

**MDR THEORY AND THE PROBLEMS POSED BY NONREFERRING NAMES**

**By**

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## Abstract

I begin by explaining MDR theory by which I mean Millianism, Direct reference theory, and the theory of Russellian structured proposition. In the first chapter, I have also discussed what nonreferring names are and some of the problems nonreferring names pose for MDR theory, namely the problem of no proposition expressed, the problem of nonsense, the truth-value problem, the problem of the proposition believed, and the problem of differing cognitive values. All these problems arise for MDR theory because of the claim that the sole semantic content of a name is its referent (if any), and nothing else; and on the basis of these problems, one can reject MDR theory.

In order to understand which names are genuinely nonreferring and how serious the problems of nonreferring names are for MDR theory, in the second chapter, I have discussed different versions of the theory of abstract artifacts. I close this chapter with the conclusion that along with the other genuinely nonreferring names, some uses of the names like 'Alice' and 'Vulcan' are also genuinely nonreferring; and hence, a proper solution is required that can solve the problems nonreferring names pose for a semantic theory like MDR theory.

In the last chapter, I have examined a proposition-based solution, namely gappy propositions theory, to solve the problems, which later turns out insufficient as it cannot solve the problem of differing cognitive values. At the end of this chapter, I have presented a rough sketch of a theory that can replace MDR theory without encountering the problems posed by nonreferring names. In this proposed theory, I claim that every name has a semantic content, which is not its referent. I further suggest that the semantic content of a name is its nondescriptive sense attached to it and that every name comes with it regardless of the name's referential status. This proposed theory does not encounter any of the above-mentioned problems nonreferring names pose for MDR theory.

## **Dedication**

To my mother Zulakha Akther (1973-)

&

my father Golam Mostafa (1960-)

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MDR THEORY AND NON-REFERRING NAMES**

Proper names are an important part of our language. However, one might wonder whether a proper name has any semantic content at all, and even if it has, what that content might be. There are many philosophical theories of language that attempt to answer these queries, and among them, Millianism is one of the prominent ones. In the first section of the current chapter, I present Millianism, direct reference theory, Russellianism, and some other relevant theories. From now on, I will call Millianism, direct reference theory, and Russellianism all together 'MDR theory'. In the second section of this chapter, I explain what empty names are and some of the problems empty names pose for MDR theory. At the end of this thesis, I aim to show that on the basis of these problems, MDR theory can be refuted, and I also propose a rough sketch of a theory that does not face these problems.

#### **§1: MDR THEORY**

##### **1.1: Direct Reference Theory and Millianism**

In our everyday life, we treat a name as a code for picking out an individual or object that bears the name. Direct reference theory supports something similar to this. According to direct reference theory, a proper name, such as 'Paulo Coelho,' is a referring expression that

*directly* refers to its referent, if any.<sup>1</sup> Though David Kaplan introduced the term ‘direct reference,’<sup>2</sup> the Millian theory of names or Millianism is one of the old versions of this theory.<sup>3</sup>

A proper name, according to Millianism, does not describe the individual it refers to; rather, it only picks out the individual it refers to without providing any information on the properties of that individual. Hence, proper names, according to Millianism, are not connotative (descriptive) but denotative (referring).<sup>4</sup> For example, the name ‘Paulo Coelho,’ is just a tag that one uses to pick out the person Paulo Coelho. It does not describe any properties of that individual referred to by ‘Paulo Coelho.’ In other words, proper names are only attached to their referents, and their signification has nothing to do with any of the descriptions associated with them.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the sole semantic content of a proper name, according to contemporary Millianism, is simply its referent, if there is one, and nothing else.

## 1.2: Descriptivism and Kripke’s objections

On the other hand, the theory that claims that the semantic content of a proper name is descriptive, is commonly known as ‘descriptivism’. Proper names, according to descriptivism, are semantically equivalent to the definite description(s) associated with them.

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<sup>1</sup> See Saul Kripke, “Naming and Necessity,” in *Semantics of Natural Language*, ed. Gilbert Harman and Donald Davidson. (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1972); David Kaplan, “Demonstratives,” in *Themes from Kaplan*, ed. Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 481-563; David Kaplan, “Afterthoughts,” in *Themes from Kaplan*, ed. Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 565- 614. Also, see David Braun, “Empty Names.” *Noûs* 27, (1993): 449-69; Scott Soames, *Beyond Rigidity: The Unfinished Semantic Agenda of Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Nathan Salmon, *Frege’s Puzzle* (MA: MIT 1986), and many others.

<sup>2</sup> See Kaplan 1989a.

<sup>3</sup> Mill himself might not agree with Millianism. The original version of Mill’s theory of names have been modified over time. See John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive* (London: Parker, 1843), 33-34 for the original version. There are different versions of Millianism, but it is mainly concerned with the propositional contents of names. Also, see Kripke 1972, Soames 2002, Salmon 1986 and 1998, and others.

<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, according to Mill, there are some expressions, such as definite descriptions, that can be both descriptive and referring. For details, see Mill 1872.

<sup>5</sup> For details, see Bertrand Russell, “On Denoting.” *Mind* 14, (1905): 479-493.

Descriptions found in the form of “the F” are known as ‘definite descriptions’ and also, in the form of “an F” are called ‘indefinite descriptions.’ A definite description attached to a referring name can be used to talk about a particular property of the referent of that name. Definite descriptions, in English, often occur as noun phrases—the result of concatenating a determiner, such as ‘the’, with a noun represented schematically as ‘F’; nevertheless, it is not mandatory for definite descriptions to begin with ‘the’. Some of them can also begin with possessive nouns or pronouns, such as ‘my only brother’, ‘his sister’, and so on.<sup>6</sup> Now, consider the following sentence:

(1) The present president of the USA is a businessman.

(1) is a descriptive sentence of the form ‘The F is G,’ where ‘the present president of the USA’ is a definite description, and ‘is a businessman’ is a predicate phrase.

The main idea of descriptivism is that a proper name abbreviates a definite description associated with it.<sup>7</sup> The referent of a name is determined by the definite description associated with that name because whatever object (if any) uniquely satisfies that description is considered as the referent of the name in question.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the name ‘Paulo Coelho’ can be associated with ‘the author of *The Alchemist*’, and whoever uniquely satisfies this description is considered as the referent of that name. It is the speaker who in her mind associates such descriptions with the relevant name. The semantic content of the associated definite

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<sup>6</sup> However, many philosophers such as Bertrand Russell, believe that they can all be rephrased in the same way. For example, ‘my only brother’ can be rephrased as ‘the only brother of mine’. See Russell 1905.

<sup>7</sup> For details on descriptivism, see Anthony Everett, “Recent Defenses of Descriptivism.” *Mind and Language* 20, no. 1 (2005): 103-139; John R. Searle, “Proper names,” *Mind* 67, no. 266 (1958):166-173; and John R. Searle, “Russell’s Objections to Frege’s Theory of Sense and Reference,” *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 34, no. 1 (1969):142-143. Some of the early versions of this theory can be found in Frege 1982, and Russell’s writings in 1910-11.

<sup>8</sup> See Russell 1905, Searle 1958, Everett 2005, and many more.

description of a name is the semantic content and referent of that name; and this referent, according to descriptivism, gets fixed by the description it is attached to.<sup>9</sup> One simply needs to set out that she will be using the name 'Paulo Coelho' as the author of *The Alchemist*.

Another version of descriptivism, presented mainly by Searle, known as the 'Cluster' theory of descriptivism, proposes that instead of being associated with only one description, a name is, in fact, associated with a cluster of descriptions.<sup>10</sup> Hence, the semantic content of a proper name is given by the cluster of descriptions associated with that name. The referent of the name, according to Searle's cluster theory of description, satisfies most of the descriptions in the cluster. The name 'Paulo Coelho', for instance, is not just semantically equivalent to only one single description, such as 'the author of *The Alchemist*,' but it is also associated with 'the author of *Eleven Minutes*,' 'the Brazilian lyricist,' and many more descriptions. Whoever satisfies most of the descriptions included in the cluster of descriptions is the referent of 'Paulo Coelho.' In other words, the semantic content of a proper name, according to cluster descriptivism, is the cluster of descriptions associated with it.<sup>11</sup>

Kripke has pointed out three arguments against any version of descriptivism, which provide grounds to endorse Millianism and direct reference theory.<sup>12</sup> The arguments are briefly presented below:

The epistemic argument:

Premise 1: In a context *c* and world *w*, for a proper name 'N' and definite description "the F", if 'N' is semantically equivalent to a definite description (or a cluster of definite

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<sup>9</sup> See Russell 1905, Everett 2005, Searle 1958, and others.

<sup>10</sup> See Searle 1958. Some other versions of this theory can be found in Strawson 1959 and Wilson 1959.

<sup>11</sup> For further details, see Searle 1958.

<sup>12</sup> See Kripke 1972.

descriptions) associated with it by a speaker *S* in the form of “the *F*”, then in a context *c* and world *w*, for any proper name ‘*N*’ and definite description “the *F*”, the proposition expressed by a sentence of the form “*N* = the *F*” is knowable a priori.

Premise 2: It is not the case that in a context *c* and world *w*, for any proper name ‘*N*’ and definite description “the *F*”, the proposition expressed by a sentence of the form “*N* = the *F*” is knowable a priori.

Conclusion: Therefore, it is not the case that in a context *c* and world *w*, for any proper name ‘*N*’ and definite description ‘the *F*,’ ‘*N*’ is semantically equivalent to a definite description (or a cluster of definite descriptions) associated with it by a speaker *S* in the form of ‘the *F*.’

Here, for premise 1, consider the following three sentences:

(a) It is knowable a priori that the *F* is *F*.

(b) It is knowable a priori that *N* is *F*.

(c) It is knowable a priori that Aristotle is the greatest philosopher of antiquity.

(a) expresses a true proposition. Now, if descriptivism is true, then ‘the *F*’ can be replaced by ‘*N*’ and (b) is supposed to be true as well. However, the proposition expressed by a sentence like ‘Aristotle = the greatest philosopher of antiquity’ is not knowable a priori. In other words, (c) is not true. Thus, premise 2 is true and therefore, descriptivism is false.<sup>13</sup>

The semantic argument:

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<sup>13</sup> See Kripke 1972 for further details.

Premise 1: In a context  $c$  and world  $w$ , for a definite description “the F” and a proper name ‘N’ that refers to  $o$ , if “the F” associated with ‘N’ can uniquely pick out an individual other than  $o$ , then the referent of ‘N’ is not determined by “the F”, which further suggests that ‘N’ is not semantically equivalent to a (or a cluster of) definite description(s) associated with it by a speaker  $S$  in the form of ‘the F.’

Premise 2: In a context  $c$  and world  $w$ , for a definite description “the F” and a proper name ‘N’ that refers to  $o$ , “the F” associated with ‘N’ can uniquely pick out an individual other than  $o$ .

Conclusion: In a context  $c$  and world  $w$ , for a definite description “the F” and a proper name ‘N’ that refers to  $o$ , the referent of ‘N’ is not determined by “the F”, which further suggests that ‘N’ is not semantically equivalent to a (or a cluster of) definite description(s) associated with it by a speaker  $S$  in the form of ‘the F.’

Descriptivism claims that whatever object uniquely satisfies a definite description attached to a name is the referent of that name. However, it is possible to associate a wrong description (or a cluster of wrong descriptions) with a name. As a result, that description can pick out a different object that is not the referent of the name. It might also happen that the definite descriptions one associates with a name fail to uniquely pick out any individual at all, which suggests that the name does not have any referent. That is, nevertheless, not the case because the name actually has a referent. Therefore, a name cannot be semantically equivalent to descriptions associated with it.<sup>14</sup>

The modal argument:

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<sup>14</sup> For details, see Kripke 1972.

Premise 1: In a context  $c$  and world  $w$ , for a definite description “the  $F$ ” and a proper name ‘ $N$ ’ that refers to  $o$ , if it is true that ‘ $N$ ’ refers to  $o$  in every possible world relative to  $w$  and “the  $F$ ” might not refer to  $o$  (or anything at all) in every possible world relative to  $w$ , then ‘ $N$ ’ and “the  $F$ ” are not semantically equivalent.

Premise 2: In a context  $c$  and world  $w$ , for a definite description “the  $F$ ” and a proper name ‘ $N$ ’ that refers to  $o$ , it is true that ‘ $N$ ’ refers to  $o$  in every possible world relative to  $w$  and “the  $F$ ” might not refer to  $o$  (or anything at all) in every possible world relative to  $w$ .

Conclusion: In a context  $c$  and world  $w$ , for a definite description “the  $F$ ” and a proper name ‘ $N$ ’ that refers to  $o$ , ‘ $N$ ’ and “the  $F$ ” are not semantically equivalent.

