

We are referring to Schmidt

Abstract

The paper presents a novel approach to reference of proper names called 'genealogical descriptivism' (of a Millian-Fregean type) and argues for its initial plausibility in a certain range of cases. The semantic account is supplemented by a metaphilosophical argument supporting the view that partiality of proposed approach – as well as partiality of many other approaches – should be accepted on philosophical grounds, while a complete theory of proper names delimiting all relevant varieties of reference in a principled way shall be deferred to further interdisciplinary research, encompassing empirical input of linguistics and social sciences.

Keywords

proper names, reference, descriptivism, Saul Kripke, experimental philosophy, metaphilosophy

On the view in question [...] since the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic is in fact Schmidt, we, when we talk about 'Gödel', are in fact always referring to Schmidt. But it seems to me that we are not. We simply are not (Kripke, 1972, p. 84).

Imagine the following blatantly fictional situation.

Rudolf and Marianna Gödel have a son, Kurt, born on 28 April 1906 in Brno (Brünn), in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In January 1907, the father, trying to calm down the crying child, shakes him a little too hard and breaks his neck. Kurt dies instantly. The desperate father runs away and wanders aimlessly around the city thinking of committing suicide. After a couple of hours, in a dark alley, he suddenly encounters an abandoned boy, just about his son's age. He brings the boy home and says to his wife: 'Now he will be our Kurt'. The parents secretly bury the body of the dead child in a nearby forest and, from this day on, they present the foundling as 'Kurt Gödel'. The foundling graduates from the University of Vienna, discovers the incompleteness of arithmetic, moves to Princeton, becomes a world-famous logician, etc. Unexpectedly, the whole truth comes to light in December 1969. It turns out that the accident in 1907 was witnessed by Gödels' housemaid, who described the story in her diary, published now after her death. It was her who stole a child and put it stealthily in Herr Rudolf's sight. The child was stolen from the Schmidt family, staying in a hotel near the Gödels' apartment. It was little Hans Schmidt, born on 17 May 1906 in Vienna, the only son of Joachim and Wilhelmina

(the housemaid, before stealing the boy, checked the book in the hotel; later she checked the birth register in Vienna). Princeton is rife with rumors. On 31 December 1969, at the University New Year's Ball, everyone expects a very well-known person, a colleague, a mentor, a celebrity, one of the most famous Princeton academics... well, whom?

According to the story, there is a certain man, expected to show up at the '69/70 New Year's Ball, a man that most of Princeton society have had numerous physical encounters with and can identify in a you-know-who manner or just by rude finger-pointing: 'that man'. That man discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic (which has been widely known ever since) and was a foundling raised by the Gödels (which was known to no one but the housemaid, until the publication of the housemaid's diaries).

We can ask two parallel (but not quite equivalent) questions about the situation described:

(1) What is the real name of You-Know-Who? Gödel or Schmidt?

(2) Who is Kurt Gödel? You-Know-Who or the child who died in 1907?

Before we attempt to answer them, we need to set some theoretical background.

Socio-linguistic and logico-psychological approach to proper names

There are two broad approaches to proper names; we might identify them as the socio-linguistic approach and the logico-psychological approach.

The socio-linguistic approach sets up the category of proper names as resulting from socially restricted name-giving speech acts and socially governed name-using practices. Particularly important is the fact that naming, like other speech acts, has associated preparatory and sincerity conditions. These conditions depend on linguistic and social requirements for successful communication and thus might vary between different types of names, different circumstances of name-use, and between different communities (cultures, *a fortiori*) engaged in the name-using practices. Accordingly, the semantics of names featuring in these acts and practices might not be uniform, as there is nothing in the socio-linguistic approach alone to substantiate the so called *Uniformity Principle* with respect to names.¹ The enduring presence of manifold accounts of proper names on the market strongly suggests that the uses of proper

¹ Admittedly, the principle in its general form: 'a theory that explains similar things in a similar way is better than one that does not' – Robin Jeshion calls this general form 'Uber Uniformity Principle' (Jeshion 2015, 235) – might be counted as a universally valid methodological guideline, but this can be said of neither of its particular specifications. Validity of these specifications depends on whether the type of similarity employed in specific explanations reflects the type of similarity spotted in the phenomena under explanation. If not, such uniformity is a burden rather than a challenge, as there is no methodological virtue in lumping together things that are in fact distinct.

