You see, once you can claim people are pragmatically implying things, you

can choose any semantic account whatsoever — any flavor of language, at all — to fill in some of the meanings and then go on to use the pragmatic device fill in the other meanings. Meanings the speaker intends to get across can be cached out in any way, whatsoever, given that meanings can be declared semantic when you wish them to be and pragmatic when you prefer. Surely, if you can dismiss *the views of the people themselves*, you may argue what you will.

It is easy to defend your own view. It is hard to say why the other person's flavor is bad. It is simply because everything works. Every language can be spoken. Nothing is bad, really. You could leave ambiguous dilemmas to be resolved by the speaker's themselves, according to their intentions. Or you can do it for them, by putting one horn of the dilemma on the semantic side and the other horn on the pragmatic side. Any intellectual can claim a sentence's true semantic value is anything he likes! The speaker is misleadingly inclined to think her thoughts, and she is happy enough. Degrees of freedom, eh? Any linguist can say anything. So, what is the point?

#### I Don't Feel Well

Compositionalilty is a remarkable feature. It allows us to learn a language that is infinite, which ordinarily would be a neat trick. It is important to have rules, then. However, we *are* terribly lazy when it comes to the number of syllables that come out of our mouths. You might think we are irrational about our desire to compress language, but I think an analysis of the number of times we say various things and the calories consumed to do so, compared to the number of extra calories our brains would consume to recall a certain exception, which would save us the previous work, would ultimately justify our expedient decisions.

It is why we developed large brains, I think.

We make a lot of expedient decisions. Boston is a contraction for Saint Botolph's Town, and — with no intent to insult Mr. Botolph and all his good works — I really couldn't say that over and over. I don't know if I can count up all the delightful ways the rules of English have been compromised in order to promote caloric efficiency. The result is impure. It is mixed. People say, "How many fingers and toes do you have?" I shouldn't think I *have* anything which is both a finger and a toe, but, I believe the correct answer is twenty. When a steel ball is hurtling toward my head on a heavy chain, a passerby will shout, "Watch your head!"

How am I supposed to do that? It is a terrible thing to say. Obviously, our English language would be more pure, less mixed — and more to Adams' and Dietrich's liking — if he had yelled, "Be cognizant of the relationships between large moving objects and your head!" But then I'd be dead. Score one for caloric efficiency. Score one for mixed languages.

We could try to teach our children to respect the simplest rules and to eschew the proliferation of exceptions. I believe there was a recent attempt by grammarians to declare sentences that contain split infinitives to be meaningless, which boldly went nowhere. Surely a person is going to die if he does not learn the common exceptions. You can't just sit there and cogitate.

You'll get clobbered.

The English language has a lot of mixed sentences. The rules get suspended because, practically speaking, the rule-wise generated thought is pretty useless and is likely not to get said, and a more interesting and relevant thought gets put there, instead. When the language is mixed and ambiguous, the semantic values are mixed and

ambiguous. Of course, you *can* try to get people not to speak in exceptional ways. You can even tell them that when they did speak in such-and-such a way, they did not mean what they were saying. You can say they meant nothing, at all, since they split an infinitive, but if they hadn't, they would have semantically expressed a volition. You can tell them to be pure. If they aren't, you can say they were pure, anyway — because you can say anything you like.

Yet people keep modifying the English language. A deer, nowadays, is quite a particular sort of creature, a smallish ruminant whose closest relatives are hippopotamuses and whales. It is no longer just any old mammal. Children keep making up new rules. And new exceptions. Their parents die, and no one is around to tell them otherwise. Seriously, are we going to have a subjunctive in a hundred years? The result is a mixed language. I feel badly about it, which is not to say I am having a tactile deficiency in my manual grasp of the issue. My fingers are working just fine.

I just think it is odd the linguists can say anything they like, but the people themselves are told they can say nothing but what the linguists tell them they are allowed to say. Should the people beg to differ, they are told they *are* talking the linguist's way, nonetheless. But, really now, who is to be the master? Eventually, the hoi polloi win out. It might take a thousand years, but the hoi polloi *do* win out. Somehow, the erudite linguist intellectual will always lose out to the ignorant children. It must be because we, ourselves, are the master.

## **Dissolving Pseudo-Problems**

The Millian Descriptivists are superb to have around. Let us review their basic premises. There is a name. For each name, there is a dossier of lore on the name. Under

the presumption that the dossier of descriptions is not satisfied, which is what we mean by saying a name is empty, it is observed that the normal route to meaning — the rigidification of the description — is no longer available. The speaker (or listener, or both) notice the so-described being is not believed to exist. Hence, the speaker (or listener) does not believe the rigidification operator is successfully accomplishing anything. Accordingly, the speaker, say, imagines a slightly different thought. The lore is summoned, and a descriptive sentence incorporating the lore is contemplated and is intended.

Voliá. I like it so far.

There are a lot of Millian descriptivists. Adams has written various papers with several other authors. It is a logically intuitive position, so far. In fact, it is so easy and natural a child might think of it.

