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Descriptive Names: A Context-sensitive Account

I here explain a problem for standard rigid designator accounts of a description's role in fixing the referent of a name, the problem of what appears to be the shifting of the referent of a descriptive name over time. I offer a variant of Kripke's historical semantic theory of how names function, a variant which can accommodate the phenomenon of reference shift, and yet still maintain rigidity for proper names. The phenomenon of descriptive names, and their apparent ability to shift their referent, calls for a semantic account of names that makes their semantic values bipartite, containing 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 can allow for a definite description to be a part of proper name's meaning without thereby sacrificing its potential as a rigid designator. A definite description can be part of a name's mode of introduction -- it can be part of what determines the content assigned to a name without thereby being either its sole determinant or its content.

1. Introduction

The existence of descriptive names, those introduced using definite descriptions to secure

their reference, presents challenges for what has come to be the Orthodox Theory of proper

names, understood as the conjunction of two familiar theses: that a name's semantic

content is not given by a definite description, and that names are a kind of rigid designator,

better known, respectively, as "Direct Reference Theory" and the "Rigid Designation

Thesis." While the phenomenon of descriptive names is somewhat under-discussed, the

standard explanation for the behavior of descriptive names is due to Kripke. It allows a

definite description 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.[1] Accordingly, a proper name's reference can be

fixed initially by the use of a definite description, while still maintaining Orthodoxy.

      As I will argue, however, certain other facts show that Kripke's treatment of

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[1] See Kripke (1980).

descriptive names must be rejected. For instance, the most plausible understanding of descriptive names will allow that they can shift their referents over time in ways sensitive to whether a potential referent is appropriately thought to satisfy the particular definite description with which the name was introduced. I show this by applying a test that Orthodox Theorists themselves rely on to reveal the semantic character of a proper name, a test I will call the "retroactive reference test." As I will explain, the results of the test, which reveal the "shiftiness" of descriptive names, entail that treating a definite description's role in a name's meaning as that of a one-off reference fixer is flawed.

Of course, the Orthodox Theorist might maintain the Kripkean treatment by rejecting one of the previous assumptions. For instance, she might deny that descriptive names are instances of genuine names altogether, thereby avoiding the need to explain their shiftiness at all. However, the uniform syntactic behavior of all proper names, including those that are descriptive, defeats the plausibility of this reply. However, the Orthodox Theorist 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 Orthodoxy 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 simply that: an appearance. Descriptive names no more shift their referents than do any other names. As I will later argue, however, this approach stumbles on several different grounds. Another solution is to offer the kind of theory I shall offer, one that distinguishes between kinds of rigid designators and between a name's content and its semantic value.

The last solution requires rejecting the idea that all there is to the semantic value of a name is an individual, a view associated with writers such as Keith Donnellan, David Kaplan

and Saul Kripke.[2] 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 partly 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 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.

On my view, 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 "relative" rigid designators: they can shift their referent, but at any point at which a descriptive name's referent is fixed, the name functions as a 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.[3]

I first describe Orthodox Theory and its relation to descriptive names. I then show that we should think of descriptive names as being able to shift their referents over time, and I elucidate a conception of names as devices that track features of their introduction into discourse, features of their context of introduction. I explain how this can account for both absolute rigid designators and relative rigid designators -- ostensive and descriptive names, respectively. I conclude by discussing some potential problems with the view I

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[2] 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).
[3] It will become apparent that, contrary to what Evans (1973) argues, the phenomenon of reference-shifting needn't be a problem for a rigid designator thesis, as long as one distinguishes between a name's being rigid over time and a name's being rigid across possible worlds at a time.

develop.

2. Orthodoxy and Descriptive Names

2.1 Orthodoxy

Direct Reference Theory about proper names is defined in several ways throughout the literature. Its most neutral characterization is given by Salmon.[4] To remain conservative, that is, to refrain from making an assumption about Direct Reference Theory that entails the Rigid Designator Thesis outright, I will define the thesis as Salmon does, as the negative thesis that the semantic content of a proper name is not given by a definite description.[5] Orthodox Theory, of course, holds that not only is Direct Reference Theory true, but so is the Rigid Designation Thesis, stating that a proper name's referent is constant across all possible worlds.

Despite the widespread acceptance of both Direct Reference Theory and the Rigid Designation Thesis, they are nevertheless logically independent theses. We should, therefore, consider whether there are good reasons for maintaining both of them in conjunction.

To show that the Rigid Designation Thesis does not logically entail Direct Reference Theory, assume that a proper name is a rigid designator, and consider the hypothesis that its semantic content is indeed given by a definite description, a description that expresses

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[4] This occurs in Salmon's work on empty names (1998). Another less neutral way of defining Direct Reference Theory is as a thesis about what a name contributes to the proposition expressed by a sentence containing it, standardly, its referent. But this way of putting the theory makes it sound a bit too close to Millianism -- the thesis that all there is to a name's meaning is its referent. For one instance of this way of defining Direct Reference Theory see Everett and Hofweber (2000).

