UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

# Empty Names:

# An Essay on the Semantics, Pragmatics, Metaphysics, and Epistemology of Empty Names and Other Directly Referential Expressions

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of

the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

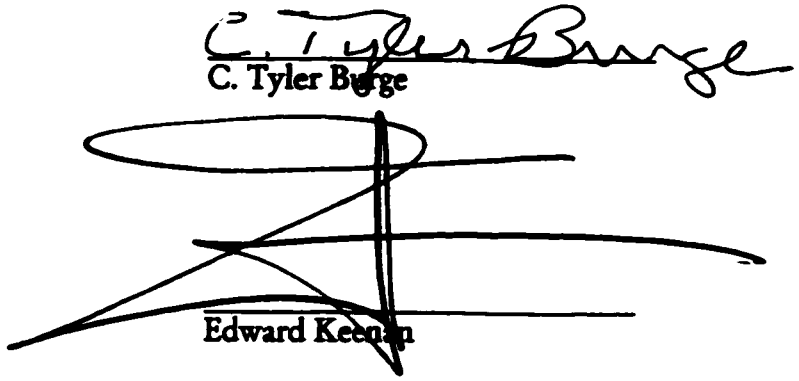
in Philosophy

by

Benjamin David Caplan

2002

The dissertation of Benjamin David Caplan is approved.



C. Tyler Burge

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2002

To my family in Montreal: my parents, Marilyn and Neil; my sister, Hanna;

and my grandparents, Mary and Nat Caplan and Bill and Belle Steinhouse

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In a futile attempt to encourage brevity, the producers of the 2001 Academy Awards ceremony offered TVs to winners who kept their acceptance speeches short. Julia Roberts, who won the Oscar for Best Actress in a Leading Role for her performance in Steven Soderbergh's *Erin Brockovich*, was loquacious. "I already have a TV," she explained.

Well, this is probably as close to winning an Oscar as I'm ever going to get; and, in the immortal words of Julia Roberts, I already have a TV. (Yes, I have always wanted to say "in the immortal words of Julia Roberts"—especially in my dissertation.)

I first came across the topic of empty names during my last semester as an undergraduate, at McGill University. Sari Kisilevsky was writing a paper on Keith Donnellan's "Speaking of Nothing" (1974) for Paul Pietroski's Philosophy of Language course in Winter 1996. I remember talking to Sari about the paper. Neither of us really knew what singular terms were, but she did introduce me to singular propositions. I came across empty names again during my first quarter as a graduate student, at UCLA. In the Philosophy of Language Workshop in Fall 1996 and beyond, Joseph Almog was presenting material that would become "The Subject Verb Object Class" I and II (1998a, 1998b). I wrote a short paper on Richard Larson and Gabriel Segal's account of empty names in *Knowledge of Meaning* (1995). (In his review, Zoltan Szabó (1997) made the point I like to think I was trying to make.) Joseph politely suggested that I spend some more

time thinking about things. He also suggested some readings, including Richard Cartwright's "Negative Existentials" (1960) and Tyler Burge's "Truth and Singular Terms" (1973). I photocopied the papers and promptly gave up. Since I have ended up working on empty names again, there is a sense in which I have made absolutely no progress at UCLA.

I started thinking about empty names again in Fall 1998, when I was conducting my annual tour through the delights of Philosophy 1 (Beginnings of Western Philosophy). Following Monty Furth's excellent "Elements of Eleatic Ontology" (1968), Sean Kelsey presented Parmenides (in *On Nature*) as a proto–direct-reference theorist who had the good sense to treat his conclusions about negative existentials (namely, that you cannot say, of what does not exist, that it does not exist) as the basis of loopy metaphysical views (for example, that only one thing exists) rather than as a refutation of the direct reference theory. Inspired by Mike Thau's Princeton dissertation, which has since become *Consciousness and Cognition* (2002), Sean argued that sentences that contain empty names don't express propositions (this is what David Braun (1993) calls 'the no proposition view'), but when they use those sentences speakers communicate descriptive propositions (this is what I call 'external descriptivism').[1] I thought this was a pretty good solution to the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory, and I decided to write my dissertation on it.

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[1] Mike has since suggested something like external descriptivism for empty names. He might even have suggested that sentences that contain empty names express descriptive propositions. (See Thau 2002: 261 n. 174.) In the draft of the dissertation that Sean had read, Mike hadn't yet made these suggestions.

As it turns out, I ended up arguing for a completely different view. But that's not Mike's or Sean's fault. At the time, I thought: "I have knock-down arguments against a view on which sentences that contain empty names do express propositions; and, although there are arguments against the view that speakers communicate descriptive propositions when they use sentences that contain empty names, there must be ways around those arguments." What happened was that the arguments that I thought were knock-down weren't as knock-down as I had thought, and I have yet to see my way around the arguments that I thought I could get around. (This is progress?)

I owe a great deal to five philosophers: David Braun, David Kaplan, Nathan Salmon, Scott Soames, and Mike Thau. I have had the good fortune to have had all but one of them (namely, David Braun) as teachers. All of them have read and commented on my work on empty names. And all of them have written work that has influenced, not just my views on empty names, but also the way in which I do semantics. I think we all owe a great deal to David Kaplan (David Braun and Nathan Salmon were also graduate students at UCLA), and having him as one's advisor is no small thing.

Over the years, I have worked on this dissertation in Los Angles and Montreal. Thanks to family and friends for making that actual. At UCLA, Betty Wilson ran the Philosophy Department smoothly, Arlecia Powell-Halley defended me from the forces of Murphy Hall, Luca Struble turned our apartment into a philosophical home, and Brian Walter was a one-person dissertation support group. I wrote the penultimate draft of this dissertation under the aegis of Scott Soames in Princeton in Spring 2001.

Princeton was a great place to work, and Scott was a great person to work with. Thanks to all those who aided and abetted my visit.

I owe thanks to many for commenting on my work, talking to me about it, or sharing their work. This list includes Fred Adams, Alex Barber, Bob Bright, Tyler Burge, Jan Cover, Louis Derosset, Anthony Everett, Peter Hanks, Richard Hanley, the Hon. Caspar J. Hare, Mark Hinchliff, Paul Hovda, Mark Johnston, Simon Keller, Daniel Krasner, Henrik Lagerlund, Jerry Levinson, Michael McGlone, Michael Nelson, Calvin Normore, Terry Parsons, Angel Pinillos, Alex Rajczi, Marga Reimer, David Sanson, Jeff Speaks, and Ken Taylor.

Being on the job market consumed about half a year of my life. When it was all over, I was surprised to discover that it had actually been philosophically productive. Thanks to all those who made my being on the job market bearable.

I presented material from Chapters 1, 4, and 5 in Andrew Hsü's Job Writing Seminar at UCLA in Spring 2000; from Chapters 2 and 3 to the Philosophy Society at Princeton in Spring 2001; from Chapter 3 at the University of Manitoba and to the Socratic Society at UCLA in Winter 2002; and from Chapters 1, 4, and 5 at the Stanford-Berkeley Graduate Conference in Spring 2001, the Society for Exact Philosophy 2001 Meeting in Montreal in Spring 2001, and the University of British Columbia in Winter 2002. Thanks to the participants and to Chris Hom, my commentator at Stanford.

While I was working on this dissertation, I benefitted from a Doctoral Fellowship (752-98-0363) from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

(SSHRC) of Canada, a President's Fellowship from UCLA, and a Dissertation Year Fellowship also from UCLA. Let me tell you, funding sure made it a lot easier to get this thing done.

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## PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Caplan, Ben. 2002. "Putting Things in Contexts: A Comment on Nathan Salmon's 'Demonstrating and Necessity'." Pacific Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, Seattle, WA, 28 March.

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— and Sam Parkovnick. 1994. "The Power and Limitations of Lambert's Research: Politics, Social Change, and Positivism." Canadian Psychological Association, Penticton, BC, 1 July.

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# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Empty Names:

An Essay on the Semantics, Pragmatics, Metaphysics, and Epistemology

of Empty Names and Other Directly Referential Expressions

by

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Doctor in Philosophy of Philosophy

University of California, Los Angeles, 2002

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In the nineteenth century, Jacques Babinet thought there was a planet between Mercury and the Sun. He introduced 'Vulcan' as a name for such a planet; but, unfortunately for him, there was and is no such planet. 'Vulcan' is an *empty name*: it's a name that doesn't refer to anything. Ever since the time of Parmenides, empty names have been giving philosophers lots of headaches.

There is a longstanding dispute in the philosophy of language about what the *content* of a name is, where the content of an expression is what it contributes to the *propositions* expressed by sentences that contain it. On the one hand, direct reference

theorists say that the content of a name is the object that it refers to. On the other hand, Fregeans say that the content of a name is a *sense*, which presents the object that the name refers to. Empty names don't refer to anything. So, on the direct reference theory, they have no content. As a result, empty names pose a host of problems for the direct reference theory. By contrast, on the Fregean theory, empty names can still have contents (provided that some senses don't present any object). As a result, empty names don't pose nearly as many problems for the Fregean theory.

The problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory have been taken to provide reasons for rejecting that theory in favor of its Fregean rival. But it would be a mistake to reject the direct reference theory on those grounds. Why? Because, by appropriating Fregean resources, direct reference theorists can offer solutions to the problems that empty names pose. Or so I argue in this dissertation. The main lesson that emerges is that the dispute between direct reference theorists and Fregeans, properly understood, isn't a dispute about whether there are senses so much as it is a dispute about *where* there are senses. Both direct reference theorists and Fregeans can appeal to senses, but only Fregeans think that senses are in the propositions expressed by sentences that contain names.

# CHAPTER ONE

# DIRECT REFERENCE AND EMPTY NAMES

> No problem has seemed to represent a more perplexing philosophical conundrum than that of the use of names which have no reference.
>
> — Saul Kripke, *Reference and Existence*

## §0: INTRODUCTION

Let's begin with two examples. Here's the first. In the nineteenth century, Jacques Babinet thought there was a planet between Mercury and the Sun. He introduced 'Vulcan' as a name for such a planet; but, unfortunately for him, there was no such planet. And there still is no such planet. Here's the second. Late one night, I thought there was a homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees. I introduced 'Leon' as a name for such a person; but, fortunately for me, there was no such person. And there still is no such person. 'Vulcan' and 'Leon' are *empty*: they don't refer to anything. (Or so I assume in this chapter. I defend that assumption in the next two chapters.)

Empty names pose a host of problems for the direct reference theory. Traditionally, these problems have been taken to be intractable. Indeed, along with

several other problems (for example, that substituting coreferential names in simple sentences apparently fails to preserve cognitive value and that substituting coreferential names in propositional-attitude ascriptions apparently fails to preserve truth-value), the problems that empty names pose have been taken to provide reasons for rejecting the direct reference theory.[1] But rejecting the direct reference theory would be a mistake. In this dissertation, I argue that direct reference theorists can offer solutions to these problems. In Section 1 of this chapter, I present the direct reference theory; and, in Section 2, I present the problems that empty names pose for it.

## §1: Direct Reference

### 1.1. Propositions

There are things that sentences express and that agents assert and believe. These are *propositions*. They are the things that are quantified over in sentences like 'I don't believe anything you say' and 'That motto expresses something that few people believe nowadays'. Propositions are about objects and attributes. For example, the proposition expressed by 'Ben is sitting' is about me and the property of being seated. Propositions have parts, and those parts determine the objects and attributes that the propositions are about. For example, the proposition expressed by 'Ben is sitting' has two parts: one that

[1] See, for example, Plantinga 1978: 129-131, Devitt 1989: 207. For more on the problems that nonempty names pose, see Chapter 6.

determines me and another that determines the property of being seated. The parts of a proposition correspond to the parts of sentences that express it. For example, one part of the proposition expressed by 'Ben is sitting', the part that determines me, corresponds to 'Ben'; and another part of that proposition, the part that determines the property of being seated, corresponds to 'is sitting'. The part of a proposition that corresponds to a part of a sentence is what that part of the sentence contributes to that proposition. For example, what 'Ben' contributes to the proposition expressed by 'Ben is sitting' is something that determines me, and what 'is sitting' contributes to that proposition is something that determines the property of being seated. The *content* of a sentence is the proposition that it expresses, and the *content* of a part of a sentence is the part of the proposition that it corresponds to. In other words, the content of an expression is what it contributes to the propositions expressed by sentences that contain it. For example, the content of 'Ben is sitting' is a proposition that is about me and the property of being seated, the content of 'Ben' is something that determines me, and the content of 'is sitting' is something that determines the property of being seated.

Propositions are not motley collections of parts; rather, those parts are put together in various ways. For example, in the proposition expressed by 'Ben is sitting', the parts that determine me and the property of being seated are put together in such a way that the property of being seated is attributed to me. The importance of structure—that is, of how the parts are put together—becomes clear when we consider more complex propositions. 'Robin kissed Sam' and 'Sam kissed Robin' express

propositions that have the same parts: one that determines Robin, another that determines the having-kissed relation, and a third that determines Sam. But those parts are put together in different ways in those propositions. In the proposition expressed by 'Robin kissed Sam', those parts are put together in such a way that Robin is said to stand in the having-kissed relation to Sam; whereas, in the proposition expressed by 'Sam kissed Robin', those parts are put together in such a way that it is Sam who is said to stand in that relation to Robin.

At least typically, propositions have truth-values. For example, the proposition expressed by 'Ben is sitting' is true, because I am sitting. A sentence inherits its truth-value from the proposition it expresses. For example, 'Ben is sitting' is true in virtue of expressing a true proposition. The same sentence can express different propositions in different *contexts*. For example, when I utter it, 'I am sitting' expresses a proposition that is about me; whereas, when you utter it, 'I am sitting' expresses a proposition that is about you. And the same proposition can have different truth-values in different *circumstances*. I am actually sitting. So, as a matter of fact, the proposition expressed by 'Ben is sitting' is true. But, had I been standing, that proposition would have been false.[2]

[2] For more on propositions, see, for example, Cartwright 1962, 1968; Salmon 1986a; Soames 1987a, 1987b; Kaplan 1989a; Thau 2002: Chapter 2.

## 1.2. What's in a Name?

A longstanding question in the philosophy of language is: what is the content of a name? That is, what does a name contribute to the propositions expressed by sentences that contain it? Gottlob Frege (1892a) famously distinguishes the *sense* (*Sinn*) and *reference* (*Bedeutung*) of an expression. For example, the referent of a name is the object that it refers to, whereas its sense is a *mode of presentation* of that object.[3] Frege's distinction presents us with two obvious candidates for the content of a name: namely, the object that it refers to and a mode of presentation of that object. Frege himself argues that what a name contributes to the propositions (or thoughts) expressed by sentences that contain it is a mode of presentation of the object that it refers to. That is, in contemporary terminology, Frege's view is that the content of a name is a mode of presentation of the object that it refers to.

But one of the main advances that has occurred in the philosophy of language since the 1970s is the recognition that the content of a name is not a *descriptive* mode of presentation: that is, it is not a mode of presentation that is of a kind with the contents of definite descriptions (for example, 'the first philosopher on the moon'). This antidescriptivist view about the contents of names is supported by semantic, epistemic, and modal arguments from Keith Donnellan (1970), Saul Kripke (1972), and David Kaplan (1989a). The crux of the semantic argument is that the descriptive mode of

[3] Frege (1892a: 26-27) says that a sense *contains* a mode of presentation, which suggests that senses are not modes of presentation. But there are reasons to think that the suggestion is mistaken. See Thau and Caplan 2001: 162 n. 7.

presentation that speakers associate with a name often does not determine the object that the name refers to. For example, speakers might associate the content of 'the famous physicist' with 'Feynman', even though that content doesn't (uniquely) determine any object; and they might associate the content of 'the discoverer of the Peano axioms' with 'Peano', even though that content determines Richard Dedekind rather than Giuseppe Peano. But the content of a name must determine the object that the name refers to. So, in many cases, the content of a name cannot be the descriptive mode of presentation that speakers associate with it.

The crux of the modal and epistemic arguments is that the proposition expressed by a sentence that contains a name often has a different modal or epistemic profile than it would have if the content of the name were a descriptive mode of presentation. For example, if the content of 'Saul Kripke' were the descriptive mode of presentation that is the content of 'the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher', then the proposition expressed by 'If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is a philosopher' would be both necessary and *a priori*. But it's neither.

Over the years, there have been many responses to these antidescriptivist arguments. I won't rehearse the literature here.[4] Although some think that there is a way around them, in the rest of this dissertation I assume that the arguments are, in essence,

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[4] For responses to the modal argument, see Plantinga 1978: 132ff.; Burge 1979: 419-420, 419-420 n. 15a; Evans 1979: 179-180; Dummett 1981a: 110-151; Dummett 1981b: 182-185, 574-585; Stanley 1997: 569-571. For arguments against these responses, see Soames 2001: Chapter 2. For a reply to Soames's arguments, see Sosa 2001: 24-34, Nelson forthcoming. (See also Nelson 2000b, Caplan 2000.) For antidescriptivist arguments in the case of empty names, see Kripke ms.; Braun 1993: 454, 1995.

correct. I take the arguments to show that, if the content of a name is a mode of presentation, then that mode of presentation is not descriptive.

We are thus left with two candidates for the content of a name: namely, the object that it refers to and a nondescriptive mode of presentation of that object. Instead of developing a theory of what nondescriptive modes of presentation might be, some have adopted the view that the content of a name is simply the object that it refers to.[5] Following Kaplan (1989a), we can call this 'the direct reference theory'.[6] We can state its two characteristic theses as follows.

**The Thesis about Names**

The content, if any, of a name is the object, if any, that it refers to.

**The Thesis about Sentences**

What a sentence that contains a name expresses, if anything, is a *singular* proposition: a proposition that contains the object, if any, that is the content of the name.[7]

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[5] For more on nondescriptive modes of presentation, see Chapter 6.

[6] See also Kaplan 1973a, 1975, 1978, 1979, 1986, 1989b; Donnellan 1974. Precursors include Mill 1843, Whitehead and Russell 1910, Russell 1918-1919, Marcus 1961, Donnellan 1970, Kripke 1972. On the history, see the papers—especially Soames 1995b, 1998—collected in Humphreys and Fetzer, eds. 1998. Kripke (1979: 239-248) comes close to endorsing the direct reference theory. But Salmon (1998: 312 n. 11) reports that "informal discussions" have led him to believe that Kripke is "deeply skeptical." In recent years, the direct reference theory has been defended by Salmon (1981, 1986a, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1990) and Soames (1985, 1987a, 1987b, 1989a, 1995a, 2001). See also Recanati 1993. In this dissertation I focus on names. On the direct reference theory and pronouns, see, for example, Salmon 1986b, 1992; Soames 1989-1990, 1994a. And on the direct reference theory and demonstratives, see, for example, Kaplan 1989a; Braun 1994, 1996; Salmon 2002; Caplan 2002.

[7] Throughout, I ignore the complications posed by sentences in which names occur within quotation marks or other such devices.

On the direct reference theory, nonempty names connect language and reality directly in the following way: a sentence that contains a nonempty name expresses a singular proposition that contains the object in the world that the name refers to.

## §2: Empty Names

Empty names pose all sorts of problems for any theory about the connection between language and reality, and the direct reference theory is no exception. One source of these problems is that, on the direct reference theory, a sentence that contains an empty name apparently fails to express any proposition. An empty name, which has no referent, has no content. So it doesn't contribute anything to the propositions, if any, expressed by sentences that contain it. It seems that, just as an empty name is defective (in having no content), sentences that contain it must also be defective (in having no content either). For these reasons, it is tempting, and apparently even compulsory, for direct reference theorists to conclude that a sentence that contains an empty name fails to express any proposition. David Braun (1993: 456-460) calls this 'the no proposition view'.[8]

[8] Kripke (ms.) and Donnellan (1974: 20-21, 21 n. 15; but cf. 25-31) are among those who accept the no proposition view, at least for some sentences that contain empty names. So are McKay (1981: 295-296), Fitch (1987: 159-161, 1993: 462-463), Martin (1987: 174-176, 188-189), and Recanati (2000: 218, 226). Braun (1993: 449, 456-460, 465) is prepared to accept the no proposition view but prefers not to. (See Braun 1993: 460-465. And see Chapter 4.) Ryckman (1988: 241-246) also seems prepared to accept it, although he denies that the direct reference theory applies to empty names and so does not see the no proposition view as a consequence of the direct reference theory. Salmon (1986a: 127) seems open to the possibility that the no proposition view is correct for some cases, but he later rejects it. (See Salmon 1998: 307-310. And see Chapter 4.)

This is where the trouble begins. For the no proposition view apparently has several counterintuitive consequences. First, it might seem that a speaker could not use a sentence that contains an empty name to communicate something that she believes. For the sentence would fail to express any proposition and hence would fail to express any proposition that she believes. But, for example, it seems that I can use 'It is not the case that Vulcan exists' to communicate something that I believe. Braun (1993: 453) calls this 'the problem of the proposition believed'.

Second, it might seem that, since it would fail to express any proposition, a sentence that contains an empty name would be nonsense. But, for example, 'It is not the case that Vulcan exists' does not seem to be nonsense. Braun (1993: 451-452) calls this 'the problem of nonsense'.

Third, it might seem that two sentences that contain different empty names could not differ in what Frege (1892a: 25-26) calls "cognitive value" ("*Erkenntniswert*"), since both would fail to express any proposition. But, for example, 'Vulcan is a planet' and 'Leon is a planet' might appear to differ in cognitive value. Braun (1993: 458-459) calls this 'the problem of differing cognitive values'.

Finally, it might seem that a sentence that contains an empty name could not be either true or false. For a sentence has a truth-value only derivatively, in virtue of expressing a proposition with that truth-value; and a sentence that contains an empty name would fail to express any proposition. But, for example, 'It is not the case that Vulcan exists' appears to be true. Braun (1993: 452-453) calls this 'the problem of truth'.

The problem of truth is a problem about the connection between language and reality. For truth itself requires a connection between language and reality. By contrast, the problem of the proposition believed and the problem of differing cognitive values are problems about the connection between language and thought. For the proposition that a speaker believes and that she communicates when she uses a sentence is a thought that she grasps, and that two sentences differ in cognitive value has at least something to do with the thoughts that she grasps when she uses those sentences.

As stated, the problem of nonsense is not all that specific; it is probably a problem about the connections between language and reality, between language and thought, and between thought and reality. When we say that a sentence that contains an empty name is nonsense, we might be saying that it is not about anything in the world (this is a problem about the connection between language and reality), that a speaker who uses it cannot be grasping any thought (this is a problem about the connection between language and thought), or that the thought that a speaker grasps when she uses it cannot be about anything in the world (this is a problem about the connection between thought and reality).

There is a sense in which the problem of truth is more immediate than the other problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory. This is not surprising, given that the problem of truth is the only problem that is clearly about the connection between language and reality and that the direct reference theory is a theory about that connection. It is central to the notion of a proposition that a sentence inherits its truth-

value from the proposition it expresses. Given this, the no proposition view has as a rather immediate consequence that, since it fails to express a proposition, a sentence that contains an empty name cannot be either true or false.

Correspondingly, there is a sense in which the other problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory are less immediate. Although there are no doubt connections between the proposition expressed by a sentence, on the one hand, and whether a speaker can use the sentence to communicate something that she believes, whether it makes sense, and which sentences it differs in cognitive value from, on the other, I do not think that these connections are as central to the notion of a proposition. Consequently, that a sentence that contains an empty name fails to express a proposition (as it does on the no proposition view) should not have as an immediate consequence that a speaker who uses the sentence cannot communicate anything that she believes, that it is nonsense, or that it does not differ in cognitive value from certain other sentences (as the problem of the proposition believed, the problem of nonsense, and the problem of differing cognitive values might suggest).

## §3: Conclusion

In presenting the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory, I have been assuming that some names, including 'Vulcan' and 'Leon', are empty. One way to solve—or, rather, dissolve—the problems that empty names pose for the direct

reference theory would be to deny that any names are empty. But this is not a strategy I endorse. In Chapters 2 and 3, I defend the assumption that some names are empty. On the view that emerges, it would be a mistake to treat all names that appear to be empty alike. Some (for example, 'Vulcan' and 'Leon') are empty. But others (for example, 'Plato') do refer, albeit to objects that don't actually exist now.

Since some names are empty, direct reference theorists must address the problems that they pose. In Chapter 4, I consider a view—namely, the gappy proposition view—on which sentences that contain empty names do express propositions after all. I argue that, by itself, this view can't solve all of the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory. To solve those problems, direct reference theorists need to appeal to Fregean resources. Or so I argue. In Chapter 5, I argue that various solutions that don't appeal to Fregean resources fail. In Chapter 6, I explain how, by appealing to Fregean resources, direct reference theorists can solve the problems that nonempty names pose. And, in Chapter 7, I argue that those solutions can be extended to the problems that empty names pose.

# CHAPTER TWO

# REFERENCE WITHOUT EXISTENCE

## §0: INTRODUCTION

Gottlob Frege (1892a: 41-42, 42 n. I; 1893: §11, 19-20) proposes assigning a referent—either the number zero or the empty set—to what would otherwise be an empty name or definite description.[1] This might be a good prescription for how a formal or natural language should work, but it's not a good description of how any natural language actually works. As Bertrand Russell (1905a: 484) remarks, Frege's proposal is "plainly artificial." If we're creating a formal language, then we can stipulate that every name that would otherwise be empty refers to any object we please: Keanu Reeves, say. And the question of which names, if any, are empty turns out to be easy. (The answer is: none!) But, if we're studying a natural language, then we don't get to make such stipulations. And the question of which names, if any, are empty turns out to be hard. (The answer is: some! But which ones?)

In this chapter and the next, I defend the assumption that some names are empty. Some philosophers think that no name is empty. On Alexius Meinong's (1904a) view, for example, every name refers to an object: some names refer to objects that exist, whereas other names refer to objects that don't exist. It is commonly assumed that, on

[1] For an exposition of Frege's (1893) view, see Beaney 1997: 384-385.

Meinong's view, objects that don't exist nonetheless have some sort of being. For example, Nathan Salmon (1998: 288) says that, on Meinong's view, 'the round square' refers to an object that has "lower-class ontological status, a sort of being shy of existence." But this isn't so: as I argue in Section 1, Meinong's view is that some names refer to objects, even though those objects don't exist and don't have any other sort of being either. Meinong's view might seem absurd. Voicing the sentiments of many, Tyler Burge (1983: 80) says: "Meinong's approach is, to put it bluntly, silly." But it isn't. In Section 2, I develop a metaphysical picture. In Section 3, I argue that this metaphysical picture vindicates Meinong's view that some names refer to objects that don't exist and that don't have any other sort of being either—but without vindicating Meinong's view that no name is empty.

You might already accept Meinong's view that, because every name that doesn't refer to an object that exists refers to an object that doesn't exist, no name is empty. If so, this chapter isn't for you. But you might be unsure how to make sense of Meinong's view that some names refer to objects that don't exist and that don't have any other sort of being either. And you might be unsure whether to accept Meinong's view that no name is empty. If so, this chapter is for you. The metaphysical picture developed in Section 2 makes sense of Meinong's view that some names refer to objects that don't exist and that don't have any other sort of being either. But, still, it doesn't provide any reason for accepting Meinong's view that no name is empty. So, without further, independent reasons, we needn't accept Meinong's view that no name is empty.

## §1: MEINONG

### 1.1. Existence and Being

On Meinong's (1904a) view, every name or definite description that doesn't refer to an object that exists refers to an object that doesn't exist. Let's review our two examples. In the nineteenth century, Jacques Babinet introduced 'Vulcan' as a name for a planet between Mercury and the Sun. And, late one night, I introduced 'Leon' as a name for a homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees. But there was and is no planet between Mercury and the Sun, just as there was and is no homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees. On Meinong's view, 'Vulcan' and 'Leon' refer to objects that don't exist, as do names from fiction or myth (such as 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Pegasus', and 'Santa Claus') and certain definite descriptions (such as 'the golden mountain' and 'the round square'). But, contrary to what is commonly assumed, Meinong doesn't think that these objects have any sort of being.

In "The Theory of Objects," Meinong (1904a: 5-7) distinguishes objects that "*existieren*" from objects that merely "*bestehen*." On Meinong's view, every object that *existieren* also *bestehen*, but not every object that *bestehen* also *existieren*; these objects that *bestehen* but don't *existerien* merely *bestehen*. Objects that *existieren*—for example, rocks and tables and chairs—are concrete. By contrast, objects that merely *bestehen*—for example, sets and numbers and true propositions—are abstract. Although they don't *existieren*, objects that merely *bestehen* have some sort of being other than *Existenz*: namely, *Bestand*. Meinong thus accepts the claim that, although they don't *existieren*, some objects have some sort of being other than *Existenz*: namely, *Bestand*.

It might be tempting to render this claim as 'although they don't exist, some objects have some sort of being other than existence: namely, subsistence'. After all, '*existieren*' is usually translated as 'exist', and '*bestehen*' is usually translated as 'subsist'. But this temptation should be resisted, because Meinong doesn't use '*existieren*' as we use 'exist'. Rather, he uses '*existieren*' as we use 'concretely exist', and he uses '*bestehen*' as we use 'exist'. Meinong's claim that, although they don't *existieren*, some objects have some sort of being other than *Existenz*—namely, *Bestand*—is, as we would put it, the claim that, although they don't concretely exist, some objects have some sort of being other than concrete existence: namely, existence *tout court*. Or, better yet, it's the claim that some objects that aren't concrete exist. In what follows, I speak of existence *tout court* where Meinong would speak of *Bestand*, and I speak of concrete existence where Meinong would speak of *Existenz*.

On Meinong's view, among the objects that don't exist (or, as he would put it, *bestehen*) are those that 'Vulcan' and 'Leon' refer to. But he doesn't think that these objects have any sort of being.[2] Meinong (1904a: 9) does say: "Those who like paradoxical modes of expression could very well say: 'There are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects'." Objects of which it is true that there are no such objects are objects that don't exist. So, if there are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects, then there are objects that don't exist. Meinong thus says that one "could very well say" something that implies that there are objects that don't exist. This suggests that, on his view, there are objects that don't exist.

But, before we conclude that Meinong thinks that objects that don't exist have some sort of being other than existence, we should bear two points in mind. First, he says that those who could say that there are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects are "those who like paradoxical modes of expression." This suggests that those who don't like such modes of expression wouldn't say that and hence needn't say anything that implies that there are objects that don't exist. And, second, whatever sort of being it is that objects of which it is true that there are no such objects lack, to say that there are such objects is to say that they have precisely that sort of being. It isn't to say that they have some sort of being other than the sort of being they lack. So, even if Meinong were among those who like paradoxical modes of expression and who would say that there are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects, he would not be saying that objects that don't exist have some sort of being other than existence.[3]

In later, unpublished work, Meinong (1913, 1915b) entertains the view that there is a kind of being that all objects, including those that don't exist, share.[4] But his considered view, at least in "The Theory of Objects," is that objects that don't exist don't have any sort of being. Meinong (1904a: 9-13) discusses the view that there is some sort of being other than concrete existence or existence *tout court*, a sort of being that even objects that don't exist have. He presents the following argument for the view. The

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[2] See Chisholm 1972.

[3] A third point: I am assuming that, if there are objects of a certain sort, then those objects have some kind of being.

[4] The citation of Meinong 1913, 1915b comes from Lambert 1983: 14 n. 4. Lambert reports that the manuscripts can be found in the library of the Karl Franzens Universität in Graz, Austria.

object that 'the golden mountain' refers to, which doesn't exist, has nonbeing (*Nichtsein*). So the proposition that the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to has nonbeing is true. Let's call that proposition 'Goldie'. Since Goldie is true, it has some sort of being. The relation between the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to and Goldie is like the relation between a part and a whole of which it is a part. And, if a whole has some sort of being, then so do its parts. Since Goldie has some sort of being, so does the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to. But the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to doesn't exist. So the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to has some sort of being other than existence. This sort of being must be compatible with nonbeing, since the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to also has nonbeing. Meinong (1904a: 11) calls this sort of being "quasi-being" ("*Quasisein*").

Meinong accepts that objects that don't exist have nonbeing. But nonbeing needn't be a sort of being and hence needn't be a sort of being other than existence, so it doesn't follow that he accepts that objects that don't exist have some sort of being other than existence. And Meinong rejects the conclusion that objects that don't exist have quasibeing or any sort of being other than existence. He does this by rejecting "the analogy to the part-whole relation": namely, the claim that the relation between the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to and Goldie is like the relation between a part and a whole of which it is a part.[5] Speaking of that analogy and of propositions such as Goldie, Meinong (1904a: 12) says:

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[5] Meinong 1904a: 12.

> Instead of deriving the being of an Object from the being of an Objective [i.e. proposition], even on the basis of a questionable analogy where the Objective is an Objective of non-being, it would be better to conclude from the facts with which we are concerned that this analogy does not apply to the Objective of non-being—i.e., that the being of the Objective is not by any means universally dependent upon the being of its Object.

