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A NOTE ON KRIPKE'S DISTINCTION BETWEEN RIGID DESIGNATORS AND NON-RIGID DESIGNATORS

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Kripke's distinction between rigid and non-rigid designators is well-known. Something "is a *rigid designator* if in any possible world it designates the same object, a *non-rigid* or *accidental designator* if that is not the case" ([3], pp. 269-270). Proper names are examples of rigid designators. As examples of non-rigid designators Kripke cites the cases of definite descriptions like 'the man who corrupted Hadleyburg' ([2], p. 145), 'the U.S. President in 1970' ([3], p. 270), and 'the man who won the election in 1968' ([3], p. 265). An obvious objection that might be raised against proper names being rigid designators according to the above definition is that 'Nixon' does not designate the same thing in any possible world, for it designates different things at least in the actual world. But suppose only one man is designated by 'Nixon' in the actual world, still it is not true that the expression designates the same object in any possible world, for the simple reason that different men are called 'Nixon' in different possible worlds.

But what about a particular designative use of the name 'Nixon'? (*cf.*, Strawson [4]). We designate our Nixon, the President of the U.S. in 1970 (in the actual world), with our use of the name 'Nixon', the person who is different in different possible worlds, but is the same person in all possible worlds where he exists. Thus with our use of the name 'Nixon' the same person in different possible worlds is designated. This is what may be called *transworld designation.* It simply follows from the thesis of transworld identity. It should, however, be noted that although the transworld designatum is the same, the objects of *in-world designation* are not necessarily the same. What I mean, thereby, is that with different uses of the name 'Nixon' in different possible worlds different things might be designated, as is the case with different uses of the name in the same possible world. There is, of course, a transworld designation corresponding to each case of in-world designation.

If proper names are rigid designators, because with a use of a proper name the same object is designated in all possible worlds where it does

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exist, all definite descriptions are rigid designators, too, so far, of course, as they are used designatively. As the same man in all possible worlds (wherever he exists) is designated by our use of the name 'Nixon', although in all possible worlds he is not designated as 'Nixon', similarly the definite description 'the President of the U.S. in 1970' in our use of the expression designates the man, the expression is true of in the actual world—the same man in all possible worlds (wherever he exists)—although in all possible worlds the definite description is not true of him.

In order to show that some definite descriptions are non-rigid designators, unlike proper names, Kripke offers the following observation:

> . . . although someone other than the U.S. President in 1970 might have been the U.S. President in 1970 (e.g., Humphrey might have), no one other than Nixon might have been Nixon. ([3], p. 270).

And again

> . . . proper names are rigid designators, for although the man (Nixon) might not have been the President, it is not the case that he might not have been Nixon (though he might not have been *called* 'Nixon'. ([3], p. 270).

It seems that Kripke claims that the above is what amounts to the application in specific cases of the criteria he laid down before of a designator being rigid or non-rigid. One way we can relate his application of the criteria in specific cases and the criteria themselves is by laying down the criterion for deciding what is meant by saying that a designator designates the same object in any possible world where the object exists, and a designator does not so designate, the following way:

(1) A designator ϕ designates the same object in all possible worlds where the object exists if it is impossible that ϕ is not ϕ (it is not the case that ϕ might not have been ϕ), otherwise it does not so designate.

According to (1), then, 'Nixon' designates the same object in all possible worlds wherever it exists, for it is impossible that Nixon is not Nixon, and that is why 'Nixon' is a rigid designator. But the case is otherwise for 'the President of the U.S. in 1974'. But could not Nixon be other than Nixon? Sure, if the two occurrences of 'Nixon' are examples of different uses of the same name, or, in other words, if the first occurrence of the name is an occurrence of the name used to designate one person and the second occurrence is an occurrence of the same name used to designate a different person. Then, of course, Nixon *is not* Nixon, and, therefore, it is not impossible that Nixon is not Nixon, although it is impossible that Nixon is not the same as himself. What this shows is that with the same use of the name 'Nixon' in both the occurrences it is impossible that Nixon is not Nixon. To indicate the same use we use such locutions as 'our Nixon', 'the Nixon we were talking about', etc.

