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What's in a Name

A Defense of Russell's Theory of Descriptions against Kripke's Critique

Author:

Bart KUIJSTEN

student number: 3693708

Supervisors:

Prof. Dr. Albert VISSER

Prof. Dr. Paul ZICHE

External Advisor:

Leon GEERDINK, MA

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Abstract

In this thesis Russell's *Theory of Descriptions* will be examined in its development over the years, i.e. the chronological development throughout several of Russell's publications on the same subject. The result will be used to examine the criticism as stated by Kripke in his *Naming and Necessity*. This thesis will state a defense of Russell's *Theory of Descriptions* against the criticism, using both a Russellian approach and a modified approach, which can be seen (roughly) as a synthesis between several parts of Russell's and Kripke's theories. The idea behind the synthesis is that Kripke faults Russell on replacing the name, as a syntactical unit, with description(s) in order to identify the (unique) object fulfilling a proposition. While Kripke uses a "perforce assumed particular reading" in order to do the same. If Russell, or in fact any description theorist, is allowed the same particular reading, most of Kripke's criticisms disappear. While this synthesis can deal with Kripke's criticisms concerning epistemology as well as modality, Russell's *Theory on Descriptions* can deal with the epistemological problems without any modification. It will be concluded that Kripke's arguments cannot be seen as knockdown for Russell's *Theory of Descriptions*, because both accounts differ greatly in both goal and assumptions.

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Writing this thesis has been a (too) long journey, in which it often felt like I had picked the wrong battle. It appeared that my aim is not practiced sufficiently to defeat the Goliath that Kripke truly is, and I would have most likely given up if it weren't for the support of my girlfriend. She has spent many hours listening to me rambling about the frustrating work that is *Naming and Necessity*, and I am truly grateful for her support. I guess that is as far as the emotional wear and tear goes.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Main Aims

Now, decades after *Naming and Necessity* was published, the influence of Kripke's paradigm shift still lingers on. There is a conception that the idea of any theory of descriptions is fundamentally mistaken, which is paradigmatically exemplified in Devitt and Sterelny's *Language and Reality*: "We think that description theories of names are wrong not merely in details but in fundamentals" (Devitt and Sterelny, 1999, p. 59). Kripke's work shows that the entire idea of associating a name with a description is fundamentally mistaken on both epistemological grounds as well as logical grounds.

Or does it?

The criticisms Kripke offered are based on a theory of descriptions, as set forth in six theses. In this thesis I will examine whether the six theses that Kripke states to explicate the theory of descriptions, are a correct portrayal of the central idea behind Russell's *Theory of Descriptions* (ToD). We will see that most theses will have to be modified in order to be applicable to Russell's ToD, and Kripke's refutation of the revised theses can then be examined. The central aim is to show that some of Kripke's refutations do not affect Russell's *Theory of Descriptions*, because two basic assumptions of Russell's ToD are false. First, Russell's position is not one of describing language as ordinarily used, it is rather a substitution of our ordinary usage of language, a reconstruction which leads to understandable propositions. Secondly, proper names and names used in the descriptive sense are two distinct terms in Russell's ToD, and when criticizing the second use, one cannot use terms that only apply to the first usage, e.g. referring.

The second aim is to show that Kripke's criticisms that are problematic for ToD, can be dealt with using a modification of ToD. Although this leads to a modification of Russell's ToD, it can be shown to work correctly when using the basic assumptions Kripke uses.

1.2 Structure

In the introduction I will state some of the concepts Kripke uses in order to explain his view, and his negative account, as found in *Naming and Necessity*. In the following chapter, I will first state Russell's ToD, and the way it is embedded within his broader *Theory of Knowledge*. Chapter two will be structured in accordance with Kripke's six theses, where each thesis will

be accompanied with a discussion section. The discussion section will be structured using two approaches: first, a strict Russellian approach, and secondly a modification, where some of my input will appear.

1.3 Syntactical Conventions

There are some conventions used to make a clear distinction between different usages of quotation marks, emphases and brackets. First, I use single quotation marks to show that a loose usage of a term is intended, with the exception of names. Whenever a name appears within single quotation marks, the name itself, as a syntactical unit, is intended. Secondly, I use double quotation marks for quotes, within a quote the quotation marks will be single, then double, then single etc. Sometimes only part of a sentence appears within quotation marks, in those cases I reiterate part of an earlier used quote. Thirdly, whenever I introduce technical terms, they will be emphasized until properly defined. Lastly, whenever we are talking about the objects of a proposition, where the syntactical unit does not clarify this on its own, I either stipulate that it concerns an object, or use square brackets, e.g. [object] to show that it concerns the constituent of a proposition.

1.4 Naming and Necessity

Naming and Necessity is a publication based on a series of three lectures in which Kripke expands on the notion of *rigid designation*. In the preface Kripke mentions the idea of necessity behind identity statements, and the way it does — or does not — apply to names: “We must distinguish three distinct theses: (i) that identical objects are necessarily identical; (ii) that true identity statements between rigid designators are necessary; (iii) that identity statements between what we call ‘names’ in actual language are necessary” (Kripke, 1981, p. 4). According to Kripke, the first two theses are true independent of natural language. From (ii) follows that names are either not rigid or that identity statements are necessary, but no definite answer is yet given. During the lectures he expands upon our intuition of names, and that they *are* rigid.

In the next subsection I will give the definition of several concepts Kripke uses in *Naming and Necessity*. I will state the definitions Kripke gives regarding names and rigidity, and the way rigidity of names works, as well as expanding on some concepts we need to keep in mind when understanding his criticism directed against the use of names in Russell’s *Theory of Descriptions* (ToD). These concepts do not form a theory on their own, and will not be criticized when stating a defense of Russell’s ToD.

1.4.1 Kripke’s Concepts

In order to state his lectures more clearly, Kripke defines some terms at the outset. A *name*, according to Kripke, is a *proper name*, such as a name for a person or city. Such names do not include *descriptions*. A *description* is any phrase of the form “the so-and-so.” A *designator* is a term that covers both names and descriptions. And, lastly, a *referent* is, in the case of unique descriptions, the object satisfying that description (Kripke, 1981, p. 24).

As previously mentioned, Kripke states that our intuition regarding names is that they *are* rigid. A designator is *rigid* when it designates the same object with respect to every possible world. If that is not the case it is called *nonrigid* or *accidental*. When the object designated is a necessary existent, the designator will be called *strongly rigid*. That names *are* rigid designators is, according to Kripke, built upon our intuition. He gives an example concerning Nixon to explain how this intuition works. The idea is that one can certainly imagine a counterfactual — or possible world — in which Nixon might not have won the presidential elections, but one cannot imagine that Nixon might not have been Nixon (Kripke, 1981, pp. 48–49). Of course one can imagine that Nixon might not have been called ‘Nixon,’ but that is a different question. Confusing use and mention might lead one to think that Nixon might not have been Nixon because he might not have been called ‘Nixon,’ but that is due to colloquial speech (Kripke, 1981, p. 62). There is one more distinction to be made, regarding forms of rigidity, viz. rigidity *de jure* and rigidity *de facto*, I will use Kripke’s words to give a definition: “I will also ignore the distinction between ‘de jure’ rigidity, where the reference of a designator is stipulated to be a single object, whether we are speaking of the actual world or of a counterfactual situation, and mere ‘de facto’ rigidity, where a description ‘the x such that Fx ’ happens to use a predicate ‘ F ’ that in each possible world is true of one and the same unique object” (Kripke, 1981, p. 21). Kripke states that names are rigid *de jure*, and a proper name rigidly designates its referent even in possible worlds where that referent does not exist (Kripke, 1981, p. 21).

Now, names *are* rigid designators. That means that names refer to the same object in every possible world. The way we can use names — even of people we do not know — is through a chain of communication: first there is an original baptism, which can be done either by ostension or ‘fixed’ by a description. Once an object is baptized, the name is spread “from link to link as if by a chain” (Kripke, 1981, p. 91).¹ Thus when talking about e.g. Aristotle, we are not talking about a person called ‘Aristotle,’ but simply and solely referring rigidly to Aristotle — the object.

The following definitions, as stated by Kripke, are of particular importance for our understanding of the criticism against Russell’s ToD, as offered by Kripke. Especially *prioricity* and *necessity*, since these terms are mentioned explicitly in the six theses Kripke states to explicate the cluster theory of descriptions — where several descriptions are involved in the explication of a name. Whether something can be known *a priori* or *a posteriori*, does not determine whether or not it is necessarily so. The point is that the two terms are, according to Kripke, of two different domains, namely the epistemological and the metaphysical (Kripke, 1981, p. 36). *A priori* knowledge means that something *can* be known independently of any experience. Whether or not something is *necessary* is a question independent from how it can be known, thus something being *a priori* does not imply its (possible) necessity.

Concerning *analyticity*, an *analytic* statement is true in virtue of its meaning. Thus, Kripke concludes, that analytic statements are both necessary (true in all possible worlds) and *a priori* (Kripke, 1981, p. 39).

The last part of Kripke’s ‘positive account’ will now be mentioned. According to Kripke, understanding a proposition involves understanding the extensional conditions under which the

¹Kripke explicitly states that not every chain “does the trick,” but does not elaborate on what is necessary for a chain to work (Kripke, 1981, p. 93).

proposition is true, as well as conditions under which counterfactual situations would be correctly described (Kripke, 1981, p. 6). Kripke gives an example concerning Aristotle: (I) “Aristotle was fond of dogs.” (I) is true iff Aristotle was fond of dogs, that is an extensional condition. But the relevant part of this assertion is that he (i.e. [Aristotle]) was fond of dogs, thus (I) would also be true in any counterfactual where Aristotle was fond of dogs — independently of other properties of Aristotle, such as being a philosopher. Because the object, in this case Aristotle, is directly involved, there is not such a ‘heavy epistemic burden’ for speakers, i.e. it does not require you to know (any) properties of the object in order to be able to talk about the object, you can simply refer to it. Besides that, this way of rigidly referring to the object also avoids metaphysical commitments to any of the properties Aristotle (might) had, avoiding what we might call ‘unnecessary necessity.’

