

PROPER NAMES: ONE CENTURY OF DISCUSSION

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to offer an overview of some of the most relevant and at the same time controversial aspects of proper names over this last century. Therefore, the intention is not to go deeply into all the issues related to proper names, though special attention will be paid to one of them for its importance, namely, the discussion as to whether proper names have sense or meaning associated to them or whether they are directly referential expressions. In the same way, only a few of all the authors who have made theories, comments or analyses about proper names will be mentioned in this article. The subject of proper names is complex enough in spite of its apparent simplicity, so as to leave many lines of analysis open, which are not deeply dealt with in this presentation.

1. Introduction

Proper names form part of the most general category of singular terms, that is, of expressions characterised for referring or denoting only one object or individual; therefore, and taking this consideration into account, definite descriptions and the wide range of indexicals will also be singular terms. Following Strawson's terminology we could say that singular terms, and in particular proper names, are the types of expressions generally used to make singularizing references, i.e. they are the expressions which tend to have a "uniquely referring use". What we generally have in mind as speakers of a language when talking about proper names is the most paradigmatic examples of them, such as Galicia, Paris, Socrates, Atenea, Ulises, Mary, John; however, we may also consider "The Holy Roman Empire", "The United States of America", "The Hercules Tower", "The Second World War" as proper names; and surely we would not consider "The dean of the Faculty of Philosophy", "The present king of France", "The director of the general library of Santiago" as proper names. That is why it is important in

the first place to differentiate among various notions closely related to the theme of proper names. Some of these notions are: definite descriptions, apparent or degenerated proper names, quasi-proper names, logically proper names, rigid designators and accidental designators.

Definite descriptions are also singular terms; and this is precisely what they have in common with proper names: they designate or denote a unique object or individual. They differ from proper names in the way in which they make this reference, for it is carried out by means of the description of a particular property, which is peculiar or unique for the individual or object in question.

Thus, “the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Santiago de Compostela”, if uttered at this moment, refers to the only person who now occupies this charge; “the present king of France” nowadays does not refer to anyone -for France has not been a monarchy for some time already- but uttered three centuries ago, precisely in 1700, the expression would have referred to Louis XIV. An interesting question is introduced here -which will be eventually analysed- related not only to definite descriptions, but also to proper names; the question is: are the expressions the ones that refer or is it the use that speakers make of them the one that refers?

For some authors, in spite of the difference that there exists between definite descriptions and proper names in the way in which they make the reference, both are considered as proper names. This is Frege’s position, who characterises as proper names every expression, simple or complex whose reference is a particular object (excluding predicative or relational expressions).

Apparent or degenerated proper names are expressions such as “Atenea”, “Ulises”, “Pegaso”; or, if following Frege’s example we also include definite expressions, “The golden mountain”, “The round square”. The former are characterised for presenting the grammatical structure corresponding to proper names, but with the difference that there is no “real” object which is defined by them. They are the names that correspond to the fiction or creation worlds. In other words, they are apparent names, which seem to refer to an object, but they “deceive” us; they fail when they make a reference because that object they pretend to refer to does not exist. These names would no longer be considered apparent or degenerated if the semantics being used, instead of taking the real world as the only point of reference should be extended by introducing the fiction worlds or the possible worlds. Then, “Atenea” could refer to the individual who exists in the possible world of the Gods in which the Greeks used to believe.

Quasi-proper names are expressions that lie halfway between proper names and definite descriptions. A proof of this intermediate character is the fact that they are generally written with capital letters like proper names; however, like descriptions they refer to their object in a peculiar way, by indicating some characteristic of it, such as for example, "The European Community", "The Tower of London" or by means of some feature which in spite of not belonging to the denoted object, is nonetheless what characterises it with respect to other objects, as for example "The Hercules Tower", which is not a tower but a lighthouse and which is not in Hercules but in A Coruña.

Logically proper names or proper names in a logical sense are not proper names in a common sense. This terminology is owed to Russell, who used it to differentiate the expressions that referred to that of which we possess direct knowledge, from those which referred to logical constructions or objects, for, to Russell objects were logical constructions. This terminology is peculiar to Russell's philosophy of language, to his semantics, his ontology and his epistemology. The examples offered by Russell of logically proper names are few but the most usual one is the expression "this". He considered ordinary proper names such as "Aristotles" or "Cervantes" as abbreviated, or disguised definite descriptions. Logically proper names are the expressions used to name sense data, of which we possess direct knowledge and which are not subject to error; therefore, logically proper names do always have a referent. Ordinary proper names refer to objects, such as Aristotles or Cervantes, which are logical constructions based on sense data and of which we do not have any direct knowledge in most cases.