Now the question is whether the same kind of story does not hold of a definite description like 'the President of the U.S. in 1970' also. Is it not impossible that the President of the U.S. in 1970 (i.e., the man who *is* as a

matter of fact—that is what *our use* of the expression means—the President of the U.S. in 1970) is not the same as himself? True, the President of the U.S. in 1970 might not have been the President of the U.S. in 1970, or in other words, it is not impossible that the President of the U.S. in 1970 is not the President of the U.S. in 1970. But that does not go to show that the definite description concerned is a non-rigid designator. Let us look into the matter more closely. The occurrence of 'is' in

(2) It is not impossible that the President of the U.S. in 1970 is not the President of the U.S. in 1970.

is either the *is* of identity or of predication. If it is of identity, then if the two occurrences of the string of letters, viz., 'the President of the U.S. in 1970' in (2) have the same use, (2) is false. If it is of identity, and the two occurrences of the above string of letters are instances of different uses of the string of letters concerned, then (2) is true. If the *is* is that of predication, and not of identity, then also (2) is true. But, then, under the predicative interpretation of 'is' in (2), the second occurrence of the string of letters mentioned above does not have a designative use, and thus it is not shown that the definite description is non-rigid. If the interpretation of designative uses of both the occurrences of the strings of letters (with the *is* taken as the *is* of identity) that makes (2) true is claimed to show that the definite description concerned is a non-rigid designator, then no less non-rigid designators are proper names. For, with different uses of the name 'Nixon'

(3) It is not impossible that Nixon is not Nixon.

is true also. What I have tried to show so far is that Kripke's distinction between *rigid* and *non-rigid designators* does not hold in so far as he wants to maintain that all proper names are rigid designators, but all definite descriptions are not. My observations, however, do not go to show that there is no difference of behavior between proper names and definite descriptions. But that difference is not relevant to the distinction of rigid and non-rigid designators.

If I have succeeded in showing what I have tried to show so far, then the following considerations might be said to hold.

First, Kripke has not succeeded in showing that there are contingent *a priori* truths, for his argument is based on the distinction that proper names are rigid designators and some definite descriptions are not.

Second, (2) should not be claimed as a case of the failure of substitutivity.

Third, it is possible for definite descriptions to be intimately linked with proper names, for both are rigid designators.

APPENDIX*

The following is a demonstration to show that a sentence of the form

(a) M (The $P \neq$ the P)

might be contradictory in the Kripkean semantic treatment of it, and the Russellean analysis of the definite description.

Let $\langle G, K, R, \psi \rangle$ be a quantificational model structure where K is a set, $G \in K$, R is a relation on K, and ψ is a function such that for each $H \in K$, $\psi(H)$ is a set. Let $\mathscr{V} = \bigcup_{H \in K} \psi(H)$. Let a model Φ be built up the usual Kripkean way with the help of the functions $I_1, I_2, \ldots, I_n$, where $1 \leqslant k \leqslant n$. Any function I_j, maps the free variables of a formula into $\mathscr{V}$. Let

(1) $\Phi(\ulcorner M(\text{The } P \neq \text{the } P)\urcorner, G, I_1) = T$ Hyp.

Then

(2) $\Phi(M((Ex)((Px.(y)(Py \supset x = y)).(Ez)((Pz.(v)(Pv \supset z = v)).$
$x \neq z))), G, I_1) = T$ 1, def.

(3) EH' such that $H'RG$. and
$\Phi((Ex)((Px.(y)(Py \supset x = y)).(Ez)((Pz.(v)(Pv \supset z = v)).x \neq z))), H', I_1) = T$
2, def.