Rather than conclude that the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to has some sort of being other than existence, then, Meinong denies that the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to must have some sort of being if Goldie has some sort of being. On Meinong's view, Goldie can itself have some sort of being, even if the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to does not. He thus avoids the conclusion that the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to has some sort of being other than existence.

Meinong (1904a: 12) goes on to say that an object "stands 'beyond being and non-being'." This is what he calls "the principle of the indifference of pure Objects to being."[6] Saying that an object "stands 'beyond being and non-being'" is how someone "who seeks to associate himself with models which have become famous could formulate" the principle of indifference.[7] But it can also be formulated in a "less pretentious and less engaging way," which Meinong (1904a: 12-13) finds "more appropriate," by saying that, although either the proposition that an object has being or the proposition that it has nonbeing is true, "The Object is by nature indifferent to being." I am not sure what the principle of indifference amounts to, exactly, but I take it

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[6] Meinong 1904a: 13.

[7] Meinong 1904a: 12.

that it does not rule out, and might even suggest, the view that some objects—namely, those that don't exist—don't have any sort of being.

Neo-Meinongians are more or less in keeping with Meinong on the question of whether objects that don't exist have any sort of being. For example, Terence Parsons (1980: 10) is neutral on the question. And Richard Routley (1980: 2) says that, at least in many cases, objects that don't exist don't have any sort of being. He also says that existence is the only sort of being, so an object that doesn't exist doesn't have any sort of being.[8]

### 1.2. Properties and Relations

On Meinong's view, objects that don't exist can enter into relations. In particular, they can enter into the refers-to relation: 'Vulcan' and 'Leon', for example, refer to objects that don't exist. Objects that don't exist can also have properties. For example, the object that 'Vulcan' refers to has the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun, and the object that 'Leon' refers to has the property of being a homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows. Meinong (1904a: 8) calls this "the principle of the independence of *Sosein* [having properties] from *Sein* [being or existing]."[9]

On Meinong's view, the object that 'the golden mountain' refers to has the properties of being golden and of being a mountain, and the object that 'the round

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[8] Routley: 1980: 851. On the interpretation of Routley's (1980) view, see Lewis 1990.

[9] As Meinong (1904a: 8 n. 1) acknowledges, the principle of independence is due to his student Ernst Mally (1904).

square' refers to has the properties of being round and of being square. No object that is both round and square exists. So, on Meinong's view, 'the round square' doesn't refer to an object that exists; rather, it refers to an object that doesn't exist. But, on pain of contradiction, Meinong's view can't be simply that every definite description of the form ⌜the φ⌝ refers to an object that has whatever properties are expressed by the expressions in φ. As Russell (1905a: 483, 1905b: 533, 1907: 439) argues, if 'the round square that exists' referred to an object that had all of the properties expressed by the expressions in 'round square that exists', then it would refer to an object that is round and square and that exists. But no object that is both round and square exists. So 'the round square that exists' would refer to an object that both exists and doesn't exist. But that's impossible.

There are at least two ways for Meinong to get around this problem. The first is to distinguish two sorts of properties: an object that doesn't exist lacks the full-blooded, *extranuclear* property of existing; but it can have a "watered down," *nuclear* version of that property.[10] On this view, 'the round square that exists' refers to an object that has the nuclear property of existing and lacks the extranuclear property of existing. And there is no contradiction in an object's having a nuclear property and lacking its extranuclear counterpart. The second way for Meinong to get around the problem is to distinguish two ways in which objects can be related to properties: an object that doesn't exist

[10] Meinong (1915a: 176) borrows the distinction between nuclear (*konstitutorisch*) and extranuclear (*außerkonstitutorisch*) properties from Mally. The citation of Meinong 1915a: 176 comes from Findlay 1963: 176. The term 'watered down' ('*depotenzierte*') comes from Meinong 1915a: 291. The citation of Meinong 1915a: 291 comes from Findlay 1963: 103. See Findlay 1963: 103-106. For a neo-Meinongian view that relies on the distinction between nuclear and extranuclear properties, see Parsons 1980.

doesn't *exemplify* the property of existing, but it can *encode* that property.[11] On this view, 'the round square that exists' refers to an object that encodes, but doesn't exemplify, the property of existing. And there is no contradiction in an object's encoding a property that it doesn't exemplify. (A third way would be to deny that 'the round square that exists'—or 'the round square that has the extranuclear property of existing' or 'the round square that exemplifies the property of existing'—refers to any object.[12])

Some objects that don't exist couldn't exist, at least not without gaining some properties and losing others. For example, the object that 'the round square' refers to is both round and square; and, even if Meinong is right that some things that don't exist are both round and square, it couldn't be the case that something that exists is both round and square. So, unless it could lose either the property of being round or the property of being square, the object that 'the round square' refers to couldn't exist. The object that 'the round square' refers to lacks both the property of being blue and the property of not being blue (and likewise for many other such pairs of properties). In this respect, it is *incomplete*.[13] But, even if Meinong is right that some things that don't exist lack both the property of being blue and the property of not being blue, it couldn't be the case that something that exists lacks both the property of being blue and the

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[11] This suggestion is due to Mally 1912: 64, 76. The citation of Mally 1912: 64, 76 comes from Findlay 1963: 112. See Findlay 1963: 110-112, 182-184. For a neo-Meinongian view that relies on the distinction between exemplifying and encoding properties, see Zalta 1983, 1988.

[12] See Parsons 1980: 43, 164-165, 170-174; but cf. 119-120. For discussion, see Wettstein 1984.

[13] See Meinong 1907: 118-123, 1915a: 179-180. The citation of Meinong 1907: 118-123, 1915a: 179-180 comes from Chisholm 1972: 34 n. 10. (Meinong 1907 is based on Meinong 1906-1907.)

property of not being blue. So, unless it could gain either the property of being blue or the property of not being blue (and likewise for many other such pairs of properties), the object that 'the round square' refers to couldn't exist.

In the next section, I leave Meinong for contemporary analytic metaphysics. Equipped with the insights of that section, I return to Meinong in Section 3.

## §2: METAPHYSICS

### 2.1. Modality and Time

There is a dispute in the metaphysics of modality between possibilists (or modal realists) and actualists. I exist, and you exist, but what about merely possible objects? Do they exist? For example, there aren't actually any talking donkeys, but there could have been. Do talking donkeys exist? Possibilists say 'yes'; actualists, 'no'. According to *possibilism*, merely possible objects exist and are just as real as actual objects. So, for example, talking donkeys exist and are just as real as you and me. For the possibilist, logical space is like physical space. Just as some things exist here and other things exist in Australia, the possibilist says, some things exist in this world and other things exist in other worlds. What exists in Australia is just as real as what exists here. Similarly, what exists in other worlds is just as real as what exists in this world. Or so the possibilist says.[14] By contrast, according to *actualism*, merely possible objects don't exist and aren't real at all. So, for example, talking donkeys don't exist and aren't real at all. For the actualist, some parts of

[14] See Lewis 1973: 84-91, 1986a.

logical space are something like a dream. Just as some things exist in reality and some things exist only in a dream, the actualist says, some things exist in this world and other things exist only in other worlds. But what exists only in a dream doesn't exist at all. Similarly, what exists only in other worlds doesn't exist at all. Or so the actualist says.[15] And I'm inclined to agree.

There is a further dispute among actualists. Can merely possible objects actually have properties, even though they don't exist? More generally, can objects have properties or enter into relations in worlds in which they don't exist? For example, can talking donkeys actually have properties or enter into relations? Serious actualists say 'no'; nonserious actualists, 'yes'. According to *serious actualism*, objects can have properties and enter into relations only in worlds in which they exist. So, for example, talking donkeys can't actually have properties or enter into relations.[16] By contrast, according to *nonserious actualism*, objects can have properties and enter into relations in worlds in which they don't exist. So, for example, talking donkeys can actually have properties and enter into relations.[17] In general, I'm inclined to agree with the nonserious actualist.

There is a dispute in the metaphysics of time that parallels the dispute in the metaphysics of modality between possibilists and actualists. I exist, and you exist, but what about merely past and merely future objects? Do they exist? For example, there aren't any ancient Greek generals or thirtieth-century Earthlings now, but there were

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[15] See, for example, Adams 1974, 1981; Plantinga 1974, 1976, 1979, 1983, 1985a, 1985b; Kaplan 1975.

[16] See Plantinga 1979, 1983, 1985a, 1985b. For criticisms, see Fine 1985, Pollock 1985, Hinchliff 1989.

[17] See Salmon 1987, 1998.

ancient Greek generals and (we may assume) there will be thirtieth-century Earthlings. Do ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings exist? Eternalists say 'yes'; presentists, 'no'. According to *eternalism*, merely past and merely future objects exist and are just as real as present objects. So, for example, ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings exist and are just as real as you and me. For the eternalist, time is like space. Just as some things exist here and other things exist in Australia, the eternalist says, some things exist now and other things exist at other times. What exists in Australia is just as real as what exists here. Similarly, what exists at other times is just as real as what exists now. Or so the eternalist says.[18] By contrast, according to *presentism*, merely past and merely future objects don't exist and aren't real at all. So, for example, ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings don't exist and aren't real at all. For the presentist, some times are something like a dream. Just as some things exist in reality and some things exist only in a dream, the presentist says, some things exist now and other things exist only at other times. But what exists only in a dream doesn't exist at all. Similarly, what exists only at other times doesn't exist at all. Or so the presentist says.[19] And I'm inclined to agree.

There is a further dispute among presentists that parallels the further dispute among actualists. Can merely past and merely future objects have properties now, even though they don't exist? More generally, can objects have properties or enter into

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[18] See Lewis 1976, 1986a, 1988, 1992, 2002a, 2002b; Sider 2001.

[19] See Hinchliff 1988, 1996, 2000, 2001; Bigelow 1996; Zimmerman 1998; Ludlow 1999; Markosian 2002; Keller 2002.

relations at times at which they don't exist? For example, can ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings now have properties and enter into relations? Serious presentists say 'no'; nonserious presentists, 'yes'. According to *serious presentism*, objects can have properties and enter into relations only at times at which they exist. So, for example, ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings can't now have properties or enter into relations.[20] By contrast, according to *nonserious presentism*, objects can have properties and enter into relations at times at which they don't exist. So, for example, ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings can now have properties and enter into relations.[21] I'm inclined to agree with the nonserious presentist.

### 2.2. Are You Serious?

According to nonserious actualism and nonserious presentism, objects can have properties and enter into relations in worlds in which, and at times at which, they don't exist. What sorts of properties could an object have, and what sorts of relations could it enter into, in worlds in which it doesn't exist? Well, a nonserious actualist might say, talking donkeys don't actually exist, but every talking donkey actually has the properties of being self-identical, of being either blue or not blue, and of not existing; and we can actually enter into the talking-about relation with them. Similarly, what sorts of properties could an object have, and what sorts of relations could it enter into, at times at which it doesn't exist? Well, a nonserious presentist might say, ancient Greek generals

[20] See Bigelow 1996, Zimmerman 1998, Keller 2002.

[21] See Hinchliff 1988: esp. Chapter 2, 1996. See also Salmon 1998: 286-291, 313-314 n. 29.

and thirtieth-century Earthlings don't exist now, but every ancient Greek general now has the property of being such that it was Greek, and every thirtieth-century Earthling now has the property of being such that it will be an Earthling. And, a nonserious presentist might continue, we can now enter into the exists-after relation with every Greek general and the exists-before relation with every thirtieth-century Earthling.

Some have thought that nonserious actualism and nonserious presentism aren't to be taken seriously, because actualism implies serious actualism and presentism implies serious presentism.[22] Let's focus on the argument from presentism to serious presentism. (The argument from actualism to serious actualism parallels the argument from presentism to serious presentism.) If nonserious presentism were true, then it would be possible for an object to have a property or enter into a relation at a time at which it doesn't exist. Suppose, for example, that it were possible for something that doesn't exist now—say, an ancient Greek general—to now have a property: say, the property of not existing. In that case, it would be possible for the property of not existing to now be instantiated by something—namely, an ancient Greek general—that doesn't exist now. According to presentism, something that doesn't exist now doesn't exist at all. In particular, ancient Greek generals don't exist at all. So it would be possible for the property of not existing to now be instantiated, without there being anything that instantiates it. But, some have thought, this is absurd, because, necessarily, if a property

[22] See Plantinga 1979, 1985a, 1985b; Bergmann 1996, 1999. For criticisms, see Pollock 1985, Hudson 1997, Hinchliff 1989. See also Plantinga 1983.

is instantiated, then there is something that instantiates it. So it's not possible for something that doesn't exist now to now have a property.

The argument given above is supposed to show that, if presentism is true, then serious presentism must be true and nonserious presentism can't be true. If the argument is to show that, we need to generalize it in two ways. First, we need to generalize the argument from properties to relations. Serious presentism precludes an object that doesn't exist now from now having properties. But it also precludes an object that doesn't exist now from now entering into relations. For example, in addition to precluding ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings from now having properties, serious presentism also precludes them from now entering into relations. Nonserious presentism would be true if ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings could now have properties (even though they don't exist now). Nonserious presentism would also be true if ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings could now enter into relations (even though they don't exist now). So the argument needs to show, not only that it's not possible for objects that don't exist now to now have properties, but also that it's not possible for objects that don't exist now to now enter into relations. I take it that this generalization is fairly straightforward. Instead of relying on the claim that, necessarily, if a property is instantiated, then there is something that instantiates it, the generalized argument relies on the claim that, necessarily, if a relation is instantiated, then all of its relata are among the things that there are.

Second, we need to generalize the argument from objects that don't exist now to objects that didn't exist or won't exist. Serious presentism precludes an object that

doesn't exist now from now having a property. But, as Mark Hinchliff (1988: Chapter 2) emphasizes, it also precludes an object that does exist now from having had a property when it didn't exist or having a property when it won't exist. For example, in addition to precluding ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings from now having the property of not existing, serious presentism also precludes twenty-first-century Earthlings from having had, in the fifth century BCE, the property of not existing and from having that property in the thirtieth century CE. Nonserious presentism would be true if ancient Greek generals and thirtieth-century Earthlings could now have the property of not existing (even though they don't exist now). Nonserious presentism would also be true if twenty-first-century Earthlings could have had in the fifth century BCE, or could have in the thirtieth century CE, the property of not existing (even though they didn't exist in the fifth century BCE and won't exist in the thirtieth century CE). So the argument needs to show, not only that it's not possible for something that doesn't exist now to now have a property, but also that it's not possible for something that does exist now to have had a property when it didn't exist or to have a property when it won't exist.

Following Hinchliff (1988: 78), let's call the view that objects that don't exist now can't now have properties or enter into relations 'semiserious presentism'. Serious presentism is the generalization of semiserious presentism from the present to all times. For, according to serious presentism, objects can't have properties or enter into relations at any time at which they don't exist. The argument given so far is an argument only for

semiserious presentism. It needs to be generalized if it is to be an argument for serious presentism.

This second generalization is a little less straightforward. The original argument relies on the claim that, according to presentism, something that doesn't exist now doesn't exist at all. In particular, since ancient Greek generals don't exist now, they don't exist at all. From this, and the assumption that an ancient Greek general now instantiates the property of not existing, it follows that it's possible for the property of not existing to now be instantiated, without there being anything that instantiates it. But twenty-first-century Earthlings do exist now. So, according to presentism, they do exist. As a result, there's no reason to deny that there is something that, in the fifth century BCE, instantiated the property of not existing.

The trick to generalizing the argument is realizing that what, for us, is a case of a present object having had a property in the fifth century BCE is, for ancient Greek generals and their timemates, a case of a merely future object having a property. If presentism is true, then it is always true. So, no matter what time it is, something that doesn't exist at that time doesn't exist at all. As result, in the fifth century BCE, twenty-first-century Earthlings didn't exist at all. So, in the fifth century BCE, it was the case that: if a twenty-first-century Earthling has the property of not existing, then that property is instantiated, without there being anything that instantiates it. But, the argument goes, this is absurd, because it is always the case that, necessarily, if a property is instantiated, then there is something that instantiates it. So it's not possible for

something that exists now to have had a property when it didn't exist. (And, similarly, it's not possible for something that exists now to have a property when it won't exist.)

To make the point more vivid, imagine that an ancient Greek general, who happens to be fluent in English and to know our calendar system, says: "Suppose that it were possible for something that doesn't exist now—say, a twenty-first-century Earthling—to now have a property: say, the property of not existing. In that case, it would be possible for the property of not existing to now be instantiated by something—namely, a twenty-first-century Earthling—that doesn't exist now. According to presentism, something that doesn't exist now doesn't exist at all. In particular, twenty-first-century Earthlings don't exist at all. So it would be possible for the property of not existing to now be instantiated, without there being anything that instantiates it. But this is absurd, because, necessarily, if a property is instantiated, then there is something that instantiates it. So it's not possible for something that doesn't exist now to now have a property."

If the original argument is sound, then so is the ancient Greek general's. The principles that it relies on—including presentism and the claim that, necessarily, if a property is instantiated, then there is something that instantiates it—are always true if they're true now. And, if the ancient Greek general's argument is sound, then it's not possible for something that exists now to have had a property when it didn't exist. (And, similarly, it's not possible for something that exists now to have a property when it won't

exist.) So the original argument for semiserious presentism can be generalized into an argument for serious presentism.

### 2.3. How to be Frivolous

But is the original argument from presentism to serious presentism any good? The argument relies on something that many people take to be obvious: namely, that, necessarily, if a property is instantiated, then there is something that instantiates it. Something like existential generalization lies behind this claim. Let '*Fa*' represent the claim that a property *F* is now instantiated by an object *a*. Let '$\exists xFx$' represent the claim that there is something that now instantiates *F*. What people have taken to be obvious is thus something like the claim that '$\exists xFx$' follows from '*Fa*'.

Presentists and eternalists alike think that the inference from '*Fa*' to '$\exists xFx$' is valid when *a* is something that now exists. Since *a* now exists, presentists and eternalists agree that *a* exists. And, since *a* is something that exists and that now instantiates *F*, presentists and eternalists agree that there is something that now instantiates *F*. Serious presentists and eternalists alike also think that the inference from '*Fa*' to '$\exists xFx$' is valid when *a* is something that existed, or will exist, but doesn't exist now. Serious presentists think that the inference is valid, because they deny that '*Fa*' can be true when *a* doesn't exist now. And they deny that, because they deny that properties can now be instantiated by objects that don't exist now. So, they think, the premise must be false. Eternalists think that the inference is valid, because they think that '$\exists xFx$' must be true when

something that existed, or will exist, now instantiates *F*. And they think that, because they think that objects that existed, or will exist, must be just as real as objects that exist now. So, they think, the conclusion must be true.

By contrast, nonserious presentists deny that the inference from '*Fa*' to '$\exists xFx$' is valid when *a* is something that doesn't exist now. According to nonserious presentism, a property can now be instantiated by an object that doesn't exist now and hence (by presentism) doesn't exist at all. So, nonserious presentists think, '*Fa*' can be true, even if '$\exists xFx$' is false. That is, they think it's possible for the premise to be true and the conclusion false. What follows from the claim that a property is now instantiated is that there was, is now, or will be something that now instantiates it. If what now instantiates the property is something that doesn't exist now, then there isn't now anything that now instantiates it and hence (by presentism) there isn't anything at all that now instantiates it.

What the original argument shows, then, is that nonserious presentists must deny something that many people take to be obvious: namely, that, necessarily, if a property is instantiated, then there is something that instantiates it. Admittedly, denying this is counterintuitive. But, I think, it is a counterintuitiveness that nonserious presentists can accept. A nonserious presentist can, I think, fairly say: "The argument shows that I've got to accept something you think is counterintuitive. But that's no objection; that's my view." Nonserious presentism remains an option. And, for similar reasons, so does nonserious actualism.

## §3: Meinong and Metaphysics

### 3.1. Using the Right Picture

Nonserious actualism and nonserious presentism give us a metaphysical picture that makes sense of Meinong's view that some names refer to objects that don't exist and that don't have any other sort of being either. According to nonserious actualism and nonserious presentism, objects that don't actually now exist don't exist at all. And they don't have any other sort of being either. But they can actually now have properties. In particular, objects that don't actually now exist can actually now have the property of being referred to. And they can actually now enter into relations. In particular, objects that don't actually now exist can actually now enter into the refers-to relation. This gives us the sort of metaphysical picture we need.

By contrast, possibilism, eternalism, serious actualism, and serious presentism don't give us the sort of metaphysical picture we need. For, according to possibilism and eternalism, objects that don't actually now exist do exist. So, even if a name referred to an object that doesn't actually now exist, it wouldn't refer to an object that doesn't exist; rather, it would refer to an object that does exist. And, according to serious actualism and serious presentism, it's not possible for an object that doesn't actually now exist to actually now have properties or enter into relations. So a name couldn't refer to an object that doesn't actually now exist.[23]

Let's look at four cases. First, some philosophers accept the following sentence:

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[23] For ways around this problem for serious presentism, see Chisholm 1994, Sider 1999, Markosian 2002.

'Plato' refers to Plato, even though Plato doesn't exist anymore.[24]

This is supposed to be a case in which a name refers to an object that once existed but no longer does. Second, some philosophers accept the following sentence:

'Newman' refers to Newman, even though Newman doesn't exist yet.

where we know that a certain sperm and egg will be united, we know that a person will result from that union, and we have introduced 'Newman' as a name for that person.[25] This is supposed to be a case in which a name refers to an object that will exist but does not yet. Third, some philosophers accept the following sentence:

'Noman' refers to Noman, even though Noman doesn't actually exist.

where we know that a certain sperm and egg could be united but won't, we know that a person could result from that union but won't, and we have introduced 'Noman' as a name for that person.[26] This is supposed to be a case in which a name refers to an object that could exist but actually doesn't.

Finally, some philosophers accept the following sentence:

'Slim' and 'Steve' refer to Slim and Steve, even though Slim and Steve couldn't exist.

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[24] See, for example, Kaplan 1973a: 503-505, 516-517 n. 19; Adams 1986: 322-328; Hinchliff 1988: Chapter 2, 1996: 124-125; Chisholm 1994; Salmon 1998: 286-291; van Inwagen 2000b: 452; Soames 2001: 89-95.

[25] See, for example, Kaplan 1978: 241, 1989b: 607-610; Salmon 1998: 286-291, ms. b; Soames 2001: 89-95.

[26] See, for example, Kaplan 1973a: 503-505, 516-517 n. 19; Kaplan 1989b: 607-610; Salmon 1987: 49-50, 90-98; Salmon 1998: 286-291; Soames 2001: 89-95. (But cf. Salmon 1981: 39 n. 41.) On the assumption that only one person could result from the union of a certain sperm and egg, see Jeshion 2000: 313 n. 7.

where 'Slim' and 'Steve' have been introduced in the following way.[27] Nathan Salmon is the person who resulted from the union of a particular sperm and egg. Suppose that we have introduced 'Nothan' as a name for the person who would result from the union of the same egg but a different sperm.[28] (If we can introduce 'Noman' as a name for a merely possible person, then we can also introduce 'Nothan' as a name for a different merely possible person.) The person that 'Nothan' refers to is such that any world in which he exists is one in which Nathan Salmon doesn't: Nathan Salmon and that person are *incompossible*. (We might say that they are incompossibilia.) If propositions and sets are complex objects that have their constituents or members essentially and that don't exist in worlds in which any of their constituents or members don't exist, then 'the proposition that Nathan Salmon is taller than Nothan' and '{Nathan Salmon, Nothan}' both refer to complex objects that couldn't exist. And 'Slim' and 'Steve' are introduced to refer to these complex objects. This is supposed to be a case in which names refer to objects that couldn't exist.

Some philosophers thus think that 'Plato', 'Newman', 'Noman', 'Slim', and 'Steve' refer to objects that don't exist: objects that once existed but no longer do, that will exist but don't yet, that could exist but don't actually, or even that couldn't exist.[29]

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[27] See Salmon 1987: 90-98, 105-106 n. 55; 1998: 286-291.

[28] A little precision is called for to rule out the possibility of compossible monozygotic twins. Let '$S$' abbreviate 'the sperm such that Nathan Salmon is the person who actually resulted from its union with an egg', and let '$E$' abbreviate 'the egg such that Nathan Salmon is the person who actually resulted from its union with a sperm'. 'Nothan' is introduced as a name for the person who would result, provided that $E$ and $S$ are not united, from the union of $E$ and a sperm other than $S$.

[29] For views on which there are further restrictions on introducing names that refer to objects that don't exist, see Kaplan 1968-1969: 200-201, Donnellan 1979: 54-57, Soames 1994b: 163-166.

And, if actualism and presentism are true, then none of these objects exists at all. So each of these names refers to an object that doesn't exist and doesn't have any other sort of being either. As Salmon (1987: 94) puts it, "Reference precedes existence." This is precisely Meinong's view that some names refer to objects that don't exist and that don't have any other sort of being either.

You might disagree with the metaphysical picture. For example, you might be an eternalist, a possibilist, a serious actualist, or a serious presentist. (As it happens, I agree with the metaphysical picture: I'm inclined to accept both nonserious actualism and nonserious presentism.) Or you might disagree with some of the cases. For example, you might think that we can't refer to objects that once existed but no longer do, that will exist but don't yet, that could exist but don't actually, or that couldn't exist. (As it happens, I disagree with some of the cases: I'm not sure that we can refer to objects that will exist but don't yet, and I'm inclined to think that we can't refer either to objects that could exist but don't actually or to objects that couldn't exist.) But that's not the point. Rather, the point is that the metaphysical picture, together with cases that various philosophers who don't regard themselves as Meinongians accept, make sense of Meinong's view that some names refer to objects that don't exist and that don't have any other sort of being either. Whether we should accept Meinong's view is a further question. I do, since I think that 'Plato' refers to Plato, even though Plato doesn't exist now and hence (by presentism) doesn't exist at all.

### 3.2. More about Properties

As we saw in the previous subection, nonserious actualism and nonserious presentism give us a metaphysical picture that makes sense of Meinong's view that some names refer to objects that don't exist and that don't have any other sort of being either. The metaphysical picture also makes sense of Meinong's view that objects that don't exist can still have properties. According to nonserious actualism and nonserious presentism, objects can have properties in worlds in which, and at times at which, they don't exist. As Salmon (1987: 96) puts it, "Predication precedes existence."[30] This is precisely Meinong's principle of independence.

It's plausible that it is at least partly in virtue of having certain properties in other circumstances (worlds, times, or worlds-at-times), in which they do exist, that objects can have properties in circumstances in which they don't exist. Let's call this 'the principle'. The principle implies that Plato, who doesn't exist now, now has properties at least partly in virtue of having had certain properties in 400 BCE, when he did exist.

Which properties are these? For example, in virtue of having had which properties in 400 BCE does Plato now have the property of being referred to by 'Plato'? This is a nontrivial question. One answer is that in 400 BCE Plato had the property of being such that people used some name to refer to him, where their uses of this name are appropriately connected, through some historical chain, to our uses of 'Plato'.[31] It is

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[30] See also Salmon 1987: 55-56, 90-98; 1998: 290-291.

[31] See Donnellan 1970, 1974; Kripke 1972; Devitt 1981.

partly in virtue of having had this property in 400 BCE that Plato now has the property of being referred to by 'Plato'.

Some philosophers who adopt the principle also think that impossible objects have properties. For example, Salmon adopts the principle. He says: "An individual from one circumstance has certain properties in another circumstance in which it does not exist, as a result of the properties it has in its own circumstance."[32] And Salmon (1987: 96-97) thinks that 'Slim' and 'Steve' refer to impossible objects that have properties: for example, the properties of necessarily not existing and of having Nathan Salmon as a constituent or member. But the principle seems to imply that impossible objects can't have properties. Any world in which an impossible object exists is impossible: it couldn't obtain. For, if such a world were to obtain, then an impossible object would exist. But impossible objects can't exist. And, if there are no worlds in which impossible objects exist, then it couldn't be even partly in virtue of having properties in worlds in which they do exist that they actually have properties, even though they don't actually exist. In that case, the principle would imply that impossible objects couldn't have properties.

Salmon's response is that there are impossible worlds.[33] We can think of a possible world as a way the universe might have been: that is, as a property the universe might have instantiated.[34] In addition to ways the universe might have been, there are

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[32] Salmon 1987: 91. See also Salmon 1998: 290.

[33] See Salmon 1984; 1989d: 7-8, 15-17.

[34] For views on which possible worlds are properties or abstract objects, see Pollock 1967, 1984: Chapter 3; Kripke 1972: 266-273, 1980b: 15-20; van Inwagen 1980, 1985b, 1986; Chisholm 1981: Appendix, 1986; Stalnaker 1984: Chapter 3, 1986; Salmon 1987, 1988, 1989d, 1998; Soames 2001. See also the works cited in note 15.

ways the universe couldn't have been: that is, properties the universe couldn't have instantiated. These are impossible worlds. An object exists or has a property in a world if and only if, had that world obtained (perhaps *per impossibile*), that object would have existed or would have had that property.[35] Or, equivalently, an object exists or has a property in a world if and only if, according to that world, that object exists or has that property. Salmon could say that it is at least partly in virtue of having properties in impossible worlds in which they do exist that impossible objects can have properties in possible worlds, including the actual one, in which they don't exist.

This seems wrong to me. I think that, in virtue of having had properties at times at which they existed or having properties at times at which they will exist, objects that don't exist now can now have properties. But I think that, if objects that don't actually exist can actually have properties, then it isn't in virtue of their having properties in worlds in which they exist. There's a disanalogy between the temporal and modal cases. What is now true about how things were or how things will be depends on how things are at other times. But what is actually true about how things could be doesn't depend on how things are in other worlds; rather, it depends on how things actually are. Put another way, the past and the future don't supervene on the present, but what is possible does supervene on what is actual. Or so I think. But I won't argue for that here.

As far as I know, Meinong doesn't say anything to suggest that it is in virtue of having properties in other worlds, in which they do exist, that objects can have

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[35] This is a version of what Lewis (1986a: 174-191) calls "magical ersatzism." For a defense of this sort of view, see van Inwagen 1986. Lewis's view in Lewis 1991 is, I think, in some ways responsive to van Inwagen's defense. (See also Lewis 1993, 2002b: 7-10.)

properties in worlds in which they don't exist. He thinks that impossible objects—for example, the referent of 'the round square'—have properties, even though they couldn't exist (at least not as they are). If the referent of 'the round square' exists in no world, then it couldn't be even partly in virtue of having properties in worlds in which it does exist that it has properties in worlds, including the actual one, in which it doesn't exist. But Meinong might think that some worlds are impossible. For example, 'the impossible world in which the actual referent of 'the round square' exists' might refer to an object that doesn't exist but that has the property of being an impossible world in which the actual referent of 'the round square' exists.

### 3.3. The End of the Picture

If the choice is between admitting that names such as 'Vulcan', 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Santa Claus', 'Pegasus', and 'Leon' are empty and holding that they refer to objects that don't exist, I suspect that most direct reference theorists would happily concede that those names are empty. For example, David Braun (1993: 453) says: "Like most philosophers, I will assume that, other things being equal, we should not hypothesize nonexistent objects to solve semantic problems." (But perhaps Braun is assuming that, if names refer to objects that don't exist, then those objects must have some sort of being other than existence. And perhaps his objection to "hypothesiz[ing] nonexistent objects" is an objection to the view that objects that don't exist nonetheless have some sort of being other than existence. But the view under consideration is that names refer to objects that don't exist and that don't have any other sort of being either.) On Meinong's view,

'Vulcan', 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Santa Claus', 'Pegasus', and 'Leon' all refer to objects that don't exist. But is Meinong's view plausible?

It's implausible that, like 'Plato', these names refer to objects that once existed but don't anymore or that, like 'Newman', they refer to objects that will exist but don't yet. Nor is it plausible that, like 'Slim' and 'Steve', these names refer to objects that couldn't exist. What makes it even remotely plausible that 'Slim' and 'Steve' refer to objects that couldn't exist is that they are said to refer to complex objects that have as essential constituents or members possible objects that happen to be incompossible.[36] But there is no reason to think that 'Vulcan', 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Santa Claus', 'Pegasus', and 'Leon' refer to such objects. So, if they refer to objects that don't exist, then, like 'Noman', these names must refer to merely possible objects.[37]

But it's implausible that 'Vulcan', 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Santa Claus', 'Pegasus', and 'Leon' refer to merely possible objects. For there are too many merely possible objects. Which of the indefinitely many merely possible winged horses, for example, does 'Pegasus' refer to?[38] What makes it plausible that 'Noman' and 'Nothan' refer to definite merely possible objects is that each refers to the definite person who would result from the union of a certain sperm and egg. But there is no reason to think that 'Vulcan',

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[36] See Salmon 1987: 96-97.

[37] Kripke (1963: 85) once held this view. But he later rejected it. See Kripke 1972: 764-765.