It is our own position, at least as far as I have described it. I happen to think it is a very good position. However, I should point out that my own approach is strictly *a priori* and that I am simply cogitating on what one might do, linguistically, if one felt like it.

Another round of drinks for all the Millian descriptivists, then! It is a perfectly natural and comprehensible point of view. We should be happy together. The differences amongst us are mere pseudo-problems. For instance, Taylor's disagreement with Adams is that the former takes it as a given that if one is going to employ Gricean pragmatics and properly label a linguistic maneuver with the term of art, *pragmatic*, the antecedent sentence must have a semantic value, a meaning, and it is this meaning which is to spark the ensuing mental leap. For Taylor, it is not proper to call a leap to a meaning — *pragmatic* — if it is not sparked by an earlier meaning of a different sort. Hence,

Taylor's grand divide with Adams is that, when Taylor withdraws his application of the Dthat operator to the descriptive lore, he does not call the process a pragmatic one. Instead, he says his thought has been *one and a half stage pseudo-asserted*.

I am fine with that.

These problems need to be dissolved. Taylor's position is that a young woman who utters, "Santa isn't coming tonight," is one and a half stage pseudo-asserting that "no jolly, white-bearded, red-suited fellow ... is coming tonight"<sup>121</sup> because our speaker believes Santa Claus doesn't exist. The speaker has realized the primary process has misfired. She has fallen back to a secondary process. Taylor's position is that she is pseudo-asserting it, not *saying* it. She is "saying" it, not saying it.

Yet, he gives no reason why, when the speaker believes her proposition is misfiring, that she cannot move to the descriptive lore and simply reload her gun and fire again. What is keeping her from firing out an alternative proposition? What is keeping her from saying something descriptive, not merely "saying" it, but *saying* it? If at first you don't succeed — and you are aware of it — then fire again. If your gun is firing blanks, then put in a bullet and fire again.

Since she probably realizes she doesn't believe in Santa Claus, even before she starts her sentence, she could just spit out the alternative proposition from the get go. She could *say* it.

It is rather strange to say our girl's shift to the dossier unrigidified is not semantic, especially if she considers it so. If she thinks she is saying and asserting (instead of "saying" and pseudo-asserting) that nothing meeting the description in her lore is coming tonight (and how can she think she is "saying" and pseudo-asserting unless she is quite

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Taylor 2000, p. 34.

up to date on abstruse philosophical terminology?), it seems unilateral and arbitrary to claim that she is not saying precisely these things.

All these divisions within the ranks of the Millian descriptivists — and I count myself among them — are unilateral and arbitrary. They are all pseudo-problems waiting to be dissolved. Both Adams and Taylor agree the girl is "saying" something but not saying something. We *all* agree on precisely what she is "saying"/saying. Adams consults volumes written by Grice to see if he is allowed to use the word *pragmatic* as he would like to. But, really now, I think he should be allow to do as he wishes without a scolding from Taylor.

But, then, I think the girl should be allowed to do as *she* wishes and that the entire pseudo-intellectual discussion whose aim it is to produce a diktat about what she is actually doing is beyond pointless. It is beyond pointless because it is not a mere waste of time. It is an intellectual faux pas not to understand the entire problem is not constrained sufficiently for there to be a rational conclusion. People who wander within the maze, acting as if they are setting the furniture aright, are simply unaware the basic pre-conditions for a rational discussion have not been satisfied. The discussion of empty names is a pseudo-problem in philosophy which has gone on for a surprisingly long time. It needs to be dissolved.

The hoi polloi need to be given a voice, first off. And, second off, they need to be acknowledged as the master.

## CHAPTER 17

#### ENOUGH WITH THE NAMES, ALREADY!

What is the big deal about names? Why are we exploring them in every conceivable detail? Isn't there something else to talk about? We find ourselves talking about names because the general problem we are investigating is the problem of sentences a portion of which is unknown. English has done a pretty good job of purging itself of these sorts of sentences. I heard of a language called Quissel, whose speakers inhabited the Faroe Islands and the Isle of Harris, where ordering a cup of tea involved not just sequencing sounds from one's lips but a precise arrangement of rocks under the North Sea in the Dogger Hills and a hexagonal structure amongst various flocks of llamas in the Andes. These industrious people moved the rocks into the appropriate places twenty fathoms deep in bitterly cold water in hopes of being able to order tea but, in the end, were always frustrated by the unknown contingencies of llamas.

They were happily invaded by the English who could order tea in an obvious way. In English, you see, very little is present — on the sentence side — that is not clearly known, up to any level of epistemic certainty you could possibly desire. On the meaning side, meanwhile, the English are allowed to talk about whatsoever they wish. There are no restrictions, really. The logical positivists postulated radical restrictions, but nobody seems to pay attention to them, anymore — and they were mostly Germans. One of the basic freedoms guaranteed by the Great War is that the English people can talk about whatever they like.

Hence, English is a radically asymmetric language, epistemologically. It tends toward putting colors and sounds together to make sentences on this side of the veil of perception and towards speaking about hidden things on the other side. I scarcely know a fraction of the truth values of the meanings that can get constructed in English. However, there are scarcely any sentences where I don't know the sentence I am saying, which is a great improvement over the poor people of Faroe and Harris.