The term **designator** is used by Kripke to refer to both proper names and definite descriptions (in general, for Kripke names are ordinary proper names). Designators can be rigid or accidental. Proper names are always rigid designators, while in most cases definite descriptions are accidental or non rigid designators. This terminology of rigid and accidental designators is directly linked to the semantics of possible worlds. Possible worlds are stipulated worlds, which represent counterfactual situations, of the kind "Let's imagine Socrates was not a philosopher and was not Greek; he could have been a despotic Persian king". A proper name is a rigid designator because it always designates the same individual in any possible world where this individual exists; in the case of the example about Socrates, in the world we are stipulating, he is not the philosopher we all know but a Persian king.

An example of possible world closer to us is the following: let us suppose that Felipe González had not devoted himself to politics and he was now a brilliant writer, winner of the Nobel Prize of Literature in

1998. The rigid designator “Felipe González” allows us to continue talking about Felipe González in a world where he is no longer a politician but a literary man. On the contrary, “the winner of the Nobel Prize of Literature in 1998” is an accidental designator, which in the real world refers to José Saramago, but which in an another possible world may designate a different individual, such as Felipe González in our example.

Lastly, we find the **ordinary proper names** which like “Mary” or “John” seem to be able to refer to many different individuals and which should therefore not be considered proper names in a strict sense. These names, however, are really proper names, only they have a more limited field of use, and in this sense, they are more dependent on the context, in a more evident way than other proper names which form part of the basic or general knowledge about history, geography or philosophy, such as Paris, Socrates, Picasso, Einstein. These last names do also maintain some dependence on the context for Paris may be the capital of France or a town in Texas. In a similar situation there appear such proper names as Granada, Cambridge, Socrates, etc.

The different types of expressions commented on either give rise to problematic situations with respect to proper names or are closely related to them. For example, their dependence on the context; the question about the necessity to introduce other possible worlds in the semantic framework; the kind of knowledge they transmit; the presupposition or the lack of the existence of the object referred to. Perhaps the most important and conflicting questions are the following ones: should proper names be considered merely denotative expressions - simple identifying labels-, or do they have a sense or meaning which is given by the definite description or descriptions associated to them? Could this sense be identified with their meaning? How can the reference of proper names be determined?

2. Presupposition and referentiality in proper names

The characteristic that best defines proper names is that they are referential expressions, but this is a feature they share with other singular terms. Where does their peculiarity with respect to other referential expressions lie? We could say that their peculiarity lies precisely in the fact that the relation established between the proper name and the object denoted by it is the relation of naming. The object referred to by the proper name is called referent or more specifically “bearer”. This expression points out precisely that the object referred to by the name is the one that has that name. Thus, the specific feature of proper

names is that they have a bearer -an object, place or individual that has the name.

We could distinguish in principle two questions directly related to proper names: one is presupposition and the other is the task of explaining what “referential expressions” means.

The question of presupposition was already considered in Frege’s work [9] and it was later developed by Strawson in that very line [30]. It is to Strawson that the term “presupposition” is owed [31]. If the main function of proper names is to refer, then proper names should be characterised by always having a bearer; in other words, for a proper name to be such, it requires the existence of an object which has or receives that name; or put inversely, if there is no object there cannot be a proper name to name it. As Frege said [9], the use of proper names is based on the previous supposition that they do have a referent; that is, a proper name presupposes the existence of the named object. His argument for this was the following: if we have the statement “Kepler died in misery” it is presupposed that the proper name “Kepler” designates something, and this presupposition is not part of the “sense” of the proper name; in this way, the sense of the statement “Kepler died in misery” does not convey the thought that the name “Kepler” designates something. Should it do so, the negation of the sentence could not be simply “Kepler did not die in misery”, but rather “Kepler did not die in misery or the name ‘Kepler’ lacks a reference”. The conclusion Frege reached is that the fact that the name “Kepler” designates something is a presupposition both for the statement “Kepler died in misery” as for its contrary, “Kepler did not die in misery”. However, apparent proper names seem to serve as a counter-example to this condition. To Frege this is nothing but a defect of natural languages, in which expressions are found which have the grammatical form used to denote an object, but which do not reach this objective. The sentences where these apparent proper names appear lack a truth value, that is, they are neither true nor false. Strawson called this feature reported by Frege first “implication” [30] and then “presupposition” [31], though he considered that presupposition was a relation held between statements used to make unique references, i.e., statements in which there appeared a proper name or a defined expression -which have a uniquely referring use- as a subject. Thus, a statement A presupposes a statement B, if B is a necessary condition both for the truth of A and for its falsity.

