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THE CONTINGENT *A PRIORI* AND RIGID DESIGNATORS

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IN "Naming and Necessity"[1] Saul Kripke describes the possibility of introducing a term for something, say a name for a person or a star, by citing a definite description, not to give a definitional equivalent, but solely to "fix the reference." A term so introduced will be a "rigid designator." Kripke calls "something a *rigid designator* if in any possible world it designates the same object. . . ."[2] Kripke claims that as a consequence of this there is the startling possibility of knowing *a priori* contingent truths about the world. For suppose we propose to introduce the term "t" as the name of the denotation, if there is one, of the definite description "the ϕ." And we do not intend that "t" shall *mean* "the ϕ" or be a mere abbreviation for it. Rather, "t" is to designate whatever happens to be the ϕ; the definite description serves solely to fix the reference. If our procedure serves to introduce "t" as a rigid designator, "t" will designate the same entity in all possible worlds (in which it designates anything at all). It will designate the same thing that it does in this, the actual world. But there will be possible worlds in which what is the ϕ in the actual world, that which "t" designates, is not the ϕ in that world. Thus the statement that if the ϕ exists, t is the ϕ is merely contingently true, because there are possible worlds in which it is false. Yet, if the reference of "t" has been fixed solely by being the denotation of the description "the ϕ" it looks like it can be known *a priori* that if the ϕ exists, t is the ϕ.

This apparent result goes counter to the way philosophers have usually thought about what is knowable *a priori*, as Kripke would be the first to acknowledge.[3] If we offer as a somewhat vague explication of "knowable *a priori*" (and I will not attempt to give a sharper account) "knowable without recourse to experience" then perhaps some philosophers have considered certain statements to be both contingent and knowable *a priori*; perhaps, for example, the Cartesian *I exist* or some statements about language that can be known just through knowing the language. But the procedure Kripke is talking about is quite general and the statements that supposedly come out as both

contingent and knowable *a priori* do not enjoy any special status such as the conclusion of the *Cogito* does. Here is one of his examples:

> An even better case of determining the reference of a name by description, as opposed to ostension, is the discovery of the planet Neptune. Neptune was hypothesized as the planet which caused such and such discrepancies in the orbits of certain other planets. If Leverrier indeed gave the name "Neptune" to the planet before it was ever seen, then he fixed the reference of "Neptune" by means of the description mentioned. At the time he was unable to see the planet even through a telescope. At this state, an *a priori* material equivalence held between the statements "Neptune exists" and "Some one planet perturbing the orbit of such and such other planets exists in such and such a position," and also such statements as "if such and such perturbations are caused by a planet, they are caused by Neptune" had the status of *a priori* truths. Nevertheless, they were not necessary truths, since "Neptune" was introduced as a name rigidly designating a certain planet. Leverrier could well have believed that if Neptune had been knocked off its course one million years earlier, it would cause no such perturbations and even that some other object might have caused the perturbations in its place.[4]

Before Kripke's discussion of the matter, most philosophers, I should think, would have considered the sentences he mentions, as they might be uttered by an astronomer today, as excellent paradigms of sentences expressing contingent truths knowable only *a posteriori*. As uttered by Leverrier, they would have said, the sentences might express truths knowable *a priori*, but that would have been because "Neptune," at the time, was a mere abbreviation for a certain description and the sentences expressed mere tautologies. Kripke would explain, at least in part, I believe, the failure of philosophers to consider the possibility of *a priori* contingent truths as, in the first place, a failure to keep firmly separate the epistemic distinction between the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* and the ontological distinction between the necessary and the contingent, the one defined in terms of knowability with or without recourse to experience and the other in terms of truth in possible worlds, and, in the second place, as a failure to make a distinction between establishing a term's meaning and fixing its reference. Whatever the extent of the influence of these factors there is another source of the uneasiness felt about the possibility of contingent *a priori* truths (I do not mean to suggest that Kripke would disagree). It might be put roughly as follows: If a truth is a contingent one then it is made true, so to speak, by some actual state of affairs in the world that, at least in the sorts of examples we are interested in, exists independently of our language and our linguistic conventions. How can we become aware of such a truth, come to know the existence of such a state of affairs, merely by performing an act of linguistic stipulation? Or, to put it another way, contingent truths are true in only a proper subclass of all possible worlds; how by a mere stipulation of how the reference of a term is to be fixed, can we come to know that our world is a member of that subclass?

I share these philosophical qualms and yet at the same time I believe that Kripke has described a viable procedure for introducing a term as a rigid designator (viable in theory; as will become clear I am dubious that it can be shown to be a part of our usual linguistic practices). My way out of this dilemma in this paper will be to suggest that the procedure does not have the consequence claimed for it; it does not in fact yield the possibility of knowing *a priori* contingent truths.

I

I should first say something, I believe, about the question of whether or not a name can be introduced as a rigid designator, as opposed to a mere abbreviation, by using a

definite description. Michael Dummett, in his long discussion of Kripke's work in his recent book *Frege: Philosophy of Language*,[5] seems to want to challenge this. In discussing this it is important to be quite sure what we are asking. In particular, we must separate the factual issue of whether it is part of our actual practice ever to introduce names in this way from the theoretical issue of whether names could be introduced in this way. Kripke does sometimes talk about examples, such as the introduction of the name "Neptune" by Leverrier, as if he wanted to assert that the example is one in which a name has been introduced as a rigid designator. And he may give the impression that he even has an argument that shows that this is so. (I believe Dummett so reads him.) It is one thing to fault him on these counts, if indeed those were his intentions, and quite another to show that there is something theoretically wrong with the very notion of introducing a name in that way. It seems to me that the philosophical worry about the possibility of knowledge *a priori* of contingent truths should be just as strong if it is no more than a theoretical possibility that a name should be introduced in such a way as to allow for such knowledge.