Which brings us to names. If one lives and breathes Kaplan too long, one rather forgets the English language does not have an explicit Dthat operator. Obviously, a Dthat operator evens out the asymmetry. If a hidden meaning can be constructed by making a set of possible worlds a function of a hidden fact and if, thusly, this meaning can be ported back over to the sentence side with the Dthat operator, then we may build sentences that are hidden on the sentence side, on the domain side. A whole lot of problems arise as a result.

Which is not to say that English does not have the Dthat operator. It is only to say that it does not have the operator explicitly attached to a particular symbol. Hence, if we are looking for the weirdness that ensues from the Dthat operator, we have to seek it out. Recanati finds it in various definite descriptions. He says — and I see no reason not to agree with him — that a definite description is ambiguous between a purely descriptive reading and a rigidified reading.<sup>122</sup> He says, on the latter reading, the sentence:

(1) The president of France might have been tall.

is claiming there are possible worlds where Francois Hollande is tall, whilst, on the former reading, it is claiming there are possible worlds where whoever is the president of France in that world is tall.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>122</sup> See Recanati 1993, p. 8.

Yet, even if `the president of France' can be viewed in two ways, it is hard to get a handle on the problem in these ambiguous cases. What is needed is a case in English where the Dthat operator is employed unambiguously. Names come up because names appear to be the only straightforward case. If we had ultra-specific indexicals, I suppose, the issue would come up, too — and I believe that `I' and `you' *are* ultra-specific indexicals — but we would really like more than a pair. We would like multiple ultraspecific ways of getting to various things we really don't know much about in any essential way. This constraint rules out `I', presumably. Hence, when we look in English for our problem, we keep coming back to names.

As Kripke points out, if you use the word 'Julius' to designate whomever invented the zip in that possible world and if you use 'Hesperus' to designate the brightest lump in the evening sky in that possible world, then you are *not* using them as names. Kripke says "such terms as 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus', when used as names, are rigid designators."<sup>123</sup> It is a definition. It is not up for debate. It is what names *are*, linguistically.

English has a lot of names. They are unambiguously Dthat rigidified. Hence, our study of the epistemological riddle of not knowing what is on the sentence side is time and time again exemplified in English by sentences with names.

The riddle has two components. On the one hand, you might not have produced a set on the sentence side, at all, because there was no thing to generate a ding set by way of Dthat rigidification. It is the problem of empty names. On the other hand, you might have produced a hidden set about which you really know nothing, and you hide your ignorance in various obscurantist ways.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>123</sup> Kripke 1980, p. 102.

We have looked closely at the two components of the riddle. It is not much of a riddle once you see that some of the words in your sentence are hidden. You don't know what you are saying, and so you don't know what you mean. It is not much of a riddle once you understand that the function of words that involve rigidification is to hang and rehang the laundry. Their semantic value does not match up with their communicative value. Their semantic value is almost invariably hidden. These sentences involve a hidden monomorphic word, after all. Nobody cares, generally, because people just want to talk about the laundry. (A girl might want to say that such-and-such laundry does not refer.) It took notable philosophers of language, Kripke and Kaplan, to explore rigidification and to point out that the semantic value of any rigidified name or phrase is behaving strangely. It is a strange and hidden thing. The people didn't care, since they were communicating the laundry. Now, perhaps we shouldn't be calling it the semantic value of the name, since it is really the semantic value of the monomorphic word that our name pushes into our sentence. But whatever we choose to call semantic value, it still remains that our names give us Dthat rigidification in English. And Dthat rigidification gives us monomorphic words. And monomorphic words are usually quite hidden. So, when we use names, we don't know what we are saying. And we don't know what we mean. It is a bit of a riddle.

### CHAPTER 18

### FREGE'S PUZZLE

How can a statement about the identity of co-referring names be informative?

The austere direct referentialist is in a quandary. To him, names have no linguistic component other than their referent. The meaning is just the referent. To say of a certain referent that it is itself provides no information. Soames says it is a difficult problem. In his final reflections in *Reference and Description*, he gives us the briefest of sketches (over the space of four pages) of the four approaches he feels are the most promising for a Millian nondescriptivist to take.<sup>124</sup> At the end of these admittedly superficial treatments, he writes:

This completes my brief survey of attempts to solve Frege's puzzle in frameworks that assign nondescriptive context and characters to proper names (and natural kind terms). Although I haven't been able to present any of these attempts in detail, there is, I think, reason for optimism that a semantically nondescriptive solution incorporating elements of these approaches will be found. If this is right, then the puzzle need not be seen as posing an insurmountable obstacle to nondescriptive analyses of names and natural kind terms.<sup>125</sup>

He doesn't quite have the answer yet, but he has an optimistic feeling it is going to get solved really soon.

So, let's solve the problem, according to descriptivist resources. When you rigidify a description with Dthat, there is a pre-proposition and a post-proposition. The latter is part of a sentential overlay with hidden context. The meaning of the sentence is hidden and what is available cognitively to the speaker (or to the listener) is only what

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>124</sup> See Soames 2005, p. 346-9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup> Soames 2005, p. 349.

