

Rigidity and *De Jure* Rigidity

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RESUMEN

La mayor parte de la discusión científica de la obra de Kripke *Naming & Necessity* se centra o bien en la denominada “teoría histórica de la referencia” o bien en su hipótesis de que los nombres propios son designadores rígidos. Como respuesta a los problemas que planteaba la hipótesis kripkeana de la rigidez, el propio autor afirmó más tarde que su hipótesis ha de ser entendida de una manera aún más restringida: los nombres propios son rígidos *de jure*. Esta idea define el desarrollo del presente trabajo. Algunos problemas que emergen de la propuesta de Kripke muestran que la noción de rigidez *de jure* requiere una aclaración más profunda. En la primera parte de este trabajo trato de contribuir a la aclaración de la noción de rigidez *de jure* analizando las caracterizaciones del término que encontramos en la bibliografía sobre el tema. De hecho, argumento que Kripke analiza correctamente los nombres descriptivos como rígidos *de jure*; y que el concepto de rigidez *de jure* no ha de explicarse recurriendo al concepto de regla semántica. La segunda parte del presente artículo es una discusión crítica de los argumentos que pretenden mostrar que los nombres propios no son rígidos *de jure*. Demuestro que estos argumentos no son convincentes tomando como punto de partida la distinción que hace Dummett entre contenido assertórico e ingrediente de sentido. Aunque los argumentos propuestos en la bibliografía en contra de la hipótesis de que los nombres propios son rígidos *de jure* no son convincentes, la versión más plausible tampoco puede ser defendida en última instancia, puesto que no explica la intuición de que los nombres propios son necesariamente rígidos. Concluyo el artículo esbozando una idea alternativa sobre el concepto de designación que explica esta intuición.

ABSTRACT

Most discussions of Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* focus either on Kripke's so-called “historical theory of reference” or his thesis that names are rigid designators. But in response to problems of the rigidity thesis Kripke later points out that his thesis about proper names is a stronger one: proper names are *de jure* rigid. This sets the agenda for my paper. Certain problems raised for Kripke's view show that the notion of *de jure* rigidity is in need of clarification. I will try to clarify the notion of *de jure* rigidity by analyzing characterizations of it given in the literature. I will argue in particular that Kripke can count descriptive names as *de jure* rigid and that the concept of *de jure* rigidity should not be explained with recourse to the concept of a semantical rule. The second part of the paper is a critical discussion of arguments intended to show that proper names are not *de jure* rigid. I will show that these arguments are unconvincing by using Dummett's distinction between assertoric content and ingredient sense. Although the arguments proposed in the literature against the thesis that proper

names are *de jure* rigid fail, the most plausible version of the thesis cannot be defended in the end, since it cannot account for the intuition that names are necessarily rigid. I close with a sketch of an alternative picture of naming that explains this intuition.

I. INTRODUCING *DE JURE* RIGIDITY

Saul Kripke's lectures *Naming and Necessity* are generally taken to be the most effective criticism of the Description Theory of Names (DTN). DTN holds in its simplest form that every natural language name is synonymous with a definite description. An additional claim of DTN is that the sense-giving description also determines the reference of the name. DTN in this form may be plausible only for a few names, but in this paper I will not try to assess the overall plausibility of DTN. I will try to clarify whether one of Kripke's central arguments can defeat DTN.

Kripke argues in *Naming and Necessity* (NN) against the synonymy-thesis of DTN on the basis of modal considerations. We can represent Kripke's argument as a reductio of the synonymy-thesis. Suppose the sense of the name "Aristotle" is given by the definite description "the inventor of formal logic". Under this assumption the sentences (S1) and (S2) should express the same proposition:

- (S1) Aristotle might not have been the inventor of formal logic.
- (S2) Aristotle might not have been Aristotle.

