What Are Proper Names for?

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1. Introduction

Fred attends a lecture on Australian history and is told the following. There was someone called ‘Matthew Flinders’. He was born in England, was the first person to circumnavigate Australia, and he suggested the name ‘Australia’ for Australia. Fred reflects on what he has been told, on his knowledge of when Australia was discovered and the methods of travel available at that time, and expresses his conclusions in sentences like ‘Matthew Flinders is dead’ and ‘Matthew Flinders went by boat from England to Australia’. We should all agree that this would be warranted, both as a piece of inference and as a piece of English usage, to capture what he inferred. But what exactly is warranted? Surely nothing more than something like: that there was someone who falls under certain descriptions – born in England, called ‘Matthew Flinders’ and so forth – who is now dead and went by boat from England to Australia. But if a proper way for him to express what he has learnt is in the sentences containing the proper name ‘Matthew Flinders’ like those given above, what else can these sentences be saying about how things are than that there was someone who falls under the descriptions who was thus and so? To say that Fred acquired more warranted opinion than this would be giving words *per se* epistemic power, and using a proper name does not in itself cut any epistemic ice.

This little story is typical of the way we use proper names. Our attention is drawn, perhaps by hearing words or seeing films, or perceptually, or by reading a book, to the fact that there is some thing that falls under various descriptions – over there, called ‘Mary’, is the person you met last night, is the person you are pointing at, is the planet responsible for the perturbations of Uranus’s orbit, and so on. We give it a name or borrow the name we have been told about, and proceed to make claims about how things are in sentences containing the name. If claims so framed and in these kinds of circumstance are to be warranted, as very often they are, they had better be to the effect that something that falls under certain descriptions is thus and so;

otherwise we would be giving epistemic power to the decision to frame them using a proper name.

That, in a nutshell, is one way of expressing the case for the description theory of reference for proper names. It is the case to give if you accept a representationalist view of language, as I do. On that very attractive view, though language has many functions, including to amuse and set off burglar alarms, above all its job is to represent, in a way accessible to actual and potential hearers and readers, how things are according to the speaker or writer. The argument for the description theory of names is that what is being said about how things are when we produce a sentence of the form '*N* is *F*' is that something that falls under such and such descriptions is *F* – to say otherwise is to make the sentences we produce of this and similar forms ones that are not warranted by the information that typically backs them.

This account fits nicely with the familiar point that any account that sees the sentences we produce as sources of information about our world that come from how we take things to be must acknowledge that what causes the sentences that come from our mouths and fingers via the world's effects on our brains are arrangements of properties. This is a good reason for holding that, at bottom, the information relates to the distribution of properties, just as the description theory of names says. When I make this point I am sometimes accused of neglecting the distinction between personal and sub-personal levels. It is agreed that information at the sub-personal level about our world is restricted to patterns of properties, but it is argued that this does not imply anything about the putative information at the personal level made public by sentences that capture how a subject takes things to be. But consider the information at a personal level carried by where a sound is heard as coming from. Cognitive scientists rightly take it for granted that there must be an explanation at the sub-personal level that shows that the personal level information does not outrun that available at the sub-personal level.

Now the argy bargy starts. There are many well-known objections to the description theory and many well-known replies to those objections. For each objection there is a reply, and for each reply, a response to that reply. That is not uncommon in philosophy, but what is noteworthy about the debate over the description theory of proper names is that the replies on behalf of the description theory often require modifications to the theory. This raises the question: do we have a case where sensible modifications are being made in pursuit of an acceptable formulation of a theory, or do we have a degenerating research program?

I think the best way to address this question is by asking why we have proper names in our language in the first place. What job do they do? My argument is going to be that once we are clear about this, we will see that the kinds of modifications description theorists make to objections deliver the kind of theory one might have expected in the first place. We don't have epicycles; we have appropriate refinements. We cannot review every objection anyone has ever advanced to the description theory, obviously. We will discuss three well-known, important objections.

I start with two comments about how I understand the description theory. Next I look at the objections and the ensuing modifications-cum-elucidations of the theory. We then discuss the rationale for having proper names and finish by seeing how the rationale makes good sense of the modifications-cum-elucidations of the description theory of proper names.

