

# REFERENCE AND MODALITY



AN INTRODUCTION TO NAMING AND NECESSITY

# A BON-BON FROM RORTY

- ❖ Since Kant, philosophers have prided themselves on transcending the 'naive realism' of Aristotle and of common sense. On this naive view, there is a right way of describing things, corresponding to how they are in themselves, to their real essences. Scientists, philosophers like to say, are especially prone to adopt this unreflective view. They think they are discovering the secrets of nature, but philosophers know that they are really constituting objects by synthesising the manifold of intuition, or predicting the occurrence of sensations, or wielding instruments to cope with the flux of experience, or something equally pragmatic and anthropocentric. This condescending attitude towards common sense, Aristotle and science has been shared by people as far apart as Russell and Bergson, Whitehead and Husserl, James and Nietzsche, Carnap and Cassirer.

# BON-BON CONTINUED

- ❖ Until Kripke came along, almost the only exceptions to this consensus were the Catholics and the Marxists. Between the two Vatican Councils, neo-Thomists tried to explain that the 'naive' Aristotelian view was the sound intuitive belief of the common man, and that Cartesian subjectivism, Kantian transcendental idealism and positivistic empiricism were successively more virulent forms of a mad modern heresy. But nobody listened, and after the *aggiornamento* the neo-Thomists pretty well gave up. Old-time Marxists, who had cut their teeth on Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism, used to argue that Russell was just the latest English version of the 'bourgeois formalism' which Hegel had diagnosed in Kant. But nobody listened to them either, and after the discovery of the young, humanist, pragmatist Marx they, too, gave up. Just when it seemed that the dialectic which Kant began had culminated in universal acceptance of the relaxed pragmatism of Wittgenstein and Quine, Kripke exploded his bomb. (*TLS*, 4 September 1980)

# THE REIGNING ORTHODOXY

## ❖ Descriptivism:

❖ There are two semantic values, viz. sense and reference

❖ A simple argument: if there were but one semantic value, 'MS=MS' and 'MS=ES' would mean the same thing; but they do not mean the same thing; hence, there is more than one semantic value.

❖ Let us call these two semantic values *sense* and *reference*.

❖ Let us also say that the reference, in the case of a singular term, is that term's extension.

❖ Let us further say that sense, in the case of a singular term, is its intension, such that:

❖ it is the graspable, shareable cognitive value of a term

❖ and that it determines reference.

# SIMPLEST VERSION

- ◆ Sense is:
  - ◆ a single individual property, that is a Platonic entity, the  $\phi$ .
  - ◆  $\phi$  is grasped by competent speakers
  - ◆ and  $\phi$  is realised by at most one object.
  - ◆ When the sense of a singular term, the  $\phi$ , is instantiated, that term is referential.
  - ◆ Otherwise, the singular term, though perfectly meaningful, has vacuous reference.
    - ◆ Slightly enhanced: the sense of a singular term is some cluster of individual properties, some subset of which individual speakers grasp

# RECALL QUINE

- ❖ 'Russell, in his theory of so-called singular descriptions, showed clearly how we might meaningfully use seeming names without supposing that there be the entities allegedly named. The names to which Russell's theory directly applies are complex descriptive names such as 'the author of Waverley', 'the present King of France', 'the round square cupola on Berkeley College'. Russell analyzes such phrases systematically as fragments of the whole sentences in which they occur. The sentence 'The author of Waverley was a poet', for example, is explained as a whole as meaning 'Someone (better: something) wrote Waverley and was a poet, and nothing else wrote Waverley'. (The point of this added clause is to affirm the uniqueness which is implicit in the word 'the', in 'the author of Waverley'.) The sentence 'The round square cupola on Berkeley College is pink' is explained as 'Something is round and square and is a cupola on Berkeley College and is pink, and nothing else is round and square and a cupola on Berkeley College.'
- ❖  $\exists x(Wx \ \& \ Px \ \& \ \forall y(Wy \rightarrow y=x))$
- ❖ The meaning of a name is its description-theoretic content.

# THE POWER OF DESCRIPTIVISM I

- ❖ Tidily handles problems of vacuous reference
- ❖ Offers a solution to Frege's puzzle, viz. how we can fail to know simple, plainly necessary identity statements *a priori*:
  - ❖ Obviously  $(MS = MS)$  is necessary and knowable *a priori*.
  - ❖ Equally obvious is the fact that  $(MS = ES)$  is *not* knowable *a priori* and is not necessary.
  - ❖ So, ' $(MS = MS)$ ' cannot mean—cannot have the same cognitive significance as— ' $(MS = ES)$ '

# THE POWER OF DESCRIPTIVISM II

- ◆ Kripke himself mentions three attractive features (1971, 28-29):
  - ◆ Provides an account of reference determination (which is otherwise a marvellous bit of magic)
  - ◆ Solves Frege's Puzzle
  - ◆ Solves Quine's (*inter alia*) worries about negative existentials.
    - ◆ Still, says Kripke (1972, 29): 'I think it's pretty certain that the view of Frege and Russell is false.'

