Rigid Designation, the Modal Argument, and the Nominal Description Theory

by

Jillian Alexandra Isenberg

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Abstract

In this thesis, I describe and evaluate two recent accounts of naming. These accounts are motivated by Kripke's response to Russell's Description Theory of Names (DTN). Particularly, I consider Kripke's Modal Argument (MA) and various arguments that have been given against it, as well as Kripke's responses to these arguments. Further, I outline a version of MA that has recently been presented by Scott Soames, and consider how he responds to the criticisms that the argument faces. In order to evaluate the claim that MA is decisive against all description theories, I outline the Nominal Description Theory (NDT) put forth by Kent Bach and consider whether it constitutes a principled response to MA. I do so by exploring how Bach both responds to Kripke's arguments against descriptivism and highlights the problems with rigid designation as a purely semantic thesis. Finally, I consider the relative merits of the accounts put forth by Bach and Soames. Upon doing so, I argue that MA is not as decisive against description theories as it has long been thought to be. In fact, NDT seems to provide a better account of our uses of proper names than the rigid designation thesis as presented by Kripke and Soames.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction: Three Influential Accounts of Names

Three distinct views are central to the history of the debate about names. Each attempts to account for the seemingly strange behaviours that names exhibit in certain contexts. Historically, such views have attempted to maintain some degree of coherence, while also explaining how we can understand names in the contexts of identity, modality, and quotation. The above mentioned views are those presented by Frege, Russell, and Kripke.

The Fregean view is based on Frege's Theory of Mediated Reference (ToMR). It treats 'meaning' with respect to a name as ambiguous between the sense, or cognitive significance, and the reference, or the object in the world that is identified by the name. The Russellian view, alternately called the descriptivist account, is based on Russell's Description Theory of Names (DTN). On this view, names are semantically equivalent to definite descriptions. As such, a name denotes the individual that uniquely fulfils the corresponding description. The Kripkean view, alternately called the rigid designation account, is based on Kripke's causal account of naming, and historically upon a Millian (and distinct Russellian) conception of names as having only their referents for meanings. On Kripke's view, names are bestowed on an individual in an initial act of baptism. These names are then used by others with the intention of using them in the same way as the person who performed the act of naming. While each of these views is motivated by a common desire to provide a coherent account of names, they also have their own unique motivations that inform their views.

In "On Sense and Reference", Frege presents a view according to which the meaning of a name is composed of two separate but equally important components. He calls these the *sense* and the *reference*, respectively. He begins this work by enquiring into the nature of identity. In doing so, he asks how the statement 'a=a' differs from 'a=b'. The answer is that the former is an a priori necessary truth, whereas the latter tells us something about the world that we can only ascertain upon inspection. According to the theory he puts forth, this is because while 'a' and 'b' have the same reference, they have different senses. In discussing this distinction, Frege uses the classic example of "Hesperus is Phosphorous". 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorous' are both names for Venus, so why is it that a statement like 'Hesperus is Hesperus' is trivially true, whereas one such as 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' is both true and informative? The answer that Frege gives is that while both names have the same reference, they have different senses.

The notion of reference is relatively straightforward. On Frege's view, the reference of a name is its denotation. That is, a name's reference is the thing in the world that the name picks out. So, in the example given above, 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' have the same reference, namely Venus. The notion of sense is more abstract and not as easy to comprehend. On Frege's view, the sense of a name is its cognitive significance, the individual concept that it picks out. Unlike that of reference, this definition is not immediately clear. This is because, unlike an object or individual with a real physical presence, it is not immediately obvious how a name is associated with a concept. Another way of understanding the sense of a name, though, is as the *mode of presentation* of its referent. By this we mean the way in which the individual in question is represented by the concept. The grasp of the sense of a name serves to show why the statement

'Hesperus is Phosphorus' is informative. While the sense of 'Hesperus' is 'the evening star', the sense of 'Phosphorus' is 'the morning star'. These two different names provide us with two different ways of thinking about an object, in this case Venus, and so two different ways of representing it in our minds. Through this distinction, we can see why it is meaningful to learn that they have the same reference; it tells us something about the world. That is, the morning star and the evening star are the same object. This notion of the conceptual distinction between the senses of these two names is slippery, but serves to highlight how a name does more than just identify an object. It also carries with it conventionally associated conceptual content that helps us to partially understand the nature of the individual.

This notion of sense is important to Frege's view of language for a number of reasons. The first such reason is that sense determines reference. What this essentially means is that an object may have many names, each of which represent it in varying ways, but a sense determines at most one object. For all the concepts that can be associated with an individual, it remains that there is only one such individual.

This provides us with the basics of ToMR. When we associate a name with an individual, the name is not only informative because it picks out an individual, but also because it is associated with a concept, which is for Frege a compositional constituent of a thought or proposition apt to be grasped psychologically. These two aspects together constitute the meaning of a name.

The notion of sense is further important to Frege because of its implications for the rest of language, for example, via the Context Principle. As a methodological principle, he states that we should never attempt to determine the meaning of a word in

isolation but only in the context of a sentence. While he does not deny that individual words have meanings in isolation, Frege thinks that we should always consider the meanings of words in the context of the propositions in which they figure. As with other words, he claims that we only fully grasp the meanings of names when they are considered in this way. For Frege, when we consider the meaning of the name, we must ask what it contributes to the sentence. He wants to understand how we use names in these sentences, because we can only ever know the semantic-value of a word when we know what it contributes to sentences.

For Frege, a sentence also has both a sense and a reference. In determining what each of these might be, he observes that each declarative sentence expresses a thought. He reasons that if we substitute co-referential names for each other within a sentence, this must not change the reference of the sentence because nothing in the reference of the names has changed. However, if the names have two distinct senses, the cognitive significance of the entire sentence is altered, and so the sentence contains a different thought. This leads us to conclude that the sense of a sentence is a thought, or the proposition which the sentence expresses. Such propositions can be either true or false. The reference of the sentence is its truth value, or the truth value of the proposition that it expresses. So, in order to say of a sentence whether it is true, we must first ascertain the proposition that it expresses. Once we have done so we can then determine whether or not the proposition is a true one, and so learn the reference of the sentence. In order to do this we must know the referents of the individual words which figure in the sentence. So, sentences can be seen as complex names that refer to either, as Frege puts it, the True or the False.

This analysis of sentence meaning seems, at first blush, relatively straightforward. However, as Frege attempts to fine-tune his view, numerous problem cases arise that must be taken into account. As he notes, many of these problems arise as a result of Leibniz's law. This law states that if two linguistic items pick out the same individual, then one can be substituted for the other without changing the truth value of the sentence in which it figures. How can we say that, in all cases, sentences that refer to the True can be substituted one for the other? Simply put, they can't.

We use sentences to do more than just pick out and distinguish that which is true from that which is false. Sentences are used to relay information, and hence, their senses are just as important to their meaning as their references are. It is the sense of a sentence which determines its communicative value, often without consideration for its reference (i.e. whether or not it is true). Cases of quotation highlight this point by providing us with a way of speaking directly about a sentence. According to Frege, when we directly quote a sentence we name it. Thus, the reference of a direct quotation is the sentence which is being quoted. According to Frege, when we indirectly quote a sentence we do not use the sentence itself, but rather mention it. Moreover, by merely mentioning a sentence, the quotation takes on a different reference. The reference of an indirect quotation is not the truth value of the sentence, but rather the sense of the sentence being named. Frege calls this the indirect reference. He further refers to indirect sense, but does not explicitly state what this might be. However, if the customary sense of a sentence is the proposition that it expresses, it seems that the indirect sense ought to be any nuanced differences in meaning that arise when the same proposition is expressed in various ways. For example, any positive or negative connotation that the particular wording of an indirect quotation

adds to our understanding of how the person using the indirect quotation intends for us to understand it.

Another key concern which arises with respect to Frege's view of names is what is to be said about names which have no reference, or vacuous names. In discussing the senses and referents of sentences, I explained that Frege believed that declarative sentences express thoughts. He claims that usually when we consider the meaning of a sentence, we ask for both the thought it expresses and the truth-value of the proposition it expresses. He believes that the reason for this is that it is our quest for the truth that compels us to determine not just the cognitive significance of a sentence, but also whether or not it expresses a truth. However, in "On Sense and Reference", Frege explains that we do not always have to ask for the truth-value of a sentence. One case in which we need not attempt to determine the reference of a sentence is when we are considering sentences which contain non-referring, or vacuous, names.

Frege considers the example of the name 'Odysseus' and explains that, since it is likely that this name does not have a reference, the sentence "Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep" is also unlikely to have a reference. In such fictional cases, he explains, the purpose of the sentence is not to convey information, and so we need not be concerned by the lack of reference. Rather, the purpose of the sentence is to express a particular idea in a certain light, and so we are only concerned with the thought that it expresses. Further, in the case of fiction and poetry, Frege explains that all we are interested in beyond the aesthetic value of the work are the thoughts and emotions that it evokes. He claims that questions of truth would serve to detract from our enjoyment of that experience, because they serve to deconstruct the artifice. Hence, the sentences in

which such names figure have no truth value. As we shall see, this becomes problematic because there are many vacuous names and non-referring expressions which figure into sentences which in reality are either true or false, and not merely indeterminate.

Russell argues against Frege's view and claims that it does not provide adequate solutions to the problems that it faces. Among his objections is the problem of vacuous names. He rejects the claim that sentences containing non-referring names have indeterminate truth-values in favor of the view that they are false. He uses the example "The present King of France is bald" to demonstrate this. On Russell's view, this sentence expresses the proposition "There is exactly one individual such that it is the present King of France, and that individual is bald". If we take the sentence to express that proposition, we understand that it must be false, since France presently has no king. This is because the sentence asserts a conjunction, of which one of the conjuncts is false. Thus, this sentence must be false, since it falsely asserts the existence of the individual denoted by the 'the present King of France' and if that individual does not exist then he cannot be bald.