2. Two comments about how to understand the description theory

2.1 The description theory would better have been called the property theory of reference for proper names. The core idea is that a proper name refers to that which has certain properties. Whether or not there are linguistic expressions for the properties is neither here nor there. In deference to tradition I will stick with the usual name but my talk of descriptions below should be read as meaning properties (in the wide sense that includes relations, and includes any way things might be, any putative pattern in nature). The point is worth making because otherwise the description theory can look like an exercise in buck passing. (See e.g. Devitt 1996, 159.)

The problem of reference for one linguistic construction can seem to be being handed across to the problem of reference for another linguistic construction. But in fact the problem of reference for names is being understood in terms of property possession.

2.2 The second comment concerns a major issue: What is a theory of reference a theory of? This is an issue for a paper in itself but I cannot avoid saying something about it within this paper.

As indicated at the beginning, I presume the view that much of language serves the purpose of representing how things are, in somewhat the way that maps and diagrams do. (I discuss the

issues here in a number of places, see e.g. Jackson 1997, Jackson, Oppy and Smith 1994. The view has a long history and is, I take it, the view that fits most naturally with possible world semantics.) In particular, I presume that simple sentences containing proper names like 'Kirchberg is cold in winter', 'The conference is in Kirchberg', and 'There are many cities between Paris and Kirchberg' represent how things are, whatever may be the case for more philosophically troublesome sentences like conditionals and ethical sentences.

An issue for the representational view of language is how the (representational) content of a sentence depends on its parts and their arrangement. How a map represents things to be is a function of its composition and structure. This is how something made of a finite number of bits arranged according to a finite number of rules can have an indefinitely rich range of representational contents that we are able to grasp. The same goes for sentences. On this way of looking at matters, a theory of reference for proper names is a theory that gives the contribution that the appearance of 'Kirchberg', say, makes to what a sentence containing it, in one or another setting, represents about how things are. And the description theory's answer is that the contribution the appearance of 'Kirchberg' in the sentence 'Kirchberg is cold' makes to how the sentence represents things as being is that it makes it the case that the sentence represents that the so and so is cold, where 'so and so' is the associated description-cum-property for the proper name 'Kirchberg'; *mutatis mutandis* for other names and similarly simple constructions.

This way of thinking of the theory of reference is, of course, not innocuous. It is inconsistent with views some find attractive. Consider someone largely ignorant of developments in modern physics but who accepts that what leading physicists say is very likely true. He hears them talk of quarks and comes to believe, as a result, that quarks exist, without having much of an idea as to what a quark is. We can all agree that 'quark' in his mouth and from his fingers refers, in some good sense, to the very same things as the word does in the mouths and from the fingers of the physicists. In that sense, he borrows the reference from the physicists. But what should we say about the contribution of the word in his mouth and from his fingers to how sentences containing the word represent things as being according to him? Some say, or seem to say, that the sentence 'There are quarks' in his mouth and from his fingers makes the same claim as the one made by the physicists when it comes from their mouths and fingers. Others say that all he is saying is that there are things called 'quarks' by the physicists in his language community, that his claim is a metalinguistic one. On the representationalist

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view of the issue, the right answer is the metalinguistic one. To say otherwise would be to say that the ignorant person expresses the same belief about how things are when he uses the sentence 'There are quarks' as do the physicists, and this cannot be right. It took a great deal of work, thinking and conceptual sophistication to reach the view about what our world is like that physicists express with the sentence 'There are quarks'. Hanging around those physicists and picking up their jargon is in itself not enough. So, in the wide sense of reference that relates to the contribution 'quark' makes to how things are being represented to be in one or another simple sentence, the reference for the expert differs from that for the ignorant.

There are many issues about the semantics of proper names to do with their contribution in a whole range of linguistic structures: belief reports, reports about the beliefs of others, identity sentences, conditionals, modal claims, and so on and so forth. But we will be discussing a small part of the big picture: we will be concerned with the contribution a proper name makes to how a simple sentence like '*N* is *F*' represents things as being, and will be defending the description theory's answer. This means that some opponents of the theory might agree with what I say about the representational contribution of a name in simple sentences, while insisting that the contribution of a name in one or another more complex construction cannot be captured in descriptivist terms.

