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Descriptive Names and Shifty Characters: A Context-Sensitive Account

Standard rigid designator accounts of a name's meaning have trouble accommodating what I will call a descriptive name's "shifty" character -- its tendency to shift its referent over time in response to a discovery that the conventional referent of that name does not satisfy the description with which that name was introduced. I offer a variant of Kripke's historical semantic theory of how names function, a variant that can accommodate the character of descriptive names while maintaining rigidity for proper names. A descriptive name's shiftiness calls for a semantic account of names that makes their semantic values bipartite, containing both traditional semantic contents and what I call "modes of introduction." Both parts of a name's semantic value are derived from the way a name gets introduced into discourse --from what I refer to as its "context of introduction." Making a name's semantic value bipartite in this way allows for a definite description to be a part of proper name's meaning without thereby sacrificing that name's status as a rigid designator. On my view, a definite description is part of descriptive name's mode of introduction. That is, it is part of what determines the content assigned to that name. As it turns out, making a definite description part of a descriptive name's mode of introduction allows for that definite description to play the role of a mere reference-fixer regarding that name's content, as Kripke would have it. However, my account allows a definite description to fix a descriptive name's content actively over time, thereby explaining its inherent shiftiness.

1. Introduction

Descriptive names -- those originally introduced into the language using definite

descriptions -- pose a challenge to the received view on proper names. This is because it is

natural to assume that a descriptive name's meaning is given by the content of the definite

description with which it was introduced, and the standard theory of proper names, largey

due to Kripke's writings (1980), must reject this. The standard theory will be defined as the

conjunction of the following two theses:

> (1) The Direct Reference Thesis: a name's semantic content is not given by the content of a definite description, or not mediated by the content of a definite description.
> (2) The Rigid Designation Thesis: a name's semantic content remains constant across all possible worlds.[1]

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[1]   Of course there are different versions of these theses, but I wanted to give some relatively general, and I hope relatively neutral, characterization of them in order to appeal to a wide audience.

The existence of names whose content is give by a definite description, of course, directly contradicts The Direct Reference Thesis. Furthermore, because the content of a definite descriptions is not by and large rigid, this assumption entails the falsity of the Rigid Designator Thesis as well. If theses (1) and (2) were true, we should expect there to be no descriptive names.[2] But there are, in fact, many examples of descriptive names in the language, as even Kripke himself recognized.

These apparent inconsistencies can be resolved however, at least if Kripke is right. Still, in spite of the attractiveness of Kripke's treatment, as we will see, the character of a descriptive name is inherently "shifty" in a way that his treatment cannot accommodate. A descriptive name's shifty character consists in the fact that it will shift its referent depending upon which object apparently counts as satisfying the definite description with which that name was introduced, unlike its more ordinary brethren whose referent does not so shift.

Because Kripke's treatment fails, we need an alternative explanation for the problems posed by the existence of descriptive names. The alternative treatment we will consider is one that modifies the standard theory of the semantics of proper names, but is still consistent with its tenets, properly understood.

2. Descriptive Names and Kripke's Treatment

We will now consider several examples of descriptive names, examples due to Evans, Kripke, and Reimer.

Consider first Evans's example (1982). Evans introduces the proper name 'Julius' to

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[2] While theses (1) and (2) are in fact logically independent, there are good reasons for maintaining them both. This is because, by and large, the definite descriptions we in fact use to introduce proper names into the language typically pick out contingent properties of the candidate referent, and therefore will not rigidly designate that referent. But since it is highly plausible that names are rigid designators, it follows that their meanings cannot be given by a definite description.

refer to the inventor of the zip, or in North American parlance, the zipper. Given how the name 'Julius' is introduced, Evans believes it follows that 'Julius' refers to whichever object uniquely satisfies the definite description 'the inventor of the zipper'. The name 'Julius', then, is plausibly a case of a descriptive name.

For a less artificial example, let us now consider the descriptive name entertained by Kripke himself, the proper name 'Jack the Ripper'. Presumably the name 'Jack the Ripper' was introduced with a definite description, since it was introduced in want of a name for that individual who committed the relevant set of crimes, whoever that might be. The name 'Jack the Ripper', then, was introduced with the intention to refer to that object that uniquely satisfies a particular definite description, an example of a descriptive name even more plausible than the previous one due to its actual occurrence in natural language.

Consider also Reimer's (2004) example of a descriptive name introduced by scientists for the first female homosapiens, the name 'Eve'. Like the other descriptive names we are considering, the name 'Eve' apparently refers willy-nilly to the object that satisfies a particular definite description -- in this case, the description 'the first female homosapiens'.

At least initially, it is plausible to say that the semantic contents of these names are given by definite descriptions. And because of this, as before, their existence challenges the standard theory. The puzzle of course is that, for many ordinary names, the standard theory seems to get things right. Furthermore, even descriptive names appear to function as rigid designators when considering hypotheticals.

Consider for instance the following hypothetical about Jack the Ripper: Jack would not have been a killer had his mother not locked him in the closet every day. Of course, the

individual relevant to the truth of this hypothetical is Jack himself at this world and his properties in other possible worlds, not the properties of whoever happens to be the murderer in other worlds, assuming the murders happened in those worlds at all. But then the definite description used to introduce the name 'Jack the Ripper' cannot give its content, since that description is not a rigid designator.

To explain the existence of descriptive names, Kripke offers the following treatment: a definite description can play a certain pragmatic, one-time role in securing the reference of a proper name. In Kripke's words, the definite description merely "fixes the referent" for a proper name and is thereafter semantically inert. On this understanding of a definite description's role in so-called "descriptive" names, it is used merely to identify an object in order to give it a name at the time the name is introduced. A description, therefore, can be used to fix the reference of a name without giving that name's content. In other words, that name's content will not co-vary with the semantic value of that description. Accordingly, a proper name may be "descriptive" without compromising its status as a rigid designator or as a device of direct reference. The existence of descriptive names, then, does not truly conflict with the standard theory.

