

# Proper Names are rigid designators

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## ABSTRACT

Here I have discussed about one of the central philosophical issues, the identity of things. We know, metaphysics deals with the identity of things, what they are. Here I am in search of that identity which makes the thing what it is, by which we can single out or pick out an object and distinguish the object from other possible objects. There are two types of identity, self-identity i.e. trivial and contingent identity. We know, every object is necessarily self-identical. Contingent identity is such an essential property of an object that an object must have if it lacks this property it could not be what it is. Whereas there are some other properties called accidental properties that an object just happens to have. For instance, being human, is an essential property of Socrates but being snub-nosed is an accidental one. In order to search of that identity I have gone through an extensive survey of literature where I have started with Aristotle and followed up with in the views of Quine, Kripke, Plantinga and Adams. For Quine, admitting quantification in modal context is possible only if we admit the possibility of de re necessity. Quine attacked the possibility of 'necessity' on open context. Quine rejected the possibility of de dicto necessity as it violates the principle of extensionality whereas necessity as expressed by a semantical predicate applicable on names of statement does not hold principle of substitutivity, it induce referential opacity. Kripke brought back names to their original non-descriptive status. I have discussed the dilemma between proper names and definite descriptions whether there is some definite description for every proper name or proper names are mere rigid designators. In this context, I have discussed Mill, Frege, Russell, Kripke-Plantinga theory on proper names. Within this exercise I have tried to find out if there is any essentialist stance among the views of these analytic philosophers. Finally, I tried to find out if there is any essence behind the indeterminacies. The fact that indeterminacies do not go on forever, the fact that even machines can be trained to be sensitised to certain quantitative boundaries and qualitative identities, speak in

favour of underlying essences – that are independent of human needs, interests or forms of living. Besides later Wittgenstein had himself suggested that there are certain 'rock bottom' of our usages – which are not the material origin or atomic structure of objects, but are the forms of living that are the conditions of possibility of all phenomena. Any investigation into essences should be geared to a ruthless task of problematising essences and not presuming them at the outset. Otherwise we cannot ensure that we can get the outcome through an honest and laborious exercise, and not through a popular rhetoric or the common-sense imageries of a permanent beyond temporary, an abiding beyond the transient, or a core beyond the husk.

## Proper Names are rigid designators

Metaphysics deals with the fundamental nature of reality: what they are. Here I am in search of that identity which makes the thing what it is, by which we can single out or pick out an object and distinguish the object from other possible objects. Now an object could have two types of identity, self-identity i.e. trivial and contingent identity. We know, every object is necessarily self-identical. Contingent identity is that essential property of an object that an object must have if it lacks this property it could not be what it is. Whereas there are some other properties called accidental properties that an object just happens to have. Socrates has self-identity essentially but is accidentally snub-nosed. Because he could not have been self-diverse but he could have been non-snub-nosed. So to understand contingent identity statement we need to understand the difference between essential property and accidental property of an object. We always have a tendency to hold on something which is very stable, basic, unique, intrinsic, fundamental and discarding that is unstable or contingent. That means, there is a neat dichotomy between core vs periphery, central vs margin, permanent vs temporary, necessity vs possibility. That indicates that there is always a contrast in our mind between a name and what it stands for. A term is so bound up with its meaning

that we often mean by 'term' the 'objects of thought' which has both subject and predicate where subject is a concrete individual and predicate is only the detail of the subject or its essential or constitutive being. Even according to Aristotle, essence is a fundamental subject of predication which implies an entity which has no properties in itself. But is the bearer of the other varying properties of the object itself. They are impredicable in nature. However, this primary substances are not bare particulars i.e. without qualifications. The primary substances are qualified by predicates that are called secondary substances that can alternatively be termed as species and genera i.e. kinds. Primary beings are individuals like Russell, Socrates, Plato. Secondary beings are the category into which something falls or they are the kinds of these individuals like man, rose, gold etc. each individual member of a given species has its own unique essential property. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle identifies essence with the kind of a thing and it is expressed by its meaning or definition where the parts of definition are genus and differentia.