[38] See Kripke 1972: 764-765, Kaplan 1973a: 505-508, Plantinga 1974: 153-159. For replies, see Sanson ms., Krasner 2001: Chapter 3. Here's a homework problem: state the objection without quantifying over merely possible objects. (For a hint, see Kripke 1972: 764-765.)

'Sherlock Holmes', 'Santa Claus', 'Pegasus', and 'Leon' refer to such definite merely possible objects.

On Meinong's view, 'Pegasus' refers to a definite object: namely, the incomplete object that has the properties of being winged and of being a horse and that lacks many other ordinary properties. But, precisely because it lacks many other ordinary properties, the object that 'Pegasus' refers to couldn't exist as it is. If incomplete objects essentially lack the properties that they actually don't have, then they're impossible. Incomplete objects would be possible only if they could have many more properties than they actually have. In addition, some incomplete objects—for example, the referent of 'the round square'—would be possible only if they could lose some properties that they actually have. But, whether they're possible or not, incomplete objects are unlike the possible or impossible objects that 'Noman', 'Slim', and 'Steve' are said to refer to. For, unlike the impossible objects that 'Slim' and 'Steve' are said to refer to, incomplete objects aren't complex objects that have as essential constituents or members possible objects that happen to be incompossible. And, unlike the possible object that 'Noman' is said to refer to, incomplete objects are, well, incomplete; they lack most ordinary properties.

Unless there's a reason to think that 'Vulcan', 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Santa Claus', 'Pegasus', and 'Leon' refer to incomplete objects, which are unlike the possible or impossible objects that other names are said to refer to, it's implausible that 'Vulcan', 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Santa Claus', 'Pegasus', and 'Leon' refer either to objects that could exist but don't actually or to objects that couldn't exist. And it's implausible that they

refer to objects that once existed but don't anymore or that will exist but don't yet. If they don't refer to objects that once existed but don't anymore, that will exist but don't yet, that could exist but don't actually, or even that couldn't exist, then these names don't refer to objects that don't exist. And they don't refer to objects that exist either. So they're empty: they don't refer to anything at all.

## §4: Conclusion

The metaphysical picture developed in Section 2 vindicates Meinong's view that some names refer to objects that don't exist and that don't have any other sort of being either. But it doesn't vindicate Meinong's view that, because every name that doesn't refer to an object that exists refers to an object that doesn't exist, no name is empty. So, without further, independent reasons, we needn't accept Meinong's view that no name is empty. In the next chapter, in which I continue to defend the assumption that some names are empty, I consider a different view on which many names that seem empty in fact aren't.

# CHAPTER THREE

# SPEAKING OF ABSTRACT OBJECTS

## §0: INTRODUCTION

Here's one of our favorite examples again. In the nineteenth century, Jacques Babinet thought there was a planet between Mercury and the Sun. He introduced 'Vulcan' as a name for such a planet, but there was and is no such planet. I think 'Vulcan' is empty. Nathan Salmon (1998, 2001) doesn't. In this chapter, I argue against Salmon's view. Salmon's view emerges from earlier work about fiction, which I present in Section 1. In Section 2, I present Salmon's view. And, in Section 3, I argue against it. Although I discuss names, like 'Sherlock Holmes', that come from fiction, the main focus of this chapter is on names, like 'Vulcan', that come from false theories

## §1: FICTION

### 1.1. Objects Native to Works of Fiction

Saul Kripke (ms.) and Peter van Inwagen (1977, 1983, 1985a, 2000a) argue that fictional characters are abstract objects that authors create.[1] On this view, works of fiction are

[1] See also Searle 1979: Chapter 3; Howell 1983: 170-173, 1996: 424-428; Levinson 1993: 372 n. 6; Schiffer 1996: 154-157; Salmon 1998: 291-304, 2001: 121 n. 22; Thomasson 1999.

abstract objects that authors create. Works of fiction are typically about objects. Sometimes these objects exist independently of the works of fiction that are about them. For example, Rebecca Goldstein created a work of fiction, *The Mind-Body Problem*, that is at least in part about Saul Kripke, who exists independently of that work of fiction. Like Kripke, these independently existing objects are usually concrete. But a work of fiction can also be about an independently existing abstract object. For example, *The Mind-Body Problem* is at least in part about the mind-body problem, which exists independently of that work of fiction and is abstract. Following Terence Parsons (1980: 51-52), let's say that such independently existing objects are *immigrant* to the works of fiction that are about them.

When immigrant objects don't suffice for a work of fiction, in creating that work the author creates additional abstract objects for that work to be about. Although they might be characterized as golden mountains or romantic heroines, these additional created objects don't concretely exist and are, in fact, abstract objects. For example, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle created several abstract objects for *A Study in Scarlet* to be about: one he characterized as a detective, another as a doctor, and so on. Following Parsons (1980: 51-52) again, let's say that such abstract objects are *native* to the works of fiction that are about them. Especially when these native abstract objects are characterized as persons, we call them 'fictional characters'.

Let's call the view that objects native to works of fiction—that is, fictional characters—are abstract objects that authors create 'creationism about objects native to

works of fiction'. According to creationism about objects native to works of fiction, fictional characters exist and authors create them. We do say things like "Many popular fictional characters have long been underappreciated by snooty literary critics" and "Some fictional characters that were created by eighteenth-century authors are still beloved by readers today." According to creationism about objects native to works of fiction, what we say is straightforwardly and literally true.

According to creationism about objects native to works of fiction, fictional characters are abstract objects that actually exist and that are caused to come into existence. There are lots of other views about fictional characters out there, and different views reject different parts of creationism about objects native to works of fiction. On some views, although fictional characters are abstract objects that actually exist, they aren't caused to come into existence. Rather, they exist independently of authors. Whether fictional characters are kinds,[2] functions from possible worlds to individuals,[3] sets of properties,[4] or something else,[5] authors merely pick them out from among a wide range of independently existing abstract objects. On other views, fictional characters aren't caused to come into existence, and they're not abstract objects that actually exist

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[2] See Wolterstorff 1980: 134-149, 1985.

[3] See Currie 1990: 171-180.

[4] See Deutsch 1991: 210; Lamarque and Olsen 1994: 95-101; Lamarque 1996: 23-39; Richard 1998: 262. See also Deutsch 1985: 208 n. 11, 2000.

[5] See Zalta 1983: 91-99, 1988: 123-127, 2000; Pelletier 2000: esp. 95 n. 21.

either. Rather, whether they're incomplete,[6] merely possible,[7] or perhaps even impossible,[8] they're concrete objects that don't actually exist. And, on yet other views, there are no such things as fictional characters, abstract or otherwise, although we often make-believe that there are.[9]

According to creationism about objects native to works of fiction, abstract objects can come into existence. For example, the fictional characters that Conan Doyle created when he wrote *A Study in Scarlet* are abstract objects that exist now, but they didn't exist when Jane Austen was writing *Pride and Prejudice*. Although many people think that abstract objects can't come into existence,[10] others think that abstract objects can come into existence.[11] And, quite apart from the metaphysics of fictional characters, it's not crazy to think that abstract objects can come into existence. For example, it's not crazy to think that the singleton set whose sole member is me is an abstract object that exists now but didn't exist before I did. Nor is it crazy to think that the species *Felis*

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[6] See Parsons 1979: 656-657; 1980: 49-60, 175-206; 1982a; 1982b; 1982c. See also Routley 1980: 537-605. For more on incomplete objects, see Chapter 2. For criticisms of Parsons's view, see Fine 1982, 1984: 130-137.

[7] See Krasner 2001. Kroon (1994) offers an argument for the view, but he doesn't endorse it. See Kroon 1994: 213 n. 2, 1996. Kripke (1963: 85) once held this view. But he later rejected it. See Kripke 1972: 764-765.

[8] See Howell 1979: esp. 169-171. But, elsewhere, Howell (1983: 170-173, 1996: 424-428) accepts creationism about objects native to works of fiction.

[9] See Walton 1990: 385-430; Kroon 1996; Friend 2000.

[10] See, for example, Deutsch 1991.

[11] See Lewis 1986a: 81-86; Maddy 1990: 50-67; Burgess and Rosen 1997: 20-25.

*domestica* is an abstract object that exists now but didn't exist before any of its members did. Works of fiction provide other examples that are closer to the metaphysics of fictional characters. For example, it's plausible that *Pride and Prejudice* is an abstract object that exists now but didn't exist before Jane Austen wrote it.[12]

### 1.2. Names from Fiction

Creationism about objects native to works of fiction is a metaphysical view about fictional characters. But it's natural to combine this metaphysical view with a semantic view about names from fiction. Names from fiction—for example, 'Sherlock Holmes'—can occur in various sorts of situation. For example, in writing *A Study in Scarlet*, Conan Doyle wrote down the following sentence: 'Sherlock Holmes rose and lighted his pipe'. Let's say that in cases like this one 'Sherlock Holmes' occurs *within fiction*. 'Sherlock Holmes' also occurs in at least two other sorts of situation. First, in describing the plot of *A Study in Scarlet* in minute detail to you, I might say: "And then Sherlock Holmes rose and lighted his pipe." Let's borrow a piece of terminology from Keith Donnellan (1974: 5-8) and say that in cases like this one 'Sherlock Holmes' occurs, not within fiction, but rather in *discourse about fiction*. And, second, in describing how Conan Doyle came to write *A Study in Scarlet*, I might say: "Conan Doyle based Sherlock Holmes on one of his old teachers, Dr. Joseph Bell." Let's borrow the corresponding bit

[12] For more on the creation of works of art, see Levinson 1980, Predelli 2001a.

of terminology from Donnellan (1974: 5-8) and say that in cases like this one 'Sherlock Holmes' occurs, not within fiction or in discourse about fiction, but rather in *discourse about reality*.

According to creationists about objects native to works of fiction, when names from fiction occur in discourse about fiction or in discourse about reality, they refer to fictional characters. For example, when I utter 'And then Sherlock Holmes rose and lighted his pipe' or 'Conan Doyle based Sherlock Holmes on one of his old teachers, Dr. Joseph Bell', 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to a fictional character. Whether names from fiction also refer to fictional characters when they occur within fiction is a further question, and creationists about objects native to works of fiction don't agree on the answer. For example, some creationists about objects native to works of fiction think that, when Conan Doyle wrote 'Sherlock Holmes rose and lighted his pipe', he wasn't really using 'Sherlock Holmes', so it doesn't refer to a fictional character.[13]

Creationists about objects native to works of fiction agree that 'Sherlock Holmes' refers to a fictional character when it occurs in discourse about fiction. They also agree that discourse about fiction should be treated differently than discourse about reality. Construed as a piece of discourse about fiction, 'Sherlock Holmes is a detective who plays the violin and takes cocaine' appears to be true; whereas, construed as a piece of discourse about reality, it does not. (Conversely, construed as a piece of discourse about

[13] See Salmon 1998: 291-304 for discussion.

fiction, 'Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character that Conan Doyle created' doesn't appear to be true; whereas, construed as a piece of discourse about reality, it does.)

But creationists about objects native to works of fiction disagree about how to treat discourse about fiction. On Kripke's (ms.) view, there is a special sort of predication in discourse about fiction. Construed as a piece of discourse about fiction, 'Sherlock Holmes is a detective who plays the violin and takes cocaine' is thus read as something like 'Sherlock Holmes *is-fictionally* a detective who plays the violin and takes cocaine'. On Salmon's (1998: 302-303) view, there is ellipsis in discourse about fiction. Construed as a piece of discourse about fiction, 'Sherlock Holmes is a detective who plays the violin and takes cocaine' is thus read as something like '*According to the relevant fiction*, Sherlock Holmes is a detective who plays the violin and takes cocaine'. And, on van Inwagen's (1977: 304-307) view, there is both a special sort of predication (which he calls "ascription") and ellipsis in discourse about fiction. Construed as a piece of discourse about fiction, 'Sherlock Holmes is a detective who plays the violin and takes cocaine' is thus read as something like '*In the relevant fiction*, being a detective who plays the violin and takes cocaine *is ascribed to* Sherlock Holmes'.[14] (There are still other ways of treating discourse about fiction. Some rely on possibility;[15] others, on make-believe.[16])

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[14] For more on creationism about objects native to works of fiction and the semantics of discourse about fiction, see Hanley forthcoming.

[15] See Lewis 1978, Predelli 1997, Krasner 2001.

[16] See Currie 1990: Chapter 2, Walton 1990: Chapter 10, Byrne 1993.

Let's call the view that, at least within discourse about reality, names from fiction refer to fictional characters 'referentialism about names from fiction'. We do say things like "Sherlock Holmes is a fictional character." According to referentialism about names from fiction, what we say is straightforwardly and literally true.

## §2: MYTH

### 2.1. Objects Native to Myths

Salmon (1998: 296-297, 305; 2001: 112-117) extends creationism about objects native to works of fiction from works of fiction to what he calls "myths": namely, false theories that someone believed.[17] (In what follows, I adopt Salmon's use of 'myth'.) On this view, there is an analogy between works of fiction and theories.[18] Theories are abstract objects that theorists create. Theories can be about objects. Sometimes these objects exist independently of the theories that are about them. For example, over the years astronomers have created many theories about Venus, which exists independently of their theories. Like Venus, these independently existing objects can be concrete. But a theory can also be about an independently existing abstract object. For example, over the years mathematicians have created many theories about the number $\pi$. Such independently existing objects are immigrant to the theories that are about them.

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[17] See also Kripke ms.

[18] See Kroon 1996: 164-172; Friend 2000: 1000; Hanley forthcoming. But, as we will see in Section 3, Kroon and Friend use the analogy to argue against creationism about objects native to works of fiction.

When immigrant objects don't suffice for a theory, in creating that theory the theorist creates additional abstract objects for that theory to be about. Although they might be characterized as small planets or heavy substances, these additional created objects don't concretely exist and are, in fact, abstract objects. For example, Babinet created an abstract object for one of his astronomical theories to be about. Such abstract objects are native to the theories that are about them. Salmon (1998: 304-305; 2001: 112) calls them "mythical objects."

Let's call the view that objects native to myths—that is, mythical objects—are abstract objects that theorists create 'creationism about objects native to myths'. According to creationism about objects native to myths, objects native to myths exist. We do say things like "A hypothetical planet was thought to be between Mercury and the Sun, but no hypothetical planet was thought to be between Mercury and Venus." According to creationism about objects native to myths, what we say is straightforwardly and literally true. (Well, more or less. I am ignoring the complication that a hypothetical planet isn't a planet.)

## 2.2. Names from Myth

Creationism about objects native to myths is a metaphysical view about objects native to myths. But it's natural to combine this metaphysical view with a semantic view about names from myth. Just like names from fiction, names from myth—for example, 'Vulcan'—can occur in various sorts of situation. For example, in writing a paper

announcing his theory, Babinet might have written down the following sentence: 'Vulcan is a planet between Mercury and the Sun'. Let's say that in cases like this one 'Vulcan' occurs *within myth*. 'Vulcan' also occurs in at least two other sorts of situation. First, in describing Babinet's theory to you, I might say: "Vulcan is a planet between Mercury and the Sun." Let's say that in cases like this one 'Vulcan' occurs, not within myth, but rather in *discourse about myth*. And, second, in debunking Babinet's theory, I might say to you: "Unfortunately for him, Vulcan doesn't exist." Let's say that in cases like this one 'Vulcan' occurs, not within myth or in discourse about myth, but rather in *discourse about reality*.

Let's call the view that, at least within discourse about reality, names from myth refer to objects native to myths 'referentialism about names from myth'. We do say things like "Vulcan was thought to be between Mercury and the Sun." According to referentialism about names from myth, what we say is straightforwardly and literally true. Salmon accepts both creationism about objects native to myths and referentialism about names from myth. Indeed, he accepts something stronger: he thinks that, whether it occurs within myth, discourse about myth, or discourse about reality, 'Vulcan' refers to an object native to myth—in this case, an abstract object that Babinet created.

Similarly, on Salmon's view, 'Santa Claus' and 'Pegasus' also refer to abstract objects. In 1897, a schoolgirl, Virginia O'Hanlon, wrote to the New York *Sun*: "Please tell me the truth. Is there a Santa Claus?" The editor, Francis P. Church, famously

replied: "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus." Church's subsequent remarks are less famous, but they might appeal to Salmon. Church said:

> He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist. You might get your papa to hire men to watch all the chimneys on Christmas eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see.[19]

He might as well have said: "Santa Claus is an abstract object." But he's wrong, just as Salmon is wrong in thinking that 'Vulcan' refers to an abstract object. Or so I argue in the next section.

## §3: Theory

### 3.1. How to Argue against Salmon's View

There are two ways to argue against Salmon's view that 'Vulcan' refers to an abstract object that Babinet created. The first is to argue that, even if Babinet created an abstract object, 'Vulcan' doesn't refer to it. This way of arguing against Salmon's view is semantic; it accepts creationism about objects native to myths and focuses on referentialism about names from myth.[20] The second is to argue that Babinet didn't create an abstract object, so there is no abstract object for 'Vulcan' to refer to. This way of arguing against

[19] The O'Hanlon-Church exchange is quoted in Friend 2001: 99.

[20] For arguments in this first vein, see Richard 1998: 260-264, Phillips 2001.

Salmon's view is metaphysical; it focuses directly on creationism about objects native to myths.

In this second vein, Matthew Phillips (2001) offers an argument against creationism about objects native to myths. He asks us to consider a possible world in which, although Babinet's theorizing and his intentions are the same as they actually are, there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun. In this world, Babinet didn't create an abstract object. But, Phillips argues, Salmon must concede that Babinet created an abstract object in both worlds, since Babinet's theorizing and his intentions are the same.

Salmon could reply that an agent's intentions and other cognitive activities alone don't determine whether an abstract object is created. An abstract object is created only when there is no immigrant object for a myth to be about. In the actual world, there was no immigrant object for the theory that Babinet created to be about. And, in creating that theory, Babinet also created a native abstract object for the theory to be about. But, in the possible world Phillips asks us to consider, there is an immigrant object for the theory that Babinet created to be about: namely, the planet between Mercury and the Sun. So, in creating that theory, Babinet did not also create a native abstract object for it to be about.

Salmon can thus reply to Phillips's objection. But, still, the objection raises a good question: namely, what is it in virtue of which abstract objects are created? As we will see, this question is ultimately the undoing of creationism about objects native to myths.

### 3.2. Objects Native to Mere Theories

The structure of the argument against creationism about objects native to myths is simple. If creationism about objects native to myths were true, then so would be some other view, which Salmon rejects. But that other view isn't true. So neither is creationism about objects native to myths. I begin by presenting the other view.

Myths are false theories that someone believed. But some theories have never been believed by anyone. For example, I recently created a theory according to which Al Gore is shaving in my bathroom. I don't believe it, and neither does anyone else. But, still, I have created it, and I have been entertaining myself by entertaining it. Let's call a theory that no one believes a 'mere theory'. There is an analogy between myths and mere theories. Mere theories are abstract objects that theorists create. Mere theories can be about objects. Sometimes these objects exist independently of the mere theories that are about them. For example, Al Gore exists independently of the mere theory that I created. But a mere theory can also be about an independently existing abstract object. For example, I could create a mere theory according to which the number nine is shaving in my bathroom. Such independently existing objects are immigrant to the mere theories that are about them.

When immigrant objects don't suffice for a mere theory, in creating that mere theory the theorist creates additional abstract objects for that mere theory to be about. Although they might be characterized as emperors or kings, these additional created objects don't concretely exist and are, in fact, abstract objects. For example, Salmon

created a mere theory according to which there is a present emperor of France. According to this mere theory, "a fanatic, with the help of an underground army and the unanimous approval of the United Nations, has just seized control of the French government and declared himself the new emperor."[21] The theory Salmon created isn't a work of fiction. Nor is it a myth. Salmon (1998: 306) says: "I am not storytelling . . . . Nor do I subscribe to any theory to the effect that France now has an emperor." So the theory that Salmon created is a mere theory. In creating it, Salmon created an abstract object for his mere theory to be about. Such abstract objects are native to the mere theories that are about them. Let's call the view that objects native to mere theories are abstract objects that theorists create 'creationism about objects native to mere theories'.

Although he accepts creationism about objects native to myths, Salmon rejects creationism about objects native to mere theories. He denies that, in creating a mere theory, he created an abstract object for it to be about. Salmon (1998: 306) says: "To the allegation that I have invented a fictional [or mythical] emperor of France, I plead Not Guilty." And Salmon is right to reject creationism about objects native to mere theories. In creating a mere theory according to which there is a present emperor of France, Salmon hasn't created an abstract object that, according to his mere theory, is an emperor of France. Here's another example. I wonder whether there is a natural number between $5^2 + 5$ and $6^2 - 6$. In doing so, I create a theory according to which there is such

[21] Salmon 1998: 305.

a natural number. But I haven't created an abstract object that, according to my mere theory, is a natural number between $5^2 + 5$ and $6^2 - 6$. Creationism about objects native to mere theories is false.

And, if creationism about objects native to mere theories is false, then so is creationism about objects native to myths. The main difference between myths and mere theories is that myths are believed, whereas mere theories are not. (Myths are also false, whereas mere theories can be true. But mere theories needn't be true. For example, Al Gore isn't shaving in my bathroom, and there isn't a natural number between $5^2 + 5$ and $6^2 - 6$.) Given that creationism about objects native to mere theories is false, if creationism about objects native to myths were true, then there would have to be something special about belief in virtue of which, when a theorist creates a false theory, (*i*) she can create an abstract object for her theory to be about if she believes that theory, but (*ii*) she can't create an abstract object for her theory to be about if she doesn't believe that theory. Quite simply put, I don't see how there could be something special about belief in that way. How could believing a theory—rather than, say, merely entertaining it—make it possible for a theorist to create an abstract object? It couldn't.

Let's make the point more vivid. I'm merely entertaining the theory according to which there is a natural number between $5^2 + 5$ and $6^2 - 6$. Since creationism about objects native to mere theories is false, in creating that theory I didn't create an abstract object for it to be about. But, if creationism about objects native to myths were true, then, had I only believed the theory instead of merely entertaining it, in creating it I

could have created an abstract object for it to be about. How can that be? It can't. Creationism about objects native to myths is false.

Sometimes, Salmon seems to accept that there is something special about belief in virtue of which believing a theory makes it possible for a theorist to create abstract objects for that theory to be about. He says that objects native to myths "come into being with the belief in the myth."[22] But, elsewhere, he seems to think that there isn't something special about belief in this way and that what matters is the creation of a theory, not whether it is believed. Salmon (2001: 114) says:

> Babinet invented a theory—erroneous, as it turns out—that there is an intra-Mercurial planet. In doing this [i.e. creating a theory], he inadvertently created Vulcan.

If, as Salmon thinks, creationism about objects native to myths is true and creationism about objects native to mere theories isn't, then creating a theory isn't enough to make it possible for Babinet to create an abstract object for his theory to be about. In addition, he must believe it.

### 3.3. Objects Native to Works of Fiction Again

Frederick Kroon (1996: 164-172) and Stacie Friend (2000: 1000) argue that, because it implies creationism about objects native to myths, creationism about objects native to works of fiction is false.[23] Salmon accepts creationism about objects native to myths. So

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[22] Salmon 2001: 112.

[23] For other arguments against creationism about objects native to works of fiction, see Yagisawa 2001.

the argument doesn't work against him. In the previous subsection, I argued that, because it implies creationism about objects native to mere theories, creationism about objects native to myths is false. Salmon rejects creationism about objects native to mere theories. So the argument does work against him. And, once we have an argument against creationism about objects native to myths, we can go back and argue that, because it implies creationism about objects native to myths, creationism about objects native to works of fiction is false. But does creationism about objects native to works of fiction imply creationism about objects native to myths?

Suppose that creationism about objects native to works of fiction is true and that creationism about objects native to myths is false. Since creationism about objects native to works of fiction is true, when they create works of fiction authors can create abstract objects for their works of fiction to be about. But, since creationism about objects native to myths is false, when they create myths theorists can't create abstract objects for their theories to be about. So there must be something special about works of fiction in virtue of which (*i*), when they create works of fiction, authors can create abstract objects for those works of fiction to be about, but (*ii*), when they create myths, theorists can't create abstract objects for those myths to be about. What could be special about works of fiction in this way? Salmon (2001: 121 n. 22) emphasizes "the nearly perfect similarity between fiction and myth." "The principal difference between them," he says, "is that the myth is believed while the fiction is only make believe."[24] If this is right, then there

[24] Salmon 2001: 121 n. 22; cf. 1998: 305.

must be something special about *make-believing* a work of fiction that makes it possible for authors to create abstract objects for their works of fiction to be about. And there mustn't be something comparably special about *believing* a myth that would make it possible for theorists to create abstract objects for their myths to be about. I don't know whether there could something special about make-believe in this way. I regard this as an open question, as I regard the question of whether creationism about objects native to works of fiction implies creationism about objects native to myths.

## §4: Conclusion

In this chapter and the previous one, I defended something that I assumed in Chapter 1 and that I will assume in the rest of this dissertation: namely, that some names—including 'Vulcan'—are empty. If some names are empty, then direct reference theorists must address the problems that they pose. In the rest of this dissertation, I consider how direct reference theorists might do just that.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# MIND THE GAP

## §0: INTRODUCTION

Here are our two examples again. In the nineteenth century, Jacques Babinet introduced 'Vulcan' as a name for a planet between Mercury and the Sun. And, late one night, I introduced 'Leon' as a name for a homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees. But there was and is no planet between Mercury and the Sun, just as there was and is no homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees. So 'Vulcan' and 'Leon' are empty.[1]

In their *Principia Mathematica*, Alfred Whitehead and Bertrand Russell (1910: 66) say that a sentence that contains an empty name would be "meaningless." And, in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism," Russell (1918-1919: 207-208) describes such a sentence as "nonsense, because you cannot have a constituent of a proposition which is nothing at all." In a footnote to "Demonstratives," David Kaplan (1989a: 496 n. 23) suggests that we "add { ... } to mark the places in a singular proposition which correspond to directly referential terms." He mentions Russell's claim that a sentence that contains an empty name "would be meaningless, presumably because the purported

[1] See Chapters 2 and 3.

singular proposition would be incomplete."[2] But Kaplan (1989a: 496 n. 23) thinks that this is a "confusion" on Russell's part, because "the braces can themselves fill out the singular proposition, and if they contain nothing, no more anomalies need result than what the development of Free Logic has already inured us to."

Taking up Kaplan's suggestion, some direct reference theorists, among them David Braun (1993) and Nathan Salmon (1998), reject the no proposition view—that is, the view that sentences that contain empty names don't express any propositions—in favor of the view that sentences that contain empty names express what Kaplan (1973b) elsewhere calls 'gappy propositions': namely, propositions that, so to speak, contain "braces ... [that] contain nothing."[3] Let's call this 'the gappy proposition view'. In this chapter, I argue that, by itself, the gappy proposition view can't solve all of the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory. In Section 1, I present the gappy proposition view. In Section 2, I present a problem for that view. And, in Section 3, I argue that, by itself, the gappy proposition view can't solve it.

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[2] Kaplan 1989a: 496 n. 23.

[3] The citation of Kaplan 1973b comes from Almog 1991: 618 n. 15. (See also Braun 1993: 468 n. 23, Salmon 1998: 318 n. 53.) Strictly speaking, a gappy proposition does not contain braces, nor does the ordered $n$-tuple that represents it; rather, what contains braces is an expression that refers to that ordered $n$-tuple. See Section 1.1. Others who adopt the view that sentences that contain empty names express gappy propositions include Adams et al., Reimer, and Taylor. See Adams, Stecker, and Fuller 1992, 1999; Adams, Fuller, and Stecker 1993, 1997; Adams and Stecker 1994; Taylor 2000; Reimer 2001b; Adams and Dietrich ms.

## §1: The Gappy Proposition View

### 1.1. Gappy Propositions

On the gappy proposition view, a sentence that contains an empty name expresses a gappy proposition. A gappy proposition doesn't contain anything where a nongappy singular proposition contains an object. For example, on the gappy proposition view,

(Ven1) Venus is a planet.

expresses a proposition that contains Venus; and

(Vul1) Vulcan is a planet.

expresses a proposition just like it, except that the proposition that (Vul1) expresses doesn't contain Venus.[4] The proposition that (Ven1) expresses can be represented as the ordered pair <{Venus}, the property of being a planet>, whose first member is a singleton set; and the proposition that (Vul1) expresses can be represented as the ordered pair <{}, the property of being a planet>, whose first member is the empty set.[5] It is not that the content of 'Venus' is a singleton set or that the content of 'Vulcan' is the empty set.[6] Rather, the content of 'Venus' is Venus, and 'Vulcan' has no content. It is just that a sentence of the form $\ulcorner \alpha \text{ is } \varphi \urcorner$, where $\alpha$ is a name and $\ulcorner \text{is } \varphi \urcorner$ is a predicate,

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[4] 'Ven' is for 'Venus', and 'Vul' is for 'Vulcan'. The named sentences are listed in Appendix III.

[5] For different ways of representing gappy propositions, see Braun 1993: 463, Salmon 1998: 308.

[6] For a discussion of this point, see Salmon ms. a. For a contrary view, see Everett 2000: 42. Although it might be in keeping with the spirit of the direct reference theory, claiming that the empty set is the content of 'Vulcan' incurs the cost of denying The Thesis about Names, which is part of the letter of the law. (See Chapter 1.) Frege (1893: §11, 18-20) considers the possibility of treating the empty set as the referent of what would otherwise be empty names and definite descriptions. See also Evans 1982: 32.

expresses a proposition that can be represented as the ordered pair <$x$, $Y$>, where $Y$ is the property expressed by $\varphi$ and $x$ is a set: either the singleton set whose sole member is the content of $\alpha$, if $\alpha$ has a content, or the empty set, if $\alpha$ has no content.

Propositions are structured. This means that they are distinguished, not only by the objects and attributes that they contain, but also by how those objects and attributes are related or put together. For example, given that Robin and Sam are distinct, so are the propositions expressed by 'Robin kissed Sam' and 'Sam kissed Robin'. On the direct reference theory, both of these propositions contain Robin, Sam, and the having-kissed relation; but those objects and that relation are related differently in those propositions. The structure of a proposition is what relates the objects and attributes that it contains.[7]

We can use set-theoretic entities such as ordered $n$-tuples to represent structured propositions. But structured propositions might not be set-theoretic entities; and the members of set-theoretic entities need not be, and in some cases definitely are not, constituents of the propositions that the set-theoretic entities represent. For example, the proposition expressed by (Ven1), which is represented as the ordered pair <{Venus}, the property of being a planet>, contains Venus and the property of being a planet; but it does not also contain a singleton set, even though the singleton set {Venus} is a member of the ordered pair that represents that proposition. Similarly, the proposition expressed by (Vul1), which is represented as the ordered pair <{}, the property of being

[7] See Chapter 1.

a planet>, contains the property of being a planet; but it does not also contain the empty set, even though the empty set is a member of the ordered pair that represents that proposition.

In addition to containing Venus and the property of being a planet, the proposition expressed by (Ven1) has a structure, in virtue of which the property of being a planet is attributed to Venus. Similarly, in addition to containing the property of being a planet, the proposition expressed by (Vul1) has a structure. Indeed, the propositions expressed by (Ven1) and (Vul1) have the same structure. This is a structure in virtue of which a property would be attributed to an object. But, alas, in the case of the proposition expressed by (Vul1), there is no object for the property of being a planet to be attributed to. Still, the proposition expressed by (Vul1) has a structure, and it is that structure that distinguishes it from the property of being a planet.

On the gappy proposition view,

(Vul2) Vulcan exists.

expresses a gappy proposition that can be represented as <{}, the property of existing>. Along with Braun (1993: 464) and Salmon (1998: 309-310), I am assuming that 'exists' expresses a property and indeed that the property expressed by 'exists' is the property of existing, which is a first-order property of objects (rather than a higher-order property of properties).[8] If we avail ourselves of lambda abstraction, existential quantification (over

[8] The assumption that existence is a first-order property of objects is contrary to a long philosophical tradition, one that dates back at least to Hume (1740: 1.2.6) and Kant (1787: A598-601/B626-629). See also Frege 1884: §49, 62; §53, 65; Frege 1884>; Frege 1892b: 199; Russell 1918-1919: 206.

objects that actually exist), and identity, then, as Salmon (1987: 63) points out, we can define the property of existing as $\lambda x \exists y(x = y)$ (or, less formally, as the property of being identical with something).[9] On the gappy proposition view,

(NegVul2) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

expresses a proposition that is a negation of the gappy proposition represented as <{}, the property of existing>.[10] The proposition that (NegVul2) expresses can be represented as <NOT, <{}, the property of existing>>, where NOT is a logical operator.[11]

### 1.2. Problems and Solutions

As we saw in Chapter 1, empty names pose a host of problems for the direct reference theory. One source of these problems is that it seems that, on the direct reference theory, a sentence that contains an empty name doesn't express a proposition. First, if a sentence that contains an empty name doesn't express a proposition, then it might seem that a speaker could not use it to communicate something that she believes. For the sentence would fail to express any proposition and hence would fail to express any proposition that she believes. But, for example, it seems that I can use

(NegVul2) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

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[9] See also Kripke 1963: 90.