Russell presents an alternative view on which names are considered to be semantically equivalent to definite descriptions. That is, for any given proper name, there is a definite description that constitutes the expressive content of that name and that description only refers to the individual so-called. It is only once that description is determined that the meaning of the name can be grasped. According to Russell, definite descriptions are those of the form "the F". As such, they identify exactly one individual. That is, there is at least and at most one individual such that it is F. Russell uses the example of 'the author of *Waverley*', explaining that it is an example of a definite

description because it uniquely identifies a single individual, the individual that wrote *Waverley*. In this way, we can see that the individual to which the definite description refers is picked out in virtue of the fact that it is the only one that meets the description in question. By identifying a name with a definite description, we can make informative statements about the bearer of the name. Thus, by stating that "Scott is the author of *Waverley*" we provide information that identifies Scott to those not directly acquainted with him. This is because by identifying the name 'Scott', with the description 'the author of *Waverley*', we provide information that allows those not directly acquainted with the individual in question to grasp the meaning of the name. It should be noted that is not necessary for 'the author of *Waverley*' to be the only such description. There might be a number of different non-necessary but sufficiently designative descriptions that only refer to that particular individual.

This is one of the motivations for Russell's view. He wants to reconcile the fact that we are often not immediately acquainted with the bearer of the names that we use with the empiricist intuition that, in order to understand a proposition, we must be acquainted with all of its constituents. This presents a problem if names are understood to be simple monolithic terms. This is because, if we must be directly acquainted with all of the constituents of a proposition and we are not acquainted with the bearer of a name, then such an account of names suggests that it will be impossible for us to understand any proposition in which it figures. However, this does not seem to be correct, since we often use names in sentences even though the bearers of such names are objects outside of our experience. Conversely, if names are understood to be definite descriptions, then the problem seems to be less threatening. This is because, if a name is semantically

equivalent to a definite description then, like a description, it can be further broken down into propositional functions, its component parts. Thus, it may be the case that even if we are not acquainted with the individual in question, we are sufficiently acquainted with the components of the description. If this is the case, then we can understand the name and so grasp the proposition expressed by the sentence in which it figures.

This view allows names to be object independent. That is, both a name and the proposition in which it figures have meanings which do not depend on the existence of the individual which the name identifies. In the example given above, the name 'Scott' is object dependent, the truth conditions of all sentences involving that name depend on the individual that it picks out in the world. So, if someone does not know anything about Scott (i.e. is not directly acquainted with him) then he cannot understand any sentence that uses the name. By contrast, since "the author of Waverly" is a definite description, the truth conditions of any sentences in which such a description is used have truth conditions which depend only on the existence and accurate assignment of the description, and not on the existence or characteristics of any particular individual.

Russell's view of names also provides a neat solution to the problem of vacuous names and non-referring expressions. The solution is to acknowledge the simple fact that, when we use a name, unless we are directly acquainted with the individual in question, we do not know for sure that the name has a real-world extension. So, when determining the reference of a name, when we say that there is at least one individual that fits the description, we must add the caveat that this is only the case if it exists. So, in the example "Santa is generous" we understand the sentence as expressing the following proposition: "there is at least one jolly red-clad giver of Christmas presents, there is at

most one jolly red-clad giver of Christmas presents and, he is generous". The name "Santa" is meaningful because it is associated with the description "jolly red-clad giver of Christmas presents". Even though no one is directly acquainted with such an individual, a regular speaker of our language can grasp the meaning of the name. Moreover, because of our acquaintance with the constituents of such a description, we can grasp the proposition that is being asserted and ascertain its truth value. When we do this, we can determine that the proposition "there is at least one jolly red-clad giver of Christmas presents" is false. Since Santa does not exist, there is no such individual that fulfils this description, and so the entire proposition "Santa is generous" is false.

Kripke takes exception to Russell's view, because he believes that there is a significant difference between identifying an individual by means of a name, and doing so by means of a description. This is because Kripke believes that names are *rigid designators*, which do not depend on the content of a definite description to designate their bearers. This is important, because he is concerned with the problems that occur with counter-factual situations, or circumstances which did not in fact occur but could have. The reason that this is a concern is that, if the meaning of a name depends on the description of the individual that holds in this world, some explanation needs to be given to explain whether or not this name would still apply to the individual in question in another possible world in which the description did not hold. He uses the example on which we identify Aristotle as "the teacher of Alexander the Great", and explains that while it is true in this world that this description refers to the man who we call Aristotle, it may not have been the case that Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander, and so the description does not correctly identify Aristotle in all possible worlds. Despite this, he

wants to say that regardless of whether or not Aristotle fit this description, Aristotle was still Aristotle, and this fact must be reflected in any account of naming. Kripke is concerned that those who adhere to DTN would have to say that if the description did not hold in a counter-factual situation, then we would have to say that the name does not identify the same individual.

Kripke discusses both how names acquire their meanings, and how those meanings remain constant despite counter-factual situations that may arise in other possible worlds. He explains that names have a causal connection to their meanings, because the meaning of a name is determined by an intentional act of naming. According to Kripke, a "rough statement of a theory" might tell us that names are often associated with a given person or object (we will refer to the referent of a name as the individual) by a baptism or act of naming which connects the individual to the name explicitly. This could be accomplished either by ostension, that is pointing directly at the individual, or by the use of a description that fixes the reference of the name to the individual who is either not present or with whom we are not directly acquainted. The difference between this view and the one presented by Russell is that while Russell believes that the name and the description are synonymous, Kripke believes that while a description can be used to identify the individual being named, the individual need not fit that description in order to be considered the bearer of the name. Rather, all that is required is that the person who performs the act of naming intend to bestow a particular name upon a particular individual. Kripke believes that it is an advantage of his approach that if it turns out that the individual in question does not fit or is not uniquely identified by the description, the name would still be said to name the same individual. Once the initial baptism has been

performed, the name is normally used within the linguistic community. Each speaker, learning the name for the first time, must only intend to do so in reference to the same individual as the person from whom they learn it; the stronger epistemological requirements of Russell's view are absent. Rather than grasping the meaning of a name by being acquainted with the corresponding description, speakers of the language need only know that it is the practice of the rest of the community to refer to that object using that name.

This approach provides the basis for rigid designation. According to Kripke names rigidly designate their bearers. This means that a name refers to the same individual in all possible worlds containing that individual. This is true even for counter-factual situations in which the individual has a different name. So, even in a possible world in which Aristotle's parents decided to baptize him with a different name, for example 'Bob', the name 'Aristotle', as used by speakers in the actual world, still refers to the same individual. This is true regardless of whether or not the individual fulfils any given description including, it seems, being the bearer of the name. This is because all that is necessary for a name to refer to an individual is that that individual be the one who those who performed the initial act of naming intended it to refer to. If it turns out, as it might, that said individual is not described by a certain set of properties conventionally associated with it, the name still refers to that individual. This is because, as a rigid designator, the name names a particular individual and not necessarily one identified by a particular description or group of descriptions.

In what follows, I will present and evaluate two recent accounts of naming. These accounts are motivated by Kripke's response to Russell's descriptivist view, particularly

his argument from the consideration of counterfactual situations. In Chapter 2, I outline Kripke's Modal Argument (MA) and consider various arguments that have been given against it, as well as Kripke's responses to these arguments. Also, in this chapter, I outline a version of MA that has recently been presented by Scott Soames, and consider how he responds to the criticisms that the argument faces. In Chapter 3, I outline a version of the descriptivist account that was put forth by Kent Bach and consider whether it constitutes a principled response to MA. I do so by exploring how Bach both responds to Kripke's arguments against descriptivism and highlights the problems with rigid designation as a purely semantic thesis. In Chapter 4, the concluding chapter, I will consider the relative merits of the accounts put forth by Bach and Soames. I will evaluate them based both on the strength of their evaluation of and response to MA, as well the arguments that each gives against the views that the other presents.

Chapter 2 – Kripke and Soames: Rigid Designation and the Modal Argument

As noted in the previous chapter, Kripke advances a view of names that is intended to respond to and refute Russell's description theory. Kripke outlines a number of arguments against the description theory. One is that proper names and the descriptions that characterize the bearers of those names are not semantically equivalent. That is, the referent of a proper name cannot be ascertained by discovering the definite description, or cluster of descriptions, with which speakers of the language associate it. Another is that, when used in belief or knowledge reports, proper names and their associated descriptions are not substitutable without a loss or change in meaning. That is, the belief characterized by the use of a proper name is not always that same belief as that characterized by the corresponding description. The most influential and contentious argument that Kripke levels against the description theory is that, with respect to sentences containing modal operators (i.e. those indicating possibility and necessity), the truth conditions of sentences containing proper names and those containing descriptions are not always the same. Therefore, Kripke claims, proper names and the definite descriptions generally used to identify the bearer cannot be equivalent, because the description may not do so correctly in all possible worlds.

This Modal Argument (MA) has received much attention from both adherents and detractors. Detractors have attempted to respond to Kripke's arguments by explaining that he has misunderstood the nature of the definite descriptions that Russell discusses. Adherents have tried to both refine Kripke's view by explaining, in careful detail, how the argument works against description theories and why such theories fail in the face of

this powerful argument, as well as showing why the arguments put forth by the detractors fail to refute it.