names in different ranges of cases (or in different types of name-using practices) aren't similar enough to each other to *a priori* validate a unified semantic treatment without further justification.² If we are seeking a constraint, common to all (or at least a majority of) name-using practices, perhaps the most we can get is *Psychological Neutrality*: a requirement that, if a given expression is to be considered a proper name, it must serve the purpose of speaking about its referent in a psychologically neutral fashion, i.e., without thinking about the referent under any particular mode of presentation. Psychological neutrality, though, is coherent with different semantic mechanisms of determining this referent, both ostensive and descriptive (Jeshion 2004, 600).

A salient alternative to the socio-linguistic approach is the logico-psychological approach, based on the notion of 'singular thought' and 'epistemically rewarding' causal relations (such as acquaintance relations). Proper names, according to logico-psychological approach, feature as possible vehicles to carry such thoughts. This approach, which – when taken to its extremes - could lead us to a Russellian view that only 'this' and 'I' within natural languages can count as genuine proper names, has been developed in a more indulgent form by, among others, François Recanati, within the framework of mental files (Récanati 2012; Murez and Recanati 2016). The logico-psychological approach sets important restrictions on the semantics of proper names to the effect that it constitutes a substantially different notion of proper names than the notion employed within the socio-linguistic approach. For even indulgently understood singular thoughts are not always expressed with proper names in the socio-linguistic sense (for such thoughts might be expressed with, say, referentially used descriptions), as well as not all proper names in the socio-linguistic sense express singular thoughts (e.g. empty names or descriptive names certainly don't).³

While the logico-psychological approach used to be probably more popular, the socio-linguistic approach has been nevertheless repeatedly acknowledged in the literature, for instance in (Searle 1969; Evans 1982; Jeshion 2004; García-Carpintero 2018). Classic examples of this

² "Uniformity shouldn't be regarded as a virtue. It handles cases uniformly which shouldn't be handled uniformly" (Skiba, 2018, s.169). In the context of discussion with (Hawthorne and Manley 2012) such an argument, based on the claim that proper names aren't similar to other kinds of expressions, was given in (Genoveva Marti 2014); in the context of challenging predicativism, such an argument, based on the claim that modified uses of proper names aren't similar to unmodified uses, can be found in (Rami 2014; Jeshion 2015; Skiba 2018). Similar observation in (Kirkby 2012).

³ As Rachel Goodman argues, even 'regular' names in a community of consumers might elicit descriptive thoughts (Goodman 2018).

approach are surely Evans's and, earlier, Strawson's.⁴ This approach will be also adopted for the account I am going to defend in the present paper.

On the grounds of the socio-linguistic approach we can elaborate the notion of a 'real name', especially of a person.⁵ *Prima facie* there is no obligation to distinguish real names of persons from just any names; and unless we do so, our questions (1) and (2) above are merely rhetoric ones: You-Know-Who may have two names (and many more) and 'Kurt Gödel' might be a name for two people (and many more – people as well as other physical, mental or abstract objects). However, the socio-linguistic approach provides resources for making relevant distinction and highlights the reasons to make it. Namely, the preparatory and sincerity conditions, in certain name-giving practices, might differentiate names of persons from names of other kind of objects (like pets, places, or certain mathematical objects or natural phenomena)⁶, and further, differentiate real names of persons from their nicknames, false names, pen names and other aliases. We ask about real names of people when we intend to reveal their identity: we ask about real names of spies or secret agents caught under false ones, or of authors known under their pen names. Aliases, on the other hand, usually serve the purpose of hiding one's identity or feature in restricted contexts in which someone's identity as a person is irrelevant.