It is, of course, of importance whether or not names are ever introduced as rigid designators by the use of definite descriptions to fix their reference. The philosophically interesting question is, what would show that that was what had been done as opposed to introducing the name as an abbreviation for the description? For we should not, of course, suppose that names *cannot* be introduced as abbreviations; it is obvious that we can do that if we want to. Leverrier probably did not say anything that would disclose an intention that the name should function one way rather than the other. Kripke tells us that this is an example of the introduction of a name as a rigid designator, but why is he so confident that it is not an example of a name introduced as an abbreviation? At the end of the passage quoted he may seem to be giving an argument. He says, of the things he believes Leverrier could know *a priori*:

> Nevertheless, they were not *necessary* truths, since "Neptune" was introduced as a name rigidly designating a certain planet. Leverrier could well have believed that if Neptune had been knocked off its course one million years earlier, it would cause no such perturbations and even that some other object might have caused the perturbations in its place.[6]

It might be thought that there is the following sort of argument being given: Take the modal sentence,

(A) Neptune might have existed and not been the cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus.[7]

Following Kripke, it seems that having just introduced the name *via* the description contained in (A), Leverrier might nevertheless believe without any inconsistency what (A) expresses. But that seems to show that the following sentence expresses a contingent truth:

(B) If Neptune exists, Neptune is the cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus.

But if "Neptune" were a mere abbreviation for the description in question then (B) would be equivalent, by substitution of the description for the name, to a mere tautology. Thus, or so it might seem, we can show that "Neptune" was not introduced as an abbreviation.

Anyone bent on maintaining that in Kripke's example the name was introduced as an abbreviation can escape this argument. He will, as Dummett does, point to scope differences. Let us suppose that "Neptune" was introduced as an abbreviation for the de-

scription. Then we can explain why we are inclined to agree with Kripke that Leverrier might without inconsistency believe what (A) expresses by claiming that (A) is ambiguous as between two readings, one with the modal operator having wide scope and the other with its having narrow scope. That is, if we substitute for "Neptune" in (A) its claimed definitional equivalent we obtain:

(C) The cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus might have existed and not been the cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus.

But this, it would be claimed, is ambiguous. We can represent the two readings explicitly by:

(D) It might have been the case that [the cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus did not cause the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus].

and

(E) The cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus might have been such that it did not cause the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus.

(D), of course, is plainly false and we cannot suppose that Leverrier would have believed it. But (E) expresses something he should have believed, for surely, the planet actually responsible for the perturbations might have met with an accident millions of years ago, etc.

That Leverrier might well have consistently believed what is expressed by (A) does not then show that "Neptune" was not introduced by him as an abbreviation for the description nor that (B) is contingently true. For on the hypothesis that it was introduced as an abbreviation (E) expresses one of the propositions (A) could express and (E) is something Leverrier might well have believed.

The attempt to construct an argument from modal beliefs to show that a rigid designator has been introduced seems, then, always open to this sort of evasion. As I will emphasize once more a bit later, however, this does not show in the least that names cannot be introduced as rigid designators by means of definite descriptions, much less that there is, for example, anything wrong with the thesis that names are, in general, rigid designators.

If we were concerned to know about an actual case whether a name had been introduced, by means of a description, as a rigid designator rather than as an abbreviation, I am inclined to believe we would be in some difficulty. Not only is there no conclusive argument of the sort described, I doubt that we could rely in general on linguistic intuitions. In the absence of an explicit stipulation that the name shall be taken as a rigid designator and the description as merely fixing the reference (and historically we have not, I believe, possessed a formula for making such a stipulation[8]) we would have to rely on our intuitions about the syntactic, semantic, modal or epistemic properties of sentences in which the introduced name occurs. The two possibilities, that the name is a rigid designator and that it is abbreviation, yield different predictions concerning the properties of various sentences and classes of sentences. For example, if the name is a rigid designator then, where "N" is the introduced name and "the ϕ" the introducing description, the sentence of the following form would express a contingent truth:

(F) If N exists, then N is the ϕ.

If, on the other hand, the name is an abbreviation the sentence of that form would

express a tautology. But this difference in the predicted status of a certain sentence does not seem to me to be a *usable* difference. In the absence of an explicit stipulation, any profession of an intuition about the status that we might make or even that the stipulator himself might make would seem to have the same status as Kripke's opinion that the sentence, in certain examples, expresses a contingent truth or Dummett's, about the same examples, that it does not. For my own part, when I think about such an example as the "Neptune" case, I don't find myself with any strong intuition one way or the other.

The same unusability of differences in predicted properties seems to me to hold for other sentence types. If the name is an abbreviation, it follows that certain pairs of sentences will be paraphrases of each other, and that would not be the case if the name is a rigid designator. Thus, in the "Neptune" example, "Neptune is a large planet" would be paraphrasable, if the name is an abbreviation for the description, as "The cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus is a large planet." When I think of Leverrier introducing the name by saying some such thing as "Let us call the cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus 'Neptune,' " I do not find myself with any strong intuitions that such pairs of sentences are or are not paraphrases of each other. Similarly, as we saw, modal sentences such as (A) in the argument discussed above, will have two non-equivalent readings if the name has been introduced as an abbreviation, but not if it is a rigid designator. Where "N" is a rigid designator to say "It might have been the case that [N is not ϕ]" is equivalent to saying "N might have been such that it is not ϕ" (this point is sometimes put by saying that the name always has wide scope—that it can always be brought outside the scope of the modal operator without change of meaning). But again I doubt that anyone would have any strong intuitions about this concerning a situation such as that of Leverrier and the introduction of the name "Neptune"—at least none not motivated by a theory about the matter.

