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An idea from Donnellan:

Deferential and non-deferential uses of proper names

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Introduction

When we use a proper name, by virtue of what do we succeed in saying something about an individual? In other words, how are we supposed to explain the seemingly trivial fact that by uttering “Aristotle was wise” we actually predicate something of the famous philosopher? Questions like these have animated a fervent debate among philosophers of language; however, nowadays the standard answer is that by using “Aristotle” we say something about that famous philosopher because the name we have used in our utterance *refers* to him.

Even though no general consensus has been reached on how to characterize the relation of reference – there are still different and competing accounts of the latter on the philosophical market – almost everybody believes, especially after the publication of Saul Kripke’s *Naming and necessity*, that reference is the *only* semantic relation that connects our uses of proper names to individuals in the world.

Contrary to this widespread assumption, in this dissertation I shall claim that our uses of proper names are not always referential. To do so, I shall take advantage of Keith Donnellan’s groundbreaking distinction between *attributive* and *referential* uses of definite descriptions. As is well known, according to Donnellan, if a speaker uses a description attributively she *denotes*, if any, the individual that uniquely satisfies the predicate occurring in it. If the speaker uses a description referentially, on the other hand, she *refers* to the individual to whom she is connected by a *historical relation*, namely, an acquaintance-based relation that Donnellan has described in terms of *having in mind*. These uses exemplify two different mechanisms by which definite descriptions semantically relate to individuals in the world. This is why they must be kept distinct.

In the course of the dissertation I shall argue that Donnellan’s distinction grounds a similar distinction concerning proper names, that between their *referential* and *non-referential* uses. I shall claim for this conclusion by appealing to a version of *predicativism*, a thesis popular among linguists and recently defended by Delia Fara

according to which proper names are predicates. In particular, from her point of view, a proper name, say “Jones”, occurring in argument position is a nominal predicate accompanied by a silent definite article to form a definite description: “ \emptyset_{The} Jones”, where “ \emptyset ” stands for unpronounced/unwritten syntactic material. Since *any* definite description is susceptible of being used in both of the ways identified by Donnellan, however, the same must be true for proper names as well, under a predicativist analysis of them. And here is exactly where the distinction between deferential and non-deferential uses of names comes into play. If “ \emptyset_{The} Jones” is used attributively, the name is used deferentially, hence it denotes an individual, if any (the one that is named that way and is at the origin of the chain of communication backing that use). By contrast, if “ \emptyset_{The} Jones” is used referentially it refers to an individual (the one the speaker has in mind). If I am on the right track, therefore, even proper names, like definite descriptions, prove to be related to individuals in the world by means of two different semantic relations. And this, in turn, amounts to saying that they are not always referential.

I know that this is not the first time it has been argued that Donnellan’s distinction may be used to shed light on the semantics of proper names: indeed, there are many philosophers who have claimed something similar.¹ However, the account of deferential and non-deferential uses of proper names that will emerge from my analysis is different from those suggested by each of them.

I shall proceed as follows. Chapter 1 gives a detailed picture of both Donnellan’s groundbreaking distinction between attributive and referential uses of definite descriptions and his *historical explanation theory* of proper names. A crucial point that will emerge is that according to the latter proper names are not peculiar from a semantic point of view. On the contrary, the semantic mechanism that connects uses of them to individuals in the world is the same as that underlying referentially used definite descriptions.

In Chapter 2 I introduce and discuss *predicativism*. According to the latter, proper names are (count-noun) predicates – i.e., they have predicate-type semantic values – in

¹ See, for example, Devitt 1974, 1981a, 1981b and 2015; Boër 1972 and 1975; Evans 1973 and 1982; Kaplan 1989; Recanati 2012 and Almog 2012 and 2014.

all of their occurrences. Even though predicativism has been developed in various ways by different philosophers, its core idea is that the role of a proper name is that of *denoting* individuals, not that of *referring* to individuals. By examining predicativism, I shall not provide any new argument for it; rather, I shall just present this interesting thesis and some of the reasons that make it *at least* plausible that proper names are indeed predicates. In doing so, I shall focus on Fara's account, which is the most detailed version of predicativism on the market and a good starting point to substantiate the distinction between the deferential and non-deferential uses of proper names that I shall put my finger on in the last Chapter. Since Fara's work has been influenced by that of Tyler Burge and Clarence Sloat, however, their intuitions on the alleged predicative role played by proper names will occupy a central place in the discussion.

If these philosophers are on the right track, which is of course something still debated, then a proper name like "Jones" is equivalent to a predicate like "bearer of 'Jones' ". In particular, from Fara's point of view, a predicate like this is true of an individual if and only if someone has called him Jones; that is, if and only if someone has used "Jones" in an appropriate way to name him. Moreover, when "Jones" occurs unmodified in argument position, as happens in a simple subject-predicate sentence like "Jones lives in Princeton", it is the descriptive element of a nominal denuded definite description: " \emptyset _{The} Jones". In the course of the Chapter we shall see in detail how Fara discusses and motivates these claims.

In Chapter 3 I shall argue for my main claim, namely, that Donnellan's distinction regarding descriptions grounds a similar distinction between deferential and non-deferential uses of proper names. According to Michael McKinsey, who is one of the philosophers who argued for the latter, a speaker may use a proper name deferentially, by relying on other speakers' uses of that name to determine the referent of her own uses; but she can also use it non-deferentially, to speak about an individual without having to defer to anyone else's use of that name. From McKinsey's perspective, a speaker uses a proper name deferentially when her knowledge of the referent is limited. By contrast, she uses the name non-deferentially when she has identifying knowledge of its referent.

I closed Chapter 2 by saying that if predicativists are on the right track, then a proper name, say "Jones", that occurs unmodified in argument position is semantically

equivalent to the nominal denuded definite description “ \emptyset_{The} Jones”. Now, my idea is simple. If the speaker uses “Jones” deferentially, then we face an attributive use of “ \emptyset_{The} Jones”. On the other hand, if she uses “Jones” non-deferentially, then the speaker’s use is equivalent to a referential use of that description. This is admittedly rough and sketchy, and a lot of details need to be fixed in order to make this account of proper names viable. In the course of Chapter 3 I shall try to do this. Finally, I shall examine some objections put forward by Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny to argue that descriptivist theories for proper names, including those that incorporate the technical notion of *reference borrowing*, should be abandoned and try to show why these objections do not harm my account of deferential and non-deferential uses of proper names.

Chapter 1

Donnellan's theory of definite descriptions and proper names

The three lines quoted below open Keith Donnellan's groundbreaking "Reference and definite descriptions", one of the most widely discussed papers in philosophy of language:

DEFINITE descriptions, I shall argue, have two possible functions.
They are used to refer to what the speaker wishes to talk about, but
they are also used quite differently. (Donnellan 1966: 281)

Before turning to the distinction that made both this paper and its author famous, it is worth highlighting something that the literature has not emphasized so much, even though it emerges vividly from this passage (indeed, the very first passage!) written by Donnellan on definite descriptions and reference. According to it, in fact, it is clear that Donnellan's strategy is not to take Bertrand Russell's well-known account of definite descriptions for granted and then argue that it does not cover *all* possible uses of these expressions. Quite the contrary, Donnellan introduces the referential use of a description – i.e., a use of a description "to refer to what the speaker wishes to talk about" – as if it were the most straightforward one, *and only after* he acknowledges that such an expression can be used in a quite different (*perhaps* Russellian) way.

1.1 Donnellan's distinction

Following what Donnellan suggests concerning singular terms in general, we say that whenever a speaker utters a subject-predicate sentence with a definite description ("the so-and-so") in subject position, he says something true "if and only if (a) there is some entity related in the appropriate way to his use of [the description] in this sentence ...,

and (b) that entity has the property designated by the predicate” (1974: 15). As we are about to see in detail, Donnellan claims that there are two different ways in which such an *appropriate* relation can be established: *satisfactionally*, if the speaker uses “the so-and-so” *attributively*; or *relationally*, if she uses it *referentially*.

If some specific requirements are met (see below), by using a description attributively the speaker *denotes* someone or something; on the other hand, by using it referentially she *refers* to someone or something. These uses exemplify two different mechanisms by which definite descriptions relate to individuals in the world. This is why they must be kept distinct from a semantic point of view. As Donnellan clearly points out, in fact, “referring is not the same as denoting” (1966: 281).²

When a speaker uses “the so-and-so” attributively, she “states something about whoever or whatever is the so-and-so” (285). The attribute of being the so-and-so is all important, for “the speaker wishes to assert something about whatever or whoever fits that description” (*ibid.*). By using the expression this way, she might not have any specific individual in mind, nor expect that her audience will pick out something in particular as the subject of her discourse. Instead, what she makes by her utterance is a general statement about whoever or whatever uniquely satisfies the predicate “so-and-so” occurring in the description she has used. Russell’s analysis in terms of existential quantification applies, “if at all” (293), to these uses of descriptions.

The *same* speaker may well use the *same* description referentially. In this case, she uses the expression to “enable [her] audience to pick out whom or what [she] is talking about and states something about that person or thing” (*ibid.*). A description used this way is in fact “merely one tool for doing a certain job – calling attention to a person or

² Strawson makes a similar point when he writes that an important distinction we are required to draw is that between “(1) using an expression to make unique reference; and (2) asserting that there is one and only one individual which has certain characteristics (e.g., is of a certain kind or stands in a certain relation to the speaker, or both” (1950: 333). Moreover, he adds that such a distinction is equivalent to the one between “(1) sentences containing an expression used to indicate or mention or refer to a particular person or thing; and (2) uniquely existential statements” (334). By considering definite descriptions, Wettstein writes that the “essential difference between referential and attributive occurrences of descriptions is the difference between the pointing use of a description, the use of a description as a device of demonstrative reference, and the property-attributing use, the use of a description to speak of whatever it is that has certain features” (1983: 187).

thing – and in general any other device for doing the same job, another description or a name, would do as well” (Donnellan 1966: 293). When a speaker uses a description referentially she *refers* to someone or something. The attribute of being the so-and-so, however, is not what ultimately determines the referent. The former is in fact “inessential, though not irrelevant, to what the speaker accomplishes” (1968: 205). As we are about to see in what follows, there is a lot to say about this latter claim of Donnellan’s.

First of all, however, let us consider the main differences between referential and attributive uses of descriptions that Donnellan puts his finger on when it comes to demonstrating that his distinction is actually well grounded. Take the following case:

Consider the sentence, “Smith’s murderer is insane”. Suppose first that we come upon poor Smith foully murdered. From the brutal manner of the killing and the fact that Smith was the most lovable person in the world, we might exclaim, “Smith’s murderer is insane”. I will assume, to make it a simpler case, that in a quite ordinary sense we do not know who murdered Smith. This, I shall say, is an attributive use of the definite description. (Donnellan 1966: 285)

Contrast the “crime-scene scenario” just described with one of those situations in which “we expect and intend our audience to realize whom we have in mind when we speak of Smith’s murderer and, most importantly, to know that it is this person about whom we are going to say something” (Donnellan 1966: 285-6):

Suppose that Jones has been charged with Smith’s murder and has been placed on trial. Imagine that there is a discussion of Jones’ odd behavior at his trial. We might sum up our impression of his behavior by saying, “Smith’s murderer is insane”. This, I shall say, is a referential use of the definite description. (Donnellan 1966: 286)

That the two uses of “Smith’s murderer” in these scenarios are different is made quite evident when considering the consequences of the assumption that nobody killed Smith. For example, let us suppose that he committed suicide. According to Donnellan, by using “Smith’s murderer”, the speaker in both cases somehow “presupposes or

implies” (1966: 285) that there is a murderer. Every time such a presupposition or implication turns out to be false, however, “there are different results for the two uses” (*ibid.*). In particular, in the crime-scene scenario, if nobody killed Smith then there is nobody “of whom it could be correctly said that we attributed insanity to him” (286). But in the “trial scenario”, where the description is nothing but a tool that we decide to use in order to draw our audience’s attention toward the individual who is going to be the subject of our discourse, “it is quite possible for the correct identification to be made [by our audience] even though no one fits the description we used” (*ibid.*). By means of “Smith’s murderer is insane”, we say something about Jones; namely, we attribute insanity to him, even though it turns out that he has not killed Smith. Moreover, our audience might realize that we are referring to Jones even though she believes (or even knows) that Jones is not the murderer. This is why Jones might well accuse us of being wrong about him in saying that he is insane, and “it would be no defense that our description, ‘the murderer of Smith,’ failed to fit him” (*ibid.*). Cases other than assertions, like questions and orders, present similar differences depending on whether the descriptions occurring in them are used attributively or referentially (see Donnellan 1966: 286-8).³

³ Take the following question for instance: “Who is the man drinking a martini?”, asked by someone who is attending a party. The idea is that if the speaker uses the description referentially, then she has “asked a question about a particular person, a question that it is possible for [someone else] to answer” (Donnellan 1966: 287), even though it turns out that nobody is drinking martini at that party. On the contrary, if she uses the description attributively, then “no person can be singled out as the person about whom the question was asked” (*ibid.*). The attribute of being a man who is drinking a martini is in fact essential for the speaker’s question to be answered. Here is another case pointed out by Donnellan. Take a speaker who issues the following order: “Bring me the book on the table”. According to Donnellan, if the speaker uses “the book on the table” referentially, then her audience may successfully obey that order even though there is nothing that uniquely satisfies the predicate occurring in that description. If, for example, there is not a book *on* the table, though there is one *beside* it, a hearer may well “bring that book back and ask the issuer of the order whether this is ‘the book he meant’ ” (*ibid.*). And it might be so. Now, contrast this case with another one where someone tells the speaker that a book has been left on her antique table where nothing should be left. In this situation, the same order issued by the speaker after the report cannot be obeyed unless there is exactly one book left right on that table. Since the speaker uses the description attributively, in fact, “there is, antecedently, no ‘right book’ except one which fits the description” (*ibid.*).

The differences between attributive and referential uses of descriptions do not emerge only under the supposition that nothing uniquely fits them. When a speaker uses a description referentially, in fact, not only does she presuppose that someone or something (in general) fits it – this happens for attributive uses as well – but she also “presupposes of some *particular* someone ... that he fits the description” (Donnellan 1966: 288). In the trial scenario, for example, by means of “Smith’s murderer is insane” we wish to say something about Jones, namely, the individual we see over there in the dock acting in a strange way. In other words, we presuppose that *that* particular man murdered Smith, not just that someone in general must be the murderer. The presuppositions that are connected to attributive uses, on the contrary, lack such a level of specificity. In the crime-scene scenario, for instance, by uttering the same sentence we simply presuppose that someone *or other* murdered Smith.

That referential uses involve such a specific presupposition can easily be brought out by considering an audience who knows that Smith has not been murdered at all. In the trial scenario, an audience with such a knowledge may well “accuse [us] of mistakenly presupposing both that someone or other is the murderer and also that Jones is the murderer” (289), for even though our audience knows that Jones (and anybody else) is not guilty, it also knows “that [we are] referring to Jones” (*ibid.*). Things are different in the crime-scene scenario. This time, in fact, the audience “can accuse [us] of having only the first, less specific presupposition” (*ibid.*). It cannot say of someone in particular that we are wrong in saying that *that individual* is the murderer.

Even though attributive uses of descriptions lack the specific presupposition, both referential and attributive uses carry the more general implication that someone or something fits the description used. However, the reason underlying this general presupposition is not the same in the two cases. This allows us to appreciate another important difference between referential and attributive uses of descriptions. When a description is used referentially, in fact, the presupposition that someone or something in general fits it “stems simply from the fact that normally a person tries to describe correctly what he wants to refer to because normally this is the best way to get his audience to recognize what he is referring to” (292). Since the purpose of using a

The attribute of being a book (indeed, the only book) on that table is in fact essential for that order to be obeyed.

description this way is to make the audience co-focus with us on the individual we wish to say something about, we will most likely choose a description that she believes fits the individual in question. As a rule, in fact, “a misdescription of that to which one wants to refer would mislead the audience” (Donnellan 1966: 291). The same general presupposition, however, stems from a different reason when it comes to attributive uses. When someone uses a description this way and it turns out that nothing uniquely fits it, in fact, “the linguistic purpose of the speech act [is] thwarted” (291-2). That is, “the speaker [does not] succeed in saying something true, if he makes an assertion; he will not succeed in asking a question that can be answered, if he has asked a question; he will not succeed in issuing an order that can be obeyed, if he has issued an order” (292).

From what we have said so far, it seems that the crucial difference between referential and attributive uses of descriptions lies in the beliefs of the speaker who uses them. Does she believe that a specific individual uniquely satisfies the description she has used? Well, then she has used it referentially. Otherwise, she has used the expression attributively. Strictly speaking, however, this is not the case. According to Donnellan, in fact, “it is possible for a definite description to be used attributively even though the speaker (and her audience) believes that a certain person or thing fits [it]” (290). At the same time, “it is also possible for a description to be used referentially where the speaker believes that nothing fits [that] description” (*ibid.*). Donnellan acknowledges that if the speaker does not believe he is capable of identifying what fits the description he uses, “it is likely that he is not using it referentially” (*ibid.*). In the same way, if both the speaker and the audience pick out someone as fitting the description, then the use of that description “is very likely referential” (*ibid.*). However, as Donnellan clearly points out, these are “only presumptions and not entailments” (*ibid.*).

The trial scenario, for example, can easily be turned into a case where the speaker uses a description attributively even though she believes of a particular individual that it uniquely satisfies the predicate occurring in the expression. Suppose that Jones is charged of Smith’s murderer and everybody believes him to be guilty. Someone comments that Smith’s murderer is insane, but instead of justifying his claim by citing Jones’s strange behavior, he supports his assertion by reporting reasons for thinking that

anyone who actually murdered Smith must be insane. Now, from Donnellan's perspective, "if it turns out that Jones was not the murderer after all, but someone else was, he can claim to have been right if the true murderer is after all insane" (1966: 290).

It is also possible to imagine cases where the speaker uses a definite description referentially believing (or even knowing) that the individual he wants to say something (or ask a question) about does not fit it:

Suppose the throne is occupied by a man I firmly believe to be not the king, but a usurper. Imagine also that his followers as firmly believe that he is the king. Suppose I wish to see this man. I might say to his minions, "Is the king in his countinghouse?" I succeed in referring to the man I wish to refer to without myself believing that he fits the description. It is not even necessary, moreover, to suppose that his followers believe him to be the king. If they are cynical about the whole thing, know he is not the king, I may still succeed in referring to the man I wish to refer to. (Donnellan 1966: 290-1)

Donnellan acknowledges that cases like this are "parasitic on a more normal use" (1966: 290). However, they "are sufficient to show that such beliefs of the speaker are not decisive as to which use is made of a definite description" (*ibid.*).

Other critical features of Donnellan's account of referential uses of descriptions emerge from his criticisms of Peter Strawson, whose theory of definite descriptions, basically, implies the following three propositions:

1. If someone asserts that the F is G he has not made a true or false statement if there is no F.
2. If there is no F then the speaker has failed to refer to anything.
3. The reason he has said nothing true or false is that he has failed to refer. (Donnellan 1966: 294; see also Strawson 1950: 329-30)

Donnellan claims that proposition (1) might be true of an attributive use. Take the crime-scene scenario. As we have pointed out at the beginning, by using "Smith's murderer", the speaker does not refer to anybody. Now, if Smith has in fact committed suicide, it is "quite tempting to conclude, following Strawson, that nothing true *or* false was said" (Donnellan 1966: 295). Things are different from a Russellian point of view:

as everybody knows, in fact, according to his theory of descriptions, every time a speaker uses one of these expressions, and nothing uniquely satisfies it, then what the latter has said is simply false (see Russell 1905 and 1911). From Donnellan's perspective, on the other hand, in the trial scenario where the description is used referentially something true may have been said "of the person referred to" (1966: 295), even though Smith has not been murdered at all. According to the former, therefore, (1) does not hold for referential uses.

Proposition (2) is simply false. As we have seen, in fact, Donnellan believes that when a speaker uses a description referentially she may well refer (in a sense that will be considered in detail below) to an individual, even though the latter does not satisfy the predicate occurring in that expression.

The criticism of proposition (3) is more interesting, since it raises an important question about the referential use: " 'Can reference fail when a definite description is used referentially?' " (*ibid.*). Donnellan claims that we do not fail to refer "merely because [our] audience does not correctly pick out what [we are] referring to" (296). Nor, as we have repeated many times, do we fail to refer because nothing fits the description we have used. Perhaps, Donnellan writes, we fail to refer "in some extreme circumstances, when there is nothing that [we] are willing to pick out as that to which [we] referred" (295).⁴

From the criticisms put forward against Strawson, it emerges that by using a definite

⁴ Donnellan points out the following example in order to clarify the matter. Suppose that we see someone walking at distance, and believe that he is carrying a walking stick. We then ask our interlocutor: "Is the man carrying a walking stick the professor of history?". At this point we must distinguish four cases: "(a) [t]here is a man carrying a walking stick; ... (b) [t]he man over there is not carrying a walking stick, but an umbrella; ... (c) [i]t is not a man at all, but a rock that looks like one; ... (d) there is nothing at all where we thought there was a man with a walking stick" (1966: 295-6). Cases (a) and (d) do not raise any problem about reference failure. Even in case (c), Donnellan believes that we still have referred to something, namely, "to the thing over there that happens to be a rock but that [we] took to be a man" (296). He acknowledges that it is not clear in this case whether our question can be correctly answered. However, this is not due to reference failure, but to the fact that the question, strictly speaking, is not appropriate. The only case of a genuine reference failure is (d), since there is nothing at all to which we can refer to. We cannot say of anything, " 'that is what [we were] referring to, though [we] now see that it's not a man carrying a walking stick' " (*ibid.*). Proposition (3), therefore, holds for *some* referential uses of definite descriptions. However, cases like these are very rare to come by.

description referentially, a speaker may well say something *true of someone* even though neither the latter, nor anybody else, satisfies the predicate occurring in the expression used by the former. Not only is this sense in which the speaker may say something true “an interesting one that needs investigation” (Donnellan 1966: 298), but it is also “one of the by-products of the distinction between the attributive and referential uses of definite descriptions” (*ibid.*). To shed light on the matter, Donnellan quotes the following passage from Linsky’s paper “Reference and referents”:

... said of a spinster that ‘Her husband is kind to her’ is neither true nor false. But a speaker might very well be referring to someone using these words, for he may think that someone is the husband of the lady (who in fact is a spinster). Still, the statement is neither true nor false, for it presupposes that the lady has a husband, which she has not.
(Linsky 1963)

Linsky’s suggestion is interesting because it allows us to appreciate another important difference between referential and attributive uses of descriptions. Moreover, “it brings out an important point about genuine referring” (Donnellan 1966: 301). Donnellan focuses on Linsky’s claim according to which when the presupposition that the lady is married turns out to be false, then the statement made by the speaker is neither true nor false. As we have seen considering proposition (1) of Strawson’s account, however, even though this may be correct for an attributive use of the description, when the latter is used referentially “this categorical assertion is no longer clearly correct” (300). Suppose that we know that the woman in question is a spinster. Suppose finally that we know that the man the speaker wishes to say something about by means of “her husband” is actually kind to her. It seems that “on the one hand, [we] want to hold that the speaker said something true” (*ibid.*). On the other, however, we are “reluctant to express this by ‘It is true that her husband is kind to her’ ” (*ibid.*). The reason is easy to spot. If we report the speaker’s words by uttering: “It is true that her husband is kind to her”, we use the description either attributively or referentially. Now, since we know that the woman is a spinster, we certainly do not want to use it attributively. In doing so, in fact, we not only lose the possibility of saying something true of that man, but we also “misrepresent the linguistic performance of the speaker”

(Donnellan 1966: 302). But we do not want to use the expression referentially either. As we know, when we use a description referentially we presuppose, for the reasons explained above, that our intended reference fits the description we have chosen. Since we know that the speaker's intended reference is not the lady's husband, however, we do not want to give the impression, by using "her husband" to refer to him, of believing otherwise.

What we have to do in order to express agreement with the speaker without giving false impressions about our beliefs highlights another difference between referential and attributive descriptions. According to Donnellan, in fact, when the speaker says of a spinster: "Her husband is kind to her", by using the description attributively, then we cannot correctly report the speaker as having said of a specific person that he is kind to her. Things are different if the speaker uses that description referentially:

... if the definite description is used referentially we can report the speaker as having attributed [kindness] to [someone]. And *we* may refer to what the speaker referred to, using whatever description or name suits our purpose. Thus, if a speaker says, "Her husband is kind to her," referring to the man he was just talking to, and if that man is Jones, we may report him as having said *of Jones* that he is kind to her. If Jones is also the president of the college, we may report the speaker as having said *of the president of the college* that he is kind to her. And finally, if we are talking to Jones, we may say, referring to the original speaker, "He said of you that *you* are kind to her."

(Donnellan 1966: 301)

This passage is very important. Donnellan in fact does not simply write that the original (wrong) referential definite description may be substituted by another one that we believe, or even know, to fit the man in question. He also suggests that the original (referentially used) description may be substituted either by *a proper name* ("Jones") or an indexical ("you"), thus emphasizing for the first time the close parallel between proper names and referential uses of descriptions that is crucial when it comes to characterizing the *appropriate relation* that is supposed to connect an individual to a description used this way, so that the former counts as the *referent* of the latter.

Donnellan closes “Reference and definite descriptions” by contrasting his view with that of Russell, according to which “whenever we use descriptions, as opposed to proper names, we introduce an element of generality which ought to be absent if what we are doing is referring to some particular thing” (1966: 303; see also Russell 1905 and 1911). This lack of particularity, however, is absent from the referential uses of descriptions, whose role is exactly that of picking out the *individual* the speaker wishes to talk about. As we have seen, in fact, Donnellan believes that in the referential use as opposed to the attributive one the right individual to be picked out by an audience “is not simply a function of its fitting the description” (1966: 304). The crucial question, now, is: If being the right individual to be picked out by a referential use of a description is not a function of the former’s fitting the predicate occurring in the latter, then what is it a function of? In other words, what does it take for an individual to be *appropriately related* to a definite description used referentially by a speaker in order to be its referent? Donnellan does not have an articulated answer in 1966. As a matter of fact, it will take him almost a decade to figure it out and, rather surprisingly, it will emerge from his analysis of proper names.

1.2 Donnellan’s *historical explanation theory*

In “Proper names and identifying descriptions” Donnellan writes that there is a plausible principle about the semantics of proper names that many philosophers have either uncritically assumed or argued for. He calls it the “principle of identifying descriptions” (1970: 335). One of the first formulations was given by Strawson:

it is no good using a name for a particular unless one knows who or what is referred to by the use of the name. A name is worthless without a backing of descriptions which can be produced on demand to explain the application. (Strawson 1959: 20)

The “backing of descriptions” Strawson is talking about provides a criterion to determine the reference of a name used by a speaker. The idea is that when a speaker utters something like “Napoleon lives in Paris”, the reference of the proper name

“Napoleon” occurring in her utterance is the individual who uniquely satisfies the definite description(s) associated to it by the speaker. These are supposed to be supplied by the speaker herself, as soon as we ask her something like: “To whom were you referring by ‘Napoleon’?” Donnellan acknowledges that “it seems almost indisputable that some such principle governs the referential function of proper names” (1970: 334). However, he is also convinced that under closer analysis the principle turns out to be fundamentally wrong.

Donnellan formulates the principle of identifying descriptions as a “two-stage” thesis. This states, first, that “the user(s) of a proper name must be able to supply a set of ... ‘non-question-begging’ descriptions in answer to the question, ‘To whom (or what) does the name refer?’” (339). And, second, that “the referent of a proper name (as used by a speaker in some particular utterance), if there is one, is that object that uniquely fits a ‘sufficient’ number of the descriptions in the set” (*ibid.*).

The counterexamples put forward by Donnellan cast doubt on the latter part of the principle. In particular, they are designed to demonstrate that “*even* if the user(s) of a name must be able to supply a set of identifying descriptions, as laid down by the first part, these descriptions do not provide necessary and sufficient conditions for what shall count as the referent” (*ibid.*).

