

DOES NAMING AND NECESSITY REFUTE DESCRIPTIVISM?

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ABSTRACT: In *Naming and Necessity* Saul Kripke offers a number of arguments in order to show that no descriptivist theory of proper names is correct. We present here a certain version of descriptivist theory -we will characterize it as an individual-use reference-fixing descriptivist theory that appeals to descriptions regarding how a name is used by other speakers. This kind of theory can successfully answer all the objections Kripke puts forward in *Naming and Necessity*. Such sort of descriptivist theory is furthermore compatible with the picture about reference that Kripke presents. It also seems to be able to account for some phenomena that are difficult to explain on Kripke's view (the existence of informative identity statements and true negative singular existential statements).

Keywords: semantics, reference, names, descriptions, conventions.

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1. Introduction

Two of the main aims of Kripke in *Naming and Necessity* are to show that descriptivist theories of proper names are not correct and to provide an alternative picture of how proper names work. A descriptivist theory of proper names is a theory that holds that a name has an associated description or cluster of descriptions which is synonymous with the name or, on same versions of the descriptivist theory, it at least determines the name's reference. It is essential for an object to fit the description (or most of the descriptions in the cluster) in order to be the referent of the name. Accord-

ing to the characterization of a descriptive theory that Kripke provides: if an object fits the description, or most of the descriptions in the cluster, the name refers to that object; If nothing fits the description, the name does not refer.

Kripke acknowledges that there are some very powerful reasons in favour of a descriptive theory of proper names. He mentions three: (1) A descriptivist theory can explain how the reference of a proper name is determined, whereas for a non-descriptivist theory it would seem mysterious how a name can *reach* its referent. "If there is *not* such a descriptive content to the name, then how do people ever use names to refer to things at all?" (p. 28)¹. There is a deeply felt intuition that in order to be speaking about something by using a name one must have, as Wettstein (1989) puts it, a "*cognitive fix* on the thing in question", "something in one's thought must correctly distinguish the relevant item from everything else in the universe"². (2) If each name is synonymous with a description (or cluster of descriptions) then we have an easy explanation for why some identity statements using proper names (such as "Richard Starkey is Ringo") are informative. (3) If each name is synonymous with a description then we can explain what it is inquired when we ask, for instance, whether Aristotle ever existed, and more dramatically: we can explain how it is possible that a singular negative existential statement such as "Santa Clause does not exist" be true.

These advantages of descriptivism notwithstanding, Kripke holds that descriptivism regarding proper names is clearly false. He presents a number of very serious difficulties for a descriptivist theory of proper names.

(I) *The modal argument*: if, for instance, the name "Aristotle" is synonymous with some description \lceil the ϕ \rceil , then the sentence \lceil Aristotle might not have been the ϕ \rceil should be false, but it is not so for any of the most plausible candidates to be substituted for "the ϕ ": Aristotle might not have been the greatest disciple of Plato, might not have been the philosopher who tutored Alexander the Great, might not have written the *Nicomachean Ethics*, or any of his other works, he might not have founded the Lyceum, or he might not even have been named "Aristotle".

(II) *Non necessity of the associated description*: Suppose that someone named "Schmidt" proved the incompleteness of arithmetic and Gödel just claimed the authorship of the result for himself. If someone who associates with the name "Gödel" just the information 'the one that proved the incompleteness of arithmetic' uses the name, though, he will be referring to

Gödel and not to Schmidt. That an object fits the description associated with a name by a certain speaker is not a necessary condition for the speaker to be able to refer to that object.

(III) *Non sufficiency of the associated description*: in the case just described the person would not be referring to Schmidt. That an object fits the description associated with a name by a certain speaker is not a sufficient condition for the speaker to be able to refer to that object.

(IV) *Incompatibility with the Kripkean picture*: Kripke offers a very intuitive, plausible and attractive view of how the reference of proper names is determined. What makes it the case that my use of "Gödel" refers to Gödel is that I am appropriately connected with Gödel himself through a certain chain: I picked up the name from some people who in turn picked it up from others who picked it up from others and ultimately the chain reaches those who participated in the introduction of the name, and to the person himself. What matters is not what information I have associated with the name, but the fact that "a certain passage of communication reaching ultimately to the man himself does reach the speaker" (p. 91). A descriptivist theory seems incompatible with this plausible picture.

(V) *The circularity problem*. Kripke offers specific arguments against those descriptivist theories that appeal to descriptions that try to incorporate the information that people use certain name to refer to certain object (descriptions such as 'the man named "Gödel"'). We will explain and discuss them latter on (section 5). Kripke's charge against this kind of descriptivist theories is that of circularity.

Kripke distinguishes two general sorts of descriptive theories of proper names, depending on the role that the associated descriptions play. We might call them the descriptivist theory of the meaning of proper names or, for short, *meaning descriptivist theory*, and the descriptivist theory of the reference of proper names, or *reference-fixing descriptivist theory*. According to a meaning descriptivist theory the associated description (or cluster of descriptions) gives the meaning of the name, is synonymous with it; According to a reference-fixing descriptivist theory the role of the associated description is just to fix the referent of the name. Except for the modal argument that applies only to a meaning theory the other arguments against a descriptive theory of proper names that Kripke gives apply to both sorts of theories.

Kripke points out (p. 33) that "some of the attractiveness of [a descriptivist theory] is lost if it isn't supposed to give the meaning of the name". The reason is that if instead of a meaning descriptivist theory we adopt a reference-fixing descriptivist theory it is not clear at all that we still can have a solution to the problems that we pointed out above in (2) and (3) (the ones posed by informative identity statements with proper names, and by true negative singular existential statements), and which we saw were two of the main reasons for adopting a descriptivist theory in the first place.

From what we have seen in this introductory section, then, we would have that a reference-fixing descriptivist theory that has recourse to descriptions that appeal to what people refer to with their use of the name is subject to the objections (II)-(V), while not having the advantages described in (2) and (3). Such kind of descriptivist theory would seem, then, to be the less attractive possible kind of theory about proper names that someone could hold. This is precisely, though, the kind of theory that I believe is true, and that I will defend against Kripke's criticisms in the rest of this paper.

What I will try to do is to show that a certain version of the sort of reference-fixing descriptivist theory mentioned in the previous paragraph is not subject to the problems (II)-(V) and that, furthermore, it can successfully account for the phenomena described in (1), (2) and (3). We will not, though, go into discussing some other phenomena that any full defense of a theory of proper names should address (most importantly the behaviour of proper names in opaque contexts). We will just focus here on the arguments and phenomena that Kripke discusses in *Naming and Necessity*. Although the view I will present can properly be termed a "descriptivist theory", it is not really in opposition to the general picture of how proper names work that Kripke presents.

2. Community level versus individual level descriptivist theories

In addition to the distinction between meaning and reference-fixing descriptivist theories there is another very important distinction among descriptivist theories that seems to be lurking behind Kripke's discussion even though he never explicitly draws it.³ The description (or cluster of descriptions) associated with a name might be so associated for the entire community of users of the name (we will call it a 'community descriptivist theory'), or might be so associated just for an individual speaker, or

even for a specific moment of time or a specific use of the name by an individual speaker (an 'individual-use descriptivist theory'). We would have, then, four kinds of descriptivist theories: (a) a community meaning theory, (b) a community reference-fixing theory, (c) an individual-use meaning theory, (d) an individual-use reference-fixing theory.