Kripke used his rigidity theory in order to provide his modal argument. According to Kripke’s rigidity theory, a proper name, such as ‘Paulo Coelho,’ designates the same individual and nothing else in every possible world (if that individual exists in that world) relative to our world, and that is why they are ‘rigid designators.’<sup>15</sup> If the person Paulo Coelho does not exist in a particular world, then the name ‘Paulo Coelho’ fails to refer to anything in that world. On the other hand, a definite description is a designator that usually does not designate the same individual in every possible world (it also depends on the definite description; for example, definite descriptions about mathematical facts are rigid designators).<sup>16</sup> A definite description, in any world, fixes its referent, given that whatever uniquely satisfies the definite description in that particular world is its referent. For example, in our world, the name ‘Paulo Coelho’ refers to the person Paulo Coelho, and in every world,

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<sup>15</sup> See Kripke 1972. Some other versions of this theory can be found in Salmon 1981 and Soames 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Some definite descriptions are rigid designators, such as ‘the sum of two and two,’ but these are exceptions. Most of them are not rigid. See Kripke 1972.

'Paulo Coelho' refers to Paulo Coelho if he exists in that world. However, 'the author of *The Alchemist*' refers to the person Paulo Coelho in our world simply because Paulo Coelho has written the novel *The Alchemist*, and hence, he uniquely satisfies the definite description in our world.

However, the fact that Paulo Coelho uniquely satisfies the definite description in our world does not guarantee that the referent of the definite description is Paulo Coelho in every possible world. It might be the case that in another world, Paulo Coelho never writes any novel, or there is no such thing as a novel, or maybe J. K. Rowling writes *The Alchemist*. In such cases, the referent of 'the author of *The Alchemist*' is not Paulo Coelho; instead, the referent shifts in other possible worlds considering what satisfies the description. The referent of the proper name 'Paulo Coelho', nevertheless, is fixed in every world. Therefore, proper names and definite descriptions cannot be semantically equivalent to each other. Hence, the semantic contribution of a proper name in a sentence, according to Kripke, is not any descriptions associated with it.<sup>17</sup>

Kaplan provides a modified version of the rigidity theory where he agrees with Kripke that proper names are rigid designators but claims that a rigid designator designates the same individual in every world regardless of whether that individual exists or not.<sup>18</sup> Hence, even if Paulo Coelho does not exist in a possible world, the name 'Paulo Coelho' still refers to the person Paulo Coelho in that world, and no descriptive content is required to determine the

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<sup>17</sup> See Kripke 1972.

<sup>18</sup> See Kaplan 1989.



referent of the name because such a name is directly referential. Kaplan believes that this version of rigidity theory is Kripke's real intended version.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.3: Russellianism

Millianism and direct reference theory are often combined with the theory of Russellian structured propositions.<sup>20</sup> A sentence, according to the theory of Russellian structured propositions, expresses a proposition, and the semantic content of the sentence is the proposition expressed by it.<sup>21</sup> One can assert as well as believe a proposition expressed by a given sentence. Propositions are the bearers of truth-values, which means that they can be true or false depending on their contexts of utterances and their connection to the actual fact. A sentence can express different propositions in different contexts. If a sentence does not express a proposition, that sentence is often considered as having no semantic content.<sup>22</sup> In total, propositions are: (a) what sentences express or in other words, the semantic contents of sentences, (b) the bearers of truth-values, and (c) such entities to which one can attribute cognitive relations (for instance, they can be asserted or believed).

Propositions, according to Russellianism, are structured entities, and the constituents of such propositions are the referents of the constituents of the sentences in question. It suggests that the structure of the proposition is similar to the structure of the relevant

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<sup>19</sup> In Kaplan's word: In arguing that the object designated by a rigid designator need not exist in every possible world, he (Kripke) seems to assert that under certain circumstances, what is expressed by 'Hitler does not exist' would have been true, and not because 'Hitler' would have designated nothing (in that case we might have given the sentence *no* truth value) but because what 'Hitler' would have designated -namely Hitler- would not have existed. David Kaplan, "Demonstratives." Salmon also agrees with Kaplan's version of rigidity theory. Nathan Salmon, *Reference and Essence*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

<sup>20</sup> Some Millianists and direct reference theorists, such as Salmon, Soames, Braun, many other, connect all these three theories together to provide a complete semantic theory of proper names. See Braun 2005, Soames 2002, and Salmon 1986. However, unlike them, Kripke does not endorse the idea of connecting direct reference theory with the theory of Russellian structured propositions. See Kripke 1972.

<sup>21</sup> See Braun 2005, Soames 2002, Salmon 1986,

<sup>22</sup> For details, see Braun 2005, Salmon 1986, and others.

sentence.<sup>23</sup> Being a structured proposition means that it is a complex entity by its nature and has constituents that are parts of the proposition.<sup>24</sup> The semantic contents of the sentence's constituents are, in fact, constituents of the proposition. If a sentence contains a proper name and the semantic content of the proper name is its referent, then the proposition expressed by the sentence can contain the referent or individual as a constituent of it. A proposition that contains an individual as its constituent is also called a 'singular proposition.' Every meaningful sentence containing a proper name expresses a singular structured proposition. This proposition contains the semantic contents of the constituents of that sentence, which suggests that the referent of the proper name is a constituent of that singular proposition. Consider the following sentence:

(2) Paulo Coelho is a novelist.

The semantic content of this sentence is the proposition expressed by it, which is that Paulo Coelho is a novelist. The person Paulo Coelho is a constituent of this proposition. In other words, the singular proposition expressed by (2) is, for example,  $Np$ , where  $N$  is the property of being a novelist and  $p$  is the referent (the person Paulo Coelho) of the name 'Paulo Coelho'. Here,  $p$  and the property  $N$  attributed to  $p$ , both are constituents of proposition  $Np$ .

Similarly, properties and relations can also be constituents of propositions. This is the special feature of singular propositions that they can have objects, individuals, properties, and relations as their constituents. For example, the proposition expressed by the sentence 'Mark runs' has the person Mark and the property of running as its constituents. A sentence

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<sup>23</sup> For details, see Soames 1987.

<sup>24</sup> The constituents of structured propositions are parts of those propositions. See Chris Tillman and Gregory Fowler, "Propositions and Parthood: The Universe and Anti-Symmetry," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 90, no. 3 (2012): 525-539.

containing a proper name as one of its constituents, according to direct reference theory, can express a Russellian singular structured proposition. In direct reference theory, singular propositions are often represented by ordered n-tuples. For example, propositions expressed by 'Mark run' and 'Mark and Jack run' can be represented by the following ordered n-tuples, where the former one consists of the person Mark and the property of running; the latter one consists of the person Mark, the person Jack, and the property of running:

<Mark, running>

<<Mark, Jack>, running>

Now, if one considers that the semantic content of a sentence is the proposition it expresses, then other than referring to the individual it refers to, a Millian name has no other semantic contribution to the sentence of which it is a part of. Hence, Millianism claims that the *only* semantic purpose of a proper name is to pick out an individual or object as its referent, and this referent is considered as its semantic content.<sup>25</sup> One of the main motivations behind this claim is that the semantic purpose of such a name is not to describe its bearer. In other words, a proper name does not contribute any definite descriptions associated with it to the semantic content of the sentence containing it. Neither does it indirectly contribute the referent determined by its associated definite descriptions. Instead, it *directly* contributes its bearer and nothing else to the semantic content of the sentence in which it occurs without relying on any descriptions.

#### **1.4: Causal Account of Reference-Fixing**

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<sup>25</sup> See Kripke 1972, Soames 2002, Salmon 1986 and 1998, and others.

Now, the question that comes to mind is, *how does a referent get attached and fixed to a name in the first place?*<sup>26</sup> Most of the direct reference theorists, such as Kripke, endorse a causal account of reference-fixing to answer this question.<sup>27</sup> The referent of a name, according to Kripke's causal theory, gets fixed by a baptizer either in an ostensive baptism or using a reference-fixing description.<sup>28</sup> Baptism is an event where a person introduces a name as the token of an object or a person. Once the name is introduced, it then passes from person to person in communicative exchanges. There is a causal relation between the person who dubs the individual with a name and the individual who has been dubbed. In Kripke's words:

Someone, let's say, a baby, is born; his parents call him by a certain name. They talk about him to their friends. Other people meet him. Through various sorts of talk the name is spread from link to link as if by a chain.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, more and more people transmit the name. Suppose that x is at the end of the chain. Now, as x knows the name, she can use it without actually knowing the referent of the name by causally interacting with other people who have used the name. To preserve the reference, however, x just needs the intention to use the name with the same referent as that person from whom she learned the name used to refer to the person in question; and to do so, x does not need any description associated with the name. x just needs to have the referential intention to refer to that baby by the name.

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<sup>26</sup> Direct reference theory can serve as a theory of semantics and also, as a theory of reference, whereas MDR theory is only a theory of semantics that can often be paired with other theories of reference.

<sup>27</sup> See Kripke 1972.

<sup>28</sup> For further details, see Kripke 1972.

<sup>29</sup> See Kripke 1972, p. 91.

In the above-mentioned example, the dubbing happened directly through a personal acquaintance with the baby. This is called an 'ostensive baptism.'<sup>30</sup> In many cases, there might be no personal acquaintance with the individual, but the baptizer intends to name that individual. In such a case, the baptizer can use a descriptive phrase, but this descriptive phrase does not get semantically associated with the name.<sup>31</sup> If a name is introduced into our world, the reference of that name remains fixed in every possible world. This way a name gets attached to an individual in our world, and in any other world, if the individual exists, according to Kripke, it becomes the referent of that name, regardless of satisfying any definite description attached to the name.

### 1.5: Closing Remarks

Following Kripke's rigidity theory and causal theory together, one can say that a proper name gets its referent in our world by initial baptism and its transmission across the community, and whatever is the referent (if exists) remains fixed in every possible world related to our world. These two theories are the main supporting ideas behind the MDR theory. A recap of MDR theory is:

- a. Millianism: If P is a proper name, then the sole semantic content of p, is its referent o, if any.
- b. Direct reference: If P is a proper name, then P is a referring expression that directly refers to its referent o (if any).

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<sup>30</sup> See Kripke 1972.

<sup>31</sup> The baptizer can just use the description to pick out the referent and once the baptism is done, that description has no semantical use. See Kripke 1972.

- c. Russellianism: The constituents of a Russellian-structured proposition expressed by a sentence are the individuals, relations, and properties that the constituents of the sentence refer to.

To put everything together, a plausible version of MDR theory can be presented in the following way:

The semantic content of a proper name, in any context  $c$  and any world  $w$ , is not the definite descriptions attached to it; rather, since a proper name *directly* refers to its referent and nothing else, the only semantic content of such a name is its referent. A sentence containing such a name expresses a Russellian structured proposition of which the referent of the proper name is a constituent. Other than referring to its referent, a proper name has no other semantic contribution towards the semantic content of the sentence in which it occurs. The referent of a name gets fixed to it by dubbing and its successful transmission from one person to another.<sup>32</sup>

Suppose that in a particular world  $w$  and context of utterance  $c$ , a sentence  $S$  contains a proper name  $P$ . The referent of  $P$  is  $o$  and a definite description associated with the proper

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<sup>32</sup> Once the referent gets fixed, a proper name designates the same individual in every possible world related to our world. However, Kaplan's version of rigidity thesis seems more relevant here, where he claims that a rigid designator designates the same individual in every possible world whether that individual exists or not. The person Paulo Coelho, for instance, does not exist in a possible world  $w_1$ . The name 'Paulo Coelho' would have still referred to Paulo Coelho, who simply fails to exist in  $w_1$ . Kaplan thinks that Kripke also meant something similar to this in his rigidity thesis. In Kaplan's own words: 'There is an unfortunate confusion in the idea that a proper name would designate nothing if the bearer of the name were not to exist. Kripke himself adopts positions which seem inconsistent with this feature of rigid designators. In arguing that the object designated by a rigid designator need not exist in every possible world, he seems to assert that under certain circumstances what is expressed by 'Hitler does not exist' would have been true, and not because 'Hitler' would have designated nothing (in that case we might have given the sentence no truth value) but because what 'Hitler' would have designated - namely Hitler - would not have existed.' David Kaplan, "Demonstratives," in *Themes from Kaplan*, ed. Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989): 481-614.

name  $P$  by a speaker is  $m$ . The proposition expressed by  $S$  is  $To$ , where  $o$  is the referent of  $P$ . Now, according to MDR theory,

The semantic content of  $P = o$

The semantic content of  $S = To$

However, the semantic content of  $P$  is not determined by  $m$ .  $m$  just designates to  $o$  in  $w$ , but in another world, it might refer to something else other than  $o$ , depending on whatever uniquely satisfies  $m$  in that world. Hence,  $P$  is not semantically equivalent to  $m$ . Rather, the semantic content of  $P$  is identical to its referent  $o$  in every possible world (whether  $o$  exists or not in that world) related to our world, where  $o$  is causally dubbed and associated with  $P$ . However, not all proper names have referents. In the next section, I will be focused on non-referring names and the problems a semantic theory, namely MDR theory, encounters in the contexts of non-referring names.