[5] Regarding Salmon's definition: I will almost always talk of the contrary descriptivist thesis about names as "giving" a name's content. This should be taken as neutral between the thesis that a definite description is literally the content of a proper name, and the thesis that a definite description merely determines the name's content. For the most part, this distinction does not matter, but when it does, I change my terminology accordingly.

an essential property of that name's referent. For instance, suppose we are considering introducing a name for a certain number, that number that is square root of 4. Suppose that we introduce the name '2' as a name for that number. Semanticists might plausibly conjecture that the name '2' simply abbreviates the definite description 'the square root of 4'. Of course, the name '2' will be a rigid designator regardless of what we think constitutes its semantic content, since the number two will satisfy the description 'the square root of four' in all possible worlds, and nothing else will satisfy it. On the face of it, the case of the proper name '2' is an instance of a proper name that refers rigidly and yet that does not refer directly. Instead, it refers by means of a definite description. Acceptance of the Rigid Designation Thesis, therefore, does not entail acceptance of Direct Reference Theory.

Let us now move in the opposite direction. Let us assume that Direct Reference Theory is true and that a name's reference varies due, let us imagine, to its semantic content being given by a predicate. In such cases, names would not be rigid, yet neither would their semantic content be given by a definite description. For instance, we can imagine that the name 'Aristotle' simply has the meaning of being an Aristotle. This predicate would apply equally to Aristotle the philosopher and Aristotle the shipping magnate, and so would not rigidly pick out a single individual. Therefore, this case shows that Direct Reference Theory, defined negatively as before, does not entail the Rigid Designation Thesis.

However, despite the fact that the Rigid Designation Thesis and Direct Reference Theory are logically independent, there are in fact good reasons for maintaining both of them. The fundamental intuition is that even if definite descriptions can be rigid designators, the definite descriptions that are typically associated with proper names are not rigid designators. Indeed, most times, mathematics excepted, when we use a definite description to introduce a name, we are in contact only with some contingent properties of the object to

which the name applies. The corresponding definite description, therefore, would pick out

different objects in different possible worlds. But as Kripke convincingly argued, proper

names are always rigid designators -- they are neither an expression that applies to

different unique individuals in different possible worlds nor are they an expression that

applies to individuals in the same manner as predicates. Supposing the predicate view of

proper names is ruled out, these further considerations show that if the Rigid Designation

Thesis is true, so is Direct Reference Theory. Because proper names are always rigid

designators, yet the definite descriptions with which they are typically associated are not, it

follows that those definite descriptions do not give that proper name's content.[6] There is,

therefore, a connection between the two theses: because, as a matter of fact, not all names

are associated with rigid definite descriptions, and yet all names are rigid designators, we

must accept Direct Reference Theory, which says that a name's content is not given by a

definite description. Thus, any evidence in favor of a name's status as a rigid designator is

equally evidence for Direct Reference Theory. Likewise, any evidence against Direct

Reference Theory is equally evidence against the Rigid Designation Thesis. All of the

examples I consider will assume the truth of the previous connection between the two

theses characterizing the Orthodox position on proper names.

2.2 Descriptive Names

A descriptive name is one whose referent is the unique object that can be appropriately

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[6] I will not consider the hypothesis that the content of a proper name should be understood as equivalent in meaning to a definite description that always takes wide-scope. Nor will I consider the hypothesis that a proper name is equivalent in meaning to some definite description indexed to the actual world. Instead, I will assume that Kripke's (1980) objections to these views are sound, since my primary aim here is to offer an account that maintains both Direct Reference Theory and the Rigid Designation Thesis. The most well-known defense of the previous descriptivist hypotheses about a proper name's meaning can be found in Dummett (1993).

thought to satisfy the particular definite description associated with that name. To make the nature of descriptive names clear, let us consider several examples of them, examples due to Evans, Kripke and Reimer.

Consider first, then, Evans's example. Evans introduces the proper name 'Julius' to refer to the inventor of the zip, or in our parlance, the zipper.[7] Given how the name 'Julius' is introduced, Evans thinks 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 person who committed the relevant set of crimes, whoever that may be.[8] The name 'Jack the Ripper', then, was introduced with the intention to refer to the object that uniquely satisfies a particular definite description, an example of a descriptive name even more plausible than the previous one.

Consider also Reimer's example of a descriptive name introduced by scientists for the first female homosapiens, the name 'Eve'.[9] Like the other descriptive names we are considering, the name 'Eve' seemingly refers willy-nilly to the object that satisfies a particular definite description -- in this case, the description 'the first female homosapiens'.

Because it seems plausible, at least initially, to say that the semantic contents of these names are given by definite descriptions, their existence challenges Orthodoxy, since if the semantic content of a descriptive name is given by a definite description, Direct

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[7] See Evans (1982).
[8] See Kripke (1980).
[9] See Reimer (2004).

Reference Theory is false. If we assume that the Rigid Designation Thesis entails the truth of Direct Reference Theory, then the evidence we have just considered against the latter is evidence against the former. If so, then Orthodoxy is false given the falsity of both of its tenets.