Recanati calls the mode of presentation. When the Dthat operator is applied, it is applied to a pre-proposition, which is available cognitively. The eventual result is a postproposition, which is most often unknown. Yet it troubles us not. We summon a stock character in our mind. Our imaginary friend gets a name.

Obviously, two distinct names can have two distinct lores associated with them. Suppose you named the mouse who bit your cat last week: Cicero. And suppose you named whatever animal pushed over the pumpkin: Tully. The identity statement:

(1) Cicero is Tully.

is an abbreviation for:

(2) The mouse who bit the cat last week is the animal who pushed over the pumpkin. under the assumption that those core definite descriptions are being rigidified by Dthat.

Now, we could discuss the descriptions found in the ring and in the periphery, too, but, since the question is merely how an identity between names can be informative, this extra information in the lore seems irrelevant to our current concern.

Therefore, the resolution of Frege's puzzle is that the various meanings of the sentences concatenated into the sentential overlay (1) are true only when the complete pre-proposition is true. The information expressed by the sentence is the sentential meaning — rather than a necessary truth (if the sentence is true) or a necessary falsehood (if the sentence if false). In short, the information provided by the identity between the names above is:

(3) The mouse who bit the cat last week is the animal who pushed over the pumpkin.

The listener might find this contingent fact interesting. She might say, "Oh, really?"

And that is the solution to Frege's puzzle.

## CHAPTER 19

### SHMINK AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF RIGIDIFICATION

#### **Rigidification to the Evident**

One of the most fascinating things about rigidification in language is that the postproposition is unknown, the meaning is unknown, and that people who talk the language are utterly unconcerned about this fact. People are content with the sentential meaning. People are content with being aware that the counterfactual behavior is indeed different from the non-rigidified case. Keeping track of these things, which are indeed informative and interesting, is quite sufficient for most people. Hence, most people don't bother with the fact that the meanings of their sentences are unknown to them because their sentences are unknown. They wouldn't even understand what you are saying if you pointed it out.

Yet, we are at a point now where we can understand the process of rigidification in these terms. To understand the epistemology, it is best to consider rigidification acting on cases nobody ever thinks of. Rigidification normally maps to things that are hidden and to things that are always hidden. I believe it is why the hidden nature gets lost. To recover the proper perspective, therefore, let us consider rigidification acting towards things that are evident or towards things that are normally evident. Then, we might see how dreadfully hidden the standard cases are.

For instance, I have never seen anybody consider the case:

(1) Yellow's color is yellow.

The color of yellow is, naturally, yellow. Hence, when we rigidify on the unique

description of the color of yellow, we get to yellow again. Sentence (1) means yellow is yellow, which is to say, sentence (1) is completely synonymous with:

(2) Yellow is yellow.

There is no Dthat operator found in the second sentence because we have *applied* the Dthat operator and worked from the pre-proposition to the post-proposition. We understand the post-proposition. It is sentence (2).

## Contrasted with Rigidification to the Hidden

The general issue is that we typically rigidify on descriptions that are nonessential. If you rigidify instead on a description that specifies the essential set, you are back to where you started.

Hence, although I know it is a bitterly small DNA sequence, one might construct the sentence:

(3) The DNA squence made of ATGCTTCGGCAAGAGTCAAATA in that order is found on Mars.

Let us suppose the sentence is false. Yet we can move to the post-proposition. It is:

(4) The DNA sequence, ATGCTTCGGCAAGAGTCAAATA, is found on Mars.

Quite similarly, the sentence:

(5) The DNA sequence made of ATGCTTCGGCAAGAGTCAAATA in that order is the DNA sequence, ATGCTTCGGCAAGAGTCAAATA.

has the very same meaning as:

(6) The DNA sequence, ATGCTTCGGCAAGAGTCAAATA, is the DNA sequence, ATGCTTCGGCAAGAGTCAAATA.

When the description is essential, the rigidification is trivial. Under the assumption that the sentential overlay is evident, the sentence is also evident.

However, as we said, rigidification is usually used to operate on non-essential characteristics. Assuming that the ding set of the queen is her DNA sequence — and it really doesn't matter what you assume here — then the pre-proposition:

(7) The queen of England is ACAT over and over again.

doesn't go over to the post-proposition, for most of us. I dare say, for none of us. Yet we don't bother about it much. If I tell you:

(8) The queen of England is having tea with cream.

you merely assume that a particular DNA structure is controlling the activities of a human body and that it is replicating itself using the carbons in cream. You view sentence (8) as being true in all possible worlds where *that very* DNA sequence is infused throughout an organism drinking tea with cream.

But, if I get you to think about sentence (7) instead of (8), it might occur to you that you do not know what you are saying. You do not know in which possible worlds sentence (7) is true. Why? Because you do not know the queen's DNA sequence. Now, the very same thing is true about sentence (8), but it does not concern you very much. You don't know in which possible worlds sentence (8) is true any more than you know the worlds in which sentence (7) is true. For various reasons, people don't bother with it.

I cannot move over to the post-proposition of sentence (7). Why? I do not know what it is. I do not know what letters to write.