1.4.2 The Negative Account

In the first lecture Kripke states — what he takes to be — Frege’s and Russell’s theory of names: “Frege and Russell both thought, and seemed to arrive at these conclusions independently of each other, that Mill was wrong in a very strong sense: really a proper name, properly used, simply was a definite description abbreviated or disguised. Frege specifically said that such a description gave the sense of the name” (Kripke, 1981, p. 27). Kripke criticizes both Frege and Russell on this view. Although in the Russellian view on proper names, names only have their objects as meaning, what we normally use as names *are* really abbreviated descriptions. Therefore, Kripke concludes, names, as commonly used, do have sense, viz. the description uniquely identifying the referent of the name (Kripke, 1981, p. 27 n. 4). According to Kripke, the Frege-Russellian theory can be understood in one of two ways. First, as a theory of the *meaning* of names, and secondly, as a theory of their *reference* (Kripke, 1981, pp. 53–54). When taking it as the latter some advantages are lost, e.g. singular existential statements and identity statements are in need of different analysis. Therefore Kripke concludes that it is meant as a theory of meaning, and that a proper name is synonymous with the description that replaces it (Kripke, 1981, pp. 58–59).

Let us recall two aspects of Kripke’s ‘positive account.’ First, the presupposition that names *are* rigid designators. Secondly, understanding a proposition involves understanding the extensional conditions as well as the conditions for describing counterfactuals. If we affirm these aspects, then if a name is to have some description — or some cluster of descriptions — as its synonym, as it does in the Frege-Russellian theory, this leads to several problems. In order to explicate the problems, Kripke states the cluster theory of descriptions in six theses. Kripke shows that — with the exception of the first thesis which is merely a definition of the cluster theory of descriptions — the theses are false. They are false, not because of some technical errors, but because the entire idea of substituting a description for a name is wrong (Kripke, 1981, p. 93). The theses are (Kripke, 1981, p. 71):

- (1) To every name or designating expression ‘ X ’, there corresponds a cluster of properties, namely the family of those properties ϕ such that A believes ‘ ϕX ’.
- (2) One of the properties, or some conjointly, are believed by A to pick out some individual

uniquely.

(3) If most, or a weighted most, of the ϕ 's are satisfied by one unique object y , then y is the referent of ' X '.

(4) If the vote yields no unique object, ' X ' does not refer.

(5) The statement, 'If X exists, then X has most of the ϕ 's' is known *a priori* by the speaker.

(6) The statement, 'If X exists, then X has most of the ϕ 's' expresses a necessary truth (in the idiolect of the speaker).

To these six theses Kripke adds a condition that needs to be fulfilled in order to be able to have a determination of reference, viz:

(C) For any successful theory, the account must not be circular. The properties which are used in the vote must not themselves involve the notion of reference in such a way that it is ultimately impossible to eliminate.

In first of the following chapters, Russell's ToD will be reviewed within the framework of his broader *Theory of Knowledge*. Thereafter the theses will be reviewed to see whether or not they are applicable, and if they are, whether or not Kripke's refutation is correct.

Chapter 2

Russell's Theory of Descriptions

2.1 Preliminary Remarks

In order to fully understand and appreciate Russell's *Theory of Descriptions*, it is important to consider the theory within the philosophical and logical development of Russell's work. There has been one major shift in Russell's philosophy, and that shift can be credited to an article written by Moore, named "The Nature of Judgment." Moore's article, published in 1899, was mostly directed against *idealism*, and can be seen as a criticism of the idea that propositions consist of ideas, i.e. thoughts, existing only dependent of the mind. Moore concluded that the constituents of a proposition need to exist independently of the mind, and that "[a] thing becomes intelligible first when it is analysed into its constituent concepts" (Moore, 1899, p. 182). Though it was this article that gave rise to Russell's shift, it was not the position Russell ultimately developed. According to Cartwright, Russell developed the doctrines constituting the 'new philosophy,' beyond what can be found in Moore's writings (Cartwright, 2003, p. 109). Starting with Russell's *Principles of Mathematics*, Russell admitted the existence of *denoting concepts*, such as [golden mountain], which were assumed to have some sort of mind-independent existence, and could be constituents of a proposition. In "On Denoting" denoting concepts were abandoned and were replaced by denoting phrases. Thus rather than denoting concepts which could be constituents of a proposition, there were denoting phrases containing a variable — which could be shown after analysis — where the variable becomes a constituent of a proposition.¹ Because denoting phrases were essentially incomplete symbols containing variables, Russell could, with the use of a range of significance, deal with what he called "The Contradiction." *The Contradiction* can be described as the paradox of the class containing all classes that are not members of themselves (Urquhart, 2003, p. 286). By giving a propositional function a range of significance, meaning that only certain terms can make the propositional function a proposition, a hierarchy of types was introduced, ranging from individuals to classes of individuals etc., with which *The Contradiction* could be solved.² The central idea behind a

¹According to Hylton it is a mistake to think that denoting concepts need to denote (Hylton, 2003, p. 217). It was rather the 'indirectness' that led Russell to abandon the idea of denoting concepts, as stated in Russell's "On Denoting." The argument concerned an example about the first line of Grey's "Elegy," and was directed against Frege's distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, but applies "more clearly" against the idea of denoting concepts (Hylton, 2003, p. 238, n. 30).

²Unfortunately, the way a range of significance works, and the role of a variable — apparent or real — in quantification cannot be explained thoroughly in this thesis. I found Russell's "Mathematical Logic as based on

denoting phrase — later also called *description* — is that it does not have meaning in isolation, but only within the proposition in which it occurs. This seems somewhat misleading, since the denoting phrase does not enter the proposition, but only the variable and concepts used in the phrase — that is what can be shown after analysis — enter the proposition. Precisely because a denoting phrase did not bring its denotation — if it has one — into a proposition, a denoting phrase cannot be concerned with its denotation, but it merely *can* have a denotation. Before expanding on Russell's Theory of Knowledge, i.e. *knowledge by acquaintance* and *knowledge by description*, there are some preliminary remarks to be made.

First, the distinction between, and nature of propositions, and propositional functions. A proposition can be seen as a state of affairs, which either exists or does not exist (Landini, 2003, p. 254). The denotation of a proposition concerns objects and predicates/relations of those objects. The meaning, however, is the same — i.e. the denoted objects and predicates/relations of those objects. All objects entering a proposition are objects with which one needs to be acquainted — more on that later. If we take Russell's use of "ostensive definition" from "Mr. Strawson on Referring," one can see how this is supposed to work for particular facts of sense (Russell, 1957, p. 386).³ A propositional function is a complex, containing one or more variables, that becomes a proposition once aforementioned variables have been given a determinate value. Take, for example, the propositional function expressed by "*x* is hurt," if we replace the variable with an object, e.g. object *a*, the result is the proposition expressed by "*a* is hurt" (Russell and Whitehead, 2009, p. 15).

Secondly, his Theory of Descriptions was first published in "On Denoting," and later in *Principia Mathematica*, "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" and *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. While the analysis of denoting phrases remains the same, there are two important aspects that have changed between "On Denoting" and "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description." First, while in "On Denoting" identity between a variable in a denoting phrase and an object, e.g. Scott, could be asserted, thus something like $\exists x(\text{Scott} = x)$, this possibility was limited in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description." As we will see, in the latter article there are bigger limitations on what we can know, and therefore what can enter a proposition. This has a large effect on the possibility to use names. Secondly, there has been a shift in judgment. While in "On Denoting" a proposition could be the object of a judgment, in "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description" this was no longer the case. In the latter article a judgment involves the constituents of a proposition, which then become the distinctive constituents of a judgment. Russell explains judgment as a relation of a mind to several entities, namely the entities that compose what is judged: "To begin with judgments: a judgment, as an occurrence, I take to be a relation of a mind to several entities, namely, the entities which compose what is judged" (Russell, 1910, p. 117). The constituents of the judgment are, in e.g. "*A* loves *B*," the person judging, *A*, love, *B*, and judging, where the distinctive constituents are *A*, love and *B*. This however does not mean that the proposition needs to be 'completed' in thought, but only that we understand a proposi-

the Theory of Types" very helpful, and can only refer to that work (Russell, 1908).

³Russell also wrote an article in which he distinguished word-propositions from image-propositions. Word-propositions are supposed to have image-propositions as meaning, and image-propositions in turn have facts of sense as meaning — directly or through remembrance — and understanding the meaning of words consists simply of the correct usage (Russell, 1919, p. 300, p. 314 ff.).

tion such as “*A* loves *B*,” if we can suppose or assert that [*A*] stands in the relation of [loving] to [*B*]. This seems to have two relevant points. First, we need to understand (be acquainted with the terms used in) propositions, and secondly, in Russell’s earlier view, propositions ‘existed’ independent from the mind — explaining how they can be an object of the mind — while in the latter view, the objects, predicates and/or relations still existed mind-independent, but they did not form an object to be judged.

Lastly, Russell’s ToD cannot be seen as a descriptive theory of how we — in everyday life — use language, or more precisely use descriptions. It is because of the vagueness and inaccuracy of ‘common speech’ that there is need for a more exact language in philosophy (Russell, 1957, pp. 387–388). That common speech is vague can be illustrated by the, independently discovered, discovery made by Peano and Frege. They discovered that the two sentences “Socrates is mortal” and “All men are mortal,” differ in form. According to Russell the discovery of *that* distinction was of great importance for philosophy (Russell, 1914, p. 49):

The philosophical importance of logic may be illustrated by the fact that this confusion [confusing the form of two previously mentioned sentences] — which is still committed by most writers — obscured not only the whole study of the forms of judgment and inference, but also the relations of things to their qualities, of concrete existence to abstract concepts, and the world of sense to the world of Platonic ideas. Peano and Frege, who pointed out the error, did so for technical reasons, and applied their logic mainly to technical developments; but the philosophical importance of the advance which they made is impossible to exaggerate.