## §2: PROBLEMS OF NON-REFERRING NAMES

### 2.1: Non-referring Names

There might be some names that do not refer to anything. Consider the proper name 'Snow White'. This name seems to not pick out any real individual as its referent. A proper name that does not refer to anything is often called an 'empty name.'<sup>33</sup> Although empty names are often called empty because they do not have referents and semantic contents, it sounds more accurate to say that empty names are empty from the point of view that they do not

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<sup>33</sup> This is not a syntactic definition.

have any referents. Hence, from now on, I will be calling them ‘non-referring names.’<sup>34</sup> There are different kinds of commonly known non-referring names that will be discussed in this section. However, whether those names are genuinely nonreferring names or not, that will be discussed in the next chapter.

One of the popular categories of nonreferring names are *names from fiction*. Fictions are created in the imagination of their authors, and hence, it is assumed that names from fiction do not have any referents in the real world. For example, ‘Alice,’ ‘Sherlock Holmes,’ ‘Harry Potter,’ and so on. *Names from the imagination* are also considered nonreferring. For example, children often have imaginary friends, and they might name them. These names are considered as nonreferring because it seems that there is nothing that can serve as the referents of these names. The same is true for *names from hallucinations*. For instance, one might see a tree and in hallucinations, mistake it for a person and name it. It seems that this name is also nonreferring as it does not refer to anything, not even the tree. Another kind of well-known nonreferring names are *mythical names*. Myths are widely known traditional stories, which can be based on mere imagination or there might be some historical and social connection; however, they are false and names from myths are considered nonreferring. For example, ‘Zeus,’ ‘Aphrodite,’ ‘Pegasus,’ and so on. *Names from false scientific theories* are also considered as nonreferring, such as Le Verrier’s hypothetical planet named ‘Vulcan.’ Some people might also consider *names from the past* as nonreferring. For instance, the person Socrates used to exist long ago but does not exist now; hence, one might think that

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<sup>34</sup> Salmon also calls empty names ‘nonreferring names.’ See Salmon 1998.



the name 'Socrates' is nonreferring now.<sup>35</sup> *Names of future entities* and *names of possible entities* are also often treated as nonreferring names.

## 2.2: Problems Posed by Non-referring Names

Non-referring names seem to create some puzzles for MDR theory. Consider a proper name 'Vulcan'. Scientists first thought that it exists, but later, discovered that there is no such existing planet named 'Vulcan.' Hence, 'Vulcan' might be a non-referring proper name. Despite the fact that 'Vulcan' does not refer to any existing planet, one can still say a sentence containing 'Vulcan' as a constituent of that sentence. Since nonreferring names are proper names without any referents, it is questionable how we successfully use them in our sentences to communicate with people. Names like 'Vulcan' can create problems for MDR theory as according to this theory, a name directly refers to its referent and nonreferring names do not have referents. Some of the problems non-referring names pose for MDR theory are presented below.

The problems that nonreferring names create for MDR theory are closely related to each other. The first one can be called as *'The Problem of No Proposition.'*<sup>36</sup> Consider a sentence with a nonreferring name:

(3) Vulcan is a planet.

Since the semantic content of a proper name is its referent, according to MDR theory, a sentence containing a proper name expresses a proposition that has the referent of the proper

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<sup>35</sup> For details on different kinds of nonreferring names, see Nathan Salmon, "Nonexistence," *Noûs* 32, no. 3 (1998).

<sup>36</sup> For a details of different puzzles nonreferring names creates for MDR theory can be found at: David Braun, "Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names," *Noûs* 39, no. 4 (2005), and David Braun, "Empty Names." *Noûs* 27, no. 4 (1993): 449-69.

name as one of its constituents. However, in (3), the name 'Vulcan' does not have any referent; hence, there is nothing to be in the subject position of the proposition expressed by (3). Since the name 'Vulcan' does not contribute anything to the proposition expressed by (3), it seems that (3) fails to express any proposition at all. To put it in a numbered premise-conclusion form:

Premise 1: If 'Vulcan' has no referent and hence, no semantic content, then 'Vulcan' does not contribute anything to the proposition expressed by (3).

Premise 2: If 'Vulcan' does not contribute anything to the proposition expressed by (3), then (3) does not express any proposition at all.

Conclusion: Therefore, if 'Vulcan' has no referent and hence, no semantic content, then (3) does not express any proposition at all.

However, when a person utters (3), she expresses a proposition, which the hearer understands. Here, the next problem comes. If (3) does not express any proposition, then the sentence expresses nothing at all. However, it is accepted in the MDR theory that the meaning of a sentence is the proposition expressed by it. Hence, if (3) fails to express any proposition, then (3) does not have any semantic content. Therefore, (3) is meaningless and nonsense. Similarly, the name 'Vulcan' is also meaningless because it does not have any referent, and according to the MDR theory, the semantic content of a name is its referent. However, (3) is obviously a meaningful sentence. When a speaker utters (3), a hearer does not fail to grasp the meaning of the sentence. Besides, no one will reply to the speaker that

the sentence you just uttered is meaningless or nonsense. This problem is known as '*The Problem of Nonsense*'.<sup>37</sup> To put it in a numbered premise-conclusion form:

Premise 1: If the proposition expressed by a sentence is the semantic content of that sentence and (3) fails to express any proposition at all, then (3) is nonsense.

Premise 2: The proposition expressed by a sentence is the semantic content of that sentence and (3) fails to express any proposition at all.

Conclusion: Therefore, (3) is nonsense.

The next problem can be called '*The Truth-value Problem*'.<sup>38</sup> MDR theory assumes that sentences can be true or false in virtue of the proposition it expresses. Propositions are the main bearers of truth values. If a proposition is true, the sentence containing it is also considered as true. Nevertheless, (3) contains a proper name that does not have any referent; and hence, (3) does not express any proposition at all. Since (3) does not express any proposition, there is nothing to assign a truth value. Therefore, it seems that when someone utters (3), they fail to express something that can be true or false. However, in reality, by uttering (3), one can express something that is false. Similarly, when a speaker utters 'Vulcan does not exist,' it might be the case that she expresses something true. Hence, sentences containing nonreferring names like 'Vulcan' can also be true or false. This problem can be presented more carefully as follows:

Premise 1: If a sentence can be true or false in virtue of the proposition it expresses (because propositions are the bearers of truth values) and (3) does not express any

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<sup>37</sup> See Braun 1993.

<sup>38</sup> For further details, see Braun 1993 and 2005.

proposition, then (3) has nothing to assign a truth value, which further suggests that (3) is truth valueless.

Premise 2: A sentence can be true or false in virtue of the proposition it expresses (because propositions are the bearers of truth values) and (3) does not express any proposition.

Conclusion: Therefore, (3) has nothing to assign a truth value, which further suggests that (3) is truth valueless.

Another problem created by nonreferring names is called '*The Problem of the Proposition Believed*'.<sup>39</sup> Even if someone sincerely utters (3) and as (3) does not express any proposition, that person fails to express his belief that Vulcan is a planet. Now, consider the following sentence:

(4) Mark believes that Vulcan is a planet.

What Mark believes is the proposition that Vulcan is a planet. However, since 'Vulcan' is a non-referring singular term and (3) fails to express any proposition, (4) also becomes a sentence that does not express any proposition. Just the way Mark fails to express any belief by sincerely uttering (3), someone who utters (4) also fails to express any proposition. However, it is obvious that by sincerely uttering (3), the speaker successfully expresses his belief, which has a truth value. Similarly, by uttering (4), the speaker succeeds in expressing the proposition that Mark believes that Vulcan is a planet. This problem can be presented more carefully as follows:

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<sup>39</sup> See Braun 1993.

Premise 1: If (3) fails to express a proposition, then a person cannot believe the proposition expressed by (3) simply because there is no proposition to believe.

Premise 2: (3) fails to express a proposition.

Conclusion: Hence, a person cannot believe the proposition expressed by (3) simply because there is no proposition to believe.

The last problem is known as *'The Problem of Differing Cognitive Values.'*<sup>40</sup> If (3) does not express a proposition and (4) also does not express a proposition, then both of these sentences have the same cognitive values. Moreover, two sentences containing two different nonreferring names also do not differ in cognitive values. For example, recall (3) and consider (5):

(3) Vulcan is a planet.

(5) Alice is a planet.

(5) and (3) despite differing in their subject terms, have no difference in their cognitive values because both do not express any propositions. However, the fact is that (3), (4), and (5) all these sentences have different cognitive values. To put it in a numbered premise-conclusion form:

Premise 1: If sentences containing nonreferring names fail to express propositions, then two sentences containing two different nonreferring names do not differ in cognitive values because none of them can express any proposition.

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<sup>40</sup> See Braun 1993.

Premise 2: Sentences containing nonreferring names fail to express propositions.

Conclusion: Hence, two sentences containing two different nonreferring names do not differ in cognitive values because none of them can express any proposition.

### **2.3: Closing Remarks**

Based on the above-mentioned problems, one can reject MDR theory. However, it is noticeable that not only the problems are interrelated but also that the last four problems arise from the first problem that claims that a sentence containing a non-referring name fails to express any proposition. Hence, if the first problem can be solved, it is expected that the other problems can also be solved. So far, there have been many attempts to solve these problems. However, before jumping into the existing solutions, I will first discuss which names are genuinely non-referring and whether there is any non-referring name at all or not. For example, if it is true that most of the non-referring names are not genuinely non-referring, rather they have some sort of referents, then it suggests that the problems posed by non-referring names for MDR theory are not so severe after all. Hence, in the second chapter, I will focus on the different versions of artifactualism in order to decide which names we need to be concerned about. And then, in the third chapter, I will discuss the existing solutions and the problems they face, which brings out the fact that there needs to be a better theory than MDR theory that can properly explain the phenomenon of non-referring names. Furthermore, I have also presented a rough sketch of what that better theory might look like.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GENUINE NON-REFERRING NAMES AND ARTIFACTUALISM

In the first chapter, I have discussed MDR theory and some problems it encounters with non-referring names. However, there is a debate over which names are genuinely non-referring, and the theory of abstract artifacts provides an answer to it, according to which some uses of nonreferring names like fictional names and mythical names, can refer to entities that exist in the real world.<sup>41</sup> It does not, nonetheless, suggest that any uses of nonreferring names like 'Alice' and 'Vulcan' can refer to some concrete entities. Unlike Meinongianism, such names do not even refer to some non-existent objects; rather, 'Alice' and 'Vulcan' can refer to the existing fictional character Alice and the hypothetical planet Vulcan, respectively.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Alice and Vulcan are, according to the theory of abstract artifacts, existing abstract artifacts created by their creators.<sup>43</sup> In the four sections of this chapter, different versions of artifactualism will be examined to determine which names are genuinely nonreferring names. By the end of this chapter, we will reach to the conclusion that some names, or at least some uses of names like 'Alice' and 'Vulcan' are genuinely nonreferring.

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<sup>41</sup> In fictional cases, they are intentionally created but in mythical cases, they are inadvertently created. See Salmon 1998, Braun 2005, and others. Different versions of the theory of abstract artifact can be found in Kripke 2013, Searle 1979, Van Inwagen 1979, Thomasson 1999 and 2003, Salmon 1998, and Braun 2005.

<sup>42</sup> *Meinongians* claim that there are some objects that do not exist; yet, they have some other sort of being, namely subsistence. These objects are such that something can be thought of them, and names of them, though, do not refer to any existent objects, can refer to non-existing (subsistent) objects. For details on Meinongianism, see Meinong 1904a, Caplan 2002.

<sup>43</sup> The view that fictional creatures are abstract artifact created and brought into existence by their authors is also known as creationism. See Searle 1979, Thomasson 1999, and Van Inwagen 1977.

## §1: VAN INWAGEN'S ARTIFACTUALISM

Van Inwagen used the term '*creatures of fiction*' by which he means fictional characters, places, and objects mentioned in works of fiction.<sup>44</sup> For example, Alice, the leading fictional character in the fiction *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, is a creature of fiction, and so is the fictional place Wonderland. Creatures of fiction, according to the theory Van Inwagen presents, are existing '*theoretical entities of literary criticism*' and so are novels, fictional stories, poems, fables, literary forms, and others.

Creatures of fiction, according to Van Inwagen, those appear in a particular work of fiction are not less real than the fiction itself, which suggests that existential quantifiers can range over all types of fictional things. However, works of fiction are created by their authors. It suggests that they cannot exist by themselves and entails a dependency relation between a work of fiction and its relevant author. Similarly, creatures of fiction appearing in works of fiction are also created by their authors. Thus, the existence of fictional creatures not only depends on the author who creates it but also on the works of fiction in which they appear.<sup>45</sup> It suggests that the novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* did not exist until Lewis Carroll had written it, and that if *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* would not have existed, then the fictional character 'Alice' could not have existed as a creature of that novel.

Fictional characters are not like ordinary existing entities. The name 'Alice', according to Van Inwagen, exists as robustly as the book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* exists.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See Van Inwagen 1977.

<sup>45</sup> There are different versions of creationism. For example, some versions claim that fictional creatures are independently existing abstract artifacts created by their authors. See Zalta 1983, 1988, 2000, and Deutsch 1985, 1991.