In this chapter I will outline the argument as presented by Kripke and discuss the problems that it faces. I will also give an account of the argument as presented by Soames and explain why, according to him, the counter-arguments commonly given are not sufficient to refute the modal argument. The goal of this chapter is to give a coherent account of this view as a whole, by considering both MA itself and the larger understanding of names that it represents.

In *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke explains the nature of rigid designators. A name rigidly designates its referent if, in all possible worlds, it refers to the same individual. As he explains:

> "If 'a' and 'b' are rigid designators, it follows that 'a=b', if true, is a necessary truth. If 'a' and 'b' are not rigid designators, no such conclusion follows about the statement 'a=b' (though the objects designated by 'a' and 'b' will be necessarily identical)" (Kripke 3).

With this explanation, Kripke makes it clear that while the relation of identity always holds between an object and itself, no such relation necessarily holds between the linguistic items that designate it. Names are rigid designators, while definite descriptions are not. As a result, whereas any two names for the same object necessarily refer to that object in all possible worlds, a name and a definite description that co-refer in one possible world need not co-refer in other possible worlds. An individual is necessarily self-identical, but it might have lacked that property by which the description picks it out in this world.

It should be noted that Kripke's view is essentialist. Essentialism is the view that objects have essential properties – those without which an individual would not exist. An accidental property, by contrast, is one without which the individual could still exist. Kripke's view that objects have accidental properties is manifest is his account of naming, in fact it is the motivation. Clearly, for Kripke, being a politician or bearing a certain name are accidental qualities. Using Richard Nixon as an example, Kripke makes clear what he takes to be the essential properties of an individual when he tells us that "Certainly Nixon might not have existed if his parents had not gotten married, in the normal course of things. When we think of a property as essential to an object we usually mean that it is true of that object in any case where it would have existed" (48). So it seems, for a person, genetic makeup is an essential property. If the only way for Nixon to exist was for his parents to have had a child then presumably only the particular child that they had (born of a particular sperm and egg) could be Nixon. It seems that there is no case, to Kripke's mind, in which Nixon could have existed without being the particular human being, with the particular genetic makeup, that he was. This shows that while Nixon could have been something other than a politician, he could not have been anything other than a human being living at the time that he did.

This idea of "possible worlds" or "counterfactual situations" is central to Kripke's view of rigid designation and his arguments against the description theory put forth by Russell. The idea of possible worlds is contrasted with that of the actual world. The actual world is the world as we experience it, as it really exists. However, it is only one way in which the world might have been. Possible worlds are ways in which the world might have been different. To put it in other words, the actual world is the factual situation, the

way in which the world did, in fact turn out to be. By contrast, a counterfactual situation is a possible scenario in which the world could have turned out, contrary to the facts, to be different than it actually is. Kripke's view of possible worlds is that they are

> "total 'ways in which the world might have been', or possible states or histories of the entire world… A practical description of the extent to which the 'counterfactual situation' differs in the relevant way from the actual facts is sufficient" (18).

Thus one possible world could be identical to the actual world in every way, except that Aristotle's parents may have chosen to name him 'Aristocrates'.

Kripke's MA is based on the idea that the Description Theory of Names (DTN) does not correctly explain the truth conditions of propositions involving the modal operators "could" or "might". He uses the example of Aristotle and the actually co-referring description 'the greatest philosopher of antiquity' to show that the truth values of propositions involving proper names and those involving supposedly equivalent definite descriptions are not the same. As he explains,

> "'It might have been the case that Aristotle was not a philosopher' expresses a truth, though 'It might have been the case that the greatest philosopher of antiquity was not a philosopher' does not, contrary to Russell's theory" (13).

What this is intended to show is that it is true that it is conceivable that this individual, whom we know as Aristotle in the actual world, could have chosen some other profession and not been a philosopher. This is because, on Kripke's view, being a philosopher is not a necessary quality of Aristotle as a person. (Presumably being a person is.) Conversely, this view suggests that it is necessary that the greatest philosopher of antiquity was a

philosopher and that it is nonsensical to think of it as being otherwise. This is because inherent in the quality of being *the greatest philosopher* of antiquity, is the more basic quality of being a philosopher.

Further, this distinction is important because it highlights a difference in the individuals to whom it is possible for sentences to refer. Because names are rigid designators, it is impossible for the sentence about Aristotle to be about any individual other than Aristotle. The truth of a proposition regarding said individual relies on facts that obtain about the individual who bears the name Aristotle in the actual world. However, it is conceivable that, in some other possible world or even unbeknownst to us in the actual world, there was an individual living around the same time as Aristotle who was in fact a superior philosopher. This individual, although not the same person as Aristotle, would end up being the referent of 'the greatest philosopher of antiquity', contrary to the hypothesis that 'Aristotle' and 'the greatest philosopher of antiquity' are semantically equivalent. Kripke makes this clear when he explains that

> "the truth conditions of 'It might have been the case that Aristotle was fond of dogs' conform to the rigidity theory: no proof that some person other than Aristotle might have been both fond of dogs and the greatest philosopher of antiquity is relevant to the truth of the quoted statement' (12).

So we see that, in sentences involving definite descriptions, the truth conditions do not rely on facts regarding the individual to whom the description refers in the actual world.

A possible reply from a description theorist is the argument that rigidity simply amounts to the practice whereby names are given wide scope over modal operators. The scope of an operator refers to the part of the sentence that is modified by the operator. If

the name is included in the scope of the modal operator then the name is said to have

narrow scope, whereas if the scope of the operator does not include the existential

quantifier associated with the name, on the DTN, then the name is said to have wide

scope. To say that the scope is ambiguous is to say that it is unclear which part of the

proposition falls within the scope of the modal operator. The reason for such an

ambiguity is that the form of a natural language sentence often differs significantly from

that of its counterpart logical proposition. Using logical notation, we can make clear

which part of the proposition falls within the scope of the operator, and so avoid

ambiguity. However, natural language is not so structured, and so it is often unclear

which part of the sentence falls within the scope of the operator. So, it is often unclear

what the correct scope ordering is for a sentence.

If a name takes wide scope, this means that the name is used to refer to the

individual so-called in the actual world, regardless of the counterfactual situation. By

contrast, if a name takes narrow scope, the name is used to refer to the individual so-

called in the counterfactual situation, regardless of its use in the actual world. Names that

take wide scope are said to simulate rigidity because, like the rigidity view on which the

name we refer to the individual so-called in the actual world, by giving the name wide

scope we speak only of the individual to whom we refer using that name in the actual

world. On the wide scope account the reason names are considered rigid designators is

because of our practice of using a name to talk about the person so-called in the actual

world even when we are talking about some counterfactual situation in which they are not

so-called. On this view, names may be said to simulate rigidity because it allows us to

accept the claim that the name always refers to the same individual without accepting rigidity as a property of names.

Kripke argues that this claim, that rigid designation amounts to the practice of always reading the name with wide scope, is mistaken (12). He argues that the wide scope account confuses the issue by shifting the focus from the use of names in general to their uses in propositions containing modal operators. He concedes that in some cases, the behavior with which he credits rigid designation could be interpreted as the result of a wide scope reading. However, he rejects the idea that considerations of scope can account for all of the behaviors of names that he sees as being the result of rigidity. Kripke uses two simple sentences, one containing a proper name and the other containing a definite description denoting the individual so-called, to demonstrate this. He argues that whereas 'Aristotle' is rigid 'the last great philosopher of antiquity' is not. Moreover, the believes that the distinction between rigid and non-rigid designators applies in non-modal contexts, including simple sentences such as "Aristotle was fond of dogs" and "The last great philosopher of antiquity was fond of dogs". This is because, on his account, these two sentences have different truth conditions in counterfactual situations. However, this seems to be nothing more than a restatement of MA. This is because he is not really concerned with the truth conditions of these sentences. Rather, he is really concerned with the truth conditions of the sentences "It might have been the case the 'Aristotle was fond of dogs' was false" and "It might have been the case that 'The last great philosopher of antiquity was fond of dogs' was false".

Kripke's argument for the difference in truth conditions seems problematic, because it seems to just reiterate the argument that the wide-scope view has already

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addressed. In order to make the argument against such a view, it seems that Kripke must explain how we can consider the truth conditions of a simple sentence in a counterfactual situation, without considering what we would say about the counterfactual situation itself. He seems to make an argument counter to his original claim, the claim that when we consider counterfactual situations we are concerned with what we would say about them, which is exactly what arguments for wide-scope interpretations address.

In his paper, "The Modal Argument", Scott Soames presents his version of Kripke's MA, and explores responses to Kripke that are based on a wide scope interpretation of names as descriptions. Soames's goal is to provide an explication of Kripke's view and to show that scope-based arguments are inadequate. He explains that the goal of MA is to demonstrate that a name derives it's meaning from the individual it denotes, and not from a description associated with it. Kripke accomplishes this by demonstrating that the truth conditions of sentences containing names and those containing corresponding descriptions are not the same in modal contexts. Soames reconstructs the argument in a more structured way:

(1)   Proper names are rigid designators.

(2)   Therefore proper names do not have the same meanings as non-rigid descriptions. So, if N is a proper name, and D is a non-rigid description, then the sentences *N is F* and *D is F* typically do not have the same meaning, or express the same proposition.

(3)   Since the descriptions commonly associated with names by speakers are non-rigid, typically the meanings of names are not given by those descriptions. So, if N is a name and D is a description associated with N by speakers, then the sentences *N is F* and *D is F* typically do not have the same meaning or express the same proposition (Soames, 1998, 2).