But the proposition expressed by (S1) is true, the proposition expressed by (S2) false. So an application of Leibniz' principle shows that (S1) and (S2) express different propositions. Kripke concludes that the synonymy-claim is false. (S1) and (S2) differ in truth-value, because "Aristotle" is a *rigid designator*, while the definite description "the inventor of formal logic" is, as one might say, a *flexible designator*. A rigid designator designates the same object with respect to every possible world, whereas the designation of a flexible designator can vary from possible world to possible world. Throughout the paper I will use the phrase "with respect to a possible world" (and not the misleading "in"). When we ask whether a designator α is rigid we ask a question about α in our usage: does the designation of α in our usage change with respect to a possible world? The use of α in another possible world is irrelevant for our purpose [Peacocke (1978), p. 110].

Adherents of the description theory of names have tried to resist Kripke's conclusion by appealing to the fact that some definite descriptions are rigid designators. For instance so-called "actualized" definite descriptions like "the *actual* inventor of formal logic" denote in our usage Aristotle with respect to every possible world, they are *rigid* definite descriptions. So

Kripke's argument has a loophole for an adherent of DTN: he can hold that the sense of a name is given by *rigid* definite descriptions [Plantinga (1978) and Searle (1983), p. 258].

This problem brings us to the notion of *de jure* rigidity. Kripke tells us in the foreword of the 1980 edition of *NN* that he ignored in the original lectures “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 (e.g. ‘the smallest prime’ rigidly designates the number two). Clearly my thesis about names is that they are rigid *de jure*, but in the monograph I am content with the weaker assertion of rigidity” [*NN*, p. 21, Fn. 21]. The criticism above shows that Kripke cannot be content with the rigidity thesis: a definite description can be rigid, but not *de jure* rigid. For instance the definite description “the smallest prime” is a *de facto* rigid designator of the number two: 2 is in all possible worlds the smallest prime. In contrast the numeral “2” is a *de jure* rigid designator of the same number. Similarly the description “the actual inventor of formal logic” is rigid, but not *de jure* rigid. The last statement is controversial. More about it in section II.

Although the notion of *de jure* rigidity is central to Kripke's criticism of DTN, there are surprisingly few articles in the literature investigating this notion. One reason for this seems to be that many writers see Kripke as proposing the so-called “Historical Theory of Reference” that apparently does not appeal to the notion of *de jure* rigidity. A look at the basic assumptions of this theory shows that this is not true. Most natural language speakers cannot determine the reference of the proper names they use by giving suitable definite descriptions. The theory holds that “Aristotle” is a name of Aristotle in the mouth of an ignorant speaker *S* because his use of “Aristotle” is an element in a chain of communication originating from a dubbing of Aristotle and that he intends to use the name with its original reference. In order for an expression to be a genuine name the chain of communication must start from a baptism. This ceremony will either introduce the name via a definite description or by ostending the nominandum. Kripke is sympathetic to the idea that the second alternative is just a variety of reference-fixing by description [*NN*, p. 97]. Therefore stipulative reference-fixing and thus the notion of *de jure* rigidity is a crucial element of the Historical Theory of Reference.

At bottom Kripke's criticism of DTN and his own positive picture rest on the thesis that natural language proper names are rigid *de jure*. Thus a discussion of Kripke's *NN* cannot be complete without scrutinizing the notion of *de jure* rigidity, although this notion is not explicitly introduced in *NN*. Now Kripke's move from rigidity to rigidity *de jure* puts him in an awkward dialectical position. When Kripke assesses the truth of sentences like (S1) and (S2)

he appeals to a “direct intuition of the rigidity of names” [NN, p. 14]. As many authors have remarked, this appeal to intuition is problematic. Do we have *direct* intuitions with respect to such semantical phenomena as rigidity? [McCulloch (1985), p. 585]. Be that as it may, we have no intuition, whether direct or indirect, of the *de jure* rigidity of names. It cannot be settled by an appeal to intuition that names are stipulated to be rigid. Perhaps we have a “direct intuition” of the rigidity of names, but the thesis that names are rigid does not suffice to refute DTN. On the other hand the thesis that names are rigid *de jure* would refute DTN, but we cannot appeal to intuition, direct or indirect, to show that this more demanding thesis is correct.