Thus confusing different forms, and metaphysical errors, are due to the misleading syntax of language (Russell, 1924, p. 331). And it is precisely because our syntax is misleading that we need a clearer formulation and explication of the propositions we wish to affirm, not in daily life but in practicing philosophy. Now what are we to make of this? In “Mr. Strawson On Referring” we can find several statements in which Russell explains how ToD was intended. On the one hand, we can find that it is not an analysis of the state of mind of the utterer (Russell, 1957, p. 388). On the other hand, the examples found in “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description” do seem to involve everyday usage of names, and in “Mr. Strawson On Referring” Russell states: “Similarly, I was concerned to find a more accurate and analysed thought to replace the somewhat confused thoughts which most people at most times have in their heads” (Russell, 1957, p. 388).

We can take from this that Russell’s position is that ToD is: (i) not a descriptive theory of how we use language, supported by Russell’s use of the idea of replacing confused thoughts; (ii) the proposal of analysis found in, e.g. “On Denoting” is a reconstruction, supported by the same passage — if not, it could not be a replacement; and (iii) all that is said of the aforementioned replacement, is that it is indispensable for technical purposes, and that in philosophy syntax needs to be corrected (Russell, 1957, p. 388).

What results is that Russell can not be faulted that we do not use language in the way he describes, because it is a replacement. We should rather read it as a replacement, that can — or perhaps must — be used in philosophy, making Russell a ‘reconstructionist’ rather than a ‘descriptionist.’

2.2 Knowledge by Acquaintance

In “On Denoting” Russell distinguished two types of knowledge, *knowledge by acquaintance*, and *knowledge by description*, which can be seen as a distinction between knowing an object, and having knowledge of an object, respectively. This distinction is relevant, because, as we will see, only objects that we know — as opposed to objects we have knowledge of — can enter a proposition. The first type, *acquaintance*, Russell describes as “things we have presentations of.” We can be acquainted with things in perception and thought, he states: “In perception we have acquaintance with the objects of perception, and in thought we have acquaintance with objects of a more abstract logical character” (Russell, 1905, p. 41).

In “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description” Russell expands on the meaning of *acquaintance*. *Acquaintance*, or being acquainted with an object, consist of having a *direct cognitive relation* to that object, i.e. being directly aware of that object, while the converse is called *presentation*: being acquainted with an object x means that x is *presented* to you (Russell, 1910, p. 108).⁴ The difference between acquaintance and presentation is twofold. First, one can be acquainted with an object, without it being ‘before one’s mind,’ by remembrance. Secondly, the word ‘acquaintance’ emphasizes the relational character more than the word ‘presentation’ does. According to Russell it is important to consider both object and subject, because, when ignoring the relation, one would be led either to materialism or to idealism (Russell, 1910, p. 109). The idea of being acquainted with an object can be somewhat misleading. According to Russell we cannot know everyday physical objects — such as e.g. tables — but only our sense-data of such an object — i.e. having the objects presented in a sensible manner.⁵ Acquaintance with sense-data is what Russell calls the “first and most obvious example” of acquaintance (Russell, 1910, p. 109). But there are more objects of acquaintance. Russell distinguishes *particulars* from *universals*, among *particulars* belong all existents, and all complexes containing existents as constituents. *Universals* are the objects that do not contain particulars, being acquainted with a universal is called “conceiving a concept” (Russell, 1910, p. 111).⁶

In one of the Lowell lectures, Russell expands on what he calls the data of philosophical investigation, which in this case is: “There is first acquaintance with particular objects of daily life [...] Then there is the extension of such particular knowledge to particular things outside our personal experience, through history and geography, newspapers, etc. And lastly, there is the systematization of all this knowledge of particulars by means of physical science” (Russell, 1914, p. 73). Within these data there subsists a difference in degree of certainty, given that some of these data are *primitive*, i.e. without support of anything else, and some are *derivative*, i.e. inferred by means of something else.

The senses give knowledge of the first kind, and although sometimes psychologically derivative, it remains logically primitive (Russell, 1914, p. 76). He then makes a distinction within

⁴He then stipulates what he takes to be the cognitive relation, namely that of presentation as opposed to that of judgment.

⁵Although Russell distinguishes ‘sensation’ from ‘sense-data’ in his earlier views, e.g. (Russell, 1913, p. 77), he abandons that view later on, see (Russell, 1914, p. 83). Therefore I thought it unnecessary to expand on the notions sensation and sense-data.

⁶Though we cannot be acquainted with *all* universals (Russell, 1910, p. 114).

data, that he calls *hard* and *soft*. *Hard data* remain certain, even after critical reflection. *Soft data* become — more or less — doubtful, once they are analyzed. Within hard data he makes a bifold distinction: “the particular facts of sense, and the general truths of logic,” and adds several data to ‘this stock’: some facts of memory, some introspective facts, facts of sense themselves, and some facts of comparison (Russell, 1914, pp. 78–79).

The objects that can be *presented* to you, whether sensible or in thought, are the limit of analysis, and the idea behind propositions is that if they are to be understood, they have to consist of nothing but the objects with which we are acquainted (Russell, 1910, p. 117).

There are things that we cannot be acquainted with, but of which we do have knowledge. We can have knowledge about these things through description. Russell states that the physical objects as well as other people’s minds belong to this category (Russell, 1910, p. 112).

2.3 Knowledge by Description

In “On Denoting” Russell describes a denoting phrase: “By a ‘denoting phrase’ I mean a phrase such as any one of the following: a man, some man, any man, every man, [...] Thus a phrase is denoting solely in virtue of its *form*” (Russell, 1905, p. 41). He does not define *denoting phrase* but only gives examples of such a phrase, varying from “a man” to “the revolution of the earth around the sun.” Every denoting phrase can be identified. The use of ‘signal words’ such as *a*, *the*, *some*, *all*, indicate that the following is a denoting phrase, e.g. “a so-and-so” is a denoting phrase.

Russell distinguishes three different cases of denoting phrases: denoting, but not denoting an object, denoting a definite object, and denoting ambiguously — e.g. “a man” which can be any man. To understand the importance of the denoting phrase, the previously mentioned distinction in knowledge by acquaintance, and knowledge by description is important. The first type is explained in the previous section. The second type, knowledge by description, is knowledge we reach by means of denoting phrases. These denoting phrases do not have meaning in themselves, only the propositions in which they occur *can* have meaning (Russell, 1905, p. 43). This is more easily understood, if we understand that Russell believes that denoting phrases contain variables. “I use ‘ $C(x)$ ’ to mean a proposition in which x is a constituent, where x , the variable, is essentially and wholly undetermined” (Russell, 1905, p. 42). Extending this idea to the quantifiers everything, nothing and something, they can, according to Russell, be interpreted as: “ $C(\text{everything})$ means ‘ $C(x)$ is always true’; $C(\text{nothing})$ means “‘ $C(x)$ is always false’ is always true’; $C(\text{something})$ means ‘It is false that “ $C(x)$ is false” is always true’” (Russell, 1905, p. 42). As recalled, a propositional function contains one or more indeterminate variables, and the function becomes a proposition once the variables have been given a determinate value. Now take, e.g. the function “I met x ,” one can see how this function could be made into a proposition with the use of a denoting phrase. If we would like to say that e.g. I met a man, we could make the previously mentioned function into a proposition by stating “I met a man.” However, according to Russell, the denotation is not part of the denoting phrase. Therefore, we cannot substitute “a man” for x , because there is not some definite man asserted. What it actually states, when interpreted, is: “‘I met x and x is human’ is not always false” (Russell, 1905, p. 43). What can be learned is threefold. First, the denoting phrase functions as an

argument satisfying the propositional function — making it a proposition, which can be shown after analysis. We can find support for this idea in *Principia Mathematica*, where a description is defined as “a phrase of the form ‘the term which etc.,’ or, more explicitly, [sic] ‘the term x which satisfies $\phi\hat{x}$,’ where $\phi\hat{x}$ is some function satisfied by one and only one argument” (Russell and Whitehead, 2009, p. 181). Secondly, the denoting phrase does not enter the proposition, but its meaning can only be discovered within the proposition in which it occurs. Thirdly, the previously used denoting phrase, which was of the form “denoting ambiguously” had two components. First, existential, which can be found in the “is not always false” part of the assertion. Secondly, predication, stating that “ x is human.”

These two components are present in the use of any denoting phrase, but in denoting phrases that denote a definite object a third component enters. According to Russell a denoting phrase containing the word ‘the’ implies uniqueness — e.g. “the present King of France” implies that there is only one King of France (Russell, 1905, p. 44). The third component can be seen, roughly, as the addition of “for every y , if y (predication/relation) then $x = y$.” In resume, the three components involved when using denoting phrases that denote definite objects are (1) existence, (2) predication, (3) uniqueness, thus: (1) there is at least one x that (predication/relation), (2) at most one x that (predication/relation), and (3) for all y , if y (predication/relation), then x is identical to y .

Now turning to the first of the three forms of denoting phrases, a denoting phrase which does not denote an object. With an example he advocates his view of denoting phrases: the abandonment of the view that propositions containing denoting phrases are concerned with denotation. The example concerns the phrase: ‘the King of France is bald,’ which ought to be nonsense if the denotation of an actual man is part of the proposition, but the phrase is “plainly false” (Russell, 1905, p. 46). That it is ‘plainly false’ has been disputed by Strawson in his article “On referring”, and although Russell did write a reply, the point is not entirely undisputed (Strawson, 1950). However, since Kripke’s criticisms are directed against the explanation and usage of names within ToD, and not against ToD as a whole, Strawson’s arguments can be put aside.⁷

Russell’s theory of meaning seems to have its own problems. If we take words to *mean* their objects — i.e. universals and particulars — how can identity statements be informative? Frege tried to deal with the informativeness of identity statements by separating *meaning*, *sign*, and *denotation*. Russell, on the other hand, used an entirely different approach for dealing with such puzzles. In the next subsection three different puzzles will be dealt with. In order to understand how Russell solves the puzzles, we need to introduce a further distinction. Russell points out that when eliminating denoting phrases, we can either eliminate them from the whole proposition — in which the description “the so-and-so” is a mere constituent — or from the subordinate proposition “so-and-so.” This is what he calls the distinction between *primary* and *secondary* occurrence (Russell, 1905, p. 52).