Russell treated this very question though with a different result [23]. He did also maintain that a name is to name something, or otherwise it would not be a name; therefore, with logically proper names it is not questioned whether what is denoted by them does or does not exist,

because they are names which denote that of which we have some direct knowledge. However, ordinary proper names were abbreviated definite descriptions to Russell. Thus, “Cervantes” was an abbreviation for example of the definite description “the author of Quixote”. Definite descriptions are, according to Russell, incomplete symbols which although they do contribute to the meaning of the sentence where they appear, they really do not have a meaning on their own when they are alone. Russell shows that this is so through his theory of descriptions. The logical analysis of definite descriptions emphasises their logic form, which consists of the conjunction of an existential statement and a statement of uniqueness where the description as such does not appear, but rather only variables of the individual, predicative expressions, quantifiers, logical connectives and the sign of identity. This is the solution that enables Russell to solve the problem of apparent proper names such as “Atenea” or “The golden mountain” for when analysing the logic form of these expressions, the existential statement that says that “There exists an x , such that x is a mountain and x is golden”, proves not to be true for any value of x .

What was a supposition to Frege, a presupposition to Strawson, is to Russell an existential statement implicit in proper names, which is revealed or made explicit by logical analysis. Frege’s analysis did not solve the problem of non-denotative terms. Frege himself avoided every explanation of this fact when considering it inherent to the imperfection of natural languages on the one hand, and irrelevant in logical analysis on the other, because the statements containing these terms lacked truth values. Russell’s analysis however, seems to run contrary to the law of excluded middle, for a statement such as “the golden mountain is in the Medules” and its negation “the golden mountain is not in the Medules” are both false. Russell solves this problem by differentiating between internal negation and external negation. External negation applied to the logical analysis of the sentence in its whole turns the sentence true when the affirmation of existence or uniqueness is not reached.

The other question is that of explaining what is understood by a “referential expression”. A referential expression is that which designates, denotes or refers to an object or individual, but in the case of a referential expression such as a proper name, is it such by itself, or because we use it in order to make a reference with it? This question was first raised in these terms by Strawson [30], who claimed that referential expressions are such for the use we make of them to refer. Strawson was completely opposed to Russell’s analysis of definite descriptions and to his conception of logically proper names, characterised by the fact that

their meaning is the individual thing, that is, the sense data they designate. To Strawson, there do not exist logically proper names or definite descriptions such as Russell understands them. Strawson's thesis is that mentioning or referring to are not tasks performed by an expression, but rather by someone when using an expression. Strawson then differentiates between meaning, which depends on the sentence or expression, and mentioning or referring, which depends on the use of an expression, in the same way as making a true or false assertion depends on the use of a sentence. Therefore, in his opinion, it is incorrect to identify meaning with reference as Russell does. The meaning of an expression cannot be identified with the object we refer to by means of its use on a given occasion. Thus, the meaning of a referential expression such as proper names or definite descriptions has to do with the rules, habits and conventions that govern their correct use to make reference.

A uniquely referring use of an expression such as "the present king of France", or more simply "The king of France" does not denote any individual *per se*; it is the use we make of it on a particular occasion that allows it to have a reference. This explains the case of ordinary proper names such as "Anna" or "Paul", which according to the uses or contexts in which they are uttered, denote different individuals, being nonetheless considered proper names.

However, though the issues treated up to this point are very interesting, the question that has received most attention about ordinary proper names is that of their sense. Do proper names have sense or meaning? Are proper names simply directly referential expressions, without any sense or meaning? The origins of this discussion can be traced back to Mill, Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein, and the controversy may be followed through the polemics raised around the seventies, which once again turned the theme current with papers by Searle, Kripke, Donnellan and Burge among others, as a consequence of the diffusion reached by Frege's book when translated into English by Geach and Black in 1952. Donnellan's and Kripke's comments introduced an outstanding change into the classic theory of reference, by proposing a point of view which gave rise to what was later called "the new theory of reference". At present, authors committed to a referentialistic point of view, such as Kaplan, Kripke, Perry, and Putnam draw the lines of the discussion. Kaplan in particular, has elaborated a semantical-formal model for the treatment of referential expressions and in particular of demonstratives.