# TILTING AT ORTHODOXY

- ❖ Three Arguments:
  - ❖ Modal Argument
  - ❖ Semantic Argument
  - ❖ Epistemological Argument

# A DEVICE: RD

- ❖ Identity statements are necessary when the identity operator is flanked by two *rigid designators* (RD).
- ❖ Rigid Designator: 'Let's call something a rigid designator if in every possible world it designates the same object.' (1972, 48)
- ❖ A rigid designator designates (picks out, denotes, refers to) the same thing in all possible worlds in which that thing exists.
- ❖ Moreover, it designates nothing at all in those possible worlds in which that thing it designates in the actual world does not exist.
- ❖ One helpful thought:  $n$  a rigid designator *iff* the sentences (i)  $\ulcorner n$  could not have existed without being  $n \urcorner$  and (ii)  $\ulcorner$  nothing other than  $n$  could have been  $n \urcorner$  are true.
- ❖ One core claim: ordinary proper names are rigid designators.

# CAVEATS

- ❖ An RD designates the same object in every world in which that object exists.
  - ❖ The object denoted by an RD need not exist in every possible world.
- ❖ The thesis is not that an RD must be used in every world as it is in this world.
  - ❖ We can imagine a possible world in which a given RD is used differently from the way it is used in the actual world.
    - ❖ 'IP' is only contingently a designator of IP.

# RIGIDITY VS. STRONG RIGIDITY

- ❖ [W]hen I use the notion of a rigid designator, I do not imply that the object referred to necessarily exists. All I mean is that in any possible world where the object in question does exist, in any situation where the object would exist, we use the designator in question to designate that object. In a situation where the object does not exist, then we should say that the designator has no referent and that the object in question so designated does not exist.' —Kripke (1971)

# RIGIDIFYING DD

- ❖ Evidently, one can take any definite description and rigidify it:
  - ❖ Take, for instance, the definite description ‘the inventor of the espresso machine’.
  - ❖ If Francesco Illy had not been the inventor of the espresso machine, then perhaps his son Ernesto would have done so.
    - ❖ So, the inventor of the espresso machine might not have been the inventor of the espresso machine.
- ❖ Rigidified: the *actual* inventor of the espresso machine
  - ❖ It not the case that the actual inventor of the espresso machine might not have been the actual inventor of the espresso machine.
    - ❖ So, the addition of ‘actual’ rigidifies.

# A CRITICISM OF FREGE

- ❖ Frege should be criticized for using the term 'sense' in two senses. For he takes the sense of a designator to be its meaning; and he also takes it to be the way its reference is determined. Identifying the two, he supposes that both are given by definite descriptions.' —Kripke (1972, 59)
- ❖ So, two roles for sense:
  - ❖ provide meaning, in the sense of cognitive significance
  - ❖ determine reference
- ❖ It is not clear why one item must/should discharge both these roles.
- ❖ One question: against which role are Kripke's arguments targeted?
- ❖ One further question: how well do these arguments intersect with rigidified DD?

# THE MODAL ARGUMENT

1. Possibly, Aristotle might not have been the  $\phi$ .
2. Not possibly, Aristotle might have not been Aristotle.
3. If (1) and (2), then 'Aristotle' and 'the  $\phi$ ' do not mean the same thing.
4. If (3), then: (i) DTN is false; and (ii) proper names are rigid designators.
5. Ergo, (i) DTN is false; and (ii) proper names are rigid designators.

# THE EPISTEMIC ARGUMENT

1. It is knowable *a priori* that if the  $\phi$  exists, then the  $\phi$  is  $\phi$ .
2. Suppose, as per the DTN, that  $n$  is  $\phi$ .
3. Then, given  $s s v$ , we may infer: It is knowable *a priori* that if the  $n$  exists, then the  $n$  is  $\phi$ .
4. It is not knowable *a priori* that if the  $n$  exists, then the  $n$  is  $\phi$ .
5. Ergo, (i) DTN is false; and (ii) proper names are rigid designators.

# THE SEMANTIC ARGUMENT

1. Possibly,  $n$  refers to  $a$ , even when (i)  $S$  associates being  $\phi$  with  $n$ , though  $\neg\phi a$ , or (ii) there is no  $\phi$  such that  $S$  associates  $\phi$  with  $a$ .
2. If (1), (i) DTN is false; and (ii) proper names are rigid designators
3. Ergo, (i) DTN is false; and (ii) proper names are rigid designators.

# KRIPKE'S ALTERNATIVE

- ❖ 'A rough statement of a theory might be the following: An initial 'baptism' takes place. Here the object may be named by ostension, or the reference of the name may be fixed by a description. When the name is 'passed from link to link', the receiver of the name must, I think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference as the man from whom he heard it. If I hear the name 'Napoleon' and decide it would be a nice name for my pet aardvark, I do not satisfy this condition.'—Kripke (1972, 97)