I will say more about the details of relevant name-using practices below, in the course of the exposition of my account. Perhaps it is worth a short pause, though, to discuss briefly whether the disjunctions included in the questions (1) and (2) are to be read inclusively or exclusively. Thus, whether (1) can be read inclusively – i.e. whether a person can have two different *real* names – depends on the details of preparatory and sincerity conditions of the name-giving acts on the grounds of given name-using practice. The question itself does not preclude such possibility; although this possibility is not actualized very often in real cases, I presume. In such a case a person might be obliged to use, in official circumstances, both her names simultaneously, e.g. in the form 'Jones vel Smith'. Thus the difference between having two names and having a two-part name might be vague. Specifically, according to the particular

⁴ "An understanding of linguistic function pre-eminently involves an understanding of the *utility* of linguistic forms in communication between human beings variously circumstanced and variously equipped" (Strawson 1974, 35).

⁵ I understand that the notion of a 'real name' of a person may bring to mind some ethnographic image of a tribe endowing its members with some secret – and sacred – names, reserved for ceremonial uses only, existentially connected with their bearers, encoding the bearers' souls and expressing the bearers' true selves. However, nothing of this sort is intended here.

⁶ For instance, among preparatory conditions for naming places in certain name-using practices, there might be a requirement that a name shall be bestowed by a governmental body like the United States Board on Geographic Names. No such requirement features normally in the conditions for naming people (save, perhaps, within some dystopian totalitarian societies).

situation described in our Gödel case, all approaches considered below would hold it rather unlikely that You-Know-Who has two real names: Schmidt and Gödel, in the same sense (while it might be allowed that You-Know-Who bears both these names in different senses: one as a real name and the other as a name of a different sort, a family nickname or a pen-name or whatever).

When it comes to question (2), the worry about the inclusiveness of the disjunction therein is ambiguous. Obviously, in a sense, a name can be borne by more than one person – for instance in the case of the so called ‘modified uses’. As we know well, there are many Alfreds in Princeton. It might be so, thus, that there are two different Gödels, too. But this is not a very enlightening sense in the case described in our scenario, for question (2) presupposes rather a properist approach to names, according to which a ‘proper name [...] [is] a name which is essentially borne by one and only one thing’ (Strawson 1974, 47). Under such presupposition question (2) is about a single person and the specifying disjunction in this question is to be read exclusively. Only one person: either You-Know-Who or the dead child, but not both, is supposed to feature in a felicitous answer to this question.⁷

Classic accounts of proper names and the Gödel case

Let us see now how the classic approaches would answer our questions. I contend that what they say about ‘names’ in general should apply – in the case of persons – to real names of these persons.

Saul Kripke’s causal theory (S. A. Kripke 1972) says that the real name of You-Know-Who is Kurt Gödel and that Kurt Gödel is You-Know-Who. For when the father brought the foundling home and said to his wife: ‘Now he will be our Kurt’, he performed an initial baptism (using an ‘orphaned’ name while naming the foundling after his dead son). All further utterances of the name ‘Kurt Gödel’ during the foundling’s later career, in Vienna and then in Princeton, were

⁷ A properist approach would certainly get highlighted in a following extension to our scenario. Suppose that Rudolf Gödel’s mother in her last will bequeathed a very precious jewel to her grandson Kurt, on condition that, after his death, the jewel goes to the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. The jewel is now (Princeton 1969) in the possession of You-Know-Who. The Museum, after the publication of the housemaid’s diary, has quite a straightforward decision to make. They need to decide who is Kurt Gödel in order to establish whether he is dead or not, for this is the condition of their claims for the jewel. They might acknowledge that Kurt Gödel is You-Know-Who and let him keep the jewel, or decide that Kurt Gödel is the dead child and initiate a legal procedure towards reclaiming the jewel for their collection. It is legitimate for them in every inch to ask the question (2) with the exclusive interpretation of the disjunction therein. They are not interested how many people can call themselves ‘Kurt Gödel’ for any reason, but whether certain particular Kurt Gödel is dead or alive.

causally connected with that baptism and subsequent acts of introducing the foundling to other people by his parents (and by himself) as Kurt Gödel.