3. The description theory vs the direct reference theory

The discussion about whether proper names do or do not have sense lies between the Fregean view corresponding to the so called “classical theory” or “theory of sense”, or also “description theory” of proper names, and the Kripkean view, corresponding to the so called “direct reference theory”, “the new theory of reference”, “causal theory of reference”, or also though less frequently “theory of non-sense”.

Briefly, the Fregean view is characterised by maintaining that proper names do have sense; this sense is given through one or several definite descriptions associated to the name; that is to say, the referent of the proper name is that object or person who satisfies the definite description associated to the name. In other words, the sense fulfils an epistemic function, namely, it offers a way of knowing something about the object being denoted, it enlightens it partially; and it fulfils a semantic function: that one of determining or fixing the denoted object, because the object that satisfies the description becomes the referent of the proper name.

Meanwhile, the Kripkean view maintains that proper names refer directly to the object being denoted, without the mediation of any sense or definite description. That is, the description theory of reference considers that proper names have sense in priority and reference in an accidental or secondary way. The new theory of reference maintains that the priority of proper names is to name, that is, to make reference, and that this reference is direct and does not require the presence of sense.

Making a brief historical approach, the antecedents of the new theory of reference date back to Mill and to certain early comments by Russell related both to his conception of proposition, and to the claims relative to logically proper names put forward in his lectures about “The philosophy of logical atomism”. These logically proper names have important links with some of Kripke’s ideas, which are implicit in the new “neo-Russellian” theory of the direct reference, in particular the emphasis that proper names refer directly without the mediation of any sense, and that in order to make reference speakers do not need to associate any definite description to the proper name. The classical theory of reference has its origins in Frege, but Russell in his conception of ordinary proper names keeps close to Frege’s line. The remarks about proper names in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* and the ones in Searle’s *Speech Acts*, though introducing important modifications to the Fregean view, are considered to be a continuation of Frege’s ideas. Let us consider some of the observations made by these authors with respect to proper names, where the relation between proper names and definite descriptions will be emphasised. According to Mill, proper

names have denotation but do not have connotation; that is, they designate an object without indicating any of its properties or characteristics. They are simply like labels that serve to indicate or to point to the corresponding object or individual. Thus then, names refer directly to what is mentioned and properly speaking they have no meaning.

With respect to proper names -ordinary proper names and definite descriptions- Frege introduces a double semantic dimension: sense and reference. As it can be seen through his brief comments in "About sense and reference" and "The Thought", the main idea is that proper names have senses associated with them, which can be expressed by definite descriptions. When he introduces examples of descriptions that can be associated to proper names, there also appear in them other ordinary proper names, from which it can be deduced that Frege did not pretend that sense could be exhaustively expressed by definite descriptions, that is, that the sense of proper names was not generally "purely descriptive", for there were almost always proper names in these descriptions. Moreover, his comment that the sense of a proper name is understood by every person who knows the language or the set of designations to which the proper name belongs sufficiently well [9], allows us to think that in order to understand the sense of the proper name it is necessary to know not only the expressions proper to the language, but also the set of their designations, among which proper names are naturally included.

Frege does not seem to maintain that definite descriptions should be synonymous of proper names; nor, that they should consist of definitions of proper names. Two synonymous expressions may be substituted in every context without changing the truth value of the sentences they form part of. And this is not so in the case of indirect contexts, as Frege showed. They are not definitions either, because the number of definite descriptions associated with a proper name is undetermined and possibly infinite, and a definition must be exhaustive. Nor is the sense of proper names equivalent to linguistic meaning, as it is also claimed. The sense of some given expressions, proper names among them, may vary according to the context and the speakers, while this does not apply to meaning. Linguistic meaning is shared by different competent speakers, while the sense associated to a proper name may vary with respect to different competent speakers and it may also occur that these competent speakers should not associate the same sense with the same proper name they are both using.

One important point to be emphasised is that Frege introduces the dichotomy sense/reference initially in order to explain the difference in cognitive value between analytic and synthetic identity statements.

Sense is precisely the notion that explains this difference. Moreover, sense does also explain why it is impossible to interchange co-referential expressions in indirect discourse. In “The philosophy of logical atomism” Russell maintains a referential theory with respect to logically proper names, i.e. the meaning of these proper names is their referent; he does however defend a “descriptive” point of view, and in that sense similar to Frege’s, in his consideration of ordinary proper names as abbreviated definite descriptions. Russell, like Frege, thought that definite descriptions associated to the proper name could vary according to the speakers. It is necessary to point out that both Russell and Frege when analysing proper names were more interested in epistemic and cognitive questions related to them than in their linguistic meaning.