In *primary* occurrence, the existential quantifier (one of the three components) concerns the entire proposition, in *secondary* occurrence only the subordinate proposition. Russell explains the distinction with use of the following proposition: “George IV wished to know whether Scott

⁷This is of course an entirely different question if the goal of this thesis is a reinstatement of ToD as a viable programme.

was the author of *Waverley*.” In primary occurrence this states: “One and only one man wrote *Waverley* and George IV wished to know whether Scott was that man.” In secondary occurrence this states: “George IV wished to know whether one and only one man wrote *Waverley* and Scott was that man.” This is essentially the distinction of scope.

2.3.1 The Puzzles

In “On Denoting” Russell mentions three distinct puzzles that a theory of denoting should be able to solve. The first is a puzzle about identity statements, the second concerns the law of excluded middle and, lastly, the third concerns non-entities as subjects of propositions (Russell, 1905, p. 47).

Identity Statements

The puzzle concerning identity statements can be stated as follows: when objects a and b are identical, they can be substituted for each other in any proposition. Russell explains the puzzle with the use of the following proposition: “George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*.” In the example of George IV, if we substitute “Scott” for “the author of *Waverley*” we can state that George IV wished to know whether Scott was Scott. This, however, clearly is not the case.

Although Scott is the author of *Waverley* and in that *sense* there is in fact identity, the terms are not interchangeable. Whenever a denoting phrase is used, the object described — if there is one — is *not* a constituent of the denoting phrase, thus when I say, e.g. “I met a man,” no man enters the proposition (Russell, 2009, pp. 115–116).⁸

As previously mentioned a denoting phrase does not have meaning in itself, besides that, it does not express a constituent in a proposition. It is also remembered that one needs to be acquainted with the constituents constituting a proposition. In order to make use of a denoting phrase at all, it needs to be ‘broken down’ into a comprehensible formula. Thus “Scott is the author of *Waverley*” becomes: (1) there is at least one x that wrote *Waverley*, (2) at most one x that wrote *Waverley*, and (3) for all x , if x wrote *Waverley*, then x is identical to Scott.⁹ Russell would not deny that there is identity, given that Scott is in fact the object fulfilling “one and only one x wrote *Waverley*.” However, this identity only exists when the denoting phrase is ‘broken down.’ The variable x is not a constituent of the denoting phrase, but only appears when the denoting phrase disappears. In Russell’s words: “The shortest statement ‘Scott is the author of *Waverley*’ seems to be ‘Scott wrote *Waverley*; and it is always true of y that if y wrote *Waverley*, y is identical with Scott.’ It is in this way that identity enters into ‘Scott is the author of *Waverley*’; and it is owing to such uses that identity is worth affirming” (Russell, 1905, p. 55).

⁸Of course *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* is written more than a decade after “On Denoting,” but the central idea seems to remain the same.

⁹One does need to keep in mind that whenever a denoting phrase — or description — occurs without any further predication, existence is not implied, i.e. $\iota x\phi x$ simply means ‘the x for which ϕx ’ and no existential quantifier appears, it only occurs when used in a proposition.

Law of the excluded middle

Let us return to the example “the present King of France is bald.” Where we saw, “the present King of France” is a denoting phrase, and as the word ‘the’ tells us, uniquely denoting. Stating that there is exactly one x , for which *present King of France*(x) — or perhaps *King of France*(x) at time t — and *bald*(x). Given that France is not a monarchy, this proposition is indeed false. The law of the excluded middle states that either p or $\neg p$. According to this law, one should expect that either the present King of France is bald, or he is not bald. Since it is false that he is bald, the proposition “the present King of France is not bald” should be true, but when enumerating the men that are not bald, the present King of France cannot be found. To solve this problem Russell makes use of the previously mentioned distinction between primary and secondary occurrence. In the proposition “the present King of France is not bald,” a negation is asserted. When the negation is taken to have primary occurrence the analysis would be “one and only one x is the present King of France, and is not bald,” where the negation concerns the predication only, and the proposition is still false, thus violating the law of the excluded middle. But when taken as secondary occurrence, the analysis becomes “it is false that one and only one x is the present King of France, and is bald,” which is a true proposition, thus preserving the law of the excluded middle (Russell, 1905, pp. 52–53).

Non-entities

The puzzle concerning non-entities as subjects of propositions — e.g. “the difference between A and B does not subsist” — is resolved using the same method as the puzzle concerning the law of the excluded middle (Russell, 1905, p. 48). When stating “the present King of France is bald” we would make a non-existing entity the subject of a proposition. As previously explained, the proposition, when analyzed, would become “one and only one x ...” which, as we saw, is false. The negation, in secondary occurrence, is, as we saw, true. The same goes for propositions as “the difference between A and B does not subsist.” When the negation is read as a primary occurrence, this would state something like “one and only one x is the difference between A and B , and that x does not subsist,” which is a strange proposition indeed. However, if the occurrence is secondary this would state “it is false that there is one and only one x which is the difference between A and B , and which subsists.”

2.3.2 Names

Names play a rather peculiar role in Russell's ToD. In “On Denoting” there is no mention about proper names being some sort of description, with the exception of non-entities such as Apollo, and Hamlet, where there is some definition as a substitution of the name (Russell, 1905, p. 54). It is not until later works, such as *Principia Mathematica*, “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description,” and *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* that we can find Russell's position on names of non-fictional entities. In “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description” we find an interesting passage regarding names (Russell, 1910, p. 114):

Common words, even proper names, are usually really descriptions. That is to

say, the thought in the mind of a person using a proper name correctly can generally only be expressed explicitly if we replace the proper name by a description. Moreover, the description required to express the thought will vary for different people, or for the same person at different times. The only thing constant (so long as the name is rightly used) is the object to which the name applies. But so long as this remains constant, the particular description involved usually makes no difference to the truth or falsehood of the proposition in which the name appears.

In *Principia Mathematica* we can also find an example of a name really being a description, viz. 'Homer,' which Russell defines as to mean "the author of the Homeric poems" (Russell and Whitehead, 2009, p. 183). In chapter sixteen of *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* Russell states that if "Scott is Sir Walter" is seen as being of the same form as "Scott is the author of *Waverley*," then names are really being used as descriptions, i.e. the explicit rendering of "Scott is Sir Walter" is "the person named 'Scott' is the person named 'Sir Walter.'" ¹⁰ However, if 'Scott' and 'Sir Walter' are used as names, then "Scott is Sir Walter" is as trivial as "Scott is Scott." The point is that in propositions such as "Scott is Sir Walter" the person is not named, but described as the person having that name, and that is precisely how names are often used, and there is no way of differentiating between the two uses (Russell, 2009, pp. 119–120). I take this to mean a distinction between whether (i) the name enters the assertion, or (ii) merely enters the language used to make the assertion. In the second of the two uses the name, e.g. 'Scott,' only enters the language, thus the logical form does not contain the name, which can be shown after analysis, in the same way as "the present King of France" disappears after analysis. The same idea can be found in the earlier article "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description," where Russell states that in order to understand a judgment about Julius Caesar, we must *substitute* for the name 'Julius Caesar' a description of Julius Caesar. Russell uses the description "the man whose name was 'Julius Caesar'". If the utterance was "Julius Caesar was assassinated," then the proposition becomes "the man whose name was 'Julius Caesar' was assassinated," which in turn should be analyzed into "one and only one man was called 'Julius Caesar,' and that one was assassinated" (Russell, 1910, pp. 120–121).

This seems to leave us with a choice. We can either choose to use a name on the level of a logical form, thereby bringing the object into the proposition, or we can use it merely on a grammatical level, thereby describing the object intended. But, according to Russell, that is not the case. If we recall the earlier quoted passage, Russell states that the thought can only be rendered explicitly if we replace the proper name by a description. That it can only be rendered explicitly, is because we cannot be acquainted with other people's minds and bodies. Thus although we would like to make a statement where somebody is a constituent, we cannot (Russell, 1910, p. 116). Precisely because we cannot make such a judgment, we need to replace the name with a description, i.e. a description in virtue of which we have knowledge of the object.

Let us return to the proposition "Julius Caesar was assassinated." If we take the name to be a proper name the proposition would contain [Julius Caesar], but because we cannot be acquainted with Julius Caesar, and only objects with which we are acquainted can enter a proposition, we

¹⁰Of course "the person named 'Scott' is the person named 'Sir Walter'" needs to be analyzed as well.

cannot assert "Julius Caesar was assassinated." However, we do have knowledge *of* Julius Caesar, therefore we have descriptive material available to render our thought explicit.¹¹ We can thus give a *descriptive* proposition in which Julius Caesar is not a constituent, but as long as the (definite) description we use to give the descriptive proposition is correct, it makes no difference to the truth or falsehood which description we employ (Russell, 1910, p. 114).

This leads to a different question: If we need to employ a description expressing our thought, what determines which description we should choose? The answer can be found in a passage where Russell explains how a friend of Bismarck can make a judgment about Bismarck (Russell, 1910, pp. 114–115):

It is, of course, very much a matter of chance which characteristics of a man's appearance will come into a friend's mind when he thinks of him; thus the description actually in the friend's mind is accidental. The essential point is that he knows that the various descriptions all apply to the same entity, in spite of not being acquainted with the entity in question.

It is important to notice that Russell calls the description that comes to mind accidental. It seems therefore, that there is not a determined description that must be used as a substitution for a name.