3. Problems for the Kripkean Treatment of Descriptive Names

Having considered several examples of descriptive names, I now want to discuss various scenarios involving those names. To show that descriptive names have shifty characters, we will rely on a test that standard theorists themselves rely on to reveal the semantic character of a proper name, a test I will call the "retroactive reference test," better known as Kripke's "semantic argument."[3]

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[3]   I here dub the test with a different moniker in order to highlight the fact that the test itself is composed not only of one test, but rather two, the second of which involves our

As we shall see, according to our test, descriptive names are inherently shift. For this reason, it follows that treating a definite description's role in a name's meaning as that of a one-off reference fixer is flawed. Since Kripke's solution to the problem of descriptive names fails, an alternative explanation of their nature is required.[4]

3.1 The Retroactive Reference Test

To apply the retroactive reference test, we consider cases in which a name is associated with a particular definite description that the name's referent fails to satisfy. We will then poll our intuitions, as speakers of a natural language, about our answers to two different questions. First, we ask whether, upon the discovery that the object commonly referred to using a name does not satisfy a particular definite description, we would shift that proper name's referent to the object we believe does in fact satisfy the associated definite description. Second, we will ask whether we would retroactively reinterpret our previous discourse as having been about the individual now thought to satisfy a particular definite description, rather than as having been about the referent previously thought to satisfy it.

In deciding whether a name has any descriptive content as part of its meaning, then, are are two tests a name must pass to count as a non-descriptive name.

> (3) The Reference-Shift Test: is passed by a name just in case that name's referent remains the same regardless of that referent's counting as satisfying any definite description associated with that name.
> (4) The Retroactive Reinterpretation Test: is passed by a name just in case the object of the discourse that used that name is not interpreted as having been about the object that counts as satisfying any definite description associated with that name.

Before examining whether descriptive names past tests (3) and (4), let us first consider

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intuitions about how to retroactively reinterpret our previous discourse using a descriptive name after it has shifted referents, a feature of the test not commonly examined in isolation.
[4]   The test, of course, appears in Kripke (1980), but has an earlier well-known incarnation in Mill's work (1843).

Kripke's application of those tests to the name 'Godel' and its associated definite description 'the discoverer of the incompleteness theorem'.

Kripke asks us to suppose that we learn that it was not Godel who discovered the incompleteness theorem; instead, someone else accomplished this feat. He then concludes that, even if we did make such a discovery, we would not naturally conclude that the name 'Godel' refers to the actual discoverer of the incompleteness theorem; we would not shift the referent of 'Godel'. So the name 'Godel' passes test (3) of the retroactive reference test. What's more, argues Kripke, we would not conclude that, when using the name 'Godel', we had all along been talking about the person who did in fact accomplish the feat commonly attributed to Godel. The object of our Godel-discourse was not the discoverer of the incompleteness theorem, and so the name also passes test (4). Orthodox theorists, then, conclude that the name 'Godel' has no descriptive element present in its meaning. More plausibly, the content of the name 'Godel' was fixed by the name's being historically connected in some way or other to the individual Godel.

The Orthodox Theorist's use of the retroactive reference test works to her advantage in cases involving names like 'Godel'. However, the results of applying the test to the examples of descriptive names we considered earlier will suggest that, unlike the name 'Godel', the content of a definite description is indeed at least part of the meaning of those names, and that a simple Kripkean pragmatic treatment of a definite description's role in introducing descriptive names must be mistaken.

3.2 Reference-Shifting

I will now describe certain scenarios involving the three descriptive names previously introduced, those in which the answers we give to the two questions posed by the

retroactive reference test differ from the answers we give to those questions when faced with names like 'Godel'. As we will see, our intuitive answers to these questions when applied to descriptive names, show that, even by the standard theorist's own lights, the content of a definite description must have an on-going active role in a descriptive name's meaning. To illustrate that the Kripkean pragmatic treatment fails, let us re-examine our previous examples in turn.

Returning to our Julius case, let us suppose that there is an individual regarded as the inventor of the zipper, but who is in fact wrongly taking the credit for that invention. To all appearances, this individual is the inventor of the zipper, and for this reason, ordinary speakers call this person by the name 'Julius'. Imagine that this continues for a very long time, but that eventually the true inventor of the zipper is discovered. We can imagine that speakers would then begin to call this newly identified inventor of the zipper by the name 'Julius' while, at the same time, withdrawing the name from the poseur. If this is correct, the name 'Julius', then, fails to pass test (3) of the retroactive reference test.

It might seem reasonable, then, to conclude that the content of the name 'Julius' is given by a definite description. However, just as a name must satisfy pass both tests (3) and (4) in order to count as wholly non-descriptive, so too must a name fail to pass them both to count as wholly descriptive.

Recall that it was earlier established that descriptive names do function as rigid designators when considering hypothetical scenarios. If this is correct, then simply failing test (3) cannot be sufficient to show that the received view is false.

In fact, it is only by distinguishing between satisfying the two separate tests of the retroactive reference test that we can truly understand the character of descriptive names.

The explanation for why descriptive names have the character that they do -- that they are both shifty and yet rigid designators -- is that they are neither wholly descriptive nor wholly non-descriptive. And we can see this when we attend to test (4) of the retroactive reference test.

If the content of the name 'Julius' was exhausted by a definite description, then it should fail test (4), which demands that if a name is non-descriptive, the object of the discourse using that name is not determined to be that object that satisfies the relevant description. The name 'Julius' will fail test (4) only if speakers reinterpret all of their previous discourse using that name to have been about the real inventor of the zipper. But I doubt speakers would do this. It's simply implausible to suppose that, for instance, a speaker who asserted of the poseur that he was particularly bright, based on her acquaintance with him, would conclude that she had really been talking about the individual she now takes to be the actual inventor of the zipper all along. By test (4) of the retroactive reference test, then, the supposition that a definite description gives the content of the name 'Julius' is false.