There are arguments both for and against the description theory of proper names. And the same applies to the direct reference theory. Let us see some of these arguments for both theories.

As Kripke indicated, one interesting question that the theory defended by Mill seemed not to be able to answer is the following: How can we determine what or who is the referent of a proper name, when it is used by a particular speaker? Both Frege and Russell, in Kripke’s opinion, seem to have given a direct answer to this question when they indicated that any person or object that should satisfy the definite description associated to the name is the referent of the name. Thus, if “Cervantes” is an abbreviation of the definite description “the author of Don Quixote” or this is the definite description associated to the proper name by a speaker, then the individual who satisfies that description is the referent of the name. In this sense, the definite description determines the referent of the name. This is one of the ideas most strongly opposed to by the theory of direct reference.

Negative existential statements of the type “Pegaso does not exist”, which do also cause problems to the theories of a Mill style, are solved by Russell’s theory of descriptions. In the first place, Russell indicates that it is not possible to predicate the existence of proper names, but only of the definite descriptions that they supposedly abbreviate. For example, “Pegaso” is an expression that abbreviates a definite description, which once analysed in its corresponding logic form, gives as a result a negation of the existence of a horse with wings. Therefore, the statement is true.

However, the theory of the sense of proper names solves another problem not solved by Mill’s view: how to explain the difference in cognitive value between analytic and synthetic identity statements? If proper names only have denotation, this leads to the paradox of identity: an analytic statement has the same cognitive value as a synthetic

statement, because only the referents of the terms that appear in the identity are relevant and these are the same in any of the statements of the identity. The introduction of the notion of sense together with that of reference avoids this conclusion. It also explains that a synthetic identity statement is informative because the sense of the proper names that appear in it is different, though their reference be the same. As Searle indicated [26], Frege's example "the morning star = the evening star" would have been a bit more difficult if instead of choosing definite descriptions, he had chosen ordinary proper names, for Searle thinks that definite descriptions do not constitute the paradigms of proper names.

The introduction of the sense of proper names also solves two other problems for which Mill's view has no solution: the problem of the proper names that do not have a referent, and the failure of the substitution of co-referential proper names in indirect contexts or in propositional attitudes. In the first case, as the priority is that a proper name has sense, the name may have sense though it may have no referent to designate. This brings as a consequence that when a non-denotative proper name appears in a statement, this either lacks a truth value, as Frege indicated, or becomes a false statement, because the existential assertion implicit in the analysis of the name and the statement it forms part of, reveals that there is no variable value which makes the statement true, as Russell pointed out. In the case of indirect contexts, as Frege and Russell had already indicated, co-referential proper names may not be interchanged: as they may in for example "Hesperus = Phosphorus"; nor may proper names be replaced by their corresponding associated definite descriptions as in "Hesperus = the evening star"; nor descriptions by descriptions, as in "the morning star = the evening star". In all these cases, the substitution of some names for others in indirect contexts may bring about a change in the truth value of the sentence as a whole. Sense serves as an explanation for the cause of this phenomenon.

Anyway, this theory is not free of problems. The most important problem is perhaps the one Frege has already pointed out -in the footnote of "About sense and reference"- about the possibility that a synthetic identity statement in which an ordinary proper name appears may become analytic as a result of the definite descriptions associated by the speakers to the given proper name. And this problem is precisely one of the problems the direct reference theory is going to solve.

Another approach that continues to move in the scope of the Fregean view, though with important differences with respect to it, is the one initially proposed by Wittgenstein, but more deeply elaborated

by Searle. As Searle maintains [26], his proposal is some “kind of commitment between Frege and Mill” and it is called the cluster theory.

Searle considers that Mill was right about the fact that proper names do not imply any particular description and that Frege was also right to suppose that names should have a mode of presentation, that is a sense. Searle states that Frege’s mistake was to consider the identifying description that can be substituted for the name as a definition of it. Searle’s conception of proper names is the following: proper names have a set or family of descriptions associated to them. Like Donnellan [7], Searle differentiates the referential function from the describing one. The first one is characteristic of proper names and the second of definite descriptions. Proper names are an institution specifically created to refer and not to describe. Therefore, proper names according to Searle function not as descriptions but as pegs on which to hang descriptions. Descriptions, as Searle says, can also refer but at the cost of specifying identity conditions every time reference is made, which does not happen with proper names. That is where their referential advantage over them lies. In Searle’s opinion, the imprecision in identity criteria for applying proper names is a necessary condition to separate the referential function from the descriptive function. As Searle indicates, in *Speech Acts* the immense pragmatic convenience of the proper names in our language lies precisely in the fact that they allow us to refer publicly to objects without forcing us to settle disputes and reach an agreement with respect to which descriptive characteristics do exactly constitute the identity of the object.