How can I justify such a narrow brief? Part of the answer is that the full brief is the task of a book, not a paper. The other part is that we should not assume that the answer to the part we are tackling determines in any simple way the answer across the range. The fact that we finite creatures are able to grasp the representational contents of a vast range of sentences tells us there are systematic, graspable connections between the way parts of sentences and their organisation determine content. It follows that, as a rule, a proper name '*N*''s contribution in '*N* is *F*' bears some non-accidental relationship to its contribution in, say, '*S* believes that *N* is *F*'. But we are smart. We handle irregular verbs. It should not be assumed that if '*N* is *F*' represents that the such and such is *F*, then '*S* believes that *N* is *F*' must represent that *S* believes that the such and such is *F*. And in fact, due to the fact that sentences of this form are typically about someone (*S*) other than the producer of the sentence (me, say), who may have quite different descriptions associated with '*N*', there is good reason to hold that often it does not. (I am indebted here to Scott Soames but I am pretty sure he will draw a very different moral from the point.)

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3. The three well-known objections to the description theory we will look at are: rigidity, troubles with finding the right descriptions, and duplicate regions of space

3.1 *Rigidity*

"Proper names are rigid whereas the thing which is *D* typically varies from world to world. Ergo, '*N*' is not equivalent to 'the thing which is *D*'."

Description theorists – or this one anyway – respond by turning the definite description in question into an 'actually' one, where for all worlds *w*, 'the actual *D*' refers at *w* to the *D* at the actual world. In consequence, 'the actual *D*' is rigid, because at every world where it refers, it refers to the *D* at the actual world. In this way, the description theory is able to capture the rigidity property of names while remaining in the spirit of a description theory.

One objection raised against this suggestion concerns names in various more or less complex constructions. (See, e.g., Soames 2002.) But our remit is limited to very simple constructions containing names. All the same there is a problem.

We are presuming a representationalist view of language and defending the view that '*N* is *F*' represents that the *D* is *F*, for some *D*; that was the kind of position suggested by our remarks at the beginning. But to represent is to make a division among possibilities: a division into those consistent with how things are being represented to be, and those inconsistent with how things are being represented to be. The problem is that rigidifying the description has the result that the wrong division among possibilities is being made from the point of view of the description theory – or so it seems. At which worlds is 'The actual *D* is *F*' true? At those where the *D* in the actual world exists and is *F* in that world. These worlds will be the worlds where the object named according to the description theory – the thing which is *D* in the actual world – is *F*. That is to say, the commonality that unites the worlds where the sentence is true is that, in each world, the named thing according to the description theory, be it *D* or not in that world, exists in the world and is *F*. And that is a Millian answer, not a descriptivist one.

I think there is only one way to reply to this objection. It is to argue that, although a sentence represents by making a division among possibilities, in certain cases involving occurrences of 'actually' and like expressions, the division is not between cases where the sentence is true at

the possibility and cases where it is false at the possibility. The required division is between cases where the sentence is true at the possibility under the supposition that the possibility is actual, and cases where it is false at the possibility under the supposition that the possibility is actual. For our purposes here, we need only consider simple sentences like 'The actual *D* is *F*'. So the suggestion is that in the case of such a sentence, how it represents things as being is given by the set of worlds, where 'The actual *D* is *F*' is true at *w* under the supposition that *w* is actual. (This is the *A*-intension of 'The actual *D* is *F*', in the terms of Jackson 1998.) But the actual *D* is *F* at a world if and only if the *D* is *F* at the actual world. So 'The actual *D* is *F*' is true at *w* under the supposition that *w* is actual if and only if 'The *D* is *F*' is true at *w*. This is precisely the kind of answer description theorists need.