I believe the conclusion to be drawn from this is that in the absence of stipulation that the name shall be one or the other, it would be indeterminate whether a name introduced by means of a description is a rigid designator or an abbreviation, so long as the name continues to be pegged to the description. It may be interesting that a name could have this indeterminacy, but I do not see that it should cause concern. It certainly would not make any practical difference. It will be indeterminate, for example, whether certain pairs of sentences are paraphrases of each other, but there will not be any question but that what they express will have the same truth value. And should someone wonder how we know this, the right response would be to remind him of the agreed upon stipulation, even though it is indeterminate whether or not that stipulation introduced a rigid designator or an abbreviation. This conclusion, of course, presupposes that the concept of introducing a name as a rigid designator by means of a description is a coherent one.

It seems to me that the concept *is* a coherent one. If it is specifically intended and stipulated that this introduction of a name is to be the introduction of a rigid designator, I see no theoretical reason to suppose that the stipulation cannot accomplish what is intended. Certainly none of the above facts about the status of names in cases where there is no explicit intention one way or the other casts any shadow on the theoretical possibility of such an introduction. (And I must confess that while I am not confident I fully grasp Dummett's attack on Kripke, a large part of it seems to me to accomplish no more than what I have set out above.) I should like also to point out even more emphatically that these facts certainly cast no doubt upon the thesis that in general names are rigid designators. For we are talking now about a special sort of situation, one in which a name is introduced by and subsequently, for some period of time, is

pegged to a definite description. And there is no obvious reason why what we would conclude about this sort of situation should be extended to or have implications for what we should say about, say, the present use of the names "Aristotle" or "Ford." Those who hold that such names are rigid designators need not hold that they are now or were at any time pegged to a definite description that "fixes the referent." A name such as "Neptune," which we will suppose was first introduced by some description, is certainly no longer tied to the description that was used to introduce it. This is shown by the fact that if someone were to ask an astronomer how he knows that Neptune causes the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus, he would be treated, undoubtedly, to a discussion of such things as astronomical observations, details of orbits, gravitational forces and the like, whereas, just after Leverrier's stipulation the same question would have received (whatever the name's status as rigid designator or abbreviation) some such reply as "That is just what we call 'Neptune' " or "It is just by stipulation that we call the cause of those perturbations, 'Neptune'." Now those who hold some version of what I have called the "principle of identifying descriptions,"[9] a view that Kripke and I have attacked, will describe the breaking away of the name from the introducing description either as a case in which it has come to be an abbreviation for (or associated with, to accommodate certain versions) another description or as the introducing description having come to be merely one member of a set of descriptions associated with the name (where the referent is determined by being that which satisfies some proportion of the descriptions). But there is no obvious reason why someone who held that the name had originally been introduced as a rigid designator by means of one description should have to say that now, when it has been disengaged from that description, there is some *other* description that "fixes" its referent.[10] And in fact those who hold that a name such as "Neptune" is currently a rigid designator do not take, so far as I know, any such route. Instead, they theorize that there is another relationship that can hold between the user(s) of a name, the name and the thing named in virtue of which the thing *is* named and that does not involve the thing satisfying any descriptions associated with the name. Thus Kripke speaks of a causal relationship, I have talked about a relationship of being involved in an historical explanation of the use of a name[11] and David Kaplan introduced a technical notion of a name being a name *of* something for someone, characterized in terms of how the user acquired the name.[12] A name that functions according to some version of such a theory will be a rigid designator, but not in virtue of there being some definite description associated with the name that fixes the reference. If any such theory is tenable, then what we say about the situation, for example, when "Neptune" was tied to a description, will not have any immediate application, at any rate, to the situation after it has become divorced from the introducing description. Thus, where there has been no explicit stipulation that a name being introduced via a description shall be construed as a rigid designator, the fact that there is no argument that would show that it is a rigid designator nor, as I have suggested, the possibility of firm intuitions that might point that way, neither demonstrates (at least straight off) anything wrong with the thesis that names in general are rigid designators nor even that there is anything amiss with the notion of introducing rigid designators by description. As for the latter, we will from now on suppose that the stipulation that the name shall be a rigid designator and the introducing description a device for fixing the reference is explicitly made. Whether or not we in fact would have any practical reason for doing this, rather than leaving the matter indeterminate, the theoretical possibility that a consequence would be knowledge *a priori* of continent truths must be faced.

II

About Kripke's view that by the sort of stipulative introduction of a name as a rigid designator one would thereby be in a position to know a contingent truth *a priori*, Dummett remarks, "Counter-intuitive it undoubtedly is, but it appears to follow from Kripke's arguments: something must, therefore, be amiss with those arguments."[13] I am not sure what he meant by "those arguments," but I do want to question whether it follows from the possibility of introducing a rigid designator by means of a description that certain contingent truths are knowable *a priori*. And I will suggest that it does not. (Or, more cautiously, if there are thereby any contingent truths knowable *a priori* they will not be of the sort Kripke mentions and will not cause the philosophical qualms mentioned at the beginning.) In doing this I am going to invoke a distinction between knowing that a certain sentence expresses a truth and knowing the truth of what is expressed by the sentence. I am going to suggest that as the result of the introduction of a name as a rigid designator by means of a description fixing the referent we can come to know, perhaps even *a priori*, that certain sentences express truths, but we do not come to know, *a priori*, the truth of what they express.[14] This may turn out to sound as paradoxical as Kripke's position on the matter, but at least it will not be for the same reasons.