The former part of the principle, however, is not without difficulties. One is this: it seems quite uncontroversial that speakers very often use proper names without being able to supply *any* description detailed enough to guarantee the unique identification of their intended referents. This simple and empirical consideration has been masked by the fact that philosophers have focused on names used by speakers to say something about famous persons, whose well-known enterprises give everybody the possibility of supplying uniquely identifying descriptions. It is not so clear, however, if speakers are equally able to list descriptions like these of their friends, people they have met in their lives, or even important figures of their times, whose characteristics have not yet been fixed into well-known attributes and descriptions. If the former part of the principle were true, the objection goes, it would demand far too much of us, as vividly emerges from the following scenario:

Suppose a child is gotten up from sleep at a party and introduced to someone as ‘Tom’, who then says a few words to the child. Later the

child says to his parents, “Tom is a nice man”. The only thing he can say about ‘Tom’ is that Tom was at a party. Moreover, he is unable to recognize anyone as ‘Tom’ on subsequent occasions. His parents give lots of parties and they have numerous friends named ‘Tom’. The case could be built up, I think, so that nothing the child possesses in the way of descriptions, dispositions to recognize, serves to pick out in the standard way anybody uniquely. That is, we cannot go by the denotation of his descriptions nor whom he points to, if anyone, etc. Does this mean that there is no person to whom he was referring? (Donnellan 1970: 343)

Donnellan’s answer is negative. According to him, in fact, the child’s parents may well identify the individual their son is talking about *via* some sort of deductive argument. For example, they “might reason as follows: ‘He’s met several people named ‘Tom’ at recent parties, but only Tom Brown did something that might make him say, ‘Tom is a nice man’ ” (Donnellan 1970: 343). Of course there is no need for Tom Brown to actually be a nice man for him to be the referent of the child’s use of “Tom”. But this is something that concerns the latter part of the principle under discussion. We shall get back to it later. For the moment, let us follow Donnellan by concluding that if this is a plausible example, “it seems the question of what a speaker referred to by using a name is not foreclosed by his inability to describe or even to recognize or point to the referent” (*ibid.*). The requirement according to which the user of a name must be able to identify by description (or by a pointing gesture) what the name refers to is therefore too demanding. Speakers may well use proper names to refer to individuals even though they do not satisfy it.

The former part of the principle contains another element that deserves special attention. As we have seen, in fact, Donnellan formulates it by introducing a condition according to which the descriptions that are supposed to back up the use of the name must not be “question begging”. To properly understand the problem of the principle under discussion this qualification is crucial, since there are descriptions that uniquely identify the speaker’s intended reference that she can *always* provide. According to Donnellan, “[n]o argument could be devised to show that the referent of a name need not be denoted by these descriptions” (344). However, he also believes that anyone who subscribes to the principle “would hardly have these descriptions in mind or want to

rely on them in defense of [it]” (*ibid.*). Here are some examples of what Donnellan would count as question-begging identifying descriptions:

1. ‘the entity I had in mind’;
2. ‘the entity I referred to’;
3. ‘the entity I believe to be the author of the *Metaphysics*’ [provided by a speaker to back up her use of ‘Aristotle’]. (Donnellan 1970: 344)

Clearly, Donnellan’s reasoning goes on, if the descriptions associated by a speaker to her uses of proper names were like these, “the principle would become uninteresting” (1970: 344). According to the principle under discussion, in fact, the descriptions associated to a name are what determine which individual the speaker is talking about by means of that name. Now, from Donnellan’s point of view, descriptions that uniquely apply to an individual simply in virtue of the fact that the speaker refers to it (or has it in mind) by using the name would be question-begging in answer to “Who (or what) did the speaker refer to?”, in exactly the same way as “ ‘What I have in my hand’ would be question begging in answer to the question, ‘What are you holding in your hand?’ ” (345).⁵

⁵ By considering “parasitic” (Donnellan 1970: 352) uses of proper names, namely, uses for “persons in history (and also those we are not personally acquainted with)” (*ibid.*), Donnellan takes into account another type of description that he does not classify “as ‘question begging’ in the way in which ‘the entity I have in mind’ is question begging” (354). Take the following case. We have never been acquainted with Frege. Moreover, suppose that the only thing that we know about him is that he was a philosopher and that Dummett wrote a lot about him by using “Frege” to refer to him. Now, according to Donnellan, it seems natural to say that in knowing only that Frege was the philosopher referred to by Dummett with “Frege” we are not in the position to describe Frege; that is, there is “an ordinary use of ‘describe’ in which to say only ‘the man referred to by [Dummett with ‘Frege’]’ is not yet to describe [Frege]” (*ibid.*). Apparently, we may succeed in referring to Frege, the same person in fact referred to by Dummett, although we cannot describe him correctly. At any rate, and this is an interesting point, Donnellan writes that “so long as the user of a name can fall back on such a description as ‘the person referred to by [Dummett with ‘Frege’]’, the principle of identifying descriptions may be salvaged” (*ibid.*). The crucial problem with these descriptions is not that they are question begging; rather, it is that it is not clear to Donnellan whether they are in general available to the speakers when they use proper names, since we very often use names to refer to people without knowing who we have received them from.

This is enough for the former part of the principle. Let us pass on Donnellan's counterexamples to the latter. These are meant to demonstrate that even if the speaker turns out to be able to supply a set of identifying descriptions for her intended referent, these descriptions do not provide necessary and sufficient conditions for what should count as the referent of the speaker's use of that name. The first case considered by Donnellan is a scenario where someone uses a name to say something about an object, though what he actually refers to by means of that name does not satisfy the descriptions associated by the former to the latter. Here is the scenario:

in an experiment by psychologists interested in perception a subject is seated before a screen of uniform color and large enough to entirely fill his visual field. On the screen are painted two squares of identical size and color, one directly above the other. The subject knows nothing of the history of the squares - whether one was painted before the other, etc. Nor does he know anything about their future. He is asked to give names to the squares and to say on what basis he assigns the names. ... it seems that the only way in which he can distinguish the squares through description is by their relative positions. So he might respond that he will call the top square 'alpha' and the bottom square 'beta'.

The catch in the example is this: unknown to the subject, he has been fitted with spectacles that invert his visual field. Thus, the square he sees as apparently on top is really on the bottom and vice versa.

Having now two names to work with we can imagine the subject using one of them to say something about one of the squares. Suppose he comes to believe (whether erroneously or not doesn't matter) that one of the squares has changed color. He might report, 'Alpha is now a different color'. But which square is he referring to? (Donnellan 1970: 347)

Since the only identifying description associated to "Alpha" by the subject is "the square that is on top", given our knowledge of the inverted spectacles, it seems that what the subject has actually referred to by "Alpha" is not the square that is on top; rather, it is the square that the subject mistakenly believes to be on top, namely the one that is on the bottom.

Every time the subject, for some reason, utters something like: "Alpha is about to

change its color”, given our knowledge of the situation, we are therefore justified in expecting the bottom square to change its color. According to Donnellan, this is a clear case “in which the speaker’s description of what he is referring to when he uses a name does not yield the true referent so long as we stick to what is denoted by the description he gives” (1970: 348). It is certainly true that the description associated to “Alpha” by the subject has a role when it comes to identifying its referent. This role, however, is not the one prescribed by the principle of identifying descriptions. When the speaker describes who (or what) she is referring to by a name, in fact, we are not limited (in order to make the correct identification) to those individuals that uniquely satisfy the description(s) provided by the speaker. As happens in the “child scenario”, in fact, we may well identify the individual the speaker is talking about by means of some kind of reasoning. For example, we might ask ourselves something like this: “ ‘What thing would he judge to fit those descriptions, even if it does not really do so?’ ” (349). The way in which the subject describes his intended referent, plus our knowledge of the inverted spectacles, give us all that we need to determine which is the square he is actually talking about. If we do really want to assign a referent determination role to the description associated by the subject to “Alpha”, then this must be a sort of causal role, which is different from the one prescribed by the principle under discussion.

Here is another counterexample to the principle of identifying descriptions. As we are about to see, however, its role is not limited to the criticism of that principle, but it “provides a somewhat different insight into how proper names function” (*ibid.*):

A student meets a man he takes to be the famous philosopher, J. L. Aston-Martin. Previously, the student has read some of the philosopher’s works and so has at his command descriptions such as, “the author of ‘Other Bodies’ ” and “the leading expounder of the theory of egocentric pluralism.” The meeting takes place at a party and the student engages the man in a somewhat lengthy conversation, much of it given over, it turns out, to trying to name cities over 100000 in population in descending order of altitude above sea-level. In fact, however, although the student never suspects it, the man at the party is not the famous philosopher, but someone who leads the student to have that impression. (We can even imagine that by coincidence he has the same name.) Imagine, then, a subsequent

conversation with his friends in which the student relates what happened at the party. He might begin by saying, “Last night I met J. L. Aston-Martin and talked to him for almost an hour”. To whom does he refer at this point? I strongly believe the answer should be, ‘to the famous philosopher’, and not, ‘to the man he met at the party’. What the student says is simply false; a friend ‘in the know’ would be justified in replying that he did not meet J. L. Aston-Martin, but someone who had the same name and was no more a philosopher than Milton Berle.

Suppose, however, that the audience contains no such doubting Thomases, and that the rest of party was of sufficient interest to generate several more stories about what went on. The student might use the name ‘J. L. Aston-Martin’, as it were, incidently [sic]. For example: “... and then Robinson tripped over Aston-Martin’s feet and fell flat on his face” or “I was almost the last to leave – only Aston Martin and Robinson, who was still out cold, were left.”

In these subsequent utterances to whom was the speaker referring in using the name, ‘Aston Martin?’ My inclination is to say that here it was to the man he met at the party and not to the famous philosopher. Perhaps the difference lies in the fact that in the initial utterance the speaker’s remark would only have a point if he was referring to the famous philosopher, while in the later utterances it is more natural to take him to be referring to the man at the party, since what happened there is the whole point. (Donnellan 1970: 349-50)

The “Aston-Martin scenario” is supposed to be a counterexample to the principle under discussion because the latter prescribes that “the *same* set of identifying descriptions can determine at most *one* referent” (Donnellan 1970: 351). In this example, however, “there are *two* references made” (350), even though the student associates the same set of descriptions to both his uses of “Aston-Martin”. According to Donnellan, in fact, the full set of identifying descriptions associated to the name by the student includes all those descriptions that he was willing to associate with the name *before* the party took place, plus all those that derive from the events he witnessed at the party and that incidentally involved the man he met there. The descriptions associated by the student to his uses of “Aston-Martin” are therefore the same, whether he uses the name by uttering “Last night I met J. L. Aston-Martin”, or “Robinson tripped over

Aston-Martin's feet". Despite the fact that the descriptions are the same, Donnellan's inclination is to say that in the two utterances the speaker has referred to different persons, even though the student would not be willing to acknowledge it. In the former case, "the speaker's remark would only have a point if he was referring to the famous philosopher" (Donnellan 1970: 350). In the latter, on the contrary, "it is more natural to take him to be referring to the man at the party, since what happened there is the whole point" (*ibid.*).

By considering the "experiment scenario", we have realized that the right question we should ask ourselves to identify the referent of a proper name used by a speaker is something like "What would the user of the name describe this way?". And not, as prescribed by the principle of identifying descriptions, "What uniquely fits the description provided by the speaker?". Very often these two questions receive the same answer. However, as we have seen, they need not. Moreover, the Aston-Martin scenario shows that since the same set of identifying descriptions may be associated by a speaker to two (or even more) different referents, then even the former question may not be the right one to ask in order to identify the speaker's intended referent. According to Donnellan, the ultimate question should be therefore something like this: "What would the speaker describe in this way on this occasion?", where "describe in this way" does not refer to his set of identifying descriptions, but to the predicate he ascribes to the referent" (351). If this is so, in order to identify the referent of the name used by the student in "Last night I met J. L. Aston-Martin", the correct question is this: "Who does he claim to have met at the party?". On the other hand, to identify the referent of the same name used in "Robinson tripped over Aston-Martin's feet", the right question is: "Who would he want us to believe Jones tripped over at the party?".

Donnellan is convinced that the answer to these two questions is different. However, he also acknowledges that "[h]ow we answer such questions [he has] not a general theory about" (356), even though he writes that it seems clear to him that "in some way the referent must be historically, or ... causally connected to the speech act" (*ibid.*). Obviously, something more needs to be said: Which, among the many, different, historical relations connecting speech acts to individuals, determines reference? In 1970, when "Proper names and identifying descriptions" was published, Donnellan did not see "[his] way clear to saying exactly how in general that connection goes" (*ibid.*).

As we are about to see, in fact, it was not until some years later that he provided a tentative characterization of this relation.

On closing “Proper names and identifying descriptions”, Donnellan mentions again what, in his reply to MacKay’s charge of “Humpty-Dumptying” reference, he called the *games of describing*. This is what he writes:

... we can imagine the following games: In the first a player gives a set of descriptions and the other players try to find the object in the room that best fits them. This is analogous to the role of the set of identifying descriptions in the principle I object to. In the other game the player picks out some object in the room, tries to give descriptions that characterize it uniquely and the other players attempt to discover what object he described. In the second game the problem set for the other players (the audience in the analogue) is to find out what is being described, not what best fits the descriptions. (Donnellan 1970: 356)

From Donnellan’s point of view, insofar “as definite descriptions enter into a determination of what the referent of a name is, the second game is a better analogy” (1970: 356). The second game, however, exemplifies a referential use of a definite description.⁶ This latter remark of Donnellan’s is crucial. By means of it he openly emphasizes the close parallel between proper names and descriptions used referentially. Apparently, the *historical relation* that Donnellan is looking for is what ultimately grounds reference for both proper names and descriptions used this way.

In “Speaking of nothing” the exact nature of this historical relation emerges more vividly, as Donnellan does not hesitate to call his account of proper names a theory: the *historical explanation theory*. Donnellan presents it as if it were a development of what he takes to be the “natural pre-theoretical view” (1974: 11) on the functioning of singular terms. To this regard, he writes: “if one says, for example, ‘Socrates is snub-

⁶ In a note appended to the same paper, Donnellan makes this important point again by claiming that his “account of proper names in this paper seems to [him] to make what [he] called ‘referential’ definite descriptions ... a close relative of proper names” (1970: 357 n. 8). In the introduction to his *Essays on reference, language, and mind*, he is even more explicit by writing that his views on proper names are a “natural extension” (2012: xix) of his views on definite descriptions.

nosed,' the natural view seems to me to be that the singular expression 'Socrates' is simply a device used by the speaker to pick out what he wants to talk about while the rest of the sentence expresses what property he wishes to attribute to that individual" (*ibid.*). Moreover, he adds that "[t]his can be made somewhat more precise by saying, first, that the natural view is that in using such simple sentences containing singular terms we are not saying something general about the world – that is, not saying something that would be correctly analyzed with the aid of quantifiers; and, second, that in such cases the speaker could, in all probability, have said the same thing, expressed the same proposition, with the aid of other and different singular expressions, so long as they are being used to refer to the same individual" (Donnellan 1974: 11).⁷

Donnellan's paper, however, is mainly devoted to dealing with a specific problem that *any* theory of proper names has to solve, namely, that of how to explain the semantics of true negative existence statements (i.e., "Sherlock Holmes does not exist"), and all that he writes in the way of a characterization of his historical explanation theory is the following:

The main idea is that when a speaker uses a name intending to refer to an individual and predicate something of it, successful reference will occur when there is an individual that enters into the historically correct explanation of who it is that the speaker intended to predicate something of. That individual will then be the referent and the statement made will be true or false depending upon whether it has the property designated by the predicate. (Donnellan 1974: 16)

All this is no doubt rough and sketchy. Indeed, Donnellan himself acknowledges that his statement "leaves a lot to be desired in the way of precision" (1974: 16). The main features of his theory, which he believes to have "more content than might at first sight be supposed" (*ibid.*), can be brought out with the help of this example:

⁷ Besides "Socrates", Donnellan's examples of singular expressions are proper names like "Smith", indexicals like "you" and "I", and definite descriptions like "my son" (see Donnellan 1974: 11). Even though he does not specify it in this particular occasion, it should be clear that a description such as "my son" only counts as a singular expression if it is used referentially.

Suppose someone says, “Socrates was snub-nosed,” and we ask to whom he is referring. The central idea is that this calls for a historical explanation; we search not for an individual who might best fit the speaker’s descriptions of the individual to whom he takes himself to be referring (though his descriptions are usually important data), but rather for an individual historically related to his use of the name “Socrates” on this occasion. It might be that an omniscient observer of history would see an individual related to an author of dialogues, that one of the central characters of these dialogues was modeled upon that individual, that these dialogues have been handed down and that the speaker has read translations of them, that the speaker’s now predicating snub-nosedness of something is explained by his having read those translations. (Donnellan 1974: 16)

A speaker, say S, utters the sentence “Socrates was snub-nosed”. The question, now, is: Whom does S’s use of “Socrates” refer to? Recalling what he had suggested in 1970, Donnellan points out that we must search for the individual “historically related” to S’s use of the name on this particular occasion. This time, however, he says something more about what this historical connection amounts to. To do this, he appeals to a fictional character already introduced in “Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions”: an *omniscient observer* of history “who sees the whole history of the affair” (1970: 335).⁸ Concerning the example under discussion, the omniscient observer sees that S’s utterance “is explained by” his having read certain translations of some dialogues. These dialogues were authored by someone who modeled one of their main characters, described as snub-nosed, on an individual he was “related to”. Thus, we have that by his use of “Socrates” S refers to Socrates because S’s use is historically connected to Socrates in the appropriate way, and this is so because someone else (the author of the dialogues), to whom S is (historically) connected, is (historically) connected to Socrates (see Bianchi & Bonanini 2014: 186).

Donnellan does not go into details, but it is reasonable to assume that the relation between the author and Socrates is somewhat closer than the one between S and

⁸ Joseph Almog describes the omniscient observer as “an omniscient investigator, having all the pertinent facts accessible by stipulation, who is out to survey the history of the language and of the mental life of... [the] cognizers” (2004: 394).

Socrates. Support for this last assumption comes from the following passage, where Donnellan claims that “when there is an absence of historical connection between an individual and the use of a name by a speaker, then, be the speaker’s descriptions ever so correct about a certain individual, that individual is not the referent” (1974: 18):

We might ... try to show that the historical connection is necessary by constructing a situation in which, for instance, one person begins by assuming that another is referring to a friend of his, perhaps because the descriptions seem accurate, the context is appropriate, and so forth, and who then discovers that it is practically impossible for the speaker to have been acquainted with or otherwise related to his friend. In such an event, surely confidence that the speaker was referring to the friend would be shaken despite the apparent accuracy of description or appropriateness of context. (Donnellan 1974: 18)

Acquaintance seems therefore to play a crucial role in Donnellan’s account of reference. It seems clear, however, that in the example under discussion S is not acquainted with Socrates. It is instead more plausible to suppose that the author of the dialogues was acquainted with the latter. The fact that he had a “direct” cognitive relation with the individual himself put the author in the position to use “Socrates” to refer to that individual. Donnellan’s point seems to be that S is “otherwise related” to Socrates. The idea is that through his reading of the translations of the dialogues S has gained a “vicarious” or “indirect” cognitive relation to Socrates, a relation that depends on the more basic and direct one the author had to him. This puts S, too, in a position to use “Socrates” to refer to Socrates (see Bianchi & Bonanini 2014: 186).

There is no doubt that to be acquainted with an individual is to have it in mind, in the relevant sense. So, if we agree that having a vicarious relation such as the one just described with an individual is also a way of having it in mind, we may finally call *having in mind* the historical relation that grounds proper names reference in Donnellan’s account (see Bianchi & Bonanini 2014: 188). It should be clear, however, that having an individual in mind when uttering a proper name is a necessary but not sufficient condition for reference to occur: when S utters “Socrates was snub-nosed”, in fact, she may well have in mind many other individuals besides Socrates. What is also required is that the individual in mind “explains” the use of the name on that particular

occasion. The following bi-conditional exemplifies Donnellan's account of proper names:

a₁) In using a proper name "N" a speaker *S* *refers* to an individual *e* if and only if *S*'s having *e* in mind is appropriately involved in the explanation of *S*'s use of "N".

It is important not to forget that here having an individual in mind must be understood historically, if not altogether causally. Moreover, as we are about to see by examining Alfred MacKay's objections to Donnellan's distinction between referential and attributive uses of descriptions, the speaker's expectations about her audience and its ability to identify her intended referent must find a place in the explanation mentioned on the right side of the bi-conditional (a₁).

As far as reference is concerned, therefore, Donnellan's account does not make proper names "special". On the contrary, as should already be clear, let us think about those occasions on which Donnellan openly argues for a close parallel between names and descriptions used referentially; his account of proper names reference should be extended to descriptions used this way as well. If this is so, Donnellan's conception of referential uses of definite descriptions may be formulated in exactly the same way as that put forward above for proper names:

b₁) In using a definite description "the so-and-so" referentially, a speaker *S* *refers* to an individual *e* if and only if *S*'s having *e* in mind is appropriately involved in the explanation of *S*'s use of "the so-and-so".

The following bi-conditional, on the contrary, may be used to formulate Donnellan's conception of attributive uses of definite descriptions:

c₁) In using a definite description "the so-and-so" attributively, a speaker *S* *denotes* an individual *e* if and only if *e* uniquely satisfies the predicate "so-and-so" that occurs in the description.

As emerges from bi-conditionals (a₁) and (b₁), having an individual *e* in mind is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for a speaker to use both proper names and definite descriptions to *refer* to it. But what does it mean, *exactly*, to have *e* in mind? Even though Donnellan acknowledges that it is difficult to attempt “any general answer to this important problem” (1978: 48), in “Speaking of nothing”, as we have seen, he puts forward a tentative answer: the speaker *S* has *e* in mind if and only if she is acquainted (whether directly or indirectly) with it. All of this, however, is admittedly rough and sketchy. Moreover, it does little more than shift the question to what exactly it takes for *S* to be acquainted with *e*.

One way to answer the former question is this: *S* has *e* in mind if and only if she can entertain *singular thoughts* about *e*. If we stick to Russell (see Russell 1911), singular thoughts have three fundamental properties: they are *object-dependent*, since if we think this way about *e* then *e* occurs as a constituent of our thought; they are *non-descriptive*, since our thought cannot be described as a conceptual complex which is satisfied by *e*; and they are *direct*, since we can only think singularly about *e* if we are connected with it by a direct relation. An important problem that arises as soon as we consider these thoughts concerns the way in which they are generated. To deal with this difficulty we must clarify their third property. In other words, we must characterize the direct relation that is supposed to connect *S* and *e* so that the former can think singular thoughts about the latter. And here we come to the other question: the standard way to characterize such a relation, in fact, is that of appealing to the so-called *Theory of Acquaintance*. Those who make this move pose some sort of “epistemic constraint” on *S*’s ability to entertain singular thoughts about *e*. According to them, in fact, *S* can think singularly about *e* if and only if the former is acquainted with the latter. Acquaintance is therefore the direct relation mentioned by introducing the third property of singular thoughts. Now, depending on how much this epistemic constraint is relaxed, that is, depending on what we are willing to call *acquaintance*, this theory divides into numerous variants.

For example, those who subscribe to the most stringent epistemic constraint identify acquaintance with direct perceptual contact. According to them, the only individuals we are acquainted with are those that we perceive (or, at least, that we have perceived in the past). If this is so, direct perception is the only kind of relation that allows speakers to think singular thoughts about individuals.

Others are willing to relax the epistemic constraint on singular thoughts. Basically, they believe that in order for S to entertain singular thoughts about *e* it is not necessary for the former to perceive the latter directly; rather, it is sufficient for S to perceive it *indirectly*, by being in causal contact with some of *e*'s effects. If they are on the right track, even though he did not have a telescope powerful enough to see it directly, by observing the perturbations of Mercury's orbit provoked by Neptune, Urbain Le Verrier was acquainted with the latter, and so he could entertain singular thoughts about it. According to this version of the theory, which Robin Jeshion calls *Causal Analysis of Acquaintance*, the range of individuals we are acquainted with extends far beyond those we perceive (or that we have perceived in the past), by also including those we come into contact with causally (see Jeshion 2014).

If we keep on relaxing the epistemic constraint we arrive at what Jeshion calls *Testimonial Instrumentalism*. Those who argue for this thesis believe that even though S has never perceived *e*, she may nevertheless be acquainted with it as long as the former is at the end of a linguistic communication chain for a singular term introduced for the latter by someone who has perceived it whether directly or indirectly (see Jeshion 2012: 106 and 2014).

If this is so, S is acquainted with Jones, a friend of S's brother she has never personally met, but whom he has told her several things about by using "Jones" or some other type of singular term. The fact that S has been in contact with an occurrence of "Jones" used by her brother to say something about Jones allows S to think singularly about the former, and so, since thinking singularly about him amounts to having him in mind, in the relevant sense, it allows S to use a proper name (perhaps the same one used by her brother) or a definite description to refer to Jones.

It is interesting to point out that many contemporary philosophers who believe that the cognitive dimension of the speaker plays a crucial role in explaining *reference* embrace Testimonial Instrumentalism. Just to give some examples, this is what François Recanati writes, by approvingly quoting David Lewis, when it comes to characterizing the relation of acquaintance:

The paradigm is, of course, perceptual acquaintance, but the notion of acquaintance can be generalized "in virtue of the analogy between relations of perceptual acquaintance and other, more tenuous, relations

of epistemic rapport. There are relations that someone bears to me when I get a letter from him, or I watch the swerving of a car he is driving, or I read his biography, or I hear him mentioned by name, or I investigate the clues he has left at the scene of his crime. In each case there are causal chains from him to me of a sort which would permit a flow of information ... I call such relations as these relations of acquaintance. (Recanati 2012: Ch. 3 n. 5; see also Lewis 1999: 380-1)

And this is what Almog writes in *Referential Mechanics* to explain what it takes for a speaker to have someone or something in mind:

The manners of coming-in [mind] are many, but all involve the object: perhaps I see it directly ... Perhaps you show me a photograph of it or I get an email from it or radio waves from it. Perhaps I see perturbations of the orbit of another object caused by the unseen perturber and that is how the perturbing object comes to be on my mind. Perhaps I see footprints it–the object–left 65 million years ago in soft volcanic ash. Perhaps I receive a name of it–for example, “Aristotle,” itself not the original Greek name but a transmuted or transliterated or badly transcribed version. Perhaps I receive a referential description itself predicatively incorrect of Aristotle but originating in-Aristotle. (Almog 2014: 68)

Setting aside the numerous (and profound) differences, both Recanati’s and Almog’s accounts of proper names are based on the intuition that their referent determination depends crucially on the cognitive state of the speaker who uses them. Moreover, as emerges vividly from the passages quoted, both of them adopt a very loose epistemic constraint on acquaintance/having in mind: indeed, these two passages seem to be the real proclamation of Testimonial Instrumentalism, of which Donnellan’s example of the speaker who can use “Socrates” to refer to Socrates because he has previously read certain dialogues containing occurrences of this name that refer to him seems to be nothing but an early and sketchy version.

In this regard, however, it is important to make a clarification. We have said that the contemporary speaker S in Donnellan’s example is indirectly acquainted with Socrates in virtue of his having read certain dialogues authored by someone else who used the

name “Socrates” to refer to him. But all of this is absolutely incidental. In the passage quoted from Donnellan’s paper, in fact, there is no trace whatsoever of the fact that the proper name “Socrates” actually occurred in those dialogues. It is certainly plausible to suppose that this is the case, as we have done by commenting on the example, but Donnellan’s idea seems to be that to use “Socrates” to refer to Socrates all that is needed is to be at the end of a communication chain for *some* expression – proper names, definite descriptions (used referentially) or personal pronouns – the use of which is explained by the author’s having Socrates in mind. Strictly speaking, S may turn out to be indirectly acquainted with Socrates even though the author of the dialogues used only (referential) definite descriptions to write about him. We can also imagine that the contemporary speaker is the one who has actually introduced the name “Socrates” for the individual she began to think singularly about after reading those dialogues. A similar situation is considered by Almog at the end of the passage quoted above, whereas David Kaplan recalls a personal conversation where Donnellan himself suggested such a possibility (in relation to the name “Aristotle”) to him:

Donnellan once said to me that he could imagine the name “Aristotle” having been first introduced in the Middle Ages by scholars who previously had used only definite descriptions to write and speak about Aristotle. According to Donnellan, these scholars may well have had Aristotle in mind, and through their conversations, through the referential use of definite descriptions and other devices, passed the epistemic state of having Aristotle in mind from one to another. Thus they were properly situated from an epistemic point of view to be able to introduce a proper name. (Kaplan 2012: 142)

Anyway, it is easy to say what makes Testimonial Instrumentalism so appealing. An important advantage of causal theories of reference is that they provide an easy non-descriptivist explanation of how speakers who are temporally and spatially far from their intended referents actually succeed in referring to them by using proper names (or other singular terms). Now, if we stick to Recanati, Almog and Donnellan in saying that an occurrence of a singular term used by S refers to *e* in virtue of the fact that S’s use of the expression is explained by her having *e* in mind, then it clearly follows that, if we want to preserve that advantage, we must explain how it happens that S has *e* in mind

even though she is temporally and spatially far from it. As we have seen, Testimonial Instrumentalism is specifically designed to satisfy this need.