Should I write:

# (9) GAGATATACCCGTGTGACACTGCA is ACAT over and over again.

or should I write something else? Perhaps:

# (10) ATCGTGCAGCAAGTGTCTTAGTCA is ACAT over and over again.

eh? Which of these sentences is the post-proposition of (7)? Which of these sentences is synonymous with sentence (7)? I do not know. I do not know what I am saying when I say my local portion of sentence (7). I do not know what I mean. It is made clear to me by the fact that I cannot write a synonymous sentence. Contrariwise, if I were to search for a sentence synonymous with:

# (11) The word that starts with `c' is followed by an `a' and is thence promptly terminated by a `t' has three letters.

I should find:

(12) The word `cat' has three letters.

would do quite nicely as a synonym. It is not hard. I know what I mean.

If we move to a non-essential description, we start to see the trouble. I could consider the color you see when I see pink. (You know, when you look at the same thing under the same light in about the same place, etcetera.) I could name that color `shmink'.

I could write:

(13) Shmink is light green.

It is an assertion that you are color inverted, in some way. Is it true? I do not know. It is true if:

(14) The color you see when I see pink is light green.

However, it does not *mean* the same as sentence (14). Rather, it means the same as:

(15) The color you see when I see pink is light green.

which everyone would acknowledge has different counterfactual behavior than sentence (14).

The counterfactual behavior of sentence (15) is necessary if it is true. The subject is simply a color. It is not a description of a state of affairs with a hook set to the color being seen in that state of affairs. It is just the color itself.

When I proclaim, "Shmink is blue," what is it I have said? Have I said that light green is blue? I really don't know. If I have, then I have said something necessarily false.

If I point to another man and define some color that he might be seeing here and there as `Shmurple', I may go ahead and construct sentences such as:

(16) Shmink is shmurple.

Of course, he might be a synaesthesiac and be seeing no color at all! I might have the problem of empty names. Irrespective of that issue, when I say shmink is shmurple or:

(17) Shmink is yellow.

the curious thing about rigidification is that I do not know what I am saying! I know something *about* what I am saying. I know the pre-proposition. I know the condition under which (17) is true in the actual world. However, I do not know what `Shmink is yellow' *means*.

I cannot tell you the worlds in which (17) is true. I cannot pick them out of a line up. I can run through all the possible worlds in my mind where 'Red is yellow' is true, and I can run through all the possible worlds where 'Yellow is yellow' is true. Moreover, I can run through all the possible worlds in my mind where the color someone is seeing in some particular situation when I see pink is, in fact, yellow. However, I cannot get started about the counterfactual nature of shmink.

The sentence:

(18) Shmink is the color of my true love's hair.

is one that I simply cannot get off the ground, counterfactually speaking. It is fortunate, when I say things like this, that my audience generally thinks I am trying to say a truth about the actual world. They do not concern themselves deeply about the counterfactual behavior — the meaning — of the sentence.

Witness that no one has ever thought through the essence of Venus.

The problem comes to the fore in these cases because a color is the sort of thing you *see*. It is the sort of thing that is evident. If I spell out a sequence of guanine, adenine, thymine and cytosine, it is evident to you what order I am putting them in. You do not wonder if they are in some different order, other than the one I just spelled out. The hidden nature of an obscure part of the sentence itself and the corresponding hidden meaning of the sentence upon rigidification becomes apparent when I select either of these two entities descriptively and non-essentially. You are used to having these things depicted essentially. You are used to words about colors that let you know what color you are talking about. All the rigid words, at least.

Hence, the epistemological problem of rigidification on non-essential descriptive sets becomes clear in the cases where you are used to talking about evident things in an evident way.

### Rigidification to the Never Evident

We need to master these examples before we go on to the standard and typical uses of Dthat and naming in English, which go from a descriptive non-essential set to the

sort of thing that is never evident to people, anyway. We even go to things that never could be evident to anybody, under any circumstances.

When the non-evident and the never-evident are the thing rigidified to, a curious suspension of scrutiny ensues. You do not consider the meaning of your sentence because you really couldn't *ever* understand the meaning of your sentence. These are not the sort of sentences that you could ever know what you are saying. You have to be content with knowing *about* the sentence, with knowing the pre-proposition evidently, because there is no way, at all, to phrase things so that you know what you mean evidently.

There is no way to write it as 'Yellow is yellow.'

We considered sentences earlier written in the viscera of gerbils. If you name a gerbil and if you presume to be rigidifying on some internal order or whatnot, then the specificity of that sentence must elude you. We don't even have a quick way of talking about it, such as listing AGTC ... in some order. Hence, there is no easy way to even utter a sentence which might be component-wise synonymous with `Plamsy is Fimmelton', the sentence written externally in the viscera of gerbils.

Since it is all rather complicated, you do not see people admitting they do not know what they mean when they say, "Plamsy went into pedagogy." They will, instead, give you a description *about* the sentence. They might explicate the core of their dossier unrigidified. They might insist they mean: the gerbil Helga baptized on the seventh of October at 1:12 pm went into pedagogy. That's what I mean, damn it.