These mixed results, then, speak both in favor of and against the standard theory and descriptivist analyses of a name like 'Julius'. The fact that speakers shift the name's referent speaks in favor of descriptivist analyses, yet our reluctance to retroactively reinterpret all previous discourse speaks in favor of the standard theory.

Turning now to our Jack the Ripper case, we will find that applying the retroactive reference test to this example shows even more strongly that the received view cannot rely on the Kripkean treatment of descriptive names to account for them.

Let us suppose that there is an arrest made in this case, but that it is a false arrest. Nevertheless, the falsely accused is jailed for a rather lengthy period before being

exculpated, and up to that point, at least, is known to all, except perhaps his family and friends, as 'Jack the Ripper'.

However, upon his day of reckoning, we can imagine that the falsely accused would justifiably demand that the name stop being applied to him, and that it instead be applied to the true murderer. The content of the name 'Jack the Ripper', then, at least according to the test (3), is descriptive.

Still, even though we would willingly shift the referent of the name 'Jack the Ripper', we would not plausibly reinterpret all of our previous discourse using that name to have been about the real murderer, thereby showing that at least this descriptive name satisfies criterion (4) for being non-descriptive -- that the name is actually rigid in some way or other. Consider, for instance, one of the prison guards for the falsely accused asserting that Jack was very polite. Surely we would not say that guard's utterance was false if the true murderer was not in fact polite.

Now consider, once again, the case of 'Eve'. Imagine that scientists discover the remains of something they wrongly believe to be the first female homosapiens, and that they proceed to call those remains by the name 'Eve'. Conferences and journal articles ensue, entertaining various hypothetical scenarios, all using the name 'Eve' as a rigid designator for the misidentified remains. Later, another set of remains is discovered, the supposed actual first female homosapiens, which the scientists then start calling 'Eve'. Again, conferences ensue, journal articles are written. Once again, however, scientists agree that this second set of remains is not truly the first female homosapiens, that another set of remains has that property. And again, the name is withdrawn and applied to yet

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another set of remains.[5]

However, just like in the Jack the Ripper case, with respect to the retroactive reference test, we see mixed results regarding the name 'Eve'. While, the name does not remain steadfast in its reference, it is simply not plausible that all of the scientists past discourse using this name would get reinterpreted as having been about the actual first female homosapiens.[6]

As a matter of course, then, descriptive names can shift their reference, thereby revealing their descriptive character according to test (3), but previous discourse using that name will not necessarily be reinterpreted accordingly, entailing that these names are not descriptive by test (4). However, this latter fact in no way vindicates Kripke's approach, since Kripke's approach cannot explain that, according test (3) of the retroactive reference test, the name's content is descriptive.

3.3 Reactions to a Descriptive Name's Shifty Character

There are several ways that the standard theorist might try to maintain the Kripkean treatment. For instance, she might deny that descriptive names are instances of genuine names altogether, thereby avoiding the need to explain their shiftiness at all. She would then have to explain the uniform syntactic behavior of all proper names, and the modal of names that are descriptive. She might also simply deny the validity of the retroactive reference test's results, holding that the test reveals nothing about the semantic character of an expression. But since this would require giving up one of the main sources of support for the standard theory in the first place, taking this approach is, of course, self-defeating. The third option is to maintain that a descriptive name's apparent ability to reference shift is

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[5] See Reimer (2004).

[6] The description of the scenario where the name shifts its reference is also due to Reimer (2004).

simply that: an appearance. Descriptive names no more shift their referents than do any other names. Any intuition to the contrary is simply the outcome of confusing one name with another on the basis of their homophony.

But there are at least two major problems with this last kind of response. To show this, let us suppose that the apparent reference-shifting of a descriptive name like 'Jack the Ripper' from the falsely accused to the actual murderer is really an instance of a speaker introducing a new name into discourse.

The first problem with this last supposition is that it provides us with no internally motivated explanation for the tight connection between the extinction of the use of the old name 'Jack the Ripper$_1$', and the introduction of the new name 'Jack the Ripper$_2$'. This is especially true in the Jack the Ripper example in which the use of the so-called "old" name is extinguished and the "new" name is to be thought of as explicitly introduced because the referent of the old name does not satisfy the relevant descriptions. The standard theorist owes us an explanation of why this should be the case, since the intuitive explanation seems to be that the original name had the content of a description as part of its meaning, and its reference shifted according to the influence of the content of this description on the name's content.

Second, having shifted the name's referent is likely the way the speaker herself would describe her own actions in calling the actual murderer "Jack the Ripper", leaving the Orthodox Theorist with the further implausibility of attributing to speakers acts of introducing new names into their own vocabularies unbeknownst to themselves, and even against their own best linguistic intentions.

4. An Alternative Approach

An alternative solution to the problem of descriptive names requires rejecting the idea that all there is to the semantic value, or meaning, of a name is an individual or referent, a view associated with writers such as Donnellan, Kaplan, and Kripke.[7] Instead, we should accept that the semantic value of a proper name is complex. I argue that, in addition to having a traditional content -- a referent -- a proper name's semantic value is also composed of what I will call its "mode of introduction." A name's mode of introduction is, naturally, derived from the name's introduction into discourse; as a matter of its semantics, a name tracks various features of its introduction, including any descriptions with which it was introduced. As I will show, this allows the contents of descriptions to play an active role in a descriptive name's meaning without giving up Direct Reference Theory or the Rigid Designation Thesis, properly understood. Because the Kripkean treatment of descriptive names fails and because of the mixed results garnered from applying the retroactive reference test to these names, it turns out that they are expressions requiring a rather delicate semantic explanation.