The aim of this paper is mainly to give a critical analysis of the notion of *de jure* rigidity. I will argue that Kripke’s thesis that natural language proper names are rigid *de jure* is false. Section II clarifies the notion of rigidity *de jure*, section III discusses arguments against the *de jure*-thesis. The paper ends with a sketch of an alternative to Kripke’s picture of naming that replaces the notion of *de jure* rigidity with a more fundamental one.

II. CLARIFYING *DE JURE* RIGIDITY

In this section I will discuss some misconstruals of the notion of rigidity *de jure* that create additional problems for Kripke’s theory rather than solve its genuine difficulties. The first misconstrual I will discuss is the *non-mediation fallacy*. (D. Kaplan discusses a version of this fallacy in Kaplan (1989b), p. 568.) It runs thus:

- (1) A *de facto* rigid designator of x designates x in virtue of x meeting some condition, i.e. via mediation of some descriptions.
- Ergo*: (2) A *de jure* rigid designator of x designates x *not* in virtue of x meeting some condition, i.e. *not* mediated by a description.

The conclusion (2) conflicts with Kripke’s thesis that *all* proper names are rigid *de jure*. Proper names which are introduced into the language by giving a description are called “descriptive names” [Evans (1979), p. 180f]. A natural example of a descriptive name is the name “Neptun”, used and introduced as a name for the heavenly body whose existence explains the perturbations of Uranus [NN, p. 79, Fn. 33]. The reference of a descriptive proper name *is* mediated by a description, yet descriptive names are rigid: “Neptun might not have been Neptun” has a reading in which it is intuitively false, thus “Neptun” is rigid. Jason Stanley says that given examples of descriptive names “it seems implausible to maintain that it is a feature of the semantic category of proper names that they are *de jure* rigid” [Stanley (1997), p. 571].

Do descriptive names refute Kripke's thesis that all proper names are rigid *de jure*? Is "Neptun" *de facto* rigid? This would be a surprising result, since the descriptive introduction of a proper name is Kripke's original model of naming to which he appeals in explaining our "direct intuition" of rigidity [NN, p. 14f]. Moreover how could "Neptun" be *de facto* rigid if the introducing description is not even rigid?

I don't think that the consideration above shows that Kripke's claim that all proper names are rigid *de jure* is false. Rather the idea that a *de jure* rigid designator refers without mediation must be precisified. To see this, let us take a look at Kripke's model for a descriptive "name" in NN. Kripke discusses the "definition" "One meter is the length of S at t_1 " which

properly interpreted does *not* say that the phrase "one meter" is to be *synonymous* (even when talking about counterfactual situations) with the phrase "the length of S at t_1 ", but rather that we have *determined the reference* of the phrase "one meter" BY STIPULATING that "one meter" is to be a *rigid* designator of the length which is in fact the length of S at t_1 [NN, p. 56. My emphasis].

Kripke's model gives us a grip on the notion of *de jure* rigidity. Someone who wishes to introduce the sign "Saul Kripke" as a name might say: I will use "Saul Kripke" to designate the man who is in fact the author of *Naming and Necessity*, whether I am speaking of factual or counterfactual circumstances. In short, I will use "Saul Kripke" as a *rigid* designator for the author of *Naming and Necessity*. This stipulation makes "Saul Kripke" a *de jure* rigid designator.

According to Kripke's model there is no conflict between the idea that a name is introduced via a description and the thesis that all names are *de jure* rigid. The latter thesis conflicts only with the idea that the name is synonymous with the introducing description. In the initial baptism the definite description has the function to fix the reference of the designator, but not to supply a synonym for it. According to Kripke the reference-fixing ceremony determines that the introduced designator designates with respect to all possible worlds the object the introducing description designates in the actual world¹. Once the reference is fixed, it is fixed with respect to all possible worlds. Thus the special character of the reference-fixing ceremony guarantees the rigidity of the name. A *de jure* rigid designator consequently designates an object because the object meets a specific condition in the actual world, but it designates the same object with respect to other possible worlds simply in virtue of the nature of the introducing ceremony. The first idea explains what is correct about the intuition behind the non-mediation fallacy, the second idea shows why it is a fallacy. Kripke's account of *de jure* rigidity has thus no problem with *descriptive* proper names: if proper names are *de jure* rigid designators, descriptive proper names are *de jure* rigid designators, too.