[10] 'Neg' is for 'negation'.

[11] For more on (NegVul2), see Section 1.3.

to communicate something that I believe. This is the problem of the proposition believed.

The gappy proposition view offers a solution to the problem of the proposition believed. For example, I could use (NegVul2) to communicate a proposition that I believe: namely, the gappy proposition represented as <NOT, <{}, the property of existing>>, which is a proposition that could be expressed by the sentence that I used.

Second, if a sentence that contains an empty name doesn't express any proposition, then it might seem that it would be nonsense. But, for example, (NegVul2) does not seem to be nonsense. This is the problem of nonsense.

On the one hand, if the problem of nonsense is a problem about the connection between language and thought, and the reason for thinking that (NegVul2) is nonsense is that there is no thought for a speaker who uses it to grasp, then the gappy proposition view offers a solution to the problem of nonsense. For, on the gappy proposition view, (NegVul2) does express a proposition and hence a speaker who uses it could believe the proposition that it expresses.

On the other hand, if the problem of nonsense is a problem about the connection between language and reality or between thought and reality, and the reason for thinking that (NegVul2) is nonsense is that there is no object in the world for the sentence, or the thought that a speaker grasps when she uses it, to be about, then the gappy proposition view does not offer a solution to the problem of nonsense. For, although on the gappy proposition view (NegVul2) expresses a proposition, that

proposition is gappy. So it does not contain an object in the world that the sentence, or the thought that a speaker grasps when she uses it, is about, for the simple reason that it cannot, because there is no such object.

But the problem of nonsense is not terribly specific, and perhaps the reason for thinking that (NegVul2) is nonsense is merely that it fails to express any proposition. (This is suggested by Russell's (1918-1919: 206-207) remark that a sentence that contains an empty name would be "nonsense, because you cannot have a constituent of a proposition which is nothing at all.") If so, then, as Kaplan suggests, the gappy proposition view does offer a solution to the problem of nonsense. For, on the gappy proposition view, (NegVul2) does express a proposition, albeit a gappy one.

Third, if no sentence that contains an empty name expresses a proposition, then it might seem that two sentences that contain different empty names could not differ in cognitive value. But, for example,

(Vul1) Vulcan is a planet.

and

(L1) Leon is a planet.

might appear to differ in cognitive value.[12] This is the problem of differing cognitive values.

[12] 'L' is for 'Leon'.

Insofar as it is not clear what the problem of nonsense is, it is not clear whether the gappy proposition view offers a solution to that problem. But it is clear that the gappy proposition view does not offer a solution to the problem of differing cognitive values. For, on the gappy proposition view, (Vul1) and (L1) both express a gappy proposition that can be represented as <{}, the property of being a planet>. So the gappy proposition that (Vul1) and (L1) both express cannot account for their apparent difference in cognitive value.

Still, a direct reference theorist who accepts the gappy proposition view can say that empty names pose no *special* problems here. On the gappy proposition view,

(H1) Hesperus is a planet.

and

(P1) Phosphorus is a planet.

both express a nongappy proposition that can be represented as <{Venus}, the property of being a planet>, since 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' both refer to Venus.[13] Even a direct reference theorist who does not accept the gappy proposition view would agree that, since 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' corefer, (H1) and (P1) express the same nongappy proposition.[14] So the nongappy proposition that (H1) and (P1) both express cannot account for their apparent difference in cognitive value. And we shouldn't expect

[13] 'H' is for 'Hesperus', and 'P' is for 'Phosphorus'.

[14] In unpublished lectures (which I have not seen but which are mentioned in Kaplan 1990: 94-95), Kaplan discusses the possibility that, even on the direct reference theory, (H1) and (P1) don't express the same proposition. See also Kaplan 1989b: 607.

the gappy proposition view to offer a solution to a problem in the case of empty names that neither it nor the direct reference theory offers a solution to in the case of nonempty names. We can thus think of the gappy proposition view as a natural, if problem-preserving, extension of the direct reference theory to empty names.

Some direct reference theorists accept the view that a propositional-attitude ascription of the form $\ulcorner \alpha$ v that $\sigma \urcorner$ expresses a proposition—about the agent *S* that the name $\alpha$ refers to, the relation *R* that the verb v refers to, and the proposition *P* that the sentence $\sigma$ expresses—to the effect that *S* bears *R* to *P*.[15] Let's call this 'the relational view of propositional-attitude ascriptions'. On the relational view of propositional-attitude ascriptions, since (Vul1) and (L1) express the same gappy proposition, so do

(BelVul1) Robin believes that Vulcan is a planet.

and

(BelL1) Robin believes that Leon is a planet.[16]

That (BelVul1) and (BelL1) express the same gappy proposition might seem more absurd to some than the claim that, since (H1) and (P1) express the same nongappy proposition, so do

(BelH1) Robin believes that Hesperus is a planet.

and

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[15] See, for example, Braun 1998: 558, 2000: 205-206, 2001a: 255, 2001b: 60-61, 2002; Nelson 2000a; Salmon 1986a: 5-6, 1989a: 245-248, 1990: 223-227; Soames 1987a: 73-74, 1987b: 105-106, 1995a: 515, 2001: Chapter 6; Thau 2002: Chapters 2-3.

[16] 'Bel' is for 'belief'.

(BelP1) Robin believes that Phosphorus is a planet.

But I think that it is open to a direct reference theorist who adopts both the relational view of propositional-attitude ascriptions and the gappy proposition view to say that the claim that (BelVul1) and (BelL1) express the same proposition is no more (or less) theoretically troubling than the claim that (BelH1) and (BelP1) do.

Braun (1993: 458-459, 464-465) and Salmon (1998: 308) both offer solutions to the problem of differing cognitive values. On Braun's view, despite expressing the same gappy proposition, (Vul1) and (L1) can differ in cognitive value for a speaker, because they can be associated with different belief states that she is in. In the spirit of John Perry's (1979) work, Braun takes belief states to be individuated more finely than their propositional contents, so (Vul1) and (L1) can be associated with different belief states, even if those belief states share the gappy proposition represented as <{}, the property of being a planet> as their propositional content.[17] On Salmon's view, despite expressing the same gappy proposition, (Vul1) and (L1) can appear to differ in cognitive value for a speaker, because she can take that proposition in different ways or, what amounts to the same thing, internally affirm it under different guises.[18] In this chapter, I do not address the solutions that Braun and Salmon offer to the problem of differing cognitive values.

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[17] See also Braun 1991. In later work, Braun (1998, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2002) develops this view in a way that makes it closer to Salmon's.

[18] See also Salmon 1986a: esp. 114–118, 1989a: esp. 267-268. If the cognitive value of a sentence is determined solely by the proposition that it expresses (see Salmon 1986a: 57-60), then Salmon would say that, because they express the same gappy proposition, (Vul1) and (L1) cannot differ in cognitive value. But, because she can take that gappy proposition in different ways, the sentences can still *appear* to a speaker to differ in cognitive value.

The problem is, I think, a difficult one for any direct reference theorist.[19] My argument for the claim that, by itself, the gappy proposition view can't solve all of the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory isn't based on this sort of problem.

That leaves the problem of truth. If a sentence that contains an empty name doesn't express a proposition, then it might seem that it could not be either true or false. For a sentence has a truth-value only derivatively, in virtue of expressing a proposition with that truth-value. But, for example, (NegVul2) appears to be true. This is the problem of truth.

The gappy proposition view nicely solves the problem of truth for negative existentials. On the gappy proposition view, (NegVul2) could express a proposition represented as <NOT, <{}, the property of existing>>. If that proposition is true—say, because it is true when the proposition represented as <{}, the property of existing> is not true, and that proposition is not true—then, in virtue of expressing a true proposition, (NegVul2) could be true, as it appears to be.

[19] See Chapters 6 and 7.

## 1.3. Choice and Exclusion

In talking about

(NegVul2) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

we need to be careful, because it turns out, at least according to some, that 'it is not the case that' is ambiguous and hence that there is no single logical operator that is its content.

Salmon (1998: 277-282, 308-310) distinguishes the choice and exclusion negations of a proposition *P*: the choice negation $\neg_C P$ of *P* is neither true nor false if *P* is neither true nor false, whereas the exclusion negation $\neg_E P$ of *P* is true if *P* is neither true nor false.[20] If bivalence is true, and every proposition is either true or false, then the distinction between choice and exclusion negation collapses. For the choice and exclusion negations of a true proposition are both false, and the choice and exclusion negations of a false proposition are both true. Only when the proposition being negated is neither true nor false does the distinction between choice and exclusion negation matter. (See Figure 4.1.)

[20] The distinction between choice and exclusion negation corresponds to Bochvar's (1939) distinction between internal and external negation. See Church 1939 for a review of Bochvar 1939.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| T(rue) | F | F |
| F(alse) | T | T |
| N(either) | N | T |

**Figure 4.1:** Truth-tables for choice and exclusion negation.

Where σ is a sentence that expresses a proposition *P*, ⌜It is not the case that σ⌝ is thus ambiguous between ⌜It is $not_C$ the case that σ⌝, which expresses the proposition $\neg_C P$, and ⌜It is $not_E$ the case that σ⌝, which expresses the proposition $\neg_E P$.

We should accordingly distinguish $NOT_C$, which is the content of 'it is $not_C$ the case that', and $NOT_E$, which is the content of 'it is $not_E$ the case that'. Let $P'$ be the ordered *n*-tuple that represents the proposition *P*. The proposition represented as $<NOT_C, P'>$, which is the choice negation $\neg_C P$ of *P*, is expressed by ⌜It is $not_C$ the case that σ⌝; whereas the proposition represented as $<NOT_E, P'>$, which is the exclusion negation $\neg_E P$ of *P*, is expressed by ⌜It is $not_E$ the case that σ⌝.[21]

Braun and Salmon disagree about the semantics of gappy atomic propositions, but they agree that negative existentials that contain empty names can be true. Braun does not explicitly distinguish choice and exclusion negation. Indeed, if he accepts

[21] We can formulate rules for $NOT_C$ and $NOT_E$. See Appendix II.

bivalence, then he might reject that distinction altogether. But, even if he rejects bivalence, he doesn't need to distinguish choice and exclusion negation. On Braun's (1993: 463-464) view, all gappy atomic propositions are false.[22] So the choice and exclusion negations of a gappy atomic proposition are both true. (NegVul2) could be interpreted as

(NegVul2C) It is $\text{not}_C$ the case that Vulcan exists.

which expresses the proposition represented as $<\text{NOT}_C, <\{\}$, the property of existing$>>$, or it could be interpreted as

(NegVul2E) It is $\text{not}_E$ the case that Vulcan exists.

which expresses the proposition represented as $<\text{NOT}_E, <\{\}$, the property of existing$>>$.[23] Either proposition is true if the proposition represented as $<\{\}$, the property of existing$>$ is false. And, on Braun's view, the proposition represented as $<\{\}$, the property of existing$>$ is false. So the propositions represented as $<\text{NOT}_C, <\{\}$, the property of existing$>>$ and $<\text{NOT}_E, <\{\}$, the property of existing$>>$ are both true and hence, in virtue of expressing either of those true propositions, so is (NegVul2).

Unlike Braun, Salmon (1998: 277-282, 308-310) is explicit that $\ulcorner$It is not the case that $\sigma\urcorner$ can be interpreted either as $\ulcorner$It is $\text{not}_C$ the case that $\sigma\urcorner$ or as $\ulcorner$It is $\text{not}_E$ the case that $\sigma\urcorner$. In particular, (NegVul2) can be interpreted either as (NegVul2C), which expresses the proposition represented as $<\text{NOT}_C, <\{\}$, the property of existing$>>$, or as

[22] We can formulate a rule that gets this result. See Appendix II.

[23] 'C' is for 'choice', and 'E' is for 'exclusion'.

(NegVul2E), which expresses the proposition represented as <$NOT_E$, <{}, the property of existing>>. Also unlike Braun, Salmon (1998: 307, 318 n. 54, 319 n. 57) thinks that the proposition represented as <{}, the property of existing> is neither true nor false, as are all gappy atomic propositions.[24] So, on his view, the proposition represented as <$NOT_C$, <{}, the property of existing>> is neither true nor false and hence, in virtue of expressing that neither-true-nor-false proposition, so is (NegVul2C). But the proposition represented as <$NOT_E$, <{}, the property of existing>> is true and hence, in virtue of expressing that true proposition, so is (NegVul2E).

Although Braun and Salmon might disagree about (NegVul2C) (assuming that he accepts the distinction between choice and exclusion negation in the first place, Braun would think that it is true; whereas Salmon thinks that it is neither true nor false), they agree that there is a reading of (NegVul2) on which it is true, as it appears to be, in virtue of expressing a true proposition that is some sort of negation of a gappy proposition. They thus both think that the gappy proposition view offers a solution to the problem of truth for negative existentials. I agree. But problems remain elsewhere. In the rest of this chapter, I argue that, by itself, the gappy proposition view can't offer a general solution to the problem of truth.

[24] We can formulate a rule that gets this result. See Appendix II.

## §2: The Atomic Problem

The truth of the proposition represented as <$NOT_E$, <{}, the property of existing>> requires the untruth of the proposition represented as <{}, the property of existing>. And, on Salmon's semantics, the proposition represented as <{}, the property of existing> is untrue, because every gappy atomic proposition is neither true nor false. On the gappy proposition view, atomic sentences that contain empty names express gappy atomic propositions. So Salmon's semantics implies that, in virtue of expressing gappy atomic propositions that are neither true nor false, all atomic sentences that contain empty names are neither true nor false.

Salmon (1998: 310) says that his view is "intuitively correct as applied to a very wide range of sentences with nonreferring terms," including empty names. But his view doesn't accord with speakers' intuitions about some atomic sentences that contain empty names. Contrary to Salmon's view, some atomic sentences that contain empty names—for example,

(F1) Vulcan is Leon.

(F2) 'Vulcan' refers to Leon.

(F3) Vulcan is as hot as Leon.

(F4) Vulcan is on a collision course with the Earth.

and

(F5) Vulcan exists.

—appear to be false.[25] This isn't contrary to Braun's view. For, on his view, (F1)-(F5) are false, in virtue of expressing false gappy atomic propositions. But it is contrary to Salmon's view. And, also contrary to Salmon's view, other atomic sentences that contain empty names—for example,

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

and

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

—appear to be true.[26] This is contrary to Braun's view, too. For, on his view as on Salmon's, (T1)-(T5) are untrue, in virtue of expressing untrue gappy atomic propositions.

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[25] 'F' is for 'false'. '(F5)' and '(Vul2)' corefer. For similar examples, see Parsons 1980: 115, Taylor 2000: 17. Salmon denies that 'Vulcan' is empty. See Chapter 3. But the example isn't crucial, since Salmon (1998: 286, 305-306, 318 n. 52) concedes that some names are empty; and, I think, similar problems arise with those names. (F3) might appear to be neither true nor false rather than simply false. I include it to contrast it with (T3) below.

[26] 'T' is for 'true'. For similar examples, see Taylor 2000: 17; Everett 2000: 38, ms. Ryle (1931-1932: 147) mentions 'is nonexistent' and several other "systematically misleading expressions," my favorite of which is the simple 'is not'. (But I take it that the 'is' in 'is not' is the 'is' of existence and hence that ⌜α is not⌝ expresses the same nonatomic proposition as ⌜It is not the case that α exists⌝.)

## §3: A Semantic Fix

### 3.1. The Intimation of Failure

On the gappy proposition view, atomic sentences that contain empty names express gappy atomic propositions. And, on Braun's and Salmon's semantics, no gappy atomic proposition is true. So no atomic sentence that contains an empty name is true. But some atomic sentences that contain empty names appear to be true. We have a clash between theory and intuitions. Can the theory be fixed so that it has the result that some gappy atomic propositions are true and hence that some atomic sentences that contain empty names are true? There is some reason to think that the theory can't be fixed, because there is some reason to think that, as Braun and Salmon suppose, no gappy atomic proposition is true.

Consider, for example, the monadic gappy atomic proposition represented as <{}, the property of not existing>, which

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

expresses. Along with Braun and Salmon, I am assuming that 'is nonexistent' expresses a complex property and indeed that the property expressed by 'is nonexistent' is the property of not existing, which is a first-order property of objects (rather than a higher-order property of properties). So (T5)—unlike

(NegF5) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

expresses a monadic gappy atomic proposition represented as <{}, the property of not existing>. If we avail ourselves of lambda abstraction, universal quantification (over

actual objects that exist), identity, and negation, then, as Salmon (1998: 290) points out, we can define the property of not existing as $\lambda x \forall y (x \neq y)$ (or, less formally, as the property of not being identical with anything). Although he does not explicitly discuss the property of not existing, Braun (1993: 464) does distinguish property and propositional negation. And he thinks that existence is a property. So he would agree that the property of not existing, which is the result of combining the property of existing with property negation, is also a property.

How could the monadic gappy atomic proposition represented as <{}, the property of not existing> be true? We want a unified account of the truth of that proposition and of other monadic atomic propositions, including nongappy ones. On the way in which we normally think of things, if a nongappy monadic atomic proposition represented as <{*o*}, *F*>, which attributes a property *F* to an object *o*, is true, then it's true in virtue of *o*'s having *F*. So it is true only if *o* has *F*. For example, the proposition represented as <{Venus}, the property of being a planet> is true in virtue of Venus's having the property of being a planet. So that proposition is true only if Venus is a planet. The most natural and plausible generalization of this idea is that, if *any* monadic atomic proposition—gappy or otherwise—is true, then it's true in virtue of an object's having a property. But, in a gappy monadic atomic proposition, there is no object for any property to be attributed to. So there is no object whose having a property would make the proposition true. As a result, there is nothing that would make the proposition true. So it couldn't be true. You might think that the generalization from nongappy monadic

atomic propositions to all monadic atomic propositions, natural as it is, is too hasty. But it's still hard to see what could make a gappy monadic atomic proposition true. So it's still hard to see how a gappy monadic atomic proposition could be true.

The proposition represented as <{}, the property of not existing> contains the property of not existing, but there is nothing special about that property in virtue of which a generalization of the way in which we normally think of things shouldn't apply. Consider 'I am nonexistent'. Relative to a context whose agent is me, 'I am nonexistent' expresses a nongappy monadic atomic proposition represented as <{Ben Caplan}, the property of not existing>. In the actual present circumstance, in which I exist, I don't have the property of not existing. So, relative to the actual present circumstance, that proposition isn't true. And, in other (merely possible, past, or future) circumstances in which I don't exist, I do have the property of not existing. So, relative to such a circumstance, that proposition is true. This account of the truth, relative to a circumstance in which I don't exist, of the proposition represented as <{Ben Caplan}, the property of not existing> requires that I have properties—particularly the property of not existing—in circumstances in which I don't exist. Although serious actualists and serious presentists reject the claim that objects can have properties in circumstances in which they don't exist, nonserious actualists and nonserious presentists accept it.[27]

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[27] See Chapter 2.

### 3.2. The Inexorability of Failure

The semantics of gappy atomic propositions can't be fixed; it's bound to have counterintuitive consequences.

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

appears to be true, and

(F1) Vulcan is Leon.

appears to be false. But, on the gappy proposition view, both express a gappy atomic proposition represented as <{}, {}, the identity relation>. We should be careful to distinguish the proposition that (T1) expresses from the one that

(T1P) Vulcan is self-identical.

expresses.[28] The proposition that (T1P) expresses is represented as <{}, the property of being self-identical>. To see the contrast between (T1) and (T1P), consider 'Venus is Venus' and 'Venus is self-identical'. The former expresses a proposition that contains a pair of objects (namely, Venus and itself) and a dyadic relation (namely, the identity relation), whereas the latter expresses a proposition that contains an object (namely, Venus) and a (monadic) property (namely, the property of being self-identical).[29] Similarly, (T1) expresses a proposition that contains a dyadic relation (namely, the identity relation), whereas (T1P) expresses a proposition that contains a (monadic) property (namely, the property of being self-identical).

---

[28] 'P' is for 'property'.

[29] See Salmon 1986b; Soames 1987a: 70-71.

It doesn't matter what direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view do to the semantics of gappy atomic propositions; a clash between the semantics and speakers' intuitions is unavoidable. Here's why. On the one hand, if the semantics had it that the proposition represented as <{}, {}, the identity relation> is true, then (F1) would come out true, in virtue of expressing that true proposition, even though the sentence appears to be false. On the other hand, if the semantics had it that that proposition is false, then (T1) would come out false, in virtue of expressing that false proposition, even though the sentence appears to be true. And, on the third hand, if the semantics had it that that proposition is neither true nor false, then (T1) and (F1) would both come out neither true nor false, in virtue of expressing that neither-true-nor-false proposition, even though one appears to be true and the other appears to be false. The same problem arises with other pairs of sentences—for example,

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

(F2) 'Vulcan' refers to Leon.

and

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

(F3) Vulcan is as hot as Leon.

—that express the same gappy atomic proposition but don't appear to have the same truth-value.

In a way, the problem here is one of compositionality. If the proposition expressed by a sentence is determined (at least in part) on the basis of the contents of its

parts, then it seems that (T1) and (F1) must express the same proposition. For their parts have the same contents: 'Vulcan' and 'Leon' have no content, and the content of 'is' in both sentences is the identity relation. And, if (T1) and (F1) express the same proposition, then there is no way of making the semantics of gappy atomic propositions accord with speakers' intuitions.

One response to the problem is to deny that (T1) and (F1) express the same gappy atomic proposition. It is true that (T1) and (F1) contain parts that have the same contents. But compositionality does not require that the proposition expressed by a sentence be determined solely by the contents of its parts; compositionality allows that the proposition expressed by a sentence is also determined by how the parts of that sentence are put together. For example, 'Robin kissed Sam' and 'Sam kissed Robin' contain parts that have the same contents; but, because their parts are put together in different ways, the sentences don't express the same proposition. (T1) contains two occurrences of one name: 'Vulcan'. And (F1) contains one occurrence each of two names: 'Vulcan' and 'Leon'. Kaplan (1985; 1990: 95, 95 n. 6) suggests that (T1) and (F1) differ in their structure or *logical syntax*: their parts are not put together in the same way.[30] This leaves open the possibility that they do not express the same proposition, even though their parts have the same contents.

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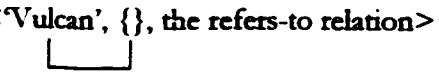
[30] The citation of Kaplan 1985 comes from Soames 1987a: 111. For a precursor of this idea, see Putnam 1954.

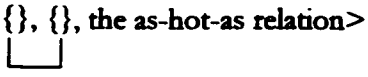
On Kaplan's view, (F1) expresses the gappy atomic proposition represented as <{}, {}, the identity relation>. But (T1) expresses a different gappy atomic proposition, a "wired" proposition that can be represented as the wired ordered triple whose description is displayed below.


If (T1) and (F1) express different gappy atomic propositions, then direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view could in principle concoct a semantics that makes the proposition that (T1) expresses true and the proposition that (F1) expresses false.

Kaplan's wiring trick can be used in other cases. For example, Kaplan might say that, while (F2) expresses the unwired gappy atomic proposition represented as <'Vulcan', {}, the refers-to relation>, (T2) expresses the wired gappy atomic proposition represented as the wired ordered triple whose description is displayed below.




And Kaplan might say that, while (F3) expresses the unwired gappy atomic proposition represented as <{}, {}, the as-hot-as relation>, (T3) expresses the wired gappy atomic proposition represented as the wired ordered triple whose description is displayed below.



If (T2) and (F2) express different gappy atomic propositions, then direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view could in principle concoct a semantics that makes the proposition that (T2) expresses true and the proposition that (F2) expresses false. Similarly, if (T3) and (F3) express different gappy atomic propositions, then the proposition that (T3) expresses could come out true even if the proposition that (F3) expresses does not.

But Kaplan's wiring trick can't be used across the board, and some problem cases remain. For example, if 'Clark Kent' and 'Superman' are empty, then

(F1′) Clark Kent is Superman.

would express the same gappy atomic proposition as (F1) does.[31] Since neither (F1) nor (F1′) contains two occurrences of the same name, there's no reason to think that they have different structures and hence there's no reason to think that they express different propositions. But (F1′) appears to be true, whereas (F1) appears to be false. The same problem arises with

(F1″) Zeus is Jupiter.

If 'Zeus' and 'Jupiter' are empty, then (F1″) would express the same gappy atomic proposition as (F1) does. But (F1″) appears to be true, whereas (F1) appears to be false.

With the help of definite descriptions, we can come up with more examples.

(T1D) Vulcan is the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

[31] For more on names from fiction, see Chapter 3.

appears to be true, and

(F1D) Leon is the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

appears to be false.[32] (T1D) and (F1D) both contain one occurrence of a name—either 'Vulcan' or 'Leon'—and one occurrence of a definite description: 'the planet between Mercury and the Sun'. 'Vulcan' was introduced by using 'the planet between Mercury and the Sun', whereas 'Leon' was not. But that 'Vulcan' was so introduced isn't a matter of how the parts of (T1D) are put together. As far as their structure is concerned, (T1D) and (F1D) are the same. So there is no reason to deny that they express the same gappy proposition. But one appears to be true, whereas the other appears to be false.[33]

The same problem arises in other cases.

(T2D) 'The planet between Mercury and the Sun' refers to Vulcan.

and

(F2D) 'The planet between Mercury and the Sun' refers to Leon.

express the same gappy proposition, but one appears to be true and the other appears to be false. Similarly,

(T3D) Vulcan is as hot as the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

---

[32] 'D' is for 'definite description'.

[33] Maybe (T1D) appears to be true as a piece of discourse about myth rather than as a piece of discourse about reality (in the way that 'Vulcan doesn't exist' appears to be true). See Chapter 3. What a theory of discourse about myth might be, how it might explain why (T1D) appears to be true, and whether it would also explain why other sentences that contain 'Vulcan' appear to be true—all are further questions that I won't address here. But someone should address them somewhere. Although appealing to discourse about myth might help in some cases, I do think that the reason that some of the sentences discussed below—for example, (T6)—appear to be true has more to do with reality than with myth.

and

(F3D) Leon is as hot as the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

express the same gappy proposition, but one appears to be true and the other doesn't. None of these sentences contains more than one occurrence of the same name, so there's no justification for using Kaplan's wiring trick in these cases.

The problem isn't limited to atomic sentences (or to sentences obtained from atomic ones by replacing names with definite descriptions).

(T6) If Vulcan exists, then there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun.

and

(F6) If Leon exists, then there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun.

express the same gappy proposition, but one appears to be true and the other appears to be false. Neither sentence contains more than one occurrence of the same name, so there's no justification for using Kaplan's wiring trick. It doesn't matter what we do to the semantics of gappy atomic propositions or of truth-functional connectives. Since the sentences express the same proposition, the semantics is bound to clash with speakers' intuitions.

## §4: Conclusion

What the cases from the previous section show is that, by itself, the gappy proposition view can't solve the problem of truth. So, to solve the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory, we need something else. But what? In the next chapter, I consider solutions that don't appeal to Fregean resources. I argue that they fail.

## APPENDIX I: GRAY'S ELEGY

To solve the problem that Russell (1905a: 485-487) raises in his infamous remarks about Gray's Elegy, Kaplan (1989a: 497 n. 23) uses a singleton set to distinguish the set-theoretic representations of

(*a*) the proposition expressed by a sentence that contains an expression $\chi$ that isn't directly referential; and

(*b*) the proposition expressed by a sentence that contains a directly referential expression $\chi'$ that refers to the content of $\chi$.

In particular, Kaplan uses a singleton set to distinguish the set-theoretic representations of the propositions expressed by ⌜The $\varphi$ is $\psi$⌝ and ⌜$\alpha$ is $\psi$⌝, where $\alpha$ is a name of the content of ⌜The $\varphi$⌝. Let $x$ be the content of ⌜The $\varphi$⌝ and hence of $\alpha$, and let $Y$ be the content of ⌜is $\psi$⌝.[34] Kaplan suggests that ⌜The $\varphi$ is $\psi$⌝ expresses the proposition represented as $<x, Y>$, whereas ⌜$\alpha$ is $\psi$⌝ expresses the proposition represented as $<\{x\}, Y>$.

The propositions expressed by ⌜The $\varphi$ is $\psi$⌝ and ⌜$\alpha$ is $\psi$⌝ both contain $x$ and $Y$; but neither contains $\{x\}$, even though $\{x\}$ is a member of the ordered pair that represents the proposition expressed by ⌜$\alpha$ is $\varphi$⌝. The propositions represented as $<x, Y>$ and $<\{x\}, Y>$ are to be distinguished, not by their constituents, but rather by their structures. Roughly speaking, the proposition represented as $<x, Y>$ has a structure in

[34] On some views, ⌜is $\psi$⌝ expresses a propositional function in ⌜The $\varphi$ is $\psi$⌝ and a property in ⌜$\alpha$ is $\psi$⌝. But I ignore that here. See Chapter 7 and the appendix to Chapter 5 for more on propositional functions.

virtue of which the property $Y$ is attributed to an object that is appropriately related to the quantifier $x$, whereas the proposition represented as $<\{x\}, Y>$ has a structure in virtue of which $Y$ is attributed to $x$ itself.[35]

## APPENDIX II: THE RULES

### The Rule for $NOT_C$

Let $Q$ be a proposition represented as $<NOT_C, P'>$, where $P'$ is an ordered $n$-tuple that represents a proposition $P$.

(1) $Q$ is true relative to a circumstance $E$ if and only if $P$ is false relative to $E$.

(2) $Q$ is false relative to $E$ if and only if $P$ is true relative to $E$.

(3) $Q$ is neither true nor false relative to $E$ if and only if $P$ is neither true nor false relative to $E$.

### The Rule for $NOT_E$

Let $Q$ be a proposition represented as $<NOT_E, P'>$, where $P'$ is an ordered $n$-tuple that represents a proposition $P$.

(1) $Q$ is true relative to a circumstance $E$ if and only if either

(*a*) $P$ is false relative to $E$; or

[35] Thanks to Michael Nelson for raising this issue. See also Salmon ms. a.

(*b*) $P$ is neither true nor false relative to $E$.

(2) $Q$ is false relative to $E$ if and only if $P$ is true relative to $E$.

**Braun's Rule for Atomic Propositions**

Let $P$ be an atomic proposition represented as the ordered $(n+1)$-tuple $<x_1, \ldots, x_n, Y>$, where $Y$ is an $n$-place attribute.

(1) $P$ is true relative to a circumstance $E$ if and only if $x_1, \ldots, x_n$ are singleton sets $\{o_1\}, \ldots, \{o_n\}$, where each $x_i$ contains an object $o_i$ (for $1 \leq i \leq n$), and the ordered $n$-tuple $<o_1, \ldots, o_n>$ is in the extension of $Y$ relative to $E$.

(2) $P$ is false relative to $E$ if and only if either

(*a*) $x_1, \ldots, x_n$ are singleton sets $\{o_1\}, \ldots, \{o_n\}$, where each $x_i$ contains an object $o_i$ (for $1 \leq i \leq n$), and the ordered $n$-tuple $<o_1, \ldots, o_n>$ is not in the extension of $Y$ relative to $E$; or

(*b*) some $x_i$ (for $1 \leq i \leq n$) is the empty set.

**Salmon's Rule for Atomic Propositions**

Let $P$ be an atomic proposition represented as the ordered $(n+1)$-tuple $<x_1, \ldots, x_n, Y>$, where $Y$ is an $n$-place attribute.

(1) $P$ is true relative to a circumstance $E$ if and only if $x_1, \ldots, x_n$ are singleton sets $\{o_1\}, \ldots, \{o_n\}$, where each $x_i$ contains an object $o_i$ (for $1 \leq i \leq n$), and the ordered $n$-tuple $<o_1, \ldots, o_n>$ is in the extension of $Y$ relative to $E$.

(2) $P$ is false relative to $E$ if and only if $x_1, \ldots, x_n$ are singleton sets $\{o_1\}, \ldots, \{o_n\}$, where each $x_i$ contains an object $o_i$ (for $1 \leq i \leq n$), and the ordered $n$-tuple $<o_1, \ldots, o_n>$ is not in the extension of $Y$ relative to $E$.

(3) $P$ is neither true nor false relative to $E$ if and only if some $x_i$ (for $1 \leq i \leq n$) is the empty set.