We now have a basic idea of Russell's ToD within his Theory of Knowledge, and are able to examine whether the first thesis is a correct representation of the usage of names in Russell's ToD.

¹¹We can have knowledge *of* an object through sense-data, testimonies etc., but that need not be explained thoroughly in order to grasp the use of names in propositions.

Chapter 3

Theses

In this chapter we will examine whether or not the six theses that Kripke uses to explicate the cluster theory of descriptions are applicable to Russell's ToD. As we will see some will have to be modified, and some are applicable without modification, that is, with the exception of the circularity condition (C). As remembered, the circularity condition states:

(C) For any successful theory, the account must not be circular. The properties which are used in the vote must not themselves involve the notion of reference in such a way that it is ultimately impossible to eliminate.

But if we take into account that a description is not concerned with reference, although it *can* have a referent, the circularity condition is not applicable at all. The central idea is that we have no means of 'pointing' to the objects, which are believed to be associated with the name, thus the statement we intend to make, cannot be made, we can only describe the proposition by giving a descriptive proposition (Russell, 1910, p. 116). Let us illustrate this with the following example: We only know of Plato, that he taught Aristotle, and we only know of Aristotle that he was a student of Plato. Now, if the question was: "To whom do you refer with the name 'Plato'?" and the answer was "The teacher of Aristotle", then we would indeed run in circles as soon as we arrive at "To whom do you refer with the name 'Aristotle'?" But if we take into account that we simply do not refer, then the actual statement is: "there is exactly one pair x, y , for which x is named 'Plato' and stands in the relation of [x taught y] to exactly one y that is named 'Aristotle'." There is nothing circular about such a belief.¹ Thus, it appears, that the circularity condition is not applicable, and we can ignore that condition in so far as it concerns finding a referent. This shows that the entire non-circularity condition cannot be used to attack the ToD.

The remaining six theses can then be examined, and there will be a double approach used in the discussion section following each thesis. The first approach is a 'strict' Russellian approach, where his ideas and principles, as mentioned in the previous chapter, will be used. The second approach is my modification, where I use some of Russell's ideas as well as Kripke's use of a context defining pretext, as explained in subsection following the discussion section of thesis (1), I will call this approach the *pretext approach*.

¹This is an entirely different question than one concerning uniqueness, i.e. it can be argued that this does not give enough descriptive material to find a unique referent, but that does not affect the idea of non-referring.

3.1 Thesis One

(1) To every name or designating expression ‘ X ’, there corresponds a cluster of properties, namely the family of those properties ϕ such that A believes ‘ ϕX ’.

This thesis is, according to Kripke, correct by definition (Kripke, 1981, p. 64). By that he does not mean that it is true that *that* is the case, it simply means that it is a definition of the theory. Whether that definition does justice to Russell’s ToD is something we can examine.

3.1.1 Discussion

If we keep Russell’s idea of proper names — that they mean nothing but the object to which they refer — in mind, this does not seem to be a correct portrayal of Russell’s usage of names in ToD at all. Kripke knows this, and explains why it *does* apply to Russell. As remembered from an earlier passage, according to Russell names are usually really descriptions. What appears to be a name, only enters the language as a name, and does not refer to an object — it only appears on the grammatical level, thus although it is indistinguishable from a name on the surface, it actually *means* a description. Let us call such a name a *surface name* or *schname*. Although Russell’s view on (proper) names differs from thesis (1), a schname does seem to work that way. According to Kripke a schname does have ‘sense,’ viz. that we should be able to give a definite description to determine the referent whenever somebody uses a schname (Kripke, 1981, p. 27).² With use of schnames instead of names, and leaving designating expressions for what they are, we get the modified:

(1’) To every schname ‘ X ’, there corresponds a cluster of properties, namely the family of those properties ϕ such that A believes ‘ ϕX ’.

Thesis (1’) does seem to apply to Russell’s ToD. At any rate, the previously mentioned example about Julius Caesar does seem to support it; someone could very well utter “Julius Caesar was assassinated,” but the explication of this proposition does not contain [Julius Caesar], thus the name can only be a schname, and, when analyzed, is replaced by a description indeed. Therefore we can content ourselves with this slight modification of thesis (1), and can then continue to the following theses. But first, I will give the central ideas of the previously mentioned *pretext approach*.

3.1.2 A Slight Modification

The most basic assumption is that a schname cannot be distinguished from a name, in use. That is to say, from an utterance involving a (sch)name, one cannot distinguish which one is used. The difference between a name and a schname lies on the level of their logical form, but on the level of surface grammar they are indistinguishable. This also implies that, although a proper name has a certain object as its meaning — given that the name is non-empty — this

²Of course Kripke mentions nothing about schnames, he talks about names as ordinarily used, which I, for the sake of clarity, call schnames.

cannot be discovered from the utterance of the proposition alone. Because the utterance could mean different propositions, i.e. of a different form, the object referred to by the name, has not yet entered, because it could not enter if the name was actually a schname. But even if we would go so far as to say that Kripke is completely right in stating that both Russell and Frege were wrong, and there are no schnames, only names that mean their objects, then with regard to homophonic and homographic names, the intended object still cannot be discovered from the utterance alone. No communicational chain could solve this issue, since this problem lies solely on the level of surface grammar. This ambiguity does not affect the thesis of rigidity, because once the meaning is discovered, it *can* be used rigidly. It does, however, require a particular reading of an utterance. Only given such a particular reading of the name, can the proposition be understood correctly. Kripke seems to agree when he states: “As a speaker of my idiolect, I call only one object ‘Aristotle’, though I am aware that other people [...] had the same given name. [...] When I spoke of ‘the truth conditions’ of (I), I perforce assumed a particular reading for (I)” (Kripke, 1981, p. 8). (I) is the proposition “Aristotle was fond of dogs,” and in (I) Kripke “perforce assumed” reading “Aristotle” to mean the object that is (believed to be) a philosopher. Paraphrased, Kripke actually gives some sort of definition of calling himself, i.e. one of the objects which is called ‘Aristotle’, and the intended object can be identified by “the so-and-so”, he states that he means Aristotle the philosopher and not the shipping magnate (Kripke, 1981, p. 9). That is not to say that such a reading functions as an exact definition, but it is in the very least a context defining pretext, in virtue of which a rigid interpretation of a name is possible. If the description theorist is allowed the same context defining pretext, the descriptive sense of a name is as definite as the name. For example, if, using the previously mentioned example, the description theorist is allowed to add as a particular reading “the philosopher”, then a descriptive reading of the name could be as definite, i.e. only one philosopher is also named ‘Aristotle’. The point is that in order to have a correct particular reading of an utterance of a proposition, the pretext already assures that the name points to one and only one object, and when that demand is satisfied, it does not matter whether you use a name or a schname.

Now, it can be argued that Kripke is allowed such a pretext, because his use of a communicational chain, and Russell, lacking such a chain, cannot do the same. But that seems to rest on the idealized picture of an unambiguous reading of an utterance, it is only in virtue of such a pretext that the proposition can be understood, thus the chain actually only works once the particular reading is assumed. The implications of allowing such a pretext, is of significant importance to a description theorist, because it opens the door to using a name in the descriptive sense. We can now take the schname to always mean “the person named ‘X’,” where ‘X’ is merely a noise or shape. If a pretext need not be used to disambiguate the indistinguishable homonym names in the surface grammar, then proper names will be definite, given the fact that they mean their objects, while descriptive usages of names are — albeit not all — indefinite, since many people have the same given name. But because we *need* to use a pretext to understand what was meant, the descriptive sense is as definite as a proper name.^{3,4}

³It actually cannot be the case that either one is more definite than the other.

⁴It actually seems that the pretext — which loosely serves as a ‘discourse-definer’ — is used by description theorists as well, but only in the explicit rendering of a schname, because something like “the last great philosopher

The idea I will use when stating a defense, is that there is a fixed definiens for every schname — contrary to Russell — and the definition will be: $X =$ “the person named ‘ X ’,” where the ‘ X ’ is merely a noise or a shape. The criticism can be, and actually is given by Kripke, that e.g. Isaiah was called ‘Isaiah’ is simply not true, Isaiah would not recognize this name, it is only because of the translation of the original name, that we call Isaiah ‘Isaiah’ (Kripke, 1981, p. 72).⁵ The answer is, and Kripke also foresaw this, that *we* use the name ‘Isaiah.’ It is, for our purposes, of little relevance what he was called, might have been called, or will be called. Except, perhaps, when using a Kripkesque communicational chain which could lead back to translations of the original schname, but that use is implicit, and would only enter a pretext. According to Kripke, using a name in the descriptive sense is a violation of the non-circularity condition (C), but, as remembered, that condition is only applicable when referring is involved.

This is, in essence, the pretext approach: a schname has as a fixed definition the descriptive use of the name, i.e. “the person named ‘ X ’,” the indefiniteness is dealt with using the same context defining pretext Kripke uses to assume the correct reading of the name. Kripke’s communicational chain, will be used — albeit somewhat modified — to lead back to the original translation of the name, as a syntactical unit, when necessary. There is one more basic assumption used, concerning the non-rigidity of schnames, which will be explained in the examination of thesis (6).

3.2 Thesis Two

(2) One of the properties, or some conjointly, are believed by A to pick out some individual uniquely.

Kripke gives several examples to show why this thesis seems to be false, two of them will be mentioned here. The first example concerns Feynman. If we ask ‘the man on the street’ who Feynman is, he will say “he is a physicist or something,” which would not single out somebody uniquely. But, according to Kripke, he still uses ‘Feynman’ as a name for Feynman (Kripke, 1981, p. 81). The second example concerns Einstein. Most people know that Einstein discovered the theory of relativity, which would pick out somebody uniquely. But when asked about the theory of relativity, they can only explain it as Einstein’s theory, so the circularity condition (C) is unsatisfied.