Some worry about truth at *w* under the supposition of actuality. They grant an understanding of truth at a world but puzzle about the import of supposing actuality. But there is no difference between the two notions in respect to the role that how things are at worlds play in settling truth values; the difference is in which worlds come into consideration. So if they understand the first notion, they understand the second. Or to put the essential point in terms of our example: 'The actual *D* is *F*' is true at *w* under the supposition that *w* is the actual world if and only if 'The *D* is *F*' is true at *w*; and what follows 'if and only if' contains 'is true at *w*' and not 'is true at *w* under the supposition that *w* is the actual world'. That is to say, we can translate out the occurrence of truth at a world under the supposition that the world is actual in favour of truth at a world by suitable selection of the world in question.

Others ask, Why should truth at a world under the supposition of actuality be the key notion; what's that got to do with it? The answer is that one's opinion about how things are is none other than one's opinion about how the world one is in is, and that's nothing other than one's opinion about which worlds might be the one you are in, that is, might be the actual world. It follows that the representational role of a sentence in making a claim about how assertors take things to be is given by the worlds whose actuality is consistent with the sentences they assert, and that is given by the set of worlds whose actuality is consistent with the sentence.

3.2 *Troubles finding the right descriptions (properties)*

"There are many cases where it is clear that a proper name '*N*' refers to *x* in the mouths and from the fingers of users of '*N*' but these users cannot cite the descriptions that *x* uniquely satisfies. True, there will be descriptions that the referent uniquely satisfies – reference

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supervenes on nature – but the description theory of reference is not the view that reference for proper names goes by descriptions, but that it goes by certain *associated* descriptions, where an associated description means one that is, in some sense, in the mind of the user of the name."

One might be tempted to object that everyone knows that being Kirchberg is a unique property of the referent of 'Kirchberg' and a similar point applies to all names. But the opponent of the description theory can rightly point out that it is one thing to know that 'being Kirchberg' names a property Kirchberg alone has, another to know what that property is; so the point is irrelevant.

The right response for the description theorist is to enlarge on what is meant by 'associated' in the description theory of reference. Debates over the theory of reference are dominated by descriptions of possible cases and appeals to intuitions about what 'water', or 'Aristotle', or 'Gödel', or 'Kirchberg' does or does not refer to in various possible cases described in one or another article or book or conversation. The view that 'water' is short for something like 'the clear, potable liquid at room temperature' is argued to be refuted by the intuition that the clear, potable liquid at room temperature *XYZ* on Twin Earth is not water. The view that 'Gödel' refers to the person who proved the famous theorem is argued to be refuted by the intuition that, in the possible world where Schmidt proves the theorem, Schmidt is nevertheless not Gödel. And so on.

These intuitions, so crucial to the debate over reference, do not come from nowhere and are not made up as we philosophers go along. They can only come from the, sometimes implicit, theories that govern our assignments of names to objects. What then is the description associated with the name 'Gödel'? It is the descriptive pattern that separates the 'the so and so is Gödel' cases from the 'the so and so is not Gödel' ones. Ditto for 'Kirchberg', 'water' and all the rest. In other words, the intuitions that drive the debate are not mysterious deliverances from wherever but are the exercise of a pattern-recognition capacity akin to that native speakers exercise when they judge 'We is here' to be ungrammatical.

When we exercise these intuitions we need to be careful. As 'Gödel' is rigid, and intuitively so, our answer as to what counts as Gödel in any non-actual world is determined by our answer as to what counts as Gödel in the actual world. What then do we *vary*? We vary hypotheses about how *our* world might be, much as historians do when they consider various hypotheses about who wrote *King Lear*: Marlowe, Shakespeare, Bacon, ...? The pattern is the

implicitly known one that underlies our answer as to who wrote *King Lear* as we imagine different bodies of information coming to hand about how things were when the play was written.

I think it is important here to bear in mind something that Kripke said early on in the debate:

> The picture that leads to the cluster-of-descriptions theory is something like this: ...one determines the reference for himself by saying – 'By Gödel I shall mean the man, whoever he is, who proved the incompleteness of arithmetic'. *Now you can do this if you want to. There's nothing really preventing it.* You can just stick to that determination. If that's what you do, then if Schmidt discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic you *do refer* to him when you say, 'Gödel did such and such'. (Kripke 1980, 91, my emphasis.)