## APPENDIX III: NAMED SENTENCES

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (Ven1) | Venus is a planet. | |
| (Vul1) | Vulcan is a planet. | |
| (L1) | Leon is a planet. | |
| (H1) | Hesperus is a planet. | |
| (P1) | Phosphorus is a planet. | |
| (Vul2) | Vulcan exists. | = (F5) |
| (NegVul2) | It is not the case that Vulcan exists. | = (NegF5) |
| (NegVul2C) | It is $\text{not}_C$ the case that Vulcan exists. | |
| (NegVul2E) | It is $\text{not}_E$ the case that Vulcan exists. | |
| (BelVul1) | Robin believes that Vulcan is a planet. | |
| (BelL1) | Robin believes that Leon is a planet. | |

(BelH1) Robin believes that Hesperus is a planet.

(BelP1) Robin believes that Phosphorus is a planet.

(F1) Vulcan is Leon.

(F2) 'Vulcan' refers to Leon.

(F3) Vulcan is as hot as Leon.

(F4) Vulcan is on a collision course with the Earth.

(F5) Vulcan exists. = (Vul2)

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

(NegF5) It is not the case that Vulcan exists. = (NegVul2)

(T1P) Vulcan is self-identical.

(F1') Clark Kent is Superman.

(F1'') Zeus is Jupiter.

(T1D) Vulcan is the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(T2D) 'The planet between Mercury and the Sun' refers to Vulcan.

(F1D) Leon is the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(F2D) 'The planet between Mercury and the Sun' refers to Leon.

(T6) If Vulcan exists, then there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(F6) If Leon exists, then there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SENSELESS SOLUTIONS

## §0: INTRODUCTION

Here's our astronomical example again. In the nineteenth century, Jacques Babinet thought there was a planet between Mercury and the Sun. He introduced 'Vulcan' as a name for such a planet, but there was and is no such planet. In Chapters 2 and 3, I argued that 'Vulcan' is empty. On the gappy proposition view, sentences that contain 'Vulcan' and other empty names express gappy propositions. In Chapter 4, I argued that there is no way of fixing the semantics of gappy propositions so that it matches speakers' intuitions about the truth-values of sentences that contain empty names. The only other way to resolve the clash between theory and intuition is to explain the intuitions away. In Chapter 7, I argue that, by appealing to Fregean resources, direct reference theorists can explain the intuitions away. In this chapter, I argue that various attempts to do so that don't appeal to Fregean resources fail.

## §1: Away with Speakers' Intuitions

### 1.1. Falsehood and Untruth

As we saw in Chapter 4, on Nathan Salmon's (1998) view,

(F1) Vulcan is Leon.

(F2) 'Vulcan' refers to Leon.

(F3) Vulcan is as hot as Leon.

(F4) Vulcan is on a collision course with the Earth.

and

(F5) Vulcan exists.

are all neither true nor false, in virtue of expressing gappy atomic propositions that are neither true nor false.[1] But these sentences appear to be false. To explain away speakers' intuitions about these sentences, Salmon could say that, because they're neither true nor false and hence untrue, the sentences appear to be false. Indeed, he remarks that, although on his view 'The present king of France exists' is "not false ... at least it is judged untrue."[2] Speakers might fail to distinguish a sentence's being untrue from its being false. So a sentence that is untrue might appear to them to be false.

There are two things to note about this reply. First, we might wonder why (F1)-(F5) don't appear to be true, in virtue of being neither true nor false and hence *unfalse*. (Although 'untrue' is a word of English, 'unfalse' isn't. We could of course introduce the

[1] 'F' is for 'false'. The named sentences are listed in Appendix II.

[2] Salmon 1998: 309.

word 'unfalse'. Couldn't we? I can and I will. In fact, I did.) For whatever reason—perhaps because they are more interested in attaining the virtue that is truth than in avoiding the vice that is falsehood—speakers treat neither-true-nor-falseness and falsehood together, as untruth, rather than treating neither-true-nor-falseness and truth together, as unfalsehood. While it might remain puzzling why speakers treat neither-true-nor-falseness as untruth rather than as unfalsehood, Salmon could say that, as a matter of fact, they do treat it that way.

Second, on Salmon's view, there is a reading of

(NegF5) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

—namely, as

(NegF5C) It is $\text{not}_C$ the case that Vulcan exists.

—on which, in virtue of expressing a proposition that is neither true nor false, it is neither true nor false.[3] If speakers don't distinguish a sentence's being untrue from its being false, we would expect (NegF5) to appear to be false, at least on one reading. But it doesn't. Why not? Salmon could say that, since speakers don't distinguish untruth from falsity, they don't distinguish a proposition's being neither true nor false from its being false. And the choice and exclusion negations of a false proposition are both true. For this reason, even if speakers don't distinguish falsehood from untruth, (NegF5) appears to them to be true.[4]

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[3] 'Neg' is for 'negation', and 'C' is for 'choice'. See Chapter 4.

[4] Thanks to Anthony Everett for raising this issue.

Even to speakers who have been trained to carefully distinguish falsehood from untruth, (F1)-(F5) might continue to appear to be false (rather than neither true nor false). So, in the end, I don't know whether Salmon can explain away speakers' intuitions about these sentences. But, even if speakers' confusing falsehood and untruth were to explain their intuitions about (F1)-(F5), it wouldn't explain their intuitions about

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

and

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.[5]

For those sentences are also neither true nor false and hence untrue, and they don't appear to be false. Rather, they appear to be true.

In the rest of this chapter, I ignore speakers' intuition that (F1)-(F5) are false, and I focus on their intuition that (T1)-(T5) are true. Given that the semantics for gappy atomic propositions can't be fixed so that it has no counterintuitive consequences, direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view need to explain away speakers' intuitions about (T1)-(T5). But how?

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[5] 'T' is for 'true'.

## 1.2. Predicate and Sentential Negation

Direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view need not offer a single explanation that covers all cases. Let's start with

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

On the standard reading of (T4), 'is nothing' is a one-place predicate and (T4) expresses a gappy atomic proposition represented as <{}, the property of being nothing>. And, on Salmon's semantics (as on David Braun's (1993)), no gappy atomic proposition is true. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter 4, it's hard to see how any gappy atomic proposition could be true. So (T4) isn't true on its standard reading. But there is a nonstandard reading of (T4) on which it is true, in virtue of expressing a true nonatomic proposition. On this nonstandard reading, the 'is' is the 'is' of identity and 'nothing' is a quantifier expression, as in 'Nothing is in the fridge' or 'I gave him nothing'. Read in this nonstandard way, (T4) is roughly equivalent to 'Nothing is such that Vulcan is identical with it' and is true.[6]

But that there is such a nonstandard reading of (T4) on which it is true isn't what explains why speakers have the intuition that it is true. For speakers have the intuition that (T4) is true even when they read it in the standard way and are completely unaware of the nonstandard reading. (The nonstandard reading *is* nonstandard. Even philosophers don't always notice it.)

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[6] I spell out some of the formal details in Appendix I.

On its standard reading, (T4) expresses an untrue atomic proposition. On a nonstandard reading, (T4) expresses a true nonatomic proposition. But the explanation that direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view are looking for need not rely solely on a proposition that the sentence itself expresses. When they use (T4), speakers might communicate yet another proposition, which isn't expressed by (T4) on any reading.

(T4Na) It is not the case that Vulcan is something.

and

(T4Nb) It is not the case that Vulcan is a thing.

both express gappy nonatomic propositions.[7] These propositions are true, simply because they're the negations of gappy atomic propositions, which are untrue.[8] On no reading does (T4) express a proposition expressed by (T4Na) or (T4Nb). (I am assuming that, on any reading, the proposition expressed by (T4) is closely tied to its surface syntax.) Still, when they use (T4), speakers might communicate either of these propositions. (T4) contains some sort of negation affixed in the predicate: namely, 'no'- in 'is nothing'. So it might be natural for speakers who don't distinguish predicate negation—namely, the sort of negation that occurs in

[7] 'N' is for 'nonatomic'.

[8] See Chapter 4. I am assuming that, at least on one reading, 'is something' and 'is a thing' are one-place predicates. It doesn't matter whether there are readings on which 'Vulcan is something' is roughly equivalent to 'Something is such that Vulcan is identical with it' and on which 'Vulcan is a thing' is roughly equivalent to 'There is a thing such that Vulcan is identical with it'. For 'Something is such that Vulcan is identical with it' and 'There is a thing such that Vulcan is identical with it' are both false and hence their negations are true.

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

—and sentential negation—namely, the sort of negation that occurs in

(NegF5) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

—to remove the negation from the predicate, so to speak, and turn it into sentential negation.[9] As a result, what explains the intuition that (T4) is true might be that, when they use it, speakers communicate a true proposition expressed by (T4Na) or (T4Nb). Let's call this 'the negation explanation'.

As with (T4), there might be a reading of 'Vulcan does not exist' on which it expresses a nonatomic proposition. But there isn't a reading of (T5) on which it expresses a nonatomic proposition. (Again, I am assuming that, on any reading, the proposition expressed by (T5) is closely tied to its surface syntax.) If there isn't a reading of (T5) on which it expresses a nonatomic proposition, then what explains the intuition that it's true isn't that there is a reading on which it is true, in virtue of expressing a true nonatomic proposition.

Still, direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view could extend the negation explanation from (T4) to (T5). When they use (T5), speakers might communicate a true gappy nonatomic proposition expressed, not by (T5), but rather by (NegF5). (T5) contains some sort of negation affixed in the predicate: namely, 'non'- in 'is nonexistent'. So, as with (T4), it might be natural for speakers who don't distinguish

[9] (NegF5) might also be called '(T5N)'.

predicate and sentential negation to remove the negation from the predicate, so to speak, and turn it into sentential negation. As a result, what explains the intuition that (T5) is true might be that, when they use it, speakers communicate the true gappy nonatomic proposition expressed by (NegF5).

### 1.3. A Bad Problem

Speakers who have the intuition that

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

and

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

are true also have the intuition that

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

and

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

are true. These sentences don't have readings on which they express nonatomic propositions. (In this respect, they are like (T5) but unlike (T4).) So what explains the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true isn't that there are readings on which they are true, in virtue of expressing true nonatomic propositions. In this respect, they are like (T4) and (T5). So what explains the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true?

In the previous subsection, I sketched an explanation—namely, the negation explanation—of why speakers have the intuition that (T4) and (T5) are true. There are two problems with this explanation. The first is that it doesn't extend from (T4) and (T5) to (T1)-(T3). It isn't plausible that, when they use (T1)-(T3), speakers communicate true gappy nonatomic propositions. What makes it plausible that speakers communicate gappy nonatomic propositions when they use (T4) and (T5) is that each contains some sort of negation affixed in the predicate. But (T1)-(T3) don't contain any sort of negation. So what explains the intuition that these sentences are true isn't that, when they use them, speakers communicate true gappy nonatomic propositions.

Someone who clings to the negation explanation might insist that, when they use (T1)-(T3), speakers communicate the true gappy nonatomic propositions expressed by

(T1N) It is not the case that Vulcan is distinct from Vulcan.

(T2N) It is not the case that 'Vulcan' refers to anything that is not Vulcan.

and

(T3N) It is not the case that Vulcan is hotter, or less hot, than Vulcan.

But, if when they use (T1)-(T3) speakers communicate the propositions expressed by (T1N)-(T3N), then we would expect that when they use

(F1) Vulcan is Leon.

(F2) 'Vulcan' refers to Leon.

and

(F3) Vulcan is as hot as Leon.

they would communicate the propositions expressed by

(F1N) It is not the case that Vulcan is distinct from Leon.

(F2N) It is not the case that 'Vulcan' refers to anything that is not Leon.

and

(F3N) It is not the case that Vulcan is hotter, or less hot, than Leon.

And, if it is because they communicate the true propositions expressed by (T1N)-(T3N) that they have the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true, then we would expect that, because they communicate the true propositions expressed by (F1N)-(F3N), speakers also have the intuition that (F1)-(F3)are true. (The propositions expressed by (F1N)-(F3N) are true for the same reason as the propositions expressed by (T1N)-(T3N) are true: all are negations of untrue gappy propositions.) But even speakers who have the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true don't have the intuition that (F1)-(F3) are true. So what explains the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true isn't that, when they use them, speakers communicate the true propositions expressed by (T1N)-(T3N).

Someone who still clings to the negation explanation might think that, when they use (T1)-(T3), speakers communicate the propositions expressed, not by (T1N)-(T3N), but rather by

(T1NP) It is not the case that Vulcan is non–self-identical.

(T2NP) It is not the case that 'Vulcan' is nondisquotationally referential.

and

(T3NP) It is not the case that Vulcan is non–self-temperatured.

where, for example, 'Venus' would be nondisquotationally referential if it didn't refer to Venus, and Venus would be non–self-temperatured if it were hotter, or less hot, than itself.[10] (Admittedly, 'nondisquotationally referential' and 'non–self-temperatured' are somewhat ad hoc. But perhaps they could be improved on, and the real problem lies elsewhere.) This view doesn't lead us to expect that speakers have the intuition that (F1)-(F3) are true, since there aren't analogs of (T1NP)-(T3NP) to express propositions for speakers who use (F1)-(F3) to communicate. But, although it might be plausible that, when they use (T1)-(T3), speakers communicate the untrue propositions expressed by

(T1P) Vulcan is self-identical.

(T2P) 'Vulcan' is disquotationally referential.

and

(T3P) Vulcan is self-temperatured.

it isn't plausible that, when they use (T1)-(T3), they communicate the true propositions expressed by (T1NP)-(T3NP).[11] For there isn't any negation in (T1)-(T3). And there's no reason to think that, when they use an unnegated sentence, speakers communicate something like the double negation of the proposition that it expresses.

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[10] 'P' is for 'property'.

[11] For the distinction between the propositions expressed by (T1)-(T3) and (T1P)-(T3P), see Section 3.

### 1.4. A Worse Problem

The first problem with the negation explanation, then, is that it doesn't extend from

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

and

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

to

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

and

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

This might not be such a serious problem, if there is a separate explanation of the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true.[12] But the second problem with the negation explanation is worse: the negation explanation doesn't work even for (T4) and (T5).[13]

If, when they use (T4) and (T5), speakers communicate the propositions expressed by

(T4Nb) It is not the case that Vulcan is a thing.

and

(T5N) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

then we would expect that, when they use

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[12] See Sections 2 and 3.

[13] This second problem is due to Bob Bright.

(F6) Vulcan is non–self-identical.

they communicate the proposition expressed by

(F6N) It is not the case that Vulcan is self-identical.

And, if it is because they communicate the true propositions expressed by (T4Nb) and (T5N) that they have the intuition that (T4) and (T5) are true, then we would expect that, because they communicate the true proposition expressed by (F6N), speakers also have the intuition that (F6) is true. (Again, the proposition expressed by (F6N) is true for the same reason as the propositions expressed by (T4Nb) and (T5N) are true: all are negations of untrue gappy propositions.) But even speakers who have the intuition that (T4) and (T5) are true don't have the intuition that (F6) is true. So, contrary to the negation explanation, what explains the intuition that (T4) and (T5) are true isn't that, when they use them, speakers communicate the true propositions expressed by (T4Nb) and (T5N).

## §2: In Search of Something Special

### 2.1. An Easy Mistake

Even without an explanation of why speakers have the intuition that

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

and

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

are true, direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view might think that something different is going on with

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

and

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

These sentences are of the forms $\ulcorner \alpha = \alpha \urcorner$, $\ulcorner \ulcorner \alpha \urcorner$ refers to $\alpha \urcorner$, and $\ulcorner \alpha$ is as hot as $\alpha \urcorner$, most of whose instances are true. Direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view might think that there is something special about sentences of these forms, in virtue of which (T1)-(T3) appear to be true. There are at least three ways of cashing out this idea.

Here's the first: "Typically, if $\alpha$ weren't empty, then $\ulcorner \alpha = \alpha \urcorner$, $\ulcorner \ulcorner \alpha \urcorner$ refers to $\alpha \urcorner$, and $\ulcorner \alpha$ is as hot as $\alpha \urcorner$ would be true. So what's special about sentences of these forms has something to do with counterfactual circumstances in which $\alpha$ isn't empty. If 'Vulcan' hadn't been empty, then there would have been a planet between Mercury and the Sun. There isn't actually a planet between Mercury and the Sun, but there might have been one. Had there been a planet between Mercury and the Sun, the universe would have been significantly different than it actually is. Let's suppose that, had there been a planet between Mercury and the Sun, it would have been Venus. So, if 'Vulcan' hadn't been empty, it would have referred to Venus, and (T1)-(T3) would have expressed the propositions that

(T1C) Venus is Venus.

(T2C) 'Vulcan' refers to Venus.

and

(T3C) Venus is as hot as Venus.

actually express.[14] The propositions actually expressed by (T1C) and (T3C) are actually true, and they would have been true even if Venus had been between Mercury and the Sun. The proposition actually expressed by (T2C) isn't actually true, but (assuming that Babinet would still have introduced 'Vulcan' as a name for the planet between Mercury and the Sun) it would have been true if Venus had been between Mercury and the Sun. So, if 'Vulcan' hadn't been empty, the propositions that (T1)-(T3) would have expressed would have been true; and, in virtue of expressing those true propositions, (T1)-(T3) would have been true, too. What's going on is that speakers are mistaking the truth of (T1)-(T3) in counterfactual circumstances in which 'Vulcan' isn't empty for the actual truth of those sentences. This is what explains their intuition that those sentences are true." Let's call this 'the easy explanation'.

But, if the easy explanation is right, then why doesn't

(F5) Vulcan exists.

appear to be true, too? If 'Vulcan' hadn't been empty, it would have referred to Venus, and (F5) would have expressed the proposition that

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[14] 'C' is for 'counterfactual'.

(F5C) Venus exists.

actually expresses. This proposition is actually true, and it would have been true even if Venus had been between Mercury and the Sun. So, if 'Vulcan' hadn't been empty, the proposition that (F5) would have expressed would have been true; and, in virtue of expressing that true proposition, (F5) would have been true, too. If it is because they're mistaking the truth of (T1)-(T3) in counterfactual circumstances in which 'Vulcan' isn't empty for the actual truth of those sentences that speakers have the intuition that those sentences are true, then we would expect that, because they're mistaking the truth of (F5) in counterfactual circumstances in which 'Vulcan' isn't empty for its actual truth, speakers also have the intuition that (F5) is true. But even speakers who have the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true don't have the intuition that (F5) is true. So, contrary to the easy explanation, what explains the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true isn't that speakers are mistaking the truth of those sentences in counterfactual circumstances in which 'Vulcan' isn't empty for their actual truth.

## 2.2. A Logical Mistake

A second way of cashing out the idea that there's something special about sentences of certain forms might go like this: "Speakers are misled by the forms $\ulcorner \alpha = \alpha \urcorner$, $\ulcorner \ulcorner \alpha \urcorner$ refers to $\alpha \urcorner$, and $\ulcorner \alpha$ is as hot as $\alpha \urcorner$ into making a logical error.

(T1G) Everything is identical with itself.

(T2G) Everything is such that its name refers to it.

and

(T3G) Everything is as hot as itself.

are true.[15] From (T1G)-(T3G), speakers mistakenly infer

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

and

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

*This* is what explains their intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true."[16] Let's call this 'the logical explanation'.

The inference from (T2G) to (T2) is probably more complicated than the inference from (T1G) to (T1) or from (T3G) to (T3). But, that worry aside, if the logical explanation is right, then why doesn't

(F5) Vulcan exists.

appear to be true, too?

(F5G) Everything exists.

is true. The form of reasoning that leads from (T1G)-(T3G) to (T1)-(T3) also leads from (F5G) to (F5). If it is because they mistakenly infer (T1)-(T3) from (T1G)-(T3G) that speakers have the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true, then we would expect that, because they mistakenly infer (F5) from (F5G), speakers also have the intuition that (F5) is true.

[15] 'G' is for 'generalization'.

[16] In correspondence, Nathan Salmon suggested something along these lines.

But even speakers who have the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true don't have the intuition that (F5) is true. So, contrary to the logical explanation, what explains the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true isn't that speakers mistakenly infer them from (T1G)-(T3G).

A proponent of the logical explanation might reply: "Well, because they believe that some things don't exist, speakers accept (T1G)-(T3G) but don't accept (F5G). So they infer (T1)-(T3) from (T1G)-(T3G) without inferring (F5) from (F5G). This explains why speakers have the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true but don't have the intuition that (F5) is true."[17]

But, if what explains why speakers don't have the intuition that (F5) is true is that they believe that some things don't exist, then every speaker who has the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true but doesn't have the intuition that (F5) is true must believe that some things don't exist. And, if a speaker who once believed that some things don't exist rejects that belief and hence comes to accept (F5G), then we would expect that she would also come to have the intuition that (F5)is true. But speakers who don't have the intuition that (F5) is true needn't believe that some things don't exist. And a speaker who rejects the belief that some things don't exist needn't come to have the intuition that (F5) is true. So what explains why speakers have the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true but don't have the intuition that (F5) is true isn't that they accept (T1G)-(T3G) but don't accept (F5G).

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[17] Chris Hom (2001) suggested something along these lines. For the view that speakers believe that some things don't exist, see Reimer 2001a. Some of Parsons's (1980: 32-38) evidence for the view that some things don't exist is also evidence for the view that speakers believe that there are such things.

There is a further problem with the logical explanation: it doesn't extend to

(T6) Vulcan has a name.

Speakers who have the intuition that (T1)-(T3) are true also have the intuition that (T6) is true. Although every instance of ⌜α has a name⌝ is true (where α is a nonempty name), the corresponding generalization—namely,

(T6G) Everything has a name.

—isn't. What explains the intuition that (T6) is true can't be that speakers mistakenly infer it from (T6G), because speakers don't accept that sentence. So, even if the logical explanation worked for (T1)-(T3) (which it doesn't), it wouldn't work for (T6).

### 2.3. A Sophisticated Mistake

There's a third way of cashing out the idea that there's something special about sentences of certain forms: "Speakers are making a more complex mistake. There isn't actually a planet between Mercury and the Sun. But there might have been. Let's suppose that, had there been a planet between Mercury and the Sun, it would have been Venus. So, if 'Vulcan' hadn't been empty, it would have referred to Venus, and

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

and

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

would have expressed the propositions that

(T1C) Venus is Venus.

and

(T3C) Venus is as hot as Venus.

actually express. These propositions are necessarily true: they're true in every possible circumstance, including those unfortunate circumstances in which Venus doesn't exist. What's going on is that speakers are mistaking the necessary truth of the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed for the actual truth of the propositions that they actually express. And *this* is what explains their intuition that (T1) and (T3) are true."[18] Let's call this 'the sophisticated explanation'.

Unlike the easy explanation and the logical explanation, the sophisticated explanation of the intuition that (T1) and (T3) are true doesn't lead us to expect that speakers also have the intuition that

(F5) Vulcan exists.

is true. Had there been a planet between Mercury and the Sun, it would have been Venus, and (F5) would have expressed the proposition that

(F5C) Venus exists.

actually expresses. But, since Venus doesn't necessarily exist, that proposition isn't necessarily true. In particular, it isn't true in those still unfortunate circumstances in which Venus doesn't exist.

[18] In conversation, Michael McGlone suggested something along these lines.

Despite (or because of) its advantages, the sophisticated explanation attributes to speakers a mistake that is really quite complex. Indeed, the sophisticated explanation attributes two separate mistakes to speakers. Speakers are not merely mistaking the propositions that sentences would have expressed for the propositions that they actually express. Nor are they merely mistaking the truth of propositions relative to counterfactual circumstances for the truth of those propositions relative to the actual circumstance. Rather, speakers are making both mistakes at once. And, when they're making the second mistake, they're confusing the actual circumstance with all possible circumstances, including those circumstances in which Venus doesn't exist. (For speakers are mistaking the truth in *all possible circumstances* of the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed for the truth of those sentences in *the actual circumstance*.) But, when they're making the first mistake, they're confusing the actual circumstance with a particular counterfactual circumstance: namely, the circumstance that would have obtained had there been a planet between Mercury and the Sun. (For speakers are mistaking the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed, had *a circumstance in which there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun* obtained, for the propositions that those sentences express in *the actual circumstance*.) We should be reluctant to attribute to speakers a mistake of this complexity. But, this worry about complexity aside, there is a further problem with the sophisticated explanation.

## §3: The Problem of Contingency

### 3.1. The Problem

A potential problem for the sophisticated explanation is that it's not clear that the proposition that

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

and

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

would have expressed, and that

(T1C) Venus is Venus.

and

(T3C) Venus is as hot as Venus.

actually express, are necessarily true. For the proposition that (T1) would have expressed and that (T1C) actually expresses to be necessarily true, Venus would have to bear the identity relation to itself in every circumstance, including those circumstances in which it doesn't exist; and, likewise, for the proposition that (T3) would have expressed and that (T3C) actually expresses to be necessarily true, Venus would have to bear the as-hot-as relation to itself in every circumstance, again including those circumstances in which it doesn't exist. Now, I think that every object bears the identity relation and the as-hot-as relation to itself in every circumstance in which it exists. And I'm more sympathetic than most to the idea that objects can have properties and enter into relations in

circumstances in which they don't exist.[19] But I'm not sure that an object bears the identity relation or the as-hot-as relation to itself in circumstances in which it doesn't exist. If the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed aren't necessarily true, then those propositions aren't relevantly different from the proposition that

(F5) Vulcan exists.

would have expressed: neither is true in circumstances in which Venus doesn't exist. And, if the propositions that (T1), (T3), and (F5) would have expressed are all contingent, then the chief advantage of the sophisticated explanation disappears: it can no longer explain why speakers have the intuition that (T1) and (T3) are true but don't have the intuition that (F5) is true. Let's call this 'the problem of contingency'.

A proponent of the sophisticated explanation might insist that, unlike the proposition that (F5) would have expressed, the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed are necessary. As we will see later in this section, the problem of contingency arises elsewhere, where it isn't plausible to insist that the relevant proposition is necessary, so it will be useful to see what someone who is sympathetic to the sophisticated explanation might say if she grants that the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed aren't necessary.

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[19] See Chapter 2.

### 3.2. Quasi-Necessity

Someone who is sympathetic to the sophisticated explanation might say: "The propositions that

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

and

(F5) Vulcan exists.

would have expressed are all contingent: none is true in circumstances in which Venus doesn't exist. But the proposition that (F5) would have expressed is *false* in those circumstances; whereas the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed are *neither true nor false* in those circumstances, since the existence of Venus is something like a presupposition of those propositions. Let's say that a proposition that is false in no circumstance is *quasi-necessary*. The propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed are quasi-necessary, whereas the proposition that (F5) would have expressed is not. What's going on is that speakers are mistaking the quasi-necessity of the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed for the actual truth of the proposition that those sentences actually express. But the proposition that (F5) would have expressed isn't quasi-necessary. So, even if speakers were to mistake quasi-necessity for actual truth, they wouldn't think that (F5) expresses a true proposition. And *this* is why speakers have the intuition that (T1) and (T3) are true but don't have the intuition that (F5) is true."[20]

[20] Again, Michael McGlone suggested something along these lines.

Let's call this 'the quasi-necessity fix' (to the problem of contingency for the sophisticated explanation).

But, if the quasi-necessity fix is right, then every speaker who has the intuition that (T1) and (T3) are true but doesn't have the intuition that (F5) is true distinguishes falsehood from neither-true-nor-falseness. For it is the falsehood (rather than the mere neither-true-nor-falseness) in circumstances in which Venus doesn't exist, of the proposition that (F5) would have expressed, that prevents it from being quasi-necessary. Although some speakers might distinguish falsehood from neither-true-nor-falseness, not every speaker who has the intuition that (T1) and (T3) are true but doesn't have the intuition that (F5) is true makes that distinction.[21] So, contrary to the quasi-necessity fix, what explains why speakers have the intuition that (T1) and (T3) are true but don't have the intuition that (F5) is true isn't that they are mistaking the quasi-necessity of the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed for the actual truth of the propositions that those sentences actually express.

### 3.3. Belief and Properties

Someone sympathetic to the sophisticated explanation might try a different tack: "Okay, forget about the quasi-necessity fix. Even if the propositions that

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

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[21] See Section 1.1.

and

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

would have expressed aren't necessary, speakers *believe* that they are. But they don't believe, of the proposition that

(F5) Vulcan exists.

would have expressed, that it's necessary. What's going on is that speakers mistake what they believe to be the necessary truth of the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed for the actual truth of the propositions that those sentences actually express. But they don't believe, of the proposition that (F5) would have expressed, that it's necessary. So, even if they were to mistake what they believe to be necessary truth for actual truth, they wouldn't think that (F5) expresses a true proposition. And *this* is what explains why speakers have the intuition that (T1) and (T3) are true but don't have the intuition that (F5) is true." Let's call this 'the belief fix' (to the problem of contingency for the sophisticated explanation).[22]

The belief fix doesn't explain why speakers believe, of the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed, that they're necessary but don't believe, of the proposition that (F5) would have expressed, that it's necessary. But, still, I think it remains a viable option at this point.

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[22] For a similar appeal to what speakers believe, see Chapters 6 and 7.

Alternatively, someone sympathetic to the sophisticated explanation might distinguish the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed from those that

(T1P) Vulcan is self-identical.

and

(T3P) Vulcan is self-temperatured.

would have expressed. Had there been a planet between Mercury and the Sun, (T1) would have expressed a proposition that contains a pair of objects (namely, Venus and itself) and a dyadic relation (namely, the identity relation), and (T3) would have expressed a proposition that contains the same pair of objects and a different dyadic relation (namely, the as-hot-as relation). By contrast, (T1P) would have expressed a proposition that contains an object (namely, Venus) and a (monadic) property (namely, the property of being self-identical), and (T3P) would have expressed a proposition that contains the same object and a different (monadic) property (namely, the property of being self-temperatured).

Someone sympathetic to the sophisticated explanation might then say: "Even if Venus doesn't bear the identity relation or the as-hot-as relation to itself in circumstances in which it doesn't exist (so the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed aren't true in those circumstances and hence aren't necessarily true), in those circumstances it nonetheless has the properties of being self-identical and of being self-temperatured (so the propositions that (T1P) and (T3P) would have expressed are true in those circumstances and in fact are necessarily true). Were they to use (T1) and

(T3) in a circumstance in which there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun, speakers would communicate the necessarily true propositions that (T1P) and (T3P) would have expressed. What's going on is that speakers mistake the necessary truth of the propositions that they would have communicated had they used (T1) and (T3) in a circumstance in which there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun for the actual truth of the propositions that (T1) and (T3) actually express. But, were they to use (F5) in that circumstance, speakers wouldn't communicate any necessary proposition. So, even if they were to confuse the necessary truth of a communicated proposition for the actual truth of one that is expressed, speakers wouldn't think that (F5) expresses a true proposition. And *this* is what explains why speakers have the intuition that (T1) and (T3) are true but don't have the intuition that (F5) is true." Let's call this 'the property fix' (to the problem of contingency for the sophisticated explanation).

It is not obvious that, even if the propositions that (T1) and (T3) would have expressed aren't necessary, the propositions that (T1P) and (T3P) would have expressed are. But, still, I think that, like the belief fix, the property fix remains a viable option at this point. Of course, both the belief fix and the property fix continue to attribute to speakers a very complex mistake. But that's a separate problem.

### 3.4. The Problem Again

So far, I have been discussing the problem of contingency for

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

and

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

But the problem arises in a particularly intractable form for

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

Contrary to the sophisticated explanation, what explains the intuition that (T2) is true can't be that speakers are mistaking the necessary truth of the proposition that (T2) would have expressed for the actual truth of the proposition that it actually expresses. For the proposition that (T2) would have expressed isn't necessary. If 'Vulcan' hadn't been empty, it would have referred to Venus, and (T2) would have expressed the proposition that

(T2C) 'Vulcan' refers to Venus.

actually expresses. The proposition actually expressed by (T2C) would have been true if Venus had been between Mercury and the Sun. But it wouldn't have been necessarily true. For it isn't actually true.

Although the belief fix and the property fix might work with (T1) and (T3), neither works with (T3). Someone who adopts the belief fix might say: "Even if the proposition that (T2) would have expressed and that (T2C) actually expresses isn't necessary, speakers *believe* that it is. What's going on is that speakers mistake what they believe to be the necessary truth of the proposition that (T2) would have expressed for the actual truth of the proposition that (T2) actually express. And *this*, if you must know, is what explains the intuition that (T2) is true."

But speakers might continue to have the intuition that (T2) is true even after they're led to realize that, for example, 'Venus' might not have referred to Venus and hence to believe, of the proposition that (T2) would have expressed, that it isn't necessary. So, contrary to the belief fix, what explains their intuition that (T2) is true isn't that they believe, of the proposition that it would have expressed, that it's necessary. Or consider a slightly simpler case. Speakers who have the intuition that (T2) is true also have the intuition that

(T6) Vulcan has a name.

is true. And they might continue to have the intuition that (T6) is true after they're led to realize that Venus might not have been named, if there hadn't been anyone around to name it, and hence to believe, of the proposition that (T6) would have expressed, that it isn't necessary. So, again contrary to the belief fix, what explains their intuition that (T6) is true isn't that they believe, of the proposition that it would have expressed, that it's necessary.