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For Soames, the rigidity thesis (1) is a conclusion about the meaning of names based on our uses of them. That is, he considers how we use names when we describe counterfactual situations and draws a conclusion about their meaning based on our conventional uses in those situations. He observes that the truth conditions of propositions involving possible worlds always depend on the properties, in those possible worlds, of the individual so-called in the actual world. He argues that, whether or not an individual bears the name in question in some possible world, as long as it is identical with the individual that bears it in the actual world, propositions about that individual are judged true or false depending on the properties of that individual.

Soames goes on to explain the reasoning that allows the argument to work as it does lies in understanding proper names as rigid designators. Using the Aristotle example, he explains that the reason that we think of names in this way is that, when we think about the truth values of propositions in which this name figures, no matter whether the proposition deals with the actual world or some other possible world, they always depend on the identity of Aristotle in this world with that same individual in any possible world in question. As he explains:

> our ultimate ground for thinking that the name *Aristotle* is a rigid designator is our conviction that there is a certain individual x, such that for every possible world w, the proposition that Aristotle was a philosopher is true at w iff x was a philosopher at w, and similarly for other propositions (2).

(Generalized to all propositions using the term 'Aristotle', Soames calls this 'ultimate ground' principle GR.) So we see that it is a necessary fact that the individual named 'Aristotle' in this world is the same individual in all possible worlds. In other words,

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'x=x' is a logical truth quite independently of what name x may bear in various worlds. By contrast, "Aristotle was a philosopher" is intuitively not true in some possible worlds. Whether or not it is true does not depend on the identity of the individual, but on the state of the world in question, or as Soames puts it "whether or not the person we call Aristotle in this world is a philosopher in w" (2). When we describe possible worlds in which Aristotle is not a philosopher, it is *Aristotle* who is not a philosopher in those worlds. The truth-conditions of such statements implicate the person himself, and not those of his actual properties by which a description picks him out.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this premise is that the meaning of a name is not the same as the meaning of a description. A name refers to a certain individual. This meaning holds across all worlds, regardless of the descriptions used to characterize that individual. By contrast, a description refers to the individual, in any given world, that is characterized by it. This does not hold across all worlds. In some worlds the individual may fit the description associated with the name in our world, but in others it may not. This means that the meaning of the description varies according to the contingent facts of the world in question. So if we say that in this world N is F and D is F, we must understand that while these propositions have the same truth values in this world, we can conceive of a world in which N is F, but D is not F. This is because N always refers to the same individual, but D only refers to the individual who happens to fill the description, and that may not always be the same individual in a given world. Hence, we see that the two propositions do not mean the same thing.

Proceeding from principle (GR), Soames explores the viability of using a wide scope interpretation of definite descriptions to correct for any discrepancies between the

meanings of sentences containing proper names and those containing definite descriptions, which characterize the same individuals in the actual world. He considers what would happen if we tried to simulate the rigidity of proper names by taking definite descriptions to have wide scope in modal statements. He replaces the name Aristotle with a hypothetically equivalent description, "the G" to derive principle SR (i): "There is a certain individual x, such that for every possible world w, the proposition that **the G** was a philosopher is true at w iff x was a philosopher at w,… and so on for other propositions expressed using the name Aristotle" (3). As Soames explains, "the G" is a description of the individual Aristotle as he was in the actual world, which takes a wide scope over the modal operator. The claim is that on this account, we should understand any sentence in which the name 'Aristotle' figures, not as referring to the individual Aristotle, regardless of which descriptions characterize him in a given world, but as referring to that individual who satisfies the description in this world. On Soames account, the argument in favour of the wide scope interpretation does not privilege the individual Aristotle, regardless of whether or he actually fits this description, but rather that it privileges the person who satisfies the description "the G", regardless of whether or not that person is identical with Aristotle. This seems problematic because GR always identifies Aristotle as Aristotle, and would continue to do so even if it turned out that Aristotle was not the G. By contrast, it seems that SR (i) always identifies Aristotle as the G, and would continue to do so even if it turned out that Aristotle was not the G. So, while GR always identifies the correct individual, SR (i) does not. However, one possibility that Soames fails to consider is that it is not the case that there is no definite description that could always identify the

correct individual, but rather that 'the G' is simply not that description. It is conceivable that the correct description would always yield the same results as 'Aristotle'.

Soames demonstrates what he believes to be the problem with the wide scope analysis by showing that the truth conditions of the propositions that ought to follow from the semantic equivalence of a proper name and a definite description do not actually coincide. He explains that if the name n is equivalent to "the G", then "If n is F, then something is both F and G" expresses the same proposition as "If the G is F, then something is both F and G" (5). He further explains that "if the G is F, then something is both F and G" must necessarily be true. The problem arises when we attempt to substitute the seemingly equivalent propositions, so that we might claim that "if n is F, then something is both F and G is a necessary truth" (6). According to the reasoning of the wide scope argument, this claim should hold true after substituting the seemingly semantically equivalent terms n and "the G". However, this cannot be the case because there is no necessary connection between an individual bearing the name n and fitting the description "the G". On this account of definite descriptions, it seems hard to see why we should accept the claim that the meaning of a name is simply a definite description that uniquely identifies the individual in the actual world. Soames thinks that this is reason to believe that the wide scope analysis does not adequately account for the features of names that lead Kripke to suppose that they are rigid designators.

Another possible alternative to the rigid designation view is that proper names are synonymous with actually-rigidified descriptions. On this view, we say that a definite description is actually-rigidified if the description is preceded by the word 'actually'. This is because 'actually' acts indexically to designate the world of the speaker, whether it is

our actual world, or some other possible world. It should be noted that, for simplicity, I will assume that the context of utterance is the actual world. So, the expression "the actual G" is used to designate the individual which uniquely satisfies the description 'the G' in the actual world. Moreover, since 'actually' acts indexically, "the actual G" as used in counterfactual situations refers to the individual in a possible world who satisfies 'the G' in the actual world. On this view, proper names are actually-rigidified descriptions because, since the indexical 'actually' fixes the referent of the description as the individual who satisfies it in the actual world, we can ensure that the description always refers to the same individual regardless of the counterfactual situation, if that individual exists.

Soames argues against the identification of names with actually-rigidified descriptions. He claims that, by considering how we ascribe propositional-attitudes to individuals in other possible worlds, we can see that an actually-rigidified description does not denote the same individual as the corresponding proper name. He explains that it may be the case that individuals in other possible worlds have beliefs about other individuals in those worlds: Soames's point seems to be that the claim that 'Aristotle' and 'the actual greatest philosopher of antiquity' are semantically equivalent commits us to making the claim that when we ascribe a belief about Aristotle to an individual in some possible world, we are ascribing to them a belief about the actual greatest philosopher of antiquity and, by extension, the actual world. He does not believe that this is appropriate because, to a person in another possible world the description 'the actual greatest philosopher of antiquity' might not refer to Aristotle. He makes his case against proper names as actually-rigidified descriptions with the following argument:

P1. It is possible to believe that Aristotle was a philosopher without believing anything about the actual world A_w. In particular, there are worlds w* in which agents believe that Aristotle was a philosopher, without believing of A_w that anything was F in it, and hence without believing of A_w that the unique thing that was F in it was a philosopher.

P2. Necessarily one believes that the actual F was a philosopher iff one believes of the actual world, A_w, that the unique thing that was F in it was a philosopher

C1. It is not the case that necessarily one believes that Aristotle was a philosopher iff one believes that the actual F was a philosopher

P3. If the content of *Aristotle*, as used in a context C, were identical with the content of *the actual F*, as used in C, then (i) the contents of (proposition expressed by) *Aristotle was G* and *The actual F* was G in C would be the same, (ii) the propositions expressed by α *believes that Aristotle was G* and α *believes that the actual F was G*, would be necessarily equivalent, and (iii) C1 above would be false.

C2. The content of *Aristotle*, as used in a context, is **not** the same as the content of *the actual F* as used in that context (15).

Soames's argument seems to turn on a confusion about what it means to ascribe beliefs about the actual greatest philosopher of antiquity. He is correct in saying that P1 is true. It is possible to hold beliefs about Aristotle without holding beliefs about the actual world. In fact, it is possible to hold beliefs about Aristotle without holding beliefs about whether or not he was the greatest philosopher of antiquity. However, his P2 is more problematic. He claims that a belief that the actual greatest philosopher of antiquity was a philosopher is the belief that, in A_w, the unique individual who was the greatest philosopher of antiquity was a philosopher.

This seems to be confused because the actually-rigid description thesis requires only that a belief that the actual greatest philosopher of antiquity was a philosopher is the belief that, in whatever world the believer inhabits, the unique individual who was the

greatest philosopher *in the actual world* was a philosopher *in that world*. As a result, what the believer believes about Aristotle has nothing to do with the actual world other than the fact that the individual of whom it is believed satisfies the description 'the greatest philosopher of antiquity' in the actual world. The state of mind of the believer need not include this. So, while C1 is correct on Soames's understanding of actually-rigid descriptions, it is based on a misinterpretation of the view and so is incorrect.

This confusion becomes further evident when we consider P3. For any context of utterance, the word "actually" refers indexically to the speaker's world. So, in the actual world, the content of 'Aristotle was a philosopher' and 'the actual greatest philosopher of antiquity was a philosopher' is the same. Moreover, the propositions asserting an individual's beliefs about the bearers of the name and the actually-rigidified description are the same. So, if the speaker is in the actual world then C1 is clearly false because it is necessary that one can hold a belief about Aristotle if and only if one can hold that same belief about the actual greatest philosopher of antiquity. Conversely, in another possible world, "actually" refers indexically to that possible world. If we suppose that in that world, the content of 'Aristotle' is not the same as that of 'the greatest philosopher of antiquity', then propositions asserting an individual's beliefs about the bearers of these two expressions are not the same. This seems to be why Soames asserts that it is not the case that holding a belief about one amounts to holding a belief about the other.