The conclusion from this point of Kripke's is that we implicitly decided not to use 'Gödel' for the person who proved the theorem – 'implicitly' because, unlike what happened with the various definitions of one metre, there were no meetings to discuss the matter, and 'decided' because we had a choice. This tells us why the intuitions that dominate the debate are relevant. They make explicit our implicit theory. Stephen Stich has protested at philosophers' tendency to make claims that are, in one way or another, about word usage while showing little interest in carrying out empirical research into word usage (see, e.g., Doris and Stich forthcoming). In my view, we should think of the many papers with their descriptions of various possible cases and invitations to agree or disagree with one or another claim about what 'water' or 'Gödel' or 'Kirchberg' or 'Aristotle' refers to in those cases, as a bit of (not awfully rigorous) fieldwork on word usage. The widespread agreement that in the famous possible case, Schmidt is not the referent of 'Gödel' is the evidence that although, as Kripke says, 'Gödel' might have been used for the person who proved the theorem, in fact it isn't. How else could we have any sort of reply to Stich's protest?

What do I mean by an implicit theory? I mean one, but only one, of the things sometimes meant when it is said that we have an implicit theory of grammar. There is an implicit theory that drives our classifications of sentences in languages we have mastered into the set of the acceptable and the set of the non-acceptable sentences. This is the theory we make explicit by interrogating our intuitive classifications and which, when extracted and recorded in words,

makes its way into grammar books as an explicit theory of grammar. In the same way, there is an implicit theory that drives our classification of cases into ones where it is Gödel, and ones where it is not Gödel, who did thus and so.

What I do *not* mean is the sense of implicit theory in which it is said that we have an implicit theory at the *sub-personal* level. Our ability to classify sentences into the grammatical and the non-grammatical must have an explanation at the sub-personal level. In this regard it is like our ability to locate sounds. The explanation for this is, in part and roughly, that our brains latch onto the relevant out-of-phase effects that occur in the inputs to our ears. I do not know if anyone knows the corresponding explanation in the grammar case but there must be one, and that is what some have in mind when they talk of our implicit theory of grammar. If we call the first the personal level implicit theory, and the second the sub-personal level implicit theory, what I am saying is that we have an implicit theory at the personal level and at the sub-personal level, both in the case of grammar and in the case of words like 'water', 'Gödel', 'Kirchberg' and so on, but that it is the implicit theory at the personal level for names that delivers the descriptions (properties) the description theorist needs.

It is sometimes doubted that there is an implicit theory at the personal level. It is argued that although we have an *ability* to say what 'Kirchberg' refers to, given one or another scenario, it is knowledge how, not knowledge that. It is like our ability to ride a bike or that of a homing pigeon to find its way home. In similar vein, when description theorists point out that we use the word 'Kirchberg' to make successful arrangements to meet – when conferences are announced as taking place in Kirchberg, the delegates have no special trouble finding their way to the right place – and argue that this shows that, because we find our way to places going by properties (we do not use thisness detectors), there must be descriptions associated with Kirchberg, some opponents of the description theory argue that our ability to get to Kirchberg is merely an ability; it is not an ability that rests on known properties that single out Kirchberg from, say, London or Paris.

This is very implausible. First, our responses concerning what refers to what in the famous possible cases are driven by the *descriptions* of those cases. Part of what reveals that our knowledge of how to ride a bicycle is typically knowledge how, not knowledge that, is that we cannot classify right from wrong ways of riding a bicycle going by descriptions alone. Second, consider what happens when we arrived in Kirchberg. Each of us knew perfectly well which properties made them think they had arrived in the right place. It was not like keeping

one's balance while riding a bicycle. Finally, the ability to find Kirchberg required much more in the way of complex bodily movements in response to changing situations than does riding a bicycle. It is very hard to believe that we acquired such a complex ability merely by hearing or seeing words. (Most of us who made it to this conference did so as a result of actions consequent on visual and auditory contact with strings of words.) The only credible explanation is that we already knew how to pair words with properties and with configurations of properties, and could then use the resulting information about property configurations to navigate the world. It was this propositional knowledge that conferred the ability to navigate successfully to Kirchberg.