A proponent of the property fix might distinguish the proposition that (T2) would have expressed from those that

(T2Pa) 'Vulcan' is disquotationally referential.

and

(T2Pb) Vulcan is quotationally referred to.

would have expressed, where for 'Venus', for example, to be disquotationally referential is for it to refer to Venus and for Venus to be quotationally referred to is for 'Venus' to

refer to it. Had there been a planet between Mercury and the Sun, (T2) would have expressed a proposition that contains a pair of objects (namely, the name 'Vulcan' and the planet Venus) and a dyadic relation (namely, the refers-to relation). By contrast, (T2Pa) would have expressed a proposition that contains an object (namely, the name 'Vulcan') and a (monadic) property (namely, the property of being disquotationally referential), and (T2Pb) would have expressed a proposition that contains a different object (namely, the planet Venus) and a different (monadic) property (namely, the property of being quotationally referred to).

A proponent of the property fix might then say: "Were they to use (T2) in a circumstance in which there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun, speakers would communicate the necessarily true propositions that (T2Pa) and (T2Pb) would have expressed. What's going on is that speakers mistake the necessary truth of the propositions that they would have communicated had they used (T2) in a circumstance in which there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun for the actual truth of the proposition that (T2) actually expresses. And *this*, I keep telling you, is what explains the intuition that (T2) is true."

But, alas, the propositions that (T2Pa) and (T2Pb) would have expressed are just as contingent as the proposition that (T2) would have expressed. The propositions that (T2), (T2Pa), and (T2Pb) would have expressed, had Venus been between Mercury and the Sun, would all have been false, had no one been around to name Venus. So, contrary to the property fix, what explains the intuition that (T2) is true isn't that, were they to use

it, speakers would communicate a necessary proposition. Those who are sympathetic to the sophisticated explanation are left without a way around the contingency of the proposition that (T2) would have expressed. And hence direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view still need an explanation of the intuition that (T2) is true.

## §4: Conclusion

As we've seen in this chapter, direct reference theorists who adopt the gappy proposition view still need to explain away speakers' intuitions that

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

and

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

are true. In Chapter 7, I argue that, by appealing to Fregean resources, direct reference theorists can explain those intuitions away. But, first, in the next chapter, I introduce those Fregean resources by considering the problems that nonempty names pose for the direct reference theory.

## APPENDIX I: MUCH ADO ABOUT 'NOTHING'

On a nonstandard reading

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

expresses the true nonatomic proposition represented as <<NO, $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of being a thing>>, $\lambda x$<{}, {$x$}, the identity relation>>, where $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of being a thing> is the propositional function that maps an object $o$ onto the proposition represented as <{$o$}, the property of being a thing>; $\lambda x$<{}, {$x$}, the identity relation> is the propositional function that maps an object $o$ onto the proposition represented as <{}, {$o$}, the identity relation>; and <NO, $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of being a thing>> represents the restricted quantifier that is the content of 'nothing'.[23]

The proposition represented as <<NO, $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of being a thing>>, $\lambda x$<{}, {$x$}, the identity relation>> is true if and only if there is no object $o$ such that $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of being a thing> and $\lambda x$<{}, {$x$}, the identity relation> both map $o$ onto a true proposition: that is, if and only if there is no object $o$ such that the propositions represented as <{$o$}, the property of being a thing> and <{}, {$o$}, the identity relation> are both true. For any object $o$, the proposition represented as <{}, {$o$}, the identity relation> is a gappy atomic proposition. And, on Braun's and Salmon's semantics, no gappy atomic proposition is true.[24] So for no object $o$ is the proposition represented as <{}, {$o$}, the identity relation> true and hence for no object $o$ are the

[23] Here, I'm using $\ulcorner\lambda x\Phi(x)\urcorner$ for a propositional function rather than a property.

[24] See Chapter 4.

propositions represented as $<\{o\}$, the property of being a thing> and $<\{\}, \{o\}$, the identity relation> both true. As a result, the proposition represented as $<<$NO, $\lambda x<\{x\}$, the property of being a thing>>, $\lambda x<\{\}, \{x\}$, the identity relation>> is true.

## APPENDIX II: NAMED SENTENCES

(F1) Vulcan is Leon.

(F2) 'Vulcan' refers to Leon.

(F3) Vulcan is as hot as Leon.

(F4) Vulcan is on a collision course with the Earth.

(F5) Vulcan exists.

(NegF5) It is not the case that Vulcan exists. = (T5N)

(NegF5C) It is $\text{not}_C$ the case that Vulcan exists.

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

(T1N) It is not the case that Vulcan is distinct from Vulcan.

(T2N) It is not the case that 'Vulcan' refers to anything that is not Vulcan.

(T3N) It is not the case that Vulcan is hotter, or less hot, than Vulcan.

(T4Na) It is not the case that Vulcan is something.

(T4Nb) It is not the case that Vulcan is a thing.

(T5N) It is not the case that Vulcan exists. = (NegF5)

(F1N) It is not the case that Vulcan is distinct from Leon.

(F2N) It is not the case that 'Vulcan' refers to anything that is not Leon.

(F3N) It is not the case that Vulcan is hotter, or less hot, than Leon.

(T1NP) It is not the case that Vulcan is non–self-identical.

(T2NP) It is not the case that 'Vulcan' is nondisquotationally referential.

(T3NP) It is not the case that Vulcan is non–self-temperatured.

(T1P) Vulcan is self-identical.

(T2P) 'Vulcan' is disquotationally referential. = (T2Pa)

(T2Pa) 'Vulcan' is disquotationally referential. = (T2P)

(T2Pb) Vulcan is quotationally referred to.

(T3P) Vulcan is self-temperatured.

(F6) Vulcan is non–self-identical.

(F6N) It is not the case that Vulcan is self-identical.

(T1C) Venus is Venus.

(T2C) 'Vulcan' refers to Venus.

(T3C) Venus is as hot as Venus.

(F5C) Venus exists.

(T1G) Everything is identical with itself.

(T2G) Everything is such that its name refers to it.

(T3G) Everything is as hot as itself.

(F5G) Everything exists.

(T6) Vulcan has a name.

(T6G) Everything has a name.

# CHAPTER SIX

# SENSE AND DIRECT REFERENCE

## §0: INTRODUCTION

In the last two chapters, I considered the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory. But nonempty names also pose problems for the direct reference theory. In this chapter, I argue that, by appropriating Fregean resources, direct reference theorists can offer solutions to those problems. In Section 1, I present the problems that nonempty names pose for the direct reference theory. In Sections 2 and 3, I develop two sorts of solutions that direct reference theorists can offer. And, in Section 4, I consider the relation between the problems that (nonempty) names pose and those that (nonvacuous) quantifier expressions pose. Why consider the problems that nonempty names pose? Because, in the next chapter, I argue that the solutions that direct reference theorists offer to these problems can be extended to the problems that empty names pose.

## §1: Problems with Nonempty Names

### 1.1. Some Theories

On the direct reference theory, the content of a nonempty name is the object that it refers to, and a sentence that contains a nonempty name expresses a singular proposition that contains the object that the name refers to. So, for example,

(N1) Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(N2) Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

express the same singular proposition, which contains (twice over) the object that 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' both refer to.[1] (For the sake of offering simple examples, I assume in this chapter that the *Superman* fiction is true.[2]) On the relational view of propositional-attitude ascriptions, a propositional-attitude ascription of the form $\ulcorner \alpha\ \nu$ that $\sigma \urcorner$ expresses a proposition—about the agent $S$ that the name $\alpha$ refers to, the relation $R$ that the verb $\nu$ refers to, and the proposition $P$ that the sentence $\sigma$ expresses—to the effect that $S$ bears $R$ to $P$. So, for example,

(BelN1) Lex Luthor believes that Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

expresses a proposition, about the proposition that (N1) expresses, to the effect that Lex Luthor bears the belief relation to it; and, likewise,

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[1] 'N' is for 'name'.

[2] For more on names from fiction, see Chapter 3.

(BelN2) Lex Luthor believes that Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

expresses a proposition, about the proposition that (N2) expresses, to the effect that Lex Luthor bears the belief relation to *it*.[3] On the direct reference theory, (N1) and (N2) express the same proposition. So, on the direct reference theory combined with the relational view of propositional-attitude ascriptions, (BelN1) and (BelN2) also express the same proposition.

By contrast, on the Fregean theory, the content of a name is a *sense*—that is, a *mode of presentation* of the object that the name refers to—and a sentence that contains a name expresses a proposition that contains the sense that is the content of the name. 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' refer to the same object; but the names have different senses as contents, and those senses present that object in different ways. The proposition expressed by (N1) contains both the sense that is the content of 'Superman' and the sense that is the content of 'Clark Kent'. So does the proposition expressed by (N2). But those propositions are different, because the senses that are the contents of 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' are put together differently in those propositions. (Analogously, on the direct reference theory, if Robin and Sam are distinct, then 'Robin is more successful with women than Sam is' and 'Sam is more successful with women than Robin is' express different propositions, because Robin and Sam are put together

[3] 'Bel' is for 'belief'.

differently in those propositions.) Since on the Fregean theory (N1) and (N2) express different propositions, on the Fregean theory combined with the relational view of propositional-attitude ascriptions (BelN1) and (BelN2) also express different propositions.

Fregeans disagree about what senses are. On the one hand, some Fregeans think that senses are *descriptive*: that is, they are of a kind with the contents of definite descriptions. For example, the content of 'Superman' might be the content of 'the super-powered protector of Metropolis', and the content of 'Clark Kent' might be the content of 'the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter'. In that case, (N1) would express the same proposition as

(D1) The super-powered protector of Metropolis is more successful with women than the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is.

and (N2) would express the same proposition as

(D2) The bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is more successful with women than the super-powered protector of Metropolis is.[4]

These propositions are *descriptive*, because they contain descriptive senses. In "Sense and Reference," Gottlob Frege (1892a) suggests that at least some senses are descriptive. For example, he says that the sense of 'Aristotle' might be the content of 'the student of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great'.[5] Let's call the view that sentences that contain

[4] 'D' is for 'definite description'.

[5] Frege 1892a: 27 n. B.

names express descriptive propositions 'internal descriptivism'—'internal', because on this view senses are internal to the propositions expressed by sentences that contain names; and 'descriptivism', because on this view those senses are descriptive.[6]

On the other hand, some Fregeans think that senses are *nondescriptive*: that is, they are not of a kind with the contents of definite descriptions. (These Fregeans are sometimes called 'neo-Fregeans'.) There are various theories about what nondescriptive senses might be. For example, some think that senses are linguistic expressions or things that contain linguistic expressions,[7] whereas others think that senses are abstract objects that are individuated by agents' cognitive abilities.[8] If senses are simply linguistic expressions, the content of 'Superman' would be the name 'Superman' itself, and the content of 'Clark Kent' would be the name 'Clark Kent' itself. Let's call the view that sentences that contain names express propositions that contain nondescriptive senses 'internal nondescriptivism'—'internal', because on this view senses are internal to the propositions expressed by sentences that contain names; and 'nondescriptivism', because on this view those senses are nondescriptive.

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[6] For more on descriptive propositions, see Chapter 7.

[7] See, for example, Harman 1970, 1972; Higginbotham 1986, 1991; Segal 1989; Richard 1990; Larson and Ludlow 1993; Larson and Segal 1995: Chapter 11; Rickless 1996.

[8] See, for example, McDowell 1977; Evans 1982; Peacocke 1983, 1986, 1992.

## 1.2. Two Old Problems

There is much to be said against the direct reference theory and in favor of the Fregean theory. At any rate, much has been said to that effect. For one thing, as we all know from Frege's "On Sense and Reference" (1892a), the substitution of coreferential names in simple sentences can appear not to preserve cognitive value. (A simple sentence is simply a sentence that doesn't contain propositional-attitude verbs, modal expressions, or any such fancy stuff.) For example,

(N1) Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(N2) Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

appear to differ in cognitive value. If sentences can differ in cognitive value only if they express different propositions, and if (N1) and (N2) do differ in cognitive value, then—contrary to the direct reference theory—those sentences don't express the same proposition. Let's call this 'the problem of differing cognitive values for simple sentences that contain names'. (In Chapters 1 and 4, I discussed a special case of this problem, for simple sentences that contain empty names. But, as we saw in Chapter 4, the problem is not confined to simple sentences that contain empty names; it also arises with simple sentences that contain nonempty names.)

Another point in favor of the Fregean theory, as we also know from "Sense and Reference," is that the substitution of coreferential names in propositional-attitude ascriptions can appear not to preserve truth-value. For example,

(BelN1) Lex Luthor believes that Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(BelN2) Lex Luthor believes that Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

appear to differ in truth-value: the first appears to be true, whereas the second appears to be false. But sentences that differ in truth-value can't express the same proposition, since it's the proposition expressed by a sentence that determines its truth-value. If the relational view of propositional-attitude ascriptions is correct, and if (BelN1) and (BelN2) do differ in truth-value, then—again contrary to the direct reference theory—(N1) and (N2) don't express the same proposition. Let's call this 'the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names'.

The Fregean theory offers solutions to the problem of differing cognitive values for simple sentences that contain names and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names. These solutions are *internal*, because they appeal to the propositions expressed by the relevant sentences. On the Fregean theory, (N1) and (N2) differ in cognitive value, because they express propositions that differ in cognitive value. And (BelN1) and (BelN2) differ in truth-value, because Lex Luthor bears the belief relation to the proposition expressed by (N1) but doesn't bear that relation to the proposition expressed by (N2).

Some direct reference theorists, among them Nathan Salmon (1986a) and Scott Soames (1987a, 1987b), deny that simple sentences like (N1) and (N2) can differ in cognitive value; they also deny that propositional-attitude ascriptions like (BelN1) and (BelN2) can differ in truth-value. These direct reference theorists offer solutions to the problem of differing cognitive values for simple sentences that contain names and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names. But these solutions are *external*, because they don't appeal to the propositions expressed by the relevant sentences. The solutions are supposed to explain why, although the simple sentences don't differ in cognitive value and the propositional-attitude ascriptions don't differ in truth-value, they nonetheless appear to. In Sections 2 and 3, I present such external solutions. But, first, there is another problem to consider.

### 1.3. A New Problem

Jennifer Saul (1997a) points out that the substitution of coreferential names in simple sentences can appear not to preserve truth-value. For example,

(N1) Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(N2) Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

appear to differ in truth-value: the first appears to be true, whereas the second appears to be false. This presents a further problem for the direct reference theory. Sentences that differ in truth-value can't express the same proposition, since it's the proposition

expressed by a sentence that determines its truth-value. So, if (N1) and (N2) do differ in truth-value, then—again contrary to the direct reference theory—they don't express the same proposition. Let's call this 'the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names'.

But the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names isn't a problem only for the direct reference theory. For, on the Fregean theory, the truth-value of a simple sentence depends on the reference, not the sense, of its parts. So, since 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' refer to the same object, (N1) and (N2) have the same truth-value, even though they express different propositions. And, as Saul argues, the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names presents a dilemma for anyone who rejects the external solutions that direct reference theorists offer to the problem of differing cognitive values for simple sentences that contain names and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names. The dilemma is this: either (*i*) offer an *internal* solution to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names (that is, a solution that appeals to the propositions expressed by the relevant sentences); or (*ii*) offer an *external* solution to that problem *and* say why direct reference theorists shouldn't also offer external solutions to the other problems.

Some have opted for the first horn of the dilemma, but I won't discuss that here.[9] Opting for the second horn of the dilemma, Stefano Predelli (1999) argues that

[9] Forbes (1997, 1999) and Moore (1999, 2000) opt for the first horn. For criticisms of their views, see Saul 1997b, 1999, 2000. Pitt (2001) also opts for the first horn. He denies that 'Clark Kent' and 'Superman'

Salmon's external solution to the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names doesn't extend to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names. And Alex Barber (2000) offers an external solution to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names. But, because it assumes that ⌜α knows that 'Superman' refers to Superman⌝ can be true even if ⌜α knows that 'Superman' refers to Clark Kent⌝ isn't, Barber's solution is incompatible with the direct reference theory (assuming something like the relational view of propositional-attitude ascriptions). The upshot of Predelli's argument is that the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names gives us no reason to accept the direct reference theory or Salmon's external solution, offered in its defense, to the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names. The upshot of Barber's argument is that the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names in fact gives us reason to reject the direct reference theory.

But direct reference theorists can avoid both these upshots. For they can offer external solutions to the problem of differing cognitive values for simple sentences that contain names and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names—solutions that are compatible with the direct reference

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corefer. So, on his view, 'Clark Kent is Superman' is false. Although Pitt (2001: 533) is "not prepared to sacrifice" intuitions about simple sentences like (N1) and (N2) "to a pragmatics-based [i.e. external] solution," he is prepared to thus sacrifice the intuition that 'Clark Kent is Superman' is true. But, if intuitions about 'Clark Kent is Superman' are negotiable, then so are intuitions about other simple sentences.

theory and that can be extended to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names. Just as Fregeans can appeal to either descriptive or nondescriptive senses, so direct reference theorists can also appeal to either descriptive or nondescriptive senses. Or at least they can appeal to something very much like them. This is what the next two sections are designed to show.

## §2: External Descriptivism

### 2.1. Simple Sentences and Cognitive Value

The first set of external solutions that direct reference theorists can offer appeal to descriptive senses. Scott Soames (2001: Chapter 3) and Michael Thau (2002: Chapter 4) argue that the reason

(N1) Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(N2) Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

appear to differ in cognitive value is that speakers who use them communicate (or assert) different descriptive propositions.[10] For example, a speaker who uses (N1) might communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by

[10] This is in fact in the spirit of what Barber (2000: 303-304) says about speakers who know about Superman's double life. For a similar view, see Ryckman 1986, 1989. Salmon (1998: 303-304) and van Inwagen (1977: 308 n. 11, 2000b: 246) suggest a similar view in the case of some sentences that contain names from fiction. For a similar view in the case of empty names, see the works cited in note 1 in Chapter 7. Soames (2001: Chapter 5) thinks that some names, which he calls "partially descriptive," are such that sentences that contain them express descriptive propositions. This is a form of internal

(D1) The super-powered protector of Metropolis is more successful with women than the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is.

whereas a speaker who uses (N2) might communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by

(D2) The bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is more successful with women than the super-powered protector of Metropolis is.

On this view, when they use sentences that contain names speakers communicate descriptive propositions. For reasons to be explained shortly, let's call this 'external descriptivism'. Two questions that arise for external descriptivism are: What do speakers communicate? And how do they communicate what they do? That is, which descriptive propositions do speakers communicate when they use a given sentence? And what is the mechanism whereby speakers communicate those propositions?

Taking up the first question, Soames (2001: 67-86) argues that, when they use a single sentence, speakers often communicate (or assert) more than one descriptive proposition. For example, when they use (N1), speakers might communicate, not only the descriptive proposition expressed by (D1), but also many other descriptive propositions, including those expressed by 'The man of steel is more successful with women than Lois Lane's mild-mannered colleague is' and 'The man who is faster than a speeding bullet is more successful with women than Jimmy's best friend is'. Soames

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descriptivism. He suggests that 'Superman' is a partially descriptive name, but in the end he regards this conclusion as "tentative." See Soames 2001: 53-54, 121-122.

(2001: 82-83) also suggests that, for any descriptive proposition, it might be indeterminate whether a speaker communicates it when she uses a given sentence.

Taking up the second question, Thau (2002: 172-174) suggests that, at least in the 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' cases, Paul Grice's (1975) *conventional implicature* is the mechanism whereby speakers communicate descriptive propositions when they use sentences that contain names. On this view, the contents of 'the super-powered protector of Metropolis' and 'the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter' are associated with 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent', respectively, as a matter of linguistic convention. The descriptive proposition expressed by (D1) isn't expressed by (N1) and so doesn't determine its truth-value. But, still, that descriptive proposition is part of the linguistic meaning of (N1), just as the descriptive proposition expressed by (D2) is part of the linguistic meaning of (N2).

According to Soames and Thau, a sentence that contains a nonempty name expresses a singular proposition, which contains the object that the name refers to; but, when they use that sentence, speakers communicate a descriptive proposition. This is the converse of what many, including Soames (1986, 1994b), say about what Keith Donnellan (1966) calls 'referential' uses of definite descriptions. Suppose that I say 'The handsome fellow from *The Matrix* is Canadian', intending to tell you about Keanu Reeves, who I have in mind. On Donnellan's view, when I use the definite description 'the handsome fellow from the *Matrix*' in this referential way, the sentence 'The handsome fellow from *The Matrix* is Canadian' doesn't express a descriptive proposition;

rather, it expresses the same singular proposition as 'Keanu Reeves is Canadian' does.[11] Soames and others have argued that, on the contrary, 'The handsome fellow from *The Matrix* is Canadian' expresses a descriptive proposition, even when I use the definite description referentially. What happens when I use the definite description referentially and say 'The handsome fellow from *The Matrix* is Canadian' is that I communicate the singular proposition that 'Keanu Reeves is Canadian' expresses.[12]

The explanation of why (N1) and (N2) appear to differ in cognitive value is to be based on some difference between the descriptive propositions expressed by (D1) and (D2). For example, it might be that those descriptive propositions differ in cognitive value. This is an external, descriptive solution to the problem of differing cognitive values for simple sentences that contain names.

The contents of 'the super-powered protector of Metropolis' and 'the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter' are descriptive senses. Or at least they're descriptive—they're the contents of definite descriptions—and they play one of the roles that senses do. According to Fregeans, senses play three roles. First, senses present objects and, as a result, help explain how simple sentences can appear to differ in cognitive value and how propositional-attitude ascriptions can appear to differ in truth-value. Second, senses are the contents of names and, as such, are parts of the

[11] See Donnellan 1966, 1968, 1978; Wettstein 1981, 1983. For a criticism of Wettstein 1981, 1983, see Nelson 1999.

[12] See also Grice 1969; Kripke 1977; Salmon 1982, 1991. For a criticism of Salmon 1982, 1991, see Nelson 1999.

propositions expressed by sentences that contain names. Third, senses determine the objects that names refer to; a name refers to the object it does in virtue of being associated with a sense that presents that object.[13] According to external descriptivism, the contents of 'the super-powered protector of Metropolis' and 'the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter' play the first role: they are distinct modes of presentation of the same individual—namely, the person from Krypton who is called both 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent'—and they help explain how simple sentences that contain names can appear to differ in cognitive value. But they don't play the second role: they aren't parts of the propositions expressed by sentences that contain 'Superman' or 'Clark Kent'. And they don't play the third role either: 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' needn't refer to the object that they do in virtue of being associated with the contents of 'the super-powered protector of Metropolis' and 'the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter', respectively. Indeed, the content of 'the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter' might not even determine the referent of 'Clark Kent'. For example, there might be more than one bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter, and our hero might not really be bespectacled. (What look like glasses might in fact be a cleverly disguised symbiotic creature from Krypton.) We are now in a position to see precisely why 'external descriptivism' is an apt name. According to external descriptivism, (*i*) senses are external, rather than internal, to the propositions expressed by sentences that contain names, and (*ii*) those senses are descriptive.

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[13] For distinctions along the same lines, see Kripke 1972: 277, Burge 1977: 356, Salmon 1981: 11-14.

## 2.2. Semantics and Pragmatics

Thau's suggestion that conventional implicature is the mechanism whereby speakers communicate descriptive propositions when they use sentences that contain names raises the question of whether external descriptivism should be characterized as a view about semantics or about pragmatics. Grice (1975) makes two distinctions. On the one hand, he distinguishes *what is said* by a speaker's utterance of a sentence from *what is implicated* by her utterance of that sentence. The crux of this first distinction is that what is said by a speaker's utterance of a sentence determines the truth-value of her utterance of that sentence, whereas what is implicated by her utterance of that sentence does not. Grice's notion of what is said by a speaker's utterance of a sentence corresponds more or less to our notion of the proposition expressed by that sentence. Determining truth-value is central to both notions (although what is said by a speaker's utterance of a sentence determines the truth-value of her utterance of that sentence, whereas the proposition expressed by that sentence determines the truth-value of the sentence itself). On the other hand, Grice distinguishes what a speaker *conventionally implicates* by her utterance of a sentence from what she *conversationally implicates* by her utterance of that sentence. The crux of this second distinction is that what a speaker conventionally implicates by her utterance of a sentence depends on the linguistic meaning of that sentence, whereas what she conversationally implicates by her utterance of that sentence does not and instead depends on conversational maxims. (See Figure 6.1.)

| | | Yes<br>*vertical axis*→ | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes<br>*horizontal axis*↓ | What is said | — |
| | No | What is conventionally implicated | What is conversationally implicated |

**Figure 6.1:** Grice's two distinctions.[14]

Grice does not explicitly discuss the distinction between semantics and pragmatics. But he does ask "whether there is any kind, type, or region of signification which has special claims to centrality."[15] And, I think, we can read him as asking what is central to semantics and hence as asking where the distinction between semantics and pragmatics lies. Grice (1987: 360-361) mentions two things that might be central to semantics: (*i*) what is said by a speaker's utterance of a sentence (he calls this "dictive content"), and (*ii*) the linguistic meaning of that sentence (he calls this "formal signification"). On the one hand, if what is said by a speaker's utterance of a sentence is central to semantics, then what is said by a speaker's utterance of a sentence is part of

[14] Figure 6.1 is simplified in two ways. First, the top right corner is unfilled. In later work, Grice (1987: 360-362) argues that what is said by a speaker's utterance of a sentence need not be determined by the linguistic meaning of that sentence. But this is not his view in "Logic and Conversation" (1975). Second, some implicatures are neither conventional nor conversational. So what is conversationally implicated doesn't exhaust the bottom right corner.

[15] Grice 1987: 359.

semantics, whereas what she conventionally and conversationally implicates by her utterance of that sentence are both part of pragmatics. (In that case, the horizontal axis marks the semantics-pragmatics distinction: above is semantics; below, pragmatics.) But, on the other hand, if linguistic meaning is central to semantics, then what is said and what is conventionally implicated by a speaker's utterance of a sentence are both part of semantics (given that both depend on the linguistic meaning of that sentence), whereas what she conversationally implicates by uttering that sentence is part of pragmatics. (In that case, the vertical axis marks the semantics-pragmatics distinction: to the left is semantics; to the right, pragmatics.) In either case, what is said by a speaker's utterance of a sentence is part of semantics, whereas what is conversationally implicated by her utterance of that sentence is part of pragmatics. But what is conventionally implicated by a speaker's utterance of a sentence falls somewhere in between: on one way of making out the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, it falls on the side of semantics; whereas, on the other way of making out that distinction, it falls on the side of pragmatics. As Kent Bach (1999: 327) puts it, what is conventionally implicated by a speaker's utterance of a sentence is "a monkey wrench" in the distinction between semantics and pragmatics.

Unfortunately, Grice does not resolve the issue of what is central to semantics; nor does he resolve the issue of whether what is conventionally implicated by a speaker's utterance of a sentence is part of semantics or pragmatics. I don't propose to resolve the issue either. Rather, I leave it as an open question. As a result, we should be careful

about how we characterize the dispute between internal and external descriptivism. Internal descriptivism is a view about semantics. For it's a view about the propositions expressed by sentences that contain names; and, insofar as they correspond to what is said by speakers' utterances of sentences, propositions are clearly part of semantics. But, until we resolve the issue of what is central to semantics, it's not clear whether external descriptivism is a view about semantics or pragmatics. For external descriptivism is a view that could be at least in part about what is conventionally implicated by speakers' utterances of sentences that contain names. So the dispute between internal and external descriptivism shouldn't be characterized as a dispute about whether descriptive senses are part of semantics. Rather, it should be characterized as a dispute about whether descriptive senses are part of the propositions expressed by sentences that contain names.

### 2.3. Propositional-Attitude Ascriptions and Truth-Value

Soames (2001: Chapter 8) and Thau (2002: Chapter 4) argue that the reason

(BelN1) Lex Luthor believes that Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(BelN2) Lex Luthor believes that Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

appear to differ in truth-value is that speakers who use them communicate different descriptive propositions. For example, a speaker who uses (BelN1) might communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by

(BelD1) Lex Luthor believes that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is more successful with women than the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is.

whereas a speaker who uses (BelN2) might communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by

(BelD2) Lex Luthor believes that the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is more successful with women that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is.

The explanation of why (BelN1) and (BelN2) appear to differ in truth-value is to be based on some difference between the descriptive propositions expressed by (BelD1) and (BelD2). For example, it might be that those descriptive propositions differ in truth-value. Let's call this 'external descriptivism with a metaphysical twist'—'metaphysical', because the explanation depends on what the truth-values of the relevant descriptive propositions are (rather than on, say, what speakers believe those truth-values to be).

Again, the contents of 'the super-powered protector of Metropolis' and 'the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter' are descriptive senses. Or at least they're descriptive, and they play one of the roles that senses do: they're distinct modes of presentation of the same individual and, as a result, they help explain how propositional-attitude

ascriptions that contain names can appear to differ in truth-value. On this, internal descriptivists and external descriptivists can agree. The main thing they disagree about is where the descriptive senses go: according to internal descriptivists, they're in the propositions that (BelN1) and (BelN2) express; whereas, according to external descriptivists, they're in the propositions that speakers communicate when they use those sentences.

External descriptivism with a metaphysical twist is one variety of external descriptivism. But it isn't the only one. Contrary to external descriptivism with a metaphysical twist, the reason that a sentence appears to a speaker to have a certain truth-value needn't be that the relevant descriptive proposition has that truth-value.[16] The reason that (BelN1) appears to a speaker to be true might be that she believes the descriptive proposition expressed by (BelD1); and the reason that (BelN2) appears to her to be false might be that she disbelieves the descriptive proposition expressed by (BelD2). Let's call this 'external descriptivism with an epistemological twist'—'epistemological', because the explanation depends on what speakers believe.[17] According to external descriptivism with an epistemological twist, the contents of 'the super-powered protector of Metropolis' and 'the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter' play

[16] In the terminology of Braun and Saul (ms.), The Matching Proposition Principle needn't be true. (That principle is restricted to enlightened speakers, who are discussed below in Section 2.5.)

[17] Braun (2002) discusses the epistemological twist. As far as I can tell, neither Soames nor Thau distinguishes the metaphysical and epistemological twists.

the same sense-like role that they do according to external descriptivism with a metaphysical twist.

## 2.4. Simple Sentences and Truth-Value

The solution that external descriptivism with a metaphysical twist offers to the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names doesn't extend to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names. Since the super-powered protector of Metropolis is the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter, the descriptive propositions expressed by

(D1) The super-powered protector of Metropolis is more successful with women than the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is.

and

(D2) The bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is more successful with women than the super-powered protector of Metropolis is.

have the same truth-value. So the difference between those descriptive propositions that explains why

(N1) Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(N2) Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

appear to differ in truth-value can't be that those descriptive propositions differ in truth-value.

But the solution that external descriptivism with an epistemological twist offers to the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names can be extended to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names. The difference between the descriptive propositions expressed by (D1) and (D2) could be that a speaker believes one and disbelieves the other. On this explanation, the reason that (N1) appears to a speaker to be true is that she believes the descriptive proposition expressed by (D1), and the reason that (N2) appears to her to be false is that she disbelieves the descriptive proposition expressed by (D2).

### 2.5. Enlightened Speakers

The solution that external descriptivism with an epistemological twist offers to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names works for unenlightened speakers, who don't know about Superman's double life. To an unenlightened speaker,

(N1) Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

might appear to be true and

(N2) Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

might appear to be false. Since she doesn't know that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter, she can readily believe the descriptive proposition expressed by

(D1) The super-powered protector of Metropolis is more successful with women than the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is.

and disbelieve the descriptive proposition expressed by

(D2) The bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is more successful with women than the super-powered protector of Metropolis is.

But even to an enlightened speaker, who does know about Superman's double life, (N1) might appear to be true and (N2) might appear to be false. There's a problem here. Since she does know that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter, she is in a position to recognize that the descriptive propositions expressed by (D1) and (D2) have the same truth-value. And, if she recognizes this and is rational, then presumably she won't believe one descriptive proposition and disbelieve the other.

A direct reference theorist who favors external descriptivism with an epistemological twist can say that, insofar as (N1) appears to an enlightened speaker to be true and (N2) appears to her to be false, she *doesn't* recognize that the descriptive propositions expressed by (D1) and (D2) have the same truth-value. Although she knows it, perhaps she isn't entertaining the descriptive proposition that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter. Or, even if she is entertaining it, perhaps she isn't drawing all of its consequences.[18] In a way, enlightened speakers who have the intuition that (N1) is true and (N2) is false are being

[18] For more detailed explanations along these lines, see Braun and Saul ms. (But Braun and Saul favor the nondescriptive solutions sketched in Section 3.)

less than ideally rational. But to expect agents to draw all of the consequences of all of their beliefs is to expect too much.