Once the function of proper names has been made clear, it is important to answer the question of whether they do or do not have sense. It is evident to Searle that if proper names have sense, then it is an imprecise one. As speakers connect a set of descriptions with a proper name, many of them are not identifying but some others are; this set as a whole can be considered an identifying description of the proper name, and its “descriptive backing”. A speaker can associate with a proper name a sufficient though unspecified number of descriptions that are true of the object; therefore and according to Searle, it is a necessary condition for an object or individual to be Aristotles that it should satisfy some of these descriptions or a sufficient number of them.

One important point to emphasise in this new version of the descriptive theory of proper names with respect to Frege’s conception, is that a change takes place: the interest about knowledge and cognitive value moves towards linguistic meaning. Searle is interested in that shared by speakers when using proper names and which is nothing other than an imprecise family of descriptions. In this way, the relation be-

tween the reference of proper names and the definite description associated to them is loosened and the function of proper names begins to be seen as a social and pragmatic question.

As Burge indicates [5], these remarks were radicalized up to the extreme of producing a completely different picture of reference. This different picture is known as the new theory of reference. Donnellan and Kripke are the ones that produce most arguments in order to weaken the descriptive theory of reference.

Donnellan questioned the primacy of proper names as referential expressions. Donnellan maintained that definite descriptions could have both an attributive use, the one that generally characterised them, and also a referential one [7]. This referential use of descriptions could appear even with identifying descriptions associated to a proper name, which are not correctly applied to the individual the name intends to refer to. Thus, if in a party someone asks "Who is Rose?" we could answer "the lady with the glass of gin in her hand", when in fact Rose has a glass of water instead of a glass of gin in her hand, but the description has a successful referential use to identify Rose among the guests in the party. This idea is very important and it undermines the strength of the descriptive theory, for it shows that definite descriptions do not always refer to those who satisfy them; in other words, on some occasions definite descriptions, even when being used referentially, do not fix the referent they pretend to describe.

In *Naming and Necessity* Kripke developed some of the consequences implied by his conception of rigid designator. One of the principal ideas was that proper names or rigid designators refer without the need of a definite description or set of definite descriptions that fix the referent. Thus, the rigid designator "Socrates" could be used to refer to Socrates in any possible world where Socrates exists, though in these possible worlds Socrates may not satisfy any of the definite descriptions that it generally satisfies in our world, such as being the teacher of Plato, the philosopher who drank cicuta, etc. Some more evidence against the traditional theory of proper names is the fact that we can discover that few or none of the things commonly believed of an individual are true of him in the real world.

Kripke claims that Frege should be criticised for having used the term "sense" in two senses, in which definite descriptions play a relevant role. The first one is to identify the sense of a proper name with its meaning. The second one is to treat sense as the way in which reference is determined. According to Kripke, both senses of Frege's notion of sense correspond to two senses of "definition" in ordinary speech. It is necessary, in his opinion, to separate both things clearly. To Kripke,

a description is not a synonym of a name, or a definition- for both synonyms and descriptions are understood as if they supplied the meanings of the name. What a definition can be used for at most on certain occasions is to fix the reference of the name but to fix the reference that way does not imply that the description gives the sense or meaning of the name. Let us consider an example by Kripke that clarifies this.

The example is the following: “the standard meter stick is one meter long”. The definite description “the standard meter stick” refers to the platinum stick which is in Paris and whose length was stipulated to correspond to the length of one meter. “One meter” is a rigid designator to Kripke, which rigidly designates a certain length in all possible worlds. The description “the standard meter stick” is not a rigid designator for it is accidental that one meter should coincide with a platinum bar that is found in Paris; we can imagine a possible world in which that bar could be longer or shorter or which could be somewhere different from that in Paris. Thus it is shown, according to Kripke, that the statement “the standard meter stick is one meter long”, considered as a definition, cannot be understood as one that makes “one meter” and “the standard meter stick” synonyms. Rather, its function is to fix the reference of “one meter”, stating that “one meter” is a rigid designator for the length that in the actual world happens to be that of the standard meter stick. In other words, the definition does not necessarily imply that the standard meter stick should be one meter, because under certain circumstances, the standard meter stick could have been not one meter long. The reason is that “one meter” is a rigid designator, while “the standard meter stick” is not. A description cannot give the meaning of a rigid designator, for the description describes accidental properties, which may vary in the different possible worlds; while the rigid designator is like the label used to identify the same object or individual in any possible world.