But, of course, it is not what they mean. Anybody could tell you the first sentence has a different truth scheme across possible worlds. If they do not admit the

counterfactual difference, they can override you, but if they, themselves, admit it is different, then it is not what they mean. They have given the sentential meaning, instead. Which is a fine thing to try to get across to people.

At times, philosophers just get adamant and say, "I mean *Aristotle* himself went into pedagogy," which doesn't really add much to the discussion. If you are trying to explicate:

(1) Aristotle went into pedagogy.

to someone who does not know what it means, it does no good to utter:

(2) *Aristotle* himself went into pedagogy.

Either they got the rigidification the first time or they didn't.

It brings us to the next, truly interesting, aspect of the epistemology of rigidificition. I have met a lot of people who think they know Aristotle. But you really couldn't pick him out of a possible world. Taking his essence to be his DNA, you really couldn't find his presence or dearth in any possible world every component of which was spelled out to you in utter detail. You could spot the buckyballs, of course, but you couldn't spot Aristotle.

You might take his essence to be some exceedingly particular arrangement of carbons, hydrogens, oxygens, etcetera, located long ago between his ears. Do not make it too specific or he won't exist from one moment to the next. But, conceiving a stricture on essence such that a particular ding set is pointed to by a particular point in phase space long ago, you once again find yourself not knowing Aristotle. You have rigidified to a complicated mush of stuff two thousand years ago. It is going to be hard to get an evident purchase on it.

Hence, we typically rigidify to ding sets that nobody knows and nobody *could* know. These sentences themselves are written into the viscera of history. A portion of these sorts of sentences is coming out of your mouth. It is ringing in your ears. It is the part that is commonly called the sentence. It is merely a sentential overlay, and when someone asks you to explicate the meaning of a sentential overlay, you can only presume they are inquiring into the sentential meaning, and you can explicate that.

But, strictly speaking, the meaning of your sentence is unknown. Your sentence is unknown to you. You do not know what you have said in its entirety. When I say she is pretty in shmink, I have said a sentence whose constituent part is a visual experience in your mind. I do not know what I have said. Hence, I do not know its meaning.

For those of us who intend the essence of what we are naming when we issue a name, such as 'Jake', to be the first person conscious perspective itself, the problem arises once again. A constituent part of my sentence is somebody else's perspective. A constituent part of my meaning, too, is somebody else's perspective. It goes a trifle farther than the problem of some strict ding set being an ordering of carbons, hydrogens, oxygens and the rest — whether it is off in China or deep in history — because, even though I certainly do not know what I am saying in the latter case, I can, nonetheless, by pure happenstance and exquisite chance manage to spell out in English a sentence which is an exact synonym of the one I am actually saying. I will not know I have done so, but I can do it.

Contrariwise, there are no words in the English language I can use to directly talk about another person's conscious perspective. I can talk about it indirectly. I can rigidify on some non-essential description. I can give it a name like `Lucy'. I can employ

Kaplan's operator to give me a sentence whose meaning involves a particular conscious perspective and whose truth relates to that very conscious perspective in all possible worlds. Yet I cannot conceive of these possible worlds in the same way that I can assemble possible worlds out of the bare theoretical pieces of my favorite scientific theory. I can find the buckyballs in those worlds. I can accidently say a sentence synonymous with a hidden arrangement of such elemental pieces. I cannot find the DNA queen in those worlds, of course, but I might accidently speak her essence. Yet I do not see how I can possibly even speak essentially and directly about Jake (or the queen) if I presume to rigidify to his or her first person conscious view of the world. I can notice that, in some possible worlds, some conscious perspective or other is qualitatively experiencing pink — but is that the queen? I can view possible worlds as follows: person nineteen is the queen. However, this assumes there is a queen, which might be wrong. And, even if I were right in assuming there is a queen, then it seems I have gotten dangerously close to imagining a stock character who merely serves an imaginary purpose in my own mind. I am not really conceiving the possible worlds in any proper way. I am merely packing up the rigidification and suppressing it, somehow.

The reason people often do not get it that their rigidified and named sentences are hidden in meaning — derived from the sentence being hidden, of course — is that one can scarcely conceive of the sort of thing being said and meant as *ever* being known or understood. In such a case, people go straight to their stock characters — straight to their imaginary friends — and it should come as no surprise that they summon the same stock characters ever and anon. They might include much of the same laundry. When you think of the queen in a possible world where she abdicated and became a professional

wrestler, you generally give her the same external appearance. You give her the same face. You have a laugh. You port over much of the same laundry. You are really just imagining most of her laundry hanging in another possible world. That is your stock character, of sorts. You are not really rigidifying on the hidden essence, whether it be DNA or whatever you choose.

People don't really have a grasp on rigidification to hidden essences, which is fine because most of our sentences are meant to say something about the actual world, anyway. When we do take a sojourn into counterfactuals, we can be sloppy. The speaker might have intended you to port over most of the laundry. He wanted you to laugh at her poor career move. He did not want you to contemplate precisely a possible world where her DNA infuses a body shaped like Hulk Hogan.