If the reconstruction of Donnellan's account of proper names suggested above is on the right track, then his historical explanation theory is a clear instance of an *individualistic theory* of reference, namely, an approach "in which each particular use of a name has its semantic referent determined solely by the speaker's state of mind and its relation to the referent" (McKinsey 2011: 327). According to this view, once someone has an individual in mind, in order to refer to it she may use *in principle* whatever proper name (or definite description) she prefers. The referential relation that connects the name (or the description) in question with the speaker's intended referent is in fact grounded on the cognitive contact that the former entertains with the latter, with the specification that it is this type of cognitive contact that explains the speaker's use of the expression.

Obviously, there is no denying that to refer to an individual speakers most likely use either proper names that others in their linguistic community have previously (and successfully) used to refer to the same individual, or definite descriptions they believe to be satisfied by their intended referents. What is important to realize, however, is that this has nothing to do with the semantics of these expressions. Rather, this speaker behavior is due to practical considerations concerning communication: as Kaplan writes in describing individualistic (*subjectivist*, in his terminology) semantics, for the speaker "it may be prudent to try to coordinate with the meanings others have assigned, but this is only a practical matter" (1989: 600).

Donnellan discusses these issues, though in relation to referential descriptions rather than proper names, in "Putting Humpty Dumpty together again", where he rejects MacKay's objection according to which he had given a "Humpty-Dumpty" account of reference. Before considering MacKay's criticism in detail, however, let us quote a passage from Almog's "Referential uses and the foundations of direct reference" where all we have said so far is linked together:

Donnellan's idea of direct reference as referentiality unifies the cases of proper names, demonstrative [sic] and definite descriptions. What is at stake for Donnellan is not so much the morphology of the specific expression used but the underlying cognitive relation between

the cognizer and the cognized object. In the party, I have in mind a given object, Sir Alfred, before any linguistic activity. I can now use a whole spectrum of expressions to get at what I am already cognitively bound to. I may say “he”; I may say “she” (if Sir Alfred is in female attire); I may say “Sir Alfred,” using his correct name, or “George,” using a false name some prankster tossed to me while earlier pointing out to me Sir Alfred; and I may use a whole variety of descriptions, for example “the theologian speaking loudly about his Catholic faith,” or “an eloquent but slightly tipsy theologian standing to the right of Margaret,” even if Sir Alfred is no theologian, et cetera. Through and through, the one underlying fact is that I am wired to this man by an information link from him to me – to my cognitive system – and the expression(s) I am about to use ride back on that wire, externalizing the cognitive contact already made. (Almog 2012: 181)

Two years after the publication of “Reference and definite descriptions”, MacKay charged Donnellan with giving a “Humpty Dumpty” account of reference, tending “to collapse referring into intending to refer” (1968: 200).⁹ Donnellan’s reply deserves

⁹ In Lewis Carroll’s *Through the looking-glass*, we find the following exchange between Alice and Humpty Dumpty:

“There are three hundred and sixty-four days when you might get un-birthday presents.” “Certainly,” said Alice. “And only one for birthday presents, you know. There’s glory for you!”

“I don’t know what you mean by ‘glory,’ ” Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. “Of course you don’t – till I tell you. I meant ‘there’s a nice knockdown argument for you!’ ” “But ‘glory’ doesn’t mean ‘a nice knockdown argument,’ ” Alice objected. “When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean neither more nor less.” “The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.” “The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master – that’s all”.

Here Humpty Dumpty is explaining to Alice his personal (and extremely subjectivist) theory of meaning. According to the latter, he is the master of the meaning of his words. Whenever he uses a word, in fact, its meaning is determined by his intentions. If he intends to say “a nice knockdown argument” by using the word “glory”, the only thing he has to do is to use “glory” with that intention. According to MacKay,

special attention, for it reveals an important part of what the *explanation* mentioned on the right side of the bi-conditionals (a₁) and (b₁) amounts to.

First of all, however, let us briefly consider MacKay's objections. Despite appearances, he does not deny the distinction between attributive and referential uses of descriptions. As a matter of fact, Donnellan writes that MacKay's view can even "be shown to presuppose the distinction" (1968: 204). On the contrary, MacKay casts doubt on Donnellan's idea according to which by using a description referentially a speaker may succeed in referring to someone or something that does not fit it. MacKay's main points are summarized by Donnellan himself in the following way:

- A. Referring is one way among others of making it known what a speaker is talking about.
- B. In using a definite description to refer, one succeeds in referring only to something that fits the description used.
- C. What one is talking about, however, may fail altogether to fit the description used.
- D. In that case, in view of (B), one does not succeed in referring to what one is talking about, although one may succeed in making it knowable what one is talking about. (Donnellan 1968: 207; see also MacKay 1968: 197-9)

To determine what *referring* consists in, MacKay suggests two different approximations. According to the former, "referring is making known (to our audience) what we are talking about" (1968: 197). But this is immediately ruled out for it makes "the question of whether or not a person is referring depend rather too much upon his audience, and not enough upon him and what he says" (*ibid.*).¹⁰ On the other hand, we

however, such a theory of meaning is absurd, for if it were true, then the words used by a speaker would be absolutely irrelevant to what she meant by them. As we are about to see, MacKay's point is that Donnellan's conception of referential uses of definite descriptions inevitably drags him to the same absurd conclusion.

¹⁰ In this regard, MacKay points out that in Donnellan's scenarios where the speaker uses a description to refer to something that does not fit it we must distinguish four different elements that become important as soon as we try to characterize the relation of *reference*: "(1) the speaker's intentions; (2) the ostensible referring expression used (*o.r.e*); (3) the object of intended reference; and (4) the audience" (MacKay

can take referring as “making *knowable* (not known) to our audience what we are talking about” (MacKay 1968: 197). Even though MacKay believes this latter option to be far better than the former, he points out that referring cannot be *defined* this way either, for it is merely one way among others of accomplishing such a goal. To put it in a taxonomic way, “making knowable what we are talking about is the *genus* of which referring is only one among many *species*” (*ibid.*).

As far as definite descriptions are concerned, MacKay claims that referring “is making knowable what we are talking about, *by way* of using an expression which correctly describes the object in question” (198).¹¹ If the description does not apply to anything; or if it does not correctly describe our intended referent, then we have failed to refer, even though we may have succeeded in making knowable to our audience what we were talking about.¹²

MacKay believes that in “Reference and definite descriptions” this fact does not emerge because all the cases of speakers using descriptions referentially to say (ask, order) something about someone who does not fit them are instances of what he calls “near misses” (200).¹³ In the “usurper scenario”, for example (see Donnellan 1966: 290-1), in order to ask whether the individual the speaker knows to be a usurper is in the counting house, Donnellan does not use an “outrageously inappropriate” (MacKay 1968: 200) description. Rather, he opts for “the king”. Since the usurper actually acts as if he were the king, dresses as though he were the king and, above all, everyone (except

1968: 198-9). From MacKay’s point of view, the crucial flaw in Donnellan’s account “is to upgrade the importance of (1) and (4), and downgrade the importance of (2)” (199).

¹¹ Wettstein and Devitt have a similar view on the matter (see, for example, Wettstein 1981 and 1983; and Devitt 1981a, 1981b and 2004).

¹² Before concluding his paper, MacKay reiterates this important point: in those cases involving the use of definite descriptions, “the feature which distinguishes referring as a way of making it knowable, from other ways, is that we accomplish our aim by way of using an expression which fits the object” (1968: 201). Failure of fit, MacKay writes, “is failure to refer, and failure to refer normally ensures that we do not accomplish our aim” (*ibid.*).

¹³ In his reply to MacKay’s charge, Donnellan quite correctly points out that not all the examples he proposed in “Reference and definite descriptions” are instances of near misses (see Donnellan 1968: 208 n. 9). Neither the trial scenario where we mistakenly describe the innocent Jones as “Smith’s murderer”, nor the scenario where the speaker refers to a rock as “the man carrying a walking stick”, in fact, can be described as near misses in MacKay’s sense.

for the speaker) believes him to be the king, then there is a sense in which the individual intended by the speaker is not very far from fitting the description in question. By means of “the king”, the speaker may easily “let his audience know (*not* refer to) which man he is talking about” (*ibid.*).

MacKay wonders whether Donnellan could have sustained his claim by appealing to examples in which the speaker’s intended reference is very far from fitting the description used.¹⁴ Let us take the “table scenario” again (see footnote 3 above). Suppose that there are both a book and a rock left on the table. Suppose further that the speaker utters something like: “Bring me the rock on the table”, intending to issue an order about the book. The question, now, is: “Does he really refer to a book?” (see MacKay 1968: 200). MacKay’s answer is negative. Not only does the speaker not succeed in referring to that book by using “the rock”, but since the definite description

¹⁴ In “Reference and definite descriptions”, Donnellan substantiates his distinction between referential and attributive uses of descriptions in several ways. As we have seen in detail, one is this: if the speaker uses “the so-and-so” referentially to say something about an individual *e*, then she may have said something true about *e* even though neither it, nor anything else, is so-and-so. On the contrary, if the speaker uses the description attributively, if nothing is so-and-so, then she inevitably fails to say anything true. Donnellan acknowledges that this latter claim is “too rigid in relation to our practice” (1968: 209). Let us take the crime-scene scenario again. This time suppose that Smith actually died of natural causes. Moreover, suppose that he had been seriously injured by an assailant right before his death. Since all the evidence leading the speaker to attribute insanity to whoever killed Smith (by using “Smith’s murderer”) is still legitimate to prove the insanity of the assailant, then there is a sense in which “the speaker has scored a ‘near miss’ ” (*ibid.*). Even though the speaker makes an attributive use of a description that is not fit by anybody, it seems that she has stated something true. The point is that near misses of attributive uses of descriptions seem to blur Donnellan’s distinction, at least in connection with the difference in truth-value of the speaker’s utterance when nobody fits the description used. According to Donnellan, however, this is not the case. There are in fact “two sources of near misses, one for the attributive use and another for the referential” (*ibid.*). A near miss occurs with an attributive use when nothing exactly fits the description used, “but some individual or other does fit a description in some sense close in meaning to the one used” (*ibid.*). This sort of near miss is quite different from that involving referential uses. In these cases, in fact, the speaker slightly mistakenly describes a specific individual she wants to refer to. The idea is that only in the referential use can a speaker have “ ‘missed by a mile,’ because only that use involves a particular entity that the description either fits neatly, just misses, or misses wildly” (209-10). From Donnellan’s perspective therefore, far from blurring his distinction, the near miss phenomenon involving attributive uses “helps one to see what the distinction is” (201).

“the rock” is not even a near miss for the description “the book”, most likely, the speaker does not make knowable to her audience which of the two objects left on the table she is talking about. On the contrary, MacKay writes that he sees “no way Donnellan can avoid admitting that the speaker has, in this case, referred to the book” (MacKay 1968: 200). And he is right, for according to Donnellan this is “a perfectly clear case of referring to a book” (Donnellan 1968: 210). From MacKay’s perspective, however, this claim leads Donnellan into trouble. If one can refer to a book by using “the rock”, in fact, “then one can refer to a book by using *any* [description], and so the actual [description] used becomes irrelevant” (MacKay 1968: 201). Clearly, this is nothing but the absurd conception of referring put forward by Humpty Dumpty.

Donnellan replies to MacKay that his position is not open to this *reductio*. In particular, he points out that, even though we can imagine a situation where a speaker succeeds in referring to a book by using “the rock”, we cannot imagine this happening in *any* scenario. According to Donnellan, in fact, “it is only in some circumstances that we can imagine a speaker referring to a book by using the definite description, ‘the rock’ – namely, when he really does intend to refer to something which is in fact a book, by using the definite description, ‘the rock’ ” (*ibid.*). Circumstances like these, however, are not so easy to come by. Forming the intention of using “the rock” to refer to a book, in fact, is not such a simple matter as it may appear at first sight.

In this regard, Donnellan writes that intentions in general “are essentially connected with expectations” (1968: 212),¹⁵ and in particular, as speaking is always communication-oriented, a speaker’s intention is essentially connected with expectations “about his audience and their ability to grasp his intention” (*ibid.*).¹⁶ This

¹⁵ In a footnote appended to this very passage, Donnellan recognizes that the connection between intentions and expectations is much more complicated, and so in what follows he probably gives an oversimplified view of the matter. What we can intend to do “not only depends upon expectation, but also upon the possibility of other means of accomplishing the same end and upon incentives” (1968: 212 n. 10). A man in the water after a shipwreck may perhaps genuinely intend to swim a hundred miles to shore, if he believes that this is his only hope of survival, even though he (rationally) cannot expect to make it. Things seem to be different, Donnellan writes, for an ordinary man at the beach: Can he really have the genuine intention of swimming a hundred miles? Donnellan answers that he cannot.

¹⁶ Concerning definite descriptions, the connection between intentions and expectations is insisted upon in “Speaker Reference, Descriptions and Anaphora”, where Donnellan argues against an account of

is what Donnellan writes on the matter:

Ask someone to flap his arms with the intention of flying. In response he can certainly wave his arms up and down, just as one can easily on command say the words “It’s cold here.” But this is not to do it with the intention of flying. Nor does it seem to me that a normal adult in normal circumstances can flap his arms and in doing so really have that intention.... Similarly, one cannot say entirely out of the blue, “It’s cold here” and mean “It’s hot here” [W]e can explain this by the impossibility of having the right intention in such circumstances. To the next person who comes in the room I say, “It’s cold here.” I have no expectations, any more than Humpty Dumpty did about Alice, that the person will construe my words in a novel way. Could I really intend that “cold” should mean “hot”? Or would my performance not be so much arm-flapping? (Donnellan 1968: 212)¹⁷

In this passage Donnellan quotes the famous challenge put forward by Ludwig Wittgenstein of saying “It’s cold here” to mean “It’s hot here”. This shows that what he writes about intentions in general holds for referential intentions as well. Since we do not expect to fly away by flapping our arms, then we cannot do this with the intention of flying. In exactly the same way, since we do not (usually) expect our audience to interpret our words differently from what the common practice has established, then we cannot utter “It’s cold here” with the *genuine* intention of saying “It’s hot here”. But what about MacKay’s modified table scenario?

In the light of what we have said, Donnellan’s claim that the speaker’s using “the rock” is a “perfectly clear case of referring to a book” seems to be a bit hasty. This in

reference that “ignores the speaker’s intentions toward his audience with respect to what he has in mind” (1978: 50).

¹⁷ A similar point is anticipated in Donnellan’s encyclopedia entry “Reasons and Causes”. This is what he writes: “in the case of many intentions it seems necessary for a person to have some want and belief connected in the pattern pointed out if he is to have formed the intention. That is, while some things may be desired for their own sake when a person forms the intention to get them (in which case no further want is involved), it does not seem possible for a person to form the intention to go to the store without some further want which he thinks will possibly be satisfied by going. And this, in turn, will necessitate a belief connecting the want with the intention” (1967: 88).

fact would be true only on condition that the speaker *expected and intended* her audience to pick out the book after her use of “the rock”. However, this is not something that happens in standard contexts where both the speaker and the hearer share a common linguistic practice, which is “*usually* required for speakers to have the right expectations” (Donnellan 1968: 212), and, let us say, a similar cluster of information about whatever the former wants to talk about to the latter. This is why we do not refer to a book by saying to the assistant we meet in the bookshop: “We would like to buy a rock”. We do not expect that he will interpret our words outside the context of established practice, which suggests to us that if we want to buy a book the best strategy is to use “a book” instead of “a rock”. We can certainly imagine rather extreme situations in which a speaker really does intend to use “the rock” to refer to a book (perceptual mistakes, for example),¹⁸ but these, as we have already said, are very rare. Far from being irrelevant, therefore, the descriptive content of a definite description, *even when it is used referentially*, “is clearly relevant ... and not something that a speaker can ignore” (214). Donnellan’s conception of reference is not on a par with that put forward by Humpty Dumpty.

In a footnote appended to the penultimate paragraph of “Putting Humpty Dumpty together again”, Donnellan characterizes the difference between referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions in terms of the difference between two *games of describing* (see Donnellan 1968: 214 n. 12). I have already presented these games by considering Donnellan’s arguments against the principle of identifying descriptions. However, what we have seen so far allows us to reach a deeper comprehension of what Donnellan has in mind by means of this analogy. As we have said, according to Donnellan the second game recalls a referential use of a definite description. In playing this game, the speaker focuses her attention on a specific individual that is going to be

¹⁸ Donnellan himself provides an example of a situation of this kind: “suppose there is a rock on my shelf that has been carefully carved to resemble a book and that I know the person I am speaking to cannot recognize it for what it is. I say to him, ‘Bring me the book with the blue binding.’ It seems at least plausible to say that I referred to a rock” (1968: 214). The usurper scenario is another example of this sort. Even though both the speaker and the hearer share the same linguistic practice, according to which “the king” describes the only individual who has come to the throne in a legitimate way, the former exploits the fact that the latter is not aware that the individual he believes to be the king is in fact an impostor to refer to him by using “the king”.

the subject of her discourse. The goal of the game is to make the interlocutor co-focus with her on that very individual by using *any* definite description that may suit the purpose. Most likely, the “best” description will be one that correctly describes the speaker’s intended referent. However, as we have seen, this is not always true. Indeed, a good player knows when to drop a correct description for a wrong one that nevertheless gives her more chance of achieving the goal of the game (see, for example, the usurper scenario). The first game, on the other hand, recalls an attributive use of a description. In this case, the speaker does not have any individual in mind as the subject of her discourse. This is why the goal of the latter game is radically different from that of the former. The speaker’s task is not to make her interlocutor co-focus with her on someone or something; rather, it is to provide the latter with a definite description, leaving to her the search for the individual that uniquely or best (as we know, in fact, near misses may happen with attributive uses as well) fits the expression.

All this makes Donnellan’s account of proper names (a little) less surprising. To say that in principle we can use whatever name we want to refer to an individual does not mean that, in every circumstance, we succeed in doing it by using the first name that comes to mind. If S wants to tell S₁ that Napoleon lives in Paris, and S knows that S₁ has never used, let us say, “Socrates” to refer to Napoleon, S will probably not succeed in saying anything about Napoleon by uttering in front of S₁ “Socrates lives in Paris”. The reason is that, as happens in the book/rock case examined above, S cannot expect that S₁ will interpret “Socrates” outside the context of established practice shared in their linguistic community, where “Socrates” has never been (regularly) used by anybody as a name for Napoleon.

1.3 Donnellan’s distinction and Kripke’s methodological arguments

We have seen that according to Donnellan, when S utters “The so-and-so is G” intending to say that an individual *e* is G, she succeeds in referring to it even if nothing (or more than one thing) is so-and-so, provided that S *expects* her interlocutor to pick out the former’s intended referent by using “the so-and-so”. But what about the truth-value of what S says? Before “Speaker reference, description and anaphora”, where

Donnellan clearly argues for the semantic relevance of his distinction between attributive and referential uses of descriptions, he had hesitated to say that what S utters is true if and only if the individual she has in mind when using “the so-and-so” is G, false otherwise. Saul Kripke was the first to point out that it is rather unclear whether Donnellan’s truth conditions for statements containing referential descriptions actually differ from Russell’s. Donnellan certainly claims that by using “the so-and-so” S may refer to the individual she has in mind and that in uttering “The so-and-so is G” S may say something true *of* this very individual (see Donnellan 1966: 298, 300 and 1968: 206, 209), but “if we ask, ‘Yes, but was the statement [S] made true?’, Donnellan would hedge” (Kripke 1972: 261).

Perhaps Kripke is right in saying that in the Sixties Donnellan did not clearly depart from Russell’s truth conditions for statements containing definite descriptions; however, this departure emerges vividly some years later, when Donnellan writes that the truth or falsity of an utterance containing a referential definite description is “a function of... the properties of the person or thing the speaker has in mind” (1978: 61).

Even though the main target of Donnellan’s criticism is Strawson, who “fails to make the distinction between the referential and the attributive use and mixes together truths about each (together with some things that are false)” (Donnellan 1966: 297), Kripke reads “Reference and definite descriptions” as if it were a direct attack on Russell’s theory of descriptions. From his point of view, in fact, Donnellan directs our attention to “a phenomenon which he alleges to be inexplicable on a Russell account of English definite descriptions” (Kripke 1977: 264-5). The phenomenon Kripke is talking about is that in some circumstances we may succeed in referring to an individual by using “the so-and-so” even though there is no so-and-so, or the unique so-and-so is not the one we have in mind when we use the description. Donnellan explains this phenomenon by appealing to his (semantically significant) attributive/referential distinction. In contrast, Kripke wishes to explain this very phenomenon from a *pragmatic* point of view, relying on the two technical notions of *semantic referent* and *speaker’s referent*.

This is how Kripke defines the semantic referent of a designator: “[i]f a speaker has a designator in his idiolect, certain conventions of his idiolect (given various facts about the world) determine the referent in the idiolect: that I call the *semantic referent* of the

designator” (Kripke 1977: 263). On the other hand, he writes that the speaker’s referent of a designator is the object “the speaker wishes to talk about, on a given occasion, and believes fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent of the designator” (264). Moreover, he adds that the speaker “uses the designator with the intention of making an assertion about the object in question (which may not really be the semantic referent, if the speaker’s belief that it fulfills the appropriate semantic conditions is in error)” (*ibid.*).

Kripke provides a test “for [an] alleged counterexample to a linguistic proposal” (1977: 264). Let us say that T is a theory by which we wish to explain the functioning of a designator D in a language L. We would like to establish whether a particular phenomenon P that arises in L is a counterexample for T in L. In order to do so, we set up another language L₁ identical to L except for the fact that T in L₁ is true by definition. If P arises in L₁ as well, then P cannot disprove the hypothesis that T is correct in L. This test obviously does not guarantee that T is correct in L. It merely points out that P cannot be counted as a counterexample for T in L. Of course there is always the possibility of finding another counterexample for T in L.

Anyway, let T be Russell’s theory, D a definite description, L English and P the phenomenon pointed out by Donnellan. Following Kripke, let us consider a community where people speak an *R*-language (L₁ in our test) relative to which Russell’s theory of descriptions is true by definition: namely, the semantic referent of a definite description is the unique individual that satisfies the predicate occurring in it and every sentence of the form “The so-and-so is G” is true if and only if the semantic referent of “the so-and-so” is G, false if either “the so-and-so” has no semantic referent or its semantic referent is not G. To put things in Donnellan’s terms, in an *R*-language community definite descriptions are used attributively, and so, in this community, the only semantic relation that connects uses of definite descriptions to individuals is that of denotation.

From Kripke’s point of view, *R*-language speakers are surely “no more infallible than we [are]” (*ibid.*), and so they too may find themselves mistakenly thinking that a particular individual, the one whom they want to predicate “G”, is the only so-and-so, even though there is actually no so-and-so. If this is so, just as English speakers do in the same situation, *R*-language speakers will probably utter “The so-and-so is G”, in the mistaken belief that the individual they want to predicate “G” of satisfies the conditions

for being the semantic referent of “the so-and-so”.

This should show that since the phenomenon pointed out by Donnellan emerges in this hypothetical language as well, the fact that it arises in English “can be no argument that English is not an [R-]language” (Kripke 1977: 264.). Moreover, the speaker’s/semantic referent apparatus seems to be well suited to give an account of the situation without involving any “unwarranted” (271) ambiguity. Indeed, even though “the so-and-so” has no semantic referent, a speaker who erroneously believes of a particular individual that it is the only so-and-so may well succeed in (speaker’s-) referring to it, and perhaps in making known to her audience that this very individual is the one she wishes to say that it is G. But this is a matter for a pragmatic analysis and does not have anything to do with the semantics of definite descriptions.

It is not entirely clear whether this linguistic test returns what Kripke in fact claims. Michael Devitt, for example, provides some reasons that may cast doubt on this. He is in fact convinced that the phenomenon pointed out by Donnellan *would not* arise in a community of R-language speakers. The reason is supposed to be that among them “there is no convention... of using definite [descriptions] to express singular thoughts” (Devitt 2004: 287). When an English speaker wants to say *of* a specific individual she has in mind that it is G, she may decide to use a definite description, uttering something like “The so-and-so is G”. On the other hand, when an R-language speaker is in the same situation she will probably not use a definite description: in this hypothetical language, in fact, there is no convention that allows her to use this kind of designator in order to say something about a specific individual. The only convention (the Russellian one) concerning definite descriptions in R-language only compels its speakers to use them if they want to say something general about the world. Of course these speakers may want to say something about a specific individual they have in mind, but in this case they will most likely choose a demonstrative or a pronoun, instead of a definite description. Since R-language speakers would behave differently from English ones, and the phenomenon described by Donnellan would not arise in their linguistic community, Devitt comes straight to the conclusion that “English is simply Donnellan English” (*ibid.*), namely, that in English definite descriptions actually can be used either attributively or referentially.

Devitt’s considerations openly contrast Stephen Neale’s argument to the effect that

the semantics of definite descriptions should not be complicated by positing semantically distinct quantificational and referential interpretations of these expressions (see Neale 1990: 87-8). This is the scenario set up by Neale. Everybody knows that Smith is the only student taking Jones' seminar. At the end of the seminar, Jones throws a party and Smith is the only one who turns up. Now, when asked some days later whether his party was well attended, Jones answers: "Well, everyone taking my seminar turned up", intending to inform his interlocutor that Smith attended. According to Neale, in the same way as the possibility of such a scenario clearly should not lead us to posit a semantically distinct referential interpretation of universal quantifiers, the fact that by means of definite descriptions speakers may succeed in communicating singular thoughts about individuals (Donnellan's phenomenon) should not persuade us to posit an extra (semantically relevant) referential role besides their usual quantificational/denotational one.

According to Devitt, however, there is a crucial difference between Neale's scenario and those set up by Donnellan to introduce referential uses of descriptions. Contrary to what happens for universal quantifiers, for which there is no regular use of them to express singular thoughts, and only rather extreme stage settings may allow speakers to use them for this purpose, definite descriptions are instead *regularly* used by English-speakers in their everyday speech to convey singular thoughts about individuals they have in mind. This regularity is strong evidence that there is a *convention* of using definite descriptions this way, and from Devitt's point of view this convention "is semantic, as semantic as the one for an attributive use" (2004: 283).

Marga Reimer makes a similar point by means of an analogy with so-called *dead metaphors* (see Reimer 1998: 96). Here is Reimer's reasoning, which is approvingly quoted by Devitt. Let us suppose that someone wants to claim that there are no dead metaphors in English. The idea is that we may resist this claim by citing the following (alleged) counterexample: "I am incensed". The English verb "to incense", in fact, once had just one literal meaning, namely, *to make fragrant with incense*. After a while, people began to use it metaphorically to mean *to make very angry*. Due to frequent and systematic uses of it to mean *to make very angry*, however, what was originally a mere metaphorical meaning has now been turned into a literal one. So, nowadays, "to incense" has two distinct literal meanings, and what was originally a metaphor is now

dead. The supporter of the thesis according to which there are no dead metaphors in English may reply by setting up something similar to Kripke's test (let us call it TEST). This time, T is the thesis according to which there are no dead metaphors in language L; D is the verb "to incense"; L is English and P is the fact that English-speakers regularly use "to incense" to mean both *to make very angry* and *to make fragrant with incense*. Following Kripke's test, let us take a language L_1 identical to English (L in TEST) except for the fact that T in L_1 is true by definition. The idea is that even L_1 -speakers may well intend to use "to incense" to mean *to make very angry*. All that they need, in fact, is to pragmatically derive such a metaphorical meaning from the literal one (*to make fragrant with incense*) by applying some sort of Gricean derivation. Conclusion: since the phenomenon P emerges in L_1 as well, where T is true by definition, then the fact that it emerges among English-speakers does not count as an argument against the thesis according to which there are no dead metaphors in English.

The problem with TEST is that if it were correct, it would demonstrate too much. As a matter of fact, TEST does not just prove that the metaphorical meaning of "to incense" is still alive, but since analogous tests may well be used against any other alleged example of dead metaphors, then TEST may be used to refute the existence of "an entire class of expressions" (Reimer 1998: 98). All this, however, is clearly absurd, since "surely the English language does contain dead metaphors" (*ibid.*). From Reimer's point of view, TEST's crucial mistake is that it implicitly denies that when an expression is standardly used to mean such-and-such, this also "suggests (even if it does not establish) that it can be used – literally – to mean such-and-such" (*ibid.*). In a community where "to incense" is not regularly used to mean *to make very angry*, it is plausible that on those rare occasions where speakers use that verb with such a non-standard (metaphorical) meaning, the latter is actually pragmatically derived by audiences from its literal one *via* a Gricean derivation. In contrast, in "a linguistic community (such as [the English one]) where such use is standard, it is plausible to suppose that the intended meaning [*to make very angry*] ... would be grasped immediately" (*ibid.*), without having to rely at all on pragmatic derivations of any sort.