The second point I want to discuss could be called *the problem of actualized descriptions*. It is created by Colin McGinn's characterization of the concept of *de jure* rigidity. In his paper "Rigid Designation and Semantic Value" McGinn turns to Kaplan's semantics for indexicals for help in clarifying the distinction between *de facto* and *de jure* rigidity. One element of Kaplan's semantics for indexicals is that they have a specific kind of linguistic meaning. For instance the entry under "I" in my English dictionary reads:

I: the person speaking.

This entry gives (in one sense of the word "meaning") the meaning of "I" by providing a rule which systematically fixes its reference with respect to contexts of use. Kaplan associates in *Demonstratives* two sorts of meaning with indexicals and demonstratives: *content* and *character*. Kaplan's contents shall model the intuitive notion of "what is said" by an utterance. Kaplan's characters serve to explicate the idea of a semantical rule for an indexical expression and are, so to say, the theoretical successors of dictionary entries like the one above. The character of an indexical is set by linguistic convention. Kaplan says, "it is natural to think of [character] as *meaning* in the sense of what is known by the competent language user" [Kaplan (1989a), p. 505].

McGinn's "preliminary characterization" of the distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* rigidity relies on the notion of a semantical rule just mentioned. McGinn writes:

[...] a *de facto* rigid designator has constant reference with respect to all possible worlds in virtue of expressing a *condition* which attributes a certain individual essence to an object, so that its rigidity traces to extra-linguistic modal facts; a *de jure* rigid designator, on the other hand, has constant reference in virtue of the semantical rules of the language, so that it does not merely *turn out* that the term is rigid [McGinn (1982), p. 99].

McGinn's characterization has been accepted by several philosophers [Almog (1986), p. 223, Stanley (1997), p. 557]. But it seems to me to be a step in the wrong direction. The concept McGinn outlines cannot be the one Kripke uses in distinguishing between proper names and rigid descriptions, otherwise the thesis that proper names are *de jure* rigid would not close the loophole opened for DTN by actualized descriptions. According to McGinn's characterization actualized descriptions would have to be counted as *de jure* rigid designators [Almog (1986), p. 223f]. The semantical rules which govern the expression "actual" determine that a definite description of the form "the actual F" denotes with respect to every possible world the same object: namely the unique F in the actual world.

Can we avoid this unwelcome consequence for Kripke's account? The problem is created by McGinn's use of the concept of a semantical rule in his characterization of the notion of rigidity *de jure*. The concept of a semantical rule has its place in an account of the semantics of indexicals and demonstratives. In the sense of "meaning" in which indexicals have meaning natural language proper names are meaningless: there is no reference-fixing semantical rule that a speaker must know to be a competent user of the proper name "Saul Kripke". This is an essential difference between natural language proper names and indexicals which disqualifies the notion of a semantical rule as an element in an elucidation of the notion of *de jure* rigidity. Kripke holds that proper names as *de jure* rigid designators owe their rigidity not to semantical rules, but to stipulations like the one described above. If one wants to count these stipulations as semantical rules, the corresponding notion of a semantical rule would be too broad to be useful in an account of *de jure* rigidity. Perhaps one could hold that there must be one semantical rule which governs all uses of proper names, namely the rule that a proper name is rigid. I will discuss this option in the next section.

Rather than solving problems connected with rigidity *de jure* McGinn's characterization creates the problem of actualized descriptions. We can avoid this problem if we focus on Kripke's notion of stipulation in an account of *de jure* rigidity: when an expression α is introduced via the definite description "the F", it counts only as a name if the act of introduction is a stipulation to the effect that α designates with respect to all worlds (or: designates rigidly) the object which the definite description "the F" designates in the actual world. But if we do this, we face a different problem: how plausible is Kripke's picture as a picture of natural language proper names? I will turn now to problems relating to this issue.