3.2.1 Discussion

This thesis is actually correct, but only when one keeps in mind that these properties actually concern the belief of the speaker, not the correspondence of properties to a schname. If we take the properties involved in the explicit utterance of the speaker’s thought, there are three approaches. First, a more strict Russellian answer to the problems sketched by Kripke. Secondly, one can show that it is possible that one can use a schname while not thinking that the underlying description singles out someone uniquely — it can be an indefinite description. Thirdly, thesis of antiquity,” need not be used if the pretext already brings us to Aristotle the philosopher.

⁵This example is actually quite interesting, since even here Kripke adds that the discourse intends the prophet Isaiah: “the prophet would not have recognized this name at all.”

(2) actually does not lead to a problem in itself, and the examples Kripke uses are incorrectly dealt with, as can be shown by the pretext approach.

First, the Russellian approach. What we do, in Russellian terms, is assert a descriptive proposition, not containing [Feynman] or [Einstein], but a unique defining definite description. Russell did seem to analyze schnames (sometimes) in the descriptive sense, and was aware that nothing remains but the shape and sound: “Here *Julius Caesar* is a noise or shape with which we are acquainted” (Russell, 1910, p. 120). Russell did not use some sort of pretext to make the descriptive sense of a name definite, nevertheless, he did seem to think that it still was uniquely identifying. Now, is he wrong in thinking that *that* is the case? Not necessarily. Russell states that whatever (definite) description is used, is irrelevant, so long as it correctly describes the object (Russell, 1910, p. 116). Therefore Russell can actually use (among others) the following two solutions. First, the analysis leads to an indefinite description, but when accompanied with several other descriptions, is uniquely identifying — leading to some sort of cluster theory. Secondly, the analysis of the scname in “the person named ...” is definite, because it is accompanied with a definition of being named — in the same way as mentioned earlier about Isaiah. Neither of the two approaches leads to an indefinite description, and therefore a description of the form “a person named ‘*X*’” can be used, solving the problem created by the Feynman-example.⁶

Concerning the second approach, I will give an example to illustrate why it is not a problem. The example will be — in line with Kripke’s method — a common usage example. Now I do not consider myself to be a complete dummy when it comes to computers, but I am certainly not an expert. Confronted with a problem I cannot solve on my own, I call customer service. A certain man named ‘John’ answers, and luckily helps me solve my problem. Let us complicate this further, and state that when I called there were several John’s working at the call center. In this example there is the possibility to give a uniquely identifying description — given that I only spoke to one man named ‘John’ — but the problem Kripke states is likewise applicable, i.e. I spoke to whomever I spoke to, which certainly does not point out an object. If we ignore the fact that I simply cannot point to an object — I cannot refer unless it is to be a constituent of the proposition — and ignore that part of the description, I get: there is an x , for which *named ‘John’*(x), and is man, and stands in the relation of [x works at y] and *Call center*(y). In this example, the descriptive sense of the name is read — contrary to Russell’s approach — as indefinite. Now, the belief I have is that there is a certain object, but I do not have enough information to give a correct ‘blueprint.’⁷ This is neither a problem, nor is it odd. I can certainly entertain the belief that there is some object to which the properties apply, without asserting that there is only one object to which they apply. No contradiction arises, as long as I do not assert that the proper description is definite— of the form $(\iota x)(\phi x)$ (Russell and Whitehead, 2009, p. 182). Whimsical as I am, I might even say “John helped me,” as if I knew the man. Confronted with the question “Who is John?” I can reply, “Some man working at the call center I called.” The example illustrates that no problem arises when I use a scname for an object

⁶Although it must be mentioned, that it is not clear that Russell thought this was needed, perhaps he simply thought that a descriptive sense of the name was definite. If so, that could be faulted to him.

⁷The term ‘blueprint’ actually comes from Almog, I used it because, in my opinion, it represents beautifully what a description actually does (Almog, 1986).

I cannot uniquely identify. However, Russell clearly only considered definite descriptions, and would not use this approach of indefiniteness.

Now, concerning the third approach, the pretext approach. The schnames are analyzed as explained earlier, taking the descriptive sense of the name as definiens. In the Feynman-example Kripke seems to neglect that when one uses a name — or even schname — it is already known that there is a person to which the name supposedly refers — of course, a schname does not refer, in the same way a description does not refer. Thus the man on the street would not substitute “a physicist” for the schname ‘Feynman,’ but “the person named ‘Feynman.’” Given that a pretext ensures that the name is definite — the assumed particular reading — the belief is also definite. The Einstein-example involves use of the circularity condition. The idea is that one cannot use a description to refer to an entity when said description involves a different entity which can only be defined in terms of the first entity. We could approach it in the same way we did with the Feynman example, say “the person named ‘Einstein,’” which picks somebody out uniquely. As remembered, the circularity condition is not applicable. To see that, suppose I am the man on the street, and I am asked about Einstein. What I know, according to Kripke’s example, is that there are two objects x and y , which stand in the relation of [x wrote y], furthermore I know that x is named ‘Einstein’ and that y is the only theory of relativity — at least if we keep Russell’s analysis of the word ‘the’ in mind. It seems impossible that I do not believe that this information is uniquely identifying, because, if otherwise, I would probably ask “Which Einstein?” Thus I believe that there is exactly one combination of two objects, involved in a certain relation, having the properties as described. And indeed there does not seem to be any circularity when we examine the example.

As we saw, we accepted thesis (2), in both the Russellian approach as well as the pretext approach. Kripke’s refutation of thesis (2), failed with both approaches, because he ignores the descriptive sense of a name. However, when one does use the descriptive sense of a name, possibly accompanied by either several other descriptions or else a definition of being named ‘ X ,’ thesis (2) turns out to be unproblematic. But even if we go so far as stating that thesis (2) is problematic and abandon it, it still does not have to be problematic if the belief is not uniquely identifying, as shown by the example about John.

3.3 Thesis Three

(3) If most, or a weighted most, of the ϕ ’s are satisfied by one unique object y , then y is the referent of ‘ X ’.

The most important example Kripke gives, concerns Gödel (Kripke, 1981, p. 84). If $\phi\hat{x}$ is the propositional function “ x discovered the incompleteness theorem” and $(\iota x)(\phi x)$ is the replacement of the schname ‘Gödel,’ then if Schmidt were the discoverer of the incompleteness theorem, the schname ‘Gödel’ would have Schmidt as its referent.

3.3.1 Discussion

The formulation in (3) is somewhat problematic. Not the “weighted most” of the ϕ ’s need to be satisfied, but all of them have to, or else the randomly chosen one has to — i.e. the accidental description that comes to mind. Let us give a revised thesis:

(3’) If ϕ in $(ix)(\phi x)$, where $(ix)(\phi x)$ is the description used for ‘ X ’, is satisfied by one unique object x , then x is the referent of ‘ X ’.

The answer open to a Russellian approach, could just be ‘biting the bullet,’ which seems peculiar given Kripke’s example, but on investigation it need not be. What someone would like to assert is a proposition containing [Gödel], but, for lack of acquaintance, he simply cannot. However, he can assert a descriptive proposition, stating whatever is predicated of the object he believes is correctly described by the description he employs. Now, if the description used to describe a certain object is actually false, then he asserted either a false proposition, or an accidentally true proposition, but true in virtue of a different object. If the description used, is not considered to be the totality of a speaker’s belief about, e.g. Gödel, then he could adjust his beliefs using a negation — more on that in the treatment of thesis (4). But if the description used is considered to be the totality of a speaker’s belief, the example becomes more interesting. In the case of a false proposition, it does not seem troublesome, it happens very often that one has a false belief. In the case of an accidentally true proposition, it does seem very unintuitive, but only when we consider it not to be the totality of a belief. If we simply take the description, we thus ignore the descriptive sense of a name completely, then there is no such thing as a ‘wrong referent’ because the referent completely fits the belief one has. The only reason that this seems false, is because we simply do not ignore the descriptive sense of a name, which brings us to the pretext approach.

In the pretext approach the example is not problematic at all, since the schname involves only being named ‘ X .’ In fact, no modification of the example is possible, because it would lead immediately to a contradiction, i.e. “ X is not named ‘ X ,” seems to be impossible, because it requires you to use the schname ‘ X ’, which would not work if no one bears that name. Yet, as we will see in the examination of thesis (6), X might not have been named ‘ X .’

3.4 Thesis Four

(4) If the vote yields no unique object, ‘ X ’ does not refer.

This point can be illustrated by an earlier passage, where Kripke states: “Biblical scholars generally hold that Jonah did exist, the account not only of his being swallowed by a big fish but even going to Nineveh to preach or anything else that is said in the Biblical story is assumed to be substantially false. But nevertheless there are reasons for thinking this was about a real prophet” (Kripke, 1981, p. 67).

Kripke’s criticism raised against what he sees as Russell’s thesis (4) is that ‘ X ’ can refer independently of the description(s) associated with the name.

3.4.1 Discussion

The formulation of (4) is actually quite interesting. Kripke presupposes that a schname works as a name. But, as remembered, a schname does not refer at all, if it would, it would be a name. However, Kripke knows this, so he must have meant something else — he realized that a schname ultimately must be replaced by a description, and therefore that a schname simply cannot refer. The point seems to be that if ‘Jonah’ means “the so-and-so”, then if there is no “so-and-so” every proposition using ‘Jonah’ is false. Thus, every proposition of the form $\exists x(X = x)$ is false, where ‘ X ’ will be “the so-and-so” when substituted in the analysis. If we take this into account, we get the modified:

(4') If $(\iota x)(\phi x)$, for which $X = (\iota x)(\phi x)$, is improper, ‘ X ’ has no referent.