<sup>46</sup> Van Inwagen treats existence as a first-order property. It suggests that fictional creatures have both being and existence. See Van Inwagen 1977, 1983, 2000, and 2003.



However, creatures of fiction cannot actually have most of the properties ascribed to them in the fiction. In Van Inwagen's words,

Thus, the properties Mrs. Gamp *has* are just those "literary" properties that are appropriate to what she is: a theoretical entity of criticism. If she shares any properties with you and me, they are "high-category" properties like existence, self-identity, and non-identity with any ordinal number.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, outside of fiction, a creature of fiction can have the high-category properties but cannot have some of the ordinary properties. Roughly speaking, in Van Inwagen's view, creatures of fiction are existing abstract artifacts, and for that reason, they can only have certain properties that are compatible with there being abstract.<sup>48</sup> For instance, recall (3), and consider (6) and (7):

(3) Vulcan is a planet.

(6) Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do. (Lewis Carroll, 1856)

(7) Alice is a fictional character.

In the above examples, (3) contains a name that occurs in myth, and (6) contains a name that occurs in fiction. In the case of (6), Alice does not have the property of being very tired of sitting by her sister because an abstract artifact cannot have such a property; instead, the property of being very tired of sitting by her sister is ascribed to Alice in the relevant fiction.

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<sup>47</sup> Peter Van Inwagen, "Creatures of Fiction," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1977): 299-308.

<sup>48</sup> The distinction between abstract and concrete is quite controversial. I am not sure whether the traditional distinction even makes sense or not. For a discussion of the problems with traditional abstract and concrete distinction, see Lewis 1986, p. 84-89.

The scenario, however, is different for (7): a creature of fiction like Alice, according to Van Inwagen, can have the property of being a fictional character. This way, Van Inwagen creates a distinction between object-fictional and meta-fictional sentences. (7) is a meta-fictional sentence as such a sentence is made outside of fiction; whereas (6) is an object-fictional sentence as it is made within fiction. In sentence (6), however, the fictional name 'Alice' is merely a nonreferring fictional name that does not refer to anything, not even the fictional character. It can, nevertheless, refer to the relevant fictional character if it is used in sentences outside of fiction.<sup>49</sup>

Ben Caplan in 2004, nonetheless, has provided an argument where he claims that accepting Van Inwagen's theory of fictional creatures can lead one to the realism about all the other categories of creatures.<sup>50</sup> Caplan's argument can be written in the following way:

Premise 1: Creating fictional creatures, mythical creatures, imaginary creatures, and creatures of false scientific theories are the similar kinds of acts.

Premise 2: If creating fictional creatures, mythical creatures, imaginary creatures, and creatures of false scientific theories are the similar kinds of acts, then if fictional creatures are existing abstract artifacts created by authors, then mythical creatures, imaginary creatures, and creatures of false scientific theories are also existing abstract artifacts created by mythmakers, imaginary content-makers, and false scientific theory-makers, respectively.

Conclusion: If fictional creatures are existing abstract artifacts created by authors, then mythical creatures, imaginary creatures, and creatures of false scientific theories are also

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<sup>49</sup> Van Inwagen did not clearly make this distinction and name the two different uses of a fictional name. See Van Inwagen 1977.

<sup>50</sup> Ben Caplan, "Creatures of Fiction, Myth, and Imagination," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (2004).

existing abstract artifacts created by mythmakers, imaginary content-makers, and false scientific theory-makers, respectively.

In other words, arguments very similar to Van Inwagen's realism about creatures of fiction can be given for a broader form of realism about the reference of mythical names and names introduced in the course of false scientific theorizing as Caplan has shown.<sup>51</sup> Caplan also thinks that there is no ontologically significant difference between creatures of fiction and creatures of myth. Similarly, there is no ontologically significant difference between creatures of fiction and creatures of imagination. Authors create fictional creatures along with their works of fiction; on the other hand, creatures of imagination are brought into existence by their creators.<sup>52</sup> The difference between creatures of fiction and creatures of imagination, according to Caplan, is that authors make-believe their works of fiction, whereas imaginers simply entertain their imaginations. If fictional creatures exist and they are the products of their authors' acts of make-believe, then creatures of myth and imagination are also existing entities and products of their creators' acts of mythmaking and acts of imagination.

If Caplan is correct, then Van Inwagen's theory commits one to a huge realism of mythical and other entities. For example, if Alice exists as a fictional character, then Vulcan exists as a mythical character, and Salmon's introduced Nappy also exists as an imaginary character.<sup>53</sup> If any use of the name 'Alice,' namely the meta-fictional one, refers to the fictional character Alice, then in the similar sort of use, namely the meta-mythical use, the name 'Vulcan' also refers to the mythical character Vulcan. Hence, it can be said that names from fiction, myth, imagination, false scientific theory, hallucination, and etc. can be used in two

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<sup>51</sup> For further details, see Caplan 2004.

<sup>52</sup> See Caplan 2004.

<sup>53</sup> Salmon introduced 'Nappy' as an actual emperor of France. See Salmon 1998.

different ways, namely object and meta uses, where in the former one, such names do not refer to anything, and in the latter one, they refer to their relevant abstract artifact. For the purpose of this thesis, I am mostly concerned about the genuinely non-referring uses. In the next section, I will discuss Kripke's pretense theory as it explains why the object-fictional uses of 'Alice' do not refer to anything.

## §2: KRIPKE'S THEORY OF PRETENSE IN FICTION

Both Van Inwagen and Kripke believe that fictional characters are existing abstract artifacts created by their authors and that there is a distinction between object-fictional and meta-fictional sentences. Recall (6) and (7):

(6) Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do. (Lewis Carroll, 1856)

(7) Alice is a fictional character.

In sentence (7), the name 'Alice' refers to the fictional character created by Lewis Carroll, and it is a meta-fictional sentence. However, in (6), when the name is used in fiction, it does not refer to anything and it is an object-fictional sentence.

Van Inwagen, Thomasson, and Kripke suggest that (6) involves pretense, whereas (7) is simply a sentence about Alice.<sup>54</sup> Kripke has developed a version of pretense theory to explain the ontology of fictional creatures and the semantics of fictional names.<sup>55</sup> In Kripke's

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<sup>54</sup> See Van Inwagen 1977, Thomasson 1999, and Kripke 1973, 2013.

<sup>55</sup> See Kripke 2013. Some other versions of pretense theory can be found in Walton 1990, Recanati 2000, Kroon 2000.

pretense principle, pretense is treated as if it is essential in fiction, and hence, Kripke concludes that fictional creatures could not have possibly existed.<sup>56</sup> In his words,

The types of names which occur in fictional discourse are, so to speak, “pretended names,” part of the pretense of the fiction. The propositions in which they occur are pretended propositions rather than real propositions; or rather, as we might put it, the sentences pretend to express a proposition rather than really doing so.<sup>57</sup>

Authors, according to Kripke, intentionally create fiction, and in the process of creating it, they end up with creating fictional characters to play some certain roles in the relevant fiction. Then, while naming the fictional characters, authors simply pretend that the semantic criteria for naming them are satisfied. In other words, that the semantic criteria for naming fictional characters are only pretended to be satisfied in fiction. For instance, in ‘*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*,’ Lewis Carroll happened to create the fictional character Alice and pretended that the name actually refers to the character Alice. However, the name in the fiction does not have any referent. It does not even refer to the fictional character it portrays; it refers to nothing.

Authors, according to the pretense principle, simply pretend to use such names as referring terms; hence, sentences containing them do not really express any genuine propositions.<sup>58</sup> According to Kripke’s pretense theory, no proposition has been expressed, but it is pretended that a true proposition has been expressed.<sup>59</sup> Besides, properties are also just pretended to be attributed to the fictional creatures.<sup>60</sup> In other words, fictional names have

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<sup>56</sup> See Kripke 2013.

<sup>57</sup> Kripke 2013, p. 29.

<sup>58</sup> Van Inwagen’s view might differ than Kripke about expressing propositions. See Van Inwagen 1977 and Kripke 2013.

<sup>59</sup> Salmon and Braun’s views are different here: a proposition has been expressed by such a sentence and it is pretended that the proposition is true. See Salmon 1998 and Braun 2005.

<sup>60</sup> For details, see Kripke 1972.

only pretended referents, and authors also pretend to attribute properties to the pretended referents. As a result, sentences in fiction are only pretended to be true. They are only true in fiction because authors only pretend to create true stories. This is what might have contributed to creating the distinction between object-fictional and meta-fictional sentences.

Pretense theorists treat pretense in fiction as a characteristic of fiction.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, I think it is questionable whether pretense is involved at all in sentences containing fictional names outside of fiction or within fiction.<sup>62</sup> One can claim that it is counterintuitive to suppose that the author is pretending something somewhere in the process of producing fiction. Kripke's pretense theory suggests that an author develops a genuine intention to tell a story and does not pretend to develop the intention and tell the story; rather, she really tells the story but only pretends that it is a true story.<sup>63</sup> However, this can be explained without the help of pretense. The author just develops a genuine intention to tell a false story, and she simply tells a false story without any kind of pretense. Salmon explaining Kripke's pretense principle, in his paper "Nonexistence," says:

According to Kripke, as the name 'Sherlock Holmes' was originally introduced and used by Conan Doyle, it has no referent whatsoever. It is a name in the make-believe world of storytelling, part of an elaborate pretense. By Kripke's lights, our language licenses a certain kind of metaphysical move. It postulates an abstract artifact, the fictional character, as a product of this pretense.<sup>64</sup>

It suggests that the existence of the abstract artifact depends on the authors' pretense activity.

If Salmon is correctly interpreting Kripke, then an abstract artifact is just a by-product of its

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<sup>61</sup> See Kripke 2013, Walton 1990, Recanati 2000, and Kroon 2000.

<sup>62</sup> Also, see Salmon 1998, where he rejects most of the involvement of pretense in fiction.

<sup>63</sup> See Kripke 2013.

<sup>64</sup> See Salmon 1998, p. 294.

author's engaging in the relevant pretense activity. If so, then it is questionable how this can account for any case where an author holds a genuine creative intention to create an abstract artifact.

Furthermore, the author, according to Kripke's pretense theory, happened to create the abstract artifact but pretends that the semantic criteria for naming this abstract artifact are satisfied.<sup>65</sup> In other words, it is not the case that the author pretends to create an abstract artifact; rather, she genuinely creates it but while naming it, she does some sort of a pretending naming ceremony so that it can just look like a referring name, while it is not a genuine referring name. Again, pretense is not needed here. After creating an abstract artifact, the author can genuinely name the artifact without any pretended naming ceremony. That name is a referring name as it refers to the relevant abstract artifact created by the author.

Besides, according to the pretense theory, it is only pretended that propositions have been expressed by the sentences used in fiction. However, the sentences are themselves meaningful, and propositions are actually expressed by the relevant use of such sentences. Consider the sentence (6) again:

(6) Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do. (Lewis Carroll, 1856)

Lewis Carroll created an abstract artifact and named it 'Alice.' Hence, (6) successfully expresses a proposition because the referent of 'Alice' is the fictional character, which itself is a direct constituent (following Russellian proposition theory) of the proposition expressed

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<sup>65</sup> See Kripke 2013 and Salmon 1998.

by (6). Since propositions are actually expressed by the sentences in fiction, there is no need to pretend that propositions have been expressed.

In fiction, according to pretense theory, it is also a part of pretense that properties are attributed to the abstract artifacts created by an author. However, pretense might not be needed here either. Authors genuinely create false stories with their genuine intention to do so. They create abstract artifacts and with the intention to name it, dub it with names of their choices satisfying the naming criteria. The names are itself referring names as they successfully refer to the relevant abstract artifacts. Hence, inside and outside of fiction, such a name refers to the abstract artifact created by its author and similarly, properties are genuinely attributed to the abstract artifacts.

However, abstract artifacts, no matter whether inside or outside of fiction, cannot have some ordinary properties, such as being a fat old lady. An abstract artifact cannot be a fat old lady or a six-years old girl. Instead, it can have the properties those are compatible with its being abstract, such as the property of an abstract artifact or a fictional character.<sup>66</sup> Hence, inside of fictions, the author's attempts to attribute properties to her created abstract artifacts fail. Failure to attribute properties to the artifacts is a reason why sentences inside of fiction are false. To rephrase it, while creating stories, authors do everything genuinely.

One might argue that reading the fiction, despite knowing that it is a false story, readers still get emotional over a bad ending. Readers even get angry or excited about what is coming next in the fiction they are reading. Pretense theory can explain this phenomenon; but if there is no pretense involved in fiction, then what might be the reason behind readers' emotions.

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<sup>66</sup> Van Inwagen, Salmon, and Braun all agree that some properties cannot be attributed to fictional creatures. See Van Inwagen 1977, Braun 2005, and Salmon 1998.