Five observations:

First: Kripke's modal argument is supposed to present a problem for (a) and (c) that does not affect (b) and (d). Now, if we allow the descriptions associated with the name to include the operator "actual" or some equivalent device, (a) and (c) make the same predictions as (b) and (d) regarding who or what the referent of the name will be in non-actual situations: With respect to a counterfactual situation in which Aristotle did not study with Plato "Aristotle" still refers to Aristotle, whereas "the greatest disciple of Plato" does not; nevertheless with respect to that same counterfactual situation "the individual who is actually the greatest student of Plato" does refer to Aristotle.

Second: Even if, like (a), (c) is not subject to the modal argument, it is, I think, quite an implausible kind of theory to hold. According to this type of theory for each user of a name there is a description (or cluster of descriptions) that is synonymous with the name, even though different speakers might associate different descriptions with the name. If one person is to understand what another has said, though, they must share the meaning they attribute to the expressions they use. So if it were true that names have an associated description that give their meaning, if one person were to understand what another had said when using a sentence containing names they should share the meaning they attribute to any names occurring in the sentence they use. And so it can not be both that there are meaning-providing descriptions associated with every name *and* that different competent users of a name can have different descriptions associated with the name.

Third: Given the problem with (c) just pointed out, maybe it could be said that an individual-use meaning theory should not postulate that descriptions are associated with (and give the meaning of) names for a specific use of the name by a single speaker but rather that the description is associated with a name relative to a context. On this view names would be like indexicals in that their meaning could vary from one context to the next, but not within a certain context. The same description would be associated with a given name by all the speakers in a given context.

One thing that might motivate this context-dependent version of (c) is the fact that some names are ambiguous: both the philosopher and the tycoon were named "Aristotle". On this view, in some contexts "Aristotle" would refer to one man, in others to the other. I do not think that there is any good reason to hold that names are like indexicals in order to account for the fact that they are ambiguous. Still, if which description is associated with a name depended on context just in the way in which it might be claimed that which man is referred to with an use of "Aristotle" depends on context, then any name that is not ambiguous would have the same description associated with it by all the speakers in all their uses of the name. An even for ambiguous names, the same description would be associated with the same name in precisely those occasions in which someone who held the view (a) but not the indexical-in-order-to-account-for-ambiguity view would say that a given description is associated with a name. This context-dependent view would be, then, just a version of view (a).

In the face of this someone might hold that the description that is associated with a name must be the same for all the speakers in a certain occasion of use even though it can vary from one context to another beyond ambiguity (that is, it can vary even for names that are not ambiguous, or for different uses of "Aristotle" when it is used to refer to the philosopher). I believe that this context-dependent version of (c) would be unpalatable for the same reason we gave above against (c): The meaning that the sentence "Aristotle is my favourite philosopher" has when I use it in a certain occasion is exactly the same that it would have if I were to use this sentence in any other context. (Or at least the contribution made by "Aristotle" to the meaning of the whole would be the same -we might want to leave it open that there might be contextual variations regarding how fond of some α one must be in order for it to count as one's favourite α , or how much devoted to philosophy one must be in order to be a philosopher). And the same seems that goes for any other of my uses of "Aristotle" to refer to the philosopher. It can not be that John this morning and Peter tonight both understand what I say by using "Aristotle is my favourite philosopher" if there is a difference in the meaning they take "Aristotle" to have, since I intend my two uses of the sentence to have exactly the same meaning.

Fourth: There is a fundamental and critical difference between, on the one hand, (a) and (b) and on the other (d). Whereas in (a) and (b) the description (or cluster of descriptions) associated with the name are so associated in a conventional way, this is not so in (d). The kind of descriptivist theory

I will try to show that is not subject to Kripke's criticisms is of the type in (d). In a theory of the kind in (d) each speaker might associate a different description with the name. This description's only role is to allow the speaker to be able to 'intellectually reach' the object that he will talk about.

Fifth: Even if Kripke does not say it explicitly, most of the time he seems to be considering individual level theories, and many of the arguments that he offers against a descriptivist theory of proper names seem to be particularly addressed to a theory of the type (d). This does not mean, though, that with these arguments he does not also attack (a), (b) and (c) as well. Because of the specific consequences of (d) that Kripke's arguments attack, his arguments apply as well against (a), (b) and (c):

The arguments in (2) and (3) (the non-necessity and the non-sufficient of the associated description) proceed by describing situations in which *in a given occasion* a name refers to an individual and if it is postulated that it refers to the individual that fits some description associated with the name (or most of the descriptions in an associated cluster of descriptions) then we get the wrong predictions regarding that particular situation, because according to what we postulate the name should refer to an individual that is not the one the name does actually refer to.

A meaning theory of descriptions (i.e. (a) or (c)) by claiming that the description associated with the name is synonymous with it, it is also committed to the fact that on each occasion the individual the name refers to is the one that fits the description. So the type of argument just described applies to (a) and (c) too. On the other hand, a community reference-fixing theory (i.e. (b)) by claiming that there is a associated description that determines the reference of the name for all occasions is, of course, also committed to maintaining that on each occasion there is some description associated with the name (always the same!) that determines its reference. And so is also affected by the type of argumentation we described in the previous paragraph.

3. *An individual-level reference-fixing descriptivist theory*

Kripke's general picture about names in *Naming and Necessity* is often taken to imply what Kripke calls the "Milliam picture of naming" or, as it is most usually called the *direct reference view* of names. Kripke tells us (p. 26) that according to Mill "names have denotation but not connotation".

According to the direct reference view all the semantic contribution that names make is to provide some individual; they do so 'directly', without providing any further information or features of what is named; there is no sense, connotation, guise, or mode of presentation conventionally associated with the name which speakers must know or grasp in order to understand a use of the name. A name simply stands in place of the thing it names.

Direct reference is often taken to be incompatible with a descriptivist theory of proper names. It is certainly so with a theory such as (a) and (c), and it seems clear that also with a theory such as (b). But a descriptivist theory of the kind in (d) can be perfectly compatible with the direct reference view of proper names. An individual-use reference-fixing theory can claim that all the semantic function of a name is to provide an individual, while being at the same time sensitive to the intuition that in order to talk about an individual one needs to be able to intellectually reach the individual, to be able to have a cognitive fix on that individual. All a name does is to refer to some individual, but in order to be able to competently use a name a speaker must have a cognitive fix on the individual, and he can do so if the speaker in each one of his uses of the name has an associated 'description' (more in a moment about what exactly can be part of this 'description') that applies uniquely to the individual that is the referent of the name. Each person in a community might identify an individual in a different way, but if they all identify the same individual and are able to realize that they are all identifying the same individual they can agree to use certain expression as a name for that individual; even if each speaker is able to identify the referent of the name, whatever information he has associated with the name is not part of the meaning of the name, and need not be shared by other speakers. Being able to identify the referent of the name is just a condition on being able to understand the convention governing the use of the name (i.e. that people in the community have agreed to use such an expression as a name of such an individual), and this does not alter the fact that all the semantic function of the name is to provide some individual. The requirement that a user of the name have in each moment a description associated with the name through which he is able to identify the name's referent is of course a way of assuring that we have a way of explaining the fact (1) we mentioned in the introduction: how does a name reach its referent? Each competent user is able to identify this reference through some information he has; speakers have agreed to use the name to talk about that individual which each one of them is able to identify through

some information each one has; when a name is used what makes it the case that it reaches its referent is the fact that each speaker will understand which individual it refers by way of having information associated with the name that uniquely identifies that referent.