We can illustrate the distinction I have in mind, in the first place, by a familiar kind of example. A person could know that a certain sentence expresses a truth if he has been told by an unimpeachable source that it does. Thus I could learn from a German-speaking friend that a certain German sentence expresses something true, but if I do not speak German and do not know what the sentence means I would say that I do not know the truth of what the sentence expresses—or rather, if by chance I do, it would not be just from the information given me by my friend. Similarly, I could be assured by a qualified mathematician that a certain mathematical sentence expresses a theorem, without thereby knowing the truth of the theorem expressed, if I am ignorant of what the mathematical sentence means. Now it is true that in such cases I can pass on to someone else not only that the sentence in question expresses a truth, but also the truth it expresses. For example, having read in an authoritative article in *Scientific American*, "The oblateness of Mars is .003," I may be said to know that that sentence expresses a truth, but if I have not the foggiest idea of what is meant by "oblateness," I do not think I can be said to know that the oblateness of Mars is .003. Yet if I subsequently happen to be in a group discussing the properties of the planets and someone asks what the oblateness of Mars is, I might answer "It is .003." But I think I act here, to use an apt expression of Gareth Evans,[15] as a mere mouthpiece, passing on a statement about matters of which *I* am ignorant.

In these sorts of examples the person is ignorant of the meaning of at least part of the sentence involved. Where demonstratives or pronouns are involved, however, one might know, at least in one ordinary sense, what a sentence means, know that it expresses something true, but not know the truth of what it expresses. If you say to me, "That is mine," I know what the sentence means and if, for example, I also know that you keep scrupulous track of your possessions, but never claim something that is not yours, I may know that the sentence, on this occasion of its use, expresses something true. But if I fail to grasp what it is that you are referring to by "that" I will not yet know the truth of what the sentence, on this occasion, expresses.

None of this, of course, is new; I mention these examples only to make sure the distinction I want is clear. A slightly more interesting example and one somewhat closer to the situation which, I will suggest, holds in the case of introducing rigid

designators via descriptions, is suggested by a remark of William Kneale's (quoted by Kripke for another purpose). Kneale says, "While it may be informative to tell a man that the most famous Greek philosopher was called Socrates, it is obviously trifling to tell him that Socrates was called Socrates."[16] As Kripke points out Kneale cannot be correct about the example as he gives it, because it is surely not trifling to tell someone that Socrates *was* called "Socrates"—it is not even obviously true that Socrates had the same name we use for him. But let us patch this up and suppose that someone says, "Socrates is called by me 'Socrates.' " This looks more like it may be trifling and let us grant that it is. Then in general if anyone says something of the form "N is called by me 'N'," he will have asserted something trifling, if he asserts anything at all. Now suppose that you say to me "Vladimir is called by me 'Vladimir' " and I do not have the least idea who Vladimir is. From the general principle I can see that if you have asserted anything, your sentence expresses a truth. But I do not believe that I know that Vladimir is called "Vladimir" by you. I do not know the truth of what your sentence expresses. This example shows that considerations other than the reliable testimony of those who understand what a sentence expresses can put one in the position of knowing that a sentence expresses a truth, but not knowing the truth of what it expresses.

III

If we imagine all the participants to have mastered the notion of a rigid designator then we could make explicit the intention to introduce a name as a rigid designator by using some such formula as, "Let 'N' be a rigid designator with its referent fixed by 'the ϕ.' " But, because I think it somewhat illuminating to do it this way, I am going to propose instead that we think of the introduction as consisting of stipulating that a certain sentence shall express a contingent truth. If we want to introduce the name "N" by means of the description of "the ϕ" then the formula we would use would be:

(a) Provided that the ϕ exists, let "N is the ϕ" express a contingent truth.

It is a condition on the stipulation that the ϕ exists and should it turn out that it does not, the stipulation, we might say, has been an unhappy one and not to be taken as being in effect.[17] It should be clear from the preceding remarks that I am not in any way suggesting that this represents some sort of analysis of any practice that we have ever engaged in.

No doubt the procedure looks strange. We are accustomed to linguistic conventions that give meaning to words, phrases and sometimes whole sentences, but not to conventions that specify that a certain sentence shall express a truth. Perhaps the closest approximation in ordinary practice is the laying down of axioms in an axiom system. But, of course, what is most strange about the procedure is that a sentence is by stipulation to express a contingent truth.

I can imagine a philosophical worry about the procedure not unlike the worry about the possibility of the contingent *a priori*. How, it might be asked, could one *stipulate* that something be contingently true? What makes something contingently true is how the world is, the existence or non-existence of some state of affairs. Surely only God, if even He, could perform the miracle of stipulating how the world shall be.

How shall we reply to this? In the first place, it is of course crucial that the name in the sentence about which the stipulation is made is a fresh new name or, if it has been used previously to name something, that it is being given a new use. I could not, for example, get away with stipulating that, say, "Gerald Ford will be starting quarterback for the

Rams in 1976," where I intend all the words to have their usual meanings and the names their usual referents, shall be contingently true. Secondly, the philosophical worry assumes that we are trying by mere stipulation to establish that a certain state of affairs shall exist. That *would* be an exceedingly odd thing to suggest we try to do. But that is not what the stipulation is intended to accomplish nor does it do so. It stipulates that a certain sentence containing a name for which there is no independently intended referent shall express a contingent truth. Now what state of affairs will turn out, if any does, to correspond to the sentence is, so to speak, up to the world. Imagine the detective, of philosophical bent, instead of using the hackneyed, "Let us call the murderer 'X,' " saying "Provided the murderer exists, let 'Vladimir is the murderer' express a contingent truth." We can suppose that Jones is the actual murderer. So in the actual world the state of affairs that corresponds to the sentence in question is Jones being the murderer and what the sentence expresses is the existence of that state of affairs. But someone else might have been the murderer; in other possible worlds it is Smith or Robinson. We can imagine everything being the same except that someone else is the murderer (and what ever differences are entailed by that). Then a different state of affairs would correspond to the sentence and it would express the existence of a different state of affairs. We could also put this by saying that in different possible worlds "Vladimir," as the name is introduced by the stipulation in those worlds, would turn out to rigidly designate someone else. So the detective is not, by stipulation, attempting to create a state of affairs (other than a linguistic one).