A possible reply to it might be something like this: it is not the case that there is no pretense involved in fiction at all; rather, there is some sort of pretense involved in fiction at least on the reader's part. There is definitely a connection between authors and their audiences. Authors create fiction and present it to their readers in such a way that it invites the readers to pretend that the fiction is true. In other words, authors invite their readers to engage in pretense while reading their stories. It can be said that there are two different senses of pretense. One is pretense as a description of what authors might be doing, and the other one is the invitation to pretend as a sort of authorial intention with respect to how that fiction is to be received by the readers. The latter one brings up a lot of questions, and here, I am mostly concerned about the first one. In the above-mentioned no involvement of pretense idea, pretense is treated as a description of what authors might be doing when they are working to create a fiction even before presenting it to the readers.

The so far discussion suggests that if involvement of pretense in fiction is the reason for making the object-fictional and meta-fictional distinction regarding the referents of fictional names, then denying the involvement of pretense as a description of what authors might be doing, makes such distinction disappear. If the distinction disappears, then it turns out that names like fictional names are not non-referring inside of fiction. Salmon has a view where he claims that there is no referential distinction between object-fictional and meta-fictional uses of names like 'Alice'.<sup>67</sup>

### **§3: SALMON'S THEORY OF NON-REFERRING TERMS**

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<sup>67</sup> See Salmon 1998.

There are names introduced by authors for the purpose of relaying their fictions, and Salmon agrees with Peter Van Inwagen about the existence of such fictional names, where Van Inwagen further claims that fictional names can sometimes refer to their relevant abstract artifacts, which are, in fact, fictional creatures created by their authors.<sup>68</sup> Recall (6) and (7):

(6) Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do. (Lewis Carroll, 1856)

(7) Alice is a fictional character.

According to Salmon's theory, a fictional name used in fiction, such as 'Alice<sub>1</sub>', can refer to the abstract artifact Alice created by Carroll. Hence, the object-fictional sentence (6) has a genuine semantic content in its original use. There is, thus, no ambiguity between object-fictional and meta-fictional sentences containing fictional names. Since the referents of fictional names are existing entities, sentences about them also exist. However, there is a small role for pretense principle in Salmon's theory. No fictional entity, according to Salmon, actually has most of the properties its author attributes to it inside the fiction because, inside the fiction, the author only pretends to attribute those properties on his created abstract artifacts; and hence, sentences those appear in fiction express untrue propositions. Salmon extends a similar kind of view for mythical names as well. An important difference between myth and fiction is that myth is genuinely believed, and the relevant authors of fiction make-believe their works. There is, however, no pretense involved in the process of myth making. Salmon endorses that just like a fictional name, a mythical name such that 'Vulcan' is also

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<sup>68</sup> See Van Inwagen, 1977; and Salmon, 1998, 291-304.

not ambiguous; both 'Vulcan<sub>1</sub>' and 'Vulcan<sub>2</sub>' refer to the same abstract artifact mistakenly created and named 'Vulcan' by the mythmaker.<sup>69</sup>

However, according to Salmon's theory, there are four other categories of names treated as non-referring singular terms:<sup>70</sup>

- (a) Weakly Nonreferring Singular terms: the referent of such a nonreferring singular term might have existed but does not actually exist. For example, Salmon provides an example of Noman. Noman is the particular possible individual who is Salmon's merely possible brother. The referent of 'Noman' does not exist because he is just a definite merely possible individual, but someone might have existed as the actual referent of 'Noman.' For Salmon, 'Noman' is a weakly nonreferring singular term.
- (b) Very Weakly Nonreferring Singular Terms: the referent of such a nonreferring singular term has existed in the past or will exist in the future. The existence of the referent of this kind of singular term is depended on a particular time such that the referent has existed at t or will exist at t. 'Socrates' is a very weakly non-referring singular term because the reference of this name, the person Socrates, has existed in the past but does not exist now. Salmon provided another example as well: he introduced the name 'Newman,' who is the 1<sup>st</sup> child born in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. Newman has neither existed, nor does he exist now, but is going to exist in the future; and thus, a very weakly nonreferring singular term.
- (c) Strongly Nonreferring Singular Terms: the referent of such a nonreferring singular term could not have existed anyway. For example, Salmon introduced Nothan - the merely

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<sup>69</sup> See Salmon 1998, and Braun 2005.

<sup>70</sup> See Salmon 1998.

possible individual - who would have sprung from the ovum Salmon actually sprang. 'Nothan' is a weakly nonreferring singular term. Since they both require the same ovum, Salmon and Nothan both could not exist in the same world. So, the proposition that Nothan might have been taller than Salmon is a strongly nonreferring term. It means that the referents of such terms are mainly impossible things.<sup>71</sup>

- (d) Thoroughly Nonreferring Singular Terms: the referent of such a nonreferring singular term simply does not exist. If one introduces a nonreferring name without properly singling out a merely particular possible object as a reference of that name, then that name is considered as a thoroughly nonreferring name, such as Salmon's introduced 'Curly-0'. Curly-0 is the merely possible bald man standing in Quine's doorway, but it is possible that many merely possible men are standing there, and Salmon has not singled out a particular one as Curly-0.<sup>72</sup>

A sentence containing a nonreferring singular term, in Salmon's theory, is not meaningless; rather, it is meaningful and can express a proposition that can be true or false depending on its context, time, and world. Though a sentence containing a non-referring singular term can express a proposition, it does not follow that the proposition exists. The existence of a proposition depends on the existence of the referent of the singular term it is about. Since the referent of a nonreferring singular term does not exist, the propositions about such terms do not exist either. Hence, even if propositions containing nonreferring singular terms from (a), (b), and (c) do not exist, they can still have truth values, and the truth values depend on the context, time, and world. Salmon also believes that the existence of an object

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<sup>71</sup> For details on what Salmon thinks impossible objects are see Salmon 1998.

<sup>72</sup> Salmon also introduces a name 'Nappy' as a thoroughly non-referring singular term. See Salmon, 1998.

is not a pre-condition for having properties.<sup>73</sup> He rejects the idea that existence precedes suchness, which suggests that the referents of (a), (b), (c), and (d) can have properties even if they do not exist.<sup>74</sup>

Among the above-mentioned four categories of nonreferring singular terms, (d) is a special one. Salmon thinks that sentences containing them are not only genuinely nonreferring but also rare and bizarre.<sup>75</sup> Salmon introduced 'Nappy' and 'Curly-0' as such names.<sup>76</sup> In short, only thoroughly nonreferring names are genuine nonreferring names and all other names have some sorts of referents.

However, Salmon's classifications of non-referring names are problematic. Salmon classifies non-referring singular names into four categories: weakly, very weakly, strongly, and thoroughly nonreferring names. Among these four categories, weakly, very weakly, and strongly nonreferring names, according to Salmon, are not genuinely nonreferring after all.<sup>77</sup> Salmon thinks that they actually have some sorts of referents.<sup>78</sup> However, even though Salmon himself claims that such names are not genuinely nonreferring names, he still somehow treats them as nonreferring names by calling them weakly, very weakly, strongly, and thoroughly *non-referring* names. Here is an argument for why these names, following Salmon's theory, cannot be called non-referring names:

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<sup>73</sup> Salmon thinks that existence is a first-order monadic predicate and hence, it can be a property of an object. In other words, the property of existence can be attributed to an object. See Salmon 1998.

<sup>74</sup> This view somewhat presents Salmon as a Meinongian.

<sup>75</sup> See Salmon, 1998.

<sup>76</sup> It is controversial whether 'Nappy' is a genuine nonreferring name. See Caplan 2004.

<sup>77</sup> See Salmon 1998.

<sup>78</sup> Salmon ends up claiming that only thoroughly nonreferring names are genuinely nonreferring names and such names are rare to find. For further details, see Salmon 1998.

(P1) According to Salmon, intentional attitude relations can be held between existent and non-existent entities.

(P2) According to Salmon, some properties, such as being true or false, and being a proposition, can be held by non-existent entities.

(C1) According to Salmon, intentional attitude relations can be held between existent and non-existent entities, and some properties, such as being true or false, and being a proposition, can be held by non-existent entities.

(P3) If C1, then if names like 'Socrates', 'Newman-1', and 'Noman' are non-referring singular names, then reference, the relation, needs to be fundamentally different kind of relation than properties and intentional attitude relations.

(C2) If names like 'Socrates', 'Newman-1', and 'Noman' are non-referring singular names, then reference, the relation, needs to be a fundamentally different kind of relation than properties and intentional attitude relations.

(P4) It is not the case that reference, the relation, is a fundamentally different kind of relation than properties and intentional attitude relations.

(C3) Hence, names like 'Socrates', 'Newman-1', and 'Noman' are not non-referring singular names.

(P5) If names like 'Socrates', 'Newman-1', and 'Noman' are not non-referring singular names, then names like 'Socrates', 'Newman-1', and 'Noman' cannot be called as non-referring names.

(C4) Therefore, names like 'Socrates', 'Newman-1', and 'Noman' cannot be called as non-referring names.

For (P1), consider the following sentence,

(15) x believes that Socrates is wise.

Here, Socrates is a non-existent individual, and hence, the proposition that Socrates is wise, is also a non-existent proposition. In Salmon's theory, to have a relation to something, the existence of an entity is not mandatory. Suppose that x is an existent individual. According to Salmon's theory, x, the existing entity, can have a belief relation to the nonexistent proposition. Hence, (P1) is true. Salmon's theory presupposes the rejection of the principle of serious actualism. In Salmon's view, though a proposition about a singular term exists only when the referent of that singular term exists, a non-existing proposition can also have properties. Existence itself can be a property of an object and is a first-order monadic predicate. It means that similar to the other properties, the property of existence can be ascribed to an object. Hence, the existence of an object is not a necessary pre-condition for having properties. Thus, he rejects the idea that existence universally precedes suchness, which means that the referents of nonreferring singular terms can have properties even if they do not exist. Similarly, even if the proposition about Socrates does not exist now, it can have the property of being true or the property of being a proposition. Thus, (P2) is also true.

Just like other relations and properties, a reference is also just a relation. Reference is just a relation between a name, such as 'Socrates', and the individual that name refers to. Now, since (P1) and (P2) are true, in order to accept the fact that names like 'Socrates', 'Newman-1', and 'Noman' are non-referring singular names, the relation reference needs to

be a different kind of relation. Hence, (P3) is true. Nevertheless, reference is just a relation like a belief relation and a property relation. Moreover, existence is not necessary to have such a relation to something and a non-existent proposition can also have properties. This means that (P4) is also true. Even though Salmon himself also believes that names like 'Socrates', 'Newman-1', and 'Noman' have some sort of referents, he still calls them 'non-referring singular terms.' However, if names like 'Socrates', 'Newman-1', and 'Noman' are not non-referring singular names, then there is no point in calling them *non-referring* names. Hence, (P5) is true as well.

However, Salmon's theory could have avoided this problem if the classification of names, such as weakly, very weakly, strongly, and thoroughly nonreferring names, were different. For instance, names from the past, such as 'Socrates,' can be called 'past-directed names,' and names from the future, such as 'Newman-1,' can be called as 'future-directed names.' Names of individuals who do not exist but could have existed, such as 'Noman,' and those who could not have existed anyway, such as 'Nothan-0,' can be called as 'modally-directed names.'

In order to explain which names are genuinely nonreferring, Salmon introduced the name 'Curly-0,' a merely possible bald man standing in Quine's doorway, without singling out a particular individual as the referent of that name and he claims that this name is genuinely nonreferring.<sup>79</sup> However, in Salmon's theory, there is no proper list of requirements to be a genuine nonreferring name. In support of Salmon's theory, one might still say that if there has not been a proper naming ceremony, or in other words, the semantic criteria for naming have

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<sup>79</sup> See Salmon 1998.



not been properly satisfied, then that name can be considered as a nonreferring name. One might introduce a name without having anything in mind to which that name can refer. For example, one can say, “let’s introduce a name ‘Tilli’. Tilli is something or someone, but I don’t know what or who exactly Tilli is.” In this case, the naming criteria are far away from satisfactory and ‘Tilli’ is a genuinely nonreferring name. None of these requirements, however, make much difference because such names are very rare to find.<sup>80</sup>

Salmon’s theory at first glimpse looks quite lucrative because most categories of non-referring names, according to Salmon’s theory, have some sort of referents. If most of the commonly known nonreferring names have some sort of referents, then it turns out that the problems posed by nonreferring names are not that severe after all. However, such a claim together with the claim that genuinely nonreferring names are rare and bizarre is the most problematic part of Salmon’s theory because some uses of such names (for example, ‘Alice’) are genuinely non-referring. Braun has a view where he provides a plausible reason for believing in the referential distinction between object-fictional and meta-fictional uses of fictional names.

#### **§4: BRAUN’S ARGUMENT OF INDETERMINACY**

Braun agrees with Van Inwagen and others about the existence of fictional creatures.<sup>81</sup> Fictional entities, according to Braun’s theory, are abstract artifacts created somehow by their

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<sup>80</sup> See Salmon 1998.

<sup>81</sup> See Braun 2005.

authors; and hence, fictional names can *sometimes* refer to genuine fictional entities. Recall (6) and (7):

(6) Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do. (Lewis Carroll, 1856)

(7) Alice is a fictional character.