(What we are saying might seem obviously subject to the criticisms that Kripke provides in *Naming and Necessity* and that we described in (II) and (III), where Kripke allegedly shows that the most plausible candidates for being a description associated with a name that uniquely identifies its referent lead us to the wrong predictions regarding what or who a name refers to. We will see in section 5 that our descriptivist theory of type (d) can be defended against these objections).

All the semantic function of a name consists in providing some individual. Nevertheless and in accordance with the spirit of what Evans called *Russell's Principle*⁴ it is very plausible and natural to accept -we would need good reasons to think otherwise- that in order for a speaker to be able to use a name α he must

- (i) know that α is a name,
- (ii) know the individual that is the referent of α , and
- (iii) know that α is a name of this individual.

Let's examine each of these three conditions with some more detail.

(i) *To know that α is a name*

To know that α is a name will require, first, knowing the name as a syntactic expression. This will involve being able in normal conditions to tell whether one has been presented with a token of α . It will also involve knowing that α is syntactically a Noun Phrase and has certain other syntactic properties (which we do not need to go into here). Knowing that α is a name requires also knowing that α will behave semantically in a certain way: its only semantic role will be to provide an individual; its role will not be to provide the individual under some guise or mode of presentation. The referent of α is the referent of α not because it meets some condition which is conventionally associated with α . Even if α is made up of several expressions that have their own independent meaning (one of Kripke's examples is "The Holy Roman Empire"), the meaning of α does not depend on the meaning of its parts.

(Regarding this last characteristic of the semantics of proper names we may wonder: what about names of people such as "Bill Clinton"? "Bill

"Clinton" refers to Bill Clinton, and so do "Bill" and "Clinton". "Bill" and "Clinton" are multiply ambiguous, "Bill Clinton" is less so. The meaning of "Bill Clinton", it might be claimed, is obtained from the meaning of its parts by the rule: if α is an expression of type *first-name* and β is an expression of type *last-name* and α and β both refer to x then $[\alpha\beta]$ refers to x . The point of having complex proper names using this rule, it might be claimed, is to reduce ambiguity [notice that if α and β do not refer to the same individual then the rule does not assign any referent to $[\alpha\beta]$]. I do not think, though, that it is correct to claim that the meaning of "Bill Clinton" is compositionally determined from the meaning of "Bill" and "Clinton". Notice for instance that even if "George Orwell" and "Eric Blair" are both names of the same person and "George" is a first name and "Blair" a second name "George Blair" is not a name of that same person; or also: I can decide to name my parakeet "Bill Clinton" without this making it the case that he is also named "Bill" or "Clinton". It seems plausible to hold that "Bill Clinton", "Bill" and "Clinton" are three different names of the same person, and that the meaning of none of them depends compositionally from the meaning of the others. This does not mean, though, that we need to endow with meaning to each of the three names in an independent way. We can, and we do, rely on general rules that set what the meaning of certain expression will be, given what the meaning of certain other expression will be. This is not a rule that gives the meaning of one expression as a function of the meaning of another or others, but rather a rule that makes it the case that one expression has meaning when other expressions do. It is like the rule that makes it the case that, as it is often said, "Richard" and "Dick" are the same name, and so are "Josep" and "Pep", "Robert" and "Bob", "Francisco" and "Paco", etc. "Richard" and "Dick" are not, of course, really the same name. It is just that they have the same referent and that there is a general rule that establishes that if a *person* is named "Richard" then he is also named "Dick". This is not a rule that gives the meaning of "Dick" as a function of the meaning of "Richard" but rather a rule that makes it the case that "Dick" has a referent given the fact that "Richard" also has it).

(ii) *To know the object x which is the referent of α*

How much does one need to know about x in order to know x ? We just saw in (i) that knowing α as a syntactic expression requires being able to recognize under normal conditions whether one is presented with a token of α . Does knowing an object x require (for the case of physical objects) that one

be able to recognize (under some conditions which are 'normal' for the kind of object in question) whether one is in front of x ? How much one has to know about x in order to know x depends on what is the relevance for the point at issue of the fact that one knows x . In the case of (i) the point of knowing α was to be able to use it, and so it required to be able to recognize instances of it. Here in (ii) the point of knowing x is to be able to 'intellectually reach' it, to be able to cognitively differentiate it from all the other objects. So it seems that what is required here to be able to know x must be much less stringent than in the case of knowing an expression one must be able to use. Here it is just required that one be able to think about that particular object, and this might be compatible with not being able to tell whether one is in the presence of the object one thinks about (under normal or even favourable circumstances). In the relevant sense we are using it here I know the tallest giraffe that ever existed since I am able to identify it as 'the tallest giraffe that ever existed', even though if I am in front of it I might not be able to tell whether he is actually the giraffe I think about when I think of the tallest giraffe that ever existed.

We introduce the notion of an *idea* of an individual which will play a role similar to the one that a cluster of descriptions is supposed to play in a descriptivist theory of names. Having an idea of an individual is what allows someone to be able of thinking at some particular moment about that individual. One difference between our notion of an *idea* of an individual and a *singular concept* is that we want to allow for an idea of an individual to be able to alter some of the information it contains. Whereas the singular concept of the tallest giraffe is different from the singular concept of the giraffe which lives in the Amsterdam zoo and is the tallest in the world, we want to say that someone's idea of the tallest giraffe does not disappear and get substituted by another one when one comes to think that it lives in the Amsterdam's zoo, it is simply that some more information is added to the idea that the subject has of that giraffe.

Not all the content that someone has as part of his idea of some individual needs to be accurate and fit the individual of which the idea is an idea of. It is sufficient that 'enough' of the content of the idea be accurate. Some sorts of information might have more weight than others. What is the relative weight of each sort of information might depend on the context in which one is using certain idea that one has to think about some individual.

The way Kripke presents descriptivism, and the way we have been talking about 'descriptions' so far in this paper, might suggest that the sort of information that makes up an idea can be assimilated to a set of descrip-

tions that can be expressed in the language of the subject who has the idea and that the subject can easily provide those descriptions if asked to. This is not really so. Some of the information that constitutes someone's idea of some individual might be part of the idea in an implicit way and might require quite a lot of effort for the subject to realize that that information is part of his idea of certain individual. The same is true for people's knowledge of some concept such as the one we express with the verb "to swim". If we ask someone who does perfectly well know what swimming is to tell us what swimming is we might very well get an answer such as: "to move in the water"; this is not really enough, and we can point to our subject that if one moves in the water using a ship or submarine one is not swimming; our subject might add: "to move in the water unaided by any sort of device"; this is still not enough, as ships do not swim even if they do move in the water unaided; etc. This makes it plausible to believe that the fact that some subject has certain idea which contains certain information does not mean that the subject has that information in an explicit way and that he is aware of the fact that he has that information and that he can readily provide it when asked to.