Not only does the detective not create, by stipulation, any state of affairs (other than a linguistic one), but I should like to say nor does he thereby come to know the existence of any state of affairs. Kripke himself says, in connection with his example of the standard meter bar, "But, merely by fixing a system of measurement, has he thereby *learned* some (contingent) information about the world, some new *fact* that he did not know before? It seems plausible that in some sense he did not, though it is undeniably a contingent fact that S is one meter long."[18] I should like to question, in these cases, whether there is *any* sense in which by the sort of stipulation we are talking about a person could come to know something of which he was previously ignorant.

Let us look at an example from David Kaplan's paper "Quantifying In" which he also uses in a subsequent paper "Dthat,"[19] and about which, interestingly, he draws diametrically opposite conclusions, a fact I will touch upon later. I will adapt the example slightly to fit the format we are using. Consider the description, "the first child born in the 21st century." Even though the denotation, if there is one, does not yet exist and moreover, with certain assumptions about determinism and freedom of the will, it may not even now be determined who that individual will be, we can by stipulation introduce a rigid designator for that person, if there is to be one. So, following Kaplan, we shall stipulate that providing the first child born in the 21st century will exist, the sentence "Newman 1 will be the first child born in the 21st century" shall express a contingent truth. Let us now imagine that just after midnight on New Century's Eve a child is born who is firmly established to be the first born of the century. He is baptised "John," but those of us who are still around, remembering our stipulation, also call this child "Newman 1." Now it seems to me that it would be outrageous to say that some twenty-five years or so before his birth, we knew that John would be the first child born in the 21st century. Suppose one of us, living to a ripe old age, were to meet John after he has grown up a bit. Would it be true to say to John, "I call you 'Newman 1' and Newman 1, I knew some twenty-five years or so before your birth that you would be the first child born in the 21st century"?

The Neptunians are watching on their interplanetary videoscope; they see and hear

Leverrier perform his act of stipulation (and since this is science fiction let us also imagine that, anachronistically, he intends the name he is introducing to be a rigid designator and even uses our formula). They know that their planet is the cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus. Would they be justified in concluding that the Earthling has learned or come to know that their planet is the cause? It seems to me that the answer is obviously that they would not. Suppose they call their planet "Enutpen." Would they be justified in saying, in Enutpenese, that the Earthling now knows that Enutpen is the cause of those perturbations? Again I think not. Suppose, finally, that they like the sound of the name "Neptune"; one of them suggests they too adopt the Earthlings convention and agree that "Neptune _____" (where "_____" is a translation into Enutpense of "is the cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus") shall express a contingent truth. Would they be justified in saying that the earthling knows the truth of what is expressed by them as "Neptune _____." I am still inclined to say that they would not be.

The above are supposed to be considerations toward showing that what some of us may know after the advent of the 21st century is not anything we know now and that what the Neptunians may have known is not anything that Leverrier knew just as a result of his stipulation. And I am assuming that if we know something now just as a result of our stipulation it cannot be anything different from something we may know after the birth of the first child in the 21st century and that if Leverrier did know something just as the result of his stipulation it could not be different from what the Neptunians knew.

I am assuming, to use the jargon, that if we now have any knowledge (other than about linguistic matters) just as a result of the stipulation concerning the sentence, "Newman 1 will be the first child born in the 21st century" it would have to be knowledge *de re*. That is, it would have to be knowledge *about* an individual in the sense that there is (or will be) an individual about whom we now know something and if that individual turns out to be John we now know something about John. We could, of course, put this point by saying that the sentence which expresses the proposition that we have such knowledge, and which contains the name "Newman 1" is open to substitution on the name and allows of existential generalization on it. This is as opposed to the knowledge we might come to have *de dicto*, for example, that the first born child, if there will be one, in the 21st century will be bald, knowledge that we might come to have, for example, because we get indisputable evidence that pollution from aerosol sprays has caused genetic changes and every child born after a certain time will be bald. That knowledge would not be knowledge *about* a certain individual, not knowledge about John.

I make this assumption that the knowledge, if we have it, would have to be *de re* not simply on the grounds that "Newman 1" is a rigid designator. It does not follow from the fact that a term is a rigid designator that when it enters into a statement of propositional attitude, the attitude ascribed must be *de re*. It does not follow because not all rigid designators lack descriptive content. Mathematical definite descriptions, when they do not lack a denotation, presumably would be rigid designators, designating the same thing in all possible worlds. Although I know that the 98th prime number is not divisible by three, it does not follow that I know about the number which is the 98th prime number that is not divisible by three.[20] It is rather, then, that as these stipulations introduce names they give the names no descriptive content that leads me to say that the knowledge, if there is any, must be *de re* knowledge and then to try to show that we do not have such *de re* knowledge.

Now the notion of *de re* propositional attitudes is a notoriously difficult one. It is

difficult to know what the proper analysis is of statements ascribing such attitudes and it is difficult to know under what conditions they are true. It also creates formidable problems for the sort of theory of reference to which Kripke and I and others subscribe, problems that have to do with identity conditions for such propositional attitudes.[21] I do not want to push the whole matter under the rug, but I would like, if possible, to step around the messy areas for the purposes of the point I want to establish in this paper.