With this modified thesis, we can now examine what happens in the Jonah-example. As shown in the examination of thesis (3), if “was swallowed by a big fish” is the totality of our belief, then it would not have a referent indeed. But this example illustrates that we simply do not, maybe even cannot, ignore the descriptive sense of the name. What we would like to convey is “Jonah, the object, did not do any of the things commonly attributed to him, nevertheless he was a prophet.” The belief some of us had was: $(\exists b) : Jx \cdot \equiv_x \cdot x = b : Pb$, where Jx means ‘is called ‘Jonah’(x)’ and Px means ‘is a prophet(x),’ with the addition of a number of predicates and relations the bible attributes to Jonah. Up to that point some of us might indeed falsely describe the object with “the prophet swallowed by a big fish,” if that was believed to describe an object uniquely — perhaps with use of the bible as testimony. Now, suppose I was among the people believing all this information about Jonah, but Kripke’s testimony convinced me. Now, what happens with my belief? At first instance I might panic and negate the entire proposition containing, say “was swallowed by a big fish,” which we will write as Bx , then it becomes, perhaps, $\neg[(\exists b) : Jx \wedge Px \cdot \equiv_x \cdot x = b : Bb]$. But, reading Kripke again leads me to think that Jonah did exist, he just was not swallowed. Relieved, I come back to the earlier belief “one and only one object was called ‘Jonah’ and that object is a prophet,” with the addition of not being swallowed: $(\exists b) : Jx \wedge Px \cdot \equiv_x \cdot x = b : \neg Bb$. However, Kripke is right in stating that at that point it turns out that all propositions containing “one and only one object was swallowed by a big fish” are false, but that has nothing to do with the meaning of a name. If the explicit renderings of the schname involved “the man swallowed by a big fish,” those descriptive propositions would indeed be wrong, but there is no reason why I cannot assert a different descriptive proposition, where the description is modified. It is important to remember two things at this point. First, that Russell’s ToD argues in terms of a replacement of asserting propositions containing unknown objects, because a rendering of a proposition containing a schname, leads to an ambiguous proposition, if not an unintelligible one. Secondly, we can only describe the proposition which we would like to affirm. Thus the description that comes to mind, is what has to be used — since then it can be either true or false — and is not what the schname means. If the schname could be asserted correctly, it would be a name, and as long as it is not a name, use the description that comes to mind. As I explained using Kripke’s Jonah-example, the belief when false, makes the proposition containing the conjunction of properties false. The

problem is therefore that you have falsely described the proposition which you would like to affirm — i.e. asserted a false descriptive proposition — because you have a false belief of the object described.⁸ But it is very much a matter of what it is that you now believe to be false, because using scope distinction, the negation in secondary occurrence can still lead to a true descriptive proposition — or at least what now is believed to be true — it simply requires a revision.

Now, let us examine what happens if we examine this counterexample using the pretext approach. First of all, the thesis is a correct portrayal; if no one is named ‘ X ,’ then X does not have a referent. But again, no counterexample is possible, because as soon as someone is in fact named ‘ X ,’ the schname would automatically also have a referent, and if no one was named ‘ X ’ it is hardly strange that X does not have a referent.⁹

3.5 Thesis Five

(5) The statement, ‘If X exists, then X has most of the ϕ ’s’ is known *a priori* by the speaker.

Kripke states that even if theses (3) and (4) happen to be true, a speaker does not know *a priori* that X has most of the ϕ ’s. But that the speaker knows it *a priori* is required by the description theorist (Kripke, 1981, p. 87).

The point is that if a schname ‘ X ’ has some description as its replacement on the logical level, whatever that description is, follows *a priori* from the schname. Thus if, e.g. the schname ‘Gödel’ means “the man who proved the incompleteness theorem,” then “Gödel proved the incompleteness theorem” is an *a priori* statement. This point can be seen more easily on a logical level:

$$E!(\iota x)(\phi(x)) \rightarrow \exists x \forall y (\phi(x) \wedge (\phi(y) \rightarrow (\phi(y) \wedge x = y)))$$

If $(\iota x)(\phi(x))$ represents the schname, then the description follows. The problem is that when one says “Gödel proved the incompleteness theorem” this does not seem *a priori* at all. Of course one can say, “Well when he says *that* he does not think of Gödel as the man who proved the incompleteness theorem.” But the statement always involves some sort of description, and the used description follows logically.

3.5.1 Discussion

Whether it is problematic that the description follows logically from the substituting description, actually comes down to whether or not one accepts Russell’s reconstruction. As remembered, we cannot fault Russell that our ordinary language does not seem to function in such a way, nor is the description a substitution of the schname, the schname is a substitution of the description —

⁸Affirming a proposition, is judging it to be true.

⁹It is to be remembered at this point that it does not matter if someone was originally named ‘ X ,’ as explained using the example concerning Isaiah. It need only be relevant what we did with the sound/shape in the definiens, and that is already secured through a Kripkesque communicational chain, leading back to the original schname, or perhaps even to sense-data of a man responsive to it.

using the name is simply incorrect. Russell states that he sought a replacement for the confused thoughts that most people sometimes have — while denying that ToD was meant as an analysis of the state of mind of the utterer. Thus the idea seems to be that rather than referring to the object, assert the description in virtue of which you (can) think of the object.

But let us examine thesis (5) more thoroughly, the actual statement is that if X exists, and has some description $(\iota x)(\phi x)$ associated with the schname, then *that* is known *a priori*, thus we get:

(5') The statement, 'If X exists, and $X = (\iota x)(\phi x)$, then $\phi(X)$ ' is known *a priori* to the speaker.

It is of course the question whether anyone would consider the association of ϕ with some x for which $X = x$ *a priori*, since this is probably something acquired in the process of learning.¹⁰ Nevertheless any statement containing X implies $\phi(\iota x)(\phi x)$, and that is *a priori* in some sense. Again there are two approaches to this, a Russellian approach, and the pretext approach.

Concerning the first approach. Suppose someone uttered some proposition in which he tried to make some object a constituent of that proposition, but he cannot — because he is not acquainted with the object— thus the name, cannot function as a name, and is actually a schname. The thought in the mind of the utterer must involve some sort of description in virtue of which he thinks of the object intended.¹¹ What he must substitute is the description in virtue of which he thought of the object intended. It is of course possible that he simply thought “the person who proved the incompleteness theorem, proved the incompleteness theorem.” There is no reason to forbid such thoughts, but the fact that somebody might think, and wished to utter, such a tautology can not be faulted to Russell’s ToD. If somebody decides to give a tautology as input, it is not very strange that he gets the same as output.¹² This reply is somewhat trivial, and perhaps is applicable for the Russellian approach, but certainly not for a cluster theory of descriptions. Which brings us to the second approach.

Now, using the pretext approach. It seems that the statement “If X exists, then X is named ‘ X ’” is as *a priori* as e.g. “Nixon is Nixon.” There is no problem, since we use sound/shape already, thus it is trifling indeed. Of course only if we do not require that X was originally named ‘ X ,’ if it did, then indeed would we have a problem, as sketched with the example about Isaiah. But that is not a requirement, though the definiens “was named ‘ X ,’” relies heavily on using a chain leading to the original name.¹³

3.6 Thesis Six

(6) The statement, ‘If X exists, then X has most of the ϕ ’s’ expresses a necessary truth (in the idiolect of the speaker).

¹⁰When we take a context in which both ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’ are given an interpretation, the proposition “Hesperus is Phosphorus” is as *a priori* as $\phi(\iota x)(\phi x)$, showing that we cannot ignore the fact that one does need to learn empirically whatever is associated with the schname, but let us not digress.

¹¹I cannot imagine what it would be like to think of an object without thinking of some sort of accidental property, it must be like thinking of the ‘Ding an sich.’

¹²This heavily depends on Russell not having a fixed description, if there were something as a definition of a schname, given before stating the proposition, then Kripke’s criticism would be problematic for Russell’s ToD. Although not, as we will see, for the pretext approach.

¹³It needs the chain if we are not to give a different object the predication of being named ‘ X .’

This actually follows in the same way thesis (5) followed. If X is associated with certain ϕ 's, and those ϕ 's serve as the definition of X , then that X has the ϕ 's is analytic — thus both *a priori* and necessary. But, according to Kripke “It just is not, in any intuitive sense of necessity, a necessary truth that Aristotle had the properties commonly attributed to him” (Kripke, 1981, p. 74).¹⁴

3.6.1 Discussion

Thesis (6) requires the same modification as (5), taking into account that a certain object x has the ϕ 's, not the schname, and that it involves all of the ϕ 's, or the randomly chosen one. We then get:

(6') The statement, ‘If X exists, and $X = (\iota x)(\phi x)$, then $\phi(X)$ ’ expresses a necessary truth (in the idiolect of the speaker).

In order to grasp the assumption used to attribute this ‘unnecessary necessity’ to ToD, we need to make a small sidestep into Possible Worlds Semantics (PWS). Kripke states that a designator is rigid if it designates the same object with respect to every possible world (Kripke, 1981, p. 48). It has been argued that this idea, combined with the necessity of identity statements between names, leads to a model in PWS where all worlds share one domain. This implies that every object existent in the domain, exists in every possible world (Gamut, 1991, p. 55). It is simply not true that Kripke had such necessity of existents in mind: “Of course we don’t require that the objects exist in all possible worlds” (Kripke, 1981, p. 48). But he remains silent on the matter, and deliberately ignores the possible non-existence of objects (Kripke, 1981, p. 21 n. 21). If worlds are to have different domains, where in some worlds a certain object exists and in other worlds it does not, how are we to know about which object we are speaking? According to Kripke, this question arises from ‘reversing the cart and the horse’: “it is *because* we can refer (rigidly) to Nixon, and stipulate that we are speaking of what might have happened to *him* (under certain circumstances), that ‘transworld identifications’ are unproblematic in such cases” (Kripke, 1981, p. 49). Now, what this seems to say is that because Nixon refers to the same object, identification is not a problem.