The considerations put forward above apply to definite descriptions as well. The important point, in fact, is not that English-speakers *can* use these expressions to convey singular thoughts about the individuals they have in mind, which is something

that even *R*-language speakers can do. The important point is that this is a *standard* use of these expressions. And according to Reimer, if “a certain type of expression (*e*) is *standardly* used as a referring expression . . . , that surely suggests that it has at least one interpretation according to which it *is* a referring expression” (1998: 97). The referential reading of certain uses of definite descriptions is therefore something that an audience “grasps” immediately, to use Reimer’s words, and not something that, as Kripke suggests, must be pragmatically derived from their quantificational/denotational readings.

The points made by both Devitt and Reimer seem to be quite reasonable.¹⁹ Indeed, they seem to derive directly from the way in which Kripke sets up his test. However, Kripke’s entire reasoning in “Speaker’s reference and semantic reference” against the semantic relevance of Donnellan’s distinction is not as unproblematic as is commonly assumed. For the sake of the discussion, therefore, let us concede to Kripke that his test returns what he wants and proceed in examining this reasoning.

Kripke is convinced that none of the numerous examples proposed by Donnellan that we have considered above provides any concrete evidence in favor of Donnellan’s view that definite descriptions are apt to perform two different semantic tasks, so to speak:

¹⁹ The considerations put forward by Devitt and Reimer reported above strengthen Donnellan’s point on the semantic relevance of his distinction against Kripke’s criticism. Devitt’s and Reimer’s positions on referentially used descriptions, however, cannot be totally assimilated to that of Donnellan’s. In particular, they assign an effective role to the descriptive material that occurs in these expressions when it comes to determining their referents. Devitt, who believes that definite descriptions used referentially function like complex demonstratives, writes that “‘the/an/that F’ would designate an object that ‘F’ applies to” (2004: 292). Reimer, who believes that when used referentially definite descriptions function like indexicals, claims that “a referential utterance of the form *The F is G* expresses a singular proposition provided the intended referent satisfies the linguistic meaning (the ‘sense’) of the definite description: provided it is the (contextually) unique F” (1998: 93). Otherwise, even though a singular proposition may well be communicated, “no proposition (singular or general) will be *literally expressed*” (*ibid.*). Wettstein is another philosopher who is convinced that Donnellan’s distinction is semantically significant. He writes that “it is not implausible to maintain that descriptions are sometimes used to call attention to some particular entity the speaker has in mind and sometimes used to speak of whatever it is that has certain properties” (1981: 244). However, he emphasizes that in making his reflections on Donnellan’s distinction he “put to one side Donnellan’s controversial view about reference via a conventionally inapplicable expression” (254).

that of *denoting* individuals and that of *referring to* individuals. At the same time, however, Kripke acknowledges that his view, according to which the phenomenon that Donnellan puts his finger on has to be explained pragmatically, cannot be supported by any substantive reason. Indeed, it seems that “the actual practice of English speakers is compatible with either model” (Kripke 1977: 269). According to Kripke, however, there are two general methodological considerations that should prompt us toward his view.

Kripke’s first reason directly casts doubt on the supposed referential/attributive ambiguity of the word “the” in English. In short, his reasoning goes like this. If a word is really ambiguous, say in English, we then have to expect this word to be disambiguated in other languages unrelated to English: ambiguities at home are probably removed in other languages, to use Felipe Amaral’s phrase (see Amaral 2004: 294). But because of the fact that it would be “quite surprising to learn that say, an Eskimo, used two separate words ‘the’ and ‘ze’, for the attributive and referential uses” (Kripke 1977: 268), Kripke concludes that both intuition and empirical research (until proven otherwise) favor his unitary account, moving Donnellan’s phenomenon into the pragmatic field.

Despite what Kripke says, the situation is not so simple. First of all, linguists have recognized at least two different types of lexical ambiguity: *polysemies* and *homonymies*. Polysemies are “the product of conceptual associations made by speakers” (Amaral 2004: 290). A classic example is the English word “feet”, which means a part of the human body as well as the bottom of a mountain. The latter meaning probably derives from a conceptual association made by the speakers between what connects the human body to the ground and what connects the mountain to the Earth’s surface (or something like that). Since it is reasonable to suppose that all the members of the human kind share a quite similar conceptual apparatus, we should not be surprised when we find that even non-English speakers have assigned these two meanings to their translation of “feet”. Indeed, this is what happens among Italian speakers, who use the word “piedi” for both the part of the human body and the bottom of a mountain. The mechanism that underlies a conceptual association is in fact language-independent, and for this reason polysemies may well be “cross-linguistic” (291).

On the other hand, homonymies express different and unrelated meanings, “being the product of phonological, or at least orthographical, convergences peculiar to a particular

language” (Amaral 2004: 290). If this is so, taking a homonymous expression in English, say “bank”, we should not expect its translation into a language other than English (a language which has not shared any phonological or orthographical analogy with English concerning the words used for river banks and credit banks) to express the same list of different meanings. Unlike polysemies, homonymies are not language-independent, and so they are not cross-linguistic ambiguities.

Now, since according to the *OED* the etymology of “the” derives from an uninflected stem of an ancient English demonstrative, it seems “rather implausible that the referential-attributive multiplicity of senses associated with ‘the’ is the result of the phonological and orthographical convergence of two different words...” (*ibid.*). Hence, it is reasonable to assume that if “the” really turns out to be a case of ambiguity in English then it is a case of polysemy.

If this is so, however, Kripke’s argument can be blocked. In fact, since these kinds of ambiguities are cross-linguistic, at least in principle some of them may well be universal. Hence, Kripke would be wrong in saying that because the alleged ambiguity pointed out by Donnellan is not removed in languages other than English, then “the” cannot be ambiguous in English or in other languages. Indeed, it could be ambiguous in *all* languages.²⁰ Far from confirming his unitary account of definite descriptions, Kripke’s first methodological reason may not lead us to reject Donnellan’s claim.

Let us now consider Kripke’s second methodological reason. He emphasizes that the

²⁰ We should perhaps mention the fact that even if “the” turned out to be a case of English homonymy, Kripke’s reasoning would be still problematic. In fact, since nowadays we do not have any comprehensive study of the definite article in all the languages that are (and were) spoken, nothing prevents us from discovering a language in which there are in fact two different conventions underlying two different forms of definite article: one for the referential use pointed out by Donnellan, the other for the attributive use described by Russell. Indeed, despite what Kripke claims, a language with such characteristics has been discovered. Amaral points out that in Malagasy, which is the national language of Madagascar, there are two different forms of definite article: “ny” and “ilay”. Descriptions ny- are regularly used by the speaker to say something about an individual “the hearer has specifically identified prior to the utterance” (Amaral 2004: 294). This kind of use is very similar to the referential one we are interested in. On the other hand, descriptions ilay- are used by speakers to say something about an individual without any prior identification of it. This latter use, although not purely Russellian, seems to be very similar to the attributive one described by Donnellan.

phenomenon Donnellan takes as a case against the exhaustiveness of Russell's theory, namely, that in certain circumstances we succeed in referring to an individual using "the so-and-so" even though there is no so-and-so, or the unique so-and-so is not the one we have in mind when we use the description, is not peculiar to definite descriptions. Instead, it may emerge in the case of proper names as well:

Two people see Smith in the distance and mistake him for Jones. They have a brief colloquy: "What is Jones doing?" "Raking the leaves."
"Jones," in the common language of both, is a name of Jones; it never names Smith. Yet, in some sense, on this occasion, clearly both participants in the dialogue have referred to Smith, and the second participant has said something true about the man he referred to if and only if Smith was raking the leaves (whether or not Jones was).
(Kripke 1977: 263)

The speaker's referent/semantic referent apparatus seems to be well suited to account for this situation. Jones is the semantic referent of the name used by the speakers in the dialogue; while Smith, whom they mistakenly take to be the semantic referent of "Jones", is indeed the speaker's referent of their uses of the name. The sentence "Jones is raking the leaves" uttered by the second speaker is then false, since – let us suppose – the semantic referent of "Jones" is not raking the leaves. But at the same time the speaker succeeded in communicating to her interlocutor something true *of* Smith: namely, something true of the speaker's referent of his use of "Jones". But this according to Kripke has nothing to do with the semantics of the name "Jones", and it should instead be explicated from a pragmatic point of view.

The speaker's referent/semantic referent apparatus developed by Kripke seems to suitably apply even to those cases, such as the Smith/Jones one, where "it is completely implausible that a semantic ambiguity exists" (Kripke 1977: 267). This is the pivot of the second methodological reason against Donnellan: while the idea that there is a semantic ambiguity may perhaps be plausible for definite descriptions, it seems completely out of question for proper names.

Keeping this in mind, let us get to the second methodological reason that should prompt us toward the unitary account of definite descriptions adopted by Kripke. It may be helpful to reconstruct his argument in this way:

1. Donnellan explains the phenomenon that should count as a case against Russell's theory by postulating a semantic ambiguity.
2. The resemblance between the phenomenon Donnellan is interested in and the phenomenon exemplified by the Smith/Jones case is "so close that any attempt to explain the cases differently is automatically suspect" (Kripke 1977: 269).
3. But proper names are not semantically ambiguous (in the relevant sense).
4. Hence, definite descriptions are not semantically ambiguous.

Why should we posit a semantic ambiguity both "insufficient in general" (Kripke 1977: 267), since we cannot use it to explain the same phenomenon when it arises for proper names, and "superfluous for the special case" (*ibid.*), since the phenomenon that arises for definite descriptions may be explicated by appealing to the speaker's referent/semantic referent apparatus, which "is needed in any case" (268)? From Kripke's point of view the unitary account, unlike Donnellan's, conforms with "considerations of economy in that it does not 'multiply senses beyond necessity' " (269).

Is this a good argument? Donnellan would certainly answer that it is not. In particular, as should already be clear from what we said above, Donnellan would not accept the point (3). Let us apply the historical explanation theory to the Smith/Jones case. Both the speakers are directly acquainted with Smith, even though they see him at distance. If this is so, we may say that both the speakers have Smith in mind. The having Smith in mind is what explains in the appropriate way the use of "Jones" by the second speaker when she utters "Jones is raking the leaves", and since the speaker utters the name with the genuine intention of referring to the individual she has in mind, namely, she *expects* that by using "Jones" she allows her interlocutor to single out the subject of her discourse, we may say that by using "Jones" the speaker has (semantically) referred to Smith. According to the historical explanation theory, in fact, the referential relation between a particular use of a name and a specific individual is determined by the cognitive focus of the speaker when she uses the name, and not, as Kripke would say in this case, by its history of use which instead would securely steer the speaker's utterance towards Jones (see Kripke 1980: 91-2).

The Aston-Martin example that Donnellan provides in “Proper names and identifying descriptions”, and that we have discussed in detail, confirms that he would have treated the Smith/Jones case precisely in the way just proposed. In fact, when, after the party, the student utters “Robinson tripped over Aston-Martin’s feet”, Donnellan writes that his “inclination is to say that here it [is] to the man he met at the party [that the student is referring to] and not to the famous philosopher”. Once again, following his historical explanation theory of names, the man at the party is the one who explains in the appropriate way the student’s use of the name in the utterance: namely, the one mentioned in answering to “who would the student want us to believe Robinson tripped over at the party?”. By using “Aston-Martin” the student refers to the man he met at the party and not to the famous philosopher, and so what he states is true if and only if Robinson actually tripped over the man met at the party, false otherwise. The situation is different when the student proudly utters to his classmates “Last night I met J.L. Aston-Martin”. In this case, since “the speaker’s remark would only have a point if he was referring to the famous philosopher”, it seems that the cognitive focus of the speaker has changed. According to the theory, the famous philosopher is the one who explains in the appropriate way the student’s use of the name in the utterance. What the speaker states is then true if and only if he has actually met the famous philosopher, false otherwise.

Far from explaining the Smith/Jones case in a *suspect* peculiar way, Donnellan would then bite Kripke’s bullet and offer for this case the same account he put forward for the phenomenon adduced against the exhaustiveness of Russell’s theory of descriptions. Moreover, Donnellan can do this by staying perfectly in line with his theory of reference. According to the latter, in fact, proper names are indeed ambiguous expressions inasmuch as their reference is determined every time they are used by the cognitive focus of the speaker who utters them. In nutshell: *if* Donnellan’s historical explanation theory of reference for proper names is correct, then Kripke’s argument (1) - (4) is thwarted.

Chapter 2

The predicativist account of proper names

Predicativism about proper names holds that proper names are (count-noun) predicates – i.e., that they have predicate-type semantic values – in *all* of their occurrences. Even though this thesis “mean[s] different things to different people” (Fara 2015a: 59), its core idea is that the role of a proper name is not that of *referring* to individuals; rather, it is that of *denoting* individuals.

Predicativism is deeply rooted in the philosophical debate. Suffice it to say that two eminent philosophers such as Russell and Willard Van Orman Quine subscribed to two different versions of it. Despite this philosophical lineage, however, predicativism’s main rationale comes from linguistics. Moreover, as we are about to see in detail, despite the fact that it is a thesis about the semantics of proper names, it stems from an analysis of some of their syntactic properties.

In what follows I shall examine a “modern version” of predicativism, by deliberately leaving Russell’s and Quine’s “traditional predicate view[s]” (Burge 1973: 427) in the background.²¹ In doing so, however, I shall not provide any new argument for it. Rather, I just want to present this intriguing thesis and some of the reasons that make it *at least* plausible that proper names are indeed predicates. I shall focus on Delia Fara’s account, which is the most detailed version of predicativism on the market and a good starting point to substantiate the distinction between *deferential* and *non-deferential* uses of proper names that I shall put my finger on in Chapter 3. Since Fara’s work has been

²¹ Burge opens his “Reference and proper names” with some reflections on Russell’s and Quine’s predicative accounts of proper names. He points out that these views “have been widely regarded as having the vice of artificiality, at least insofar as [they are] supposed to give analyses of sentences in natural languages” (1973: 427). According to Burge, the main aspect that “has been held to do violence to ordinary preconception” (*ibid.*) is their treatment of proper names as abbreviated or manufactured descriptions.

deeply influenced by that of Tyler Burge and Clarence Sloat, however, the intuitions and remarks of the latter on the alleged predicative role played by proper names will occupy a central place in the discussion.

2.1 Fara's version of predicativism

The following may be a good way to introduce Fara's predicativism: Have you ever heard of the old joke about calling someone a cab (see Fara 2015a: 68)?

Howlett: Choate, will you call me a cab?

Choate: Ok, you're a cab.

It plays on two different readings of the verb "to call". Such a verb, in fact, can be used to say "that someone has called someone something" (Fara 2015a: 68), as it happens in:

1) John called Jack stupid.

Let us say that in (1) this verb is used to make an *appellative-call* predication (see Fara 2011: 493 and 2015a: 68). On the other hand, the same verb can be used to make a *telephone-call* predication (see Fara 2011: 493 and 2015a: 68), namely, to say "that someone telephone-called someone or that someone telephone-called something *for* someone" (Fara 2015a: 68), as it happens in the most natural reading of:

2) Choate called Howlett a cab.

Now, what makes this joke so funny is precisely Choate's (deliberate) misinterpretation of the request made by Howlett. By using "to call", in fact, she clearly intends to make a telephone-call request. Instead, Choate answers her as if she had asked an appellative-call question.

From the predicativist point of view, the semantics of appellative-call predications is interesting. Indeed, Fara acknowledges that it is by looking for a uniform syntax and

semantics for the appellative “to call” that she made “the first step toward providing a uniform analysis of names as predicates” (Fara 2011: 495; see also Fara 2001: 31 for the very first hint at this idea).

An appellative-call predication is composed by three different elements: a *caller*, or the subject of the predication; a *callee*, which is the one who is getting called something; and an *appellation*, or what it is that the latter is called by the former (see Fara 2011: 494). If we take (1) as a typical case of appellative-call predication, then we have “John” in caller position, “Jack” in callee position, and “stupid” in appellative position.

What stimulates Fara’s curiosity about this is that expressions of (apparently) different grammatical and semantic kind may occur in the appellative position of an appellative-call predication. In particular, she points out that such a position may be occupied either “by (i) proper names, (ii) names of proper names, (iii) predicates or (iv) names of predicates” (Fara 2011: 494). If this is so, besides (1), the following sentences should also count as well formed appellative-calls (see Fara 2011: 492-3):

- 3) John called Jack “stupid”.
- 4) The author of *Word and Object* was called Willard.
- 5) The author of *Word and Object* was called “Willard”.

Between the pairs (1)-(4) and (3)-(5), however, there are interesting differences (see Fara 2011: 439).²² By means of (1) we say that John has attributed to Jack the property expressed by the adjective “stupid”. If John had said to Jack something like “You are dim-witted and ignorant” (see Fara 2011: 493), then he would have called Jack stupid without having used that specific adjective. Strictly speaking, he would have called Jack stupid without having called him “stupid”. Even in the case of John saying to Jack:

²² Fara points out that although what we actually convey by (4) may be true, from the perspective of someone who maintains “a Frege-Kripke view of names” (Fara 2015: 62) we express such a truth in a “sloppy, colloquial speech” (Kripke 1980: 62 n. 25). In particular, Kripke would argue that by having committed the beginner’s mistake of confusing use and mention what we have made by using (4) is the incoherent statement that Quine is called a certain person, himself (see Fara 2015a: 62). As we are about to see, however, Fara believes that “[n]either [(4) nor (5)] involve a use-mention confusion” (2011: 493). According to her, in fact, “not only are both [(4) and (5)] grammatical, they mean different things” (*ibid.*).

“You are dim-witted and ignorant”, however, the use of (1) to report the exchange between John and Jack would have been appropriate. By means of (3), in contrast, we say that John has addressed Jack with a specific adjective, “stupid”. John might well have done this without calling Jack stupid by simply saying to him something like “You are brilliant, stupid” (see Fara 2011: 493). In this case, John has called Jack “stupid” without having called him stupid, namely, without having attributed to him the property of being dim-witted and ignorant. Clearly, the use of (1) to describe this last exchange between John and Jack would be inappropriate.

Fara detects a similar distinction when it comes to considering appellative-calls with proper names rather than predicates in appellative position. From her point of view, in fact, while by using (4) we say that a specific individual “has ‘Willard’ as a name” (Fara 2011: 493) – to put things in Kent Bach’s terms, we attribute to Quine the *nominal property* of bearing “Willard” (see Bach 2002: 75) –, by means of (5), instead, we say that the same individual was addressed by someone else with “Willard” – to use Bach’s words again, we attribute to Quine the *substantive property* of being addressed with a certain expression (see Bach 2002: 75).

According to Fara there is “not much difference between what it takes to be called ‘stupid’ and what it takes to be called ‘Willard’ ” (Fara 2011: 494). In both cases, in fact, all that is needed is that someone has addressed the callee with “stupid” or “Willard”. On the other hand, she believes that there is a profound difference between being called stupid and being called Willard. The reason is that while anyone can call Quine stupid by saying something that implies he is dim-witted and ignorant, not everyone can call Quine Willard, but only someone who has “the special authority required to name him” (*ibid.*).²³ And from Fara’s perspective these are limited to: “his parents at the time of his birth (‘Let’s call our baby Willard’), himself when he was an adult (‘I hereby call myself Willard’), or any others whose use of the name eventually caught on” (*ibid.*). If Fara is on the right track, therefore, (4) is only true if a member of

²³ Burge makes a similar point by saying that “a proper name designates an object only if the object is given that name in an appropriate way” (1973: 435). As a truth theorist, Burge is convinced that he is not required to define either “given” nor “appropriate way”. However, it seems clear that even from his perspective something similar to Fara’s *special authority requirement* is supposed to find a place in such a definition.

one of these groups has named Quine by using the proper name “Willard”.

Now, Fara’s aim is twofold: on the one hand she wants to “account for the variability in the grammatical category of expressions occurring in appellation position” (Fara 2011: 494-5); on the other, as we have already seen above, she wants to account for the semantic distinction “between being called N and being called ‘N’ (where the schematic letter ‘N’ is replaced with a name) along with what [she] regard[s] as the more general distinction between being called P and being called ‘P’ (where the schematic letter ‘P’ is replaced with a predicate)” (495).

Those who are convinced that proper names are always referring expressions, for example those who argue for an “individual-constants view” (Burge 1973: 426) of names, have a straightforward solution for both Fara’s concerns: “appellative ‘called’ is semantically ambiguous” (Fara 2011: 495). Since an appellative-call may have in its appellative position either an expression with a predicate-type semantic value or an expression with an individual as its semantic value (proper names, names of proper names and names of predicates), their reasoning goes, then “a hybrid semantics” (*ibid.*) for the appellative “to call” seems to be necessary.

Fara argues for something radically different. According to her, in fact, “[w]e should try as much as possible to uphold a unified theory of the semantics of proper names” (Fara 2015a: 70). From the predicativist point of view, simplicity and (especially) uniformity are in fact the most important virtues of any semantic theory.²⁴

²⁴ Together with the idea that proper names do not abbreviate predicates, but *are* predicates in their own right, the possibility of giving a uniform semantic analysis of proper names in any of their different occurrences is the real *leitmotiv* of predicativism. Ultimately, this should be what establishes its theoretical superiority compared to those views that take proper names as referring expressions. If this is so, no wonder that whoever argues for a predicative view of names sooner or later uses this argument to support her claim. By closing his comparison between common nouns and proper names, for example, Sloat points out that his predicative view allows a “constant interpretation” (1969: 29) of proper names in different contexts. In his “Reference and proper names”, Burge writes that unlike the individual-constants view of names his account “covers plural and modified occurrences [of proper names] as well as singular, unmodified ones” (1973: 437). Of course these claims have not convinced everyone. Jeshion, for example, believes that we “should not regard uniformity as the sole or decisive factor in semantic theory selection” (2015a: 235), and she openly criticizes what she calls *The Predicativist Uniformity Argument*. I shall get back to this important issue in what follows.

In order to handle both of these concerns, Fara argues “that names are [always] predicates when they occur in appellative position” (2011: 495). This means that appellative positions can be occupied only by expressions with predicate-type semantic values. Since proper names, names of proper names and names of predicates may well occur in such a position, however, Fara must argue for the (anything but uncontroversial) claim that all of these expressions have predicate-type semantic values.²⁵

To analyze the “logical role of proper names in a semantical account of natural languages” (Burge 1973: 452), Burge elaborates the first version of “modern predicativism”. He points out that proper names very often occur in places usually reserved for predicates. According to him, philosophers had not realized this platitude because they were too focused on names occurring unmodified in argument positions, like “Jones” and “Princeton” in the sentence below:

6) Jones studies in Princeton.

Beside paradigmatic cases such as (6), however, Burge claims that proper names may well take the plural, the indefinite article, and quantifiers (see Burge 1973: 429):

7) There are relatively few Alfreds in Princeton.

8) Some Alfreds are crazy; some are sane.

9) An Alfred Russell joined the club today.

These uses of proper names “are literal and not metaphoric” (Burge 1973: 429). By saying this, Burge means that (7), (8) and (9) do not deserve a special (perhaps

²⁵ As Burge points out, to show that proper names have predicate-type semantic values is difficult because there are several intuitions that seem to support the alternative view, i.e. that proper names have individuals as their semantic values. In their most common uses, in fact, proper names occur unmodified as singular terms in argument position, purporting to single out a unique individual which is going to be the subject of the discourse; they do not show any sign of internal semantic structure; and, above all, they do not seem to describe (in any relevant sense) the individual they purportedly designate (see Burge 1973: 426). It is by relying on considerations like these that many philosophers have criticized the traditional predicate views about names.

metalinguistic) analysis. On the contrary, he believes that the modified proper names in the examples just given “have the same conditions for literal application to an object that singular, unmodified proper names have” (1973: 429).²⁶

In sentences (7), (8) and (9) proper names occur in places usually occupied by predicates. Take the predicate “man”, for example. Let us say, for the sake of the discussion, that an individual is a member of its extension if and only if he or she has certain properties; in particular, if he or she is featherless and biped. *Being featherless and biped* may then be thought of as the application conditions for this predicate: the latter applies to (is true of) an individual *e* if and only if *e* is featherless and biped. Now, if both Burge and Fara are on the right track, then something similar holds for proper names as well. But what does it take for an individual to be a member of the extension of a proper name like “Alfred”? In other words, how are we supposed to characterize the conditions of application of a proper name?

Fara and Burge agree on this important point: sentences (7), (8) and (9) are true or false depending “in part on what people’s names are” (Fara 2011: 496; see also Burge 1973: 428). Moreover, it seems that in sentence (7) the name “Alfred” can occur only as a predicate, given that it appears pluralized as the complement of the numerical determiner “relatively few”. In this case, the most natural thing to say is that the name “Alfred” applies to all those individuals that are called this way. If there were not several people called this way in Princeton, in fact, then sentence (7) would not be true. With slight modifications, the same can be said for both (8) and (9).

Fara has recently strengthened these claims by saying that “names in these positions satisfy the *being-called condition*” (2015a: 63), something similar to Burge’s “application conditions of proper names” (Burge 1973: 430), which may be schematically stated in this way (see Fara 2011: 496; 2015a: 64 and 2015b: 251):

²⁶ In a footnote appended at the end of this sentence, Burge recalls with approval Sloat’s idea of treating proper names by making a close analogy to common nouns. He also writes that “[Sloat’s] syntactical account is congenial with [his] predicate view of the semantical role of proper names and uncongenial with an individual-constants view” (1973: 492 n. 8). As we are about to see in what follows, Sloat’s comparison between some of the syntactic properties of proper names and those of common countable nouns plays a crucial role in Fara’s characterization of her predicative view of names.

(BCC) A proper name “N” is true of an individual *e* iff someone called *e* N.²⁷

If we replace the schematic letter N with a proper name, what we obtain is an instance of BCC. For example, “A proper name ‘Aristotle’ is true of an individual *e* iff someone called *e* Aristotle” is an instance of BCC. Instances like this exhibit what Burge calls a “mild self-referential element” (1973: 430), which somehow differentiates them from the application conditions of *ordinary* predicates. According to BCC, in fact, a proper name is only true of an individual if the former is connected with the latter *via* a specific relation established when someone who has the authority required for naming that individual actually names it with the name in question. Thus, unlike what happens for ordinary predicates, it is “the name itself [that] enters into the conditions under which it is applicable” (*ibid.*).

Let us consider again the ordinary predicate “man”. Someone may well be a man even though no one has ever used the word “man”. For instance in a world where English does not exist. On the contrary, someone is not a Jones unless he has “Jones” among his proper names (see Burge 1973: 430). And this only happens if someone with the required authority *used* that expression to name him.²⁸ This is an important

²⁷ Fara’s original formulation of BCC is slightly different. It goes as follows: “A name ‘N’ is true of a thing just in case it is called N” (2011: 496). This formulation, however, is equivalent to the one suggested above. I only adopt the latter because it will make it easier to detect the *small-clause* construction – “her N” – which occurs in it. In “Reference and proper names”, Burge proposes similar conditions of application for proper names. According to what we may call *given-name conditions* (GNC), “a proper name functioning as a singular term designates an object only if the object is given that name in an appropriate way” (Burge 1973: 434). From Fara’s point of view, GNC is equivalent to BCC. This is what she writes on the matter: “I regard the appropriateness condition [GNC] as equivalent to ... the being-called condition, since – expressed schematically – *having ‘N’ as a name of yours ...* is equivalent to being called *N*, even though the name ‘*N*’ occurs in a predicate position in the being-called condition, while it is the name of that name, “ ‘*N* ’ ” that occurs in a predicate position in the appropriateness conditions” (2015a: 74 n. 26).

²⁸ Fara makes a similar point by writing that BCC for proper names as predicates is not trivially true. If this were so, in fact, then analogous schemata applied to other predicates would be trivially true as well, but “[t]hey are not, not even remotely” (2011: 499). To point out this fact, Fara shows how BCC applied

difference between proper names and ordinary predicates that is worth keeping in mind. As we are about to see, in fact, it plays a crucial role when it comes to defending predicativism from some of the objections put forward against it.

The BCC schema must be kept distinct from “a different but related condition” (Fara 2015a: 64; see also 2011: 496) that Fara calls the *bastardized being-called condition*, expressed as a universal quantification:

(BBCC) For every name N, N is true of *e* iff *e* is called N.

Since it is followed by an individual variable, the passive phrase “is called” occurring in BBCC “must be a relation expression with at least two arguments: a grammatical subject (the one that is called something) and an object (what the subject is called)” (Fara 2015a: 64). On the contrary, the past participle “called” in BCC “is not followed by an individual variable, but rather by a schematic letter which is to be replaced by a name, which may in turn be unquoted” (*ibid.*). Moreover, unlike BCC, according to Fara BBCC is simply “not true” (2011: 496). The reason lies in what we have seen above concerning the sentences (1)-(4) and (3)-(5). In the same way as someone can call Jack stupid without having to call him “stupid”, namely, by saying something that implies that he is dim-witted and ignorant, then a proper name “John” may well be true of an individual even though no one has ever addressed the latter with it.²⁹ All that is needed, in fact, is that someone with the required authority called him

to a predicate such as “liar” turns out to be blatantly false: “[i]t doesn’t matter how many people call me a liar, or how often, I am still not a liar, i.e., the predicate ‘liar’ is not true of me” (Fara 2011: 499).

