

# ***Naming Names: The Aftermath of the Kripkean Revolution***

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## **I. Summary**

This book defends a theory of names as dually context-sensitive de jure rigid expressions – the context of introduction theory – against the backdrop of truth conditional theories of meaning. A proper name is a type of expression the content of which depends both upon a context of utterance and a context of introduction. The latter involve the tokening of a name by a speaker with a particular linguistic intention to determine its meaning composed of both its referential status and its content. On this view, referring to an individual is not necessary to give a name meaning, but their purpose is nevertheless to have the same content in any given fixed context. Additionally, a context of utterance is needed to determine a name's content since one name type might have multiple contexts of introduction associated with it. Therefore, a context of utterance is required to determine which of these is relevant for determining its content.

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### **Preface: The History and Value of Theories of Proper Names**

Here I review that history beginning with Mill's theory, shifting to descriptivist theories, Kripke's refutation of descriptivism, and the subsequent return to what some interpreted as Millianism about names. One reason to believe that a theory of names is central to the philosophy of language is because the concept of reference is central to it, and steadfast reference that is under our referential control is of particular interest given its value in communication, and in the transmission of knowledge via language. Since proper names are the only candidate expression that might have these properties, then given value of these properties, understanding the nature of proper names is therefore valuable.

#### *1.1 Introduction*

Traditionally names are considered to be expressions that name one and only one individual. Originally, there were 2 competing theories: The Rigid Designation Theory and Descriptivism. While descriptivism has mainly been rejected. Contemporary literature therefore focuses on the development of the former theory.

#### *1.2 The Rigid Designator Theory*

If names are singular nouns, then they represent a single individual, and what they contribute to the truth evaluable content of a sentence is that individual. Two prominent theories represent this view: rigid designator theories, and descriptivist theories.

The initial introduction by Mill of the rigid designator theory of the meaning of names was motivated by considering whether the town Dartmouth – so-called due to its location at the mouth of the river – would stop being called Dartmouth if the river was somehow re-routed. That Dartmouth would no longer be Dartmouth in this case seemed implausible. Mill therefore concluded that names must be mere tags for individuals. If so, names must rigidly designate individuals in all contexts. Contemporary Millian explanations of claim that the only meaning a name can have is that of representing one and only one individual in any context, and that this exhausts their meaning.

Fregean interpretations of the rigid designator theory, however, allow for the possibility that rigid designators could have a sense – a secondary meaning, but not one that affects whether names rigidly represent one and only one single individual in any context. Several problems arise for this view that will be explored in the next chapter, and that motivate the descriptivist interpretation of names as singular nouns.

### *1.3 Descriptivism*

In contrast with the rigid designator theory, descriptivism maintains that the meaning of name is equivalent to a uniquely identifying definite description. For example, the name 'Jack the Ripper' means 'the person responsible for the murders of the persons being investigated'. So, while names do represent a single individual, they need not represent one and the same individual in all contexts.

Descriptivism, then, rejects that a name is a rigid designator, but not that the meaning of a name is that of singular noun. The main difference between them, I claim, is the way in which this is accomplished. When first introduced, descriptivism about names assigned them a different logical form than the of Millianism. For a descriptivist, proper names as used in a sentence expressed general propositions, rather a singular proposition as Millians hold. In fact, a definite description will always pick out a single individual, but unlike the rigid designator theory, this need not be the same one.

Descriptivism has largely been rejected is due to three well known arguments due to Kripke that decimated adherents. These arguments showed that descriptivism could capture neither the modal profile, the semantics, or the epistemic profile of names. .

## **Chapter 2: Issues for the Rigid Designator Theories of Names**

### *2.1 Introduction*

There are at least five issues that the rigid designator theorist must address: the existence of empty names, descriptive names, and non-referential names; puzzles about propositional attitude reports; and the difference between the meaning of name types and name tokens. These issues present themselves slightly differently for the Millian and the Fregean interpretations of this theory.

### *2.2 Empty Names*

If the Millian theory is correct, and empty names exist, then those names must be meaningless. The sentence 'Vulcan is a planet' expressing a fact about LeVerrier's mistaken postulate of the existence of a planet between Mercury and the Sun, most certainly appears to be meaningful, unlike this expression 'Jjhoi hoyh hiug'. However, if Millianism is true, then that sentence cannot be meaningful due to the lack of meaning of the name 'Vulcan'. Likewise, the sentence 'Vulcan does not exist' is also meaningless, even though it seems not only meaningful but also true.

Millians will attempt to address these problems by relying heavily on the semantics-pragmatics

distinction. However, some theorists find this appeal ad-hoc and therefore turn to the Fregean version of the rigid designator theory – that a name might have some kind of sense. But even the Fregean version faces the challenge of explaining the apparent truth-evaluable content of sentences containing empty names, since even the Fregean version of the rigid designator theory is committed to the idea that a name's content is a single individual.

### *2.3 Propositional Attitudes*

In addition to empty names, the naïve theory faces the problem of propositional attitudes – that a speaker could believe both the contradictory sentences 'London is pretty' and 'Londres is ugly' or that Superman is Superman but that Clark Kent is not – is dealt with in several ways. One avenue I explore is separating necessary truth from a priori knowledge. It is possible, according to Kripke, to fail to believe the necessary truth expressed by the identity sentence 'London = Londres', since this is not known a priori. This would explain a speaker's judgement that the meanings of these names differ, and therefore, that they get different truth value assignments, let us say, false to this sentence 'I believe London is pretty' and true to this sentence 'I believe Londres est moche'. The issue of the speaker's consistency still needs more analysis, which occurs in the manuscript.

### *2.4 Descriptive Names*

Descriptive names are those that appear to have their content fixed by a definite description, but once fixed, function as a rigid designator. This poses a challenge to the rigid designator theory, since on this view, a name's content is always rigid in all contexts. To grasp how this is a problem. Consider the name 'Jack the Ripper' introduced prior to his apprehension and used as a name for any person who fit the description of 'the murderer of all of those women that the police are attempting to apprehend'. Now suppose someone is apprehended, but that person is innocent. Later, however, their innocence is proven. At that point, the name 'Jack the Ripper' is withdrawn showing that names are not one and all rigid designators.

### *2.5 Non-referential Names*

There are also uses of names that appear to be non-rigid for other reasons. Some appear not to be names used to designate any individual at all, let alone rigidly. Others appear to have their value determined by expressions in a sentence that precedes them. The first of these – fictional names – are introduced as a name for a fictional character. An individual fails to exist. The second of these have an anaphoric value, the value of which is not necessarily a rigid designator.

### *2.6 Type-token Distinction*

Lastly, if names are expressions that take on one constant semantic content, how can some individuals share the same name. There is more than one individual named 'John'. This seems to demand that at least at the type level, names are not rigid designators at all.

## **Chapter 3: Classical and Contemporary Theories of Names as Nominalized Predicates**

In Progress

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In Progress

## **Chapter 5: Singly Context-sensitive Theories of Names**

In Progress

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In Progress

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