Putting aside any attempt to account for them and any theories about how names function, let us look at a couple of loose principles concerning names and propositional attitudes. I say "loose" because I do not want to defend them as having no counter-examples.[22] The first one is this: If an object is called by one name, say "N," by one group of people and by another name by a second group, say "M," and if, in the language of the first group "N is ϕ" expresses a bit of knowledge of theirs and if "is ψ" is a translation of "is ϕ" into the language of the second group then if the relevant facts are known to the second group, they can say truly that the first group "knew that M is ψ." Thus, for example, our historians would say that the early Indian residents knew that Santa Catalina is a single island, unlike the first Spanish explorers in the area, even though, of course, the Indians have a different name for it. Now this principle fails in the "Newman" and "Neptune" examples. If the first child born in the 21st century comes to be named "John" it would not be correct to say then that although we had a different name for him we knew twenty-five years beforehand that John would be the first child born in the 21st century. Nor should the Neptunians admit that while Leverrier, presuming he has introduced a name as a rigid designator, had a different name for Enutpen, he knew that Enutpen was the cause of the perturbations in the orbit of Uranus.

Another such principle is this: If one has a name for a person, say "N," and there is a bit of knowledge that one would express by saying "N is ϕ" then if one subsequently meets the person it will be true to say to him, using the second person pronoun, "I knew that you were ϕ." I believe I knew that Bertrand Russell was a short man. Had I met him I could quite correctly, though impolitely, say to him, "I knew that you were a short man." As we have seen this too fails in the "Newman 1" case. (A similar loose principle could be constructed substituting a demonstrative such as "this planet" that would be seen as failing in the "Neptune" example.)

In the absence of any other explanation of why these principles should fail in these cases I suggest that the reason is that the stipulations have not given rise to any knowledge (other than of linguistic matters). And so not to any knowledge *a priori*.

IV

If this is correct that indeed the introduction of a rigid designator by a definite description does not give rise to the sort of knowledge Kripke thought would be *a priori* and of contingent truths, what then of the argument at the beginning that seemed to show that it would? Where does it go wrong? The crucial step, I believe, was where we said, "Yet, if the referent of 't' has been fixed solely by being the denotation of the definite description 'the ϕ' it looks like it can be known *a priori* that provided the ϕ exists, t is the ϕ." I believe that this move looks very plausible because what *can*, I believe, be known is the following:

(A) Provided the ϕ exists, "t is the ϕ" expresses a contingent truth.

I am supposing here that (A) is not itself the stipulation, even though it is close to it in

phrasing, but a statement about the language into which the name has been introduced. But it does not follow from the fact that as the result of a stipulation one can know something of the form of (A) that one thereby knows the truth of what the sentence of the following form expresses:

(B) Provided the ϕ exists, t is the ϕ.

But, of course, it was the truth of what some sentences of form (B) express that Kripke thought we could know *a priori* as the result of a stipulation.

Now it might be asked whether we have not still got the contingent *a priori* on our hands, because does not (A) express a contingent truth, albeit one about a language, and will it not be knowable *a priori*? My answer to this is that I am not sure whether in the circumstances what sentences of form (A) express are both contingent and *a priori*. But if they are they are harmless varieties of the contingent *a priori*, examples of which we could produce without recourse to stipulations introducing rigid designators. Perhaps it would be argued that since such sentences express a truth about a language that might have been false (if, for example, the stipulation had not been made) they are contingent and that because their truth can be assured merely by reference back to a linguistic stipulation, they are *a priori*. But if so, then, for example, traditional definitions will yield the contingent *a priori*. Suppose I stipulate that "Widgit" shall mean by definition "green cow," then I know the truth of what the following expresses:

(C) Provided there are any green cows, "Widgits are green cows" expresses a truth.

But the same considerations would argue for this being *a priori* knowledge of a contingent truth. If this proves that there can be *a priori* knowledge of the contingent, then it seems to me that the contingent *a priori* is not very scary and not very interesting.

V

At the end of his paper "Dthat" Kaplan says that "It is now clear that I can assert *of* the first child to be born in the 21st century that *he* will be bald." In terms of the modifications in the example made in this paper, he thinks he could do this, having introduced the name "Newman 1" in the way specified, by "assertively uttering" "Newman 1 will be bald." Kaplan is here recanting the position he had in "Quantifying In." Part of the task Kaplan set for himself in that paper was to give the conditions under which a person can correctly be said to have a *de re* propositional attitude. The "Newman 1" example was, in fact, used to show the necessity of requiring for such an attitude that the person having it be in a special sort of relationship to the entity about which he has it. He says, "I am unwilling to adopt any theory of proper names which permits me to perform a dubbing in absentia, as by solemnly declaring 'I hereby dub the first child to be born in the twenty-second century "Newman 1." ' "[23] In "Dthat" he has become armed with the apparatus for introducing rigid designators *via* definite descriptions and this leads him, I believe, to think that he can perform the feat that he earlier thought obviously impossible. If the position of this paper is correct, however, the fact that a name is introduced as a rigid designator does not by itself put a person in a position to have *de re* propositional attitudes toward the entity rigidly designated. For essentially the same considerations that were adduced for denying that there was knowledge of an entity just in virtue of the sort of stipulation that introduces a rigid designator by means of a description can be applied to the other propositional attitudes. It would, for example, seem to me just as incorrect to say to John who turns out to be the first child

born in the 21st century, "I believed about you some twenty-five years before your birth . . .," "I asserted about you some twenty-five years before your birth . . .," etc.

If this is so, we are in the somewhat odd position of possessing a mechanisms for introducing a name that rigidly designates something, but a mechanism that is not powerful enough to allow us to use the name! But that it is odd does not show, of course, that it is not true.