²⁹ Someone may perhaps cast doubt on this point by saying that since the namer used “John” to call the individual in question John, then in doing so she actually called the latter “John”. Even though there are many ways to call someone stupid without using the adjective “stupid”, the objection goes, there are not so many ways to call someone John without using the name “John”. If this is so, BCC must be certainly kept distinct from BBCC, but the latter may be considered true after all. Curiously, the way in which Fara herself got her name seems to be a reply to this objection. According to Fara (see Fara 2011: 497), her parents called her Delia Ruby Graff when she was born. Now, since presumably they used “Delia Ruby Graff” to name her Delia Ruby Graff, then they called her “Delia Ruby Graff” as well. Fara also writes that she added “Fara” to her name as an adult. In doing so, however, she probably did not call herself “Delia Ruby Graff Fara”. Indeed, since that name is too long, she even doubts that anyone has ever called her this way. If this is so, Fara’s personal case constitutes a counterexample to BBCC: although she “is

John in Fara’s sense.

Let us get back to BCC. Its grammaticality depends on the fact that “N” in the naming construction “someone called *e* N” actually occurs in predicate position (see Fara 2015a: 66). According to Fara, this is exactly the position taken by “stupid” in (1). In this sentence, however, the complex phrase “Jack stupid” is what linguists call a *small clause*: namely, “a subject-predicate construction with no finite verb to connect the subject with the predicate” (Fara 2015a: 66). By preceding such a clause, Fara’s reasoning goes on, the past participle of “to call” in (1) does not stand for a relational expression, as happens for example in both (3) and BBCC. Rather, it stands for something “more like a copula – like ‘turned’ in ‘he was turned green by the witch’ ” (Fara 2015a: 65).

Ora Matushansky provides extended and thorough arguments for a small clause analysis of naming constructions. The “stronger evidence” (Matushansky 2008: 582) for this conclusion comes from languages where predicates are morphologically marked with a dedicated case (*case-marking*). In particular, from those like Latin where the case assigned to the subject is shared by the predicate (*case-agreement*). This phenomenon emerges vividly with nomination verbs, which as Tim Stowell has demonstrated (see, for example, Stowell 1989), “clearly take small clause [complements]” (Matushansky 2008: 576). In Latin small clauses, in fact, the case of the predicate is the same as that of the subject. Moreover, when passivization turns the subject’s case into nominative, this is reflected in the case of the predicate (Matushansky 2008: 586; see also 2006: 286-7:

- 10) a. Ciceronem consulem facit.
 Cicero - acc consul - acc make - 3sg
 He/She makes Cicero consul.
- b. Cicero fit consul.
 Cicero - nom is made - 3sg consul - nom
 Cicero is made consul.

According to Matushansky, the fact that case agreement “also takes place with naming constructions suggests that verbs of naming take small clause complements”

now called Delia Ruby Graff Fara, [she has] never been called ‘Delia Ruby Graff Fara’ ” (Fara 2011: 497).

(Matushansky 2008: 586). The following examples are meant to exemplify this suggestion (Matushansky 2008: 586; see also 2006: 286-7):

- 11) a. Filium meum Lucium voco.
 son - acc my - acc Lucius - acc call - 1sg
 I call my son Lucius.
- b. Meus filius vocatur Lucius.
 my - nom son - nom call - pass - 3sg Lucius - nom
 My son is called Lucius.

Matushansky acknowledges that there is no accepted theory of case agreement among linguists. However, while the “passivization-proof” accordance between the case of the subject and that of the predicate may be straightforwardly described as a case of agreement, “no relation is commonly assumed to exist between two internal arguments of a ditransitive verb that would permit to connect their case-marking” (Matushansky 2008: 586). If she is on the right track, therefore, the phenomenon of case agreement might be compatible with a theory according to which proper names that occur in naming constructions are predicates.

Evidence for the idea that naming verbs are not ditransitive even emerges from those languages where the case marking does not appear at a morphological level. Take English, for instance. Matushansky writes that one of its general properties is that “to passivize, an argument has to start out as the object of a verb” (2008: 617; see also 2005: 227). That’s why prototypical ditransitive verbs such as “to give”, by taking double-object complements, can be passivized in both of their object positions, “Carlos” and “a book” in the example below (see Matushansky 2005: 227 and 2008: 617; see also Fara 2015a: 67):

- 12) a. Maria gave Carlos a book.
 b. Carlos was given a book by Maria.
 c. A book was given (to) Carlos by Maria.

Now, the argument goes on, if naming verbs were ditransitive, then they should exhibit the same passivization property. However, as the following sentences clearly demonstrate, this is not the case:

- 13) a. Someone called me Alessandro.
 b. I was called Alessandro by someone.
 c. *Alessandro was called me by someone.

The unacceptability of (13c) is easily explained if “Alessandro” in “me Alessandro” does not occupy an object position; that is, if naming verbs do not take double-object complements. The idea that “me Alessandro” is a small clause with “Alessandro” occupying its predicate position is suggested by the close parallel between naming verbs and verbs of nomination that, as we have already seen by analyzing the Latin sentences, clearly take small clause complements (see Matushansky 2008: 584):

- 14) a. The Senate nominated Cesar consul.
 b. Cesar was nominated consul by the Senate.
 c. *Consul was nominated Cesar by the Senate.

Thanks to Matushansky’s considerations on the syntax of both nomination and naming constructions, it seems that Fara finally achieves the conclusion she was looking for, namely, that “in the right-hand side of the being-called condition, the name ‘N’ occurs in the predicate position of a small clause” (Fara 2015a: 67).³⁰ If Matushansky’s analysis of naming verbs is on the right track, then BCC’s grammaticality seems to be preserved. The proper name “N” that occurs in BCC’s naming construction “someone called *e* N” is therefore a predicate (i.e., the predicative component of a small-clause complement) which is “semantically equivalent to ‘thing [individual] called N’ ” (Fara 2015a: 70).

³⁰ Let us apply Matushansky’s considerations to the joke about calling someone a cab. It emerges that if Choate had called Howlett a cab by means of a telephone-call request, then we could say, in the passive voice, both that Howlett was called a cab by Choate and that a cab was called for Howlett by Choate. This happens because when “to call” is used to make a telephone-call request the indefinite description “a cab” occurs in an object-position of a double-object structure. On the other hand, given what Choate actually does, namely, to say to Howlett that he is a cab, the passive voice allows us only to say that Howlett was called a cab by Choate. And this is because the description “a cab” occurs in the predicate position of a small clause (see Fara 2015a: 69). Matushansky’s passivization test seems then to be useful when it comes to distinguishing telephone-call from appellative-call predications.

Fara acknowledges that this view is “related to, but not the same as, Kent Bach’s ‘Nominal Description Theory’ ” (*ibid.*). According to Bach, when a proper name “N” occurs in a sentence, it is “semantically equivalent to ‘bearer of ‘N’ ’ ” (Bach 2002: 75; see also 2015: 774). In other words, Bach gives the application conditions of proper names in terms of the *name-bearing* relation: “Jones” applies (is true of) an individual *e* iff *e* bears “Jones” as a proper name. Since “*bearing the name* ‘N’ is equivalent to being called N” (Fara 2015a: 74 n. 26), however, for reasons that will become clear in Chapter 3, I shall stick to Bach’s suggestion according to which a proper name “N” is semantically equivalent to “bearer of ‘N’ ’”, which is a predicate true of an individual if and only if someone called that individual N in Fara’s sense.

Now, if Fara is on the right track, it seems that “we can give a uniform semantics for appellative ‘called’ by saying that it always contains a predicate in its appellative position, even when that is an unquoted name such as ‘Aristotle’ ” (Fara 2011: 497). And this, in turn, means that we can uniform the semantics for appellative-call predications by treating the proper names that occur in them as if they were predicates rather than referring expressions.

As we have seen, in *at least* some cases, it is reasonable to suppose that proper names occur as predicates. So far we have considered those pointed out by Burge, our sentences (7), (8) and (9), and those suggested by Matushansky and Fara where proper names occupy the predicative positions of small clause complements in naming constructions. In the vast majority of their occurrences, however, proper names do not seem to occupy predicative positions. On the contrary, they occur unmodified in argument position, “as subjects; direct objects; indirect objects; and objects of prepositions” (Fara 2015a: 69). The proper name “Jones” in our sentence (6), for example, does not seem to occur as a predicate at all, since its position is grammatically occupiable by an individual constant.

Now, the individual-constants view of names is certainly the most straightforward one in the light of commonplace examples like these. In particular, it allows “a pleasingly simple semantic analysis of subject-predicate sentences with names as subjects” (70). According to (a version of) this view, in fact, the individual which is the semantic value of the name “Jones” composes with the function which is the semantic value of the complex predicate “*x* studies in Princeton” to yield the *Truth* if the semantic

value of “Jones” is an element of the extension determined by the semantic value of the predicate, the *False* otherwise. Predicativism, on the other hand, seems not to have this advantage. As Fara points out, in fact, “[i]f names are predicates, not referring expressions; not, that is, expressions with an individual as a semantic value; then how could a name compose with a predicate to yield a truth value?” (Fara 2015a: 70). Without further refinement, predicativism seems unable to answer this important question.

It is certainly true that the individual-constants views of proper names have many advantages. Once we have acknowledged them, however, we must also admit that this view cannot be straightforwardly applied to names in predicate positions like those that have caught Burge’s attention. In this regard, Fara writes that more “than one well-known philosopher of language has said to [her] that names in predicate position are just clearly used differently from names in argument position” (*ibid.*). According to them, a name in predicate position stands for “a ‘meta-linguistic’ predicate, true of just those things that have [that] name” (*ibid.*). A name that occurs in argument position, on the contrary, is a referential expression with an individual as its semantic value. If they are on the right track, then “predicative names can simply be set aside as requiring no more discussion than that” (*ibid.*). Fara’s idea is radically different. She does not take names in predicate position “as ubiquitous deviants” (*ibid.*) such as to deserve an *ad hoc* analysis. Rather, she looks for a “unified theory of names” (*ibid.*) appearing both in argument and predicate positions. In order to elaborate her account, she takes names “as multiply applicable predicates as a starting point” (*ibid.*). Subsequently, she tries to extend her predicative analysis to names in argument positions as well.

Fara has her own peculiar view of the semantics of proper names occurring in argument positions. Before considering it in detail, however, it is interesting to briefly examine Burge’s ideas on this matter. Since he accepts a version of BCC for all occurrences of proper names, he also faces Fara’s problem “of how to give a compositional semantics for names appearing in argument position” (Fara 2015a: 74).

According to Burge, proper names occurring unmodified in argument position “play the role of predicate and demonstrative” (Burge 1973: 428). By having the “same semantical structure as the phrase ‘that book’ ” (432) they do, in fact, “constitute the

predicate component of a denuded complex demonstrative” (Fara 2015a: 60).³¹ If Burge is on the right track, therefore, sentence (6) would have the following syntactical form, where “ \emptyset ” stands for unpronounced/unwritten syntactic material:

15) \emptyset _{That} Jones studies in Princeton.

From Burge’s perspective, the crucial evidence that should persuade us that proper names in argument position involve a demonstrative element “emerges when one compares sentences involving such names with sentences involving demonstratives” (1973: 432). The following are the examples considered by Burge:

16) Jim is 6 feet tall.

17) That book is green.

Now, Burge’s reasoning goes on, (16) and (17) exhibit a common feature: without having access to their contexts of utterance they are “incompletely interpreted – they lack truth value” (1973: 432). When we use these sentences in everyday speech, however, we usually succeed in saying something true (or false) of some particular Jim or some particular book, even though there are many people called Jim and many books in the world. The particular Jim or the particular book that is the subject of our discourse must therefore have been demonstrated or picked out in some context-dependent way. It is precisely such a “conventional reliance on extrasentential action or context to pick out a particular which signals the demonstrative element in both sentences” (Burge 1973: 432).

Burge tries to give a unified semantics for proper names as predicates. So “he needs a name appearing in argument position to be embedded within some phrase that can

³¹ Jeshion points out that there are two different ways to interpret Burge’s claim according to which proper names that occur in argument position involve a “demonstrative element”. According to what she calls *Complex Demonstrative Analysis*, names in argument position “are construed as possessing the semantics (and only the semantics) of complex demonstratives” (2015a: 237). On the other hand, according to what Jeshion calls the *Syntactic Demonstrative* interpretation, Burge’s claim must be read as suggesting that a phonologically silent “that” always fronts a proper name that occurs in argument position, “which itself just functions as a common count noun” (*ibid.*).

both appear in argument position and have a ‘demonstrative element’ – where the name is the only part that gets pronounced” (Fara 2015a: 76). Complex demonstratives do precisely this job. That is why he argues for an unpronounced “that” that precedes proper names in argument position.

From Burge’s perspective, his “‘That’-Predicativism” (Fara 2015a: 74) has two advantages over the individual-constants views of proper names. First of all, it “covers plural and modified occurrences [of proper names] as well as singular, unmodified ones” (Burge 1973: 437) in exactly the same way. Theoretically speaking, the individual-constants views are less economical since they are supposed to give two different explanations for the two types of occurrences. A related difficulty for those who argue for an individual-constants view is that they must also *justify* this difference in treatment. To simply say that predicative occurrences of names are somehow “special” is in fact “flimsy and theoretically deficient” (*ibid.*). Another advantage of Burge’s “That”-predicativism is that it seems to be well suited to account for the intuition that proper names are ambiguous expressions, namely, that they may have, and indeed usually have, different bearers. By treating them as predicates, in fact, the problem is straightforwardly solved: a proper name is a predicate that, like the vast majority of predicates, applies to many individuals. To account for the same intuition, and to avoid the odd conclusion that the truth-conditions for sentences containing proper names are ambiguous, individual-constants views are forced to admit that “occurrences designating different [individuals] have to be differentiated (indexed) in the truth theory for a person at a time” (*ibid.*). From Burge’s perspective, however, such indexing poses a serious problem since there is “no evident limit on the number of [individuals] that bear a given name and so there is no way to know how many indexes to provide, much less what denotation to provide them with” (*ibid.*).

Let us come to Fara’s account of proper names in argument position. From her point of view, when “a bare singular name appears in argument position, it is the predicative component of a *denuded definite description*”, by which she means “a definite description with an unpronounced definite article” (Fara 2015a: 70). If this is so, the real syntactic structure of sentence (6) is something like this:

18) \emptyset_{The} Jones lives in Princeton.

Fara’s suggestion is not a novelty. In “Proper nouns in English”, for example, Sloat made a comparison between proper names and count nouns to prove that from a syntactic perspective proper names “select determiners as freely as common [countable] nouns do” (Sloat 1969: 27). To do this, Sloat compiled a chart by which he compared the distribution of determiners and a count noun with the distribution of those same determiners with a proper name. As for determiners, he focused on the definite and indefinite article; “sm”, which is the “some” that occurs with plurals and mass nouns; “some”, which is the “some” that is well-represented by the existential quantifier; bare plurals and the demonstrative “that”. Here is an extended version (compiled by Fara) of the chart that Sloat offered in his paper (see Sloat 1969: 27 and Fara 2015a: 82):

A man stopped by/A Smith stopped by.
 *Sm man stopped by/*Sm Smith stopped by.
 Some man stopped by/Some Smith stopped by.
 Sm men stopped by/Sm Smiths stopped by.
 Some men stopped by/Some Smiths stopped by.
 Men must breathe/Smiths must breathe.
 The clever man stopped by/The clever Smith stopped by.
 The man who is clever stopped by/The Smith who is clever stopped by.
 A clever man stopped by/A clever Smith stopped by.
 The men stopped by/The Smiths stopped by.
The man stopped by/*The Smith stopped by.
***Man stopped by/Smith stopped by.**
 That clever man stopped by/That clever Smith stopped by.
 *That men stopped by/*That Smiths stopped by.
 That man stopped by/That Smith stopped by.

Two things emerge immediately from this chart. First of all, a vivid resemblance between proper names and count nouns. In *almost* all cases in which the count noun turns out to be compatible (or incompatible) with a certain determiner, the same happens for the proper name. The three cases pointed out by Burge to argue for his “That”-predicativism, our sentences (7), (8) and (9) where proper names occur modified as if they were count nouns are therefore only instances of a much more general phenomenon.

The other thing to notice (see the two lines in boldface) is that the definite article is distinguished as the only one among these determiners that differs in its combination with names as compared to count nouns. This asymmetry, however, is only apparent. Indeed, according to Sloat, “a closer analysis reveals that proper [names] in general are only apparently restricted with regard to *the* in the singular” (1969: 28). He also claimed that the “simplest way to account for the null determiner in such structures [those in which the name occurs unmodified in argument position] is to recognize a zero allomorph of the definite article” (*ibid.*).

The idea according to which proper names are semantically equivalent to count nouns makes the presence of a pronounced definite article before some of them in some languages quite unsurprising. As Sloat’s chart demonstrates, this is in fact what count nouns require when they occur in argument positions. But at the same time this raises the question of how to explain the absence of a pronounced article before the vast majority of proper names occurring in that position. At this regard, however, Fara writes that (at least in English) it is “completely predictable which environments do not tolerate an overt definite article and which ones require a definite article to appear overtly” (2015a: 94). The rule governing the stripping of the overt “the” before proper names in argument position, initially suggested by Sloat and then reworked by Fara, is this (Fara 2015a: 82; see also Sloat 1968: 28):

The definite article appears as “ \emptyset_{The} ” when it occurs with a name, except in any of the following cases, where it appears as overtly “The”:

1. The definite article is stressed.
2. The name is preceded by a restrictive or nonrestrictive modifier.
3. The name is followed by a restrictive modifier.³²

³² This generalization may be taken as what ultimately establishes the superiority of Fara’s “The”-predicativism in comparison to “That”-predicativism. Indeed, what Burge’s version of predicativism lacks is a rule that allows us to systematically forecast whether the demonstrative element that it takes to precede every name occurring in argument position emerges at the surface level or remains silent in its null form (see Fara 2015a: 109).

Sloat's work is mainly devoted to an analysis of the syntactic behavior of proper names. This is why at the beginning of this Chapter I have said that despite its being a thesis about the semantics of proper names, modern predicativism (at least Fara's version) takes advantage of some considerations concerning their syntactic properties. Before closing his paper, however, Sloat rather incidentally pointed out that "the treatment of proper [names] presented [there] permits very natural semantic interpretations" (1969: 29). In particular, he suggested that in every context of use, a proper name such as "*Smith* has the constant interpretation 'person that we call 'Smith', just as *man* has the constant interpretation 'adult human male' " (*ibid.*). If we set aside for the moment the distinction made by Fara between BCC and BBCC, a striking consonance emerges between Sloat's conception of proper names and Fara's predicative view of them, on both their syntactic and semantic sides.

Before making some general considerations about Fara's version of predicativism, it is necessary to clarify a couple of important points. First of all, by claiming that the semantics of proper names is the same as that of common countable nouns (predicates), Fara means that "names and common nouns have the same type of semantic value [either extensional or intensional], not that they have the same conditions of application" (Fara 2015a: 73). The proper name "Jones" is true of those things that have been called Jones by someone who has the special authority required to do so. Clearly, an ordinary predicate such as "stupid" is not true of someone just because someone else called her this way. This is none other than the point made by Burge according to which, unlike those for ordinary predicates, the application conditions for proper names contain a "mild self-referential" element.

Another thing worthy of mention is that the fact that proper names do not exhibit the same syntactic behavior as that of common countable nouns, as the two lines in boldface in Sloat's chart point out, "is not a strike against 'the'-predicativism" (77). The reason, according to Fara, is simple: nouns are not all alike in all respects. For example, some nouns (countable nouns) can be used to count the things that they apply to; others (mass terms), cannot. In the same way, common nouns are not all syntactically alike. Mass terms, for example, are incompatible with determiners such as "a" and "every"; they cannot occur in the plural; they cannot complement "how many", but they can

complement “how much”. For countable nouns the opposite is true: they are compatible with both “a” and “every”; they can occur pluralized; they can occur as complements of “how many”, but they cannot complement “how much”. Despite all these differences, however, both mass terms and countable nouns are members of the same class of nouns (see Fara 2015a :78). The mere fact that proper names and countable nouns differ in their syntactic behavior when they are connected with “the” does not count as an argument against the claim according to which proper names are common nouns (predicates).

As I anticipated at the beginning of this Chapter, the possibility of giving a *uniform* semantic treatment of proper names occurring both in argument and in predicate positions is what ultimately establishes the theoretical superiority of predicativism over those views that take proper names as referring expressions. According to this, the semantics of proper names occurring in sentences (6), (7), (8) and (9) is exactly the same, namely, that of a predicate whose conditions of application are given by BCC. Cases like (6) are no exception. Indeed, under closer analysis, the name “Jones” that *appears* to be in argument position turns out to be the nominal part of a denuded definite description, whose definite element, by having a name as its sister, occurs in its null form. On the contrary, even though referentialism provides the most straightforward semantic account of names occurring in commonplace examples like (6), it cannot be applied to names that occur in plain predicative positions, like those in (7), (8) and (9). Referentialists must provide a different (perhaps metalinguistic) account for them.

The *Uniformity Argument* put forward by predicativists against referentialists may be summarized in the following way (see Jeshion 2015a: 234):

- a. Referentialism cannot supply a uniform semantic analysis of the apparently referential uses of proper names as exemplified in (6) and the apparently predicative uses of proper names as exemplified in (7), (8) and (9).
- b. Predicativism can supply a uniform semantic analysis of the apparently referential uses of proper names as exemplified in (6) and the apparently predicative uses of proper names as exemplified in (7), (8) and (9).
- c. But, other things equal, the more phenomena that a theory explains

as like, the better.³³

d. Then, predicativism is superior to referentialism.

The uniformity demand is deeply rooted in the predicativist conception of a semantic analysis of language. This demand occurs in traditional predicate views. Even though it is mainly devoted to solving long-standing problems about the semantics of empty names and true negative existentials, Russell's descriptivist account of proper names was prompted by "its ability to unify the semantics [of names and definite descriptions]" (Jeshion 2015a: 224). The uniformity demand, however, emerges even more vividly in modern versions of predicativism. As we have seen, Sloat pointed out that his predicative view allows a "constant interpretation" of proper names in different contexts. By listing the alleged advantages of his predicative account of names, Burge writes that the latter "covers plural and modified occurrences as well as singular, unmodified ones". Fara echoes Burge when she points out that her "The"-predicativism has been characterized by keeping in mind that "it is better to have a semantic account of proper names that extends to all uses of them than it is to have two separate semantic analyses, one for their 'referential' uses and another one for their predicative uses" (Fara 2015b: 270-1). Paul Elbourne, who is a linguist willing to defend a predicativist account of proper names, maintains that referentialists invariably come up with an "uneconomical theory" (2005: 171).

But why do predicativists emphasize the uniformity demand so strongly? According to Jeshion there are two different reasons. The former are "purely general desiderata about theoretical superiority" (Jeshion 2015a: 234). For all theories, the more uniform and simple, the better. This is none other than the modified version of Occam's Razor

³³ In her reconstruction of the Uniformity Argument, Jeshion substitutes the premise (c) with what she calls the "Uniformity Principle 1" (2015a: 234). According to her, this principle states that "[o]ther things equal, a theory that explains the semantics of singular unmodified occurrences of names in the same way that it explains the semantics of those (and just those) pluralized, quantified, modified, and otherwise determiner-fronted occurrences of proper names true of those that have the name, is superior to a theory that does not" (*ibid.*). By considering what kind of uniformity principle predicativism is really guided by, however, Fara writes that "she does not think it is the one that Jeshion isolates" (2015b: 271). Rather, she claims that "it is something a bit more like Occam's Razor" (*ibid.*): do not multiply entities beyond necessity. She calls it the "Maximize Uniformity Principle", and it is this one to be found in (c).

that appears in premise (c) of the Uniformity Argument. It is also what ultimately leads both Burge and Fara toward their predicativist accounts of proper names. The latter reason, on the other hand, concerns the theoretical motivations of proponents of generative grammars. The unification of the syntax and semantics of proper names, definite descriptions and, possibly, other kinds of terms is in fact something worth being achieved by those committed to an innately known Universal Grammar, “for it reduces the amount of basic syntactic and semantic knowledge that a language learner must innately have access to” (Jeshion 2015a: 234). This is basically what urges Elbourne toward a predicativist position.

2.2 Jeshion’s arguments against predicativism and Fara’s replies

The Uniformity Argument has not convinced everyone. Jeshion, for example, who according to Fara provides “the most extended and cohesive version of [its] criticism” (2015b: 252), maintains that the predicativist’s goal of uniformity is misplaced. In order to argue for her claim, she elaborates an *Anti-Unification Argument* to show that BCC provides the wrong conditions of application for numerous uses of modified proper names.³⁴ According to Jeshion, this conclusion is supported by the fact that a series of *literal* uses of predicative names do not seem to be correctly analyzable in terms of BCC. Thus, Jeshion’s criticism goes on, “if the predicative occurrences are not even themselves unified, ... then there can be no unified theory of names that includes their ‘referential’ occurrences as well” (Fara 2015b: 252).

Here is (Fara’s reconstruction of) Jeshion’s Anti-Unification Argument (see Fara 2015b: 253).³⁵

³⁴ That this is the main aim of Jeshion’s criticism clearly emerges from what she writes in “Names not predicates”: “[m]y challenge to predicativism is simple: the BNC/BCC are limited in their scope. They do not supply the correct truth conditions for numerous uses of proper names taking the plural, definite and indefinite articles, quantifiers, and other determiners” (2015a: 235).

³⁵ As we have said, the Anti-Unification Argument applies to *literal* uses of predicative names. Burge writes that “literal use[s] contrast with metaphorical use[s]” (1973: 434). This is an example that he would surely take as a metaphorical use of a proper name: “Matteo Renzi is a real Machiavelli”. Now,

Premise 1: Predicativist about proper names think that all literal uses of proper names satisfy BCC.

Premise 2: Non-metaphorical usage entails literal usage (Burge's claim).

Premise 3: There are non-metaphorical uses of predicative proper names that do not satisfy BCC.

Conclusion 1: Therefore, there are literal uses of predicative proper names that do not satisfy BCC.

Conclusion 2: Therefore, predicativists are wrong. More specifically, there is no unified meaning analysis of literal uses of predicative proper names, since literal uses of predicative proper names do not always satisfy BCC.

Premise 4: Predicativists are only justified in giving a unified analysis of predicative and "referential" occurrences of proper names if they can give a uniform analysis of all literally used predicative proper names.³⁶

Conclusion 3: Therefore, predicativists are not justified in giving a unified analysis of predicative and "referential" occurrences of proper names.

The pivot of Jeshion's Anti-Unification Argument is Premise 3. Those who argue for the latter must therefore provide examples in which a predicative name is used non-metaphorically and its semantics cannot be correctly analyzed by means of BCC. As we are about to see, this is precisely Jeshion's strategy. On the other hand, Fara's defense of predicativism is based on a close analysis of Jeshion's examples in order to demonstrate either that (i) even if Jeshion's cases exemplify literal uses of proper

there is a sense in which this sentence says something (metaphorically) true. Of course this is not because someone with the required authority called Matteo Renzi Machiavelli. Rather, it is because Matteo Renzi shares with the most salient member of the extension that contains all the individuals called Machiavelli some of his (contextually) salient properties. Even the enemies of the Uniformity Argument are willing to recognize that such uses of names do not challenge BCC. At this regard, Fara points out that "metaphorical uses of proper names do not undercut [BCC] any more than metaphorical uses of other count nouns undercut any condition for literal application of them" (Fara 2015b: 252).

³⁶ By "referential" occurrences of proper names Jeshion means those names that occur unmodified in argument position.

names, it is nevertheless unproblematic for the predicativism that they do not respect BCC, or (ii) that these presumed literal uses of names are not uses of proper names at all. Moreover, since “the phenomenon which is alleged to plague [BCC] equally plagues uncontroversial meaning analyses of other count nouns” (Fara 2015b: 253), Fara concludes that none of the examples offered by Jeshion refutes predicativism.

Let us consider the examples provided by Jeshion to support her Anti-Unification Argument with the corresponding replies by Fara. I shall focus on the so-called *Costume examples*, *Deferred Interpretation examples*, *Resemblance examples* and *Romanov examples*. This is the scenario provided by Jeshion to characterize the former: at a Halloween party there are four individuals. Two of them are dressed up as Osama Bin Laden, the others as ballerinas. Someone says something like this:

- 19) a. Two Osama Bin Ladens came to the party.
- b. Two ballerinas came to the party.