This example introduces one of the questions Kripke gave more importance to, and which is related to the use of the terms “necessary/contingent” and “a priori/a posteriori” and connected to them the terms “analytic /synthetic”. Kripke’s explanation consists of the following: necessary/contingent are metaphysical categories while a priori/a posteriori are epistemological categories and analytic/synthetic are semantical categories. The first ones have to do with what the world is like, what it should have been like, etc. The second ones have to do with what our knowledge of the world is like, that is, the different ways in which the real world can be known. The third ones are semantical categories that have to do with meaning; analytic statements are true according to their meaning. This allows Kripke to speak about a priory

contingent statements, such as the example above, or a posteriori necessary statements, such as “Hesperus = Fosfurus”.

Almost all the considerations indicated up to here about proper names belong to semantics. However, there are considerations of a pragmatic type related to this presentation of the functioning of proper names proposed by the theory of direct reference, which make up the so called “causal theory of proper names”. This theory provides a positive explanation of how the reference of names is fixed. As the new theorists of reference, opposed to the descriptive theories, maintain that definite descriptions associated to proper names do not determine their reference, they have to indicate which is the alternative way that enables us to explain how a speaker can use a name correctly even when he may be unable to give a definite description applied only to the given individual, such as for example “Cicero was a Roman orator” or following Kripke’s example “Feynman is a physicist”. The alternative proposed is the “causal chain of communication”, which has its origin in the act of an “initial baptism” when the object is given the name. Thus, reference seems to depend on the relations established between speakers and their social background and not so much on the mental repertoires that speakers have associated to proper names. Therefore, reference will depend on the causal chain of circumstances that lead the speaker to learn the name. These causal chains are communication chains where the name is passed from link to link, namely from one speaker to another until coming back to the referent himself or herself. All this is in accordance with the idea that names refer without the mediation of any identity description; the only thing that is necessary in order to fix the reference of the proper name is that the use of the name should be causally and adequately connected to the individual.

Putnam extended Kripke’s analysis of proper names to natural kind names [17], though Kripke had already made comments in this sense, when he indicated that the identities of the type “water = H₂O” fix the reference of the expressions of natural kinds; in this case both expressions in the identity are rigid designators, for H₂O is an essential property of water. The important thing in this case is that these natural kind terms depend for determining or fixing their reference not on the satisfaction of a set of definite descriptions associated to the name but on whether the object referred to has or does not have a given essential property. Therefore, the set of descriptions associated to the name does not give the necessary or sufficient conditions for the determination of the extension of the term. Another consequence of this conception is that a statement like “water = H₂O” is not analytic, for it may prove false, or at least epistemically contingent, that this should actually be

the chemical composition of water, owing to some fault in the instruments used to determine it, and also because it is a question of scientific discovery, and not a definition.

These ideas of Putnam's emerge from his criticism to traditional semantics, which defends the idea that the concept that corresponds to the intension of a term is a conjunction of predicates that give the necessary and sufficient conditions for the determination of the extension, as we have already indicated; put briefly, traditional semantics considers that the intension, the sense, or the meaning of a term determines its reference, or in the case of the natural kind terms, their extension. Putnam understands that to know the meaning of a term, namely, its intension is equivalent to being in a psychological state so that it is the psychological state that determines the intension of the term. If we apply to this the thesis that the intension determines the reference or the extension, then it proves that psychological states determine the extensions of the terms. This is an unacceptable conclusion that obliges us to reject either the idea that the psychological state determines the intension, or that the intension determines the extension. Putnam is inclined to accept the last part of the disjunction and reject the first.

Putnam, like Kripke, stresses the important role of community in the determination of the extension, by introducing elements such as the division of linguistic work, which sets experts in a privileged position for the determination of the extension of a natural kind term. In this way, it is emphasized that reference is not something attained by a person isolated from the world, something which the person makes in private in his study, as Kripke suggested in *Naming and Necessity*, when going to extremes with the idea of the descriptive theory in the determination of reference. Rather, the importance of the community is also present in the conception of the meaning of the natural kind terms, for it is conceived by Putnam as a combination of the extension of the term together with the stereotypes about it. The stereotypes do not need to be so complete as to fix the reference of the term in question; they can even not be true of the referent. Their function is to help fix the referent taking into account what the community requires to know in order to say that one knows the meaning of the term. Stereotypes are "obligatory" information by reference to a linguistic community. They are their "minimum requirements" as to the meaning of the terms. Stereotypes are conventional ideas, characteristics of a normal member of the class. According to Putnam, reference cannot be reduced to the psychological states of individuals, unless they become related to the links that the individual maintains with its community and with its social and physical background.