Braun also believes that in (7), the name 'Alice' refers to the fictional character created by Lewis Carroll. However, when the name is used in fiction, it might not refer to anything. In object fictional reading, fictional names might be nonreferring, whereas in meta-fictional cases, they are referring names because they refer to the abstract artifacts created by their authors, and that is why Braun suggests that the name should be replaced with two names to solve the ambiguity: 'Alice<sub>1</sub>' and 'Alice<sub>2</sub>'. 'Alice<sub>1</sub>' is the non-referring one that is used in the fiction, whereas 'Alice<sub>2</sub>' is the referring one used outside of the fiction. Since 'Alice<sub>1</sub>' does not refer to anything, sentences containing them, according to Braun, express gappy propositions. On the other hand, 'Alice<sub>2</sub>' is a referring name that refers to the abstract artifact created by Lewis Carroll, and a sentence containing it can successfully express a proposition containing the abstract artifact as a constituent of the proposition.

Now, the question is why 'Alice<sub>1</sub>' does not refer to the abstract artifact created by Carroll. According to Braun's theory, after creating the fictional character Alice, Carroll pretends to name the artifact 'Alice' and later, pretends to refer to something with that name and asserts some propositions about it while writing the story.<sup>82</sup> Carroll's singular thoughts

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<sup>82</sup> It seems that unlike Kripke, Braun does not believe that the involvement of pretense is the reason why object-fictional uses of fictional names are non-referring. Rather, he thinks that in some cases, object-fictional uses of fictional names do not refer because of authors' not having any singular thoughts and intentions about the fictional characters. For details with examples, see Braun 2005.

and intentions about the character Alice determine whether his inscriptions of 'Alice' refer to his created fictional character Alice or not.<sup>83</sup> Whether an author has singular thoughts and intentions about the fictional characters in the process of writing the story, depends on the relevant empirical facts and it might vary from case to case. The author, according to Braun, might not have any singular thoughts and intentions about his created character while writing the story. In Braun's own words,

But Conan Doyle might not have had such singular thoughts and intentions. Perhaps, he just started writing his story with the non-singular intention that he pretend to refer to something with the name 'Holmes'. He would then not have had a particular character "in mind."<sup>84</sup>

Now, one might claim that an author cannot pretend to refer to *something* without having that *something* in her mind. In Braun's support, it can be said that even if the author has *something* in her mind, that something might not be a particular character because the author might not have any singular thought about it. It suggests that in a case, if the author lacks the relevant singular thoughts and intentions, then any plausible candidate for introducing the name using a reference-fixing description will fail. That is why Braun believes that there are referential indeterminacies in authors' inscriptions and their later reflections of the fictional name as well as our utterances of that fictional name.<sup>85</sup> According to Braun's theory, if there are referential indeterminacies in author's inscriptions and our utterances of fictional names, then by replacing the name 'Alice' with two different names (namely 'Alice<sub>1</sub>'

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<sup>83</sup> See Braun 2005.

<sup>84</sup> See Braun 2005.

<sup>85</sup> See Braun 2005.

and ‘Alice<sub>2</sub>’, where the former one can be used in non-referring cases and the latter one can be used in referring cases), can solve the ambiguity problem.<sup>86</sup>

Mythical objects, according to Braun’s artifactualism, are also abstract artifacts created by mythmakers. Mythmakers and scientific theorists unintentionally create abstract artifacts and inside of the myths and scientific theories, such names do not refer to anything at all.<sup>87</sup> Hence, according to Braun, Le Verrier’s utterances of ‘Vulcan’ do not refer to anything, but in a sentence like ‘According to Le Verrier, Vulcan is a planet,’ the name ‘Vulcan’ refers to the abstract artifact created by Le Verrier. Just like ‘Alice<sub>1</sub>’ and ‘Alice<sub>2</sub>’, the former one can be called ‘Vulcan<sub>1</sub>’, and the latter ‘Vulcan<sub>2</sub>’. The conclusion of this section is that genuinely nonreferring names are not rare and bizarre because there are plenty of them. For example, names like ‘Alice<sub>1</sub>’ and ‘Vulcan<sub>1</sub>’ are genuinely nonreferring names.

## §5: CLOSING REMARKS

The main problematic claim in MDR theory is that the sole semantic content of a name is its referent and nothing else. This is the root cause of the problems posed by non-referring names as non-referring names do not have any referents. Nevertheless, if non-referring names are rare to find, then one might not be so concerned about these problems because the problems are not so severe then. However, that is not the case here. This chapter ends up with the conclusion that along with the other genuine non-referring names, some uses of names like ‘Alice’ and ‘Vulcan’, namely ‘Alice<sub>1</sub>’ and ‘Vulcan<sub>1</sub>’, are also non-referring. It

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<sup>86</sup> Kripke also suggests using ‘Alice<sub>1</sub>’ and ‘Alice<sub>2</sub>’ to make the distinction clear. However, because of relying on the pretense theory to explain the object-fictional use, Kripke’s theory turns out insupportable.

<sup>87</sup> Besides, since the myth-maker’s naming ceremony is the reason for the mythical object’s existence, Braun thinks that the causal-historical relation between these two is problematic. See Braun 2005.

suggests that a proper solution is still required to solve the problems of non-referring names. In the next chapter, I will examine a proposition-based solution, namely gappy propositions theory, to solve the problems posed by non-referring names for MDR theory; and then, since gappy proposition theory turns out as untenable, I will present a preliminary version of a theory that can be used in replace of MDR theory as it does not encounter the problems of non-referring names.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### GAPPY SOLUTION AND A PROPOSED THEORY

According to all the four versions of artifactualism discussed in the second chapter, there are, indeed, some non-referring names (though Salmon claims that they are rare to find).<sup>88</sup> It suggests that the problems non-referring names pose for a semantic theory like MDR theory, are still there.<sup>89</sup> A possible solution to these problems is known as the notion of 'gappy proposition', which is developed by many philosophers and among them Braun's and Salmon's versions will be examined in this current chapter.<sup>90</sup> Since the gappy propositions theory turns out as an insufficient solution to the problems of nonreferring names, I will then be rejecting the theory of gappy propositions, which will further lead to a rejection of MDR theory. At the end of this chapter, I will present a rough sketch of a better theory, where I will claim that every meaningful expression, such as names, comes with a semantic content regardless of their referential status. I will further claim that the semantic content of a meaningful expression is the nondescriptive sense associated with it.

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<sup>88</sup> Van Inwagen, Kripke, and Braun's theory agrees that some particular uses of 'Alice' are nonreferring. Kripke and Braun named the nonreferring one 'Alice<sub>1</sub>'. In this chapter, I will be only concerned about 'Alice<sub>1</sub>'. Hence, in this chapter, by 'Alice', I mean 'Alice<sub>1</sub>'. On the other hand, Salmon claimed that genuinely nonreferring names are rare and bizzare, which suggests that there are still nonreferring names, according to Salmon's theory, but they are just rare to find.

<sup>89</sup> Even though nonreferring names are rare and bizarre in Salmon's version of artifactualism, still there are genuine nonreferring names. Salmon calls them 'thoroughly non-referring singular terms.' See Salmon 1998. On the other hand, in addition to other nonreferring names, according to Van Inwagen, Kripke, and Braun's version of artifactualism, names like 'Alice<sub>1</sub>' and 'Vulcan<sub>1</sub>' are also nonreferring. See Van Inwagen 1977, Kripke 2013, and Braun 2005.

<sup>90</sup> Braun endorses the gappy proposition view after denying the no-proposition view (sentences containing nonreferring names do not express any proposition). However, Kaplan first introduced the idea of the gappy proposition. Salmon also endorses a similar kind of idea in a different name. See Kaplan 1973b, Salmon 1998, Braun 1993 and 2005, Reimer 2001b.

## §1: BRAUN'S THEORY OF GAPPY PROPOSITIONS

Recall (2), (3), (6), and (7):

(2) Paulo Coelho is a novelist.

(3) Vulcan is a planet.

(6) Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do. (Lewis Carroll, 1856)

(7) Alice is a fictional character.

The name 'Paulo Coelho' is, according to David Braun, a referring name that refers to the person Paulo Coelho. The only semantic function of such a proper name is to pick out the individual it refers to, and a sentence containing a proper name, such as (2), expresses a singular Russellian structured proposition.<sup>91</sup> Since the semantic content of (2) is a function of the semantic content of its constituents, and the semantic content of the proper name 'Paulo Coelho' is the person it refers to, it turns out that the referent of the proper name itself is a constituent of the proposition expressed by (2). The proposition expressed by (2) can be represented in an ordered pair consisting of the referent of 'Paulo Coelho' and the property attributed to him in (2):

(2a) <Paulo Coelho, being-a-novelist>

However, the same does not happen for (6) and Le Verrier's utterance of (3). (6) and (3) both contains genuinely nonreferring proper names. Although Braun thinks that there are different uses of proper names, for the purposes of this chapter, I am just seeking attention

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<sup>91</sup> For details, see Braun 1993 and 2005.

to the genuinely non-referring uses of names that Braun mentions.<sup>92</sup> Sentence (6) contains a proper name that does not refer to any existing object. Since a constituent of the proposition expressed by (6) and a constituent of the proposition expressed by Le Verrier's utterance of (3) are missing, it seems that no propositions are expressed at all, which makes the sentences meaningless and not truth valuable. Braun believes a theory where propositions are the bearers of truth-values and sentences get the same truth-value as their propositions.<sup>93</sup> Hence, if sentences like (6) do not express any proposition, then they do not have truth-values. In addition to this, the problem of no proposition also leads to many other problems, such as the problem of belief, sincere assertive utterance, and attitude ascriptions, and the problem of differing cognitive values.<sup>94</sup> To summarize, in Braun's view, 'Alice<sub>2</sub>' and 'Vulcan<sub>2</sub>' are not genuinely non-referring names, but 'Alice<sub>1</sub>' and 'Vulcan<sub>1</sub>' are nonreferring names, which suggests that there still remain the problems of nonreferring names.

However, gappy proposition theory, according to Braun, provides a solution to these problems. A sentence containing a nonreferring name, according to Braun, expresses a gappy proposition (he first named it '*unfilled proposition*').<sup>95</sup> For example, sentence (6) and Le Verrier's utterance of (3) express gappy propositions because they respectively contain the non-referring singular names 'Alice<sub>1</sub>' and 'Vulcan<sub>1</sub>'. Braun believes that a nonreferring name has no semantic content, but a sentence containing it can successfully express a gappy proposition. A gappy proposition expressed by a sentence is just like an ordinary proposition that has the same propositional structure of the relevant sentence, except the fact that since

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<sup>92</sup> Braun thinks that 'Vulcan<sub>1</sub>' and 'Alice<sub>1</sub>' are genuinely nonreferring uses of those names. See Braun 2005.

<sup>93</sup> See Braun 1993 and 2005.

<sup>94</sup> These problems are discussed in the first chapter of this thesis and also, for Braun's version of these problems, see Braun 1993 and 2005.

<sup>95</sup> See Braun 1993.



the nonreferring proper name has no referent, the place of the semantic content of the nonreferring name is vacuous. In Braun's words,

Thus, I proposed...that the semantic content of sentence (3) is a propositional structure that contains an unfilled position (a "gap"), as represented by (3p). ... I furthermore proposed that unfilled propositional structures can be asserted and believed.<sup>96</sup>

For instance, the proposition expressed by Le Verrier's utterance of (3), according to Braun, can be represented in the following ordered pair:<sup>97</sup>

(3a) < \_, being-a-planet >

Thus, *the problem of no proposition expressed*, and *the problem of non-sense* are solved because a sentence containing a nonreferring name is not proposition-less after all; rather, it expresses a gappy proposition that can be meaningful and not nonsense.<sup>98</sup> Besides, *the problem of truth-value* is also solved because one can utter such a sentence to express something true or false. Braun thinks that propositions expressed by sentences like (3) are false.<sup>99</sup> For Braun, all atomic gappy propositions are false. However, consider the following sentence:

(8) Vulcan does not exist.

The negative existential proposition expressed by (8) can be true considering it as a negation of the false proposition that Vulcan exists<sup>100</sup>:

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<sup>96</sup> See Braun 2005, p. 599.

<sup>97</sup> Braun does not think that ordered pairs and n-tuples are identical with propositions; rather, they can just represent propositions. See Braun 2005.

<sup>98</sup> See Braun 2005.

<sup>99</sup> Braun 2005.

<sup>100</sup> Sentences containing gappy propositions, according to Braun's theory, can have scope ambiguities. The proposition expressed by a sentence containing a nonreferring name is false, if the quantifier has wide scope. See Braun 2005. For further details on scope ambiguity, see Russell 1905.

(8a) <<\_, existing>, NEG>

Moreover, gappy proposition theory can also solve *the problem of the proposition believed*. One can sincerely and assertively utter as well as believe a sentence like (3) containing a nonreferring name because it expresses a proposition even though it is a gappy one. Recall (4):

(4) Mark believes that Vulcan is a planet.