In sentence (19a), the proper name occurs modified in predicate position as the complement of a numeric determiner. The speaker’s report, apparently, is true. However, since nobody with the required authority called those individuals Osama Bin Laden, they are not elements of “Osama Bin Laden”’s extension: BCC seems then to be violated. But what about (19b)? Almost everybody would be willing to take something like “woman who is a ballet dancer” as the conditions of application of the predicate “ballerina”. If we have found the Bin Laden example convincing, however, we have to admit that in exactly the same way as BCC does not provide the correct conditions of application for “Osama Bin Laden”, then “woman who is a ballet dancer” does not express the correct conditions of application for “ballerina”. But since all of this sounds very odd, Fara concludes that Costume examples do not contradict BCC when it comes to providing the conditions of application for proper names in predicate positions (see Fara 2015b: 255).

The fact that it is far from clear whether “Osama Bin Laden” in (19a) can be taken as a *literal* use of a proper name does not affect Fara’s conclusion. If that name is used literally, in fact, the only thing that predicativists need to do is “to circumscribe their claim about the applicability of [BCC] to all literal uses” (Fara 2015b: 255.). If this is so, Conclusion 2 of the Anti-Unification Argument may easily be blocked by rejecting

Premise 1. And from Fara's perspective predicativists are definitely entitled to get rid of the latter: if proper names that occur in Costume examples are literally used, "then the applicability conditions for all [predicates] must be circumscribed in exactly the same way" (*ibid.*). In this case, Fara's reasoning goes on, predicativists are also entitled to refute Conclusion 3 by rejecting Premise 4 of the Anti-Unification Argument. On the other hand, if "Osama Bin Laden" in (19a) is not used literally, then there are two different options to choose from: according to the former, the name is used metaphorically. In this case the Anti-Unification Argument loses its grip against predicativism. According to the latter option, the name is not used literally or metaphorically: Fara calls such a use a " *'literal'* " use. If this were so, predicativists would be entitled to reject Premise 2, and so Conclusions 1, 2 and 3 of the Anti-Unification Argument would not hold any longer (see Fara 2015b: 255).

Let us consider *Deferred Interpretation examples*. Take the following sentences:

- 20) a. Picasso painted Guernica.
- b. Calisto Tanzi is hiding two Picassos in his cellar.

Setting aside for the moment the predicativist analysis of (20a), it seems quite clear that everyone, whether predicativist or referentialist, would use it to say something about a specific individual, namely, that *that* individual painted a specific painting. On the other hand, sentence (20b) would be most likely used to say that there are two paintings *authored by* Picasso hidden in Calisto Tanzi's cellar. According to Jeshion, this contrasts with BCC. Since the two objects that "Picassos" seems to stand for are not called Picasso in Fara's terms, then BCC does not give the correct conditions of application for "Picasso" in (20b).

Fara points out that "Picasso" in (20b) is not used metaphorically. Rather, she claims that it is a clear instance "of what Geoffrey Nunberg has called 'deferred interpretation'" (Fara 2015b: 256), namely, a phenomenon to the effect that a predicate, turns out to be true of someone or something that it is not in its *conventional* extension. According to Nunberg, we have a deferred interpretation of an expression when a *salient functional relation* maps the individuals that satisfy its deferred interpretation to those that satisfy the conventional one (see Nunberg 1995 and 2004). From Fara's point of view, this means that a deferentially interpreted predicate "is true of something just in case the

salient function maps it to something in the [extension of the] normally interpreted predicate” (Fara 2015b: 259). In the case of (20b), this salient function may be the one that maps a painting to the artist who authored it.

It might be argued that deferred interpretations are indeed *pragmatic* phenomena. If this were so, by using (20b) a speaker would not express a literal truth, even though she may succeed in *conveying* something true. It is clear that according to this pragmatic view “the predicativist need not reject [BCC] in the face of [cases like (20b)]” (*ibid.*). Those who take deferred interpretations as *semantic* phenomena, on the contrary, are willing to recognize that the pluralized occurrence of “Picasso” in (20b) may be interpreted as if it designates a predicate true of some paintings associated to Picasso *via* the function *being a painting authored by*. However, since the phenomenon of deferred interpretation applies to common nouns as well without forcing us to revise the standard assumptions on their semantics, it “does not require the predicativist to reject [BCC] as the normal applicability condition for proper names” (*ibid.*).³⁷

Let us consider *Resemblance examples*. This is the situation described by Jeshion. Lena is coming with her three little daughters. One of them does not look like her mother, but the others resemble her very much: they look like her, act like her and so on and so forth. Whilst looking at all of them, a speaker utters the following sentence:

21) Two little Lenas just arrived.

There is a sense in which this sentence is appropriately uttered. However, since none of Lena’s daughters has been called Lena, the pluralized occurrence of “Lena” that occurs in (21) does not behave in accordance with BCC. Now, does this situation

³⁷ To clarify this point Fara takes into account the following sentence: “Put the gorillas in the east wing and the humans in the west wing” (2015b: 258), uttered by the curator of the Prime Art Museum who is asking her assistant to put the paintings made by the gorillas in a specific area of the museum and those painted by the humans in another one. According to Fara, this scenario exemplifies a case in which both “gorillas” and “humans” have deferred interpretations. Moreover, the function that is supposed to govern the phenomenon is the same as the one that is at work in (20b), namely, *being a painting authored by*. Since cases like the one just examined do not induce us to conclude that “gorilla” and “human” have applicability conditions different than we thought, Fara’s reasoning goes on, the phenomenon of deferred interpretation does not count against BCC for proper names.

support Premise 3 of the Anti-Unification Argument, and so its conclusion to the effect that predicativism's uniformity claim is misplaced? Fara's answer is negative.

According to Fara, the proper name "Lena" that occurs in (21) exhibits what she calls a *resemblance behavior* (see Fara 2015b: 260). A proper name that occupies a predicate position behaves this way whenever it is "appropriately used as if it applies to a thing that it does not normally apply to because the thing resembles (in some contextual relevant ways) the things that the [name] does normally apply to" (*ibid.*).

The resemblance behavior does not make proper names peculiar. On the contrary, common nouns seem to be susceptible to this very same behavior. To realize this, all that we have to do is to consider the following sentences (see Fara 2015b: 260):

- 22) a. Here comes Lena with her two little women.
b. Here comes Lena with her two little ballerinas.

If Lena's daughters actually look like women or ballerinas, for example because they wear tutus or business suits, then both (22a) and (22b) may be appropriately uttered. According to Fara, this is straightforwardly explained by saying that *even* common nouns such as "woman" or "ballerina" are susceptible to resemblance behavior. In particular, both of them are applicable even to little girls as long as these resemble, for example by wearing tutus or business suits, the things "woman" and "ballerina" normally apply to. From Fara's perspective, however, if common nouns exhibit resemblance behavior as well, then the fact that proper names do the same cannot be used as an argument against BCC.

Now, the crucial point made by Fara is that for every example suggested by Jeshion where a predicative proper name apparently does not behave in accordance with BCC it is possible to find an analogous example with a common noun that clearly does not cast doubt on its usual conditions of application. From Fara's view (see Fara 2015b: 264), this is enough to demonstrate that Costume, Resemblance and Deferred Interpretation examples do not discredit BCC.

Let us finally consider *Romanov examples*. According to Boër, who pointed them out for the first time, as soon as we focus on "standard use[s] of *family names* in [sentences where] they are employed to talk about *genetic kinds*" (Boër 1974: 390), we immediately realize that BCC – or, to be precise, GNC since Boër argues against

Burge's version of predicativism (see footnote 27 above) – gives wrong truth-conditions. These are some of the examples provided by Boër (see 1974: 390) and reconsidered by Jeshion (see 2015a: 238):

23) Joe Romanov (my barber) is not a Romanov.

24) Waldo Cox (my gardener) is a Romanov.

Suppose that both (23) and (24) are true: Joe Romanov does not belong to the famous Russian family; Waldo Cox, on the other hand, after some historical and genealogical investigations, actually turns out to be a descendent of that family. If we stick to Fara's BCC and Burge's GNC, however, both (23) and (24) should be false.

According to Boër, it might be argued that the deliberately vague formulation used by Burge to characterize his conditions of application for proper names – “N” is true of x iff x was given “N” as a proper name in an *appropriate* way – allows us to evaluate (23) and (24) by staying in line with our intuitions. Since Joe has never been given “Romanov” as a proper name in a “genealogically appropriated fashion” (Boër 1974: 390), in fact, he does not figure in the extension of that name, and so (23) turns out to be true. However, this strategy cannot be applied to the Waldo Cox example, since in Boër's scenario “Waldo Cox” has never been given “Romanov” as a name, whatever Burge might mean by “in an appropriate way”. Far from giving the complete semantic analysis of proper names, Boër's reasoning goes on, BCC/GNC, if not altogether wrong, are at least incomplete, since there are occurrences of proper names whose correct semantic analysis is not given by them.

From Boër's perspective, the following considerations prompt the same conclusion. Take ordinary predicates, namely, predicates that are not proper names. Here are three sentences compared by Boër (see 1974: 392):

25) a. Most twenty-story hotels do not have a thirteenth floor.

b. Most twenty-story hotels lack a floor which is thirteenth above the ground.

c. Most twenty-story hotels lack a floor called ‘the thirteenth floor’.

According to Boër, (25b) and (25c) are merely two different readings of (25a). But while (25b) is clearly “self-contradictory” (Boër 1974: 392), (25c) “states a familiar

truth” (Boër 1974: 392). The difference between them lies in an alleged ambiguity of the predicate “thirteenth floor”, which is supposed to be open to two different conditions of application, “one ‘self-referential’ and the other not” (*ibid.*). Respectively, “ ‘Thirteenth floor’ is true of x iff x is *called* ‘thirteenth floor’ ”, and “ ‘Thirteenth floor’ is true of x iff x is a thirteenth floor above the ground”. According to Boër, everyone who believes that BCC/GNC give the correct conditions of application for proper names is just making a “more subtle version of the mistake made by one who insists that x is a thirteenth floor just in case x is called ‘the thirteenth floor’ ” (*ibid.*).

Whatever we may think about this last statement of Boër – it is far from clear whether *all* ordinary predicates have self-referential readings – his considerations should catch our eye. Indeed, the way for those who want to defend predicativism from Boër’s attack seems to be already paved. They have to demonstrate that despite appearances expressions such as “Romanov” have much more in common with ordinary predicates than with proper names. If this were so, then the mere fact that “Romanov” does not respect BCC/GNC could not be taken as an argument against Burge’s and Fara’s versions of predicativism.

The idea according to which “Romanov” might not be a proper name is not preposterous after all. As Boër himself points out, “to be, say, a Romanov (in the relevant sense) requires much more than just being named ‘Romanov’ ” (390). On the contrary, to be, say, a John does not seem to require much more than to have received “John” as a name in whatever way is appropriate. It might be thought, Boër’s reasoning goes on, that even though the expression “Romanov” that occurs in (23) and (24) *appears* to be a proper name, since it has its first letter capitalized and shows no sign of internal syntactic/semantic structure, it turns out to be a complex (ordinary) predicate such as “being a member of a family with such-and-such a genetic make-up”. Fara’s reply to Jeshion’s *Romanov examples* follows exactly this line.

Now, Fara’s point seems reasonable. When we utter a sentence like (23), it is quite clear that what we want to convey is that a specific individual, Joe, is not a member of the Romanovs (the formerly powerful Russian family), *even though* his surname is phonologically identical with the one that should be held by anyone who is genetically connected in an appropriate way to the members of that dynasty. Strictly speaking, we do not use a sentence like that to convey something about Joe’s name. On the contrary,

we do use it to convey something about his genetic make-up. The idea originally pointed out by Boër, and then revisited by Fara, according to which the second occurrence of “Romanov” in (23) and (24) may be equivalent to an ordinary predicate such as “being a member of a family with such-and-such a genetic make-up” seems to be more than appealing, thus making the inapplicability of BCC to “Romanov” in (23) and (24) unproblematic from the predicativist’s point of view.³⁸

It is interesting to note that all the examples grouped under the tag *Romanov examples*, those of Joe and Waldo Romanov pointed out by Boër and Jeshion, those of Fred Smith and Billy Jones proposed by Boër (1974: 391) and those of the Kennedys originally suggested by King (2006: 143) and then recalled by Jeshion (2015a: 224), do not concern proper names at all. Rather, they are supposed to achieve conclusions about the semantics of names by considering the behavior of *surnames*. Now, that a surname *is* a proper name, and so everything that is true of the former must also be true of the latter, is something that still has to be demonstrated. In this regard, however, one thing is certain: between proper names and surnames there are important differences. As we have seen, according to Fara and Burge, one of the crucial features of a proper name, say “N”, is that not everyone can call someone “N”, but only someone who has the required authority to do so. Proper names are something that *someone with the required authority intentionally gives* (attaches, imposes, assigns) to someone or something else. Things are different for surnames. Devitt, for example, writes that “babies in many cultures have their father’s surname waiting for them at birth” (2015: 114). A surname is therefore something that is, let us say, *automatically* associated to an individual (and usually *only* to a human individual – this is another difference with respect to proper

³⁸ Just for the record, Fara’s replies to Costume, Deferred Interpretation, Resemblance and Romanov examples have not convinced Jeshion. In “A rejoinder to Fara’s ‘ ‘Literal’ uses of proper names’ ”, she explains why. Basically, she believes that Fara is not entitled to assume cases like (7), (8) and (9) as “the canonical examples of predicative uses of proper names that illustrate [their] normal application conditions” (Jeshion 2015b: 283). Because of the large set of examples to which BCC does not give the correct conditions of application, Jeshion’s reasoning goes on, Fara “needs to argue or somehow justify, not assume, that sentences [(7), (8) and (9)] exemplify the normal, literal usage of proper names” (*ibid.*). In other words, to “be successful, Fara needs to establish that the [BCC]-friendly examples are not to be analyzed in the same fashion as Romanov examples” (289), namely, as proper nouns rather than proper names.

names) at the time of its birth. Are these differences enough to convince someone that surnames are not proper names? Probably not. As a matter of fact, the considerations tentatively put forward above are only meant to show that the widespread tendency among philosophers of language to derive conclusions about proper names by considering surnames should not be taken to be as unproblematic as they usually seem.

There is the problem of capitalization. If surnames are much more similar to ordinary predicates, why do they occur capitalized as if they were proper names? It is difficult to answer this question. One immediate explanation may be that since they often occur juxtaposed to proper names, people eventually began to write surnames in the way they write proper names, namely, with the first letter capitalized. Of course this is not a real explanation. A lot of empirical data is needed in order to confirm this hypothesis. However, this is a matter for linguists rather than for philosophers.

Let us take stock. *If* predicativism is correct, which is of course still controversial like many things in philosophy, then a proper name “N” is equivalent to a predicate like “bearer of ‘N’ ”. According to BCC, such a predicate is true of an individual if and only if someone called it N; that is, if and only if someone used “N” in an appropriate way to name it. Moreover, when “N” occurs unmodified in argument position, it is the descriptive element of the nominal denuded definite description “ \emptyset_{The} N”, which in my view is equivalent to “the bearer of ‘N’ ”. The latter claim, however, leaves us with a problem. Since definite descriptions like these are almost always incomplete, how do we determine the *individual* that is the truth-maker of an utterance containing a proper name occurring unmodified in argument position? What we have seen so far sheds no light whatsoever on how occurrences of proper names in argument position are semantically connected with specific individuals in the world. As we shall see in the next Chapter, here is exactly where Donnellan’s distinction between attributive and referential uses of definite descriptions, which was introduced in Chapter 1, comes into play.

Chapter 3

Deferential and non-deferential uses of proper names

In “Understanding proper names”, Michael McKinsey pointed out that a speaker may use a proper name in two different ways. She can do it *deferentially*, by relying “on other speaker’s uses of the name to determine reference for ... her own uses” (2011: 328). But she can also use it *non-deferentially* to speak about an individual “without at all having to defer to anyone else’s use of that name” (*ibid.*).

Speakers use proper names deferentially when they are “either nearly completely ignorant of the referent’s characteristics or their knowledge of the referent is quite limited” (*ibid.*). Even though these uses of names are by no means uncommon, McKinsey claims that they are generally restricted to those made “to refer to famous or historical persons or objects with which [the speakers] are not acquainted, and about which [they] know very little” (*ibid.*). Kripke’s *picture* of proper names referent seems to be well suited to account for uses like these. According to him, the referent of a given use of a name is determined by a communication chain that diachronically connects it to other uses of the same name made by other speakers and, ultimately, to an original dubbing event in which someone gave that name to an individual, which is the referent of all these uses of that name (see Kripke 1980: 91-92).

On the other hand, speakers are supposed to be using proper names non-deferentially when they have “an enormous amount of identifying knowledge of the name’s referent” (McKinsey 2011: 329). Non-deferential uses are “exceedingly common” (328) and include those by which the speaker wishes “to refer to extremely familiar things, including family pets, frequently visited locations (towns and cities) and geographical objects (lakes, rivers, mountains), spouses, family members, good friends, and close colleagues” (*ibid.*). Contrary to what happens for deferential uses, McKinsey believes that non-deferential uses of names represent a huge class of name uses to which Kripke’s account “simply does not apply” (*ibid.*). Both the original dubbing and its

being connected *via* a communication chain to uses of names made by speakers are in fact “irrelevant to determining the semantic referents of ... [their] non-deferential uses” (McKinsey 2011: 329). McKinsey is not the only philosopher who believes that a distinction between deferential and non-deferential uses of proper names is useful when it comes to theorizing about their semantics. In the early seventies, for example, Gareth Evans had already pointed out something very similar.³⁹

3.1 Evans’ remarks on deferential uses of proper names

To properly understand Evans’ remarks on the matter, it is necessary to recall some of the main features of his account of proper names. As everybody knows, the most polished and complete version of the latter is offered by him in *The varieties of reference*. In what follows, however, I shall focus on his earlier paper “The causal theory of names”. Since all the details relevant for my purpose remain unchanged in these two works, this choice will not have any effect on the way my reasoning proceeds.

Evans believed that both Donnellan’s and Kripke’s arguments were crucial against descriptivist theories of reference for proper names (see Chapter 1). According to him, the crucial flaw of these theories resides in the absence, in the explanations they give of the phenomenon of reference, “of any causal relation between the items concerned [i.e., the referents of the names] and the speaker [who uses them]” (1973: 197). However, he also claims that the causal account of reference sketched by Kripke takes the “wrong” causal connection to be relevant, so to say. From Evans’ point of view, in fact, the important causal relation “lies between the item’s states and doings and the speaker’s body of information” (*ibid.*); and not, as Kripke claims, “between the item’s being dubbed with a name and the speaker’s contemporary use of it” (*ibid.*). This is why, from Evans’ perspective, Kripke’s picture becomes inadequate for handling problems like the so called “reference-shift”, that may be “decisive against Causal Theories of Names” (195), unless they are properly modified.

³⁹ In a footnote appended to “Should proper names still seem so problematic?”, Devitt writes that to his knowledge Evans is the first to bring the notion of semantic *deference* into the debate (see Devitt 2015: 115 n.19).

This is the well-known example proposed by Evans to characterize the reference-shift problem:

We learn from Isaac Taylor's book: *Names and their History*, 1898: In the case of "Madagascar" a hearsay report of Malay or Arab sailors misunderstood by Marco Polo... has had the effect of transferring a corrupted form of the name of a portion of the African Mainland to the great African Island. (Evans 1973: 169)

Apparently, the proper name "Madagascar" that we now currently use every time we want to say something about the African island was instead originally introduced (and used) by African natives to speak about a specific portion of the African mainland. According to Taylor, what triggered the reference-shift for that name was a mistake by Marco Polo, who mistook a sailor's remark containing "Madagascar" to say something about the mainland as if it were made to say something about the island. Let us suppose that, on his return to Venice, Polo uttered something like this: "Madagascar is huge". The question, now, is: What was Polo referring to by using "Madagascar"?

If we stick to a rude version of Kripke's picture, then the answer should be to the mainland. However, even though this may be plausible for Polo's first uses of "Madagascar", the answer becomes very difficult to swallow as soon as we consider our contemporary uses of that name.⁴⁰ For we certainly have strong intuitions that when we use "Madagascar" what we are now speaking about is the island, and not (or no longer) the mainland. Kripke's casual picture of reference leads us in exactly the opposite direction, though. Since all the communication chains underlying our uses of "Madagascar" most likely pass through Polo's first uses of that name, we must conclude that we, too, refer to the mainland by using "Madagascar".

Things are different if we apply Donnellan's historical explanation theory to this case. As we know, according to this theory, for a proper name used by a speaker to refer

⁴⁰ McKinsey would certainly not subscribe to this point. According to him, in fact, "when Polo first returned to Venice, the sentences he uttered containing 'Madagascar' were not about a part of Africa at all. These sentences were about Madagascar" (1976: 237). Despite what he writes, however, it is difficult to deny that our intuitions according to which Polo's first uses of "Madagascar" referred to the island are indeed weaker than those concerning our contemporary uses of the same name.

to an individual all that is necessary is that the speaker has that individual in mind, and that her having that individual in mind is what explains in the appropriate way her use of that name. Now, Polo had both the island and the mainland in mind even at the time of his first uses of “Madagascar”: the former, *via* a direct perceptual relation; the latter, *via* what the sailor said to him by using that name. In order to understand what Polo was referring to with his uses of “Madagascar”, therefore, what we have to do is to determine, *case by case*, which of these two individuals (island or mainland) play the explicative role mentioned by the theory. Technically speaking, if it turns out that Polo’s first uses of “Madagascar” were appropriately explained by his having the island in mind, then in accordance with McKinsey’s intuitions on the matter (see footnote 40 above), even the very first uses of that name made by Polo referred to the island. But what about our present uses of the name? Well, since most likely every contemporary use of “Madagascar” made by a speaker is explained by her having the island in mind, then contrary to Kripke’s picture, Donnellan’s historical explanation theory allows us to stay in line with our intuitions: every time we use the name we refer to the African island.

In “The causal theory of names”, Evans tries to “sketch an account of what makes an expression into a name for something that will allow names to change their [referents]” (1973: 198). His account is based on the concepts of “source and dominance” (199) of a cluster or body of information. Take the definite description “the-so-and-so”. In Chapter 1 we said that when a speaker uses an expression of this kind intending to say something about an individual, *as a rule*, she believes that some individual or other in the world is so-and-so. However, Evans writes that “that item [i.e., individual] is not (in general) the satisfier of the body of the information [possessed by the speaker] ...; it is rather the item which is causally responsible for the speaker’s possession of that body of information, or dominantly responsible if there is more than one” (*ibid.*). A strong consonance with Donnellan’s conception of descriptions used referentially emerges vividly. As we are about to see, however, the parallel between Evans and Donnellan extends to proper names as well.

The idea is that our bodies of information (i.e., beliefs) about an individual are derived from “informational gathering transactions” (*ibid.*) involving a causal contact between us and that individual. The informational transactions Evans is talking about

are very similar to what Recanati calls *epistemically rewarding relations* (see Recanati 2012). These are the “channels” by which we obtain information about individuals in the world. The crucial trait of these transactions is that of being acquaintance-based, and their paradigm is of course that of *perceptual* acquaintance (see Evans 1973: 199).

Thus, we entertain an informational transaction with the pencil we are looking at. All the information we gather through this transaction – about its color, its approximate length and weight, etc. – composes our body of information for that pencil. That pencil is therefore the *source*, to use Evans’ terminology, of that body of information.

Moreover, since by stipulation all the components of that body of information are derived by transactions with that very pencil, the latter counts as its unique source.

There are other informational transactions based on causal contacts that are more “tenuous” or indirect than those perceptually grounded. To this regard, Evans points out that a man may well turn out to be the source of one of our bodies of information just because we have rummaged into his suitcase (see Evans 1973: 199). Even though we have never been perceptually acquainted with that man, Evans believes that the causal relation that holds between us and him (through his suitcase) allows for a potential flow of information from him to us, hence in his view it counts as a transaction suitable for determining not only the source of a body of information, but the *speaker’s referential intentions* as well. I shall get back to this crucial point in a moment.

So far so good, but how is all this supposed to shed light on the problem of reference-shift? Evans writes that “misidentification can bring it about that the item which is the source of the information is different from the item about which the information is believed” (1973: 200). Consequently, “a cluster or dossier of information can be dominantly of an item though it contains elements whose source is different” (*ibid.*). Persistent misidentifications, finally, may result in a cluster being dominantly of some individual “other than that it was dominantly of originally” (*ibid.*).

We may suppose, following Evans, that something similar happened to Polo. Various sailors spoke to him using “Madagascar” to convey information about the portion of the mainland. The source of Polo’s body of information thus obtained was therefore the mainland, even though, strictly speaking, he did not know what the sailors were talking about. Anyway, the time of the crucial mistake soon arrived. Polo sighted the African island from his ship and mistook a remark containing “Madagascar” made by a sailor

who was standing by him as being about that island. Information obtained through the perception-based transactions connecting him to that island began to flow into Polo's original (mainland-dominant) body of information associated to the name "Madagascar". At the beginning, and for a period whose length is certainly difficult to specify, Polo's body of information continued to have the mainland as its dominant source, even though such a source ceased to be univocal. By containing information derived from the island, in fact, the latter now counts as one of its sources. As we know from Taylor's report, however, Polo did not realize his mistake, namely, he did not realize that what he took to be a body of information deriving from a univocal source was actually the result of information obtained from two different sources. He then set ashore on that island, began to explore it and so on and so forth. As a result, a huge amount of island-obtained information began to flow into his original body of information, and since the dominancy of a body of information with more than one source is a matter of balance between the amount of information derived from its different sources, Polo's body of information connected with "Madagascar" eventually changed its dominant source, by shifting from the mainland to the island.

All this may perhaps explain the shift in Polo's beliefs, so to say: what was originally a true belief about the mainland is now a wrong belief about the island. But what about reference? Evans writes that "*in general* a speaker intends to refer to the item that is the dominant source of his associated body of information" (1973: 202). He then proposes the following as a tentative definition of what it takes, for an expression, to be a proper name of an individual:

"NN" is a name of x if there is a community C

1. in which it is common knowledge that members of C have in their repertoire the procedure of using "NN" to refer to x (with the intention of referring to x);
2. the success in reference in any particular case being intended to rely on common knowledge between speaker and hearer that "NN" has been used to refer to x by members of C and not upon common knowledge of the satisfaction by x of some predicate embedded in "NN". (Evans 1973: 202)

Even though the criticism of description theories of reference clearly emerges from point (2), Evans' positive remarks on what it takes for "NN" to be a proper name of an individual x , and so what it takes for a speaker to use the former to say something about the latter, are not equally clear. Apparently, for this to happen there must be a community of speakers whose members *know* that when they want to say something about an individual x , they are going to use "NN". With the specification that every time a member of this community uses "NN" she must do so by intending to refer to x , namely, her use of "NN" must be connected with one of her bodies of information whose dominant source is x .

The crucial point to notice here is that neither original baptisms nor chains of communication find a place in Evans' explanation of proper names reference. Something similar to Kripke's chains of communication may certainly have a role in determining the common knowledge Evans is talking about; however, these are not what ultimately determine the reference of a proper name used by a speaker, which is instead the individual who is the dominant source (causally-determined) of the body of information associated by the speaker to her use of that name.

A parallel with Donnellan's historical explanation theory emerges vividly. As we have seen, from his perspective all that is needed for a speaker to use a name to refer to an individual is that the former's having the latter in mind is what explains the speaker's use of that name. The common knowledge mentioned by Evans, moreover, can be characterized, at least in part, in terms of Donnellan's considerations about the *expectations* that a speaker who uses a proper name must have toward the other speakers of her community and their ability to grasp her referential intentions (see Chapter 1). The following example put forward by Evans, together with the conclusions he derives from it, counts as further evidence of the parallel between his account of proper names and that of Donnellan:

An urn is discovered in the Dead Sea containing documents on which are found fascinating mathematical proofs. Inscribed at the bottom is the name "Ibn-Khan" which is quite naturally taken to be the name of the constructor of the proofs. Consequently, it passes into common usage amongst mathematicians concerned with that branch of mathematics. "Khan conjectured here that ..." and the like. However,

suppose the name was the name of the scribe who had transcribed the proofs much later; a small “*id scripsit*” had been obliterated. Here is a perfect case where there is a coherent community using the name with the mathematician as the intended referent and a consequence of the definition would be that “Ibn-Khan” would be one of his names.
(Evans 1973: 203)

According to Evans, every time contemporary speakers use the name “Ibn-Kahn” they refer to the mathematician who constructed the proofs; and not, as a rude application of Kripke’s causal picture would suggest, to the scribe who transcribed them. The reason is that the contemporary speakers use “Ibn-Kahn” in connection with a body of information whose dominant, though not unique, source is the mathematician, not the scribe. Moreover, they do it in a community where everybody knows that to say something about that individual the common practice is that of using “Ibn-Kahn”. To put things in Donnellan’s terms, they do it in a community where everybody *expects* that by using “Ibn-Kahn” her audience will pick out her intended reference, namely, the mathematician who actually constructed those proofs.