Still it may be thought that the result is so odd that something must be wrong. It might be said, "I can understand how a person might know about a sentence in someone else's language or idiolect that it expresses a truth without knowing the truth of what it expresses; even where the sentence is in some sense, a sentence in your language, as in the examples employing demonstratives or proper names as used by someone else, at least the reference has been fixed by the other person and that is why you might know that the sentence, as used by him, expresses a truth without knowing the truth of what it expresses. But you are trying to tell us that there is a procedure for introducing a name, with its reference fixed, and thereby an indefinite number of sentences employing the name, into your very own language. And that is what makes it difficult to see how, concerning some of these sentences introduced into your language, you could be in the position of knowing that they express truths, but not knowing the truth of what they express. In particular, if 'P' is a sentence in your language and we assume that the reference of any names and demonstratives has also been fixed, how could you fail to know that 'P' expresses a truth if and only if P? But, of course, if you know that in the cases you are concerned about, you will know the truth of what is expressed."

I will, of course, have to agree that if I am right one result of introducing names via definite descriptions in the way suggested is that there are sentences introduced into one's language such that about any particular one "P," one does not know that "P" expresses a truth if and only if P. Or, rather, I will if this is not simply a terminological dispute—simply a refusal on the one side to say that a sentence has been introduced into a person's language unless he knows the biconditional. In that case, I do not mind what we say, as Anscombe, I believe, once put it, so long as the facts of the matter are straight. And the facts, as I have described them, are that the procedure sets up the apparatus necessary for a set of sentences to express truths and falsehoods without thereby putting the possessor of the apparatus in a position to know what they express. And the real issue, I believe, is whether there is any impossibility in this. If we admit the possibility, then whether or not we say that the sentences have really been introduced into his language is unimportant. Consider the following analogous situation: I close my eyes and say (pointing), "I will call the color of that 'Murple.' " I do not know what I am pointing to, if anything. Let us suppose I am pointing to something of a definite color. Have I not set up an indefinite number of sentences, for example, "Murple is the color of my true love's hair," each of which expresses something true or false? But while my eyes remain shut I do not believe I know what they express. The apparatus, however, has been constructed and I have only to open my eyes to see, for example, how ludicrous it would be to think that murple is the color of my true love's hair and that grass is murple. And analogously to the introduction of names by the procedure we have been talking about, I believe I know, while my eyes are shut, that providing I am pointing to something of a definite color, where were I to use assertively the sentence "Murple is the color of that" with eyes open, I would express a truth, but with eyes closed I do not believe I would know the truth of what I would have asserted.

There is, however, an alternative way of characterizing the situation that I do not know how, at the moment, to counter.[24] And that is that what these stipulations succeed

in doing is reserving a name for a future use. Thus "Newman 1" is now reserved for use in referring to whoever turns out to be the first child born in the 21st century, much as prospective parents may choose a name for the next female child they have. When we come to know who the first child born in the 21st century is, when we come to be in a position to refer to him and have beliefs about him, then the name, if we remember and adhere to our former intentions, becomes a part of our repertoire and an indefinite number of sentences using the name enter our language. A consequence of this account is that these sentences did not express anything true or false prior to the time at which we were in a position to use them ourselves. And thus it would be wrong to characterize our position as that of knowing that certain sentences express truths, but not knowing the truth of what they express. Rather, what we can know is that certain sentences, if and when we come to be in a position to use them, *will* express truths.

I do not, at the moment, see how to show that this way of viewing the matter, as opposed to how I have described it, is or is not the correct way. I do not, however, find this particularly upsetting. The alternative view still preserves the main points I wish to make, namely, that there is a way of introducing a name, albeit as a reserved name, *via* a definite description, but not as an abbreviation, and that knowledge *a priori* of contingent truths (of a kind to raise philosophical qualms) is not a result.

VI

In "Quantifying In," Kaplan held that in order to have a *de re* propositional attitude toward an entity one must be, as he put it, *en rapport* with it. And he thought that being *en rapport* involved three things: One must possess a name for the entity that (1) denoted the entity, (2) is for the user a "vivid" name and (3) in a technical sense, is a name for the speaker *of* the object. For the latter condition to be satisfied the entity must enter into the "genetic" account of how the speaker came to acquire the name, the beliefs that he would express using the name, etc. I do not believe that he succeeds in spelling out exactly how the entity must enter into the account any more than have others who have suggested some similar condition, but he has a nice analogy with the notion of when a picture is a picture *of* something (as opposed to merely resembling something) where it seems clear that a similar genetic requirement operates. Now for my own part I am inclined to drop Kaplan's first two requirements and try to go with some variant of this third condition as being what is required for a name to be a name that a speaker can use to assert *de re* something *about* an entity. I am, of course, not going to attempt any defense of that sort of claim here, but if it were correct it would, of course, account for why the sort of stipulations we have been discussing do not put us in a position to assert and, thus, to know anything about the entity for which we have introduced a rigid designator.

One final remark: Having indicated the direction in which I am inclined to go, I find myself wanting to ask the question, why, if indeed it is true, is one in a position to assert and know *de re* things about an entity when the entity becomes (in the right way) a part of the history of one's use of the name? What does *that* accomplish that allows for this possibility? But perhaps that is a misconceived question. Perhaps the only answer is that that is just when we do ascribe *de re* propositional attitudes. Perhaps the only task we can perform is the one Kaplan was attempting, to make sure that we have spelled out as exactly as possible the conditions under which such attitudes are correctly ascribed.

FOOTNOTES

[1] In *Semantics of Natural Language*, ed. D. Davidson and G. Harman (Dordrecht, 1972), pp. 253–355.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 269. Strictly we should add, as Kripke points out, "if the term designates anything in that possible world."