What he fails to realize is that any statements about the possibility of holding beliefs in certain counterfactual situations that we make are made in the actual world, and so the context of utterance is one in which 'Aristotle' and 'the actual greatest philosopher of antiquity' have the same referent, and so we can use them to make statements about

the beliefs of individuals inhabiting other possible worlds, without ascribing to them beliefs about the actual world, just as the individuals inhabiting other possible worlds can make statements about our beliefs without ascribing beliefs about their world to us. This seems to be a confusion between the context of utterance and the context of belief.

Chapter 3 – Bach: Nominal Description Theory and Semantic Incompleteness

Despite the challenges that the Modal Argument (MA) presents for the Description Theory of Names (DTN), there are those who still adhere to a view on which names are semantically equivalent to definite descriptions. They persist in this view because they believe a descriptivist view can provide principled solutions to many problems for which the rigidity thesis cannot. Therefore, rather than abandon descriptivism in favor of a Kripkean view, these philosophers propose modifications to the description theory that they believe would avoid the criticisms posed by the MA.

Kent Bach is one such philosopher. He agrees with Kripke that DTN, as often conceived, is implausible, but believes that a description theory is still the best explanation of the behavior of proper names in natural language. His view is motivated by the understanding that "we must take seriously Mill's exception to his claim that names convey no information about the individuals we use them to refer to 'except that those are their names'" (Bach, 2002, 75). With this is mind, he proposes a description theory on which being so-called is the only property relevant to the association of a name with an individual.

In his work on the meaning of proper names (*Thought and Reference*, 1987, and "Giorgione was so-called because of his name", 2002), Bach responds to the criticisms of description theories put forth by Kripke and Soames. In an attempt to salvage the explanatory power of description theories, without succumbing to MA, he proposes the Nominal Description Theory (NDT). On this view, as with DTN, a name is semantically equivalent to a definite description which uniquely identifies the individual so-called.

Unlike DTN, however, he claims that this description is always and only "the bearer of 'N'", for any name N. Bach claims that this theory respects the spirit of DTN, while better accounting for how we use proper names in natural language. On his account, descriptions are semantically incomplete. Thus, even when we properly identify the description to which the name is equivalent, this itself is not enough to determine a unique referent. Other information, including the context of use, is necessary to determine which bearer of the name a speaker is talking about. Moreover, while Kripke claims that his view is purely semantic, he provides no way of correctly identifying the referent outside of the context of use.

The goal of this chapter is to explore the possibility of NDT as an adequate response to Kripke's view of rigid designation. I will give an account of NDT and present what I understand to be Bach's motivation for presenting such a view. In doing so, I will examine the claims that Bach makes in favor of NDT and consider his reasons for adopting such a view in light of MA and considerations of scope. In particular, I will present the formulation of MA to which Bach is responding and consider how this understanding of the argument allows him to formulate his view. Further, I will discuss what he calls the "illusion of rigidity" and explain how this relates to the considerations of scope examined in the previous chapter.

What does it mean to say that a name is semantically equivalent to the definite description that identifies its referent as the bearer of the name? As we have seen above, this theory can be schematized as follows: N means "the bearer of 'N'", where N is any proper name. The description provides no information about the individual so-called except that she is so called.

Bach contends that the reason that one name can be used to denote many bearers is that names are semantically equivalent to definite descriptions and most definite descriptions are semantically incomplete. That is, the properties that they predicate are not unique to a single individual (2002, 90). He acknowledges that this may seem like a strike against NDT, but explains that since the speaker's intended meaning when uttering a sentence is typically determined pragmatically, the incompleteness of names does not imply the impossibility of determining their referents. Rather, it implicates pragmatics as necessary for determining the individual denoted by a name as used in a context. Bach further explains that the semantic incompleteness of names is not a semantic fact, rather it is pragmatic. He claims that "since incompleteness is not a semantic property of descriptions, incomplete descriptions make the same sort of semantic contribution to sentences in which they occur as do complete ones" (1987, 125). This is because there is nothing in the linguistic meaning of a name that indicates the existence of multiple bearers. Moreover, the fact that the semantic content of a name is a definite description implies that the name, as used, denotes one of its bearers. What it does not make explicit is which bearer. This information must be filled in pragmatically based on the use of the name in the context of utterance. Bach concludes that the semantic incompleteness of names does not pose a threat to description theories because the context of use provides sufficient information for a listener to determine the speaker's intention when using a name (2002, 92).

Kripke presents his view of rigid designation as a semantic thesis about the meaning of names. He claims that the reference of a name is wholly determined by its semantic content. As such, he denies that names are semantically incomplete and so must

provide a different explanation for how names determine their referents. More specifically, he must account for how a name can be used to designate more than one individual and still designate rigidly. Bach suggests that

> Shared names… force the [rigidity] thesis to be relativized to uses of names. As [Kripke] writes, "That more than one proposition may be expressed by ['Aristotle was fond of dogs'] is irrelevant: the question is whether each such proposition is evaluated as I describe it; or is it not…." However, Kripke is forced to regard the sentence as having "various readings," one for each bearer of the name in question (2002, 89).

Bach explains that in order to maintain such a view, while accounting for the fact that a name can be used in various contexts to refer to various individuals, Kripke must relativize rigidity to uses of names. That is, he must take rigidity to be a property of the uses of names, and not of names themselves. Each name must be seen as having various readings which, when applied appropriately, designate the same individual in all possible worlds. The name itself, however, has no univocal reading on this view.

Bach believes that this is a problem for Kripke, because it is hard to see how we can view the differences between uses of names as a semantic difference, when there is nothing about the various instances of names themselves that indicate that they refer to one individual and not another. Rather, it is the understanding of a name as used in context that indicates how the name is being used.

> Once RDT is relativized to the uses of names, it becomes not only trivial, but misdirected. For if we individuate uses by bearers while recognizing that shared names are not thereby ambiguous, we must acknowledge that RDT thus relativized is no longer a thesis about the semantics of names but one about uses of names to refer. Nothing about the semantics of

names tells us which of its bearers it is being used to refer to on a given occasion (1987, 156).

If this is the case, Kripke cannot provide a fully semantic account which can explain how the same name can be used to refer to many individuals. Thus, this relativized rigidity suggests that rigid designation can only be explained pragmatically. This seems problematic for a view which bases its objection to DTN and other descriptions theories on the fact that such theories require a pragmatic account of how names denote their bearers.

Bach explains what he believes are two advantages of NDT as an account of the meanings of proper names. The fist is that on this view, the definite description to which a name is semantically equivalent is such that the name may only denote an individual who is so-called. This is an advantage because it properly associates the meaning of a name with how it is used. That is, a name can only refer to an individual that is called by that name. This is because the description associated with "the bearer of 'N'" cannot attribute to N a property that he does not possess.

This is closely associated with the second advantage of NDT, which is that this account does not require that a name have any content that describes its bearer. This may seem strange for a view that calls itself a description theory, in as much as it does not associate any additional properties with the name. The only information that the description "the bearer of 'N'" provides about the individual, N, is that he is called 'N'. Since this description does not rely on any additional information about accidental properties that N may possess, the content of the name cannot properly be understood as descriptive. As Bach explains:

the property of bearing a certain name, does not count as an element of descriptive content, unlike such properties as writing a certain book or proving a certain theorem. After all, no one who has this intuition, not even Mill or Kripke, would deny that a name at least conveys the information that its bearer bears it (135).

By advocating a description theory on which the description associated with a name expresses only the property of bearing the name, Bach is able to accommodate the view that the only information that a name expresses is that the bearer is so-called. Moreover, unlike Mill and Kripke, who also hold this view, Bach seems to provide a principled account of how the name conveys this information.

One question that arises is that, if we simply want an account of names on which the only information that a name conveys is that is names its bearer, it seems unnecessary to add the descriptive content, "the bearer of 'N'" when we could simply say that 'N' always refers to the individual, N. Bach's response to this is that while both Mill and Kripke endorse this interpretation, neither provides an account which explains how names can convey this information. Thus, the additional descriptive element is needed. As he explains in a footnote to the passage above:

> Indeed, Kripke remarks that 'the linguistic function of a proper name is completely exhausted by the fact that it names its bearer' (1979, 240), though he does not indicate or imply how his own theory can account for this. And Mill, whom Kripke credits with the view that names denote directly …, remarks that proper names 'do not indicate or imply any attributes as belonging to … the individuals who are called by them…. [W]hen we say, pointing to a man, this is Brown or Smith,…we do not merely by so doing convey… any information about them *except that those are their names*' (1872, 20-2; my emphasis) (135 n. 6).

This seems to indicate that both Mill and Kripke believe that names are used to convey the fact that an individual is so-called, but do not provide an account of how this information is conveyed. Examination of their views yields no answers to the question of how names fulfill this function. So, we must ask on what grounds we could justify a view that accounts for the intuition that names merely express the information that their bearer bears them while providing no additional information about the individual.

Rather than consider MA as Kripke himself presented it, Bach refers to a schematized version originally presented by Brian Loar:

(a) If 'N' meant 'the F' then 'N might not have been the F' would be false.

But

(b) 'N might not have been the F' is true.

Therefore,

(c) 'N' does not mean 'the F'.

Assume here that 'N' has but one bearer, that N is the actual F, and that 'the F' is the description which, according to the description theory in question, is synonymous with 'N'. This pattern of argument is formally valid, Loar points out, provided that 'N'… takes the same scope in (b) relative to 'might' as it does in (a). However, Loar suggests that the argument trades on an illicit shift of scope (1987, 150).