The Ibn-Kahn example has some features in common with the Aston-Martin scenario that Donnellan put forward to argue against the principle of identifying descriptions (see Chapter 1). Even in the latter, in fact, by using “Aston-Martin” the speaker succeeds in referring to an individual, namely, to the man he met at the party, who has never received “Aston-Martin” as a name in what Kripke would describe as an original dubbing and so, *a fortiori*, to an individual who is not at the end of any communication chain underlying the speaker’s use of that name. As we know, the reason is that the speaker’s use of “Aston-Martin” in “Robinson tripped over Aston-Martin’s feet”, which is one of two utterances the speaker makes when using that name in Donnellan’s example, is appropriately explained by his having the man he met at that party in mind. To put things in Evans’ terms, the speaker’s use of “Aston-Martin” in that utterance is connected with a body of information whose dominant source is the man he met at that party, not the famous philosopher.⁴¹

⁴¹ There are two objections that someone may raise against the parallel just drawn between Donnellan and Evans. The first one is that in the Aston-Martin scenario, unlike what happens in the Ibn-Kahn example, the speaker makes two different utterances in a very short period of time: “Robinson tripped over Aston-

After having presented his account of proper names, Evans writes that “although standardly we use expressions with the intention of conforming with the general use made of them by the community, sometimes we use them with the *over-riding* intention to conform to the use made of them by some other person or persons” (1973: 205). By using a name this way, according to him, we “use the expression *deferentially* (with respect to that other person or group of persons)” (*ibid.*). The following is an example of

Martin’s feet”, and “Last night I met J.L. Aston-Martin”. Donnellan believes that by using “Aston-Martin” in the former utterance, the speaker refers to the man he met at the party. On the contrary, he believes that by using the same name in the latter, the speaker refers to the famous philosopher (see Chapter 1). As we know, the historical explanation theory of reference accounts for this by saying that these two uses of “Aston-Martin” are appropriately explained by the speaker’s having two different individuals in mind. Now, the problem arises as soon as we try to describe this situation by appealing to the process that from Evans’ point of view is supposed to underlie the change of the dominant source of a body of information. In particular, as we have seen above, this is a process that takes a lot of time. It is not something that happens during the short period between two consecutive utterances. This is not a fatal objection, though. For those who believe that Polo’s first uses of “Madagascar” referred to the mainland, and that it took (a long) time in order for its reference to shift, Evans’ change-in dominant source-process is perhaps more appealing. On the contrary, those who believe, like McKinsey (see footnote 40 above), that Polo’s very first uses of “Madagascar” referred to the island would probably find Donnellan’s view more apt. However, the parallel between Evans’s and Donnellan’s accounts of proper names still holds. According to both of them, neither original dubbings nor chains of communication are what ultimately establish the reference of a proper name used by a speaker. The other objection is more serious. It concerns the role of the community of the speakers in ensuring that a use of a proper name made by one of its member actually refers to a specific individual. According to Evans, for this to happen the members of the community must know that the common practice for referring to that individual is that of using that specific name. Now, even though this requirement is satisfied for the latter utterance in Donnellan’s example, it is clearly not respected for the former. The “theoretical weight” placed by Evans on the community of the speakers when it comes to determining proper names’ referent is perhaps the only large gap between his account and that of Donnellan. As we have said, however, what Donnellan writes about the expectations a speaker who uses a name must have towards her audience seems to bridge (at least in part) this gap. From his point of view, to use a proper name “NN” to refer to *x* a speaker must expect that her audience will pick out *x* as her intended referent. As a rule, however, this happens when both the speaker and the hearer know that in their community “NN” is actually used as a name for *x*. It seems therefore that even in Donnellan’s historical explanation theory the community of the speakers, or better, what the speakers believe (perhaps erroneously) about their community, plays an important role when it comes to determining the referents of proper names.

what should count as a deferential use of a proper name in Evans' view.⁴²

Archaeologists might find a tomb in the desert and claim falsely that it is the burial place of some little known character in the Bible. They could discover a great deal about the man in the tomb so that he and not the character in the Bible was the dominant source of their information. But, given the nature and point of their enterprise, the archaeologists are using the name deferentially to the authors of the Bible. I should say, then, that they denote that man, and say false things about him. (Evans 1973: 205)

The unique source of the archeologists' body of information connected to their uses of, let us say, "Isaiah", was the individual (provided that it existed) they were causally in contact with through what they read in the Bible. After they had discovered the tomb, however, a massive flow of information perceptually-based in the individual actually buried there began to enter into their original body of information connected to their uses of "Isaiah", and since the individual buried in that tomb is not the Isaiah the Bible talks about, the dominant source of their original body of information eventually changed.

If we stick to Evans' causal account of names, we must conclude that by their most recent uses of "Isaiah", the archeologists intend to refer to the individual buried in the tomb they discovered. However, given "the nature and the point of their enterprise", Evans claims that what they really do is to use "Isaiah" by *deferring* to the authors of the Bible. And this, according to him, means that they use that name with the intention of referring to the individual those authors were talking about. Thus, when the archeologists utter something like "Isaiah is buried there" by pointing to the tomb, they say something false about the character in the Bible, and not something true of the

⁴² At the beginning of "The casual theory of names", Evans reports the following scenario to argue against description theories of reference: "A group of people are having a conversation in a pub, about a certain Louis S has never heard of before. S becomes interested and asks: 'What did Louis do then?' There seems to be no question but that S denotes a particular man and asks about him. Or on some subsequent occasion S may use the name to offer some new thought to one of the participants: 'Louis was quite right to do that' " (1973: 192). On concluding his paper, Evans recalls this example and he points out that according to his view "the man in the conversation in the pub used 'Louis' deferentially" (205).

individual buried in the tomb they discovered.

Even though, as we are about to see, it does not perfectly overlap with the one outlined by McKinsey, Evans' characterization of deferential uses of proper names is quite interesting. It seems that according to his account, when someone, let us say S_1 , uses a name N by deferring to someone else, let us say S_2 , the dominant source of the body of information connected to S_1 's uses of N somehow gets "deactivated", and the dominant source associated by S_2 to her uses of N takes its place. Strictly speaking, this means that by using N , S_1 intends to designate *whoever or whatever S_2 intends to designate with N* . When the dominant source of S_1 's body of information connected with N is different from that of the body of information connected to the same name by S_2 , then we have a case like the one described in the archeologists example.

The problem of course is that Evans (in the same way as McKinsey regarding his own examples) does not clearly explain *why* the archeologists use "Isaiah" by deferring to the authors of the Bible, since "cognitively speaking" they may well use it in its standard/non-deferential way to say something about the dominant source of the body of information *they* associate with that name, namely, the individual buried in the tomb they discovered. All that Evans writes in the way of explanation is that the fact that they use "Isaiah" deferentially for the character in the Bible, and not in its standard/non-deferential way for the man buried in the tomb, derives from the "nature and point of their enterprise". Which is something that somehow reminds the equally rather obscure formulation "the speaker's remark would only have a point" used by Donnellan to claim that the speaker's use of "Aston-Martin" in his utterance "Robinson tripped over Aston-Martin's feet" actually refers to the man he met at the party, not to the famous philosopher (see Donnellan 1970: 349-350).

Another important point is that according to Evans the example of the archeologists who use "Isaiah" by deferring to the Bible's authors is "no different with any situation in which a name is used with the over-riding intention of referring to something satisfying such and such a description" (Evans 1973: 205). Right after this remark, Evans recalls the well-known example put forward by Kripke of the name "Jack the Ripper" introduced to speak about whoever brutally murdered certain prostitutes in 1888. This is a rather interesting suggestion, since Evans seems to associate deferential uses of names to uses of (names introduced by means of) *attributive* definite

descriptions. And this, as we are about to see, is exactly what I shall argue for. According to the account of deferential uses of names that I am going to outline, in fact, names used this way function as (a special type of) attributive definite descriptions.

Before proceeding, however, it is important to realize that Evans' distinction between deferential and standard/non-deferential uses of proper names does not coincide perfectly with the one sketched by McKinsey, which is the one I am going to adopt for the rest of the discussion. In particular, while the latter says that by using a proper name non-deferentially a speaker does not rely on anybody else's use of that name, the former, as we have just seen, claims that a speaker uses a name non-deferentially by intending to conform with (or *by relying on*, to use McKinsey's words) the general use made of it by the community. It seems therefore that the "theoretical weight" placed by Evans on the community of the speakers not only distinguishes his account of proper names from Donnellan's (see footnote 41 above), but somehow also differentiates his notion of a non-deferential use of a name from that characterized by McKinsey. Moreover, while for McKinsey the crucial difference between a speaker who uses a name deferentially for an individual x and one who may also use it non-deferentially for the same individual seems to lie in their different "epistemic access" to x , for Evans this difference is apparently grounded in the wideness of the group of the speakers who use that name and with which someone who wants to use it must conform: the entire community of the speakers, if she uses the name non-deferentially; a group of persons, or even a single individual, if she uses that name deferentially (see Evans 1973: 205).

3.2 Deferential and non-deferential uses of proper names

I believe that Donnellan's distinction about definite descriptions that we discussed extensively in Chapter 1 can shed light on McKinsey's rather tentative remarks on both deferential and non-deferential uses of proper names. Let us take sentence (6) again:

6) Jones studies in Princeton.

Suppose that a speaker utters (6) to talk about an individual whose name is in fact “Jones” and who studies in Princeton. Since predicativism about proper names is *at least* plausible, as we have seen in Chapter 2, we may represent the speaker’s utterance in the following way:

(6*) \emptyset_{The} Jones studies in Princeton.

Now, the idea is simple. If the speaker uses “Jones” in (6*) deferentially, then we face an attributive use of “ \emptyset_{The} Jones”, which is equivalent to an attributive use of “the bearer of ‘Jones’ ”. On the other hand, if she uses “Jones” non-deferentially, then the speaker’s use of the latter is equivalent to a referential use of that description. If I am on the right track, therefore, even proper names, like definite descriptions, are expressions designed to perform two different semantic roles. And this, in turn, means that exactly as happens with definite descriptions there are two different ways in which a proper name can be related to an individual so that the latter counts as the truth-maker of an utterance containing the former. The following bi-conditionals parallel (b₁) and (c₁) given in Chapter 1, and are meant to exemplify these differences:

b₂) In using a proper name “N” (unmodified in argument position) *non-deferentially* a speaker S *refers* to an individual *e* iff S’s having *e* in mind is appropriately involved in the explanation of S’s use of “N”.

c₂) In using a proper name “N” (unmodified in argument position) *deferentially* a speaker S *denotes* an individual *e* iff *e* uniquely satisfies “N”, which is equivalent to “bearer of ‘N’ ”, when it is contextually integrated.

Both (b₂) and (c₂) require clarifications. Take (c₂) first. In this case the speaker utters (6*) by using “Jones” deferentially. This means that the speaker’s use of “Jones” is equivalent to an attributive use of “the bearer of ‘Jones’ ”. According to Russell’s theory, which from Donnellan’s point view may be applied “if at all” to these uses of definite descriptions, (6*) is true if and only if the predicate occurring in “the bearer of ‘Jones’ ” applies to only one individual. But of course this is not the case. Such a description is in fact *incomplete*: there are countless Jones (people that have been called

this way) living in the world. A brute application of Russell’s theory, therefore, contrasts with the way in which I set up my example. It yields that (6*), and so its equivalent formulation (6), are false; even though, as we have said, the Jones at issue actually studies in Princeton.

The problem may be solved by taking the truth of the speaker’s utterance of (6) for granted and then trying to explain why the incomplete description occurring in its equivalent formulation (6*) is in fact a complete one. This may be done by saying that the incomplete definite description “ $\emptyset_{The\ Jones}$ ” occurring in (6*) is somehow associated to a complete one, to which Russell’s theory is going to be applied. One way to implement this suggestion is to argue for what we may call *contextual integration*. Let us take the description “the bearer of ‘Jones’ ”, which is equivalent to “ $\emptyset_{The\ Jones}$ ” occurring in (6*), as if it were integrated by another predicate when the speaker uses “Jones” in her utterance. This integration is what makes “ $\emptyset_{The\ Jones}$ ” occurring in (6*) a complete definite description, by turning the *original predicate* occurring in its equivalent formulation “the bearer of ‘Jones’ ” into something like this: “bearer of ‘Jones’ (original predicate) who is at the source of the communication chain underlying my use of ‘Jones’ in this utterance”.⁴³

⁴³ Devitt would probably take this account of deferential uses of proper names to be a sort of *causal descriptivism* and, as such, to come under his criticism of this position (see Devitt & Sterelny 1999: 61-62). Devitt moves two objections against causal descriptivism: the first is that it is not immune from the ignorance and error arguments; the second is that, even if it were correct, it would be a “redundant” theory. I shall say something more about the ignorance and error objections and their grip on my account of deferential/non-deferential uses of names at the end of this Chapter. For the moment, however, let us briefly consider Kroon’s remarks on causal descriptivism. According to Devitt, in fact, the latter is one of the most fervent supporters of this position. In a footnote appended to his paper “Causal descriptivism” (see Kroon 1987: 1 n.1), Kroon writes that the term “casual descriptivism” was first introduced by Lewis (see Lewis 1984: 226). In that same footnote, he adds that Loar and McKinsey himself may be categorized as causal descriptivists (see Loar 1976 and McKinsey 1978 and 1984). Kroon nicely describes causal descriptivism as a “causal theory made self-conscious” (1987: 1). To the extent that causal descriptivism works, however, Kroon points out that “it is not a true version of descriptivism at all but, at best, a kind of cumbersome metalinguistic version of [a classical causal theory of reference] (it says: token t refers to e iff e satisfies ‘ xRt ’, where [a classical causal theory of reference] says: t refers to e iff eRt)” (1987: 10-11). Now, Devitt is probably right: my account of deferential uses of names is an instance of a causal descriptivist theory. Once we have acknowledged this, however, we must also notice

The *original predicate* clearly applies to different people. There are many individuals who have received “Jones” as a proper name in what Kripke would count as an original dubbing. What we need to do, in order to properly evaluate the speaker’s utterance, is to select among these dubbing events the one connected to the *right* Jones. The predicate that contextually integrates the equivalent version of “ \emptyset_{The} Jones” occurring in (6*) allows us to do this. Roughly speaking, it tells us which communication chain we have to follow in order to reach, sooner or later, the relevant dubbing, and so the relevant Jones, for the proper evaluation of the speaker’s utterance.⁴⁴

that the former is more detailed than the account offered by Kroon, since in his paper he does not even characterize the causal relation R that is supposed to connect a speaker with an individual so that the latter turns out to be the semantic referent of a proper name used by the former. Moreover, as I have said in the Introduction, my main aim is to show how Donnellan’s distinction may be applied even to proper names. To put things in other terms, what I am trying to argue for here is that causal descriptivism may be a good theoretical apparatus to adopt *if* predicativism about names is correct *and* Donnellan’s distinction about descriptions is semantically well-grounded. This not only differentiates my perspective from that of Kroon, but also from that of Nozick, who is credited by Kripke with having brought causal descriptivism to his attention for the first time (see Kripke 1980: 88 n.38), and from those of Lewis, Loar and McKinsey quoted by Kroon himself. When closing his paper, Kroon makes an interesting observation: he writes that “while causal descriptivism and [classical causal theories] no doubt become *extensionally* equivalent ..., they are certainly not *explanatorily* equivalent” (1987: 15). In particular, “what explains the fact that *e* satisfies ‘*xRt*’ is the fact that *eRt* (plus other facts about the referential connection between expressions and objective items); the fact that *eRt* is not in turn explained by the fact that *e* satisfies ‘*xRt*’ ” (*ibid.*). In a way, this may be an answer to Devitt’s redundancy objection.

⁴⁴ There is a serious problem concerning the contextual integration process that I now have to face. It seems in fact that Fara, whose predicativist account is the true cornerstone of the analysis of proper names I am sketching here, cannot take “bearer of ‘Jones’ (original predicate) who is at the source of the communication chain underlying my use of ‘Jones’ in this utterance” as an equivalent formulation (contextually integrated) of “ \emptyset_{The} Jones”. As we have seen in detail in Chapter 2, Fara believes her “The”-predicativism to be superior in comparison with Burge’s “That”-predicativism because the former, contrary to the latter, allows an explanation of why proper names sometimes can and sometimes cannot occur with an overt definite article. According to Fara’s *Disjunctive Generalization* concerning “ \emptyset_{The} ”, the definite article appears in its null form before names, except when it is heavily stressed or when the names are preceded by modifiers or *followed by restrictive modifiers* (see Fara 2015a: 90 and 2016: 4). This is exactly what happens in her example “The Ivan who is on the roof is howling”, where the proper name “Ivan”, by being followed by a restrictive relative clause, is preceded by an overt definite. Now, the problem is that the contextual integration “who is at the source of the communication chain underlying

The Jones who is the truth-maker of the speaker's utterance containing a deferential use of "Jones" is therefore *satisfactorily* determined as the only one who has been given "Jones" as a name (original dubbing) and whose dubbing is the source of the communication chain underlying the use of "Jones" made by the speaker in her utterance. Clearly, this means that proper names used deferentially by speakers *denote* individuals.

Before considering the bi-conditional (b₂), there are a couple of important remarks that have to be made. One of them concerns the contextual integration process that is supposed to turn the nominal incomplete definite description " \emptyset_{The} Jones" into a complete one. The idea is that such an integration is *only* set in motion when the proper name occurs unmodified in argument position. We can think of it as a process triggered by the presence of the unpronounced definite article before the name. Every time an unpronounced definite precedes a name occurring unmodified in argument position, the predicate that is semantically equivalent to the latter is contextually integrated in the way suggested above. In contrast, when the name is not preceded by a definite, as happens in Burge's examples (7), (8) and (9) considered in Chapter 2 where proper names occur in predicate positions, no integration of the equivalent predicate is set in motion. As we have seen by closing that Chapter, an important advantage of predicativism over individual-constants views about names is supposed to be that the former gives a uniform semantic account of proper names in *all* of their occurrences. To confine the contextual integration to those cases where names occur unmodified in

my use of 'Jones' in this utterance", which according to my account of names is supposed to complete " \emptyset_{The} Jones", is clearly designed to be read as a restrictive relative clause. Its role is exactly to restrict the set of all individuals called Jones to the only one who is salient in order to evaluate the speaker's utterance. If we stick to Fara's generalization, however, this must result in an overt definite article preceding that name. In other words, if proper names were contextually integrated in the way suggested above, then every time a speaker uses a name she should pronounce (or write) a definite article before it: which is difficult to maintain because of lack of empirical evidence. A possible solution may be that of modifying Fara's generalization in order to circumscribe the emerging of the overt "the" to those cases where the proper name that occurs in argument position is either preceded or followed by an *overt* modifier, namely, a modifier that appears at the surface level. All this is admittedly rough and sketchy, and a lot of related issues need to be considered in order to make it acceptable. For the moment, however, we can leave the matter here.

argument positions is therefore crucial, since it allows the account of names I am outlining here to preserve this important advantage. Here a proper name “N” is *always* semantically equivalent to the predicate “bearer of ‘N’ ”, no matter whether it occurs in argument or predicate position.

The other remark concerns the semantic analysis of the definite description that is supposed to be equivalent to a proper name used deferentially. As we have just seen, such a description has to be treated as if it were used attributively. This is exactly what Evans rather incidentally suggested by characterizing his deferential uses of proper names. According to him, a situation in which a speaker uses a name this way is no different from the one in which someone uses “Jack the Ripper” with the over-riding intention of referring to whoever brutally murdered certain prostitutes in 1888. Of course Evans does not mention nominal denuded descriptions, and the definite descriptions that he provides in his examples are very different from those that, according to the account I am trying to articulate here, determine the truth-makers of utterances that contain proper names used deferentially. However, it is interesting to point out that a strong connection between proper names used deferentially and definite descriptions used attributively had already been detected by Evans himself.

Let us now consider (b₂). Since in this case the speaker utters (6*) by using “Jones” non-deferentially, then we have a referential use of “ \emptyset_{The} Jones”, which is, in turn, equivalent to a referential use of “the bearer of ‘Jones’ ”. As we have seen in detail in Chapter 1, according to Donnellan all that is necessary for a description used this way to *refer* to an individual is that the user has that individual in mind, and that her having that individual in mind is appropriately involved in the explanation of her use of the expression (see the bi-conditional (b₁) in that Chapter).

Being the only individual who satisfies the predicate occurring in a description used referentially is inessential for the former to be the truth-maker of an utterance in which the description is used. The same happens for non-deferential uses of names. What contextually integrates the original predicate is inessential because, as both McKinsey and Evans claim, communication chains have no role in determining the semantic value of names used this way. To use McKinsey’s words, when someone uses a name non-deferentially she does it “without at all having to defer to anyone else’s use of that name”. The original predicate is inessential too. In the same way as a referential use of

“the man drinking a Martini” may refer to an individual who is drinking plain water in a Martini-shaped glass (see Donnellan 1966: 287), the mere fact that the individual the speaker has in mind when she uses “Jones” in (6) has never been given “Jones” as a name in a dubbing event does not mean that she has failed to refer to him by using that name in that utterance.

By analyzing the defense put forward by Donnellan against MacKay’s accusation of “Humpty-Dumptying” reference (see Chapter 1), however, we realized that even though the predicative component of a description used referentially is inessential to determine its referent, it is not irrelevant for the success of the speaker’s speech act. Once again, this happens for non-deferential uses of names as well. In the same way as the speaker who uses a description referentially very often believes that the individual she is going to say something about by means of that expression uniquely satisfies it, the speaker who uses a proper name non-deferentially most likely believes not only that the individual that she has in mind by using the name has been given that name in an original dubbing, but also that the chain of communication underlying her use of the expression ends in that particular dubbing event.⁴⁵ These beliefs, however, do not determine the semantics of non-deferential uses of names; they simply stem from the fact that normally a speaker who wants to make her interlocutor co-focus with her on the subject of her discourse chooses the safest way to get at this. This means that she tries to describe the subject correctly, if she opts for a definite description. And she uses

⁴⁵ Devitt would certainly reject all this as “far too intellectualized” (Devitt 2015: 109). To determine in virtue of what a token of a proper name designates an individual, he takes into account the “intuitively appealing way to start an answer [by saying] that the speaker *intended to designate one person rather than the other* by that token” (*ibid.*). From his point of view, however, an answer like this has a crucial problem: it seems to imply that a speaker “can’t designate without thinking about designation!” (*ibid.*). But according to Devitt there is no reason whatsoever for believing something like this (see Devitt 1981a: 97 and 2015: 109). In a way, all this applies to my case as well. Since a speaker who uses a name (either deferentially or non-deferentially) believes that the individual she is going to speak about by using that name has been given it as a name in an original dubbing, and that the chain of communication underlying her uses of that name ends in that particular dubbing event, some may conclude that, if my account of names turns out to be correct, then an ordinary speaker cannot use a proper name without mastering technical notions like *original dubbings* and *chains of communication*. The point made by Devitt is perhaps well taken, and so it may represent a real problem for the account of proper names I am outlining.

a proper name that others in her linguistic community have previously (and successfully) used to speak about that individual, if she decides to use this kind of expression. Indeed, any different choice would probably misguide the interlocutor, thus making it more difficult for the speaker to succeed.

Another similarity between the attributive/referential distinction about descriptions and the one about names that I am outlining here concerns Donnellan's *games of describing* that I mentioned at the end of Chapter 1. From all that we have said so far, it seems that every time a speaker uses a proper name she is playing one of two similar games. When the goal is choosing the name that the speaker believes to be the most adequate device to make her interlocutor co-focus with her on someone or something that she has already identified as the subject of her discourse, then the speaker is playing a game that corresponds to a non-deferential use of that expression. On the other hand, when the goal is simply that of providing her interlocutor with a name, leaving it up to the latter to identify the one who uniquely satisfies the description equivalent to it, the one who has been called in a certain way and whose dubbing is the source of the communication chain underlying the use of that name, then she is playing a game that corresponds to a deferential use of that expression.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ In "Speaker's reference and semantic reference", Kripke suggests something that links what we have said about the distinction between deferential and non-deferential uses of names with Donnellan's *games of describing*. Before considering Kripke's remarks on the matter, however, it is important to realize that he points them out in a theoretical framework that is incompatible with the one I have outlined here. As we have seen in detail in Chapter 1, in fact, he believes Donnellan's distinction to be irrelevant from a semantic point of view. On the contrary, not only have I tried to demonstrate that the reasons Kripke put forward for this conclusion are not as unproblematic as is commonly assumed, but I have also based my proposal on the assumption that Donnellan's distinction is semantically well grounded. Anyway, as we have seen in Chapter 1, Kripke characterizes his technical notions of *speaker's reference* and *semantic reference* in terms of two different intentions that a speaker is supposed to have while using an expression to say something about an object. One of them is *general*: the speaker uses the expression to say something about an object that other speakers say something about "whenever the designator is used" (Kripke 1977: 264). The other is *specific*: the speaker uses the expression "on a given occasion, to [say something about] a certain object" (*ibid.*). When a speaker uses an expression, let us say a proper name, to say something about an individual, her specific intention most likely coincides with the general one. In what Kripke calls *simple cases*, this happens because the specific intention *is* the general one. We may perhaps say that the speaker's specific intention is to follow the general one. In *complex cases*, on the

Something must be said about original dubbings. One way to describe these events is as a kind of ceremony by which speakers give (attribute, attach, impose, assign) a proper name “N” to someone or something. In Fara’s terms, these are ceremonies where a speaker calls someone N (see Chapter 2). Not everyone can call an individual N, but only those who have the required authority to do so. In order for such an individual to have been called N, as we have seen in the previous Chapter, he “must have been called [N] by someone who did have that authority – his parents at the time of his birth (“Let’s call our baby [N]”), himself when he was an adult (“I hereby call myself [N]”), or any others whose use of the name eventually caught on” (Fara 2011: 494). The account of proper names I am offering here, however, presupposes a more specific requirement for a speaker to be able to call an individual N, namely, she must be able to use “N” non-deferentially for that individual. This means that *every* communication chain underlying deferential uses of “N”, sooner or later, ends in someone who used (or still uses) “N” non-deferentially for the individual in question. This also means that to reach the individual who is the truth-maker of an utterance made by a speaker who has used a proper name deferentially there’s no need to trace the underlying communication chain right back to the speaker who used that name for the very first time in the *original* dubbing event. All that is necessary is to trace that chain back to the first non-deferential use of the name. Strictly speaking, in fact, non-deferential uses of names count as (kinds of) dubbing events, thus being decisive when it comes to determining the truth-maker of an utterance made by a speaker who has used a name this way.

other hand, the speaker’s specific intention is distinct from the general one, even though in the vast majority of cases she believes that the object identified by her specific intention corresponds to that identified by the general one. Now, Kripke’s distinction between simple and complex cases appears to be comparable with the one between deferential and non-deferential uses of names that I am characterizing here. In particular, it seems that in simple cases speakers use proper names deferentially, while in complex cases they use them non-deferentially. A parallel with Donnellan’s games emerges even more vividly. In fact, simple cases recall the latter game: the one ruled either by (c₁) or (c₂), depending on whether the player decides to use a name or a definite description. Complex cases, on the contrary, recall the former game, which is ruled by (b₁) or (b₂), again, depending on the kind of expression used by the player.

The idea according to which every non-deferential use of a name counts as a sort of dubbing event derives from Donnellan's own view about the semantics of these expressions. As we have stressed in Chapter 1, according to him the semantic mechanism that connects them to their referents is the same one he points out for definite descriptions used referentially. The references of these uses of descriptions, however, are always "fixed anew", let us say, on the individual the speaker has in mind when she uses them, with the specification that it is her having the latter in mind that *explains* her use of the expression (see bi-conditional (b₁)). But as emerges from bi-conditional (b₂), which may well be endorsed by Donnellan himself, exactly the same happens for proper names.⁴⁷

Donnellan is not the only one who puts forward this (perhaps surprising) idea. By means of the notion of *multiple grounding*, for example, Devitt somehow goes in the same direction. As we have seen at the beginning of this Chapter, according to Kripke we succeed in referring to Aristotle when we use "Aristotle" in virtue of a chain of communication by means of which we *borrow*, to put things in Devitt's terminology, that name's reference from the original users who fixed "Aristotle" (or, more likely, some of its transliterations) in Aristotle. But how did that happen, exactly? In *Naming and necessity* Kripke writes that such a fixing-process may be carried out either by description or by ostension (see Kripke 1980: 97). Devitt follows suit and writes that "something like ostension [is] the right way to go for *paradigm* names like 'Aristotle' " (2015: 112). The reference of "Aristotle", his explanation goes on, "is fixed in the object, directly or indirectly, by the causal link between a person [i.e., a user] and that object [i.e., Aristotle] when it is the focus of that person's perception" (*ibid.*). This is basically what he calls *a grounding* of that name in that object and, setting complications and technicalities aside, we may well take it as a sort of dubbing event.