According to Braun's gappy proposition theory, (4) expresses the following gappy proposition:

(4a) <Mark, belief-relation, <\_, being-a-planet>>

In other words, there is a proposition, namely a gappy one, that Mark believes.<sup>101</sup> Braun also claims that one can believe the same proposition in different ways as for Braun, there can be different ways of believing propositions.<sup>102</sup>

Last but not the least, Braun claims that *the problem of differing cognitive values* can also be solved using the gappy proposition theory. Recall (3) and (5) in an object-mythical and object-fictional way, respectively:

(3) Vulcan is a planet.

(5) Alice is a planet.

(3) and (5), according to the gappy proposition theory, express the same following gappy proposition:

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<sup>101</sup> Braun treats belief as a two-place relation between an agent and the proposition expressed by a sentence.

<sup>102</sup> For details, see Braun 2002 and 2005.

(3a) < \_, being-a-planet >

It seems that both (3) and (5) do not differ in terms of their cognitive significance because they express the same proposition. However, according to Braun's theory, a speaker who utters (3) and (5) can be in two different mental states while uttering them. A person who utters (3), expresses (3a) and grasps it in a *Vulcan-ish way* and one who utters (5) also expresses (3a) but grasps it in an *Alice-ish way*.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, one can simply believe the same proposition expressed by two different sentences because of her two different ways of believing. Thus, (3) and (5) differ in cognitive values.<sup>104</sup>

Braun's gappy proposition theory seems to provide solutions to all the problems MDR theory encounters in the context of nonreferring names. Whether it is the ultimate solution or not, that will be discussed later. Meanwhile, Salmon has a version of gappy proposition theory, which will be discussed in the next section.

## §2: SALMON'S THEORY OF STRUCTURALLY CHALLENGED PROPOSITIONS

A proposition expressed by a sentence containing a thoroughly nonreferring singular term (genuine nonreferring names), such as 'Curly-0', who is not a definite or identifiable possible nonexistent individual, is named as a structurally challenged proposition by Salmon.<sup>105</sup> Sentences containing fictional names, mythical names, weakly nonreferring names, very weakly nonreferring names, and strongly nonreferring names do not express

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<sup>103</sup> See Braun 2005.

<sup>104</sup> Whether cognitive values are properties of sentences, or propositions, or the utterances of sentences is a complicated issue. For the purpose of this thesis, I am treating cognitive values as properties of sentences and the utterances of the sentences.

<sup>105</sup> See Salmon 1998.

structurally challenged propositions. They simply express Russellian structured propositions. Only sentences containing thoroughly nonreferring terms (genuine nonreferring names) can express such propositions. Structurally challenged propositions can exist even though the referents of the thoroughly nonreferring singular terms about which the propositions are, do not exist.

Now, consider the following two sentences,

(9) Nappy exists.

(10) Curly-0 exists.

(10) and (9) express the same structurally challenged proposition, which can be represented as:

(10a) < \_, existence >

According to Salmon, (10) and (9) express the same structurally challenged proposition, which we can represent as (10a); however, one can grasp and believe (10a) in different ways.<sup>106</sup>

The idea of the truth value of structurally challenged propositions, in Salmon's theory, is more complicated than Braun's. Salmon thinks that there are two ways of understanding falsehood because one might consider being false as being untrue, whereas there is a difference between something being false and something being untrue. Salmon considers both choice and exclusion negation to explain the truth values of sentences containing genuine nonreferring names. Suppose that the proposition expressed by a sentence S is p.

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<sup>106</sup> See Salmon 1998. Braun also suggests a similar sort of view. See Braun 2005.

If the choice negation of  $p$  is true, then  $p$  is just false. On the other hand, if the exclusion negation is true, then  $p$  is false. Now, when  $p$ 's truth-value is undefined, the choice negation of  $p$  is also undefined, whereas the exclusion negation of  $p$  becomes true. Here is the truth table for choice and exclusion negation:

$p$	Choice Negation	Exclusion Negation
T	F	F
F	T	T
Neither T nor F	Neither T nor F	T

Now, consider the negation of (10),

(11) Curly-0 does not exist.

If one considers that the negation used in the sentence (11) is an exclusion negation, then the structurally challenged proposition expressed by (11) turns out as true, and (10) becomes untrue. On the other hand, if one considers a choice negation for (11), then (11) is also neither true nor false. (11) can have two different truth-values in two different negation readings.

In order to have a true reading of the structurally challenged proposition expressed by (11), Salmon claimed that the negation used in (11) is an exclusion negation. In (10), 'Curly-0' is a genuine non-referring name and the proposition expressed by (10) lacks a constituent, which makes it neither true nor false. However, the fact that (10) is truth-valueless does not prevent (11) from being true. Salmon further thinks that other than the propositions expressed by true negative existential sentences, most of the propositions expressed by sentences

containing weakly, very weakly, strongly, and thoroughly nonreferring singular names are not true.<sup>107</sup>

### §3: PROBLEMS OF GAPPY PROPOSITIONS THEORY

Salmon's and Braun's theories solve the problems of non-referring names as follows: according to Salmon, one can scarcely find genuine nonreferring names as they are very rare because most of the nonreferring names are only apparently nonreferring singular terms (they look like nonreferring names, but they actually have some sort of referents).<sup>108</sup> However, even if one succeeds in finding a genuine nonreferring name, in Salmon's view, it does not create any important problem because sentences containing them can express structurally challenged propositions (in other words, gappy propositions). These kinds of propositions are just like Russellian structured propositions but gappy; and therefore, can have truth-values and can be sincerely and assertively uttered and believed.<sup>109</sup> On the other hand, according to Braun's theory, genuine nonreferring names are not that rare; rather, names like 'Alice<sub>1</sub>' and 'Vulcan<sub>1</sub>' are also genuinely nonreferring names. However, in Braun's view, sentences containing such names do not pose any problems for MDR theory because they can express gappy propositions.<sup>110</sup>

Salmon's structurally challenged propositions and Braun's gappy propositions both differ in terms of their positions regarding the truth-values of gappy propositions; nevertheless, both of them are, in fact, the same notion. Salmon's theory faces problems regarding the

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<sup>107</sup> For details, see Salmon 1998.

<sup>108</sup> See Salmon 1998.

<sup>109</sup> See Salmon 1998.

<sup>110</sup> See Braun 2005.

claim that structurally challenged propositions are mostly truth valueless. It is intuitive to say that propositions expressed by sentences like (10) are plainly false rather than neither true nor false, where false is treated as just false, not untrue. Braun's position regarding the truth values of gappy propositions definitely sounds better for simplicity and following common intuitions because in Braun's theory, (10) is false and (11) as a negation of (10) is true.<sup>111</sup>

Now, a common problem both Salmon's and Braun's versions of gappy propositions theory encounters is whether such gappy propositions are propositions at all because it seems like they are just propositional structures lacking constituents.<sup>112</sup> Recall Braun's words,

Thus, I proposed...that the semantic content of sentence (3) is a propositional structure that contains an unfilled position (a "gap"), as represented by (3p). ... I furthermore proposed that unfilled propositional structures can be asserted and believed.<sup>113</sup>

Now, it is doubtful whether a propositional structure can be called and treated as a proposition because they are, in fact, not the same things.<sup>114</sup> However, even if one considers such propositional structures as propositions, the theory of gappy propositions still fails to solve *the problem of differing cognitive values*. Recall (3) and (5):

(3) Vulcan is a planet.

(5) Alice is a planet.

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<sup>111</sup> According to Braun's theory, atomic gappy propositions are false. However, both Salmon and Braun believes that negative existential sentences containing genuine nonreferring names express gappy propositions that can be true. See Braun 2005 and Salmon 1998 for further details.

<sup>112</sup> See Braun 2005.

<sup>113</sup> See Braun 2005, p. 599.

<sup>114</sup> Syed Mousavian provided reasons for rejecting the claim that gappy propositions are, in fact, propositions, and I find his arguments quite convincing. See Mousavian 2011 for further details.

According to the gappy propositions theory, even though (3) contains 'Vulcan' and (5) contains 'Ailce', (3) and (5) still express the same gappy proposition:

(3a) <\_, being-a-planet>

Hence, (3) and (5) do not differ in cognitive values. However, according to gappy propositions theory, a speaker who utters (3) and (5) can be in two different mental states while uttering them and hence, can grasp (3a) in two different ways. Both of them, however, still express the same proposition, even though they are two different sentences. Gappy propositions theory, hence, fails to solve *the problem of differing cognitive values* and that is why we need a better theory that can address all the problems of nonreferring names.

#### **§4: A PROPOSED THEORY**

Based on the problems gappy propositions theory encounters, one can reject it, and then the problems nonreferring names pose for the MDR theory still remain there, which further indicates that the MDR theory is problematic. Let's recap what the MDR theory is:

Millianism: Proper names are not descriptive; rather, they refer to individuals called by them, and the sole semantic content of a name is its referent, if any.

Direct reference: Proper names directly refer to their referents (if any).

Russellianism: The constituents of a Russellian structured proposition expressed by a sentence are the individuals, relations, and properties that the constituents of the sentence refer to.



The most problematic part of the MDR theory is Millianism. Millianism is a theory about proper names, and it works comparatively better with proper names that have referents than with nonreferring proper names.<sup>115</sup> Now, if the sole semantic content of a name is its referent (if any), then a nonreferring name not only lacks its referent but also lacks its semantic content. However, even though such names do not have any referents, it is quite evident that we can believe propositions expressed by sentences containing nonreferring names, we can communicate to each other using those sentences, and we can even distinguish such sentences from nonsense. Intuitively, nonreferring names can contribute something to the semantic content of the sentences of which they are constituents. It suggests that even though nonreferring names do not have referents, they do have some sort of semantic content. Hence, nonreferring names are empty from the point of view that they do not have any referents, but they are not semantically empty. MDR theory, on the other hand, claims that the sole semantic contribution of a name towards the semantic content of a sentence containing it is its referent (if any) and nothing else. Now, it is quite clear that the problems non-referring names pose for the MDR theory are mostly problems for Millianism, and because of these problems, one can claim that Millianism is false and hence, MDR theory is untenable. To put it in a numbered premise-conclusion form:

Premise 1: If 'Vulcan' has no referent, then if MDR theory is true, then 'Vulcan' has no semantic content.

Premise 2: 'Vulcan' has no referent.

Sub-conclusion 1: Hence, if MDR theory is true, then 'Vulcan' has no semantic content.

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<sup>115</sup> Millianism fails to solve the problem of cognitive values for sentences containing referring names as well. This problem is widely known as one of the Frege's puzzles. See Salmon 1986, Frege 1948, and many others.

Premise 3: If 'Vulcan' has no semantic content, then (3) does not express a proposition, cannot be believed, does not have cognitive values, is nonsense, and truth valueless.<sup>116</sup>

Sub-conclusion 2: Thus, if MDR theory is true, then (3) does not express a proposition, cannot be believed, does not have cognitive values, is nonsense, and truth valueless.

Premise 4: It is not the case that (3) does not express a proposition, cannot be believed, does not have cognitive values, is nonsense, and truth valueless.

Conclusion: Therefore, it is not the case that MDR theory is true.

There might be, however, a better picture that can replace Millianism in MDR theory by preserving a lot of what is good about MDR theory and explaining nonreferring names in a better way. In this view, nonreferring names have semantic content and they are meaningful. However, the sole semantic content of a name is not its referent. It can be presented in the following argumentative way: Argument (a):

Premise 1: If referent is the semantic content of a name, then since a nonreferring name does not have a referent, such a name lacks semantic content and sentences containing it are meaningless and nonsense.<sup>117</sup>

Premise 2: It is not the case that since a nonreferring name does not have a referent, such a name lacks semantic content and sentences containing it are meaningless and nonsense.

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<sup>116</sup> (3) Vulcan is a planet.

<sup>117</sup> However, this is definitely not the case because although nonreferring names do not have referents, they are meaningful.

Conclusion: Therefore, it is not the case that referent is the semantic content of a name.

Besides, even in the case of referring names, the sole semantic content of a name cannot be just its referent. For example, 'Phosphorus' and 'Hesperus' both refer to Venus, but both of them differ in terms of their cognitive values. To put it in a numbered premise-conclusion form: Argument (b):

Premise 1: If referent is the sole semantic content of a name, then 'Phosphorus' and 'Hesperus' both have the same semantic content and cognitive value because both of the names refer to the same object.

Premise 2: It is not the case that 'Phosphorus' and 'Hesperus' both have the same semantic content and cognitive value because both of the names refer to the same object.

Sub-conclusion: Hence, it is not the case that referent is the sole semantic content of a name.

Premise 3: If it is not the case that referent is the sole semantic content of a name, then the referent and the semantic content of a name are not the same thing.

Conclusion: Therefore, the referent and the semantic content of a name are not the same thing.