The puzzle, of course, is that Orthodoxy seems to get it right, at least for many ordinary names. And despite initial appearances, even descriptive names appear to function as rigid designators. Consider for instance the following hypothetical about Jack the Ripper: Jack wouldn't 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 at all. The definite description used to introduce the name 'Jack the Ripper', then, cannot give its content, since that description is not a rigid designator.

Of course, anyone familiar with Kripke knows what the Orthodox Theorist typically says about these cases. Returning now to the Julius case, the way to understand the introduction of a name like 'Julius' is as a name whose reference just happened to be fixed by the use of a definite description.[10] On this understanding of a description's role in so-called "descriptive" names, the description plays the pragmatic role of one-off object identification: it is used merely to identify an object in order to give it a name at the time the name is introduced, and the description plays no role in giving the content of the proper name with which it is associated. Therefore a description can be used to fix the reference of a name without giving the name's content. In other words, the description can be used

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[10] This way of understanding a description's role in introducing a name has its roots in Kripke's (1980) work, though Kripke himself is ambivalent about the role a description could play in fixing a name's referent. Indeed, it is precisely at this point in the discussion that he claims he is not offering a theory of proper names, only a "better picture."

initially to fix a name's content, but that name's content does not therefore co-vary with the semantic value of the description. Of course these considerations would apply equally well to our other, more natural examples of descriptive names. Orthodoxy, then, is apparently easily preserved given this Kripkean treatment of descriptive names.

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. In doing so, I will explain and apply the retroactive reference test, which many Orthodox Theorists rely on to diagnose whether a descriptive element is present in an expression's meaning. Applying the test and garnering conclusions is also known by many as the "semantic" argument for the Orthodox position on proper names.[11]

3.1 The Retroactive Reference Test

To apply the retroactive reference test, we should consider a case in which a name is associated with one or more definite descriptions, descriptions which the name's referent fails to satisfy. We should then poll our intuitions about our answers to two different questions. First, we should ask if we would shift that proper name's referent to an object satisfying the associated definite description upon the discovery that the object commonly referred to using that name does not satisfy that description. Second, we should ask whether we would retroactively reinterpret our previous discourse using that name as having been about the individual actually satisfying the relevant description, rather than the common referent.

For instance, relying on Kripke's example, consider the name 'Godel' and its associated definite description 'the discoverer of the incompleteness theorem'. Suppose we

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[11] The test, of course, appears in Kripke (1980), but has an earlier well-known incarnation in Mill's work (1843).

learned that it was not Godel who discovered the incompleteness theorem, someone else did.[12] Kripke rightly claims that we would not therefore conclude that the name 'Godel' refers to the actual discoverer of the incompleteness theorem. What's more, we would not conclude that, all along, when using the name 'Godel', we had been talking about this other person. Applying the test to the name 'Godel' shows that the name fails to behave in the way we would expect were its semantic content given by a definite description. 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 its application to cases involving names like 'Godel'. However, the results of applying the test our descriptive names suggest that, unlike the name 'Godel', a definite description is indeed a part of the meaning of these names. If this is right, then Kripke's simple pragmatic treatment of a description's role in introducing descriptive names must be mistaken.

3.2 Reference-Shifting

Let us turn then to applying the retroactive reference test by considering certain scenarios involving the three descriptive names previously introduced. As we will see, contrary to Orthodoxy, the results of applying this test in these scenarios supports the claim that a descriptive name's meaning should be thought of as having a descriptive element.

Suppose that there is an individual regarded as the inventor of the zipper, but who is in fact wrongly taking the credit for the invention. To all appearances, this individual is the inventor of the zipper, and for this reason ordinary speakers call this person by the name of 'Julius'. Imagine that this continues for a very long time, but that eventually the true inventor of the zipper is discovered. Everyone then begins to call this newly identified inventor of the

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[12] See Kripke (1980).

zipper by the name 'Julius' while, at the same time, withdrawing the name from the poseur. Since the name 'Julius' no longer refers to the same individual as before, thereby failing the retroactive reference test, it is reasonable to conclude that the content of the name 'Julius' is given by a definite description.

However, if the previous supposition were reasonable, then not only should the name 'Julius' shift its referent to the inventor of the zipper, speakers should also reinterpret all of their previous discourse using that name to have been about the real inventor of the zipper. But speakers do not do this, thereby demonstrating the falsity of the supposition that a definite description gives the content of the name 'Julius'. These mixed results speak both in favor of and against Orthodoxy and descriptivist analyses of a name like 'Julius': the fact that speakers shift its referent speaks against Orthodoxy and in favor of descriptivist analyses, yet our reluctance to retroactively reinterpret all previous discourse speaks against descriptivist analyses and in favor of Orthodoxy. Note, however, that the results do rule out the Orthodox Theorist's reliance on Kripke's treatment. Recall that, for Kripke, a description can have only a one-off pragmatic role in determining the content of a descriptive name. This treatment, of course, would not allow us to accommodate the on-going active role that a definite description appears to play in the cases we are considering.