This version of MA is quite different than the one presented by Soames. It makes no explicit reference to rigidity, nor does it consider, as part of the argument, the nature of descriptions. Presumably, this is because, on the view being advocated by the authors, there is no semantic difference between names and the definite descriptions that characterize them. However, given that Bach is claiming to give a version of the argument for the purposes of explanation and examination, a fuller account explaining the

reasons for the apparent difference, whether or not they turn out to be problematic, seems warranted.

Both Soames and Bach are responding directly to Kripke's MA. Both schematize this argument for the sake of simplicity and clarification. This is because Kripke's argument emerges in the course of discussing what he sees as the problems with the Russellian view of proper names. He discusses issues such as essentialism, modality and rigid designation, and develops his argument in the course of this discussion. In presenting the versions of the argument that they do, each presents a version of the argument that is slanted towards the arguments that they themselves are making. While neither one presents a view that misrepresents Kripke's view, neither one presents a view that fully captures its complexity. This is because of both the nature of schematization, which necessarily excludes subtle details necessary for constructing the argument, and with the nature of interpretation, which itself is often driven by the theory being argued for. While Soames focuses more heavily on rigid designation, for the purposes of arguing against description theories and wide scope interpretations, Bach focuses more heavily on modal properties, for the purposes of arguing against what he sees as an illicit shift in scope that allows the argument to work. In light of these considerations, in giving an account of this argument, it should be made clear that what is at issue here it is what Kripke sees as the difference between the modal qualities of definite descriptions and those of proper names as rigid designators. Ultimately, the differences between the formulations given by Bach and Soames amount to a question of whether or not rigid designation is a premise of MA, or a conclusion.

Fundamentally, MA is about whether or not names can refer to the same individual in all possible worlds. On Kripke's view, this is a necessary part of being a name, and his argument is based on this. In arguing against the descriptivist view, Kripke assumes that no definite description can be relied upon to consistently designate the referent of the name in all possible worlds. This is because he formulates the argument based on his view that names are rigid designators, whereas descriptions are not. On the account given by Bach, this is not an acceptable argument because the scope of 'N' in (a) is different from the scope of 'N' in (b), taking a narrow scope in (a) and a wide scope in (b). As discussed in the previous chapter, if a name takes wide scope it is used to refer to the individual so-called in the actual world, regardless of the counterfactual situation, whereas if a name takes narrow scope it is used to refer to the individual so-called in the counterfactual situation, regardless of its use in the actual world. So, he claims that while the referent of 'N' in (a) is contingent on the facts of a given possible world, in (b) 'N' always refers to the individual so named and characterized in the actual world. As Bach points out, this problem does not arise on a wide scope reading, since the description simply designates in the proposition whatever it designates in the actual world. This reading seems reasonably justified once we consider the argument as applied to NDT.

Applying MA to NDT yields the following results:

> (an) If 'N' meant 'the bearer of "N"' then 'N might not have been the bearer of "N"' would be false.

But

> (bn) 'N might not have been the bearer of "N" is true.

Therefore,

> (cn) 'N' does not mean 'the F' (150-151).

Bach explains that (an), like (a), is only true if read with a narrow scope. This is because, to say that it is true that 'N might not have been the bearer of "N"', we must acknowledge that the bearer of 'N' in the actual world might not have been the bearer of that name in some possible world. This can mean, depending on how we interpret such a sentence, that it could have been the case that the bearer of 'N' was not so called or it could mean that the individual who we know as the bearer of 'N' was not the same individual, and both would be false if N must be the bearer of that name in all possible worlds.

Having established that in order for the first premise to be true, N must be given narrow scope, Bach goes on to ask whether or not the second premise is true on the same reading. He explains that, just as (b) tells us that it might not have been the case that the individual characterized by the description 'the F' was the individual N, given narrow scope (bn) seems to tell us that it might not have been the case the bearer of "N", that is the individual characterized by 'the bearer of "N"', was the individual N. This of course seems to support Kripke's argument against description theories, since if N is not always characterized as bearing the name "N", then the description 'the bearer of "N"' cannot mean the same thing as N. This is because it seems to be the case that in order to be characterized as bearing the name "N", one must be so named.

Bach admits that this poses a potential problem for NDT. He explains that this is because given either a narrow or a wide scope, (bn) still seems to be true. As he explains:

> For it might be that where names are involved, the effect of narrow scope
> is the same as wide scope, that is that scope makes no difference. Along
> these lines it could be argued against NDT and in support of (bn) that
> NDT mistakenly identifies the referent of 'N' *with respect to* a
> counterfactual situation with the bearer of 'N' *in* that situation. Even

though 'N' takes narrow scope rather than wide, its referent relative to that situation is the actual N… But the referent of 'the bearer of "N" relative to that situation is not the actual N. So (bn) is true, even on the narrow scope reading, and 'N' does not mean 'the bearer of "N" (151).

It is true both that we can imagine a situation in which N was not named "N", and that we can imagine a situation in which the individual so-named was not N, but someone else. Either of these readings seems potentially problematic for any description theory because if scope makes no difference, then MA is valid on all readings. On this view, it seems inconceivable that we could claim that the meaning of a name is semantically equivalent to a given description, and then show that it is possible for that description to fail to describe the bearer of the name, or for the bearer of the name to be someone other than the individual so described. However, while this is a problem for DTN, it poses little threat to NDT. This is because this argument discredits only those descriptions theories on which names admit no such ambiguity, but NDT is not one such a theory.

As he goes on to hypothesize above, a potential problem faced by NDT is that it might be interpreted as the claim that the name N has meaning only relative to the possible world in question. Thus, the meaning of "N" in the actual world might would be different from that of "N" in a possible world, just in case the bearers of the name in the two worlds were two different individuals. However, this is perfectly in keeping with Bach's view that names are semantically incomplete. On this view, the content of a name is not satisfied by a single individual. Rather, as we have seen, names can be used in various ways to refer to individuals depending on the context of use. Thus, while he admits that names are typically used to denote the individuals who bear them in the actual world, there are exceptions to this.

Bach responds to the claim that description theories commit us to the view that definite descriptions, and names by extension, always take wide scope with respect to modal operators. He concedes that names standardly take wide scope, but takes pains to make explicit the fact that there are legitimate instances of uses of names which parallel narrow scope nominal descriptions:

> … I do not concede that names do always take wide scope. I grant… that they standardly take wide scope, but as the word 'standardly' suggests, I take this to be a pragmatic fact, not a semantic one (145-146).

Bach emphasizes that the standard interpretation of names as wide scope descriptions reflects a pragmatic fact about the sort of information that we understand a speaker intends to convey by using a name. This information is not semantic, about its linguistic meaning, or syntactic, reflecting the logical form of the sentence. That is, names can take narrow scope in certain situations, such as when the speaker intends to demonstrate that a name could have denoted an individual who does not actually bear it, while they take wide scope when the speaker is conveying information about an individual who actually bears it. However, there is nothing inherent in the meaning of a name that tells us how it is used.

Using the example of 'Spiro Agnew' as contrasted with the fictional 'Aaron Aardvark', Bach demonstrates how a name can be used with narrow scope. He contrasts "Spiro Agnew might have been president (8)", with "Aaron Aardvark might have been president (10)" and explains that

> Who Aaron Aardvark is, if anyone, has no bearing on the statement being made with (10) and indeed the speaker may not believe that anyone

possesses this name, much less intend his audience to believe it. His statement is true if there is a possible world in which whoever possesses the name is president… So as used here 'Aaron Aardvark' has narrow scope with respect to might (147).

Bach explains that the reason we can more readily understand a name such as 'Aaron Aardvark' as taking narrow scope is that there is no individual, at least in the context of political discourse, with whom we would typically associate that name. We are inclined to understand a name as taking wide scope when there is a particular person with whom it is associated in a given context. However, the fact that a name is typically used to denote someone does not mean that it must be used in such a way. Bach explains that

> 'Spiro Agnew' can also be so used. Suppose that someone is contemplating a procedure whereby the president is selected on the basis of alphabetical order from a list of state governors. He has never heard of Nixon's first vice-president but he imagines, for the sake of discussion that 'Spiro Agnew is the name of a state governor. If he uttered (8) under these circumstances, he would be using 'Spiro Agnew' as having a narrow scope – who actually bears the name would be irrelevant to his statement (147).

It is precisely because we are accustomed to using the name 'Spiro Agnew' to refer to the individual so-called in the actual world, that we resist interpreting the name as taking narrow scope. However, there is nothing in the semantic content of a name that requires that a name be interpreted as taking wide scope. Rather, we are used to names taking wide scope, and so generally anticipate that they will be used to denote the individual so-called in the actual world. That said, it is within the listener's ability to recognize that in certain contexts, while we are not suggesting that the individual who actually bears the name might have been someone other than himself, we do recognize that the name can be

used to convey the information that it might have been the case that some other individual bore the name.

So, with respect to our normal use of names, when we use a name, even if we use it to refer to an individual in some possible world, we are talking about the individual so-called in the actual world. This is because we are in the actual world, speaking English to refer to a particular individual who bears the name. We can recognize that the name, as used in that possible world, may refer to a different individual or that the individual so-called in the actual world may be referred to by a different name. Moreover, we can also use the name in ways that make it clear how it could be used in a counterfactual situation.

Bach goes on to explain that when we use a definite description or proper name to refer to an individual, we are not trying to inform the listener about which properties are unique to the individual. Rather, we are merely trying to identify who we are talking about.

> When you use a name to refer, generally the property of bearing the name does not enter into what you are trying to convey….Rather, you intend the property of bearing the name merely enable your audience to identify who you are talking about (2002, 87).