On the view that will be offered, proper names can have different modes of introduction, and those different modes will determine that the names behave in different ways. Descriptive names are what I will call "time relative" rigid designators; they can shift their referent, but at any point at which a descriptive name's referent is fixed, it functions as a rigid designator. Because we can give a plausible explanation of the behavior of descriptive names only if we first revise our common understanding of a rigidly designative expression, we can no longer think of these expressions simply as those that remain

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[7] See, for instance, Donnellan (1974), Kaplan (1979), and Kripke (1980). Many others defend this view as well, including Devitt (1981), Evans (1982), Marcus (1986), and Salmon (1998).

steadfast in their reference tout court. We must, instead, think of at least some of them as able to shift their referents over time, while remaining rigid in what they designate at a given time. For example, a descriptive name is one whose referent is fixed across possible worlds at any given point in time, but not fixed over time; it is a time relative rigid designator.

In contrast, names that are introduced in non-descriptive ways, those I will be calling "ostensive" names, are absolute rigid designators -- their referent never shifts. This is our classic notion of a rigid designator -- a notion exemplified in the behavior of the name 'Godel' -- that of an expression whose semantic content is determinately fixed independently of times and worlds -- its content is constant no matter what the circumstances. These expressions are therefore absolute rigid designators.

Despite the differences between time relative and absolute rigid designators, nevertheless, both kinds of names are given a unified explanation in terms of the rules for their correct application and use. That is, in both cases, the different aspects of name's semantic value -- its content and its mode of introduction -- function in the same way to determine that name's semantic value.

If standard theorists are to preserve their theory, then, they need an alternative treatment of these names, a treatment that can respect theses (1) and (2) -- the Direct Reference and Rigid Designator theses -- and yet accommodates time relative rigid designators. After all, it is a reasonable expectation that any complete semantic account of proper names should have some explanation of the following two facts: that the content of a definite description can be part of a name's meaning without thereby giving that name's content, and that a descriptive name functions as a kind of rigid designator at any fixed point in time.

One traditional response to the descriptive names problem is to incorporate a descriptive element into a proper name's meaning in addition to its simply having an individual as its content. Doing so involves not only complicating a proper name's meaning, but also involves drawing a distinction between a name's content and its semantic value, or meaning. A name's content is that aspect of its semantic value that is a direct constituent of any proposition expressed using that name. On the view developed here, a name's semantic value will be composed of something more than content. It will thereby allow for a definite description to be part of a name's semantic value without that description's constituting, nor even determining, that name's content.[8] This account, then, will allow for a description to be a permanent feature of the meaning of that name while also remaining faithful to the standard theory. In outline, the alternative we will examine, like the proposals of Donnellan and Kripke, it will still be true that we find a name's semantic value by tracing its various disambiguated uses back to what I will be calling its original "context of introduction" -- the event in which the name was introduced into discourse.

4.1 The Context of Introduction Thesis

On Kripke's picture of what determines a name's reference, and more explicitly in Donnellan's work, a name's reference is determined by facts about a name's context of

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[8] Because I do distinguish between a name's having content and its having semantic value, the Direct Reference Thesis -- the view that a name's content is not given by a definite description -- is easily preserved on my view, since any descriptivist element I posit as part of a descriptive name's meaning will operate as only one component of name's semantic value distinct from its content. But can this kind of view also respect the Rigid Designator Thesis? It can, but not without some argument, since a definite description's role with respect to a proper name's meaning can be understood in one of two different ways. For instance, we might think of a definite description not as constituting the content of a proper name, but nevertheless, as determining that content. Of course, if a name is to function as a rigid designator at all, I must show that this second interpretation is also disallowed on my view. As we will see, the nature of a proper name's mode of introduction will indeed rule out both interpretations of a definite description's role with respect to a proper name.

introduction. However, while the semantic premise that will be offered is similar to Kripke's

proposal, it is nevertheless importantly distinct. For instance, unlike Kripke's view, this view

will make the association of an individual with a proper name as its content a mere

secondary effect of a more general fact about what determines that name's semantic value.

A name has an individual as its content only because the primary determinant of its

semantic value is a fact about that name's historical origins. This allows for the idea that a

proper name's context of introduction has features other than that of associating a name

with some content, with a referent. Not only is it an occasion on which a name is assigned

content, or associated with a particular individual, it is also an occasion on which that

content is associated with that name in a particular way. That is, any proper name, in

addition to having content, will also have a particular mode of introduction as part of its

semantic value, this mode being that feature of its semantic value indicating its method of

being introduced into discourse.

4.2 Modes of Introduction

Let us first consider a rather simple picture of how a speaker might introduce a proper name

into discourse. For instance, imagine that the way a speaker does this is first by mentally

singling out a particular object, and then stipulating that the relevant object should be

understood as that name's referent. Thinking of a name's introduction into discourse even

on this simple model shows that these events are composed of two distinct actions on the

part of the speaker -- an act of singling out, and an act of stipulating that the thing singled

out is to be a referent for a name. These two actions I will represent as composing two

separate features of a name's mode of introduction: a cognitive aspect and a referential

aspect. We can understand each of these elements as respectively corresponding to two

different rules for, or constraints on, the introduction of proper names into discourse.

The first rule, the cognitive rule, tells us that, in introducing a name, a speaker must have some way of thinking of the relevant referent. This way may be descriptive or ostensive, depending on the speaker's cognitive access to the referent she intends to assign to that name. On my view, insofar as that speaker can single out an actual unique object as a prospective referent, she has satisfied the cognitive rule.

The second rule, the reference rule, tells us that any legitimate use of a name will have associated with it some act of stipulation that the object identified as the intended referent is to be rigidly associated with that name across possible worlds. This referential component of a proper name is what secures the name's status as some kind of rigid designator. A speaker's act of attempting to introduce a proper name as such into discourse must satisfy both requirements if she is to succeed in her attempt.