When you rigidify toward something that is neither accessible easily nor can even be put directly into words, it should not surprise you that the hidden aspects and problems arising from rigidification are less than apparent. You round up the usual suspects. You round up your imaginary friends. You round them up in the only way you could ever round them up. I mean *Jake*, himself — you say. I mean *Bismark*, himself — you say. You imagine things.

Therefore, in order to demonstrate and to lay bare the tension between what is evident and what is hidden when we bring rigidification to the table, it has been helpful to consider examples where I usually and generally know everything essential about what I am talking about. I know yellow. I know light green. I don't know beans about shmink. Not *shmink*, itself. However, I could accidently speak its essence. Yet there are some

things to which I would rigidify whose essence I cannot speak, save indirectly through rigidification in an unknowable way.

## CHAPTER 20

#### ON NIOBIUM

## Moving to Any Old Set, Not an "Object" Set

The other day I found myself in the basement, and, not for the first time, I experienced an intensely strong feeling that I had come down there for a reason, that I had come down there to get something. I decided to believe the rectitude of the feeling, since it was not the first time I had such a feeling and since all the other times, if I thought about it long enough, it eventually dawned on me what sort of thing I had come to procure. I sat there and waited. It was an interesting philosophical situation.

Obviously, one could rigidify on the very object that I was going to pick up in the basement once I figured out which sort of thing I needed. The notion — dthat (the thing I am going to clutch once I think this through) — is reasonable and well enough defined. However, the interesting part of the matter is that I have six of everything. For instance, all my socks are short and white. They are basically indistinguishable. I haven't learned a difference between any of them. Hence, I had clearly come down to procure a *sort* of thing, not a particular thing, at all.

This linguistic maneuver is not part of Dthat because it devolves to the essence of particular things. But what I wanted to think about was a concept under which a few particular things might fall. I was searching for a concept. Once I had *that*, I could find the object soon enough.

A careful reader might have seen rigidification generally involves motion from one descriptive set, A, on the domain side to another set, B, on the domain side, too, based on some obscure particulars of the world. The operator, Dthat, goes to the other set, B, by way of particular essences. But it is a very narrow way of transitioning. It is just one way to go from A to B. There is a larger issue — general rigidification — that moves us to the domain-side rigid set without being bound to the narrow realm of essences. It is arbitrary. It is quite general. I'll call it *c-that* for now — a concept rigidification.

Such rigidification poses an interesting problem. The question is: *what* am I thinking? In the basement, I am thinking about a concept. However, I am only thinking *about* the concept. I am not really thinking the concept. Am I?

Is it not obvious that the crux of my mental work as I sit there in the basement is to transition from thinking about a concept to actually thinking the concept?

Suppose I were to somehow rigidify to a concept. It is fair to worry about just how this might be done because there is no real rule, like the rule of essences, to get me from the state of the world to a particular concept. We may, however, explore it. Now, just as it was helpful earlier to point to colors we could see, we may now point to concepts that are readily available. I could point to concept that is written on the very next line, and I could rigidify to that very concept. For example: (1) c-that (the concept expressed in the phrase below).

#### golden retriever puppies

There are other possible worlds where something different gets written on the next line.

But the concept expressed by (1), because it *is* rigidified, has the counterfactual behavior of designating the notion of golden retriever puppies throughout all possible worlds.

Let us now consider using c-that rigidification to select concepts that are hidden. We need an alternate way of specifying a concept that, unlike `golden retriever puppies', is not available to the ken of our speaker. Kripke's ruminations on gold provide a spark for a truly interesting case.

The chemical elements, not being elemental, provide us a curious case study. When the name of an element is proclaimed, the general idea is to work within the Standard Model and to consider precisely a particular number of protons and an attendant stable number of neutrons. One can go on to define gold with c-that. One could define gold to be:

# (2) c-that (an atom with a nucleus containing the number of protons specified by the people who named said cluster, "gold")

I am not saying it is your definition of gold, only that one might imagine it to be so.

My own definition of Lawrencium is peculiar. To me, it *is* the chemical element with 103 protons. It is my name, and I am sticking with it. If they rename the back of the periodic table after a bunch of Russians, I am going to talk my own way. If they name something else Lawrencium, I am not going to change. If it turns out they *did* name something else Lawrencium, I am still not going to change. I only talk chemistry to myself nowadays. The friends at brunch don't want to talk about van der Waals forces.

Notice further that a proton, for me, does not involve concept rigidification. It *is* two up quarks and one down quark bound tightly together. A neutron is two downs and an up. But — and here is the curious thing! — I have a lot of chemical concepts that are defined in the manner of (2). Because they are *chemical* concepts, the parameters of the

concept are severely straitened, and the whole thing becomes well-defined. Because I am not a scientific novice, we are not operating in la-la land. I know precisely what sort of concept to which I presume to be rigidifying.

However, I do not have the periodic table memorized, and it means there are names for elements I do not have matched up with their placement and their number. I know Lawrencium is 103. (At least, it is for me.) I know every element under 10, of course. When I talk about carbon and oxygen, I know *precisely* what I am talking about. I know my *s*, *p*, *d* and *f* orbitals and just how many electrons are to be found in each one.