The talk of 'descriptions' suggests also that the information in a 'cluster of descriptions' or in an 'idea of an individual' is described or at least describable in the language of the subject that has the idea. We will allow for information not describable in the subject's language to be part of an idea. One such sort of information would be the one that one has when he is able to reliably identify someone's face. I am able to identify Tim Williamson but I would not be able to describe how he looks like in a way that would match my ability to recognize him. Nevertheless the information of how he looks like is part of my idea of him.

When I say that my knowledge of how someone looks like is not describable in the language (or languages) I speak it does not mean to say that it is not describable in any language. If some of us realize that we are all able to identify how a person looks like we can agree to introduce a new term in our language, say "facitong", that will apply to the way that specific person looks. This term will presumably just be true of the way that person, her twin sisters, and clones of any of them look like. The description "The person that is facitong" will then provide the same sort of information I previously had about how the person looks like and which was not previously describable in my language. In order for someone to be a competent user of "facitong" it will not be enough that the person knows that "facitong" applies to the way such and such a person looks, it will also be

necessary that he knows how that person looks -in the same way in which in order to be a competent user of "swimming" it is not enough to know that 'swimming is what most people do when they go into that building with the "swimming-pool" sign at the door'.

(Our representation of how a person looks like is a plausible candidate for an example of a representation with 'non-conceptual content'. What makes it the case that the content is non-conceptual does not seem to be the fact that it is not expressible in a language -we just saw that any sort of content which different individuals [or even a single individual in different occasions] can realize that they all have, can become the meaning of a term that the individuals might agree to introduce- but rather the fact that it is a complex kind of content [how a person looks like depends on how her eyes, nose, eyebrows, etc. are like, on how they are combined, etc.], and that we can not express in language, any language [the present language or one we might create], the complexity of this kind of content in a way that matches our ability to discriminate the different aspects of this kind of content).

A subject's idea of some individual can also include indexical information that could not be expressed in a non indexical way. Maybe 'here' just corresponds to 'the place I am now'. But there is no such description to be provided for "I" or for "now". Information that can not be described, like in our previous example of how a person looks like, can also be regarded as indexical -"she looks like *this*", where it would not be possible to substitute the indexical by a complete description of how the person looks like.

If an individual is already named α and I know it, then that the individual is named α will be part of my idea of that individual. It would not be possible for a group of us to first introduce some name β by identifying the individual that is to be called β as 'the individual that is called β ' (or 'that will be called β '). But, of course, if an individual is already named α , and I know that there is an individual named α , and if that is the only such individual, I can think of it as 'the only individual named α '. That this is possible and that there is no circularity involved here might be easier to see if we consider an analogous case where there is some convention involving some individual which is not a convention about the use of names. Suppose that a group of individuals have the convention of jumping twice every time they meet some particular individual. If I learn about this fact even without knowing anything else about the individual in front of whom people jump, I am able to intellectually reach this individual knowing that he is 'the one about whom there is the jumping-convention'. (Just with this information I would not, of course, be able to follow the jumping-

convention because being able to follow this convention requires knowing who the individual is in a way that allows one to realize [in normal conditions] that one has met that particular individual. But in order to take part in a convention of naming something or someone what is needed is not to be able to realize whether one is in front of the object but simply to be able to intellectually reach the object, and to do this it is enough that one has an idea that applies only to that individual -like the one with the information 'the person regarding whom there is the jumping convention').

It might be the case that what object an idea is an idea of can only be determined with respect to what caused the subject to have the information that he has as part of this idea. So, for instance and using an example of Evans⁵, it might be claimed that what makes my idea of a certain man an idea of him rather than an idea of his twin brother (even if, say, I mistakenly believe the man to be a painter and, coincidentally, his twin brother *is* a painter) is the fact that he, rather than his brother, is the cause of the information I have regarding a person that looks such and such. We will leave it open that what an idea is an idea of is not solely determined by the information that constitutes the idea and that the idea 'causal history' plays also an indispensable role. Two related comments:

First, I am rather doubtful that it is really necessary to take into consideration information (what caused the idea) other than the one which is part of the idea in order to appropriately determine what or who the idea is an idea of. For instance, in the example of the twin brothers we have that, on the one hand, my idea will contain the information that I have met the person. On the other hand it seems plausible to suppose that in general information regarding direct contact has more weight than other sorts of information. So the information that I met the man (and other information related to the contact we had) can certainly outweigh the misinformation I have about the man I met and that fits better his twin brother. Furthermore, even in a case in which, say, I was not sure whether I had ever met the man or just seen some picture of him and all I remembered about him is that he is a man that looks more or less like *this*, I could still identify him rather than his twin brother (of whom, say, I did see a picture in the newspaper even though I did not pay any attention to it and my seeing his picture did not affect at all the idea I now have of his brother) by my (implicitly) thinking that he is the man that caused me to think that there is a man that looks like *this*. There is no reason for not taking the information 'the one that caused me to think that there is someone who looks like *this*' to be part

of my idea of the man. Given that it is some information regarding contact with the individual at issue it can be taken to have more weight than other kinds of information. If this is so, then it does not seem to be any need to claim that in order to determine what an idea is an idea of it is necessary to take into consideration more than what is part of the idea. Even so, I believe that this issue would require further discussion and so I claim to leave it open whether some facts other than the information that is part of the idea should be taken into consideration in order to determine what an idea is an idea of.

Second, the fact that we are leaving this question open does not mean that we are suggesting that it is a minor issue. The question is important and the two different positions with respect to it can be taken to correspond to two very different general views. It might even be claimed that an alleged descriptivist theory that is willing to concede that the 'descriptions' associated with a name might determine an individual on the basis of what caused the individual to have those descriptions is not really a descriptivist theory. The essence of a descriptivist theory, it might be said, is to reduce singular reference to the expression of general concepts, and allowing a role to causal relations goes beyond the pure expression of general concepts. I think, though, that a theory that makes it the case that the information that a user of a name has associated with the name plays an essential role in allowing him to use the name and so to refer to the object that is the referent of the name deserves to be distinguished from a purely 'causal' theory such as Kripke's and can, furthermore, be properly termed as 'descriptivist'. In any case Kripke himself thinks that one such a theory is a descriptivist theory and here we are trying to defend (one version of) descriptivism against Kripke's attacks against descriptivism. So if we are finally able to respond to Kripke's criticisms we will not have done so by presenting as a descriptivist theory a theory that Kripke would not have regarded as such, and against which he did not address his criticisms. Kripke shows that he regards a theory as descriptivist even if there is some causal element involved in determining which individual is selected by the descriptions associated with a name when he comments on Gareth Evans views (who claims that a name refers to that object, if any, that is the main source of the information associated with a name) and tells us that Evans uses certain example (one that Evans uses to show the importance of taking a name to refer to the *source* of the information associated with the name

and not to the object that *fits* that information) "to support the description theory" (p. 163).

(iii) *To know that α is a name of the individual x*

In order to know that the name α is a name of the individual x in some community one needs to know that there is a convention in that community of using α in accordance with (i), that is, as an expression that behaves syntactically in a certain way and whose sole semantic role is to select x . For there to be such a convention requires that each member in the community has the (rational) intention to use α in accordance with (i), and that each member believes that the others also have this intention, and believes that they believe that one has such an intention, and to believe that they believe that one believes that they have such an intention, etc. Furthermore these beliefs must be justified so that they constitute knowledge. So there being such a convention involves, among other things, that there is common knowledge in the community that its members intend to use α to select x in accordance with (i).