Stated more explicitly, the two rules for introducing a name into the language are as follows:

> (5) The Cognitive Rule: is satisfied by a speaker just in case that speaker has a conception of the object she wishes to name specific enough to allow her to intend that the object reasonably identified by that conception is the unique potential referent for the expression she wishes to introduce into the discourse.
> (6) The Reference Rule: is satisfied just in case a speaker engages in an act of stipulation that the object she identified via her conception of it is to be rigidly associated with the expression she is attempting to introduce into the discourse as that expression's content.

For ease of exposition, I will depict the previous two features of a name's mode of introduction as instantiated by particular components, or parts, of it. A mode of introduction, then, can be thought of as containing both a cognitive part and a referential part. To illustrate the theory offered thus far, consider the following diagram of a proper name's semantic architecture in which 'PN' will stand for 'proper name', 'M' for 'mode of

introduction', 'R' for 'content', 'C' for 'cognitive component' and 'A' for 'act of reference', where both C and A are understood as parts of a name's mode of introduction.

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\begin{array}{c}
\text{PN} \\
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\text{C} \quad \text{A}
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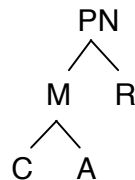
As this diagram shows, not only are names associated with traditional contents, they are also associated with a mode of introduction, which itself carries information about certain mental and linguistic intentions and actions represented by the respective meanings of 'C' and 'A'.

5. Ostensive and Descriptive Names

For current purposes, I will assume that a name can have only one of two modes of introduction: an ostensive mode or a descriptive mode. By definition, a name's mode of introduction will be ostensive just in case a particular kind of deictic expression, namely a demonstrative, is used to introduce that name, and that expression's meaning is relevant for fixing that name's referent. In contrast, names introduced descriptively will have descriptive modes of introduction. A name's mode of introduction will be descriptive just in case a definite description occurs in association with the introduction of that name, and the meaning of that description is relevant for fixing that name's referent over time.

5.1 Ostensive Names

Plausibly, standard cases of ostensive names will include the likes of ship-christenings, baby-namings, star-baptisms, and so on. Indeed, these names will likely include all cases in

which there is some kind of acquaintance between a speaker and a name's potential referent.

Let us suppose that when names are ostensive, they are so because they have ostensive modes of introduction comprised of the use of demonstrative phrases. For simplicity's sake, let us suppose that there is only one such ostensive phrase in the language, namely, 'that'. Of course, demonstrative phrases like 'that' are best understood semantically as context-sensitive variables -- that is, as expressions that have no determinate semantic value independent of a context of utterance. Specifically, demonstratives have a semantic value in a context only if they are accompanied by a successful act of demonstration or ostension.

This last fact concerning demonstratives immediately raises questions about how ostensive names could ever be legitimately introduced into the language at all, since independent of a context, demonstrative expressions will not allow a speaker to have any particular object in mind as the potential referent for a proper name, thereby violating our cognitive rule (5).

However, we can suppose that, in the case of ostensive names, the speaker uses a demonstrative phrase that already has an assigned context-dependent value in order to introduce the relevant proper name. In fact, since the expression 'that' in and of itself does not single out a particular object for a speaker to have in mind, the only way a speaker could introduce an ostensive proper name is if the demonstrative phrase already has an assigned value. So it is not true that there are no ostensive names. Rather, the particular act of demonstration with which an ostensive mode of introduction is associated is part of its cognitive component.

Of course, in these cases, not only can we identify the act of demonstration with which a name is associated as part of its cognitive component, we can also identify it as part of its referential component, since acts of demonstration can be thought of as acts of reference that are relative to contexts of utterance. Ostensive names, then, in virtue of satisfying rule (5), simultaneously satisfy rule (6) -- the Reference Rule. Demonstratives with assigned values are therefore complete modes of introduction in and of themselves.[9] All modes of introduction must contain an act of reference somehow or other. Whether that act is constitutive of the cognitive component is irrelevant.

Let me now introduce a further supposition about the cognitive component of a proper name, a supposition not entailed by anything previously asserted, but which does aid in explaining an ostensive name's nature as an absolute rigid designator. I hereby offer the hypothesis that the cognitive component of a proper name's mode of introduction has a stable and fixed character. This supposition, in combination with the previous fact about an ostensive name's cognitive component, entails that an initial act of demonstration used to introduce an ostensive name will always be part of that name's meaning, and will, therefore, always fix the same referent that was fixed in its original introduction, assuming that the act of demonstration was successful. The nature of an ostensive name's mode of introduction will then guarantee that it will always determine the same object as that name's content.

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[9] At this point, it might be worth noting that because ostensive names do not have modes of introduction composed of two separable independent components, my previous characterization of modes of introduction as composed of two parts as building blocks is strained. This raises questions about the nature of compositionality in natural language and what it actually requires. While I have relied on the easily graspable building block notion of compositionality simply to explicate the theory, because of the nature of ostensive names, arguably, I cannot take this notion of compositionality as a literally correct description of how the meanings of simple expressions compose to determine the meaning of more complex expressions. For other objections to this notion of compositionality, see Szabo (2000).
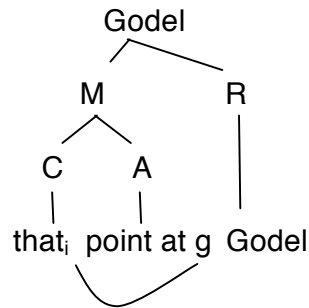
This, in turn, entails that ostensive names are rigid designators in the strongest sense possible -- they are, one and all, absolute rigid designators.

Recall that the name 'Godel' was an absolute rigid designator. On my view, the explanation for this fact is that 'Godel' was introduced in a particular way, namely, ostensively. Plausibly, we can imagine 'Godel' being introduced in the following way: upon his birth, Godel's mother, at some point, in some way or other, ostensively identified Godel and stipulated that 'Godel' was to be a name for him. On the current theory, the context of introduction for the name 'Godel' will be composed of two components that will, in turn, constitute its semantic value: some content and a mode of introduction. Respectively, both Godel and an ostensive mode of introduction will compose the semantic value of the name 'Godel'.