Gareth Evans' hybrid theory (Evans 2002; 1982) yields the same outcome. You-Know-Who is the dominant causal source of information connected with the name 'Kurt Gödel' in the Princeton society. These people establish a community of producers participating in a mature name-using practice and You-Know-Who is the individual that is consistently and regularly identified by them as Kurt Gödel. Thus You-Know-Who is Kurt Gödel. There is no other practice of using the name 'Kurt Gödel'. Even Rudolf and Marianna Gödel have been consistently using this name to refer to You-Know-Who ever since the accident; never to their dead son. None of the producers participating in the practice of using the name 'Kurt Gödel' in Princeton has the slightest chance to (regularly) misidentify another individual – some dead child in particular – as Kurt Gödel. Thus Kurt Gödel is You-Know-Who.⁸

Even a naïve descriptivism, holding that 'Kurt Gödel' means 'the discoverer of the incompleteness of arithmetic', would give the same verdict. You-Know-Who in fact is the author of the relevant theorem. Thus, You-Know-Who is Kurt Gödel, and Kurt Gödel is You-Know-Who.

Introduction of Genealogical Descriptivism

What would we say?

I would say that the real name of You-Know-Who is Hans Schmidt and that Kurt Gödel is the child who died in 1907. For what is essential for being Kurt Gödel is to be the son of Rudolf and Marianna, born on 28 April 1906 in Brno – and this son of theirs died in 1907. On the other hand, You-Know-Who was, in fact, the only son of Joachim and Wilhelmina Schmidt, born on 17 May 1906 in Vienna, and this son of theirs was named Hans Schmidt.⁹

⁸ Our Gödel case remotely resembles Evans' Madagascar case, with important difference in that there are two persons involved instead of two places. Indeed, Evans' account yields analogous outcome in both cases: the dominant source of information (the island/You-Know-Who), not the original one (a stripe of Africa's mainland/dead child), is what the name refers to on this account. However, on my account, the difference between persons and places might be important, according to differences in preparatory&sincerity conditions for name-giving acts in the case of persons and in the case of places. Such differences might yield opposite outcome for the original Madagascar case and for the present Gödel case.

⁹ I don't think I am alone in this world to hold such a view. However, I would leave it to the x-phers to establish the folks' readiness to think that You-Know-Who is Hans Schmidt. As their findings so far suggest, we should expect some variation here with respect to social status, culture, or even intracultural differences among people; see e.g. (Machery et al. 2004; Beebe and Undercoffer 2016; Machery, Sytma, and Deutsch 2015; Machery 2017). To strengthen relevant intuitions, we might extend the initial story somewhat further. Suppose, for instance, that when You-Know-Who finally shows up at the ball,

Generally, I hold a view – let us call such a view ‘genealogical descriptivism’ – according to which a name, in a certain range of name-using practices,¹⁰ designates the person who satisfies the identifying genealogical description, officially – as required by preparatory and sincerity conditions of name-giving speech act – associated with the name. Certain genealogical facts constitute the person’s identity *qua* name-bearer, for these facts constitute the person’s identity *as such*.¹¹

I don’t think it is necessary to consider here in full complexity the philosophical question of personal identity – in accordance with Kripke’s claim that we do not need to find a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for being a certain object *before* we can speak about *that* object in counterfactual situations (S. A. Kripke 1972, 47) – but, in the case of persons and their real names, certain common-sense ontological claims have some bearing on what may and what may not be said of a person in counterfactual situations. In this respect, genealogical descriptivism has a different position against the modal argument than naïve ‘famous deeds’

an elderly lady in her nineties approaches him, throws her arms around his neck and cries: ‘Oh, my beloved Hans, I have finally found you. I’ve always believed that you were alive.’ This is, certainly, Frau Schmidt. We might add that You-Know-Who has a mark on his skin, characteristic of the Schmidt family. And so on – up to the DNA tests. Substantial differences can be hypothesised depending upon the extent to which the story is told (for instance, whether it contains the interference of Frau Schmidt at the ball or some DNA tests) or the choice of the question between (1) and (2), for it is cognitively quite a different thing whether we have one name and two persons to match or one person and two names. It is enough for plausibility of my account, though, that the verdict that You-Know-Who is Hans Schmidt is just non-null in at least some of the settings. It need not be dominant or even popular.