Applying the retroactive reference test to the Jack the Ripper case shows even more strongly that the Orthodox Theorist cannot rely on the Kripkean treatment of descriptive names. 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'. This name certainly fails the retroactive reference test, since we can imagine that, upon his day of reckoning, 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 retroactive reference test's first criterion, is descriptive. Nevertheless, though we would willingly shift the reference of the name 'Jack the Ripper', we would not automatically reinterpret all of our previous discourse using that name to have been about the real murderer. According to the retroactive reference test's second criterion then, this name's content is not descriptive. But the latter fact in no way vindicates Kripke's approach, since Kripke's approach cannot explain the fact that according to the first criterion of the retroactive reference test, the name's content is descriptive.

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 they proceed to call it 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. Once again, the name is withdrawn and applied to yet another set of remains.[13] The name 'Eve' therefore fails the retroactive reference test in one sense: it does not remain steadfast in its reference.[14] But again, as in the previous case, past discourse using this name does not necessarily get reinterpreted as having been about the actual first female homosapiens. Indeed, we can imagine that much of the previous discourse about the various individuals that served as the referent of 'Eve' would make little sense if it were

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

retroactively re-interpreted to have been about the actual first female homosapiens.

As a matter of course, then, descriptive names will fail one aspect of the retroactive reference test, but will pass the other. We will assume that the result of applying the retroactive reference test shows something about the meaning of the expressions to which it is applied. More specifically, failing either of the criteria entails that the expression in question cannot be purely descriptive, since a purely descriptivist analysis of proper names would entail the failing of both aspects. Because descriptive names are expressions that satisfy one criterion but not the other, they require a rather delicate explanation. As we saw, the aspect of the test that a descriptive name regularly fails is the following: speakers would not necessarily reinterpret their previous discourse to have been about the object that actually turns out to satisfy the relevant definite description.

Why should this be? One explanation is that the name was functioning as rigid designator for the identified referent of the name at that time, regardless of that referent's actual satisfaction of any associated definite description. But if this is right, it is not obvious how to reconcile this fact with the tendency for descriptive names to shift their referents. Descriptive names seem to be what Marga Reimer calls "hybrid" names.[15] Contrary to standard thinking, in some way or other, definite descriptions appear to be an active part of the meaning of descriptive names, but nevertheless, they do not give their content.[16]

I claim that we can give a plausible explanation of the behavior of these so-called

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[15] See Reimer (2004).

[16] Of course, it is not clear that the results of the so-called "semantic" test provided by Kripke show anything about semantics at all. Rather, they may show only something about the pragmatics of the expressions involved. But as mentioned earlier, this is not a response available to the Orthodox Theorist, since she subscribes to the semantic interpretation of this argument whole-heartedly. For instance, Soames (2002), who objects to incorporating any descriptivist element into the meaning of a proper name, nevertheless accepts that failing the retroactive reference test indicates the presence of descriptive elements in an expression's meaning.

"hybrids" only if we revise our common understanding of a rigidly designative expression. We can no longer think of these expressions simply as those that remain steadfast in their reference tout court. We must 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. In particular, a descriptive name is what I will call a "relative" rigid designator, one whose referent is fixed across possible worlds at any given point in time, but not fixed over time. As I will show, this way of thinking of the rigidity of an expression will allow a descriptive name to shift its referent according to whether the relevant potential referent is appropriately thought to satisfy a particular definite description, a phenomenon that occurs most clearly in our Jack the Ripper example.

In contrast with a relative rigid designator, our classic notion of a rigid designator -- a notion exemplified in the behavior of the name 'Godel' -- is 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, appropriately called "absolute" rigid designators. The Kripkean treatment of descriptive names does not distinguish between time-relative and absolute rigid designators, and for this reason is led to give definite descriptions only a one-off, pragmatic role in fixing the referents of proper names. According to this Kripkean treatment, a name's reference gets fixed once and for all at the time it is introduced. But as we have seen, the Kripkean approach cannot accommodate the inherent shiftiness of descriptive names. If Orthodox Theorists are to preserve their theory, then, they need an alternative treatment of these names.

4. An Alternative Approach

The failure of the standard Kripkean approach to descriptive names suggests that perhaps what is needed is an alternative semantic theory for proper names, one that can respect the

Rigid Designation Thesis, maintain Direct Reference Theory, and yet accommodate descriptive names. It is a reasonable expectation that any complete semantic account of proper names should have some explanation of the following two facts: that a definite description can be part of a name's meaning without thereby giving the name's content, and that a descriptive name functions as a kind of rigid designator.

A 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.[17] 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. What I will refer to as 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 I will develop, a name's semantic value will be composed of something more than mere content, which will allow for a definite description to be part of a name's semantic value without thereby constituting its content. That is, it will allow for a description to be a permanent feature of the meaning of that name while also remaining faithful to the tenets of Orthodoxy.