Given my assumptions, the name 'Godel' then, in virtue of being introduced by an act of ostension using a demonstrative, is an absolute rigid designator. This is because the very act of reference Godel's mother performed in introducing his name is part of that name's cognitive component, a stable or fixed feature of that name's mode of introduction. This entails that the context of introduction for the name 'Godel' will necessarily be composed of a particular act of reference, namely, the original act of reference performed by Godel's mother. Because that act is and always will be related to the individual Godel, the name 'Godel' will unwaveringly pick out the same object: Godel himself.

The fact that, in cases of ostensive names, the referential component is constitutive of the cognitive component raises difficulties for representing pictorially an ostensive name's semantic value. Relying on the standard convention of using an 'x' to represent a variable, as well as a subscripted 'i' to indicate its context-sensitivity, I offer the following diagram to

illustrate the meaning of an ostensive name like 'Godel':

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                    Godel
                   /     \
                  M       R
                 / \      |
                C   A     |
                |   |     |
             thatᵢ point at g  Godel
                 _____/
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As we can see, with an ostensive name like 'Godel', the name's indivisible mode of introduction is represented pictorially by linking its cognitive aspect with its referential feature. Although, in truth, these are not truly separate components of this name's meaning. However, the mode of introduction for the name 'Godel' does respect rules (5) and (6), and this is sufficient for that mode of introduction to be legitimate. The picture offered above is given merely for the purposes of accessibility.

5.2 Descriptive Names

Having examined the nature of an ostensive name, we will now shift our attention to the nature of descriptive names. Unlike ostensive names, descriptive names are not absolute rigid designators, but only time relative rigid designators. As their moniker indicates, a descriptive name's cognitive component is not ostensive, but descriptive. Because of this, unlike the nature of an ostensive name's cognitive component, a descriptive name's cognitive component does not depend on the context to single out a particular object.[10] For this reason, the use of a definite description to introduce a name can, on its own, serve as the complete cognitive component of a name's mode of introduction; the use of a definite

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[10] The assumption that a definite description has a contextually independent interpretation is, of course, an idealization.

description to identity an object is sufficient for satisfying rule (5).[11]

But now, what about the referential component? On the theory being developed, having mere cognitive significance is not sufficient for the successful introduction of a proper name into discourse. It must also be accompanied with an act of reference. In order for a speaker to respect the reference rule, a descriptive mode of introduction will have to be accompanied with some acts of reference or other, even if those acts are non-identical over time. This fact, that the acts of reference associated with a descriptive name need not be identical over time, is the key difference between descriptive names and their so-called ordinary counterparts. Unlike ostensive names, there is no requirement that a descriptive name must be associated with any particular act of reference, since the act of reference with which a descriptive name is associated does not constitute part of that name's stable cognitive component. It is precisely this feature of a descriptive name's mode of introduction that explains its ability to shift referents over time, its difference from ostensive names, and its status as a relative rigid designator.

A descriptive name's ability to be associated with different acts of reference is explained because of the way definite descriptions function when playing the cognitive role they do with respect to those names. In effect, the theory I have offered predicts that definite descriptions, when playing only a cognitive role, play exactly the role Kripke originally claimed they play -- that of merely fixing a referent. The difference between Kripke's picture and the current picture lies in the fact that the current picture allows a definite description to continue to play that role in virtue of being part of a descriptive

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[11] It is important to emphasize that the definite description composing a name's cognitive component, because it is in fact a *cognitive* aspect of a name used by speakers to identify objects, can be subject to mis-identifications, and this is consistent with its being used in keeping with the original intentions with which that name was introduced.

name's meaning.

Because the particular act of reference with which a descriptive name is introduced need not be part of its fixed cognitive component, we can now understand how a descriptive name's referent might change over time. We can think of a descriptive name's mode of introduction as being constituted by the use of a definite description as its cognitive component, together with a context-sensitive variable for acts of reference that stipulatively associate the object identified by that cognitive component as that name's relatively rigid content.

It follows, then, that a descriptive name's mode of introduction is context-sensitive in a way that an ostensive name's mode of introduction is not: the name's content, or referent, might change in virtue of its ability to be associated with different acts of reference over time in particular contexts, those contexts that allow a descriptive name to be associated with a different act of reference. Of course, a descriptive name's context-sensitivity would not be like that of a demonstrative expression, which would allow shifts in content simply in virtue of an individual speaker's act of ostension and intention to refer using that expression. A descriptive name's context-sensitivity would be governed by much more highly constrained rules.[12] Naturally, these rules governing the allowable shifts in the content of a descriptive name would be related to the meaning of the definite description that constitutes part of that name's semantic value.

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[12] Though the difference between indexicals and demonstratives could prove simply to be one of degree, we could, given traditional explanations of the difference between such expressions, say that descriptive names function more like Kaplan (1989) claims indexicals function: as context-sensitive expressions whose content in a context is determined by the properties of some object in that context. For instance, the expression 'I' changes its content in different contexts, but it always refers to the speaker of the utterance, and given a context it does so rigidly. Likewise, a descriptive name might be thought to change its content in different contexts, but it will always refer to the object that apparently counts in that context as satisfying a particular definite description.