This is not to say that I would support the general underpinning of the method of cases understood as the claim that the correct theory of reference for expressions of a certain kind is the one that is best supported by people’s intuitions about the reference of expressions of this kind. There are good reasons to think that this is not a correct understanding of the method of cases (or that the method of cases is not a correct method of evaluating theories of reference). One of such reasons is given by Vignolo and Domaneschi: experiments test not just semantic intuitions but overall linguistic performances, including ‘making a judgment about what a speaker refers to, judging whether a speaker speaks truly/falsey, understanding what a speaker refers to and using a word to refer to something’ (Vignolo and Domaneschi 2018, 472–73). Genoveva Marti raised similar charges (G. Marti 2009). More fundamental reasons were given by Herman Cappelen and Max Deutsch, who argued that intuitions generally don’t play evidential role in philosophy (Cappelen 2012; Deutsch 2015). We might add that they don’t play evidential role in empirical sciences, either. Sociology or psychology would not be satisfied by checking people’s intuitions about sociological or psychological subject matter.

¹⁰ I will explain this caveat below.

¹¹ Among relevant conditions, according to Robin Jeshion’s account, there is the *Social Standing* condition. It says that if someone aims to introduce a name of a person to her idiolect, she must possess a relevant social standing. I would insist (and I believe Jeshion wouldn’t resist) on adding that this applies *a fortiori* to introducing a name to public currency; and that this social standing of the namer must be of relative character towards the person named (not just, say, being rich or befriended to the mayor of the town), so that the personal identity of the latter might be taken into consideration in the name-giving act performed by the former.

descriptivism.¹² For while Kurt Gödel certainly might not have discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic, it is not so certain that Kurt Gödel might not have been the son of Rudolf and Marianna Gödel. Quite the contrary, he rather could not not have been; for ‘how could a person originating from different parents, from a totally different sperm and egg, be *this very [person]*? [...] It seems to me that anything coming from a different origin would not be this object’ (S. A. Kripke 1972, 113).¹³

Genealogical descriptivism takes this – utterly Kripkean – view on personal identity and builds further on the claim that relevant details of personal identity play a crucial role in social practices of name-giving; thus endowing the name with a ‘meaning’ of a sort. However, while ‘Kurt Gödel is a son of Rudolf and Marianna Gödel’ is a kind of necessary truth, it is not a necessary requirement for a competent user of the name to know this truth. Most users – including most of the ‘producers’ in Evans’s sense – defer their use to the ‘procedures of miscellaneous sorts’ that secure ordinary acts of implementing the name-using practice (García-Carpintero 2018, 1135).¹⁴

Genealogical Descriptivism *versus* other accounts on the Gödel case

Whether intuitively plausible or not (see footnote 9 for fuller discussion), genealogical descriptivism – compared to naïve descriptivism, Kripke’s causal account and Evans’ hybrid theory – has this advantage that it can account for a cognitive change caused among the Princeton society by the publication of the housemaid’s diaries. When we ask whom some people are referring to when they are talking about ‘X’, we may be asking about the ‘semantic reference’ of their utterance or their ‘speaker’s reference’ (S. Kripke 1977). Semantic reference has just been discussed above – let us ask now who was the speaker’s reference for the

¹² Incidentally, as argued in (Gluer and Pagin 2006), the modal argument itself is too strong; for the modal intuitions can be accounted for without any resort to the rigidity of names.

¹³ While at the heart of the matter it is the *copulatio* of a particular sperm and a particular egg that determines a person’s identity (let us put aside the problem of identical twins), we normally have no socially efficient access to such facts; the date of birth featuring in the genealogical description should be regarded as a social approximation of this fact. While it doesn’t make sense to say: ‘If your parents had met in high school, you would have been born five years earlier’; for the correct answer to this exclamation would be: ‘No, I would just have had an older sibling’, it makes sense to say: ‘If your mother hadn’t been hospitalized during pregnancy, you would have been born two months earlier’ – because in such a case we still assume the same moment of conception. The place of birth is of course of no weight in respect of a person’s identity; it is important, though, for the social practice of name-use, as an indication where the relevant records are to be found.

¹⁴ Genealogical description is normally displayed on various records, ID’s, passports, etc. However, such documents just inform the reader about the identity of the bearer; they do not constitute it and may be faked. It is pretty obvious that You-Know-Who (Hans Schmidt on my account) had a passport in the name of ‘Kurt Gödel’ rather than ‘Hans Schmidt’, displaying Kurt Gödel’s genealogical data.