Now, according to Devitt, *original* dubbings and other *first* uses of names, namely, groundings made by what he calls "original users", "do not bear all the burden of linking a name to the world" (Devitt 2015: 114). These sorts of situations (groundings), in fact, "typically arise many times in the history of an object after it has been initially named: names are typically *multiply grounded* in their bearers" (*ibid.*). So, for example,

⁴⁷ For some reflections on how all this, if true, should affect our general approach to language see Bianchi and Bonanini 2014, especially Section 6.

our contemporary uses of “Aristotle”, by being connected with those made by the original users who grounded it in Aristotle, count as acts of grounding (for “Aristotle” in Aristotle) as well. The fact that proper names are constantly re-grounded in their bearers, together with the fact that speakers sometimes mistakenly re-ground names in objects that are different from those in which they were grounded by original users, moreover, is what from Devitt’s point of view explains problematic phenomena like the reference-shift we discussed above to characterize Evans’ account of proper names.⁴⁸

Let us take stock. From all that we have said so far, the resulting picture of the deferential uses of names turns out to be something like this: in using a proper name “N” deferentially a speaker *denotes* an individual *e* if and only if *e* uniquely satisfies its equivalent predicate “bearer of ‘N’ ” contextually integrated in the way characterized above. For this to happen, basically, it is necessary that:

1. The speaker, say S_1 , has received “N” from another speaker, say S_2 .
2. S_1 uses “N” intending to say something about the same individual *e* S_2 intended to say something about when the latter passed “N” to the former.
3. By tracing back the chain of communication underlying S_1 ’s use of “N” we reach a speaker, say S_x , who used “N” non-deferentially to *refer to e* (*de facto* calling *e* N in a dubbing event).

A close parallel emerges between this picture of deferential uses of names and both Kripke’s and Devitt’s explanation of proper names reference. Since in these explanations the phenomenon of *reference borrowing* plays a crucial role, however, it is important to determine the relation, assuming for the moment that there is one, between the latter and the phenomenon of *deference*.

From Devitt’s point of view, for example, the notion of reference borrowing and that of deference should be kept distinct. Recalling the basic features of his theory of reference for proper names, he has recently written that the successful use of a proper

⁴⁸ Devitt discusses his solution to the problem of the reference-shift, together with that of related problems like the so called *designation confusion* and *slip of the tongue* in different occasions. See, for example, Devitt 1974: 201-2; 1981a: 140, 146-8; 2015: 117, 120-3, and Devitt & Sterelny 1999: 76.

name acquired by reference borrowing depends on the borrower's use being caused "by an ability with that name that is, *as a matter of fact*, grounded in the bearer *via* that borrowing: *the efficacious ability must have the right sort of causal history*" (Devitt 2015: 115). Right after this remark, however, he points out that "we need not require that a borrower's successful use of a name be accompanied by an intention to 'defer' " (*ibid.*).⁴⁹ The idea according to which the opposite is true, Devitt goes on to write, derives from the fact that where "Kripke follows Strawson in talking of 'reference borrowing' and Donnellan talks of 'parasitic' uses, many have since talked of 'deference' " (Devitt 2015: 115).⁵⁰ That to assimilate reference borrowing with

⁴⁹ Devitt attributes the idea according to which a borrower's successful use of a name has to be accompanied by an intention to defer to Mercier. In "On communication-based *de re* thought, commitments *de dicto*, and word individuation", the latter claims that Kripke's causal picture of reference for proper names that has replaced descriptivism by substituting an externalist defense of reference determination still cannot get rid of some form of individualism. By considering the problem of the reference-shift, in particular the Madagascar example pointed out by Evans, Mercier writes that to properly explain how the African island became the semantic reference of Polo's (and our) uses of "Madagascar" we have "to look at *individualistic* aspects of Polo's [(and our)] interaction with the *word* Madagascar as it gets transmitted to him [(and to us)]" (1999: 19). Concerning our contemporary uses of "Madagascar", Mercier points out that "we are deferential to the semantic value" (21) of this proper name, and provided that we do not have "a present intention of referring to a given entity" (*ibid.*) other than the African island, every time we use that name we *repeat* (in Kaplan's sense, see Kaplan 1990) a word that is semantically identical to the one used (or better, introduced) by Polo. When we use that name this way, we therefore "add a new link in the ongoing [communication] chain" (*ibid.*) that started from Polo's first uses of "Madagascar". These first uses by Polo, on the other hand, deserve a more articulated explanation. According to Mercier, in fact, at least at first Polo "intends to defer [to the sailor's use of the name] more that he intends to refer [to the island]" (22). But since nobody corrected him, his "*belief* that the deferential intention is satisfied ... allows the referential intention to take over" (*ibid.*), triggering the reference-shift for that name. Apparently, Mercier is not willing to subscribe to McKinsey's claim (see footnote 40 above): according to her, in fact, by means of his first uses of "Madagascar" Polo was saying something about the mainland, not something about the island.

⁵⁰ Here Devitt parallels his (and Kripke's) notion of *reference borrowing* with Donnellan's "parasitic" uses of proper names. After all we have said in Chapter 1, however, it should be clear that this is a mistake. The parasitic element Donnellan takes into account in the passage that Devitt has in mind (see Donnellan 1970: 352) does not concern the reference of proper names. On the contrary, it pertains to the cluster of identifying descriptions that may be associated by a speaker to them. For a more detailed discussion of the issue see Bianchi and Bonanini 2014, especially Section 5.1.

deference is wrong, however, can easily be shown: if a speaker “*x* borrows the reference of a term from [another speaker] *y*, then that is an act at the time of receiving *y*’s communication” (*ibid.*). On the other hand, “if *x* defers to *y*’s use of a term, then that suggests an act at the time of *x*’s using the term herself to communicate” (*ibid.*). Moreover, Devitt believes that to talk of deference may generate another dangerous confusion; namely, that of mixing up “*epistemic* deference to experts *when seeking knowledge*, which we should all be in favor of, and *semantic* deference to experts *when referring*, which causal theorists oppose” (116).⁵¹

Before considering some objections that one might raise against the account of proper names I have offered in this Chapter and trying to show that they do not

⁵¹ Antonio Rauti, whose remarks on deference are approvingly quoted by Devitt (see Devitt 2015: 123 n. 34), is another philosopher convinced that the two notions of deference and reference borrowing – that he explains in terms of Hilary Putnam’s *division of linguistic labor* (see Putnam 1975) – must be kept distinct. From Rauti’s perspective, *non-deferential* speakers put forward their uses of proper names as reasons for their interlocutors to conform with them. Speakers who use proper names this way to say something about an individual are typically those who have “a certain degree of knowledge” (Rauti 2012: 325) of it. *Deferential* speakers, on the other hand, may have some kind of justification for using a name to say something about that individual, for example the fact that others in their linguistic community use that name this way. But they are not “willing to take on any responsibility *vis à vis* other speakers, that is, [they are] not willing to mount a defense of [their] uses” (*ibid.*) as correct if questioned by someone they take to be an expert. The comparison made by Rauti between his notion of semantic deference and that of the *division of linguistic labor* put forward by Putnam is interesting for my purpose. When Putnam talks of the division of linguistic labor he has in mind something similar to what both Kripke and Devitt suggest about the reference determination of proper names, namely, that by being a member of a communication chain, a speaker may somehow inherit *or borrow* the reference of a proper name he “received” from someone else (see Putnam 2001: 498). This is how Rauti describes this phenomenon: “when using this [name], I intend to co-refer with this person’s use (if I can identify her specifically), or *with whomever in this community I borrowed it from* (if I cannot identify her specifically)” (Rauti 2012: 329, my italics). Now, a parallel between Rauti’s description of what it takes for a speaker to use a proper name borrowed from someone else, especially the part I have italicized, and my deferential uses of proper names explained by bi-conditional (c₂) emerges vividly. It seems that even from Rauti’s point of view the individual a speaker is talking about by using a proper name she has borrowed from someone else may be individuated (if the former cannot identify the latter) by means of an attributive definite description. According to Rauti, however, “reference-borrowing is not conceptually tied to deference” (Rauti 2012: 329). In particular, “the notion of deference is not required to make sense of the notion of reference-borrowing” (*ibid.*).

compromise it, it is important to differentiate the distinction between deferential and non-deferential uses of names that I have characterized here from another distinction proposed by Devitt, which at first sight might be assimilated to it: that between *a-names* and *d-names*.

As we have seen in Chapter 1 when discussing Kripke's arguments against the semantic relevance of Donnellan's distinction about descriptions, Devitt acknowledges that the latter is "a good one" (1974: 191). In particular, he writes that in his hands, it "becomes that between attributive definite-description-tokens (briefly 'a-descriptions') and designational definite-description-tokens (briefly 'd-descriptions')" (193). By using a d-description, a speaker refers to "the object [she] has in mind" (195); i.e., to the "object that causally results in [her] use of the description" (*ibid.*). An a-description, on the contrary, "designates the object it describes" (190). According to Devitt a definite description may be used at a naming ceremony "to pick out the object to be named" (195). This is to say that "the connection between a name token and its object may be mediated by a description" (*ibid.*). Since there are two different kinds of definite-description-tokens by means of which a speaker may introduce that name, however, a token of the latter, in turn, may be of two different sorts as well. The "paradigm proper names" (Devitt 2015: 124) are what Devitt calls "d-names" (designational names). In some (rare) cases they may be introduced *via* d-descriptions, and their bearers are always "fixed by causal-perceptual links in groundings" (*ibid.*). On the other hand, so-called "a-names" (attributive names) are "not paradigm" (*ibid.*), and have their bearers fixed by a-descriptions. As a result, names so introduced *denote* whatever uniquely satisfies these expressions (see Devitt 2015: 124).

The question, now, is: does my distinction between non-deferential and deferential uses of names parallel Devitt's between d-names and a-names? The answer is that it does not. Certainly there are some similarities. For example, d-names are the "paradigm proper names" according to Devitt, and this sounds very plausible. Even though I cannot deal with this issue here, my intuitions are that the amount of non-deferential uses of names occurring in a speaker's everyday speech by far exceeds that of deferential ones. I agree with McKinsey on this last point. As we have seen at the beginning, in fact, he believes that non-deferential uses of names are "exceedingly common". The fact that philosophers of language usually make up their examples by

using the names of famous or historical figures from the distant past honors their culture, but it does not return a true picture of what kind of individual ordinary speakers usually speak about by using proper names. People tend to speak about individuals they have been acquainted with, i.e. individuals they can refer to by using names non-deferentially, simply because these are the most “interesting” for them.

Another important similarity concerns the semantic relation (denotation) that is supposed to connect both a-names and deferential uses of names to their bearers. But there are also profound differences. First of all, Devitt’s distinction is made at the level of a proper name’s *introduction*; on the contrary, my distinction is made at the level of its *use*. Once a proper name is introduced as an a-name, according to Devitt *every* subsequent use of it made by a speaker that is appropriately connected to its original introduction will be a use of an a-name, and the same can be said for d-names. It is true that Devitt takes into account the possibility that a name may “start life as descriptive [and then] become designational” (Devitt 2015: 124; see also 1981a: 57). This is basically what happened to “Neptune”. It was originally introduced as an a-name *via* an a-description. After a while, a planet that uniquely satisfied that description was discovered, and then “Neptune”, by being thereafter multiply grounded in that planet, became a d-name. The problem here is that it is not altogether clear whether Devitt is willing to claim that the converse holds as well. In other words, he does not say anything about the possibility that a proper name may start life as designational and then become descriptive. According to the account of proper names I have offered, however, in a sense this is what happens all the time. As emerges from clause (iii) of my description of what it takes for a speaker to use a proper name deferentially (see above), by following back the chain of communication underlying a deferential use of a name we always reach a speaker who used (or still uses) that name non-deferentially to say something about someone or something. According to my account, it seems that proper names always start their lives as non-deferential and then (may) become deferential. At least in this respect, therefore, the parallel with Devitt’s distinction between a-names and d-names does not hold.

Another major difference concerns the kind of description that denotes the bearer of a name used deferentially compared to that of an a-name. In my view, this is always a nominal denuded description, contextually integrated when the name occurs unmodified

in argument position. For his a-names, however, Devitt has something different in mind, as emerges from his examples: “whoever brutally murdered certain prostitutes in 1888” used to introduce “Jack the Ripper” (see Devitt 2015: 125 n. 37); “the heaviest fish in the sea” to introduce “Oscar” (see Devitt 1974: 196) and Evans’ description “the individual who invented the zip” used to introduce “Julius” (see Devitt 2015: 124). The only occasion in which he points out something similar to my nominal descriptions, is when he does so to argue against that option (see Devitt & Sterelny 1999: 58). I shall come to this in a moment.

3.3 Some objections

In *Language and reality*, Devitt and Sterelny mention *reference borrowing* approvingly, but they also write that it “does not save description theories [of proper names]” (1999: 58). According to them, once the idea that we can borrow our reference from others is implemented into a description theory, this is the result:

Suppose that yesterday Alice heard George talking with enthusiasm of someone called ‘Joshua’. She does not know Joshua from Adam, but she rightly thinks that George is very much better off. So Alice’s gossip today can meet the requirements of description theories: she associates with ‘Joshua’ the identifying description, “the person George was referring to yesterday by ‘Joshua’ ”. ... Borrowing can go further: Alice talks to Ruth, Ruth to Sebastian, and so on. Each person designates Joshua in virtue of associating with his name a description that refers to the previous person in the chain. (1999: 58)

My idea is that Alice’s use of “Joshua” in this situation is a straightforward example of a deferential use of a name. The account of proper names I have offered in this Chapter, in fact, is nothing but a more refined version of the one outlined in the passage above. Devitt and Sterelny, however, openly criticize the latter by claiming that far from solving the problems of the “classical” description theory, it makes them worse. Before concluding, let us examine these objections to show that they do not compromise my account of deferential/non-deferential uses of proper names.

The first one is the so-called *Principled Basis* objection. If we take descriptions like “the person George was referring to yesterday by ‘Joshua’ ” as what determines the truth-maker of Alice’s utterance of a sentence containing “Joshua”, then we must find “a principled basis for choosing among what will often be a much larger set of associated descriptions, a set including many reference-borrowing descriptions, reflecting conversations with many people about a name’s bearer” (Devitt & Sterelny 1999: 58). But to find such a basis, the objection goes, is not so easy. Alice might have heard someone else, say Ruth, talking about Joshua immediately after George’s enthusiastic considerations about him. If this is so, which description now ultimately determines the truth-maker of Alice’s utterance? The one originating from George’s use of “Joshua”, or the one originating from Ruth’s use of the same name?

Whether or not this is a problem for a description theory such as the one outlined in the passage quoted, it is clear that it does not compromise the account of deferential/non-deferential names I have advanced. The nominal (contextually integrated) description which is equivalent to Alice’s use of “Joshua”, in fact, is always the same, no matter how many speakers linguistically interact with her by using “Joshua”. As far as she uses “Joshua” deferentially, its semantic value is always determined as the bearer of “Joshua” (whoever he or she may be), who is at the source of the communication chain underlying her use of “Joshua” in her utterance.

All that we have just said shows that my account of names is immune to another problem that is closely related to the *Principled Basis* and that Devitt and Sterelny call *Unwanted Ambiguity*. According to them, even if we find a principled basis that allows us to select a salient definite description associated by a speaker to her uses of a proper name (as we actually can do), it would be “most unlikely that it will select the same description for all users of the name” (Devitt & Sterelny 1999: 49). On the contrary, Devitt’s and Sterelny’s reasoning goes on, we should expect such a basis to select many different descriptions for the different speakers of the community. If this is so, however, a proper name like “Aristotle”, “even when used to refer to that famous Greek philosopher, would be in many ways ambiguous” (*ibid.*). My account of deferential/non-deferential uses of names is immune to this objection. As far as these speakers use “Aristotle” to say something about the famous Greek philosopher, the semantic values of *all* their uses of the name are *always* determined in the same way,

namely, as the bearer of “Aristotle” (whoever he or she may be) who is at the source of the communication chain underlying their uses of that name in their utterances. Clearly, from the mere fact that in the nominal (contextually integrated) description which is equivalent to their uses of “Aristotle” two personal pronouns occur, it does not follow that the former is ambiguous, at least not in the way Devitt and Sterelny have in mind. In the same way as an indexical like “I” is not an ambiguous expression just because its semantic referent changes depending on who utters it, then the nominal description, and so the proper name that in my account is equivalent to it, is not ambiguous just because it contains some occurrences of an expression of this kind.

According to Devitt and Sterelny another problem for the (reference borrowing incorporated) version of description theory is that it requires identifying beliefs where there may well be none. In particular, they point out that the *borrower* must be able to identify “at least one other user of the name” (1999: 59), while the *lender* “must be able either to supply descriptions that directly identify the referent, or remember where she borrowed the name from” (*ibid.*). From their point of view, however, requirements such as these are seldom satisfied. The former claim – the one about the borrower – is simply too demanding for my account of names. If the speaker is a borrower, in fact, it means that she uses the name deferentially. In this case, however, the nominal (contextually integrated) description which is equivalent to it does not mention any speaker from which Alice is supposed to have received the name. The truth-maker of her utterance is in fact determined *satisfactionally*, regardless of her ability (or inability) to identify the individual she borrowed the name from, let alone the individual whose dubbing event is the source of the communication chain underlying her use of that name. Concerning what Devitt and Sterelny write about the lender, on the other hand, a distinction is needed. If the lender is also a borrower, in fact, it means that she uses the name deferentially. And what has been just said applies to this case as well. On the contrary, if the speaker is *only* a lender, it means that she has used the name non-deferentially. And this, in turn, means that the nominal (contextually integrated) description which is equivalent to it is used referentially. As we know, however, a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for this to happen is that the speaker has already identified the individual who is going to be the truth-maker of her utterance containing the name. The claim according to which lenders must be able to supply descriptions that directly

identify the truth-makers of their utterances containing proper names does not damage my account of deferential/non-deferential uses of proper names; rather, it is one of its constituent parts.

The arguments from *Ignorance* and from *Error*, proposed by Donnellan (see Chapter 1) and Kripke, are considered by many philosophers, including Devitt, to be decisive against descriptivist accounts of proper names.⁵² Let us consider the argument from ignorance. In this case, since very often a speaker uses a proper name to say something about an individual without being able to supply *any* identifying descriptions of the latter, but at the same time we have strong intuitions that she actually succeeds in saying something about it, descriptivist accounts of proper names seem to be wrong. This argument does not apply to my account of names, whether they are used deferentially or non-deferentially. In the former case, the nominal contextually integrated descriptions that are equivalent to names used this way are *always* available to the speakers. It seems difficult even to imagine a speaker who uses a proper name “N” to say something about an individual *e* and, at the same time, who does not “know” that *e* is the bearer of “N” (whoever he or she may be) who is at the source of the communication chain underlying her uses of that name. By saying this, however, we have to keep in mind what we have just seen above: since the nominal (contextually integrated) description which is equivalent to a proper name used deferentially has to be read attributively, then there is no need for the speaker to be able to identify *e*, nor the individual from whom she received “N”. If the speaker uses the same name non-deferentially, on the other hand, its semantic value is not determined satisfactorily on the basis of the descriptive material contained in the nominal (contextual integrated) description which is equivalent to “N”; rather, it is determined relationally on the basis of who or what the speaker has in mind when she uses “N”. In this case, therefore, the argument from ignorance loses its grip.

The argument from error is trickier to handle. Since very often a speaker uses a proper name to say something about an individual *e* by associating to her uses of that name uniquely identifying descriptions that are false of *e* and, let us say, true of *e*, but at the same time we have strong intuitions that this speaker actually succeeds in saying

⁵² See Donnellan 1970: 342-343, Kripke 1980: 81 and Devitt & Sterelny 1999: 54 for the argument from ignorance; Donnellan 1970: 347-349, Kripke 1980: 83-85 and Devitt & Sterelny 1999: 54 for the argument from error.

something about *e* by using that name, descriptivist accounts of proper names must be wrong. Now, as far as non-deferential uses are concerned, since the semantic value of the speaker's uses of that name are determined relationally, and not satisfactionally on the basis of the descriptive material that occurs in its equivalent nominal (contextually integrated) definite description, the argument from error is harmless. But what about deferential uses of proper names? The only way in which the description "the bearer of 'Joshua' (whoever he or she may be) who is at the source of the communication chain underlying my use of 'Joshua' in my utterance" can be false of the individual the speaker in the example is talking about is hypothesizing that the individual who is at the source of the communication chain underlying her use of "Joshua" (whoever he or she may be) is not actually called this way. Even though this point is problematic, I do not believe that this is sufficient to say that this description, in this hypothetical situation, fails to denote the individual we intuitively take the speaker to say something about. Consider the proper name "Aristotle", for instance. Moreover, suppose that all our contemporary uses of this name to say something about the famous Greek philosopher are deferential. Now, even though it is indisputable that the latter did not receive "Aristotle" as a proper name in an original dubbing event – "Aristotle" is in fact a transliteration of Aristotle's original proper name – we have strong intuitions that by using that name we actually succeed in saying something about that individual. One way to account for this is to claim that, strictly speaking, the relevant descriptive material occurring in the nominal description which is equivalent to "Aristotle" when the latter is used deferentially is the contextual integration, not the nominal component. This is simply to say that deferential uses of "Aristotle" that occur unmodified in argument position denote the individual (whoever he or she may be) at the source of the communication chains underlying these uses of that name. This is admittedly rough and sketchy, and a lot of related issues need to be considered in order to determine its effects on my account of deferential/non-deferential uses of names. For the moment, however, I must leave the matter here.

The last objection put forward by Devitt and Sterelny that I examine is very general. They point out that by explaining the semantic properties of one category of terms, names, by appealing to those of another, definite descriptions, "description theories would be essentially incomplete" (1999: 60). In classical descriptivist theories, their

objection goes, a proper name “N” designates the individual *e* in virtue of being associated with a definite description: “designation is explained in terms of denotation” (1999: 60). The semantic properties of descriptions are explained, in turn, by appealing to those of general terms. A description “the so-and-so” denotes *e* because “so-and-so” applies to *e* and to nobody else: “denotation is explained by application” (*ibid.*). But what does it take for “so-and-so” to apply to those individuals who are so-and-so? Devitt and Sterelny claim that since words such as “bachelor”, “judge” and “murderer” seem to be definable, then “a description theory of *some* general terms would be satisfactory” (*ibid.*). However, they also correctly add that a definition process must stop somewhere. There must be some terms whose semantic properties are not dependent on those of others. Otherwise, “language as a whole is cut loose from the world” (*ibid.*). From their point of view, this is the crucial problem of description theories: they pass the referential buck, “[b]ut the buck must stop somewhere” (*ibid.*).

Again, whether or not all this represents a problem for classical (and less classical) description theories, it does not compromise my account of deferential/non-deferential uses of proper names. Non-deferential uses of names are exactly what stop the buck-passing Devitt and Sterelny are talking about. As clearly emerges from clause (iii) of my description of what it takes for a speaker to use a proper name “N” deferentially for an individual *e* (see above), the truth-maker of an utterance containing a proper name used non-deferentially is not determined by appealing to the semantic properties of other expressions. Rather, it is grounded in a (still to be understood) cognitive connection between the speaker who uses that name and the world. Do we want to find the clue as to how, ultimately, language is semantically linked to the world? Well, we must first understand what such a cognitive connection amounts to.

Conclusion

The starting point of this dissertation was Donnellan's claim that a definite description can be used in two quite different ways: *referentially* or *attributively*. In the former case, a speaker *denotes*, if any, the individual that uniquely satisfies the predicate occurring in the expression. In the latter, the speaker *refers* to an individual to whom she is connected by a *historical relation*, namely, an acquaintance-based relation that Donnellan has described in terms of *having in mind*. In the attributive and the referential uses two different mechanisms by which expressions relate to individuals in the world are at work. This is why, from Donnellan's point of view, it is important to keep these uses distinct.

The following are the biconditionals that I have offered to account for the two uses:

b₁) In using a definite description "the so-and-so" *referentially*, a speaker *S* *refers* to an individual *e* if and only if *S*'s having *e* in mind is appropriately involved in the explanation of *S*'s use of "the so-and-so".

c₁) In using a definite description "the so-and-so" *attributively*, a speaker *S* *denotes* an individual *e* if and only if *e* uniquely satisfies the predicate "so-and-so" that occurs in the description.

In the course of the dissertation I have argued that Donnellan's distinction regarding definite descriptions, far from being confined to these kinds of expressions, may be usefully applied to proper names as well. In particular, I have claimed that it sheds light on another interesting distinction concerning the semantics of proper names – that put forward by McKinsey between their *deferential* and *non-deferential* uses.

In doing so, I have taken advantage of the predicativist account of proper names. As we have seen in detail, according to the latter a proper name like "Jones" is equivalent to a predicate like "bearer of 'Jones' ", which is true of an individual if and only if

someone has called him Jones; that is, if and only if someone has used “Jones” in an appropriate way to name him. Some predicativists are also convinced that every time “Jones” occurs unmodified in argument position it is the descriptive element of a nominal description whose definite article remains silent: “ \emptyset_{The} Jones”. Predicativism is still debated among linguists and philosophers. In Chapter 2, however, I have recalled some of the main reasons that seem to support it.

Since *any* definite description is susceptible of being used in both of the ways identified by Donnellan, I have claimed that the same must be true for proper names as well, under a predicativist analysis of them. And here is exactly where McKinsey’s distinction has come into play: if a speaker uses “Jones” deferentially, then her use of the name is an attributive use of “ \emptyset_{The} Jones”, which in turn is equivalent to an attributive use of “the bearer of ‘Jones’ ”. On the other hand, if the speaker uses “Jones” non-deferentially, then her use of the name is a referential use of that description.

These are the biconditionals I have offered to account for the deferential and non-deferential uses of names:

b₂) In using a proper name “N” (unmodified in argument position) *non-deferentially* a speaker S *refers* to an individual *e* iff S’s having *e* in mind is appropriately involved in the explanation of S’s use of “N”.

c₂) In using a proper name “N” (unmodified in argument position) *deferentially* a speaker S *denotes* an individual *e* iff *e* uniquely satisfies “N”, which is equivalent to “bearer of ‘N’ ”, when it is contextually integrated.

In Chapter 3 I have defended (c₂) as the proper account of the deferential uses of names. Among other things, I have tried to solve a problem that emerges from the fact that since there are many people in the world called, let us say, Jones, the description “ \emptyset_{The} Jones” that according to the predicativists corresponds to this name occurring in argument position is almost always *incomplete*, and so of no help in getting at the specific Jones who is the truth-maker of an utterance in which the name “Jones” is used. To do so, I have appealed to the phenomenon of *contextual integration*. In particular, I have claimed that “ \emptyset_{The} Jones” is integrated by another predicate when a speaker uses

the name deferentially. This integration is what makes “ \emptyset_{The} Jones” a complete definite description, by turning the *original predicate* occurring in its equivalent formulation “the bearer of ‘Jones’ ” into something like this: “bearer of ‘Jones’ _(original predicate) who is at the source of the communication chain underlying my use of ‘Jones’ in this utterance”.

The original predicate clearly applies to different individuals. There are many people who have received “Jones” as a proper name in a dubbing event. What we need to do, in order to properly evaluate a speaker’s utterance containing a deferential use of “Jones”, is to select among these dubbing events the one connected to the *right* Jones. The predicate that contextually integrates “ \emptyset_{The} Jones” occurring in the speaker’s utterance allows us to do this. Basically, it tells us which communication chain we have to follow in order to reach the relevant dubbing, and so the relevant Jones, for the proper evaluation of the utterance. Clearly, this account implies that proper names used deferentially by speakers *denote* individuals.

Non-deferential uses of names have been easier to handle, since if a speaker uses “Jones” non-deferentially, then her use of the name is a referential use of “ \emptyset_{The} Jones”, which is, in turn, equivalent to a referential use of “the bearer of ‘Jones’ ”. As suggested by (b₁), however, according to Donnellan all that is necessary for a description used this way to *refer* to an individual is that the user has that individual in mind and that her having that individual in mind is appropriately involved in the explanation of her use of the expression.

The resulting picture of proper names that emerges from my dissertation suggests that these expressions, too, in exactly the same way as definite descriptions, prove to be related to individuals in the world in two quite different ways: *via* satisfaction, if speakers use them deferentially; or *via* a more direct (cognitively-based) relation that as I have said on closing Chapter 3 has yet to be well understood, namely, *reference*.

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