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 263.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 347–8, n. 33.

[5] (New York, 1973), pp. 110–151.

[6] "Naming and Necessity," p. 348, n. 33.

[7] I modify Kripke's description of the case to provide a "definite" definite description to work with.

[8] On the other hand it must be admitted that we have possessed various natural ways of expressing the intention to introduce a term as an abbreviation for an expression.

[9] "Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions," *Synthese* 21 (1970): 335–358, reprinted in *Semantics of Natural Language*, ed. D. Davidson and G. Harman, pp. 356–379.

[10] Suppose, however, that someone were to hold the following sort of view about the status of a name such as "Aristotle": At some point there was an original dubbing of a person giving him that name. The name is passed along to others not present at the dubbing. At least in many cases this is accomplished by one person deciding to use the name to refer to what another who already possesses the use of the name refers to. And such a person is to be considered as introducing the name into his own repertoire as a rigid designator using some such description as "the individual to whom Jones was referring when he used the name 'Aristotle' " to fix the reference. I believe it would be a consequence of the position of this paper that the person would not thereby be put in a position to *use* the name. And that would seem to show that sort of view of how names are passed along wrong.

[11] "Speaking of Nothing," *Philosophical Review*, 83 (1974): 3–31.

[12] "Quantifying In," *Words and Objections, Essays on the Work of W. V. Quine*, ed. D. Davidson and J. Hintikka (Dordrecht, 1969), pp. 206–242. In this paper, however, Kaplan adds two other relations so that his view is not a pure example of the kind of view I have in mind.

[13] *Frege*, p. 121.

[14] The conclusion that this is the correct characterization of the matter is not original to this paper. It is suggested by at least two authors that I know of, Alvin Plantinga [*The Nature of Necessity*, (Oxford, 1974), pp. 8–9, n. 1] and Michael Levin ["Kripke's Argument Against the Identity Thesis," *The Journal of Philosophy* 72 (1975), 152, n. 2]. My excuse for a longer discussion is the need for a fuller exposition and an investigation of the consequences.

[15] "The Causal Theory of Names," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Suppl. Vol. 47 (1973): 192.

[16] "Modality, De Dicto and De Re," in *Logic, Methodology and the Philosophy of Science: Proceedings of the 1960 International Congress* (Stanford, 1962), pp. 629–30. Kripke's discussion occurs on pages 283–4 of "Naming and Necessity." Kripke's "quark" example (p. 284) could be used to make the same point using a common noun instead of a name.

[17] I utilize a stipulation about the contingent truth of a certain sentence for heuristic purposes—I do not believe it plays an essential role in my argument. There may be some difficulties involved with this sort of stipulation. One possible objection to the device in the simple form I give it in the text (suggested to me in correspondence by Plantinga) is that anyone who thought names to be disguised descriptions might hold that the device would succeed only in introducing "N" as an abbreviation for a certain description. The only plausible candidates, however, for what that definite description would be seem to be either "the ϕ" or "the thing denoted by 'the ϕ.' " "The thing denoted by 'the ϕ' is the ϕ" and "the ϕ is the ϕ" are, it could be argued, only contingently true when true because they express something false of worlds in which the ϕ does not

exist. We could avoid this objection, I believe, in one of two ways. We could define a notion of "strictly contingent" according to which a sentence expresses a strictly contingent truth only if the sentence would express a falsehood in some worlds in which there is a denotation for any definite descriptions contained in the sentence. Or we could change the form or the stipulation to read: "Provided the ϕ exists, let 'If the ϕ exists, N is the ϕ' express a contingent truth." (I suppose there would also have to be some other conditions understood—for example, that the words in the quoted sentence, other than the introduced name, have their usual meanings and references.)

[18] "Naming and Necessity," pp. 346–7, n. 26. emphasis his.

[19] Unpublished, but circulated.

[20] If some of Kripke's other views are correct, I believe there will be definite descriptions that denote things other than abstract formal objects that will also turn out to be rigid designators. He holds, for example, that certain identity statements concerning natural kinds are, if true, necessarily true, though discoverable as true only *a posteriori*. One such statement he mentions is the statement that gold is the element with atomic number 79. This would entail that the definite description, "the element with atomic number 79" is a rigid designator, designating the same thing, i.e. same substance, in all possible worlds, namely, providing the statement in question is true, gold. Now I know that the element with atomic number 79 has more than seventy-eight protons in its atomic nucleus, but since I have not checked to make sure Kripke made no mistake in his example, I would not claim to know this about gold.

[21] The problems have been posed forcefully by Diana Ackerman in comments in a symposium at the 1974 Eastern Division A.P.A. meetings and in an unpublished paper, "Proper Names and Propositional Attitudes."

[22] I have in mind the "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" kind of cases. According to the usual story the ancient Babylonians used these as names for what they took to be two distinct heavenly bodies but which was in fact one, Venus. They believed—in fact, I think we can say, knew—that Hesperus was the first heavenly body to appear in the evening, but they would have denied that they believed this of Phosphorus. Did they nevertheless know this about Phosphorus, which, after all, is Hesperus? And should we say about them that they knew about Venus, though they did not call it by that name, that it was the first to appear in the evening? The structure of this sort of case that gives rise to the problems does not seem to me to be present in the "Neptune" and "Newman 1" examples and so there seems no reason why the "loose" principles that I give should not apply to them if they do in fact present examples of knowledge. Also, I *do* have some temptation, at any rate, to say of the Babylonians that they knew about Venus, etc., but I have no corresponding temptation in the "Neptune" and "Newman 1" examples.

[23] "Quantifying In," pp. 228–29.

[24] This was suggested in discussion by Rogers Albritton.