As Searle indicates [27], common sense inclines us to accept the theories of the style of the direct reference theory. The advantage of this theory is that it considers that names are not equivalent to definite descriptions, as to call an object by its name does not imply to describe it. To name does not mean to describe. Moreover, as Searle says, we do not have definitions of most proper names; descriptions are not definitional equivalents of proper names, for they are contingently true of their bearers. On the contrary, names are not true of their bearers but rather they are their names. The supporters of the direct reference theory intend to present what the ordinary functioning of proper names consists of. However, this theory has the disadvantage that it cannot explain why synthetic identity statements are informative. It can neither explain the occurrence of proper names in existential statements.

The descriptive theory has an answer to certain puzzles such as the identity statements, the existential statements and the intensional statements, but considering the opinion of some authors, such as Searle, it is wrong to think that these descriptions offer a definition or the sense of the proper name. According to others such as Schwartz [25], there is no reason for one theory to exclude the other. In his opinion the traditional theory of meaning, the one that follows Frege's view, is right in what concerns to singular terms; however, the new theory of reference is right in what concerns natural classes expressions. Burge considers that Kripke and Searle have a genuine perspective about the normal use of proper names. According to him [4] it is a mistake to speak of proper names as rigid in themselves; proper names are referential expressions which depend on the context, which are usually used rigidly, but which on certain occasions, on certain anaphoric occurrences for example, are not used rigidly.

Finally, Kaplan [12], and Perry [15], who adopt the line of the direct reference, try to find solutions to the criticisms made of the theory about not being capable of solving the epistemological puzzles of synthetic identity statements and propositional attitudes. Kaplan [12], in particular with his functional distinction between "character" and "content", tries to explain the functioning of proper names, definite descriptions and indexicals. Character and content are two variations over sense. He offers a functional representation of both. Character is a function that takes into account the contexts of use in which the expressions are used. These contexts of use include possible worlds, time, the person who utters the expression, etc. This function has another function as a value, that is the content, which takes character as an argument and has as values extensions or references. In the case of proper names, considered as rigid designators, functions are constant and both

character and content are stable functions. Character plays the role of linguistic meaning. That is, the rule or convention that leads directly to the referent, and which therefore determines the content, though it is not part of it. Content is understood as a russellian singular proposition of which the object referred to by the expression that occupies the position of the subject forms part.

As regards the epistemological question, these authors believe that character accounts for the different cognitive values of the content, in the sense that the very content may be presented under different characters. As the notion of sense is linked to Frege's notion of thought and taking into account the ontological implications that both sense and thought possess in Fregean semantics, these authors prefer to do without the notion of sense, filling its place with other ontologically less compromised notions -such as role or character-, but which do all the same account for the cognitive aspects of expressions.

The task of conciliating the success of both great views proposed around proper names, emphasising the merits of neo-Fregeans -such as Evans and McDowell -and neo-Russellians -such as Kaplan and Perry- is being carried out by F. Recanati [19]. Directly referential expressions such as proper names are to this author expressions that imply two modes of presentation: linguistic modes of presentation and psychological modes of presentation. The former are related to meaning; they are determined by linguistic rules and present the truth-conditions of the sentences in a certain way, namely, they indicate that these truth-conditions are singular. The latter are related to the individuation of attitudes and thoughts. Recanati also differentiates between the cognitive content of an utterance (or thought), the meaning of the sentence and the proposition expressed. The first two imply a mode of presentation of reference, while the proposition expressed implies the reference itself and constitutes a singular proposition. Proper names are directly referential expressions to Recanati but this does not commit him to the idea that they should have no meaning at all, for he considers referentiality as a kind of rigidity reflected in meaning, that is, as a meta-rigidity, and he defines it as a semantic feature that forms part of the meaning of the expression, and which he calls REF. The effective determination of the referent is not carried out by REF, which as a linguistic convention does only indicate that the proper name refers to its bearer; rather it is carried out by a social non linguistic convention which depends on contextual factors.

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