So, when we use a name to talk about an individual in a counterfactual situation, we are not mistakenly trying to inform the listener that said individual is called by that name in the counterfactual situation. Rather, because the individual in question is already identified in this world as bearing that name, it is merely a tool for identifying the individual. The use of the name, or even the description, is not intended to tell us anything about the properties that the individual bears in the counterfactual situation; rather it is a tool for allowing us to communicate information about individuals across

possible worlds. This is because we must first be able to identify the individual in the actual world, in order to communicate information about the individual as they are characterized in the possible world. If doing so requires describing the individual as they actually are, this should not be considered a hindrance to our ability to explain how that person might have otherwise been different.

According to Kripke, a name is a rigid designator exactly because it was determined, by a baptismal act of naming, that it would refer to the particular individual that it designates. Because the individual in question is necessarily the referent, this holds across possible worlds. Bach has quite a different reason why it is that a name, as used in the actual world, is understood as referring to the individual who bears it in the actual world even if we are using it to talk about individuals in some possible world. This reason is simple. In order to understand which individual we are talking about, we must be able to identify them in some way. Once we have identified the bearer of a name in the actual world, we have a way of identifying that individual. Since we understand that the name identifies them in this world, it is convenient to use the same name to identify them in possible worlds. So, in saying that a name N is semantically equivalent to the "the bearer of 'N'", we are saying that since we already know that that individual is the actual bearer of N, we can use that fact to identify that same individual in all possible worlds. This does not say anything about whether or not that description is apt in other possible world. Rather it says that since it is apt in this one, it makes exactly who we are talking about clear.

Chapter 4 – Conclusion: Comparing Soames and Bach

In the previous two chapters I have outlined and discussed two accounts of proper names that are motivated by Kripke's objections to Russell's Description Theory of Names (DTN). Soames's view is a refinement and extension of Kripke's rigid designation account of names. He adopts Kripke's Modal Argument (MA) against the semantic equivalence of proper names and definite descriptions while addressing a number of objections that have been raised against Kripke's view. By contrast, Bach's view of names is presented as an alternative to DTN that recovers the benefits of associating a proper name with a definite description, while accommodating the view that a name expresses no information except that it denotes the individual so-called. He denies that MA is a serious threat to any description theory and argues that rigid designation cannot be a purely semantic view. In this chapter I will evaluate the relative merits of the each account by considering both the interpretation and responses that each provides with respect to Kripke's MA. Furthermore, I will evaluate each view based on its ability to respond to various arguments that the other gives against it. Ultimately, the stronger account will more closely reflect the way in which we actually use names.

As noted in the previous chapter, Soames and Bach give two very different characterizations of Kripke's Modal Argument (MA). While each believes that his formulation accurately captures the content of MA, both are motivated by the accounts of naming that they endorse.

Recall that Soames's presents the following formulation of MA:

(1)   Proper names are rigid designators.

(2)   Therefore proper names do not have the same meanings as non-rigid descriptions. So, if N is a proper name, and D is a non-rigid description, then the sentences *N is F* and *D is F* typically do not have the same meaning, or express the same proposition.

(3)   Since the descriptions commonly associated with names by speakers are non-rigid, typically the meanings of names are not given by those descriptions. So, if N is a name and D is a description associated with N by speakers, then the sentences *N is F* and *D is F* typically do not have the same meaning or express the same proposition (Soames, 1998, 2).

This version of MA begins with the premise that all proper names designate rigidly. This premise is based on the assumption that when we use a name to refer to an individual in a counterfactual situation, the name always refers to the individual who is so-called in the actual world. From this he concludes that if a name is a rigid designator and a definite description is not, then the name and the description cannot have the same meanings. This inference is based on the assumption that when we use a definite description to refer to an individual in a counterfactual situation, the definite description always refers to the individual who fits the description in that counterfactual situation. That is, there may be some possible world in which the description designates an individual that is distinct from the one designated by the name. As a result, depending on the properties held by the individual in a counterfactual situation, on this view the name and the description may fail to co-refer. From this, Soames concludes that a name cannot have the same meaning as a non-rigid definite description.

Soames's focus on the rigidity thesis is motivated by a belief that names and definite descriptions are essentially different. That is, that they do not have the same modal properties, and so cannot have the same meaning. As discussed previously, he claims that the ultimate ground for the belief that names are rigid designators is his

principle (GR) which tells us that when we use a name to talk about a counterfactual situation, the truth of any proposition in which that name figures depends on whether the proposition expresses a truth about the individual who bears the name in the actual world.

While this does seem to be an accurate representation of our standard use of names, it does not take into account non-standard but legitimate uses of names such as those discussed in the previous chapter. Such uses suggest that the name itself does not semantically fix the content of the alleged proposition sufficiently to produce or underwrite (GR), which is largely based on what Kripke calls our "intuition" about how names function in modal contexts. If, as Bach points out, Kripke really believes that the full extent of a name's semantic function is to convey the fact that it names the individual in question, it is difficult to see how it is a semantic fact that a name such as 'Aristotle' can be assumed to always denote the same individual regardless of context. Kripke's intuition about the behavior of names in modal contexts is based on the observation that if there is an individual with whom we already associate the name, unless we are given evidence to the contrary, we tend to assume that it is that individual to whom the name is intended to refer. Thus, there is nothing in the semantic content of a name that requires that when we use it we do so to refer to the individual so-called in the actual world and not in any other possible world, or to any other individual who bears the name in the actual world in the case of shared names.

Let us consider the name 'Aristotle'. There is nothing inherent in this name that requires that it be used to refer to Aristotle the philosopher rather than Aristotle (Onassis) the shipping magnate. Moreover, there are conceivable uses of both 'Aristotle' and 'Aristotle Onassis' that do not denote either of these individuals, nor do they denote any

other individual in the actual world. It would be equally legitimate to use such a name in the following context 'It might have been the case that Aristotle was a space shuttle'. In an appropriate context of use, the listener can easily grasp the speaker's meaning. This is because it is our implicit understanding of the name used in context that produces the sense of rigidity.

Thus, it does seem that Soames's formulation reflects the apparent reliance of Kripke's argument on the intuitions that we have about the meanings of names, which are based on our standard uses of proper names. However, it lacks an explicit explanation of why names are rigid whereas descriptions are not. As noted above, this distinction is based on the assumption that the reason that names are rigid while descriptions are not is that a name directly denotes exactly one individual in all possible worlds while a description denotes the individual who satisfies it in any given world. Without explicit explanation of the assumptions on which the argument is based, it is difficult to understand why one would believe that proper names and definite descriptions designate their bearers in essentially different ways.

The formulation of MA that Bach presents is quite different. Recall that according to his account:

(a) If 'N' meant 'the F' then 'N might not have been the F' would be false.

But

(b) 'N might not have been the F' is true.

Therefore,

(c) 'N' does not mean 'the F'.

Assume here that 'N' has but one bearer, that N is the actual F, and that 'the F' is the description which, according to the description theory in question, is synonymous with 'N'. (Bach, 1987, 150).

Bach's version of MA begins with the premise that if the name 'N' was synonymous with the definite description 'the F', then the sentence 'N might not have been the F' would express a false proposition. This premise is based on the assumption that if a name and a description co-refer, then the individual so-called must possess the property expressed by the description in all possible worlds. However, the second premise is based on the observation that the sentence, 'N might not have been the F' expresses a true proposition. In the Kripkean tradition this observation is justified by consideration of various examples on which the descriptions associated with names under DTN largely express accidental qualities. (This is typically an artifact of making the description sufficiently specific to uniquely designate a referent in the actual world.) Hence the individual in question may fail to possess the property expressed by the description. The conclusion of this argument is that 'N' is not synonymous with 'the F', since the individual, N, need not possess the property expressed by 'the F' at every possible world.

In critiquing this argument, Bach grants *arguendo* that at most one individual bears each name in the actual world. Bach's focus on the use of names in context is motivated by the observation that while names standardly take wide scope, they can also be used as though they were descriptions taking narrow scope. He claims that MA can only effectively discredit description theories if the speaker always intends to use the name 'N' to refer to the individual so-called in the actual world, behaving like a description taking wide scope, and always intends to use the description 'the F' to refer to the individual who possesses the corresponding property in the counterfactual situation,

taking narrow scope. As a result, the proposition expressed by 'N might not have been the F' must always be "the individual called 'N' in the actual world might not have possessed the property of being F in some possible world". However, as discussed in the previous chapter, this is not the only way in which we use names or descriptions. The fact that we can imagine a world in which the individual N does not possess the property of being the F is no more problematic to a description theory than the fact that we can imagine a world in which that individual was not called 'N' is to a rigid designation theory. On this view, the modal argument shows nothing more than the fact that definite descriptions do not designate rigidly.

Bach's characterization of MA is useful because it demonstrates that the strength of the argument lies in the assumptions that it makes about the semantic differences between names and descriptions. This only becomes evident if we do not recognize the rigidity thesis as an explicit premise. Since the view that rigidity is a semantic property of names is precisely what Bach is arguing against, it is natural that he avoids explicitly invoking rigid designation in his formulation. Instead, he presents the argument more minimally, leaving the reader to determine the circumstances under which the conclusion follows from the premises. Upon reflection, we see that this can only be the case if names are rigid designators, but descriptions are not.

It seems that both arguments lack certain key subtleties that make Kripke's original formulation of MA so compelling. However, this is to be expected since these two versions emerge as the result of very different motivations on the parts of the authors. Soames's version, in as much as it captures the importance of the intuition of rigidity and takes it to reflect a semantic fact about names, seems to capture the argument's reliance

on the assumption that names do in fact designate rigidly. This is important to his view since it is necessary for refuting description theories. Conversely, Bach's version relies on the implicit endorsement of rigid designation based on the fact that the argument could not work without it. This is important to his view because it suggests that rigid designation is not the result of the semantic content of names.