III. CRITICISING *DE JURE* RIGIDITY

Gregory McCulloch outlines the first problem I want to discuss. He says about *NN*:

At bottom [...] we seem to have an appeal to how we do (or perhaps should) understand natural names and descriptions: somehow this is supposed to make it manifest that natural names, unlike descriptions, are legislated or stipulated to be rigid (hence "*de jure*"). [...] However, this is surely rather odd, given that the very idea of rigidity is a technical notion introduced by Kripke himself in the course of expatiating on the modal apparatus of *NN*. What aspect of our understanding of natural names could this procedure reveal? [McCulloch (1989), p. 124.]

The notion of rigidity is a technical concept of the formal semantics of quantified modal logic. Must we really possess the basic concepts of this theory in order to introduce and understand natural names?

Kripke's answer should be: *Of course not!* Kripke argues that we cannot understand “possible world locutions” if we don't already understand the modal locutions of ordinary language (“It might have been the case that ...”) [NN, p. 19, Fn. 18; also Almog (1996), p. 414]. The sentence (S1) doesn't quantify over possible worlds. Yet it expresses according to Kripke in a theory-free language what is expressed by (S3) in theory-loaded language [NN, p. 48, Fn. 15]:

(S3) In some possible world, Aristotle is not the last great philosopher of antiquity.

Kripke can dispense in a similar way with possible world locutions in a characterization of the notion of *de jure* rigidity. One could introduce the name “Saul Kripke” by saying: I will use “Saul Kripke” to designate the man who is the author of *Naming and Necessity*, independently of the fact that he might not have written *Naming and Necessity* or of the fact that he might not even have been borne. Or more generally: independently how things might have been with him other than they are.

A more serious objection to the idea that *de jure* rigidity is a fruitful concept for the semantics of natural language proper names comes from McGinn. His argument can be reconstructed in the following way:

- (1) If a proper name α is *de jure* rigid, then one must appreciate α 's rigidity in order to understand sentences containing α .
 - (2) It is not necessary to appreciate the rigidity of a proper name in order to understand sentences containing the name.
- Ergo:* (3) Proper names are not *de jure* rigid.

McGinn rests his first premise on his implausible reconstruction of Kripke's notion of *de jure* rigidity. If the rigidity of an expression follows from the semantical rules conventionally associated with it, then a proper understanding of the expression should include a grasp of its modal properties, i.e. in the case of proper names, a grasp of their rigidity [McGinn (1982), p. 108]. But premise (1) need and should not be based on McGinn's account of *de jure* rigidity. If proper names are introduced into the language via reference-fixing stipulations of the type Kripke envisages, then there are no *semantical* rules (at least in theoretical interesting sense of “semantical”) conventionally associated with them. Normally there is no such thing as *the* reference-fixing stipulation which a competent speaker must know to understand the name.

Nonetheless it seems plausible to require that a competent speaker should know that proper names are introduced not by a specific stipulation, but by a certain *type* of stipulation, namely one which ensures the rigidity of the name. Now this consideration, in contrast to McGinn's, makes (1) plausible and leads to the idea of a semantical rigidity rule for proper names. Kripke endorses (1) in effect when he says about the sentence "Aristotle was fond of dogs", that a "proper understanding of this statement involves an understanding both of the (extensionally) correct conditions under which it is in fact true, *and* of the conditions under which a counterfactual course of history, resembling the actual course in some respects but not in others, would be correctly (partially) described by [that sentence]" [NV, p. 6].