Of course the descriptions different people associate with Kirchberg differ quite a bit and a key one is the fact that Kirchberg goes under the name 'Kirchberg' – in English for English speakers – along with the fact that there is some kind of causal-information preserving chain that runs from Kirchberg to the appearance of tokens of 'Kirchberg' in writings and utterances. Indeed this much is clear from the writings of opponents of the description theory of reference for names. When David Lewis says

> Did not Kripke and his allies refute the description theory of reference, at least for names of people and places? .... I disagree. What was well and truly refuted was a version of descriptivism in which the descriptive senses were supposed to be a matter of famous deeds and other distinctive peculiarities. A better version survives the attack: *causal descriptivism*. The descriptive sense associated with a name might for instance be *the place I have heard of under the name 'Taromeo"*, or maybe *the causal source of this token: Taromeo,* and for an account of the relation being invoked here, just consult the writings of causal theorists of reference. (Lewis 1997, fn. 22)

he is acknowledging precisely this fact, or so it seems to me. (Causal descriptivism has had many supporters, see, e.g., Kroon 1987, Searle 1983, ch. 9. Of course, the view is only intended to be an account for some proper names. We can name things outside the light cone.)

3.3 *Duplicate regions of space*

"Suppose that our world divides into two qualitatively identical temporal halves containing *inter alia* two identical cities called 'Kirchberg'. There will be two identical Jacksons:

Jackson first and Jackson second. Jackson first and Jackson second will associate the very same descriptions with their respective Kirchbergs but, all the same, Jackson first refers to Kirchberg first and Jackson second to Kirchberg second. It follows that reference does not go by associated descriptions, and notice that we did not need to fuss about the issue of choosing the right descriptions to count as associated with the Kirchbergs. Choose them how you will and they will still come out the same for both Jacksons, and yet the two Jacksons do not refer alike." (The idea for this objection comes from Scott Soames. He should *not* be held responsible for my way putting it.)

This interesting objection raises an issue that has got somewhat lost in the debate. (I am indebted here to a discussion with Brian Garrett.) To introduce it, consider someone who argues that the reference of 'the tallest person' does not go by associated descriptions on the ground that, in world w_1 the tallest person is Fred, whereas in world w_2 it is Tom. Despite the description being the same, namely being the tallest, the reference differs. They conclude that the reference of 'the tallest person' does not go by being the tallest. This cannot be right. Where is the mistake?

The mistake is that in the relevant sense the reference *does* go by description. Although Tom and Fred are different people, they are *alike* in being the tallest in their respective worlds. That unites them. I said that we would be approaching our topic from a representationalist perspective. On that perspective, what is central is the way language and bits of language serve to divide the possibilities into those that are in accord with how things are being represented to be and those that are not, and the representational content of how things are being represented to be is that which unites all the possibilities that are in accord with how things are being said to be. The way a term like 'the tallest person' does this job then turns on that which is in common with everything that term denotes, which is, of course, being the tallest person. The fact that Fred is tallest in one possible world whereas it is Tom in another is neither here nor there. The issue that has somehow got lost in the debate is that the key question is the commonality between the possibilities – or possibilities considered as actual when dealing with certain cases involving 'actually' and similar rigidifying devices.

This has an important consequence when we come to address reference and representation in cases where we need centred worlds to capture how things are being represented to be. Much of our thought and language concerns how things are *from a perspective*. Suppose I believe and say that I have a beard. My belief and my saying are about what my world is like because

worlds without beards are inconsistent with how things are being represented to be when I say and think that I have a beard. But what I say and think is not merely that there are beards. However, it would be wrong to say that the extra is that I am representing in addition that Jackson has a beard. I may have no idea who I am and yet still will be in a position to know, assert and believe that things are the way represented by the saying and the thought that I have a beard; for example, it is possible for me to feel that I myself have a beard when I have no idea who I am. To cut a long well-known story short, we need centred worlds to model content in the sense of how things are being represented to be in cases like these. When I say that I have a beard, the content is the set of worlds with bearded centres, and what we learn from the many who have argued that egocentric content is irreducibly so is that we cannot dispense with sets of centred worlds in favour of sets of worlds *simpliciter*.