Princeton folks when they were talking about 'Gödel' all these years. Were they referring to Gödel or rather to Schmidt? Did it change when the truth came out?

According to the three aforementioned classic accounts, when the folks were talking about 'Gödel', they were all the time referring to Gödel (for their speaker's reference was You-Know-Who, and You-Know-Who is Gödel on these accounts). Because their speaker's reference accords with the semantic reference of their utterances, publication of the diaries changes nothing here: they are still referring to You-Know-Who, who is still Gödel. The whole story means less than a shrug of shoulders.

Genealogical descriptivism says that when the folks were talking about 'Gödel', they were all the time referring to Schmidt (for their speaker's reference was You-Know-Who, and You-Know-Who is Schmidt on this account). They didn't know it during all these years, until it was revealed in the housemaid's diaries, but that was the truth.¹⁵ You-Know-Who, the person they had in mind when they talked about 'Gödel', was – to their great surprise – not Kurt Gödel. He was Hans Schmidt. What the Princeton folks can do about it, when the truth is revealed, is to acknowledge the fact and change their speaker's reference from the 'revelation day' on (in order to coordinate it with the semantic reference). 'Kurt Gödel' is how they can refer to the dead boy now, and when in need of referring to You-Know-Who they can use the name 'Hans Schmidt'.¹⁶ That's how the truth can change minds.

For comparison with some more recent accounts it will be useful to check Manuel García-Carpintero's taxonomy of theories of proper names (García-Carpintero 2018). On the grounds of this taxonomy, my genealogical descriptivism shall be counted as a variety of *properist referentialism* of a hybrid Millian-Fregean character, quite as Garcia-Carpintero's own account.

Millians-Fregeans are in accord on the claim that, in spite of being associated with some descriptive contents, 'proper names contribute their referents to the contents of the primary speech acts they help to perform' (García-Carpintero 2018, 1107).¹⁷ There are two important differences, though, between Garcia-Carpintero's account and mine. One is that while according to Garcia-Carpintero the 'Fregean' part is performed by a *metalinguistic* description 'being called *N*', I contend that there is an *object-language* description containing genealogical information. The other difference is situated in the 'Millian' part and concerns the details of

¹⁵ 'Having the referent in mind is neither necessary nor sufficient for a use of a name to refer to it' (Genoveva Marti 2015, 80).

¹⁶ Of course, everyone is invited to keep the name 'Kurt Gödel' for You-Know-Who in their idiolect but as a nickname now, or a pen-name, not as a real name.

¹⁷ An early account of this type was Peter Strawson's. According to this account on one hand a proper name is associated with a cluster of identifying descriptions, but on the other hand 'in an appropriate setting the name, as used, will *act* as an ideal or Russellian proper name' (Strawson 1974, 47).

reference-fixing. According to Garcia-Carpintero, 'For any use **n** of proper name N_i **n** refers to x if and only if x is the unique individual picked out in the act of naming instituting the N_i -appellative practice to which **n** belongs' (García-Carpintero 2018, 1132)¹⁸, while on my account there can be such use **n** of a proper name N_i that refers to a different object than the one picked out in the act of naming instituting N_i -appellative practice to which **n** belongs.

Both differences show up in my version of the Gödel-Schmidt case and favour genealogical descriptivism. First, as we have seen, 'being called N ' – if it is supposed to be non-circular – can be false about the semantic referent. Hans Schmidt in the Princeton name-using practice wasn't called 'Hans Schmidt' but rather 'Kurt Gödel'. Second, the Princeton uses of the name 'Kurt Gödel', as all uses of this name on my account, semantically refer to the dead child, while they belong to a practice originating from an act of naming in which it was the foundling who was fixed as the referent (recall Rudolf Gödel's name-giving act: 'Now he will be our Kurt').