Consider once again our Julius case. Recall that 'Julius' was introduced as a name for the inventor of the zipper, but that the name was subsequently fixed to an object that only seemed to satisfy this description. In this case, a mis-identification occurred and the description reasonably picked out, by an act of reference, only what was appropriately believed to be the inventor of the zipper. While it did this, the name 'Julius' acted as a rigid designator for the individual mis-identified as the inventor of the zipper, since this individual was determined to be the content of that name at that time. Nevertheless, it is still true that the actual description associated with the name 'Julius' was not 'the person believed to be the inventor of the zipper'. It was, rather, 'the inventor of the zipper'. It is the fact that this description plays only a cognitive role in allowing speakers, in initial or subsequent acts of reference, to have an object in mind that allows for different objects to "satisfy" it. For this reason, upon discovering their mistake, the townspeople will shift the reference of 'Julius' to the real inventor of the zipper by engaging in a new act of reference using that name. Of course, the very same analysis applies mutatis mutandis to both of the names 'Jack the Ripper' and 'Eve'.

Because my account of the rules associated with descriptive reference-shifting is less than complete, offering a diagram to represent the meaning of our descriptive name 'Julius' will less assuredly represent its meaning accurately. Even so, I think we can take the following semantic tree as roughly correct:

Julius

M   R

C   A

the inventor of the zipper x_i referent
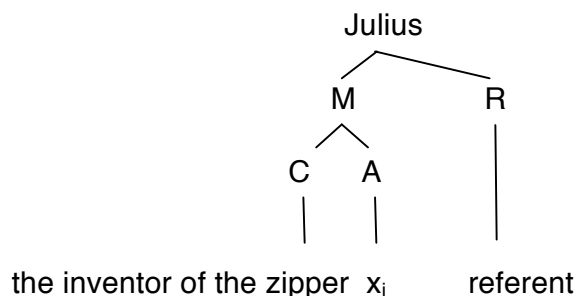
In contrast with our previous diagram of the ostensive name 'Godel', notice that the mode of introduction for the name 'Julius' contains context-sensitive variable for acts of reference A, thereby allowing for the possibility that the individual that counts as Julius might change over time, even though at any given time the content of the name 'Julius' will be associated with that name rigidly.

6. Objections

I turn now to two different objections to the view I have developed. The first objection rejects my theory in favor of another on the grounds that mine violates semantic parsimony. The second objection comes from Soames's (2002) arguments that an account incorporating any descriptivist element into the meaning of a proper name will fail.

Turning to the first objection, we might think that the hypothesis that a name has two aspects to its semantic value, both some content and a mode of introduction, unnecessarily complicates the semantics of those lexical items thereby violating the norm of simplicity or parsimony for semantic theories.

In reply, consider the fact that the idea of making the semantic value of a name complex rather than simple has been drifting around since Frege (1892), and with good reason. For instance, historically, adding an additional aspect to a name's semantic value is motivated by the problems that arise when embedding proper names in propositional attitude contexts.

Consider the classic Fregean example of the two distinct names for the planet Venus, 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus', respectively corresponding to the planet's appearance in the evening and the morning sky, thereby allowing for the possibility that speakers might believe that Hesperus rises in the evening, but fail to believe this of Phosphorus, despite the

fact that these names are co-referential. Wrestling with these problems has led many theorists to posit some kind of Fregean ingredient as part a proper name's meaning in order to explain its varying substitutional roles in extensional and intensional contexts. But in addition to these motivations, there are more contemporary considerations in favor of complicating a name's semantic value, like those that motivate my own theory.

Consider the difference, initially noted by Kripke, between de jure and de facto rigid designators, a difference that cries out for explanation. Some definite descriptions, such as 'the square root of four', will designate rigidly as a matter of their content. A rigid definite description like this counts as a de facto rigid designator. Since it is not plausible to claim that all names are associated with rigid definite descriptions, but because all names are rigid, Kripke distinguishes proper names as a separate kind of rigid designator, and ultimately concludes that these expressions must be rigid in virtue of a stipulation. In other words, proper names are de jure rigid. This fact might be thought to argue, all by itself, for including more in a name's semantic value than simply its traditional content, which is usually thought to be an individual -- the object to which the term refers.

Recanati (1993), for instance, reasons that if names are rigid designators, and yet are semantically distinct from de facto rigid designators, there must be something in their semantics to indicate this fact. He argues that even ordinary referential names must have as part of their semantics something that indicates their status as de jure rigid. For Recanati, such names are marked in a way that tells a speaker that, as a matter of stipulation, they are rigid designators. We therefore have at least one reason for believing that a name's semantic value is more complex than we might initially be inclined to think.

Another reason to suppose that a name's semantic value is complex emerges in

light of the semantic differences between variables and proper names. Both variables and proper names have individuals as their semantic contents, and both retain their values for the purposes of truth-conditional evaluations. However, unlike a variable, whose nature it is to allow for arbitrary value re-assignments, a proper name's value is traditionally represented as a logical constant, an expression whose value is not open for arbitrary re-assignment. Since the contents of both kinds of expressions are comprised of individuals, the question arises as to what distinguishes them from one another. Three different possible answers are available: distinguish between the kinds of contents the two expressions can have, claim that there is no distinction, or add another dimension to their respective semantic values that does distinguish them.[13] I choose the latter option.

Positing an additional aspect to an ordinary name's semantic content in order to explain its semantic value, then, is supported for at least two reasons independent of the phenomenon of descriptive names. If we find these reasons compelling, then we might as well exploit this feature to its fullest potential, since doing so will allow us to account for a wider range of data concerning proper names, including the data arising from the behavior of descriptive names.

What's more is that accommodating descriptive names in the way that I do does not rule out a unified account of how to determine a name's semantic value in any case. On my view, both descriptive and ostensive names have their semantic values determined by their contexts of introduction, contexts that are governed by rules (5) and (6). Both descriptive and ostensive names equally satisfy these rules, though in different ways; and this allows us to explain their different behaviors. It could be argued, then, that my theory is the simpler

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[13]   In contrast with my approach, Cumming (2008) argues for the second option -- that proper names just are variables. I do not here deal with the data he offers in favor of this hypothesis, but I do believe that it must be explained even though I cannot do so here.

semantic theory because it does not require different accounts for different kinds of names.