To be part of this convention one needs to have beliefs which involve x , and so one needs to think about x , i.e. one needs to be able to 'intellectually reach' x . That this will be so for any person that is able to use the name is guaranteed by the condition (ii).

The beliefs one must have in order to be part of the convention also involve thinking about the community one is part of. Having these beliefs can not require, though, to identify the community by explicitly identifying each of the members of this community. We will in a moment introduce the notion of two people *being coordinated* in their possession of a name. Using this notion we can say that for a subject to have beliefs about a community in which there is certain convention regarding α it is only required that the subject be able to identify the community as that group of individuals that are coordinated with him in their possession of α .

I am *coordinated* with an individual A in my possession of the name α to refer to x if and only if I am immediately coordinated with A or I am coordinated with someone who is immediately coordinated with A . I am *immediately coordinated* with A in my possession of the name α to refer to x if one of the following obtains: (1) I learned the name (at least in part) from A . That is, I learned from A that the expression α is used in some community as a name in accordance with (i) to determine x . The qualification "at least in part" is meant to include also the case where I realized that there is the relevant kind of convention by observing how some indi-

viduals that included A were using the expression α ; (2) A learned the name (at least in part) from me, (3) We both took part in the introduction of the name. We might have done so by explicitly saying "let's use α as a name of such-and-such individual". That such-and-such individual might have been specified by means of some descriptions, or might have been identified using a demonstrative and relying on the fact that each of us were able to identify x and that furthermore each of us knew that the other was identifying the same individual as he did. Or we can both be part of the introduction of a name if we agreed on following certain general rule for the introduction of names (like the one governing the assignment of number-names to the streets in certain cities). There could possibly be still other ways of two people participating together in the introduction of a name.

Notice that it being common *knowledge* in the community that its members intend to use a name α to determine x in accordance to (i) requires not only that the members of the community identify the same individual and intend to use the name as a name of that individual, but also that each one knows that the others are identifying the same individual that one does (and that they know that one knows so). If one does not *know* that the others are identifying the same individual x that he is identifying, he would not be justified in believing that the others have the intention to use α to determine *the object* x in accordance with (i). Knowing that I am coordinated with the people in my community of use of certain name α justifies me in believing that we are all identifying the same individual.

There being a convention requires that members of the community are coordinated and know that they are: how else other than by being coordinated and knowing that we are could we know that the individual we attempt to identify with our uses of the name is the same? The fact that I learned the name from you (or you from me), or that we both agreed to introduce it will make it the case that first, we both identify the same individual and, furthermore, that we know that we did (we might not recall, for instance, from whom we learned the name, still we would know that whoever we learned the name from was using it to refer to the same individual we refer to with our use of the name). And the same holds for my relation with those with whom you are immediately coordinated. And so, for my relation with everyone in the community of use of the name.

Even if all the semantic function of a name is to determine an individual, if two people both believe that the expression α is a name of the individual x , they do not understand each other when they use the name α if

they are not coordinated in their use. Expressions only have a meaning with respect to a community (which might, nevertheless, just have one member). And only those people who are coordinated with me in their possession of a name are part of my community for that name. For a use of the name to refer to its referent it must be the case that the one that utters it and those to whom he address are coordinated in their possession of the name. This is so, not just for proper names but an analogous requirement holds for any kind of expression. Suppose, for instance, that by a very improbable coincidence two communities that have been completely isolated both came to use the same expression, say "Kaumam", to mean 'it rains'. Suppose that a man from one of the communities one day meets a woman from the other community and thinking she belongs to his own community the first thing that he says is "Kaumam". Did she understand his utterance? It seems that she did not, even if she formed the same belief she would had formed if she had understood what he said. (The reason this is so is that the mechanism by which she came to think that he was saying that it was raining was not a reliable one. So she believed but she did not *know* that he used the expression with such and such intention, and so she did not understand him). Similarly if both you and I, and with complete independence of each other, decide while alone in each one's own room: 'from now on I will use "Lala" to refer to tallest woman in Andorra'. If I latter meet you and the first thing I say is "Lala must be sleeping now", did you understand what I said? It seems that you did not, even if you came to form the same believe you would have if you had understood me. There was no common knowledge that we were both identifying the same individual as the referent of "Lala".

With these clarifications of (i), (ii) and (iii), we can proceed to show in section 4 that the kind of individual-use reference-fixing descriptivist theory that I have presented can still account for the phenomena in (1), (2) and (3) of the Introduction section. We saw that Kripke regarded the fact that (meaning) descriptivist theories can account for these phenomena as a very attractive reason for holding a descriptivist theory (but, of course, he also thinks there are even much better reasons for not holding it). Then, in section 5, we will try to show that the kind of descriptivist theory presented here can successfully answer the objections that Kripke presents against descriptivist theories (the objections we labelled (I)-(V) in the introduction section). Notice that section 4 would not be necessary for the main aim of this paper, i.e. to show that *Naming and Necessity* does not refute descrip-

tivism. Section 4 simply aims at making our particular version of descriptivism more attractive by indicating how it can account for some phenomena which is not at all clear how it could be accounted for from a sort of view such as Kripke's.

4. Accounting for the phenomena that makes descriptivism attractive

(1) Explaining how the name reaches its referent

The first feature that we saw Kripke says that should count as a good reason for holding descriptivism was that a descriptivist theory can explain how the reference of a proper name is determined, whereas for a non-descriptivist theory it would seem mysterious how a name can *reach* its referent.

The particular sort of descriptivist theory we have presented even if also subscribes to direct reference can still account for (1). What makes it the case that in one of my uses the name α determines certain object is the fact that I and the people who are going to be able to understand my use of the name intent to follow a convention about using α as a name to determine certain object. What makes it the case that the name 'reaches' that object is the fact that each of us has an idea of that object (maybe each one a different one) which we use in order to be able to follow the convention and that the idea selects the object because it contains conditions characterize it uniquely (or, maybe [according to what we left open], because the object is causally responsible in the right way of our idea having the information that it has).

(2) Informative identity statements

The second sort of phenomenon that we saw that Kripke says that makes (meaning) descriptivism attractive is the fact that there are identity statements involving names that are informative. A statement such as "Ringo Starr is Richard Starkey" is informative. A (meaning) descriptivist theory can easily explain how this is so: since each name is synonymous with a description then the statement is informative in the way that, say, "The man that play drums with The Beatles is the man that wrote *Octopus's Garden*" is informative -we are told that there is one single man which is both the drummer of The Beatles and the author of certain song.

But if as I content direct reference is correct then all a name does is to determine an individual. It seems, then, that it should not make any kind of difference to use one name rather than another if both determine the

same individual (and we are using them within a community that possesses both names). And so "Ringo Starr is Richard Starkey" should be as uninformative as "Ringo Starr is Ringo Starr" is. But of course, the first identity statement *is* informative.