Render unto sciences that which is theirs¹⁹

Thus far I have postponed the question about the 'relevant range of applicability' of genealogical descriptivism and its relation to other accounts in general, not just against the Gödel case. We have just said that – on the socio-linguistic approach to names – it is natural to expect that different name-using practices would be based upon different mechanisms, accounted for by different theories. We might thus acknowledge loosely that, for instance, Kripke's original account works fine, but for nick-naming rather than real name giving (as it is insensitive to requirements for naming as a socially-governed speech-act) and that Evans' theory works fine for the names of historical personages (such as Napoleon or Aristotle), whose genealogical whereabouts are not as important for us as their being the causal source of certain 'famous deeds'. We might contend that the case of descriptive names, such as 'Vulcan', is convincingly conceptualized by Jeshion; and that predicativism – which is no surprise – accounts nicely for the predicative, or 'modified', uses of proper names. Genealogical descriptivism – I daresay – would prove its merit in explaining how given names of contemporary people designate their referents in regular circumstances.²⁰

¹⁸ For a similar reference-fixing formula see also (Kawczyński 2010).

¹⁹ The inspiration for the title of this section is (Fumerton 2007) – not only Matthew 22:21.

²⁰ It might help, too, with peculiar cases of historical personages who are now known (or suspected) as not having done the famous deeds traditionally ascribed to them. Kripke convincingly argues that, for example, if the famous deeds attributed to Moses in the Bible, hardcore miracles among them, in fact were never accomplished, descriptivism (including Evans' hybrid form of it) is in trouble when it comes to establishing Moses' identity as an object of reference. Now, I contend that we can refer to Moses – even if he supposedly didn't set plagues on Egypt or lead the exodus of the Israelites through the Red Sea – because he was introduced as a son of Amram and Jochebed. Amram was a son of Kohath, who was a son of Levi. Levi's father was Jacob (Israel), son of Isaac. Isaac was a son of Abraham, whose

Such loose acknowledgement is very far, though, from providing a general theory of reference of proper names. I am well aware, that it is underdetermined what is to be considered as 'regular circumstances' here. On the one hand, apart from the case of identical twins that we have circumvented above, there are other problematic cases: adoption, surrogacy, egg donation, sperm donation, etc. On the other hand, it might be hard to decide when a person ceases to be a 'contemporary' person and becomes a 'historical personage' (for Kripke in 1970, Gödel was a colleague from Princeton Faculty; for us, one day, Gödel will be more like Aristotle than like a colleague). Given that there are different accounts plausible in different ranges of cases, it might be expected that the proponents of a new one should delimit them on philosophical grounds and in a principled way declare when, where, and which accounts are the right ones.

My account clearly offers nothing of this sort. But it offers a rejoinder to such a requirement. Namely – and this is the metaphilosophical perspective assumed behind the presented account - it is a job of linguistics (sociology, psychology, anthropology, cross-cultural studies, etc.) to see how exactly people use names and how particular sets of conditions for names of different kinds in different situations (including the delimitation of the kind of 'real names') differ from each other. Philosophy's job is to discover possible 'varieties of reference', elaborate their distinctness by describing differences in their applicability conditions (a job we have done in two preceding sections), and leave it to empirical sciences to find out which of these varieties are actually employed by given linguistic communities in given circumstances.²¹ For we shall

distinguish two topics: first, the description of possible languages or grammars as abstract semantic systems [...]; and second, the description of the psychological and sociological facts whereby a particular one of these abstract semantic systems is the one used by a person or population. Only confusion comes of mixing these two topics (Lewis 1970, 19).

father was Terah, son of Nahor. Nahor was a son of Serug, who was a son of Reu. Reu's father was Peleg, and his father was Eber, son of Shelah. Shelah was a son of Arphaxad, who was a son of Shem, a Noah's son. Noah was a son of Lamech and a grandson of Methuselah, who was a son of Enoch. Enoch's father was Jared, and Jared's father was Mahalalel, son of Kenan, who was a son of Enosh. The father of Enosh was Seth, a son of Adam and Eve.

Fondness for genealogy is not our recent invention, apparently.

²¹ My claim concerns the *disciplines* of philosophy and of empirical sciences. I am well aware that many theorists work in an interdisciplinary area and reasonably aim at giving a fuller account of natural language – including the perspective of linguistics and sociology. The point is that they have different tasks *qua* philosophers than *qua* linguists or sociologists. As Burge put it (albeit in a somewhat different context): 'Semantics [...] need not await the full returns of sociology' (Burge 1973, 435).

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