In order to show the necessity that follows, let us return to proposition (I) “Aristotle was fond of dogs.” As remembered, understanding (I) involves understanding the conditions under which (I) is true, as well as the conditions under which counterfactuals would be correctly described. The proposition states that a certain object is fond of dogs, and the conditions for the counterfactuals are, according to Kripke, that *that* man was fond of dogs (Kripke, 1981, p. 6). Now, if we translate it, it could state “one and only one x was named ‘Aristotle’ and that x was fond of dogs.” Given that the context defining pretext serves as a definite reading of the schname, it captures extensional conditions under which (I) is true. But given that *he* might not have been named ‘Aristotle’ it fails to describe the conditions under which counterfactuals

¹⁴It is interesting that Kripke adds “in the idiolect of the speaker” in thesis (6), because it emphasizes the role of the speaker in the same way we emphasized it in thesis (5’).

are correctly described by (I). Both approaches given when discussing thesis (5) are vulnerable to the demand of correctly describing counterfactuals. However, one does need to keep in mind that Russell clearly did not mean to state that whatever description used, was essential, he quite clearly states the opposite, as shown by the passage about a friend of Bismarck, where he states that the description that comes to mind is accidental. The point is that because the object [Aristotle] does not enter the proposition, we need to describe the object, and that either limits the counterfactuals, by stating an essential description, or we fail to correctly describe the object. Now what we want to say is that (I) is true in counterfactuals where *he* was fond of dogs.¹⁵

Because Russell says very little on this subject, I will give one solution, which works for the pretext approach, but *could* likewise work for any other approach. The solution is rather simple, though less elegant than simply stating the object. What we wish to convey, and what we can convey is: “The person named ‘Aristotle’ was fond of dogs,” assuming the correct context defining pretext, there will be a single object satisfying the proposition, making it true. Once we ‘found’ the object, using the description to run a navigational query, we can simply stipulate that *that* object was fond of dogs, and once that is said, it poses no other limitations on counterfactuals, other than the required fondness of dogs of *that* object. Thus it requires that ‘Aristotle’ has a definiens which only is used to find a referent in the actual world, and the definiens does not ‘travel’ with the schname to counterfactuals. In propositional objects, Kripke’s statement is: [Aristotle] stands in the relation of [*x* is fond of *y*] to [dogs], where [dogs] is merely a concept. While the description theorist states: there is exactly one [*x*], for which in the actual world ϕx , that stands in the relation of [*x* is fond of *y*] to [dogs]. As remembered, we stipulate the counterfactual, we do not find it, and in such a counterfactual we merely stipulate the object that fulfills the description used as the definiens of the schname. Thus, the seemingly contradictory $\Diamond\neg\phi(\imath x\phi x)$, becomes $\exists x(\phi x \wedge \Diamond\neg\phi x)$. The idea is based on assuming a reading within the world of utterance, with an assumed wide scope reading of the description.¹⁶ Now how can the description theorist deal with (I)? Let us take ϕ as “is named ‘Aristotle’,” and ψ as “is fond of dogs” — ignoring the relation for a moment. The way this can now be formulated is $\exists x(\phi x \wedge \psi x)$ and $\exists x(\phi x \wedge \Diamond\psi x)$, and even $\exists x(\phi x \wedge \Diamond(\psi x \wedge \neg\phi x))$. No essential description is used, however, the propositions differ from Kripke’s, since there still is no object involved, and it poses a limitation on valuating propositions from the perspective of counterfactuals. Whether or not this method is preferable, I will not argue, I deemed it sufficient to show that the description theorist’s approach does not fail on logical grounds. I will however, give several reasons in favor of a further investigation of this approach in the section titled ‘Implications’ of the next chapter.

Now, having refuted the necessity of the description used in a schname, we actually refuted thesis (6) as well as (6’), so let us rewrite it as:

(6’’) The statement, ‘If *X* exists, and $X = (\imath x)(\phi x)$, then $\phi(X)$ ’ could express a contingent truth (in the idiolect of the speaker).

¹⁵Actually ‘it’ seems better, because it seems very limiting that Aristotle has to be a ‘he’.

¹⁶Especially the reading within a world is similar to Kaplan’s idea (Kaplan, 1970, p. 352).

Chapter 4

Conclusion

What do we have so far? We have restated most of the theses and got:

- (1') To every schname ' X ', there corresponds a cluster of properties, namely the family of those properties ϕ such that A believes ' ϕX '.
- (2) One of the properties, or some conjointly, are believed by A to pick out some individual uniquely.
- (3') If every ϕ in $(\iota x)(\phi x)$, where $(\iota x)(\phi x)$ is the description used for ' X ', is satisfied by one unique object y , then y is the referent of ' X '.
- (4') If $(\iota x)(\phi x)$, for which $X = (\iota x)(\phi x)$, is improper, ' X ' has no referent.
- (5') The statement, 'If X exists, and $X = (\iota x)(\phi x)$, then $\phi(X)$ ' is known *a priori* to the speaker.
- (6") The statement, 'If X exists, and $X = (\iota x)(\phi x)$, then $\phi(X)$ ' could express a contingent truth (in the idiolect of the speaker).

We did not accept the non-circularity condition (C), because that is only applicable when reference is directly involved. We dealt with Kripke's criticism using two different approaches, a Russellian approach, and, what we called, the pretext approach.

4.1 Russellian Approach

Most of the theses were solved by pointing out that the problem lies in the belief of the speaker, not in ToD. Others were solved by showing that there is no fixed description that could serve as a definition of the schname. Using the Russellian approach, the main solution to the problems as sketched by Kripke, rests on the assumption that a schname is the replacement of the underlying description, not *vice versa*. The central idea was that Russell's ToD, was developed as (roughly) some sort of algorithm, which showed what is actually involved in asserting propositions. Using the idea of acquaintance to determine what can and cannot be asserted, it still is mostly determined by the speaker (and his belief) what is given as input, and therefore what became output. With this insight, it was shown that most of the refutations of the theses actually rests upon a misunderstanding of what ToD does and does not do. Beginning with thesis (2), the solution lies in the fact that the problem, Kripke sketched, was dependent on an incomplete representation of the speaker's belief. The solution to the problem sketched with theses (3), (4) and (5), followed

directly. The answer was somewhat ‘biting the bullet,’ and also showed that the problem lies with Kripke’s portrayal of the belief on the speaker’s side. Regarding thesis (3), we saw that there simply cannot be a ‘wrong referent’ if we consider the totality of beliefs one has about a certain (unknown) object. Now, if one or more of those beliefs turn out to be false, e.g. Jonah was never swallowed by a big fish, that indeed means that the asserted descriptive propositions either had the wrong referent, or else no referent, but that is not problematic. Negating some properties (out of the totality) could, with use of scope distinction, create different descriptive propositions, but nevertheless true. This was shown in the discussion section of thesis (4). Refuting the criticism, as Kripke stated, against thesis (5) was (more or less) a conclusion of what was said in the discussion sections of theses (2), (3) and (4), and that was that ToD *is* (roughly) an algorithm and that it cannot be faulted to ToD that someone gives a tautology as input. Kripke’s criticism against thesis (6) could not be refuted with the use of Russell’s ToD, since Russell did not (seem to) concern himself with questions about modality, and could only be dealt with using a modification for Russell’s ToD, which we made in the pretext approach.

The result is that Russell’s ToD on schnames, cannot be seen as giving the reference of a schname, nor the meaning, since a schname does not have a reference, and likewise no meaning — in isolation.

The problem is that Kripke and Russell have a different goal in mind: Russell wishes to give an exact syntax, which can be used in philosophy, while Kripke investigates common speech, to see how it functions. Both admirable goals, but Kripke’s criticism cannot be that “we do not use it that way,” since it is a substitution, the same way Russell cannot criticize Kripke for having such low demands on the speaker’s side, questioning whether it can be considered as knowledge.

4.2 Pretext Approach

The pretext approach was used to deal with every thesis, and, as we saw, could solve the problems Kripke showed. The idea behind the pretext approach was to use the same “assumed reading,” as Kripke uses, the justification was that both needed to use it in order to disambiguate whatever was asserted — before the logical form could be revealed. The main difference with respect to Russell’s ToD, was that it involved a fixed definition for a schname, viz. $X =$ “the person named ‘X’.” Combined with this fixed definition, I also assumed a wide scope reading of the description, making it a world-dependent interpretation, similar (in some respects) to Kaplan’s proposal in “Dthat.” Because the newly used definition involves nothing more than the name as a syntactical unit in the definiens, none of the problems in theses (2) – (5) were, or even *could be*, problematic, although the solution does rely heavily on a Kripkesque communicational chain, as well as Kripke’s “assumed reading.”

Solving the modal problem, as sketched in Kripke’s criticism of thesis (6), requires that the definiens of a schname is only determined within the world of utterance. Once that is secured, then using a descriptive reading of a name has neither epistemological problems nor logical problems.

The pretext approach did not discuss whether it can be seen as a theory of meaning, or as a theory of reference, but only that the idea of using a description, should not and cannot be

used rigidly.¹

4.3 Implications

In this thesis I have discussed Russell’s ToD, and the (in)consistencies throughout its development. I have (hopefully) shown that Kripke’s criticism cannot be seen as a knockdown argument against ToD. We saw that neither Russell’s ToD, nor the pretext approach was vulnerable to the epistemological problems that Kripke sketched. And, although Russell did not concern himself with questions about modality, we saw that any description theory could also solve the modality problem that Kripke sketched, it only requires that the definiens of a schname does not ‘travel’ with the schname to counterfactuals. If I am correct in the stated defense, this implies that a name *can* be used in the descriptive sense, making it a schname. This gives us the possibility to analyze propositions such as “John exists,” which would be meaningless if ‘John’ would merely mean its object. Furthermore, it opens the possibility for a formal treatment of surface names, which allows for possible non-existence of objects, i.e. “John might not have existed” becomes a perfectly clear proposition when read in the descriptive sense. It even allows for necessity of identity statements involving a schname, due to the wide scope reading and world-dependent interpretation — i.e. the x that is named ‘ X ’ is necessarily that x , even though it is not necessarily called ‘ X .’

¹It can be argued that this theory only gives the reference, because necessity would follow if ‘ X ’ means $(\lambda x)(\phi x)$, but that is not true. The meaning would likewise only apply to our usage, i.e. it could mean something else.

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