To some enlightened speakers, (N1) and (N2) don't appear to differ in truth-value. Indeed, some enlightened speakers report that their intuitions about these sentences are less firm than are their intuitions about

(BelN1) Lex Luthor believes that Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(BelN2) Lex Luthor believes that Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

(You might not want to trust the intuitions of direct reference theorists. After all, you might think that years of accepting counterintuitive consequences inevitably warp one's intuitions. But even some Fregeans report that their intuitions about the simple sentences are less firm than are their intuitions about the propositional-attitude ascriptions.) The reason that, to some enlightened speakers, (N1) and (N2) don't appear to differ in truth-value might be precisely that, because they realize that the descriptive propositions expressed by (D1) and (D2) have the same truth-value, they won't believe one without believing the other.[19]

[19] I owe this point to Luca Struble.

But, if that's so, then why don't (BelN1) and (BelN2) also appear to such enlightened speakers to have the same truth-value? Even though the super-powered protector of Metropolis is the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter, the descriptive propositions expressed by

(BelD1) Lex Luthor believes that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is more successful with women than the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is.

and

(BelD2) Lex Luthor believes that the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is more successful with women that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is.

can differ in truth-value, since Lex Luthor—who doesn't know that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter—might believe the descriptive proposition expressed by (D1) without believing the descriptive proposition expressed by (D2). So, even if an enlightened speaker is entertaining the descriptive proposition, which she knows, that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter, and even if she is careful to draw all of its consequences, she won't conclude that the descriptive propositions expressed by (BelD1) and (BelD2) have the same truth-value. Or at least she won't conclude that unless she's making a mistake. So, even if she's rational, she might believe the descriptive proposition expressed by (BelD1) and disbelieve the descriptive proposition expressed

by (BelD2). And, in that case, (BelN1) and (BelN2) will appear to her to differ in truth-value.

## §3: External Nondescriptivism

### 3.1. Simple Sentences and Cognitive Value

The second set of external solutions that direct reference theorists can offer appeal to nondescriptive senses. David Braun (1998, 2002) argues that the reason

(N1) Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(N2) Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

appear to differ in cognitive value is that speakers grasp in different ways the singular proposition that both sentences express.[20] On this view, belief is fundamentally not a two-place relation between agents and propositions; rather, it's a three-place relation among agents, propositions, and ways of grasping propositions. The way in which a speaker grasps a proposition corresponds (in some way) to a sentence that expresses that proposition. For example, a speaker might grasp in two different ways the single proposition that is expressed by both (N1) and (N2): one of those ways—a 'Superman'-first and 'Clark Kent'-second sort of way—corresponds to (N1), whereas the other—a 'Clark Kent'-first and 'Superman'-second sort of way—corresponds to (N2). For reasons

[20] See also Salmon 1986a: esp. 114-118, 1989a: esp. 267-268; Braun 2000, 2001a, 2001b. Salmon and Braun don't develop the view in exactly the same way. In the text, I follow Braun.

to be explained shortly, let's call the view that speakers can grasp a proposition in different ways 'external nondescriptivism'.

Like the sentences that they correspond to, ways of grasping propositions are complex entities. Just as (N1) contains 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' as parts, so the way of grasping a proposition that corresponds to (N1) contains parts that correspond to 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent'. These are distinct ways of grasping the same object. The ways of grasping objects that correspond to 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' are nondescriptive senses. Or at least they're nondescriptive—they're not of a kind with the contents of definite descriptions—and they play one of the roles that senses do: they are distinct modes of presentation of the same individual and, as a result, they help explain how simple sentences can appear to differ in cognitive value.[21] But they don't play other roles that Fregeans think senses do: they aren't parts of the propositions expressed by sentences that contain 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent'; and the names needn't refer to the object that they do in virtue of being associated with those ways of grasping objects. External nondescriptivism is so-called because, according to it, (*i*) senses are external, rather than internal, to the propositions expressed by sentences that contain names, and (*ii*) those senses are nondescriptive. (See Figure 6.2.)

[21] Other direct reference theorists have appealed to linguistic expressions, which thereby play one of the roles of nondescriptive senses, to solve the problem of differing cognitive values for simple sentences that contain names. See Kaplan 1989b:598-599, 1990: 93-95.

| | | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | Internal descriptivism | Internal nondescriptivism |
| | No | External descriptivism | External nondescriptivism |

**Figure 6.2:** Four views about senses.

### 3.2. Propositional-Attitude Ascriptions and Truth-Value

Whether a speaker believes a proposition depends on the way in which she grasps it. For example, when she grasps it in the 'Superman'-first and 'Clark Kent'-second way that corresponds to

(BelN1) Lex Luthor believes that Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

a speaker might believe the single proposition that is expressed by both (BelN1) and

(BelN2) Lex Luthor believes that Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

even if she doesn't believe that proposition when she grasps it in the 'Clark Kent'-first and 'Superman'-second way that corresponds to (BelN2). And whether a speaker has the intuition that a sentence is true depends on whether, *when she grasps it in a way that corresponds to that sentence*, she believes the proposition that it expresses. So, Braun argues,

the reason (BelN1) and (BelN2) appear to differ in truth-value is that, even though they express the same proposition, a speaker might believe that proposition when she grasps it in the 'Superman'-first and 'Clark Kent'-second way that corresponds to (BelN1) without believing it when she grasps it in the 'Clark Kent'-first and 'Superman'-second way that corresponds to (BelN2). This is an external, nondescriptive solution to the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names.

Again, the ways of grasping objects that correspond to 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' are nondescriptive senses. Or at least they're nondescriptive and they play one of the roles that senses do: they're distinct modes of presentation of the same individual and, as a result, they help explain how propositional-attitude ascriptions can appear to differ in truth-value.[22] On this, internal nondescriptivists and external nondescriptivists can agree. The main thing they disagree about is where the nondescriptive senses go: according to internal nondescriptivists, they're in the propositions that (BelN1) and (BelN2) express; whereas, according to external nondescriptivists, they're not.

### 3.3. Simple Sentences and Truth-Value

The external, nondescriptive solutions to the problem of differing cognitive values for simple sentences that contain names and the problem of differing truth-values for

[22] Others have appealed to sentences, which thereby play one of the roles of nondescriptive senses, to solve the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names. See, for example, McKay 1981; Berg 1983, 1988; Soames 1987a, 1987b, 1989a, 1995; Saul 1998.

propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names can be extended to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names. On this explanation, the reason that

(N1) Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

appears to a speaker to be true is that, when she grasps it in the 'Superman'-first and 'Clark Kent'-second way that corresponds to (N1), she believes the proposition that it expresses; and the reason that

(N2) Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

appears to her to be false is that, when she grasps it in the 'Clark Kent'-first and 'Superman'-second way that corresponds to (N2), she disbelieves that proposition.

Even to an enlightened speaker, who knows about Superman's double life, (N1) might appear to be true and (N2) might appear to be false. But there's a problem here. Since she knows that Superman is Clark Kent—grasping this proposition in either the 'Superman'-first and 'Clark Kent'-second way that corresponds to 'Superman is Clark Kent' or the 'Clark Kent'-first and 'Superman'-second way that corresponds to 'Clark Kent is Superman'—she is in a position to recognize that the proposition that she grasps in the 'Superman'-first and 'Clark Kent'-second way that corresponds to (N1) is the proposition that she grasps in the 'Clark Kent'-first and 'Superman'-second way that corresponds to (N2). And, if she recognizes this and is rational, then presumably she won't believe that proposition when she grasps it in the 'Superman'-first and 'Clark

Kent'-second way that corresponds to (N1) without also believing it when she grasps it in the 'Clark Kent'-first and 'Superman'-second way that corresponds to (N2).

An external nondescriptivist can say that, insofar as (N1) appears to an enlightened speaker to be true and (N2) appears to her to be false, she doesn't recognize that the proposition that she grasps in the 'Superman'-first and 'Clark Kent'-second way that corresponds to (N1) is the proposition that she grasps in the 'Clark Kent'-first and 'Superman'-second way that corresponds to (N2). Although she knows it, perhaps she isn't entertaining (in either the 'Superman'-first and 'Clark Kent'-second way that corresponds to 'Superman is Clark Kent' or the 'Clark Kent'-first and 'Superman'-second way that corresponds to 'Clark Kent is Superman') the proposition that Superman is Clark Kent. Or, even if she is entertaining it, perhaps she isn't drawing all of the consequences of her thus entertaining it.[23] In a way, enlightened speakers who have the intuition that (N1) is true and (N2) is false are being less than ideally rational. But to expect agents to be ideally rational is to expect too much.

As we will see in the next chapter, there are problems with external descriptivism.[24] But, at this point, direct reference theorists can adopt either external descriptivism or external nondescriptivism. And both offer unified solutions to the problem of differing cognitive values for simple sentences that contain names, the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain

[23] Again, see Braun and Saul ms.

[24] See also Braun 1998, 2002.

names, and the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names.

## §4: An Interlude about Quantifier Expressions

### 4.1. Simple Sentences and Quantifier Expressions

Predelli (2001b) argues that the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names has nothing to do with names (or indeed any other singular terms). For a strikingly similar problem arises with quantifier expressions. At midnight, Superman—becaped in his super-hero attire—is alone in the computer room; and, at noon, Clark Kent—bespectacled in his reporter attire—is alone in the copy room. Just as

(N1) Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(N2) Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

can appear to differ in truth-value, so too can

(Q1) Anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is more successful with women than anyone who was in the copy room at noon is.

and

(Q2) Anyone who was in the copy room at noon is more successful with women than anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is.[25]

Let's say that, if the predicates in two quantifier expressions restrict the domain of quantification to the same individual or to the same set of individuals, then those quantifier expressions are *corestricted*. For example, 'anyone who was in the computer room at midnight' and 'anyone who was in the copy room at noon' are corestricted, since the predicates in both quantifier expressions restrict the domain of quantification to the same individual: namely, the person from Krypton who is called both 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent'. Just as the substitution of *coreferential names* in (N1) and (N2) appears not to preserve truth-value, so the substitution of *corestricted quantifier expressions* in (Q1) and (Q2) also appears not to preserve truth-value. Let's call this 'the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain quantifier expressions'.[26]

Predelli draws two conclusions: first, that any solution to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names should extend to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain quantifier

[25] 'Q' is for 'quantifier expression'. (Q1) is garbled in Predelli 2001b: 'copy room' and 'computer room' are transposed. (See Predelli 2001b: 312.) Predelli does not mention (Q2), but contrasting the two sentences helps to make his point.

[26] A similar problem arises also with definite descriptions: consider (D1) 'The super-powered protector of Metropolis is more successful with women than the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is' and (D2) 'The bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is more successful with women than the super-powered protector of Metropolis is'. This is the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain definite descriptions. But I leave this problem aside here. Extending other solutions to this problem should be relatively straightforward. Besides, the table is already sufficiently cluttered with problems as it is.

expressions; and, second, that—contrary to Saul—the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names has little to do with the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names. I do not wish to dispute Predelli's first conclusion. But I do wish to dispute his second. To see why, we need to consider yet another problem.

### 4.2. Propositional-Attitude Ascriptions and Quantifier Expressions

At midnight, Lex Luthor peeks into the computer room and spies Superman, alone, in his super-hero attire; and, at noon, Lex peaks into the copy room and spies Clark Kent, alone, in his reporter attire. Just as

(BelN1) Lex Luthor believes that Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

and

(BelN2) Lex Luthor believes that Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

can appear to differ in truth-value, so too can

(BelQ1) Lex Luthor believes that anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is more successful with women than anyone who was in the copy room at noon is.

and

(BelQ2) Lex Luthor believes that anyone who was in the copy room at noon is more successful with women than anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is.

Let's call this 'the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain quantifier expressions'.

If Predelli is right that the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names is of a piece with the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain quantifier expressions, then the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names is of a piece with the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain quantifier expressions. Let's piece the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names and the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain quantifier expressions together into the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names or quantifier expressions. And let's piece the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain quantifier expressions together into the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names or quantifier expressions. Once we've done that, there's no reason not to piece the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names or quantifier expressions and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names or

quantifier expressions together into one giant problem: namely, the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences or propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names or quantifier expressions.

The dilemma that Saul originally presented—for those who object to external solutions to the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names—rests on the idea that, since the substitution of coreferential names in simple sentences and propositional-attitude ascriptions alike can appear to fail to preserve truth-value, the same sort of solution should work for both the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names. Perhaps, once we consider the giant problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences or propositional-attitude ascriptions that contains names or quantifier expressions, the dilemma that Saul originally presented loses much of its force; perhaps not. It depends on how, independently of the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names, we want to solve the other problems: namely, the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names, the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain quantifier expressions, and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain quantifier expressions. If what we want to say about these other problems naturally generalizes into an external solution to the problem of differing truth-values for

propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names, then Saul's dilemma stands; if not, not.

### 4.3. Unified Solutions

Before returning to empty names in the next chapter, I wish to make one more point: namely, that the solutions that external descriptivism and external nondescriptivism offer to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names can be extended to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain quantifier expressions and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain quantifier expressions.

The reason a speaker has the intuition that

(Q1) Anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is more successful with women than anyone who was in the copy room at noon is.

is true might be that she believes the proposition that it expresses. And the reason she believes that proposition might be that she thinks to herself: "The super-powered protector of Metropolis is more successful with women that the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is. The only person who was in the computer room at midnight is the super-powered protector of Metropolis, and the only person who was in the copy room at noon is the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter. So anyone who was in the computer room

at midnight is more successful with women than anyone who was in the copy room at noon is." (So might say a direct reference theorist who favors external descriptivism with an epistemological twist. An external nondescriptivist could easily say something similar.) No parallel train of thought leads her to believe the proposition that

(Q2) Anyone who was in the copy room at noon is more successful with women than anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is.

expresses, so she doesn't have the intuition that that sentence is true.

Just as a speaker might believe the proposition expressed by (Q1) without believing the proposition expressed by (Q2), so Lex Luthor might believe the proposition expressed by (Q1) without believing the proposition expressed by (Q2). So

(BelQ1) Lex Luthor believes that anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is more successful with women than anyone who was in the copy room at noon is.

might be true, and

(BelQ2) Lex Luthor believes that anyone who was in the copy room at noon is more successful with women than anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is.

might be false. And, of course, a speaker can believe the proposition expressed by (BelQ1) without believing the proposition expressed by (BelQ2). So (BelQ1) might appear to her to be true, and (BelQ2) might appear to her to be false.

A direct reference theorist can thus offer unified solutions to the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain names, the problem of differing truth-values for simple sentences that contain quantifier expressions, the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain names, and the problem of differing truth-values for propositional-attitude ascriptions that contain quantifier expressions. It turns out that, according to these solutions, substituting corestricted quantifier expressions in propositional-attitude ascriptions can fail to preserve truth-value; whereas substituting corestricted quantifier expressions in simple sentences, coreferential names in simple sentences, or coreferential names in propositional-attitude ascriptions merely appears to fail to preserve truth-value. This brings home the point that, in accounting for speakers' intuitions about the truth-values of sentences, what speakers believe matters more than do the truth-values of the propositions that those sentences express.

## §5: Conclusion

In this chapter, we've seen how, by appealing to descriptive or nondescriptive senses, direct reference theorists can offer solutions to the problems that nonempty names pose.

In the next chapter, I argue that these solutions can be extended to the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory.

## APPENDIX: NAMED SENTENCES

(N1) Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

(N2) Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

(BelN1) Lex Luthor believes that Superman is more successful with women than Clark Kent is.

(BelN2) Lex Luthor believes that Clark Kent is more successful with women than Superman is.

(D1) The super-powered protector of Metropolis is more successful with women than the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is.

(D2) The bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is more successful with women than the super-powered protector of Metropolis is.

(BelD1) Lex Luthor believes that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is more successful with women than the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is.

(BelD2) Lex Luthor believes that the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter is more successful with women that the super-powered protector of Metropolis is.

(Q1) Anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is more successful with women than anyone who was in the copy room at noon is.

(Q2) Anyone who was in the copy room at noon is more successful with women than anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is.

(BelQ1) Lex Luthor believes that anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is more successful with women than anyone who was in the copy room at noon is.

(BelQ2) Lex Luthor believes that anyone who was in the copy room at noon is more successful with women than anyone who was in the computer room at midnight is.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# SENSIBLE SOLUTIONS

## §0: INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 6, we saw that, by appealing to descriptive or nondescriptive senses, direct reference theorists can offer solutions to the problems that nonempty names pose. But, of course, some names are empty. Here are our favorite examples again. In the nineteenth century, Jacques Babinet introduced 'Vulcan' as a name for a planet between Mercury and the Sun. And, late one night, I introduced 'Leon' as a name for a homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees. But there was and is no planet between Mercury and the Sun, just as there was and is no homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees. So 'Vulcan' and 'Leon' are empty.[1] And, of course, empty names also pose problems for the direct reference theory.

In this chapter, I argue that the solutions that direct reference theorists offer to the problems that nonempty names pose can be extended to the problems that empty names pose. This suggests that, grave as they may be, the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory aren't any graver than those that nonempty names already pose. In Section 1, I present solutions that appeal to descriptive senses. Although

[1] See Chapters 2 and 3.

these solutions might seem promising, I argue against them in Section 2. In Section 3, I present solutions that I think are more promising. These solutions appeal to nondescriptive senses.

## §1: External descriptivism

### 1.1. Descriptive Propositions

According to external descriptivism, when they use sentences that contain names speakers communicate descriptive propositions. There's no reason to restrict external descriptivism to nonempty names. So let's not. On this view, then, speakers communicate descriptive propositions when they use sentences that contain empty or nonempty names.[2] But what's a descriptive proposition?

Where a nongappy singular proposition contains an object that is the content of a nonempty name, a descriptive proposition contains a *restricted quantifier* that is the content of a definite description. In addition, a descriptive proposition contains a propositional function: that is, a function from objects to singular propositions. For example, when they use

[2] For external descriptivism in the case of nonempty names, see the works cited in note 7 in Chapter 6. Soames (2001: 90) and Thau (2002: 261 n. 21) both suggest extending external descriptivism from nonempty to empty names. Adams et al., Ryckman, and Taylor adopt similar views. See Ryckman 1988; Adams, Stecker, and Fuller 1992, 1999; Adams, Fuller, and Stecker 1993, 1997; Taylor 2000; Adams and Dietrich ms. Braun (1993: 459-460) discusses, but doesn't endorse, external descriptivism in the case of empty names. And he criticizes it in the case of nonempty names. See Braun 1998, 2002.

(T) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

speakers might communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by

(TD) It is not the case that the planet between Mercury and the Sun exists.[3]

That descriptive proposition can be represented as <NOT, <<THE, $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>>, $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of existing>>>, where $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun> is a propositional function that maps an object *o* onto the proposition represented as <{*o*}, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>; $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of existing> is a propositional function that maps an object *o* onto the proposition represented as <{*o*}, the property of existing>; and <THE, $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>> represents the restricted quantifier that is the content of 'the planet between Mercury and the Sun'. (I am simplifying here. In particular, the monadic proposition represented as <{*o*}, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun> should be a polyadic proposition. But the simplification is mostly harmless.)

It is not that the content of 'Vulcan' is the restricted quantifier represented as <THE, $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>>. For 'Vulcan' has no content. (This is what distinguishes external descriptivism from internal

[3] 'T' is for 'truth', and 'D' is for 'definite description'.

descriptivism.) It is just that, according to external descriptivism, when they use a sentence of the form ⌜α is ψ⌝, where α is a name and ⌜is ψ⌝ is a predicate, speakers can communicate a descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, *f*>, *g*>, where *f* is a propositional function that maps an object *o* onto the proposition represented as <{*o*}, *Y*>, *Y* being the property expressed by the predicate φ in some definite description ⌜the φ⌝ that is associated with α; *g* is a propositional function that maps an object *o* onto the proposition represented as <{*o*}, *Z*>, *Z* being the property expressed by ψ; and <THE, *f*> is an ordered pair that represents the restricted quantifier that is the content, not of α, but rather of ⌜the φ⌝.

The content of a definite description ⌜the φ⌝ is a restricted quantifier represented as <THE, *f*>, where *f* is a propositional function. Everyone agrees that, if there is a unique object *o* in a circumstance *E* such that *f* maps *o* onto a proposition that is true relative to *E*, then the descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, *f*>, *g*> is true if and only if the propositional function *g* maps *o* onto a proposition that is true relative to *E*, and false if and only if *g* maps *o* onto a proposition that is false relative to *E*. For example, everyone agrees that the descriptive proposition actually expressed by

(KR) The handsome fellow from *The Matrix* is Canadian.

would be true if there were a unique handsome fellow from *The Matrix* and that person were Canadian, and that descriptive proposition would be false if there were a unique handsome fellow from *The Matrix* and that person weren't Canadian.[4]

[4] 'KR' is named after the handsome fellow from *The Matrix*.

But there is disagreement about the truth-value of the descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, $f$>, $g$> relative to a circumstance $E^*$ in which there is no unique object $o$ such that $f$ maps $o$ onto a proposition that is true relative to $E^*$ (either because $f$ maps more than one object in $E^*$ onto a proposition that is true relative to $E^*$, or because $f$ maps no object in $E^*$ onto a proposition that is true relative to $E^*$). For example, there is disagreement about what the truth-value of the descriptive proposition actually expressed by (KR) would be if there weren't a unique handsome fellow from *The Matrix*. What are we to say about the truth-value of the descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, $f$>, $g$> relative to $E^*$?

There are three traditional options. First, following Bertrand Russell (1905a: 484, 490), we could say that, relative to $E^*$, the descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, $f$>, $g$> is false.[5] For example, on Russell's semantics, the descriptive proposition actually expressed by (KR) would be false if there weren't a unique handsome fellow from *The Matrix*. Second, following Gottlob Frege (1892a: 32-33) and Peter Strawson (1950: 329-331), we could say that, relative to $E^*$, the descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, $f$>, $g$> is neither true nor false.[6] For example, on the

[5] Although Russell does say that ⌜The φ is ψ⌝ expresses a proposition that is false when the definite description ⌜the φ⌝ is empty or otherwise improper, he would eliminate the definite description in favor of other quantifier expressions and would in fact deny that the definite description has any content or "meaning in isolation" (1905a: 480; cf. 1905a: 481, 488; 1919: 170, 172). For a discussion of Russell's view, see Kaplan 1970. We can formulate a rule for Russell's semantics. See Appendix II.

[6] Frege (1892a: 27) might deny, and Strawson (1950: 323-324) would deny, that definite descriptions are quantifier expressions. And Strawson (1950: 329-331) might deny that sentences that contain empty definite descriptions express any propositions. (On a related point about empty demonstratives, see Soames 1989b: 564-565; 1999: 168, 194) But we need not follow them. We can formulate a rule for the Frege-Strawson semantics. See Appendix II.

Frege-Strawson semantics, the descriptive proposition actually expressed by (KR) would be neither true nor false if there weren't a unique handsome fellow from *The Matrix*. And third, following Gottlob Frege (1892a: 41-42, 42 n. 1; 1893: §11, 19-20) and Rudolf Carnap (1947: 35-39), we could say that, relative to $E^*$, the descriptive proposition represented as $\langle\langle \text{THE}, f\rangle, g\rangle$ is true if and only if $g$ maps a chosen object $o^*$ onto a proposition that is true relative to $E^*$, and false if and only if $g$ maps $o^*$ onto a proposition that is false relative to $E^*$.[7] For example, on the Frege-Carnap semantics, the descriptive proposition actually expressed by (KR) would be true if there weren't a unique handsome fellow from *The Matrix* and our chosen object—Sir Ian McKellen, say—were Canadian; and it would be false if there weren't a unique handsome fellow from *The Matrix* and our chosen object weren't Canadian.

The sentence

(TD) It is not the case that the planet between Mercury and the Sun exists.

expresses the descriptive proposition represented as $\langle \text{NOT}, \langle\langle \text{THE}, \lambda x\langle\{x\}, \text{the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun}\rangle\rangle, \lambda x\langle\{x\}, \text{the property of existing}\rangle\rangle\rangle$. On Russell's semantics and the Frege-Strawson semantics, that descriptive proposition is true, because it's the negation of an untrue descriptive proposition: namely, the one represented as $\langle\langle \text{THE}, \lambda x\langle\{x\}, \text{the property of being a planet}$

[7] We can formulate a rule for the Frege-Carnap semantics. See Appendix II.

between Mercury and the Sun>>, $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of existing>>.[8] Whether the descriptive proposition represented as <NOT, <<THE, $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>>, $\lambda x$<{$x$}, the property of existing>>> is true or false on the Frege-Carnap semantics depends on whether or not our chosen object exists: it's true if our chosen object doesn't exist and false if our chosen object does exist.[9]

## 1.2. Problems and Solutions

As we saw in Chapter 1, empty names pose a host of problems for the direct reference theory. One source of these problems is that it seems that, on the direct reference theory, a sentence that contains an empty name doesn't express a proposition. First, if a sentence that contains an empty name doesn't express a proposition, then it might seem that a speaker could not use it to communicate something that she believes. For the sentence would fail to express any proposition and hence would fail to express any proposition that she believes. But, for example, it seems that I can use

(T) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

to communicate something that I believe. This is the problem of the proposition believed.

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[8] I spell out some of the formal details in Appendix I.

[9] Again, I spell out some of the formal details in Appendix I.

External descriptivism offers a solution to the problem of the proposition believed. For example, a speaker can use (T) to communicate a proposition that she believes: namely, the descriptive proposition expressed by

(TD) It is not the case that the planet between Mercury and the Sun exists.

Second, if a sentence that contains an empty name doesn't express any proposition, then it might seem that it would be nonsense. But, for example, (T) does not seem to be nonsense. This is the problem of nonsense.

It is unclear whether external descriptivism offers a solution to the problem of nonsense. On the one hand, if the problem of nonsense is a problem about the connection between language and thought, and the reason for thinking that (T) is nonsense is that there is no thought for a speaker to grasp when she uses it, then external descriptivism does offer a solution to the problem of nonsense. For, according to external descriptivism, when a speaker uses (T) she can communicate a descriptive proposition, and that descriptive proposition could be a thought that she grasps.

But, on the other hand, the problem of nonsense might be a problem about the connection between language and reality or between thought and reality. If the reason for thinking that (T) is nonsense is that there is no object in the world for the sentence, or the thought that a speaker grasps when she uses it, to be about, then external descriptivism does not offer a solution to the problem of nonsense. For, although according to external descriptivism when a speaker uses (T) she can communicate a

proposition, that proposition is descriptive, and there need not be an object in the world that satisfies the noun phrase following 'the' (or, more technically, that the propositional function contained in the restricted quantifier maps onto a true proposition). So there need not be an object in the world for the sentence, or the thought that a speaker grasps when she uses it, to be about. For example, if the definite description associated with 'Vulcan' is 'the planet between Mercury and the Sun', then there won't be any such object, because nothing satisfies the noun phrase 'planet between Mercury and the Sun'.

Still, even if the problem of nonsense is a problem about the connection between language and reality or between thought and reality, the reason for thinking that (T) is nonsense might be that there is *nothing at all* in the world for the sentence, or the thought that a speaker grasps when she uses it, to be about. In that case, external descriptivism does offer a solution to the problem of nonsense. For, even if there is no *object* in the world for the sentence, or the thought that a speaker grasps when she uses it, to be about, there might be something else in the world: an attribute, for example. (I take it that, insofar as objects are in the world, so are their attributes.) And, according to external descriptivism, when a speaker uses (T) she can communicate a descriptive proposition. That descriptive proposition contains a restricted quantifier; that restricted quantifier contains a propositional function; and that propositional function maps objects onto propositions that contain attributes. Perhaps what (T), or the thought that a speaker grasps when she uses it, is about is an attribute contained in the propositions

that the propositional function maps objects onto: in this case, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(Actually, the propositional function in the restricted quantifier that is the content of 'the planet between Mercury and the Sun' doesn't map objects onto monadic propositions that contain the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun; rather, it maps objects onto polyadic propositions that contain the property of being a planet, the is-between relation, Mercury, and the Sun. So (T), or the thought that a speaker grasps when she uses it, might be about objects in the world after all: namely, Mercury and the Sun. But not every empty name need be associated with a definite description that is thus related to objects in the world. For example, 'Fred' might be associated with 'the largest prime number'.)

Third, if no sentence that contains an empty name expresses a proposition, then it might seem that two sentences that contain different empty names could not differ in cognitive value. But, for example,

(V1) Vulcan is a planet.

and

(L1) Leon is a planet.

might appear to differ in cognitive value.[10] This is the problem of differing cognitive values.

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[10] 'V' is for 'Vulcan', and 'L' is for 'Leon'.

External descriptivism offers a solution to the problem of differing cognitive values. (Given that external descriptivism offers a solution to that problem in the case of nonempty names, this should come as no surprise.[11]) According to external descriptivism, when she uses (V1) and (L1) a speaker can communicate different descriptive propositions: for example, the descriptive propositions expressed by

(V1D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is a planet.

and

(L1D) The homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees is a planet.

And these descriptive propositions might explain the difference in cognitive value between (V1) and (L1).

That leaves the problem of truth. If a sentence that contains an empty name doesn't express a proposition, then it might seem that it could not be either true or false. For a sentence has a truth-value only derivatively, in virtue of expressing a proposition with that truth-value. But, for example, (T) appears to be true. This is the problem of truth.

External descriptivism offers a solution to the problem of truth for negative existentials. According to external descriptivism, when she uses (T) a speaker can communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by (TD). And, on either Russell's

[11] See Chapter 6.

semantics or the Frege-Strawson semantics (and perhaps even on the Frege-Carnap semantics), that descriptive proposition is true. According to external descriptivism with a metaphysical twist, the explanation of speakers' intuition that (T) is true is that, when they use it, they communicate that true descriptive proposition. And, according to external descriptivism with an epistemological twist, the explanation of their intuition is that, whether or not the descriptive proposition expressed by (TD) is true, speakers believe it.

### 1.3. The Atomic Problem Again

The problem of truth doesn't arise only for negative existentials. As we saw in Chapter 4, some atomic sentences that contain empty names—for example,

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

and

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

—appear to be true, whereas other atomic sentences that contain empty names—for example,

(F1) Vulcan is Leon.

(F2) 'Vulcan' refers to Leon.

(F3) Vulcan is as hot as Leon.

(F4) Vulcan is on a collision course with the Earth.

and

(F5) Vulcan exists.

—appear to be false.[12] Can external descriptivism explain speakers' intuitions about these sentences?

According to external descriptivism, when they use these sentences speakers might communicate the descriptive propositions expressed by

(T1D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(T2D) The word pronounced /ˈvʌlkən/ refers to the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(T3D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is as hot as the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(T4D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is nothing.

(T5D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is nonexistent.

(F1D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is the homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees.

[12] 'F' is for 'false'.

(F2D) The word pronounced /ˈvʌlkən/ refers to the homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees.

(F3D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is as hot as the homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees.

(F4D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is on a collision course with the planet we live on.

and

(F5D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun exists.

On Russell's semantics, the descriptive propositions expressed by (T1D)-(T5D) and (F1D)-(F5D) are all false; and, on the Frege-Strawson semantics, they're all neither true nor false. So, if either of these semantics is correct, external descriptivism with a metaphysical twist can't explain speakers' intuitions. Speakers have the intuition that (T1)-(T5) are true. But, on either Russell's semantics or the Frege-Strawson semantics, the descriptive propositions expressed by (T1D)-(T5D) aren't true. Since these descriptive propositions aren't true, what explains speakers' intuitions that (T1)-(T5) are true can't be that, when they use them, they communicate the descriptive propositions expressed by (T1D)-(T5D).

The prospects for external descriptivism with a metaphysical twist improve if the Frege-Carnap semantics is correct. On the Frege-Carnap semantics, some of the descriptive propositions that speakers communicate when they use sentences that appear to be true—for example, the descriptive propositions expressed by (T1D) and

(T3D)—are true. And, if we chose our object carefully, then we can increase the match between the truth-value of the descriptive propositions that speakers communicate, on the one hand, and the truth-value that the sentences they use appear to have, on the other. Suppose we choose Plato, who is nothing, doesn't exist, isn't referred to by 'Vulcan', and isn't hurtling towards the Earth. (Is Plato really nothing? Although he was something, he isn't anything now.) In that case, the descriptive propositions expressed by (T4D) and (T5D) will be true, as (T4) and (T5) appear to be; and the descriptive propositions expressed by (F2D), (F4D), and (F5D) will be false, as (F2), (F4) and (F5) appear to be.