The foregoing discussion highlights rigidity as an important feature of MA, on which the argument depends for its force against description theories. But as discussed in the previous chapter, Bach believes that our ability to use a name to pick out an individual across possible worlds is not a semantic fact, but rather a pragmatic observation about how we typically use names. This is due in large part to the fact that, since the context of utterance of all discourse in the actual world is the actual world, we typically use the name that an individual bears in the actual world to refer to the individual, regardless of the counterfactual situation under discussion.

According to Bach, this is not a reflection on the meanings of names, but rather on the uses of names. He points to linguistic intuitions to suggest that we can and do use names in ways that the rigid designation thesis does not predict, and which RDT must characterize as sloppy or metaphorical; for example, the sentence "Ronald Reagan might have been the older brother of the fortieth US president" (153). While we could be using this sentence to say that there is a possible world in which the younger brother of the man who was actually called 'Ronald Reagan' was president instead, a permissible interpretation is that there is a possible world in which the name 'Ronald Reagan' was used to refer to the older brother of the man so-called in the actual world.

Bach also highlights the difference between uses of names when he distinguishes between confusing one individual for another and being confused about which name an individual bears. He uses the example of Elvis Presley, and gives examples of ways in which these two sorts of confusion are possible. In his youth, Bach reports, he believed that the singer of an overheard song was Carl Perkins, the original singer-songwriter of "Blue Suede Shoes". When he realized his mistake, he corrected himself by saying: "That was Elvis Presley, not Carl Perkins" (2002, 79). In the second instance, he believed that the individual who sang "Heartbreak Hotel" was named 'Alvin Parsley'. When he realized his mistake he corrected himself again, saying: "That was Elvis Presley, not Alvin Parsely" (79). Bach explains that in the first case he identified one individual as having the property characterized by a description, when the true bearer of the description was someone else. Conversely, in the second case, he did not confuse the individual in question with anyone else. Rather, he predicated the property of bearing one name to the individual in question when in fact that individual bore a different name. However, the individual to whom he intended to refer did not change. Such examples show that the distinction driving Bach's argument is not esoteric; names can be used straightforwardly without overtones of rigidity, or without even purporting (as fictional names do) to designate any individual at all.

If rigidity is not a strictly semantic feature of names, what does this tell us about the strength of MA as an argument against description theories? According to Bach's Nominal Description Theory (NDT) names are semantically equivalent to the definite descriptions which express the property of being so-called. That is, the name 'N' has the same semantic content as the description "the bearer of 'N'". According to Bach,

descriptions are "semantically incomplete" by which he means that there is no individual who is uniquely characterized by the property predicated by the definite description. So too are names, then, by extension. Thus, the linguistic meaning of a name does not provide all of the information necessary to determine the individual to which it refers. That information is provided in the context of use based on what we can reasonably infer about the speaker's intention. If this is the only way to determine the referent of a name, then it seems that MA fails at the outset. If the claim that names designate rigidly is false, then the argument is not valid.

As we have seen above, Bach draws a distinction between the meaning of a name and the individual to whom that name refers. On his view, the meaning of the name comprises the univocal nominal description, independent of how the name is used. We cannot determine what it is that a speaker intends to communicate by using the name, without information provided in the context of utterance. This is because nominal descriptions do not have direct referents but are syncategorematic. That is, they are only meaningful when joined with other words to form a sentence. Thus, information about how the speaker intends the name to be understood is determined pragmatically because names do not provide sufficient information for use to determine their references out of context.

Since Kripke first introduced MA, a number of arguments have been presented that claim to account for the semantic equivalence of definite descriptions with proper names, as rigid designators. One such argument is the argument that definite descriptions always take wide scope with respect to the modal operator. As demonstrated by discussion of wide scope descriptions in the previous chapter, this interpretation does not

accurately capture the behavior of proper names or definite descriptions, as both can and do take narrow scope. Another such argument is the one on which names are semantically equivalent to actually-rigidified descriptions, against which Soames presents an argument. I have already demonstrated why, if we properly understand this view, we can see that the argument that Soames gives against it is the result of a confusion about what it means for us to believe something of an individual in the actual world. Moreover, Soames fails to allow that, since the modifier "actual" is indexical to the context of utterance, if an individual in the actual world ascribes a belief to a speaker in some counterfactual situation as being about the actual greatest philosopher of antiquity, the belief in question is about the greatest philosopher of antiquity in the actual world. So, we can use such terms to characterize the beliefs of individuals in counterfactual situations without ascribing beliefs about the actual world to them. Similarly, individuals in those counterfactual situations can use them to make statements about our beliefs without ascribing beliefs about their world to us.

In any case, NDT cannot be read as a version of an actually-rigidified description theory. There seem to be a number of similarities between the actually-rigidified description view and NDT, stemming from the fact that both views depend on the context of use to determine the referent of the name. As a result, each accommodates the intuition, based on the standard use of names, that when we use a name, we typically do so with the intention of referring to the individual so-called in the actual world. However, there are also key differences between them which result in very different interpretations of names.

One such difference lies in the fact that Bach denies the indexicality of proper names. His understanding of names as semantically incomplete descriptions is similar to an understanding of names as indexical since both depend on the context of utterance to provide the information necessary for determining which, if any, bearer of the name the speaker intends to refer to. However, an account on which names are indexical assumes the name is explicitly semantically incomplete, so to speak. An account on which names are only typically or contingently semantically insufficient to determine a unique referent considers the determination of referent to be a purely pragmatic matter. Bach argues against the account of names as indexical because he wants to give a theory that treats the semantics of names identically whether or not there is more than one individual so-called. As he explains the indexical account, the meaning of a name would depend on whether or not the name is shared.

> Consider complete definite descriptions and proper names having only one bearer. No one would suggest that they are indexicals – and no one has. If they are not, however, then the indexical view has a consequence that seems theoretically arbitrary: whether or not a description is complete affects the semantics of the sentence it occurs in. Surely the semantics of such a sentence cannot depend on the answer to that factual question (1987, p. 84).

This reasoning applies to names and descriptions shared across possible worlds as much as to those shared within the same world. The semantic content of a name, whether or not it is complete, is independent of the number of individuals so-called. In order for this to be true, the semantically equivalent definite description must be the same regardless of the number of individuals who bear it in any and all worlds. If we say that a name refer to "the actual bearer of 'N'", we must assume that there is some individual in a possible

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world who bears that name, in that world, and that the individual in question is not identical to the individual so-called in the actual world.

Hence Soames's argument against the actually-rigidified description account poses not threat to NDT. This is true for two reasons. First, even if the argument presented by Soames were correct, Bach rejects the interpretation of names as having an element of indexicality built into their semantic structures. Second, a similar argument made against NDT would fail for the same reason that it fails against the actually-rigidified view. That is, what Soames's argument fails to reflect is the pragmatic fact that the information conveyed by the use of a name depends on the context in which it is used.

NDT not only provides an account on which the semantic equivalence of a name to a definite description does not require that the individual possess the same accidental property in all worlds, it appears to suggest a solution to the Frege's question regarding the informative nature of identity statements. Let us apply NDT to the question of how statements such as 'Hesperus is Phosphorous' are informative while those of the form 'Hesperus is Hesperus' are trivially true. By substituting the nominal description for the name, we see that the former tells us that the bearer of 'Hesperus' is identical to the bearer of 'Phosphorus' while the latter tells us that the bearer of 'Hesperus' is identical to the bearer of 'Hesperus'. Without inquiring into the identity of their bearers, such an account shows us that we gain additional information about the identity of the bearer of each name, when we are told that they denote the same individual. So long as the 'is' in question is one of identity and not of predication, NDT confirms and accounts for the intuition that the former is informative while the latter, while true, is trivial.

Of the questions that an account of proper names must address, one that we have yet to resolve is that of vacuous names. NDT suggests that a view of names as incomplete definite descriptions of the form "the bearer of 'N'", the referents of which are determined by the context of utterance and our inferences about speaker intentions, should provide us with sufficient information to determine the truth values of statements in which all names figure, including vacuous ones. However, NDT does not address this problem. While the theory implies that to understand sentences containing vacuous names we must determine the intention of the speaker based on the context, it does not suggest a method for determining the truth value of the proposition expressed. This is simply a result of the fact that, in the case of non-referring names, there is no individual about whom we can say that the sentence expresses a proposition, be it true or false. However, the truth values of propositions depend on facts about the world, and not the semantics of names, so a reasonable answer to the problem of vacuous names for Bach is that it is not a problem. Semantically, vacuous names are no different from any other.

Having delineated the accounts of naming advocated by Soames and Bach respectively, and evaluated each on the strength of their account both independent of and relative to the other, we can draw some general conclusions. These conclusions are based on a number of considerations about the nature of each account and its ability to explain the use of proper names in natural language. As we have seen, Soames's account echoes the view originally put forth by Kripke. Like Kripke's account, it relies on a semantic conception of rigidity. The arguments that he provides against description theories are based solely on this conception, which has remained widely accepted for the past three decades. The reason for this is that it is intuitively appealing, reflecting the ways in which

we standardly use names. However, such arguments fail to distinguish between the standard use of names and their alternative uses. Moreover, Bach's account provides principled responses to the arguments leveled against it and theories like it. These responses reflect our *actual* uses names, based on the understanding that names are semantically incomplete. This explains both how names have the semantic content of definite descriptions and how they can be used to directly denote the individual so-called. Upon consideration of these factors, NDT seems to provide a better account of our uses of proper names than the rigid designation thesis as presented by Kripke and Soames.

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