Of course, the last two considerations in favor of complicating a name's semantic value are relatively recent considerations. Most of the earlier discussions of descriptive names occur against the backdrop of the earlier mentioned classic Fregean Hesperus-Phosphorus problem. And it is exactly against this backdrop that Soames offers his arguments against the kind of view I hold, arguments that I will now explain and to which I will respond.

Of the many descriptivist theses Soames argues against, I will focus on only one of them, since it is the one proposal that shares features in common with my own position. The proposal's aim is to accommodate the rigidity of proper names, while at the same time blocking the substitution of co-referential names for one another in belief contexts. Just like my own theory, the descriptivist theory under consideration holds that while a definite description will form part of the meaning of a descriptive name, that description will nevertheless fail to directly affect the truth-evaluable content of sentences containing that name. Not only does this thesis appear to resemble my own, at this general level of description, it is in fact equivalent to mine. However, in this case, as in many others, the devil is in the details.

To be more specific, the proposal Soames argues against is the following: the semantic content of a descriptive name is constituted by its referent, plus a descriptive condition associated with the name by speakers. On this view, regardless of whether the referent actually satisfies the associated descriptive condition, the proposition expressed is singular and its constituent referent remains constant across possible worlds. However, in using a descriptive name to make an assertion, a speaker does attribute its associated

descriptive property to its referent. On this proposal, even though the truth-condition of the proposition expressed by a sentence containing a descriptive name does not depend on whether the referent of the name satisfies any descriptive condition, a speaker can believe that proposition only if she does, in fact, attribute the descriptive property to the referent of that name.

For example, on the view under consideration, the semantic content of the descriptive name 'Hesperus' would consist of the planet Venus, along with the associated descriptive property of being the first celestial body that appears in the evening. Nevertheless, the proposition expressed by the sentence 'Hesperus is a planet' is that of a singular proposition that attributes the property of being a planet to Venus. Any speaker who believes that Hesperus is a planet will believe both that the referent of Hesperus is the first celestial body that appears in the evening and that it is a planet.

Soames's objections to this view, then, are appropriately centered on its implications for what speakers can plausibly be said to believe or assert in using descriptive names. Ultimately, Soames thinks that attributing particular descriptive beliefs about referents to speakers when using a proper name is implausible. For instance, imagine a possible world in which another planet, not Venus, is the first celestial body visible in the evening sky. Given the previous descriptivist analysis of the meaning of a name like 'Hesperus', a speaker who knew that Venus was not the first celestial body visible in the evening sky will be able to appropriately assert that Hesperus is a planet, but also that she does not believe that Hesperus is a planet, supposing she mistakenly believes that the actual first celestial body is a star. This is because, on the previous analysis of the meaning of 'Hesperus', in its first instance, the name refers to the planet Venus, but in its second instance, it reports on

the speaker's attitudes about the first celestial body that appears in the evening. Soames fairly concludes that any theory of proper names having such a consequence should be rejected. In light of the failure the previous hypothesis, Soames reasonably, but tentatively, sides with the Kripkean analysis of descriptive names.

While I do not wish to take a specific position on whether 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' specifically are descriptive names -- in fact, I believe they are not likely descriptive names -- I do nevertheless need to address Soames's objection, since it is meant to apply widely to any analysis of proper names that entails that they have a descriptive element. If the only problems posed by the behavior of descriptive names were those related to a speaker's beliefs about the propositions containing them, I might be inclined to agree with Soames. However, as I have argued, the behavior of descriptive names is also problematic for other reasons, those demonstrated by their failure to pass the retroactive reference test, which Soames himself relies on as diagnostic of a descriptive element in an expression's meaning. It is for these reasons that I conclude that a descriptive element must somehow be included in an account of a descriptive name's meaning.

Furthermore, the position on offer can be maintained in the face of Soames's criticisms because it is not motivated by the same issues that motivate the descriptivist theory Soames attacks. Unlike that previous theory, which takes a particular stance on what a speaker must believe in using a descriptive name in order to explain the classic Fregean Hesperus-Phosphorus problem, my own theory is not so motivated. I take no stance on what a speaker must believe when she uses a name. Indeed, it is reasonable to think that my proposal requires only that speakers rely on the content of the definite description that is part of a descriptive name's meaning when either introducing this kind of name or when this

kind of name's referent shifts. Otherwise, given that my proposal is ultimately historical, I suggest that any other times a descriptive name is used, speakers need only intend that they use that name with the same cognitive intention as that with which that name was introduced by a speaker, but they need not know the description used to introduce that name. My proposal, therefore, is not subject to Soames's criticism.

Of course, I offer no analysis of the classic Fregean Hesperus-Phosphorus problem. However, I am not particularly worried about this at the moment, since many have failed to solve this problem, and even Kripke suspects that it is irresolvable. Indeed, the very question itself has led some philosophers to come to the extreme conclusion that proper names are not even part of the language at all, and therefore are not subject to the normal constraints of the rule of substitution.[14]

7. Conclusion

Having offered a theory that maintains the standard theory by allowing the contents of a definite description to be part of a name's meaning without thereby sacrificing its status as a rigid designator or its status as a directly referential expression, there are still issues to be addressed. While it is true that the contents of definite descriptions are part of the meaning of descriptive names, there has been no explicit account of the rules governing the role of descriptions in the use of these names. Indeed, a complete and detailed description of these constraints would undoubtedly be a fairly complex matter. Nevertheless, if descriptive names truly are genuine names, any plausible account of names must explain the content of a definite description's dynamic role in determining the contents of those names. We have now seen already, at least a sketch of a theory that, unlike others, has the potential to explain the behavior of all names, not only those that fit easily within the confines of

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[14] See Bach (1987) and Recanati (1993).

standard parameters. That is, what has been shown is that even the recalcitrant descriptive

names do fit within those parameters, properly understood.[15]

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