Though I will incorporate a descriptivist element into a descriptive name's semantic value, the kind of view I will offer is still an historical picture of what determines a proper name's semantic value in the tradition of Donnellan and Kripke. As we will see, on my view, like the views of Donnellan and Kripke, we find a name's semantic value by tracing the various disambiguated uses of that name back to its original context of introduction. On Kripke's picture of what determines a name's reference, and more explicitly in Donnellan's

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[17] While some may find this extravagant as a response to the data we have considered so far, I will later discuss the fact that accounting for the behavior of descriptive names is not the only reason for including an additional aspect to a name's meaning.

work, a name's reference is determined by facts about the way that name was introduced into discourse. As Donnellan suggests, on this way of thinking of the meaning of a proper name, what is important for determining that name's semantic value is the nature of its original introduction into discourse, which is tracked by objective facts about its history of use over time.[18]

While the semantic premise I offer will be similar to Donnellan and Kripke's proposals, it is nevertheless importantly distinct. For instance, unlike Kripke's view, my theory 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 its 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, about what I will be calling that name's "context of introduction."[19]

4.1 The Context of Introduction Thesis

On my view, universally, a name's semantic value is determined by its context of introduction, a natural general characterization of the historical view of how to determine a name's semantic value. The aspect of this view that I wish to highlight is the fact that a

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[18] Donnellan (1974).

[19] Because I do distinguish between a name's having content and its having semantic value, Direct Reference Theory -- 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 a 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. First, one might think of a definite description's role as that of being the content of a proper name's semantic value. As we have seen, this view is ruled out. But as Kripke (1980) discusses there is another way to understand a definite description's role with respect to a proper name. We might think of a definite description not as being the content of a proper name, but nevertheless as determining that content. Of course, if a name is to function as a rigid designator, I must show that this second interpretation is also disallowed on my view. As I will show, the nature of a proper name's mode of introduction rules out both interpretations of a definite description's role with respect to a proper name.

proper name's context of introduction -- the event in which it is introduced into discourse --

has many features besides the traditionally emphasized feature 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 what I will call a certain "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.

My central claim, then, is that a name's semantic value is derived from its context of

introduction, and that its semantic value is bipartite composed both of some content and a

mode of introduction as parts.[20] Both kinds of names, descriptive and ordinary, will have

their semantic values derived from their historical origins, from facts about their contexts of

introduction.

As I will explain, a name's mode of introduction affects how its referent is

appropriately fixed. Indeed, it is this feature of a name's semantic value that will

accommodate the apparent odd behavior of descriptive names, as well as explaining the

nature of their better behaved, non-descriptive counterparts. For instance, a speaker might

introduce a name descriptively in want of name for something with which she is only

indirectly acquainted, something we saw in the Jack the Ripper case. But she might also

introduce other names more directly by acts of ostension, most plausibly seen as the best

explanation of the Godel example. These different ways of introducing names will produce

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[20] Because in this discussion I am interested in describing the role played by a name's
mode of introduction, I will not address in any detail the other aspect of what I claim is part
of a name's semantic value -- its content. For our purposes, we can safely assume that any
name, whether descriptive or non-descriptive, will have an individual as its content, though I
argue elsewhere, on the basis of considering fictional names, that this is actually false
(2010).

names that behave somewhat differently.

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 by first 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. 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 that to which the name will refer, she has satisfied the cognitive rule.[21]

The second rule, the reference rule, tells us that any legitimate use of a name will have associated with it some act of reference that reasonably identifies the introducer's

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[21] For more discussion on how a speaker could think of an object without having direct access to that object see Bach (2004). Though Bach ultimately concludes as do many others, that some acquaintance with an object is required to refer successfully to an object, the seeming ability we have to introduce descriptive names into discourse indicates that there are problems with this view. The reason is that in the latter case, we introduce a name by associating it with a description, a description that picks out an object, and we seem to be able to do this without acquaintance with the object. The alternative to Acquaintance Theory, Semantic Instrumentalism, championed by Kaplan (1978), rejects any acquaintance conditions on genuine reference whatsoever. For a review of the problems with each of these views, and for an alternative theory, see Jeshion (2009). Unfortunately, I cannot address this debate in any satisfactory way here.

intended referent. In general, an act of reference is itself understood as an act that stipulates that the appropriately identified intended referent should be understood as rigidly associated with that name across possible worlds. The 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.

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

PN
M   R
C   A
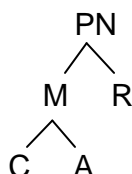
As this diagram shows, not only are names associated with traditional contents, they are also associated with a mode of introduction, which itself carries information about certain mental intentions and actions represented by the respective meanings of 'C' and 'A'.

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.[22] By definition, a name's mode of

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[22] It somewhat misleading to call them different kinds of modes of introduction, since they both aim at assigning an individual as a proper name's content. Descriptive names, then, do not challenge Orthodoxy nearly as much as the existence of fictional names, which, I argue

introduction will be ostensive just in case a deictic expression is used to introduce that name, and that deictic 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. As I said earlier, 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 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 the

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elsewhere (2010) do require modes that differ in kind, since they require modes that determine different contents for proper names. This is because fictional names do not have individuals as their content, but, instead, sets of properties.

cognitive rule. However, we can suppose that, in the case of ostensive names, the speaker

uses a demonstrative phrase that does have an assigned context-dependent value to

introduce the relevant proper name. In fact, since '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. It

follows, then, that the particular act of demonstration with which an ostensive mode of

introduction is associated is part of its conceptual component.[23]

    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. In other words, ostensive names, in virtue of satisfying the

cognitive rule, simultaneously satisfy the reference rule. Demonstratives with assigned

values are therefore complete modes of introduction in and of themselves. All modes of

introduction must contain an act of reference somehow or other. Whether the very same act

satisfies both the reference rule and the cognitive rule is beside the point.