McGinn's second premise relies on an intuition which can be formulated thus: imagine speakers of a language L_o that contains only proper names, predicates and truth-functional connectives, but no modal operators (or expressions synonymous with such operators). Speakers of L_o lack the modal concepts to appreciate the modal properties of proper names. Is their understanding of the atomic sentences of L_o that contain proper names therefore defective? The only principled way to argue for this conclusion is to adopt a holistic view of understanding: to understand an expression one must know its semantic contribution to every complex sentence it can be embedded in. But this holism is implausible. McGinn's argument against it relies on the plausible principle that our understanding of complex expressions should be dependent on our understanding of the atomic expressions which compose them (and not vice versa):

[...] we should be credited with a perfectly good understanding of atomic sentences ahead of their appearance in complex (modal) contexts. Our grasp of the truth conditions of modal sentences is a consequence of our grasp of simple sentences, not a precondition of it [McGinn (1982), p. 109-110].

Proper names can be rigid, but not *de jure* rigid, because the latter thesis implies an implausible holism about understanding. Is this a convincing argument against the thesis that proper names are *de jure* rigid?

I don't think so. A line of defense is open to Kripke which uses the distinction between assertoric content and ingredient sense introduced by Michael Dummett². Dummett thinks there is a notion of utterance content, which he calls "assertoric content", according to which names and definite descriptions can have the same utterance content. To simplify the exposition of Dummett's idea, imagine that the proper name "Aristotle" is introduced into the language only by giving the description "the inventor of formal logic". Under this assumption an utterance of the sentence (S4) "Aristotle is the inventor of formal logic" will be rendered correct by the same states of affairs as an utterance of the sentence (S5) "Aristotle is Aristotle". In this

sense utterances of (S4) and (S5) say the same thing about the world: utterances of (S4) and (S5) are two ways to express the same assertoric content. Nonetheless there is a dimension in which (S4) and (S5) differ. They make different contributions to the sentences formed from them by modalization and negation. For instance (S1) “Aristotle might not have been the inventor of formal logic” is formed from (S4) by modalization and true, while (S2) “Aristotle might not have been Aristotle” is formed from (S5) by the same operation and false. Dummett calls what a sentence contributes to more complex sentences of which it is a part “ingredient sense” and as the modalized sentences (S1) and (S2) show, the atomic sentences (S4) and (S5) differ in ingredient sense.

The speakers of the non-modal language L_o know under which conditions it is correct to assert an atomic sentence: they know, as Dummett says, the assertoric content of these sentences. What speakers of L_o cannot know is how sentences with proper names embed under modal operators. If modal operators are introduced into the language L_o turning it thereby into the modal language L_m the speakers of L_o need an additional piece of semantic information to grasp the assertoric content of sentences formed from atomic sentences by modalization.

The additional piece of semantic knowledge relates to the modal properties of proper names: an understanding of complex modal sentences like “Aristotle might not have been the inventor of formal logic” requires that one is able to evaluate the embedded sentence “Aristotle was the inventor of formal logic” with respect to other possible worlds. The speakers of L_o must acquire the additional information that the modal operator which takes us to counterfactual circumstances does not change the evaluation of the proper name: even with respect to counterfactual circumstances “Aristotle” denotes our Aristotle.

If we split up the notion of utterance content in this way into assertoric content and ingredient sense, we escape McGinn’s objection: the speakers of L_o grasp completely the assertoric content of atomic sentences containing proper names. In order to grasp the assertoric content of atomic sentences with proper names it is not necessary to grasp the assertoric content of all the complex sentence which could be constructed from the atomic ones. What the speaker’s of L_o lack is not knowledge of assertoric content, but of ingredient sense. In order to know the ingredient sense of an atomic sentence they have to know (among other things) the contribution of the atomic sentence to complex sentences formed by modalization from the atomic ones.

The distinction between assertoric content and ingredient sense helps Kripke to avoid the holism-problem, but it also shows that a version of DTN is not refuted by Kripke’s modal argument. According to Dummett’s distinction, difference in modal status does not imply difference in assertoric con-

tent. DTN *as a theory of the assertoric content of a name* is consequently not defeated by Kripke's modal argument.