We can now give the description theorists' reply to the duplication argument. It is plausible that the role of a proper name is to make a claim about how things are from a perspective, perhaps to the effect that things are thus and so at the end of a causal-information preserving chain that ends in the name's appearance in a sentence. Photographs in the paper of a football match give putative information by virtue of the photo's features causally depending in information-preserving ways on how things were during the game. This information concerns how things are vis à vis the photograph in the same way that the red 'you are here' dot on a shopping mall map gives information about how things are vis à vis the dot. Human subjects then get perspectival or centred information by knowing about these information chains and knowing how they themselves stand in relation to the structures in question: the red dots, the photos or the token sentences. When I see the sentence 'Madrid won', I get information about a happening that caused that sentence by virtue of knowing that the sentence before me causally depends in information-preserving ways on what happened during an event that is a certain kind of causal origin of the sentence. For example, had the team at that origin lost, I know the sentence would have been 'Madrid lost' instead of 'Madrid won'.

If the role of proper names is to convey centred information, then what description theorists are committed to is the relevant descriptive commonalities across centred worlds. Provided the referent of 'Kirchberg' for Jackson first in his token of, say, 'Kirchberg is cold in Winter' is suitably similar to the reference of 'Kirchberg' for Jackson second in his token of that sentence, the fact that the two word tokens refer differently is neither here nor there. Indeed, the plausible position is that the representational content of 'Kirchberg is cold in Winter' is

the same set of centred worlds for Jackson first and Jackson second: they represent alike, and what unifies the referents of 'Kirchberg' is the function that goes from a centred world to a referent. The function is the same for both tokens and the difference in reference comes from the fact that the actual centre, in the sense of the one he is at, for Jackson first differs from that for Jackson second. Provided only that this function fits the descriptivist account, there is no objection from duplicate worlds to the description theory.

4. We have reviewed how description theorists, some description theorists, reply to three objections. In each case, a modification or elucidation of the theory as originally put forward is required. Our question now is, Does the rationale for having proper names in a language predict the modifications; given that rationale, should we expect rigidity; should we expect the relevant descriptions to take a deal of extracting, to vary from person to person and to give a prominent place to something meta-linguistic; and should we expect proper names to figure centrally when we make centred claims using sentences?

5. Often it is very important that we latch onto, in some wide sense, a given object. You and I plan to meet for lunch. It is important that we end up in the same place. Conferences depend crucially on everyone arriving at the right lecture hall. I want my tax refund to end up in my mailbox, not my neighbours. And so on.
Now our judgements of identity rest on the properties of things. We do not have 'thisness' detectors. We identify and re-identify going by known distinctive properties, properties the object in question alone has and is known to have. This is as true of cases where we judge that some face has been seen before but cannot say with any precision what triggers the judgement, as it is of cases where we have some descriptive template in mind and use it to make an identification, as happens when suspects in a crime are caught as a result of the release of an identikit, or we work out that this must be Hamilton because it is Saturday. When we judge that some face has been seen before, our judgement supervenes, and we know it supervenes, on the property complex triggering the judgement, and the property in question is that of being a property complex that triggers the judgement. And often we need to create the known distinctive properties. Nature needs our help. Each object of interest has a distinctive property no doubt, but not, without our assistance, a generally *known* one, and that's what we need. What we do is to create lots of tags or labels, many of them subjunctive ones.