    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.[24] This hypothesis, in combination with the previous fact about an

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[23] Recent empirical work by Pylyshyn (2004) lends plausibility to the idea that a
demonstrative has conceptual significance, that of a mental pointer.

[24] As Frege maintained, the sense of an expression -- what he understood as its thought
content -- is an enduring and objective feature of the meaning of an expression, unlike a
speaker's idiosyncratic associations with that expression. For instance, a speaker might
associate the meaning of the word 'salt' with the meaning of the word 'pepper', but this does
not entail that the sense of 'pepper' is the sense of 'salt'. Like Frege's claim about the sense
of an expression, I claim that the significance of a name's cognitive component is not given
by idiosyncratic speaker-relative associations. This supposition can, in part, be justified on

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 of course that the act of demonstration was successful in the first place. So the nature of an ostensive name's mode of introduction guarantees that it will always determine the same object as that name's content. This, in turn, entails that ostensive names are rigid designators in the strongest possible sense -- they are, one and all, absolute rigid designators.

Let us now apply this theory to our previous example of an absolute rigid designator, namely Kripke's Godel case. As we saw, the name 'Godel' passed both aspects of the retroactive reference test. It is therefore 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'.

Continuing with our application of the theory to our chosen example, the reason that 'Godel' is an absolute rigid designator is that the very act of reference Godel's mother used

the basis of the historical thesis that a name's semantic value derives from the facts about that name's origins. Similar to Kripke's claim concerning the use of a name over time, I claim that uses of a name will count as uses of the same name over time only if subsequent speakers using that name intend to use it in the same way as was determined by the nature of its context of introduction, which plausibly includes facts about the introducing speaker's referential intentions.

to originally identify him as that name's potential referent is part of that name's conceptual component, which is a stable or fixed feature of a name's mode of introduction. The name 'Godel' will be traced back to a context of introduction in which the name 'Godel' was ostensively introduced.[25] 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 unvaryingly pick out the same object: Godel himself.

At this point, it might be worth noting that because ostensive names do not have modes of introduction composed of two separable components, my previous characterization of modes of introduction as composed of two parts is somewhat strained. However, that characterization should be understood only as a model of the claims being offered, as a pictorial representation of the theory being offered, a way of making the theory more accessible. In fact, modes of introduction need not be understood as literally composed of two separable, independent parts. And, as we have seen, the nature of ostensive names reveals the inherent flaws in this way of thinking about the theory being offered, since the so-called "referential component" of an ostensive name's mode of introduction is also its conceptual component.[26] It is for this reason, that I request that the reader treat my earlier characterization of a name's mode of introduction as having the
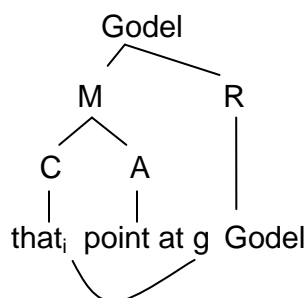
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[25] I am here ignoring issues that arise upon the recognition that words that at least look like the word 'Godel' can apply to more than one object. I give a more detailed discussion of this issue in my (2010).

[26] This issue, of course, 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, I cannot take this notion of compositionality as 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).

status that any model of a theory has regarding its literal truth. It would be easy enough to understand the mode of introduction itself as simple, while still maintaining that names are marked as the kinds of expressions that have such modes, which in turn, associate the names with rules for their interpretation. If this is acceptable, then the character of ostensive names can explained on this view simply by relying on their ability to satisfy our two rules considered earlier.

The previous issue raises difficulties for representing an ostensive name's content. 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':

$$
\begin{array}{ccc}
 & \text{Godel} & \\
 & \diagup \quad \diagdown & \\
\text{M} & & \text{R} \\
\diagup \quad \diagdown & & \mid \\
\text{C} \quad\quad \text{A} & & \mid \\
\mid \quad\quad \mid & & \mid \\
\text{that}_i \quad \text{point at g} & & \text{Godel} \\
\end{array}
$$

As we can see, with an ostensive name like 'Godel', the name's indivisible mode of introduction is represented by linking its cognitive aspect with its referential feature.

5.2 Descriptive Names

Having explained the nature of an ostensive name, I now shift my attention to the nature of descriptive names. Unlike ostensive names, descriptive names are not absolute rigid designators, but only relative rigid designators. Unsurprisingly, this difference will be explained in virtue of the contrast between a descriptive and an ostensive name's mode of introduction. As their moniker indicates, a descriptive name's conceptual component is not ostensive, but descriptive. Because of this, unlike the nature of an ostensive name's

conceptual component, a descriptive name's conceptual component is not in need of contextual saturation in order to single out a particular object.[27] For this reason, a definite description can, on its own, serve as the complete conceptual component of a name's mode of introduction. In other words, in calling an object to mind with a definite description, a speaker satisfies the cognitive rule for introducing names independent of any act of reference on her part. As we will see, it is this feature of a descriptive mode of introduction's cognitive component that will ultimately allows us to explain the different behavior of both absolute and relative rigid designators.