IV. DE JURE RIGIDITY AND DIRECT REFERENCE

So we seem to arrive at a compromise: Kripke is right about the ingredient sense of proper names and the adherents of DTN like Dummett have a correct conception of the assertoric content of sentences with proper names. The basic picture of this position is this: we first learn the conditions under which it is correct to assert an atomic sentence. The condition for the correct assertion of an atomic sentence with a proper name is specified in part by a definite description. When sentence-forming operators are added to the language, the behaviour of proper names with respect to these sentence-forming operators must be determined. One way to do this is by making stipulations about their reference with respect to other possible worlds. These stipulations do not serve then as Kripke thought in *NN* to introduce the proper name and to fix its reference, but to determine its ingredient sense. Proper names are *de jure* rigid, because their ingredient sense is determined by stipulation.

This modification of Kripke's view makes it compatible with a version of DTN and a non-holistic view of understanding. The crucial question is now whether it is possible to split up utterance content in this way? Consider the speakers of L_o who just have acquired the concept expressed by the modal operator “◊”. Do they need to make a new stipulation concerning their proper names? A. D. Smith answers this question with an adamant *No*:

It strikes me as self evident that their mastery of names *as names* in L_o would suffice for competence in correctly speaking L_m as soon as they have grasped modal notions [Smith (1984), p. 187].

Perhaps Smith's statement is not 'self evident', but I share Smith's intuitions in this case. If we can trust this intuition, then, at least, in the modal case we cannot argue that the behaviour of proper names is governed by additional stipulations. The speakers of L_o who are already familiar with proper names need just to acquire the modal concept expressed by “◊” to understand and use the complex modal sentences of L_m . No additional stipulations are needed. And, consequently, we don't need the notion of *de jure* rigidity to describe the semantics of proper names. Not everybody will accept this argument. Do we have clear and reliable intuitions about such highly theoretical matters? We would have a more convincing argument against the *de jure* thesis if we did not have to appeal to intuitions. Here is my attempt to give such an argument.

Let's start with rigidity. What kind of property is it? Is it an accidental property of natural language proper names or is it a necessary property of them? Kripke's answer to this question is clear:

My view is that proper names (except perhaps, for some quirky and derivative uses, that are not uses as *names*) are always rigid. [...] it would be logically possible to have single words that abbreviated nonrigid descriptions, but these would not be *names*. The point is not merely terminological: I mean that such abbreviated nonrigid descriptions would differ in an important semantical feature from what we call typical proper names in our actual speech [Kripke (1977), p. 23, Fn. 9].

Kripke's thesis that natural language proper names are necessarily rigid is plausible. "Aristotle" would be a flexible designator of Aristotle, if there could be a possible world in which Aristotle exists, but "Aristotle" as used in our language designates some other object. Under this supposition (S6) would be true [Stanley (1997), p. 565f]:

(S6) There is someone who is Aristotle but he could exist without being identical to Aristotle.

But (S6) is intuitively false. Therefore it seems plausible to hold that if α is a proper name of x , then α designates x in every possible world in which x exists³.

The crucial question for the account sketched in the last paragraphs is how to explain that rigidity is an essential feature of natural language proper names. If the rigidity of proper names is due to stipulations, it becomes hard to explain how rigidity could be an essential property of proper names. Although we did not, we could have stipulated that "Aristotle" denotes different objects in different possible worlds. So rigidity cannot be an essential feature of "Aristotle". Consider an analogy: in a sense my parents "stipulated" that my name is "Mark". It is not one of my essential features to be called so, since I could have been called by any other male first-name. My parents could have made a different stipulation.

Given the two-tier account we should therefore ask: why should we stipulate that proper names denote rigidly their referents when modal operators become available? Kaplan has sketched an answer. We are sometimes puzzled by ambiguous sentences like Russell's famous "I thought that your yacht was longer than it is". In one sense the touchy yacht-owner's remark "No, my yacht is not longer than it is" is true. But Kaplan has a device which could help the yacht owner's guest to make his point:

Discussion of an individual's potentiality to fail to fulfill the description by which he is known, will almost always be facilitated by the introduction of a proper name. The yacht owner's guest who is reported by Russell to have be-

come entangled in “I thought that your yacht was longer than it is” should have said, “Look, let’s call the length of your yacht a ‘russell’. What I was trying to say is that I thought that your yacht was longer than a russell” [Kaplan (1973), Appendix IX, p. 501].