Now, the semantic content of a name is not a Fregean sense either because a Fregean sense of a name is a mode of presentation of its referent; and a mode of presentation of a name's referent is something like a way of thinking about the referent or describing the

referent in a manner that is grasped by individuals who are competent with the name's use.<sup>118</sup> Frege claims that a name expresses a sense and has a referent that is determined by its sense. However, in Frege's view, it is not the case that every name that has a sense must have a referent; rather, there are names, such as nonreferring names, that have senses but do not have referents. Hence, according to Frege's theory, even though nonreferring names do not have referents, they can still have senses. Initially, there can be three simple reasons for claiming that the semantic content of a name is not a Fregean sense: (a) since a Fregean sense of a name is a mode of presentation of its referent and a nonreferring name does not have any referent, the semantic content of a nonreferring name cannot be its Fregean sense; (b) Fregean senses of a name are descriptions associated with that name and any version of descriptivism encounters Kripke's three objections;<sup>119</sup> (c) it is overall implausible to think that the semantic content of every proper name is identical to the semantic contents of all the descriptions associated with that name.

To sum up, the semantic content of a nonreferring name cannot be just its referent (it does not have any referent after all), or Fregean senses, or descriptions attached to it. Now, the question is if not referent, then what is the semantic content of a nonreferring name? Here are two conditions that a successful candidate must have: a) the semantic content of a name has to be something different than its mere referent; and b) it has to be nondescriptive. Let's call it a 'nondescriptive sense'. The semantic content of a nonreferring name, in this proposed view, is the nondescriptive sense associated with it and a name can have its nondescriptive sense, even though it does not have a referent. The nondescriptive sense of a nonreferring

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<sup>118</sup> For details, see Frege 1892, Salmon 1986, and so on.

<sup>119</sup> Kripke, in his three arguments against descriptivism, has pointed out the implausibility of descriptivism. I have discussed Kripke's three arguments in chapter one of this thesis. For further details, see Kripke 1980.

name, however, is not a nondescriptive way of thinking about any referents because again, nonreferring names do not have any referents.

Now, I do not have an elaborate theory of what this nondescriptive sense is; however, a rough idea is that maybe it is something similar to an abstract object that satisfies the above-mentioned constraints. Every expression that is meaningful has a semantic content, and the semantic content of a meaningful expression is the nondescriptive sense attached to it. For an expression to be meaningful, in this proposed theory, is to have a nondescriptive sense and this is just the way every meaningful expression works. In other words, in this view, there is no different theory that can explain how a nondescriptive sense of an expression ends up being its semantic content because every meaningful expression simply comes with its nondescriptive sense and that is just how meaningful expressions are meaningful at the first place. It suggests that every name has semantic content regardless of their referential status. A name is attached to its nondescriptive sense, which is its semantic content, even though that name does not have a referent. In other words, whether a name has a semantic content or not, that does not depend on whether that name has a referent or not.<sup>120</sup>

Let's consider Le Verrier's Vulcan case again. Le Verrier at first used the name 'Vulcan' to refer to a planet but because there was no such planet, the name 'Vulcan' failed to refer to anything. His action happened to create an abstract artifact, but he did not refer to that artifact with his use of the name 'Vulcan'. This name, however, can later be used to refer to that abstract artifact. Le Verrier's use of the name 'Vulcan' is the object-mythical use of that name

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<sup>120</sup> Note that the problems of nonreferring names are generalized for the other linguistic meaningful expressions as well that are not names, for example, nonreferring common nouns, nonreferring predicates, and so on. The solution that I am proposing, nonetheless, can also be generalized for other expressions; but because of the purpose of the thesis, my sole focus is on nonreferring names.

and other people's later use of that name is the meta-mythical use of that name.<sup>121</sup> Object-fictional and meta-fictional uses of 'Vulcan' are just two different uses of the same name (or two different ways of using the same name). Le Verrier thought that he was naming the planet he had just created, but because there is no such planet, the naming ceremony was unsuccessful, and he ended up with naming nothing. This way the name 'Vulcan' is nonreferring. This name can either be used as Le Verrier used it or can be used to say something about the hypothetical planet Vulcan. In latter use, the name 'Vulcan' refers to the abstract artifact and in former use, the name doesn't refer to anything (for the purpose of this thesis, we are mostly concerned about the genuine nonreferring use). One can get introduced with the name 'Vulcan' through an unsuccessful reference-fixing description. To use the name later, how and in which way one gets introduced with the name does not really matter. In most of the cases, one just needs to have the intention to use the name just the way people they got it from used the name.<sup>122</sup>

However, since the semantic content of a name is not its referent, 'Vulcan' has a semantic content whether 'Vulcan' refers or not. The semantic content of 'Vulcan' is its nondescriptive sense that is attached to it forever and it is just like an abstract object. Maybe whenever someone introduces a name, this abstract object gets created and attached to the name as its semantic content. In this view, however, only a name can *directly* pick out its referent, if any, but the nondescriptive sense can also somewhat provide some directions to pick out the referent, if any. In other words, knowing the semantic content of a name can help the speaker in picking out the referent, if any. Even though the nondescriptive sense of a

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<sup>121</sup> For details on the distinction between object-fictional and meta-fictional use of a name, see Salmon 1998, Braun 2003, Van Inwagen 1977, and Kripke 2013.

<sup>122</sup> For details of causal theory, see Kripke 1972.

name can somewhat help in picking out the referent, a name, nevertheless, does not need a nondescriptive sense to determine its referent because the name can directly pick out its referent if that name has any referent at all. Hence, whether the nondescriptive sense of a name can determine its referent or not, that does not have anything to do with the referential status of that name.

Nonreferring names, according to this proposed theory, just like referring names, can also be constituents of sentences. The semantic content of a sentence containing a nonreferring name is the proposition it expresses, and the non-descriptive sense of the non-referring name can be a constituent of that proposition. Consider the following sentence:

(3) Vulcan is a planet.

Suppose that the non-descriptive senses of 'Vulcan' and the predicate are ' $V_{NDS}$ ' and 'being-a-planet<sub>NDS</sub>', respectively. Now, the proposition expressed by (3) is:

(3b)  $\langle V_{NDS}, \text{being-a-planet}_{NDS} \rangle$

This proposed theory instead of individuals, relations, and properties, allows non-descriptive senses of entities to be the constituents of propositions. Hence, the proposition expressed by (3) consists of the nondescriptive sense of 'Vulcan' and the nondescriptive sense of the property of 'being-a-planet'.

Now, the question is whether this new proposed theory can solve the problems nonreferring names pose for a semantic theory like MDR or not. The proposed theory of nondescriptive sense together with the direct reference theory and the structured proposition theory is as follows:

Theory of nondescriptive sense: Proper names are not descriptive; rather, they refer to individuals called by them, but the sole semantic content of a name (and every meaningful expression) is not its referent; rather, the semantic content of a name (and every meaningful expression) is the nondescriptive sense attached to it, which is an abstract object.

Direct reference: Proper names directly refer to their referents (if any).

Structured proposition theory: The constituents of this sort of structured propositions expressed by sentences are not the individuals, relations, and properties that the constituents of the sentence refer to but are the nondescriptive senses of the constituents of the sentence.

The proposed theory of nondescriptive sense can answer the problems of nonreferring names in the following way:

a. *'The Problem of No Proposition'*

Recall (3) and (3b):

(3) Vulcan is a planet.

(3b)  $\langle V_{\text{NDS}}, \text{being-a-planet}_{\text{NDS}} \rangle$

Since a proper name directly refers to its referent, which is also the semantic content of the name, according to MDR theory, a sentence containing a proper name expresses a proposition that has the referent of the proper name as one of its constituents. However, in (3), the name 'Vulcan' does not have any referent. Since the name 'Vulcan' does not



contribute anything to the proposition expressed by (3), it seems that (3) fails to express any proposition at all.

The proposed theory, nevertheless, does not face this problem. A sentence containing a non-referring name, such as (3), expresses a proposition like (3b) that includes the non-descriptive sense of that non-referring name as one of its constituents.

b. *'The Problem of Nonsense'*

According to the MDR theory, since the semantic content of a sentence is the proposition it expresses, and sentence (3) fails to express any proposition, (3) does not have any semantic content. Therefore, (3) is meaningless and nonsense.

However, that is not the case. Although 'Vulcan', according to the proposed theory, does not have any referent, it has a semantic content, which is its nondescriptive sense. Since the semantic content of a sentence containing 'Vulcan' is the proposition it expresses and the non-descriptive sense can be a constituent of the proposition, (3b) is the proposition expressed by (3) and the semantic content of (3). Hence, the name 'Vulcan' is not nonsense, and sentence (3) is neither nonsense nor meaningless because (3) expresses a proposition, which is its semantic content.

c. *'The Problem of the Proposition Believed'*

Recall (4) and consider (4b):

(4) Mark believes that Vulcan is a planet.

(4b)  $\langle M_{\text{NDS}}, \text{belief-relation}_{\text{NDS}}, \langle V_{\text{NDS}}, \text{being-a-planet}_{\text{NDS}} \rangle \rangle$

The proposition expressed by (4) contains the proposition expressed by (3) as one of its parts. The problem is that if (3) fails to express any proposition, then a person cannot believe the proposition expressed by (3) simply because there is no proposition to believe. As a result, it seems that Mark cannot use (3) to express what he believes and also, sentence (4) fails to express any proposition. That is, nevertheless, not true.

Since a sentence like (3) can express a proposition, such as (3b), according to the proposed theory, one can sincerely utter and believe (3b). Mark, thus, can use (3) to express what he believes, and also, (4) can express a proposition and that is (4b). (4b) consists of the nondescriptive senses of the constituents of (4).

d. *'The Truth-value Problem'*

Recall (3) and (3b) again:

(3) Vulcan is a planet.

(3b)  $\langle V_{\text{NDS}}, \text{being-a-planet}_{\text{NDS}} \rangle$

Sentences can be considered as true or false in virtue of the propositions they express because propositions are the bearers of truth values. Now, according to MDR theory, (3) contains a name that does not refer to anything and hence, it fails to express any proposition. If (3) does not express any proposition, then there is nothing to assign a truth value to, which suggests that sentences like (3) are truth valueless.

However, according to the proposed theory, (3b) is the proposition expressed by (3), and hence, (3) is not truth valueless. The propositions expressed by sentences containing nonreferring names are, however, mostly false and their negations are true. The truth value

of such a proposition depends on the referents of the constituents of the sentence in question. Names, according to this proposed theory, can directly pick out their referents, if any. Hence, from the point of reference, (3) looks like this:  $\langle \_, \text{being-a-planet} \rangle$ , but it is not the semantic content of (3) as it is not the proposition expressed by (3). (3b) is the proposition expressed by (3), and it is false because the name 'Vulcan' does not have a referent.

e. *'The Problem of Differing Cognitive Values'*

Recall (3) and (5):

(3) Vulcan is a planet.

(5) Alice is a planet.

Now, if one follows MDR theory, then two sentences containing two different nonreferring names, such as (3) and (5), do not differ in cognitive values because none of them can express any proposition. However, they are clearly two different sentences containing two different names.

However, according to the proposed theory, (3) and (5) can differ in terms of their cognitive values. Suppose that the non-descriptive senses of 'Vulcan', 'Alice', and the predicate are  $V_{NDS}$ ,  $A_{NDS}$ , and  $\text{being-a-planet}_{NDS}$ , respectively. Now, the propositions expressed by (3) and (5) are:

(3b)  $\langle V_{NDS}, \text{being-a-planet}_{NDS} \rangle$

(5b)  $\langle A_{NDS}, \text{being-a-planet}_{NDS} \rangle$

Thus, (3) and (5) can differ in terms of their cognitive values because they express two different propositions.

## §5: CONCLUSION

In the first chapter, I have discussed MDR theory, and the problems MDR theory encounter in the contexts of nonreferring names. Then in the second chapter, I have examined which names are genuinely nonreferring names and ended up with the conclusion that the object-fictional uses of fictional names (and mythical names, names from false scientific theories, imagination, and hallucination) are genuinely nonreferring, whereas the meta-fictional uses of such names mostly have referents as in such uses, they can refer to the abstract artifacts created by their creators. Finally, in the third chapter, I have examined the gappy propositions theory as a solution to the problems of nonreferring names, which turns out as insupportable. Based on the fact that MDR theory fails to solve the problems of nonreferring names, in the last chapter, I have rejected the core concept of MDR theory, which is Millianism, and in replace of that I have proposed a rough sketch of a theory that I think with further modification in future can serve as a better theory that can answer the problems of nonreferring names.

Here are the main ideas of the proposed theory:

- (a) Every meaningful expression, such as names, has a semantic content.
- (b) The semantic content of a name cannot be just its referent.
- (c) A name directly refers to its referent, if any.
- (d) There is no existential dependency relationship between the semantic content of a name and its referent.

(e) A name can have a semantic content even though it does not have a referent.

(f) The semantic content of a name cannot be something like a Fregean sense.

(g) The semantic content of a name cannot be something descriptive either. It must be non-descriptive.

(h) A rough idea is that the nondescriptive sense of a name is something like an abstract object that satisfies the above-mentioned constraints.

(i) When someone introduces a name, the abstract object (nondescriptive sense) gets created and attached to the name as its semantic content.

This proposed theory can deal with the problems nonreferring names pose for a semantic theory like MDR theory. However, the proposed theory here in this thesis is just an initial representation; hence, this whole theory still needs a lot more work.

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