Nonetheless, there are cases where conceptual rigidification is involved. There are elements, such as niobium, for which my notion is nothing more than:

(3) c-that (an atom with a nucleus containing the number of protons specified by the people who named said cluster, "niobium," and the number is more than twenty and is less than 103, but is not 79.)

If I were to think about it long enough, I could also calculate and rule out the numbers associated with the noble gasses. But the first phrase is the uniquely identifying part, and we might as well focus on that.

It is a pretty sad take on niobium. Nevertheless, if I take my definition of niobium in my language to be c-that (an atom with a nucleus containing the number of protons specified by the movers and shakers of chemistry who named said cluster, "niobium"), the counterfactual behavior of one of my sentences:

(1) Niobium explodes in toilets.

is false in possible worlds where the movers and shakers there use the word, "niobium," as the name of sodium. Because of c-that rigidification, the number of protons in the concept is that of *my* niobium, not the so-called niobium in those possible worlds.
Hence, concept rigidification *is* possible. Moreover, it infects many of my views. It would be good to try to get a handle on it. We have to be as careful with it, though, as we were with Dthat. The bottom line is that there can be concepts that I simply do not know but upon which I am rigidifying, via a description in my mind.

A naïve philosopher of language would surely treat the following two sentences, uttered by myself, in precisely the same way:

(2) The inventor of bifocals put two grams of pure carbon on a scale.

(3) The inventor of bifocals put two grams of pure niobium on a scale. The various composite parts would be assigned descriptive meaning. The concepts would then be combined. A certain number of protons would be impressed into the concept for carbon. Another number would be impressed into the concept for niobium. A particular meaning for sentence (2) would be declared. A particular meaning for sentence (3) would be declared.

However, since I *am* myself, I know these sentences are quite different. In particular, number (2) is a sentence, but number (3) is only an overlay. In my language, it is a part of a sentential overlay that involves facts in the world (beyond my grasp and ken) in order to complete its post-propositional meaning.

The part of which I am aware is merely pre-propositional. I have a Namenfact description of a number of protons, and it appeals to the early movers and shakers of chemistry. These c-that rigidified descriptions define my knowledge for a lot of my chemical terms, even though I am essentially an expert.

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## The Meaning in My Mind versus the Post-Proposition

Our goal is to merge a notion of the meaning of my words with the notion of what my thoughts are about, discussed earlier in our chapter on the mental lives of oysters. It is obvious that such a notion of meaning is embodied by the pre-proposition in the many examples we have been discussing. It is not to be found in the post-proposition, which we have purposefully made obscure. My thoughts are about the sentential meaning of these sentences, even if I understand that I am rigidifying.

In the case of carbon, I do grasp the post-proposition. In the case of niobium, I only grasp the pre-proposition.

We must not forget that I conceive of myself as deliberately employing conceptual rigidification. My language has the same post-proposition, therefore, as my friend who knows the atomic number of niobium off hand. It has the same postproposition that the naïve philosopher of language would like to assign to it. However, the key to any language appears to be the fact that an individual can grasp it. It does no good to speak a language dependent upon far away rocks under oceans or upon the caprice of ill-humored llamas.

Hence, in my own language, my notion of niobium is specified in such a way that involves rigidification. My own writings about it, really, are only sentential overlays and are not sentences, at all. I suppose some people write about helium in such a fashion. For them, the identity between helium and alpha particles is informative.

To those who think philosophy is better accomplished by racing straight to the post-proposition and ignoring how one gets there, I have to say I disagree. They will

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wring their hands and say they are not fond of the nascent, ensuing spring of individual dialects. They just want to tell me what I mean by niobium and get on with it.

If you *tell* me what I mean by niobium, it is not really what *I* mean by niobium, is it?

Language has to be cached out in terms of the individual. Once it is, we can ask the philosophical question concerning the individual's purchase on his or her own language. You might think the answer is obvious. The individual needs to have a grasp of what she is saying, and the grasp needs to be solid. It should be quite impossible for her to go wrong. Yet there are a ton of languages that fall short of this criterion. There are a ton of languages whose domain side is fractured into subsets according to the configurations of the Andromeda galaxy! But we chose to speak in colors, in red and purple, in the colors in our mind. We are English, not Faroe Islanders! We know how to order tea.

Nonetheless, because of rigidification, whether it be of single phrases or of entire dossiers, our language began to fail, too. Any language that incorporates rigidification will involve a grasp once removed. So we say a speaker understands what she is saying if only she has a perfect grasp of the pre-proposition and of the theoretical character of the transformation by which rigidity is presumed to be imposed. Obviously, the post-propositions — the truth conditions across possible worlds — will be unknown to her.

Hence, she can grasp and think about what she is saying in the same sense as our dear friend, Jake. She can think about niobium howsoever she thinks about niobium. She can think about water howsoever she chooses to think about water. As philosophers, we need to understand the language an individual grasps cognitively, not merely the post-

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propositional resolution thereof. We need to cache it out in terms of the individual's direct cognitive awareness. Quite simply, it is time to get philosophy back to the first person where it belongs.

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