Wittgenstein says in the *Philosophical Investigations*, §15 that 'It will often prove useful in philosophy to say to ourselves: naming something is like attaching a label to a thing' (Wittgenstein 1963, 7). (I am indebted here to Kevin Mulligan. There are many connections between what I say in what follows and Searle's 1983 ch. 9 discussion.) What is more, it can be useful *simpliciter*. The rooms in a building differ in their properties and we can use this to find the room we want for a meeting, as in 'The meeting is in the fourth room on the left as you get out of the lift'. But in most buildings of any size, we need room numbers. Room numbers on the doors are our way of making it the case that each room has a distinctive property, known to a good number of us, which is useful for finding any particular room. They are distinctive and known to be distinctive labels. The names you and I bear are similar but they are subjunctive labels. I don't have 'Frank Jackson' written in ink on my forehead. What is true of me is that *were* you to ask me what my name is the words 'Frank Jackson' *would* come out of my mouth. Were I to fill in a form, the words 'Frank Jackson' would be inserted by me in the cell labelled 'name'. When the principal of my school says at assembly 'Jackson is to report to my office at the end of assembly', I am the one who reports to her office. And so on. There is a distinctive causal interaction between persons and their names that is common knowledge to the folk and which is established by baptismal ceremonies (widely understood so as to include what happened when Eric Blair took on the name 'George Orwell', for example). Perhaps in the future the same will be true of room numbers. Instead of having them attached to the outside of the door, a chip and a small speaker will be inserted and we will have to say to the door, What is your number? in order to hear the answer. There are cases where people subvert the intent of the baptismal ceremonies. They adopt aliases, refuse to answer to their name, and so on. They count as having the name because they underwent a process designed by society to establish the interaction pattern and never underwent subsequently one of the processes designed to remove the interaction pattern. But we will neglect this (important) complication. There is, however, a complication too central to ignore.

The claim that an interaction pattern with a name like 'John Smith' might uniquely specify, in a way known to the folk, some single person faces the problem that there are an awful lot of people called 'John Smith', there is more than one city called 'Paris' and so on. It is not a solution to this problem that we often disambiguate by talking of Paris Texas and Paris France, or of the John Smith who lead the Labour Party in the UK. People can refer to Paris France

when they use simply ‘Paris’, maybe in ignorance of the other Paris, and the same goes for certain uses of ‘John Smith’.

The solution to the problem of too many names is rather that the interaction pattern between names and objects is part of a convention for recording and passing on information about those objects – the people, cities, offices, planets and so on – by treating the names and the token sentences that contain them in a way that makes them work as information-bearing traces. Someone who wants to give out the information that I have a beard uses the name I interact with to do so, as in the sentence ‘Frank Jackson has a beard’. Token sentences like ‘Gödel proved Gödel’s theorem’ and our earlier example ‘Madrid won’ are information-bearing traces of our creation that provide putative information about a person baptised ‘Gödel’ or a city called ‘Madrid’.

How does this solve the problem? By tying the reference of a name to *tokens* of the name, and by having the associated description that of being a source which bears the name and about which token sentences carry putative information. Although there are very many John Smiths, for each *token* there will typically be only one source of the right kind. Analogy: there are many footprints, but typically only one foot that counts as the foot that was responsible for each token footprint and concerning which the footprint carries putative information. The difference is that nature alone does the job with footprints; with names, we have to agree to do the right things to ensure the known information-bearing causal link. When, then, is a token sentence ‘John Smith’s death was a shock to the Labour party in the UK’ true? When it lies at the end of a conventionally established information-preserving causal chain going back to a person bearing the name ‘John Smith’ whose death was a shock to the Labour party.

In consequence, the information conveyed by sentences containing proper names is typically (*typically*) centred information. It is like the information discussed earlier that I myself have a beard, or the information that I am the person spilling the sugar in John Perry’s famous example (see Perry 1993 for much more on all this, but I do not know if he would approve of my use of the key notion). It is information about how things are vis à vis the token trace in the same way that the information carried by a token barometer reading is about how things are in relation to that reading.

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6. We are now ready to close the circle, to see how the rationale for having proper names in the language predicts and explains the modifications description theorists make to their theory in response to the three objections.

If proper names enter the language in part because often we want to latch onto an object as such, we would expect a linguistic construction that tracks objects across changes in properties. This is what rigidifying gives us.

If proper names enter the language in part because often we want to latch onto an object as such, we would expect the properties to vary from speaker to speaker – it is fixing on the object that matters more than how one does it, and we would expect to have a known conventional device that generates unique properties. This fits nicely with the idea that the associated properties are implicit, vary quite a bit and give a special place to tags or labels made by us in a way that makes them serve as information sources.

If in order for our labels to create properties known to be uniquely possessed ones, it is necessary that the properties be tied to tokens standing at ends of information-preserving causal chains, we should expect the representational role of names in sentences to be that of making divisions among centred worlds.[1]

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[1] I am indebted to many discussions, especially at Kirchberg, with Nenad Miscevic, Terry Horgan and Michael Tye.

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