(4) $\Phi((Ex)((Px.(y)(Py \supset x = y)).(Ez)((Pz.(v)(Pv \supset z = v)).x \neq z))), H_1, I_1) = T$
3, E.I.

(5) EI' such that I' has the same assignments for the free variables in the formula in (4) as I_1, $I'(x) \in \psi(H_1)$, and
$\Phi(((Px.(y)(Py \supset x = y)).(Ez)((Pz.(v)(Pv \supset z = v)).x \neq z))), H_1, I') = T$
4, def.

(6) $\Phi(((Px.(y)(Py \supset x = y)).(Ez)((Pz.(v)(Pv \supset z = v)).x \neq z))), H_1, I_2) = T$
5, E.I.

(7) $\Phi((Ez)((Pz.(v)(Pv \supset z = v)).x \neq z), H_1, I_2) = T$ 6, def.

(8) EI' such that I' has the same assignments for the free variables in the formula in (7) as I_2, $I'(z) \in \psi(H_1)$, and
$\Phi(((Pz.(v)(Pv \supset z = v)).x \neq z), H_1, I') = T$ 7, def.

(9) $\Phi(((Pz.(v)(Pv \supset z = v)).x \neq z), H_1, I_3) = T$ 8, E.I.

(10) $\Phi(x \neq z, H_1, I_3) = T$ 9, def.

(11) $\Phi((Pz.(v)(Pv \supset z = v)), H_1, I_3) = T$ 9, def.

(12) $\Phi(Pz, H_1, I_3) = T$ 11, def.

(13) $\Phi(((Px.(y)(Py \supset x = y), H_1, I_2) = T$ 6, def.

(14) $\Phi((y)(Py \supset x = y), H_1, I_2) = T$ 13, def.

(15) $\forall I'$ such that I' differs from I_2 at most for the value it gives to y in $Py \supset x = y$, and $I'(y) \in \psi(H_1)$,
$\Phi(Py \supset x = y, H_1, I') = T$ 14, def.

(16) $\Phi(Py \supset x = y, H_1, I_4) = T$ (where let $I_4(y) = I_3(z)$) 15, U.I.

(17) $\Phi(Pz \supset x = z, H_1, I_3) = T$, for $I_4(y) = I_3(z)$, and I_4 does not differ from I_3 for any free variables in the formulae in (16) and (17).

*Appendix added February 7, 1976.

(18) $\Phi(x = z, H_1, I_3) = T$ 17, 12, def.

(18) and (10) taken together give rise to a contradiction.

Therefore,

$\Phi(\ulcorner M(\text{The } P \neq \text{the } P)\urcorner, G, I_1) = F$.

In (a) the description 'the P' has a secondary occurrence. If the definite description is taken as having a primary occurrence, then also it can be shown in a similar way that any statement of the corresponding form is contradictory. A statement of the form $\ulcorner M(\text{The } P \neq \text{the } P)\urcorner$, however, is true in the Kripkean semantics for the interpretation of one of the definite descriptions having a primary occurrence, and the other a secondary occurrence. But that hardly goes to show that proper names are rigid designators, and not all definite descriptions are. The reason is as follows. With $\ulcorner$the $P\urcorner$ having a secondary occurrence, it has a 'referential multiplicity', as Hintikka will have it ([1], pp. 121-122). That is, (a) under such an interpretation of the first occurrence of $\ulcorner$the $P\urcorner$ having a primary occurrence, and the second occurrence having a secondary occurrence, is amenable to the following interpretation

(b) The $P \neq$ some of the P's (combining all the possible worlds).

The above shows that the second occurrence of $\ulcorner$the $P\urcorner$ under such an interpretation is not a singular term at all, but is a general term. Therefore, it is not a definite description, as definite descriptions are singular terms. Hintikka's claim of the second occurrence of $\ulcorner$the $P\urcorner$ in (a) having a multiplicity of reference under the interpretation confirms the Strawsonean thesis that general terms can be used referringly.

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