If I am a competent user of "Ringo Starr" and of "Richard Starkey" then I must be able to identify Ringo and for each of these two names I must know that that name is a name of Ringo. What will allow me to identify Ringo is, as we have seen, my having an idea that is an idea of him. For each of the names I will think that it is a name of Ringo using some idea to be able to think about Ringo. Now, it is perfectly possible that I have two ideas which are ideas of the same individual without me knowing that I just have two ways of identifying the same individual. I might identify the referent of "Ringo Starr" using one of these ideas and identify the referent of "Richard Starkey" using the other idea. What I will have to do in order to interpret what has been said with an utterance of "Ringo Starr is Richard Starkey" (of course I would do so in an automatic and even unconscious way) is to identify the referent of "Ringo Starr", to identify the referent of "Richard Starkey" and to consider a situation where the 'two' individuals are the same. But, of course, I will identify the referent of each name using the idea I have associated with the name. So my considering that the 'two' individuals are the same will involve my considering that the information in both ideas apply to a single individual. And so my accepting what has been said would result in my coming to accept that the information in both ideas applies to a single individual. And so my accepting what has been said would have an important epistemic effect on me. The same applies, of course, to any other person in my community that identifies the referent of the two names by means of two different ideas. The specific epistemic effect that coming to accept what has been said by an utterance of an identity statement will have in each person can vary since each person can (and most likely will) be using a different pair of ideas when identifying the referent of the two names.

(If as part of our linguistic theory we want to be able to point to the *proposition* that an identity statement expresses we could technically define it as a function from the set of possible complete cognitive states of a competent user of the two names into that same set [one might identify this set as a set of sets of possible worlds: each cognitive state corresponds to the set of worlds that are epistemically compatible with what a subject would believe if he were in that cognitive state]: to each possible complete cognitive state the function assigns that cognitive state the subject would be

in if he had started up in the first cognitive state and then evaluated and accepted the identity statement).

(Two names might, according to what we have seen in this section, determine the same individual without a competent user of the names being aware of it. One single expression, say, "Aristotle" might be used as two names to refer to two different individuals. This is as un-mysterious as the fact that one single expression like, for instance, "bank" can be used as two predicates to express two different concepts. Which of the two *homophonic* names is being used in a particular use of the expression? Which of the two individuals is determined? The one that the speaker intends to refer to -the ones listening should be able to know which of the two it is from the context. It is also possible that there is a single expression that is used as two names, though it turns out that those two names refer to the same individual. We can call these names *homophonic co-referential names*. How are these pair of names possible according to the view defended here? The names are introduced and are spread in the same way in which homophonic non-coreferential names are introduced and are spread. Speakers will have two ideas associated with the expression [and understand that it is ambiguous and that in each use its reference will get determined by one of the ideas]. Some speakers might know that the two names are actually names of the same individual. [It might even be the case that all the speakers know so]. What would make it the case that on a particular occasion I am using one name rather than the other? The same that in the case of homophonic non-coreferential names: my intention to refer to the individual I identify in a certain way rather than the other. What would make it the case that people listening to me interpret me correctly when I am using one of a pair of homophonic co-referential names? It can certainly not be just the fact that they are identifying the same individual as I do and taking it to be determined by the expression. It is rather: the fact that they understand my use of the name by identifying the reference with that of the two ideas they have associated with the expression whose being associated with the expression is coordinated with my having the idea I use to determine the referent associated with the expression. -I might have introduced you to two homophonic and actually co-referential [even if I might not be aware of it] names by pointing to the referents of the name in two pictures. You latter learn more about the two people in the pictures: the one in the first picture is the mayor of Boston in 1992, the one in the second is the present US ambassador to the Vatican. You then introduce Jane to the names by using these descriptions. My use of the name for which I identify its refer-

ent using the idea I associated with the name when I introduced you to the name by pointing to the first picture is coordinated with Jane's name that identifies the referent through the idea that contains the information that the referent used to be the mayor of Boston, but not with her possession of the name that for her involves identifying the referent through an idea that contains the information that the person is a present US ambassador. Each one of the two homophonic names I possess is coordinated with one of hers but not with the other).

(3) *Singular negative existential statements*

The problem that singular negative existential statements and in particular negative singular existential statements that are true pose for a theory of proper names committed to direct reference is this: According to direct reference all the semantic function of a name is to provide an individual. But then a singular negative existential statement, that is, a statement of the form "N does not exist" could never be true: If $\lceil N \rceil$ refers to some individual then the negative existential statement is false; but if $\lceil N \rceil$ does not refer then the statement should be neither true nor false, since one of its parts lacks meaning. Nevertheless there *are* true negative existential statements as, for instance, "Santa does not exist".

In discussing existential statements I propose that, unlike what is customary, we focus on names that are not names of fictional characters. Names for fictional characters are special as it is shown by the fact that they can appear in singular statements other than existential statements which have meaning (and might even be claimed to be true) such as "Superman is able to fly" or "Santa is a legendary old man that lives in the North Pole". How names for fictional characters work should be explained in a derivative way from how regular names work. So I propose that we focus here on existential statements containing regular names like "Paraguay", "Aristotle" or "Alpha Centaury".

One user of the name "Bill Clinton" is told "Bill Clinton does not exist". What does he do in order to interpret this statement? In order to answer this question I propose that we look first at how we interpret the antecedent of counterfactuals such as "If Aristotle had not existed, the number of entries for 'Metaphysics' in the library catalogue would be 0"⁶. In evaluating the antecedent of this counterfactual one proceeds (implicitly and unconsciously⁷) as follows: he considers certain individual -Aristotle-; this is what should be expected that he did if direct reference is true; he identifies Aristotle using the idea of him that he has associated with "Aristotle"

(if our individual-use reference-fixing version of descriptivism is correct he would not be able to identify Aristotle in any other way than by using an idea of him); (If he has more than one idea associated with "Aristotle" because "Aristotle" is an ambiguous name for him, then he might repeat the process we describe here for each of the ideas associated with "Aristotle" so as to consider the different possible interpretations of what is been said so as to be able to choose the one that will seem to be the most relevant one given the context of utterance). Then he considers a situation which is somewhat like how things actually are except for the fact that Aristotle is not there and, furthermore all the actual facts that would have been different if Aristotle had not existed are considered as appropriately altered. With respect to this situation, the consequent of the counterfactual is evaluated.

When evaluating an indicative negative singular existential statement one proceeds in a way analogous to the counterfactual case: one tries to identify certain individual (this is what one should be expected to try to do if one is to proceed in accordance with what direct reference would prescribe); he does so using the idea he has associated with the name; he then considers a situation which is like how things actually are except only for the fact that the individual that he thinks is identifying (by means of the idea associated with the name) is not there; all other facts are not considered as altered -this is one fundamental difference with the counterfactual case (a bit more on this difference in the next paragraph). In particular, one actual fact that will not be regarded as altered in the situation one will come to consider is the fact that people in the community think to be using the name at issue. But then: the situation one will end up considering as a result of interpreting a negative singular existential statement (in the way that one would be supposed to evaluate it if direct reference is correct) is a situation which is perfectly defined even if the name has no referent.

(Regarding the difference in what one takes to be part of the situation considered in the case of a counterfactual and the case of an indicative statement: In the counterfactual case one is to consider a situation that is regarded as *counter-factual*, so that facts that are taken to be actual can be taken to be altered in the situation one is considering. In the non-counterfactual indicative case, the situation one is considering is to be regarded as actual, and so any fact -other than the very one regarding the existence of an individual who is to be the referent of the name- must be taken to be as it actually is).