Kaplan’s claim that we need some means of disambiguating sentences like the troublesome above is true. But it does not constitute an answer to the question why proper names are necessarily *rigid*, because there are other ways to achieve the intended disambiguation. For instance one could follow a proposal of Dummett and introduce a scope-convention for proper names: proper names always take wide-scope with respect to modal operators.

The view sketched in this and the last section seems to me to create more problems than it solves. A more attractive position sees rigidity not as something *added* to our use of proper names in atomic sentences by stipulation. Kaplan hints at such a position, when he asks, “How could rigid designation not be based on some deeper semantical property like direct reference? It couldn’t be an accident that names were rigid and descriptions were not” [Kaplan, (1989b), p. 571]. I close with an outlook on the attractive features of this position.

Kaplan calls the “deeper semantical” property on which rigidity should be based “direct reference”. In Kaplan’s (possible worlds) semantics for indexicals it is hard to distinguish between rigidity and direct reference, but he offers us a picture which gives his readers an intuitive understanding of the notion of direct reference. Sentences express structured propositions. The structure of a proposition mirrors somehow the structure of the sentence expressing it. Proper names and indexicals contribute the designated objects to the proposition expressed with their help. Predicates contribute properties or property-like things.

How does this picture help to understand our idea that it is not a mere accident that names are rigid and definite descriptions are not? If the propositional content of a proper name is just the object named, and a proper name has the same propositional content in all contexts, then *only* the object named is relevant for evaluating modal sentences like “Aristotle might not have been the inventor of formal logic”. Or, expressed in the possible-worlds-idiom Kripke favours: if the above made assumptions are true, the proper name “Aristotle” designates *our* Aristotle with respect to all possible worlds.

If this account is plausible, it only explains why proper names are rigid, not why they are rigid *de jure*. The notion of rigidity *de jure* ceases to play a role in the semantics of proper names. Proper names are not rigid because they are introduced or used according to special stipulations. They are rigid because their propositional content is exhausted by the object they designate. The notion of rigidity, too, loses some of its importance: rigidity is an essen-

tial, but not a fundamental property of proper names. And DTN cannot be dismissed by appealing to the fact that proper names are rigid.

The problems I have outlined show that neither the notion of rigidity nor its theoretical successor rigidity *de jure* can bear the weight Kripke puts on them. In his subsequent work Kripke himself seems to acknowledge this criticism implicitly. In “A Puzzle about Belief” he states his view of proper names without using the modal notions of rigidity or rigidity *de jure*. Kripke now works with ideas from the “old Millian paradigm of naming” according to which “the linguistic function of a proper name is completely exhausted by the fact that it names its bearer” [Kripke (1979), p. 104]. This characterization comes very close to the view that the propositional content of a proper name is just the object named.

The problems which are connected with the modally oriented notions of rigidity and rigidity *de jure* make the structured propositions view attractive. If we thus see the notion of propositional content as basic we must of course ask new questions: Are there positive reasons for the Millian view of proper names which do not rely on modal intuitions? And: Is it true that the propositional content of a proper name does not change if the proper name is embedded under a modal operator? The last question requires us to look more closely to our modal concepts. (This is done in Peacocke (1997).) One burden of this paper was to show that *these* are the questions a philosopher of language should embark on if he wants to continue the way Kripke has paved for him⁴.

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NOTES

¹ Therefore it is not necessary to use an ‘actualized’ description to fix the reference of a name.

² Cf. for instance Dummett (1991), p. 47f. Cf. for an illuminating exposition and careful defense see Stanley (1997).

³ I sidestep here problems raised by sentences like “Aristotle might not have existed”.

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