But now, what about the reference rule? On the theory being developed, having mere conceptual 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 act of reference or other. Note, however, that there is no requirement that it be associated with any particular act of reference. As we shall see, it is this feature of a descriptive name's mode of introduction that explains its ability to shift its reference over time, its difference from ostensive names and its status as a relative rigid

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[27] The assumption that a definite description has a contextually independent interpretation is a bit of an idealization. To take an example, when a speaker utters the words 'the black cat', she does not typically intend to imply that there is one and only one black cat in the whole domain of discourse. She intends only to be speaking about the contextually relevant black cat. For arguments that this is exactly what a speaker intends, because all quantifiers, as a matter of their semantic content, will restrict their domains of discourse depending on which of the possible domains are relevant in a particular context, see von Fintel (1998). Nevertheless, in whatever way definite descriptions are dependent on context, they are not dependent on it in the same way as demonstratives. When a speaker writes on a blackboard the sentence 'that is fat' without an accompanying act of reference, what a hearer fails to understand is different in kind from what a hearer fails to understand, if in fact she fails to understand anything, when a speaker writes on the blackboard the sentence 'the black cat is fat'. In order to remain neutral on this question, we can think of the conceptual criterion in this way: one cannot introduce a mode of introduction with a conceptual component that cannot be interpreted independently of an act of reference.

designator.

It is because the particular act of reference with which a descriptive name is introduced need not be part of its fixed conceptual component that the act of reference with which a descriptive name is associated might change over time. We can think of a descriptive name's mode of introduction as being constituted by the meaning of a definite description as its conceptual component, together with a context-sensitive variable for acts of reference, acts that would themselves aid in picking out a referent for the relevant name. Because the act of reference with which a descriptive name is associated might shift, so therefore might its referent. This is what most clearly occurs in our Jack the Ripper example. Once their error is discovered, speakers use the name 'Jack the Ripper' to refer to the appropriate referent, namely, the actual murderer. This saturates the context-sensitive variable for acts of reference with which the name 'Jack the Ripper' is associated with an act of reference that picks an object different from the previously accused individual: the actual murderer.

I claim 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 by an individual speaker's act of ostension. A descriptive name's context-sensitivity would be governed by much more highly constrained rules.[28] Naturally, these rules governing the

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[28] 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

allowable shifts in the content of a descriptive name would be related to the meaning of the definite description with which the name is associated.[29]

Because one of the rules associated with any name is that it must be associated with an act of reference -- though in the case of a descriptive name, it needn't be any particular act -- a descriptive name's variable for acts of reference must always have some value or other, even if those values are non-identical over time. Unlike an ostensive name whose act of reference must always remain fixed, and whose nature it is to be an absolute rigid designator, a descriptive name, while still rigid, is only relatively so. The context of introduction for a descriptive name will contain a mode of introduction, which itself will contain a context-sensitive variable that allows for the association of different referents or contents for that name in different contexts.

Let us now return to another of our previous examples of a descriptive name to see how the proposed apparatus applies. 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

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function: as context-sensitive expressions whose content in a context is determined by the properties of that 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.

[29] A complete and detailed description of these constraints would undoubtedly be a fairly complex matter, and it is not my concern here to describe or explain these constraints. My aim is simply to provide a framework that can accommodate the behavior of descriptive names consistent with Orthodoxy about the content of a proper name.

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 the name, whence it will serve as a rigid designator for the real inventor. 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:
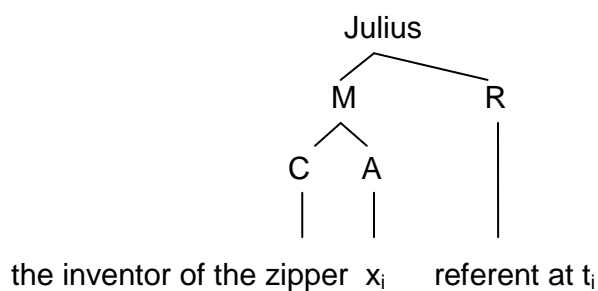
In contrast with our previous diagram of the ostensive name 'Godel', notice that the mode of introduction for the name 'Julius' contains a context-sensitive variable for acts of reference A, as well as allowing its referent R to be time-sensitive, demonstrating its potential for shifting the referent of 'Julius' over time. A fully developed account would explain the rules for saturating the name's act of reference variable, as well as the relationship between that variable and the name's time-sensitive referent. However, it is sufficient for my goals merely to provide a structure that has the potential to explain these names, not to necessarily give a detailed account of their compositional nature.

6. Discussion

6.1 Objections

I now turn to three different objections to the view I have developed. First, I will address the question of whether an Orthodox Theorist must either give up Orthodoxy, or accept a bivalent account of a proper name's semantic value as I do. At first glance, the short answer is "no." The long answer, however, involves defusing the most obvious alternative to these other options. The second objection rejects my theory in favor of another on the grounds that mine violates semantic parsimony. Lastly, I address Soames's arguments that an account incorporating any descriptivist element into the meaning of a proper name will fail.