Let's suppose that Bill Clinton does not exist. It is all a media invention. Sometimes the person we think to see on TV is just a robot, some-

times he is one of a series of actors. If that is the case then "Bill Clinton does not exist" is true. What makes it true? The situation that I (and any other speaker) will end up considering when interpreting this statement (even if in our interpreting we take "Bill Clinton" to behave the way direct reference claims names to behave) is a situation where people think to be using the name "Bill Clinton" even though the name does not really determine any individual. This is precisely how things are like, though, and so the statement is true.

If Clinton does not exist, then a statement such as "Bill Clinton does not smoke", though, is predicted on the view defended here to have no truth conditions, as seems to be desirable. The situation that the subject would allegedly end up considering when interpreting an utterance of "Bill Clinton does not smoke" is a situation that should involve the individual that he would aim to identify with the idea he has associated with "Bill Clinton". Since there is no such individual, there is neither really a situation being considered when evaluating "Bill Clinton does not smoke", and so the statement is neither true nor false. In evaluating "Bill Clinton does not exist", though, the situation we end up considering does not attempt to involve the individual allegedly determined by "Bill Clinton". It is rather a situation where even if people use the name, the name is an empty one. And this is precisely how things actually are like if Clinton does not exist. And so the situation considered matches how things actually are and so the negative existential statement is true.

What is crucial is that although from the 'outside point of view' the name does not refer according to direct reference, if we consider the point of view of each one of the speakers when they try to evaluate the negative existential statement, and we consider what a person interpreting the statement will do -even if he treats the name as just determining one individual without conveying any other sort of information about that individual (that is he proceeds in a way that treats the name as behaving in exactly the way that a direct reference theorist would say it behaves) then he ends up considering a situation which is perfectly defined even if the name has no reference. And so it makes perfect sense to ask whether that situation does or does not obtain, and so, whether the statement is true or false.

5. Kripke's objections against descriptivism

In this final section we will try to show that the version of a descriptivist theory defended in this paper is not subject to the criticisms that Kripke

presents in *Naming and Necessity*. We very briefly described Kripke's criticisms in section 1, (I)-(V). Let us now consider each of (I)-(V):

(I) *The modal argument*

We already mentioned (in the *first* observation, in section 2) that the version of descriptivism defended here is not really subject to the modal argument.

(II) *Non necessity of the associated description*

Let's suppose the Schmidt-Gödel story to be true. Kripke's example aims to show that it is not necessary that there is a description associated with a name that selects some individual for a speaker to be able to use the name to refer to that individual. Kripke's example assumes that it is possible for someone whose only information associated with "Gödel" is 'the one that proved the incompleteness of arithmetic' to use the name "Gödel" so that it refers to Gödel and not to Schmidt.

Anyone who is able to use the name "Gödel" in our community so that it refers to Gödel must be coordinated in their possession of the name with the rest of us. If one day someone who had never been in contact with anyone who uses the name "Gödel", being alone in her room, decided that from that moment on she would use the name "Gödel" to refer to whoever proved the incompleteness of arithmetic (she had read about such a proof without being told who proved it) then if she were to use the name "Gödel" when trying to communicate with some person in our community, that person would not really have understood what she had said (recall the example regarding "Kaumam" in section 4-(iii)). Furthermore, if she did not aim at communicating with others who also use the name and just attempted to use the name to explicitly express some thought to herself she would be referring to Schmidt, not to Gödel.

If someone who is part of our community (of possession of the name "Gödel"), and so someone who is coordinated with the rest of us in the community, uses the name "Gödel" she will certainly have as part of her idea of Gödel information such as 'the person that other people in the community determine with the name "Gödel"', or 'the individual that people in my community refer to with "Gödel"', or maybe 'the individual because of whom I believe that there is someone named "Gödel"', or other information of this same sort.

Isn't this sort of information circular? I content that it is not. I argue this when commenting on (V) below).

We already said that the different sorts of information that constitute certain idea of an individual might have different weight in order to determine what object the idea is an idea of. Information of the sort 'the individual that other people in the community call "Gödel"', or 'the individual that the person or people from whom I learned that there is someone named "Gödel" determined with the expression "Gödel"' have the most weight. That these sort of information has the most weight does not need to be postulated independently as one further element in our theory of names, but it is rather what should be expected to be the case given that when one uses a name it is essential in order to be properly understood that one is coordinated with the people one addresses and who must be part of the speaker's community (if communication is to take place). So the information regarding how others in the community use the expression is maximally relevant, and it is essential that that information is correct. It is some information that one who aims at being understood could not be willing to abandon and take as false, and so it is the sort of identificatory information that has the maximum weight.

Summarizing what we have so far: the person who we might be tempted to describe (as Kripke does) as having only the information 'the one that proved the incompleteness of arithmetic' associated with the name "Gödel" must, if she is a member of our community and so, if she is to be able to be understood by the other people in the community, have information regarding the use of the expression "Gödel" by other members of the community. This kind of information is the one that has the most weight in determining what an idea is an idea of.

We have then that the kind of information regarding who other speakers refer or referred to with their use of "Gödel" will have preference over the information 'the one that proved the incompleteness of arithmetic' in determining what the idea the person has associated with "Gödel" is an idea of. Provided that the other speakers do or did refer to Gödel with their use of "Gödel" the person under consideration is appropriately predicted by our descriptivist theory to be identifying Gödel and, so, to refer to Gödel when she uses "Gödel", contra what Kripke claims that a descriptivist theory would predict. (Again, more on how the sort of information considered here is not circular in section (V) below).

(III) *Non sufficiency of the associated description*

It is true that, as Kripke claims, in the Gödel-Schmidt case the person would not be referring to Schmidt with her use of the name (*if* she is a

member of our community). But we have just seen that this is so because the person, if she is a member of our community, would necessarily have other 'descriptions' associated with the name, in addition to 'the one that proved the incompleteness of arithmetic'. This other sort of information would appeal to what some other users refer to or have referred to in the past with their use of "Gödel". This is a kind of information that takes the maximum preference when determining what the idea is an idea of. Furthermore this kind of information selects Gödel. So we have that, according to our descriptivist theory, the person in the example will refer to Gödel when she uses "Gödel", contra Kripke's claim that according to descriptivism she would refer to Schmidt.

(IV) *Incompatibility with the Kripkean picture*

On the view I have presented here the sort of relations that Kripke claims are essential for a person to be able to refer to certain individual x with his use of a name α are also essential. These relations are the ones that hold between one person and another from whom he learns the use of a name, and also the relations between the one (or ones) that introduce a name and the object itself.

Regarding the relation between the object named and the people who introduce the name, we have that in order to introduce the name they need to identify the object. How will they identify the object? By each one having what we called *an idea of it* (simply having the object next to me does not allow me to decide to name it with this or that name: I have to realize that the object is there and to think about it in some way -using some idea of it). So the sort of relation between the object and those who introduce the use of the name is also a kind of relation that is part of the descriptivist view I am defending.

Two sorts of ideas seem to be involved in making the relation between one speaker and the one (or ones) from whom she picked up the name essential: the first is the one arising from the intuitions that one can refer to an object even if one does not know 'anything' about it just by being appropriately placed in the chain leading to the object. That this is in accordance with our descriptivist theory we have already explained on the basis that one can use information about what others refer to in order to identify an individual.