But, no matter which object we choose, 'Vulcan' (or the word pronounced /ˈvʌlkən/) won't refer to it, since 'Vulcan' is empty. So, even though (T2) appears to be true, the descriptive proposition expressed by (T2D) will be false. One reply is to introduce a new relation, the refers-to* relation, that holds between an expression α and an object *o* if and only if either (*i*) α refers to *o*; or (*ii*) α is empty, and *o* is our chosen object. 'Vulcan' doesn't refer to anything, because it's empty. But it does refer to* Plato, if Plato is our chosen object. So, although the descriptive proposition expressed by (T2D) is false, the descriptive proposition expressed by

(T2D′) The word pronounced /ˈvʌlkən/ refers to* the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

is true. According to external descriptivism with a metaphysical twist, the explanation of speakers' intuition that (T2) is true might be that, when they use it, they communicate

the true descriptive proposition expressed by (T2D'). But now we have entered (or, depending on what you think of the Frege-Carnap semantics to begin with, traveled further into) the land of the ad hoc. It is unlikely that ordinary speakers know about the refers-to* relation or communicate propositions about it.

Worse yet, if speakers have the intuition that (T2) is true because, when they use it, they communicate the true descriptive proposition expressed by (T2D'), then we would expect them to have the intuition that (F2) is true because, when they use it, they communicate the true descriptive proposition expressed by

(F2D') The word pronounced /ˈvʌlkən/ refers to* the homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees.

But even speakers who have the intuition that (T2) is true don't have the intuition that (F2) is true. So what explains their intuition that (T2) is true isn't that, when they use it, they communicate the true descriptive proposition expressed by (T2D'). And there are further problems. For example, on the Frege-Carnap semantics, since Plato is Plato and Plato is as hot as Plato, the descriptive propositions expressed by (F1D) and (F3D) come out true. But speakers don't have the intuition that (F1) and (F3) are true.[13]

[13] Further problems also arise if the definite description that speakers associate with an empty name isn't empty (or, similarly, if the definite description that speakers associate with a nonempty name doesn't refer to what the name does). For example, speakers might mistakenly associate 'Vulcan' with 'the planet between Venus and Mars', even though the definite description refers to the Earth.

At this point, external descriptivists might want to abandon the metaphysical twist in favor of the epistemological one (which, as we saw in the previous chapter, there is reason to do in other cases anyway). Perhaps the reason speakers have the intuition that (T1)-(T5) are true is that they believe the descriptive propositions expressed by (T1D)-(T5D). And perhaps the reason they have the intuition that (F1)-(F5) are false is that they disbelieve the descriptive propositions expressed by (F1D)-(F5D). This leaves open the question of why speakers believe the descriptive propositions that they do.[14] But, as we will see in the next section, there is a more pressing problem with external descriptivism.

## §2: Against External Descriptivism

### 2.1. Modal and Epistemic Profiling

According to internal descriptivism, sentences that contain names express descriptive propositions, which contain descriptive senses. According to external descriptivism, sentences that contain names don't express descriptive propositions; but, when they use those sentences, speakers communicate such propositions. In Chapter 1, we saw that

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[14] Why would speakers who know that 'Vulcan' is empty and that there is no planet between Mercury and the Sun believe the descriptive proposition expressed by (T2D): namely, that 'Vulcan' refers to the planet between Mercury and the Sun? I don't know. A closely related question is: Why do speakers who know that 'Vulcan' is empty have the intuition that (T2)—namely, ' 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan'—is true?

there are three arguments against internal descriptivism. Two of these arguments can readily be transformed into arguments against external descriptivism.

The crux of the semantic argument against internal descriptivism is that the descriptive sense that speakers associate with a name often does not determine the object that the name refers to. For example, speakers might associate the content of 'the famous physicist' with 'Feynman', even though that content doesn't (uniquely) determine any object; and they might associate the content of 'the discoverer of the Peano axioms' with 'Peano', even though that content determines Richard Dedekind rather than Giuseppe Peano. But the content of a name must determine the object that the name refers to. So, in many cases, the content of a name cannot be the descriptive sense that speakers associate with it.

The semantic argument can't obviously be transformed into an argument against external descriptivism.[15] The semantic argument relies on the claim that the descriptive sense that speakers associate with a name often does not determine the object that the name refers to. This precludes the descriptive sense from being the content of the name: that is, from being part of the propositions expressed by sentences that contain the name. For the content of a name must determine the object that the name refers to. But,

[15] The semantic argument against internal descriptivism can be transformed into an argument against one variety of external descriptivism: namely, external descriptivism with a metaphysical twist. (If the definite description that speakers associate with a name doesn't determine the object that the name refers to, then the descriptive propositions that speakers communicate when they use sentences that contain the name won't have truth-values that match speakers' intuitions about the truth-values of the original sentences.) But it can't obviously be transformed into an argument against external descriptivism with an epistemological twist and hence can't obviously be transformed into an argument against external descriptivism *tout court*.

even if the descriptive sense that speakers associate with a name does not determine the object that the name refers to, that doesn't preclude the descriptive sense from being part of propositions that speakers communicate when they use sentences that contain the name. For nothing in the propositions that speakers communicate when they use a sentence that contains a name need determine the object that the name refers to.

The crux of the modal and epistemic arguments against internal descriptivism is that the proposition expressed by a sentence that contains a name often has a different modal or epistemic profile than it would have if the content of the name were a descriptive sense. For example, if the content of 'Saul Kripke' were the descriptive sense that is the content of 'the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher', then the proposition expressed by

(S1) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is a philosopher.

would be both necessary and *a priori*. But, unlike the proposition expressed by

(S1D) If the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher exists, then the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher is a philosopher.

the proposition expressed by (S1) is neither necessary nor *a priori*.[16]

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[16] 'S' is for 'simple'. On the Frege-Carnap semantics, the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D) isn't necessary. Relative to a circumstance in which no unique philosopher from the Midwest became a famous philosopher but our chosen object, Plato, exists and did become a famous philosopher, the antecedent of the conditional is true and the consequent is false. In presenting the modal argument as I do in the text, I am assuming that the Frege-Carnap semantics is incorrect. But, even if the Frege-Carnap semantics were correct, we could reformulate the modal argument. 'Saul Kripke is a philosopher' and 'The mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher is a philosopher' express propositions that differ in modal profile: the latter is true in every circumstance in which a unique mathematical prodigy from the Midwest became a famous philosopher, whereas the former isn't.

The modal and epistemic arguments against internal descriptivism can be transformed into arguments against external descriptivism. The propositions that speakers communicate when they use a sentence don't affect the modal and epistemic profile of the proposition that the sentence expresses. But external descriptivists want to say that speakers' intuitions are sensitive to the propositions that are communicated. Otherwise, they can't explain speakers' intuitions about truth-values, for example. The solutions that external descriptivism, whether it has a metaphysical or an epistemological twist, offers to the problem of truth requires that speakers' intuitions about truth-value be sensitive in one way or another to the descriptive propositions that speakers communicate. So, if external descriptivism is true, then we would expect speakers to confuse the modal and epistemic profile of a proposition that they communicate when they use a sentence for the modal and epistemic profile of the proposition that the sentence expresses. Since the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D) is both necessary and *a priori*, and since according to external descriptivism speakers communicate that descriptive proposition when they use (S1), we would expect that speakers have the intuition that (S1) expresses something both necessary and *a priori*. But they don't. So, contrary to external descriptivism, when they use (S1) speakers don't communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D). Or at least their intuitions about (S1) aren't sensitive to the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D).[17]

[17] Everett (ms.) offers a similar argument against external descriptivism. See Section 2.2.

## 2.2. Form

There are several ways in which external descriptivists might reply to the modal and epistemic arguments. Frederick Adams and Laura Dietrich (ms.) suggest that, although speakers' intuitions about truth-value are sensitive to descriptive propositions that speakers communicate, their intuitions about modal profile are not; these intuitions have another source. But, on the face of it, it's implausible that speakers' intuition that a sentence expresses a truth should be completely divorced from their intuitions that it expresses a necessary truth.

Saul Kripke (1972) has argued that, if a definite description ⌜the φ⌝ is used to fix the reference of a name α, then ⌜α is a φ⌝ might express something that is true but only contingently so. This gives us a way of understanding how a definite description might affect the truth-value of the proposition expressed by a sentence that contains a name, even if the definite description doesn't affect the modal profile of that proposition. And doesn't that give us a way of understanding how a definite description might affect speakers' intuitions about the truth-value of a sentence that contains a name, even if the definite description doesn't affect their intuitions about the modal profile of that sentence?

The matter is complicated, for several reasons. First, according to external descriptivism the definite description that speakers associate with a name needn't fix its reference. So, even if the reference-fixing use of definite descriptions did affect speakers' intuitions about truth-value without affecting their intuitions about modal profile, it's not

clear that this would apply in the case of external descriptivism. Second, Kripke (1972) argues that the reference-fixing use of definite descriptions affects epistemic profile, even if it doesn't affect modal profile: if ⌜the φ⌝ is used to fix the reference of α, then ⌜α is a φ⌝ expresses a proposition that is *a priori* but that might nonetheless be contingent. So, even if the reference-fixing use of definite description did help external descriptivism avoid the reformulation of the modal argument, it's not clear that it would help external descriptivism avoid the reformulation of the epistemic argument. The matter is even more complicated, since I am inclined to agree with Keith Donnellan (1979), against Kripke, that the reference-fixing use of definite descriptions doesn't affect the epistemic profile of the proposition expressed by the sentence that contains the name: if ⌜the φ⌝ is used to fix the reference of α, the proposition that is expressed by ⌜α is a φ⌝ needn't be one that speakers know *a priori*. But the reference-fixing use of definite descriptions does give speakers *a priori* knowledge about metalinguistic matters: if ⌜the φ⌝ is used to fix the reference of α, speakers do know *a priori* that the sentence ⌜α is a φ⌝ expresses a truth.

Adams and Dietrich offer an alternative explanation of speakers' intuitions about modal profile, but it doesn't work. Adams and Dietrich are responding to Anthony Everett (ms.), who presents the modal argument against external descriptivism in the following way. Speakers don't have the intuition that

(S2) John Perry is Santa Claus.

expresses something contingent. But the descriptive proposition expressed by

(S2D) The author of "The Essential Indexical" is the jolly fat guy who brings presents to children.

is contingent. If speakers confuse the modal profile of a proposition that they communicate when they use a sentence for the modal profile of the proposition that the sentence expresses, then, contrary to external descriptivism, when they use (S2) speakers don't communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by (S2D). Or at least their intuitions about (S2) aren't sensitive to the descriptive proposition expressed by (S2D). (Although Michael Thau (2002: 261 n. 21) suggests otherwise, the modal argument against external descriptivism goes through with empty and nonempty names alike.)

Adams and Dietrich say that speakers know that sentences of the form $\ulcorner \alpha = \alpha \urcorner$ express necessary truths (if they express anything at all) and that sentences of the form $\ulcorner \alpha = \beta \urcorner$ express necessary truths if $\alpha$ and $\beta$ corefer and necessary falsehoods otherwise. And speakers know that 'John Perry' and 'Santa Claus' don't corefer. So they know that (S2) expresses a necessary falsehood. This is what explains their intuition that (S2) doesn't express a contingent truth.

But Adams and Dietrich's explanation doesn't work for

(S1) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is a philosopher.

Here, what needs to be explained is speakers' intuition that the sentence does express a contingent truth. Adams and Dietrich could say: "Speakers know that sentences of the form $\ulcorner$If $\alpha$ exists, then $\alpha$ is $\varphi\urcorner$ express contingent truths if the object that $\alpha$ refers to exists and has the property that $\varphi$ expresses. And they know that 'Saul Kripke' refers to

something that exists and that has the property of being a philosopher. This is what explains their intuition that (S1) expresses a contingent truth." But this explanation is obviously wrong. Speakers don't know that sentences of the form ⌜If α exists, then α is φ⌝ express contingent truths if the object that α refers to exists and has the property that φ expresses. They can't, because not all sentences of the form ⌜If α exists, then α is φ⌝ express contingent truths. For example,

(S3) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is human.

expresses a necessary truth, as does

(S4) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is either human or not human.

As a result, Adams and Dietrich don't have an explanation of speakers' intuition about the modal profile of the proposition expressed by (S1).

Adams and Dietrich could say that speakers know that sentences of the form ⌜If α exists, then α is φ⌝ express contingent truths if (*i*) the object that α refers to exists and has the property expressed by φ and (*ii*) the property expressed by φ isn't one that the object that α refers to necessarily has. But that's just another way of saying that speakers' intuitions about modal profile are sensitive to the proposition that a sentence expresses: if that proposition is contingently true, speakers have the intuition that it is. But this brings us back to the first point against Adams and Dietrich's reply: namely, that it's implausible that speakers' intuitions about modal profile would be sensitive to the proposition expressed if their intuitions about truth-value are not.

## 2.3. Multiplicity

On Scott Soames's (2001) view, speakers communicate (or assert) multiple descriptive propositions when they use a single sentence that contains a name. For example, in addition to communicating the descriptive proposition expressed by

(S1D) If the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher exists, then the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher is a philosopher.

when they use

(S1) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is a philosopher.

speakers might also communicate other descriptive propositions, including the one expressed by

(S1D') If the onetime Princeton professor who lived in the same dorm at Harvard as the Unabomer exists, then the onetime Princeton professor who lived in the same dorm at Harvard as the Unabomer is a philosopher.

The descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D) is both necessary and *a priori*. But the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D') is neither.

Perhaps a speaker has the intuition that a sentence expresses something necessary and *a priori* only if *all* of the propositions that she communicates when she uses it are necessary and *a priori*. Let's call this 'the intuition principle'. (The intuition principle is reminiscent of Frege's (1892a: 47) claim that a sentence that expresses multiple

propositions is true only if all of those propositions are true.) Since not all of the propositions that speakers communicate when they use (S1) are necessary and *a priori*, they don't have the intuition that the sentence expresses something necessary and *a priori*.

But, contrary to the intuition principle, speakers don't have the intuition that a sentence expresses something necessary and *a priori* only if all of the propositions that they communicate when they use it are necessary and *a priori*. One of the things that a speaker might communicate when she uses (S1D) is the singular proposition expressed by (S1). That singular proposition is neither necessary nor *a priori*. But, still, speakers might have the intuition that (S1D) expresses something necessary and *a priori*.

External descriptivists might reply by rejecting the intuition principle in favor of another principle: because of the special form of certain sentences, speakers have the intuition that those sentences express something necessary and *a priori*; and, for other sentences that aren't of a special form, speakers have the intuition that they express something necessary and *a priori* only if all of the propositions that they communicate when they use those sentences are necessary and *a priori*. Let's call this 'the modified intuition principle'. For example, (S1D) is of the special form ⌜If the φ who became a famous ψ exists, then the φ who became a famous ψ is a ψ⌝, which is why speakers have the intuition that it expresses something necessary and *a priori*. But (S1) isn't of a special form, and not all of the propositions that speakers communicate when they use it are necessary and *a priori*, which is why speakers don't have the intuition that it expresses something necessary and *a priori*.

But even the modified intuition principle won't work. Speakers have the intuition that

(S3) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is human.

expresses something necessary. But it isn't of a special form. Since some sentences of the form ⌜If α exists, then α is φ⌝—for example,

(S5) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is American.

—express contingent truths, there can't be anything special about sentences of that form in virtue of which speakers have the intuition that they express something necessary. And not all of the propositions that speakers communicate when they use (S3) are necessary. For example, the descriptive proposition expressed by

(S3D) If the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher exists, then the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher is human.

isn't necessary, since it's possible that those exploits were performed by an intelligent being of another species.

Soames (2001: 67) might say that, when they use (S3) speakers communicate the descriptive proposition expressed, not by (S3D), but rather by

(S3D') If the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher, Saul Kripke, exists, then the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher, Saul Kripke, is human.

And, unlike the descriptive proposition expressed by (S3D), the descriptive proposition expressed by (S3D^) is necessary, since it implies the singular proposition expressed by (S3), which is necessary. So (S3) isn't a counterexample to the modified intuition principle after all: speakers have the intuition that it expresses something necessary; and, although it isn't of a special form, all of the propositions that speakers communicate when they use it are necessary.

But recall that, on Soames's view, speakers communicate multiple descriptive propositions when they use a single sentence that contains a name. Perhaps Soames is right that among the many descriptive propositions that speakers communicate when they use (S3) is the one expressed by (S3D^). But, even if he's right about that, that doesn't imply that the descriptive proposition expressed by (S3D) isn't also among the descriptive propositions that speakers communicate when they use (S3). And, if speakers communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by (S3D) when they use (S3), then that sentence remains a counterexample to the modified intuition principle: speakers have the intuition that it expresses something necessary; but it isn't of a special form and not all of the propositions that speakers communicate when they use it are necessary.

### 2.4. Rigidity

Taking a different tack, external descriptivists might say that, when they use

(S1) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is a philosopher.

speakers communicate the descriptive proposition expressed, not by

(S1D) If the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher exists, then the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher is a philosopher.

but rather by

(S1D″) If the $x$ such that $x$ is actually a mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher exists, then the $x$ such that $x$ is actually a mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher is a philosopher.

Although the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D) is necessary, the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D″) is not.

'Actually' actually makes a difference. Had Keith Donnellan been the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher, the descriptive proposition actually expressed by (S1D) would have been about him. But, even if Donnellan had been the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher, the descriptive proposition actually expressed by (S1D″) would still have been about Saul Kripke, who, after all, is actually the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher.

External descriptivists can say that, when they use (S1), speakers communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D″). And external descriptivists can say that speakers confuse the modal profile of the descriptive proposition they communicate when they use a sentence for the modal profile of the proposition that the sentence

expresses. But the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D″) isn't necessary. So, contrary to the modal argument against external descriptivism, we wouldn't expect that speakers have the intuition that (S1) expresses something necessary. As a result, the modal argument against external descriptivism doesn't work.

But, even if 'actually' allows the external descriptivist to avoid the modal argument, the epistemic argument still stands.[18] Although the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D″) isn't necessary, it is still *a priori*. If speakers communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D″) when they use (S1), and if speakers confuse the epistemic profile of the descriptive proposition they communicate when they use a sentence for the epistemic profile of the proposition that sentence expresses, then we would expect that speakers would have the intuition that (S1) expresses something *a priori*. But they don't. So, contrary to external descriptivism, when they use (S1) speakers don't communicate the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D″). Or at least their intuitions about (S1) aren't sensitive to the descriptive proposition expressed by (S1D″).

## 2.5. Hodge-Podge

The external descriptivist reply (from Section 2.3) that appeals to multiple descriptive propositions runs into trouble with speakers' intuitions about the modal profile of the proposition expressed by

[18] Soames (2001: 41) makes the analogous point about internal descriptivism.

(S3) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is human.

And the external descriptivist reply (from Section 2.4) that appeals to 'actually'-rigidified descriptive propositions runs into trouble with speakers' intuitions about the epistemic profile of the proposition expressed by

(S1) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is a philosopher.

This suggests that the first reply works for the epistemic argument, and the second reply works for the modal arugment. So, by combining them, the external descriptivist should be able to reply to both the modal and epistemic arguments. Right?

Wrong. Combined, the replies would go something like this: "When they use (S1), speakers communicate many descriptive propositions, not all of which are *a priori*. So speakers don't have the intuition that (S1) expresses something *a priori*. And one of those descriptive propositions, which is expressed by a sentence that contains 'actually', isn't necessary. So speakers don't have the intuition that (S1) expresses something necessary."

The replies rely on two principles: first, that speakers have the intuition that a sentence expresses something *a priori* only if all of the propositions that they communicate when they use that sentence are *a priori*; and, second, that speakers have the intuition that a sentence expresses something necessary only if, among all of the propositions that they communicate when they use that sentence, a special, descriptive one (expressed by a sentence that contains 'actually') is necessary. But, just as it's implausible that speakers' intuitions about modal profile would be sensitive to the

proposition a sentence expresses if their intuitions about truth-value are not, so it would be implausible if speakers' intuitions about epistemic profile were sensitive to *all* of the propositions that speakers communicate when they use a sentence if their intuitions about modal profile are not. So in the end external descriptivists are left without a way of replying to both the modal and epistemic arguments.

## §3: EXTERNAL NONDESCRIPTIVISM

According to external nondescriptivism, speakers can grasp a proposition in different ways. On this view, belief is fundamentally a three-place relation among agents, propositions, and ways of grasping propositions. The most natural way to apply external nondescriptivism to sentences that contain empty names is to assume the gappy proposition view, according to which sentences that contain empty names express gappy propositions.[19] For example, on the gappy proposition view,

(V1) Vulcan is a planet.

and

(L1) Leon is a planet.

both express the gappy proposition represented as <{}, the property of being a planet>. According to external nondescriptivism, speakers can grasp that proposition in different

[19] See Chapter 4. Braun (1993: 456-460) discusses a version of external nondescriptivism that does without the gappy proposition view. But he prefers the version of external nondescriptivism that is combined with that view. See Braun 1993: 460-465.

ways: one of those ways—a 'Vulcan' sort of way—corresponds to (V1), whereas another—a 'Leon' sort of way—corresponds to (L1). The ways of grasping a proposition that corresponds to (V1) and (L1) contain parts. Both contain a part that corresponds to 'is a planet'. This part presents the property of being a planet. In addition, the way of grasping a proposition that corresponds to (V1) contains a part that corresponds to 'Vulcan', whereas the way of a grasping a proposition that corresponds to (L1) contains a part that corresponds to 'Leon'. Neither of these parts presents anything.

On the gappy proposition view,

(T) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

expresses a gappy proposition represented as <NOT, <{}, the property of existing>>. According to external nondescriptivism, speakers can grasp that proposition in a way that corresponds to (T). Together with the gappy proposition view, external nondescriptivism offers solutions to many, if not all, of the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory.

The first problem, recall, is how a speaker could use a sentence that contain an empty name to communicate something that she believes. This is the problem of the proposition believed. As we saw in Chapter 4, the gappy proposition view offers a solution to the proposition believed. For example, I could use (T) to communicate a proposition that I believe: namely, the gappy proposition represented as <NOT, <{}, the property of existing>>. According to external nondescriptivism, I believe that proposition in a particular way: namely, in a way that corresponds to (T).

The second problem, the problem of nonsense, is how a sentence that contains an empty name could make sense. As we saw in Chapter 4, the gappy proposition view might offer a solution to the problem of nonsense if it's a problem about the connection between language and thought, and the reason for thinking that (T) is nonsense is that there is no thought for a speaker who uses it to grasp. For, on the gappy proposition view, (T) does express a proposition and hence a speaker who uses it could believe the proposition that it expresses. According to external nondescriptivism, a speaker would believe that proposition in a particular way: namely, in a way that corresponds to (T).

The third problem, the problem of differing cognitive values, is how two sentences that contain empty names could differ in cognitive value. As we saw in Chapter 4, by itself the gappy proposition view doesn't offer a solution to the problem of differing cognitive values. For, on the gappy proposition view, (V1) and (L1) both express the gappy proposition represented as <{}, the property of being a planet>. But, together with external nondescriptivism, the gappy proposition view does offer a solution to the problem of differing cognitive values. (Given that external nondescriptivism offers a solution to that problem in the case of nonempty names, this shouldn't come as much of a surprise.[20]) The reason (V1) and (L1) appear to differ in cognitive value is that speakers grasp the gappy proposition represented as <{}, the property of being a planet> in different ways: one—a 'Vulcan' sort of way—that corresponds to (V1) and another—a 'Leon' sort of way—that corresponds to (L1).

[20] See Chapter 6.

The final problem, the problem of truth, is how a sentence that contains an empty name could be true. Together with external nondescriptivism, the gappy proposition view offers a solution to the problem of truth for negative existentials. On the gappy proposition view, (T) is true, in virtue of expressing the true gappy proposition represented as <NOT, <{}, the property of existing>>.[21] And the reason (T) appears to be true is that speakers believe that proposition when they grasp it in a way that corresponds to (T).

This solution can be extended to the problem of truth for other sentences that contain empty names. The reason that

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

and

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

appear to be true is that (T1)-(T5) express gappy propositions and, when they grasp those propositions in ways that correspond to (T1)-(T5), speakers believe them. And the reason that

(F1) Vulcan is Leon.

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[21] See Chapter 4.

(F2) 'Vulcan' refers to Leon.

(F3) Vulcan is as hot as Leon.

(F4) Vulcan is on a collision course with the Earth.

and

(F5) Vulcan exists.

appear to be false is that (F1)-(F5) express gappy propositions and, when they grasp these propositions in ways that correspond to (F1)-(F5), speakers disbelieve them.

On its own, the gappy proposition view can't solve the problem of truth. For some sentences that express the same gappy proposition—for example,

(T6) If Vulcan exists, then there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun.

and

(F6) If Leon exists, then there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun.

—appear to differ in truth-value. External nondescriptivism is needed. Although (T6) and (F6) express the same gappy proposition, speakers can grasp that proposition in different ways. And they can believe it when they grasp it in one way without believing it when they grasp it in another. The reason that (T6) appears to be true is that, when they grasp that proposition in a way that corresponds to (T6), they believe it. And the reason that (F6) appears to be false is that, when they grasp that proposition in a way that corresponds to (F6), they disbelieve it.

## §4: Conclusion

External nondescriptivism, together with the gappy proposition view, offers solutions to the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory. So the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory aren't fatal. Indeed, as grave as they are, the problems that empty names pose for the direct reference theory might not be any graver than those that nonempty names already pose, since the solutions that direct reference theorists offer to the problems that nonempty names pose can be extended to the problems that empty names pose.

But many questions remain unanswered. Among them are: Why do speakers believe the propositions that they do in the ways that they do? And what are nondescriptive senses anyway? More importantly for the dispute between the direct reference theory and the Fregean view, other questions that remain unanswered include: Are senses part of the propositions expressed by sentences that contain names? Why does it matter whether they are? What makes one answer rather than the other correct? And how can we tell which answer is correct? It has been said before, and it will be said again, but it's good to know that we won't run out of work to do.

## APPENDIX I: MUCH ADO ABOUT A PLANET BETWEEN MERCURY AND THE SUN

On Russell's semantics and the Frege-Strawson semantics, that descriptive proposition is true. Because for no object $o$ is the proposition represented as $<\{o\}$, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun> true, there is no unique object such that $\lambda x<\{x\}$, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun> maps it onto a true proposition. So, on Russell's semantics, the descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, $\lambda x<\{x\}$, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>>, $\lambda x<\{x\}$, the property of existing>> is false; and, on the Frege-Strawson semantics, it's neither true nor false. As a result, on either semantics, the negation of that descriptive proposition—namely, the descriptive proposition represented as <NOT, <<THE, $\lambda x<\{x\}$, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>>, $\lambda x<\{x\}$, the property of existing>>>—is true.[22]

Whether the descriptive proposition represented as <NOT, <<THE, $\lambda x<\{x\}$, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>>, $\lambda x<\{x\}$, the property of existing>>> is true or false on the Frege-Carnap semantics depends on whether or not our chosen object exists: it's true if our chosen object doesn't exist and false if our chosen object does exist. There is no unique object such that $\lambda x<\{x\}$, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun> maps it onto a true proposition. So, on the Frege-Carnap semantics, the descriptive proposition represented as <<THE,

[22] I am here assuming that NOT is exclusion rather than choice negation. See Chapter 4.

$\lambda x\langle\{x\}$, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>>, $\lambda x\langle\{x\}$, the property of existing>> is true if our chosen object exists (and hence is such that $\lambda x\langle\{x\}$, the property of existing> maps it onto a true proposition); otherwise, if our chosen object doesn't exist (and hence is such that $\lambda x\langle\{x\}$, the property of existing> maps it onto a false proposition), that descriptive proposition is false. So, for example, the descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, $\lambda x\langle\{x\}$, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>>, $\lambda x\langle\{x\}$, the property of existing>> is true if our chosen object is Sir Ian McKellen, and it's false if our chosen object is Plato.[23] And, if that descriptive proposition is true, then its negation—namely, the descriptive proposition represented as <NOT, <<THE, $\lambda x\langle\{x\}$, the property of being a planet between Mercury and the Sun>>, $\lambda x\langle\{x\}$, the property of existing>>>—is false; whereas, if it's false, its negation is true.

[23] I am assuming either (*i*) that the property of existing is time-specific and that, for some time *t* after Plato's death, the property of existing is coextensive with the property of existing at *t*, or (*ii*) that presentism is true and hence that, if Plato doesn't exist now, then he doesn't exist at all. See Chapter 2.

## APPENDIX II: THE RULES

### Russell's Rule for Descriptive Propositions

Let $P$ be a descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, $f$>, $g$>, where $f$ and $g$ are propositional functions.[24]

(1) $P$ is true relative to a circumstance $E$ if and only if

($a$) there is a unique object $o$ in $E$ such that $f(o)$ is true relative to $E$; and

($b$) $g(o)$ is true relative to $E$.

(2) $P$ is false relative to $E$ if and only if either

($ia$) there is a unique object $o$ in $E$ such that $f(o)$ is true relative to $E$; and

($ib$) $g(o)$ is false relative to $E$;

or

($ii$) no unique object $o$ in $E$ is such that $f(o)$ is true relative to $E$.

### The Frege-Strawson Rule for Descriptive Propositions

Let $P$ be a descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, $f$>, $g$>, where $f$ and $g$ are propositional functions.

(1) $P$ is true relative to a circumstance $E$ if and only if

($a$) there is a unique object $o$ in $E$ such that $f(o)$ is true relative to $E$; and

($b$) $g(o)$ is true relative to $E$.

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[24] In stating the rules, I am ignoring the possibility that, for some $o$, $g(o)$ is neither true nor false relative to $E$.

(2) *P* is false relative to *E* if and only if

(*a*) there is a unique object *o* in *E* such that *f*(*o*) is true relative to *E*; and

(*b*) *g*(*o*) is false relative to *E*.

(3) *P* is neither true nor false relative to *E* if and only if no unique object *o* in *E* is such that *f*(*o*) is true relative to *E*.

**The Frege-Carnap Rule for Descriptive Propositions**

Let *P* be a descriptive proposition represented as <<THE, *f*>, *g*>, where *f* and *g* are propositional functions.

(1) *P* is true relative to a circumstance *E* if and only if either

(*ia*) there is a unique object *o* in *E* such that *f*(*o*) is true relative to *E*; and

(*ib*) *g*(*o*) is true relative to *E*;

or

(*iia*) there is no unique object *o* in *E* such that *f*(*o*) is true relative to *E*; and

(*iib*) *g*(*o**) is true relative to *E*, where *o** is a chosen object.

(2) *P* is false relative to a circumstance *E* if and only if either

(*ia*) there is a unique object *o* in *E* such that *f*(*o*) is true relative to *E*; and

(*ib*) *g*(*o*) is false relative to *E*;

or

(*iia*) there is no unique object *o* in *E* such that *f*(*o*) is true relative to *E*; and

(*iib*) *g*(*o**) is false relative to *E*, where *o** is a chosen object.

## APPENDIX III: NAMED SENTENCES

(T) It is not the case that Vulcan exists.

(T1) Vulcan is Vulcan.

(T2) 'Vulcan' refers to Vulcan.

(T3) Vulcan is as hot as Vulcan.

(T4) Vulcan is nothing.

(T5) Vulcan is nonexistent.

(T6) If Vulcan exists, then there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(TD) It is not the case that the planet between Mercury and the Sun exists.

(T1D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(T2D) The word pronounced /ˈvʌlkən/ refers to the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(T2D') The word pronounced /ˈvʌlkən/ refers to* the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(T3D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is as hot as the planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(T4D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is nothing.

(T5D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is nonexistent.

(F1) Vulcan is Leon.

(F2) 'Vulcan' refers to Leon.

(F3) Vulcan is as hot as Leon.

(F4) Vulcan is on a collision course with the Earth.

(F5) Vulcan exists.

(F6) If Leon exists, then there is a planet between Mercury and the Sun.

(F1D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is the homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees.

(F2D) The word pronounced /ˈvʌlkən/ refers to the homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees.

(F2D') The word pronounced /ˈvʌlkən/ refers to* the homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees.

(F3D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is as hot as the homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees.

(F4D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is on a collision course with the planet we live on.

(F5D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun exists.

(KR) The handsome fellow from *The Matrix* is Canadian.

(V1) Vulcan is a planet.

(L1) Leon is a planet.

(V1D) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is a planet.

(L1D) The homicidal maniac lurking in the shadows under the distant trees is a planet.

(S1) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is a philosopher.

(S2) John Perry is Santa Claus.

(S3) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is human.

(S4) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is either human or not human.

(S5) If Saul Kripke exists, then Saul Kripke is American.

(S1D) If the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher exists, then the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher is a philosopher.

(S1D′) If the onetime Princeton professor who lived in the same dorm at Harvard as the Unabomer exists, then the onetime Princeton professor who lived in the same dorm at Harvard as the Unabomer is a philosopher.

(S1D″) If the $x$ such that $x$ is actually a mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher exists, then the $x$ such that $x$ is actually a mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher is a philosopher.

(S3D) If the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher exists, then the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher is human.

(S3D') If the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher, Saul Kripke, exists, then the mathematical prodigy from the Midwest who became a famous philosopher, Saul Kripke, is human.

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