A natural reaction from Orthodox Theorist might be to reject the need to explain the phenomenon of reference-shifting at all, since, she would say, all proper names are absolute rigid designators, and 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 three major problems with this kind of response. To show these, 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 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 Orthodox Theorist owes us an explanation of why this should be the case, since the intuitive explanation

seems to be that the original name had a description as part of its meaning, and its reference shifted according to the influence of this description on the name's content.

Second and relatedly, 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 the language unbeknownst to themselves.[30]

The third problem is that, while, in principle, the lexicon of a language is indefinitely expandable, any given idiolect must be instantiated within a given speaker, one whose capacity to remember words is not infinite. However, since the potential misidentifications associated with our descriptive names could, in principle, continue indefinitely, on the hypothesis under consideration, the Orthodox theorist would have to attribute to particular speakers the actual potential for acquiring an implausibly large vocabulary. In the abstract, of course, the indefinite expandability of a vocabulary must be a fact about language use, and is part of the explanation of its very possibility. Nevertheless, given that any concrete particular speaker will have a limited capacity to expand her vocabulary, we don't want to multiply words beyond necessity, something the Orthodox theorist's reply seems to require us to do.

The second objection to my view, on the heels of my reply to the first, argues that I too am guilty of violating the norm of parsimony in semantic theorizing. In offering the hypothesis that a name has two aspects to its semantic value, both some content and a mode of introduction, while I do not multiply lexical items, I increase the semantic complexity of those lexical items.

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[30] The current proposal raises the following question: can speakers engage in acts of reference without knowing it? I do not think I need to be committed to this strange consequence, but instead only to the idea that a speaker might knowingly engage in an act of reference while having false beliefs about the object of his act.

In reply, I point out that the idea of making the semantic value of a name complex rather than simple has been drifting around since Frege's time, 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 opening up 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.[31] 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.[32] 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.[33] As we saw earlier, 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 Kripke calls a "de facto" rigid designator. Since it is not plausible to claim that all names are associated with de facto rigid designators, 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

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[31] Frege (1892).
[32] See Schiffer (1992) for a contemporary defense of a Fregean approach to semantics.
[33] Kripke (1980).

simply its traditional content, which is usually thought to be an individual, the individual to whom the term refers.

Recanati, 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, names are marked in a way that tells a speaker that, as a matter of stipulation, the expression is a rigid designator. 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.[34] I defend 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

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[34] In contrast with my approach, Cumming (2008) argues for the second option -- that proper names just are variables.

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. The marking of a proper name as a rigid designator should be understood as informing a speaker that a name has a particular mode of introduction, a mode which is governed by the two rules I described earlier.

Of course, these are fairly 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 offer, arguments which I will now explain and to which I will respond.[35]

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 substitutivity of co-referential names 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-conditions 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. But 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

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[35] Soames (2002).

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 itself does not depend on whether the referent of the name satisfies any descriptive condition, a speaker can believe that proposition only if she does 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 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 that she also 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 the 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. Because of the failure of the previous hypothesis, Soames reasonably sides with the Kripkean analysis of descriptive names.

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 descriptions must somehow be included in an account of a descriptive name's meaning.

What's more, I can maintain my own position in the face of Soames's criticisms because my theory 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. My proposal is therefore is not subject to Soames's criticism.[36] Of course, this does suggest that I can offer no analysis of the classic Fregean Hesperus-Phosphorus problem. However, I am not particularly worried about this, since many have failed to solve this problem, and even Kripke suspects that it is irresolvable.[37] 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

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[36] The most plausible account of what competence with a proper name might consist in is due to Sainsbury (2005), but how his view comports with my own is not a question I can address here.
[37] Kripke (1979).

therefore are not subject to the normal constraints of inter-substitutivity.[38]

6.2 Concluding Remarks

Having replied to three main objections to my view, and having pointed out why my theory allows us to still accept Orthodoxy, I will now say what my theory does not address.[39] While I do maintain that definite descriptions are part of the meaning of descriptive names, I do not have an explicit account of the role of descriptions in the use of these names. I do maintain, however, that a description's role in helping to fix the referent of a name is modified by an act of reference, which is something done by the introducer or subsequent users of the name, and which depends on the intentions, perceptions, beliefs, and so on, of speakers who use the name.

In spite of these complicating factors, if descriptive names truly are genuine names, any plausible account of names must explain a definite description's dynamic role in determining the contents of those names. I offered 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 Orthodox parameters. As I have shown, however, despite appearances to the contrary, even the recalcitrant descriptive names do fit within those parameters, properly understood.[40]

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

[39] Though this framework can be used to solve several issues regarding proper names, some of which I have mentioned, others of which I have not. For instance, there is the general issue of how to give a unified treatment of all of those expressions that syntactically behave as proper names, but seem to behave differently from one another semantically. This includes not only descriptive names, but also fictional names. While empty names, specifically fictional names, are not my focus in this discussion, I do give a treatment of them elsewhere, including a much more detailed explanation of my proposed bipartite account of the semantic value of a proper name (2010).

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