The other intuition arises from those examples that show that someone can not determine what the referent of his uses of a proper name (while addressing others) will be by making some postulation while alone in his

room. That this is so we have explained on the basis that one can successfully communicate with others when using a proper name only if one takes part in a convention regarding the use of the name with those others. Furthermore what allows one to take part in this convention is, among other things, the fact that he knows that other speakers are identifying the same individual as he does and intending to refer to it by their use of the name. What allows one to have this sort of knowledge is the fact that he is coordinated with the other members of the community, and what makes it the case that he is coordinated with the community is the fact that he is immediately coordinated with some members of the community. This relation of 'immediate coordination' includes the kind of relation between one speaker and the one that learns the name from him that Kripke regards as central to the picture he presents.

The fact that, according to the view defended here, in the idea of an individual there might be information other than the information regarding who others refer to by their use of the name allows for an explanation of why if someone has information associated with a name that is massively false of the individual that others use the name to refer to, then our intuitions are that that individual is not really successfully using the name to communicate with others even if in addition to the massively false information he also has in his idea the information 'the one that those from whom I picked up the name called α '. (Even if the description that appeals to how others use the name has much more weight than any other description, enough of error in the other descriptions might make it the case that his idea does not apply to any individual). It seems that on Kripke's picture, though, someone that thought that "Aristotle" refers to the Empire State Building, given that he also would think that the name refers to the object that the person from whom he picked up the name referred to, would still be referring to Aristotle with his use of the name. This does not seem to agree with our intuitions. (The intuition that if I hear a group of people saying that John spends all day thinking about Loli, I can then say "He must be very fond of Loli" and successfully refer to Loli and be understood by the other speakers even if I do not know even the type of thing that Loli is, is respected in our account: unlike the "Aristotle"-Empire State case here I do not have abundant and massively false descriptions that will oppose the identificatory effect of the information 'the one that this group of people were referring to with "Loli"').

(V) *The circularity problem*

As we have seen, according to the proposal defended here the idea that some person has associated with some name α can contain information such as 'the thing that those from whom I learned that α is a name referred to with α '. Obviously if everyone (present and past members of the community) had only information of this kind in their ideas associated with α then it would not be possible for anyone to refer to anything using the expression α since no individual would be determined by the description anyone has associated. But if some people in the community first identify the object using some other sort of information, then the rest of the community could still be 'intellectually reaching' the object by using information that appeals to what others are able to identify. And so, provided they fulfil the other necessary requirements, everyone in the community would be able to use the name competently.

The kind of 'description' that one person A can not use to identify an individual x is the sort of description that appeals one way or the other to the fact that A is able to identify x. This would be circular. But it is not circular if the description appeals to what others are able to identify, and they are able to identify the object without appealing to what A is able to identify (in a direct or 'indirect' way: they would appeal indirectly to what A is able to identify if they were to appeal to someone else who in turn directly relies on what A is able to identify or directly relies on someone else who indirectly relies on what A is able to identify). It would even be possible for someone to identify an individual relying only on what he himself was able to identify in the past -an amnesiac can intellectually reach an individual he identifies as 'the one last week I referred to with my use of α '. There would not be any circularity here (it just seems bizarre that one can remember that he used to use a name but can not remember at all what the name was a name of -can not recall the idea he had associated with the name).

Kripke claims that an obvious constraint on any descriptivist theory should be that it does not appeal to circular descriptions. He motivates this constraint by considering (p. 70) a descriptivist theory which claims that "Socrates" has as an associated description *for all the users of the name* the description "The man called "Socrates"". No doubt this is circular, and is in no way an explanation of how a given person can intellectually reach Socrates. But as we have just seen different speakers might have different associated 'descriptions', and some of them can rely on the fact that the

others use the name to refer to "Socrates". Furthermore there are also several other kinds of descriptions that appeal to how the name "Socrates" was used in the past, or to the fact that one believes that there is someone named "Socrates" which are not circular.

Kripke does consider one of such kind of descriptions when commenting on some remarks that Strawson makes in a footnote in *Individuals* (p. 90). The proposal that Kripke considers seems to amount to claiming that one person in order to be able to use a name α might appeal to the description "The one that Joe referred to by α ", and Joe in turn might use "The one that Kathrin referred to by α ", and ultimately there will be someone in the chain who will use a description that does not appeal to what another refers to by his use of the name. (Kripke does not actually consider a description that appeals to what others think the name refers to, but rather who others think is the so-and-so -'the one that Joe believes to have proved the incompleteness of arithmetic').

According to Kripke there are two sorts of problems with this kind of proposal:

First, one can not know what descriptions the others will be using and so one can not know whether some object is finally determined or rather one of these two things happens: the chain is circular because, say, someone just relies back on me and attempts to refer to who I refer to with my use of the name; or someone in the chain simply uses a description that does not apply to anything.

Second, it seems that if one is appropriately placed in a chain of transmission of a name, one can still successfully refer when using a name even if one does not remember from whom he learned the name, and so can not appeal to the sort of description that Strawson proposes.

Regarding the first problem Kripke points out: Even if one can not be certain that there is no circularity in the chain he is relying on, one can be justified in thinking that there is not. It is actually very unlikely that one such sort of circular chain ever obtains. What would make me rely on what Joe or whoever I learned the name from refers to other than my having seeing Joe using the name *before* I started to do so? If this is correct, then it seems that with each link we go down in the chain we also go down to an earlier moment of time: if I learned the name from Joe he must have started using the name before I did, and if he learned it from Kathrin she must have been using it before Joe did, and so before I did, and so it is just very unlikely that she might have started using her name thinking that

the name would refer to whoever I referred to with my use of the name. A more plausible way that would make it the case that no one in the chain refers to anything with their use of the name is if the ones that introduced the name (and on whom all the rest ultimately rely) used an empty description without being aware of it. People, though, are not likely to get confused about whether some description one is relying on when introducing a name is empty. So, even if one might be wrong in thinking that some naming-chain does ultimately reach an individual, it is rational to think that if there is a practice of using a name there is also an individual that is the referent of the name. So even if one does not have certainty that he is not relying on an 'empty chain', one is justified in so doing. If the chain *is* empty then one will not be referring to anything with his use of the name. But that this might happen does not prevent one from 'reaching' the referent of the name when the chain is not defective.

Regarding the second problem Kripke points out: It is true that I might not remember from whom I learned the name. But, of course, I need not use a description such as 'the one that Joe refers to with α ', but rather some of the ones we saw above like, say, 'the one that the people from whom I learned that α is a name referred to with α '⁸.

Notes

¹ Numbers within brackets refer to page numbers in (Kripke 1980).

² See (Wettstein 1989, p. 318).

³ Gareth Evans discusses a distinction of this kind in (Evans 1985, pp. 1-2).

⁴ See (Evans 1982), specially ch. 3.3 and 4.

⁵ Evans (1985, p. 6).

⁶ Stalnaker (1978) also appeals to counterfactuals when discussing negative existential statements. He, in turn, claims that in talks on the subject Kripke did so too.

⁷ We do not pretend, furthermore, to be describing a temporal or psychological process but rather just a logical one.

⁸ In writing this paper I have benefitted from Robert Stalnaker's comments to a 1992 manuscript where I first defended the view presented here; I have also benefitted from a conversation with Ignacio Vicario and, most of all, from many discussions over the years with Manuel García-Carpintero as well as from his writings on reference (which include (García-Carpintero 1997)). I wish to thank them.

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