Man is a rational animal

Here 'rationality' is the differentia and animality is the genus. That means rationality is involved in meaning or the definition of the word 'man'. So According to W.V.O. Quine, meaning is when it is divorced from the object of reference and wedded to the word. It is fixed by the conventions for the use of expressions that we learn when we learn a language. What we can commonly appreciate as an issue whether the essence belongs to a thing only relatively or whether it belongs to it absolutely or really - has earned a full-mouthed technical terminology in philosophical literature. If essence belong to objects really or inalienably - irrespective of any mode of conception - it would be termed as *de re*, whereas if essence belongs to an object only in so far as the object is conceived in a proposition the essence will be termed as *de dicto*. Thus when adverbs like essentially' or necessarily' is coupled to a noun - say Paul' or table', they (i.e. these adverbs) do not touch the extension' (real referents) of Paul' or table' - they only pertain to an intension' or mode of conceiving Paul and the tables. Speaking in philosophical terminology, the antiessentialists would hold the adverbs like essentially' or necessarily' as being referentially opaque', as these adverbs actually refer to the mode of conceptions that come as intermediary screens between the real object on the one hand and the subject on the other. An upholder of *de re* essence will hold these adverbs to be

referentially transparent'. Quine does not limit himself within the scope of reference and its modes. His semantic thesis asserts that reference is pure in so far as it does not characterize the referent. Quine proceeds on with his program of limiting reference to pure reference that is the reference is free from the inference of language. To refer an object with singular terms like 'Plato', 'this book', 'the author of *Geetanjali*' - such terms do not refer to reality by virtue of their publicly reputed status as predicate-less proper names, but by virtue of the fact that they fall under a concept. From the standpoint of language, we can uphold that the terms that appear to be singular are not at all singular terms, they actually are bound variables, there are no singular terms. It is true that the task of referring is ultimately dependent on using some singular terms that roughly exemplify a general proposition. Singular terms like 'Socrates' and 'Plato' perform their referring function only in so far as the propositions like 'Socrates' refers to the individual known as Socrates (A) and 'Plato' refers to the man called Plato (B) come to exemplify the general proposition viz. 'Men in general refers to man'. (C) But as there are singular terms having no reference, to solve this problem Quine favours the elimination of singular terms . For Quine, non-extensional contexts for singular terms are 'referentially opaque'; others he calls 'referentially transparent' or 'purely referential'. If what we are saying is simply true or false of the object then it should hold true however that object is referred to. A singular term in a sentence would be referential, if and only if the singular term is interchangeable with all its co-referential terms. The proposition expressed by a sentence should remain the same no matter what name of the object it uses. However this will not be true if the names are 'mentioned' rather than used. If we were really saying that Quine, the man, rhymes with 'twine' then we would equally be saying that the well-known author of *Word and Object* rhymes with 'twine', for they are one and the same. But clearly what is being said is not about the man; it is about the name. The sentence, however, contains a singular term naming the man and is to that extent misleading. Its wording suggests that it is about one thing, the man Quine, but is in fact about something else, the name 'Quine'. Canonical notation, designed to maximize clarity and to facilitate inference, will not regiment a singular term in such a position (viz. the position of naming a name or of mentioning )as referring to the object which we take to be designated by that term in ordinary cases.i Quine objects to quantification in contexts of propositional attitudes like 'x knows or

believes or doubts or wishes that...’ So we have seen most of Quine’s efforts here deal with what he, following Russell, calls propositional attitudes.iiPropositional attitudes are mental states like a belief for hope or expectation that can be attributed to someone using a ‘that’-clause. One believes or thinks that it will not rain on that day of picnic, or fears that it will, or hopes that it won’t, or doubts that the sun will shine, and so on. As we see, Quine takes it that a very wide range of ascriptions of mental states can be fitted into this category – those including contexts that involve knowledge, belief and epistemic modalities. Someone can be said to believe that a given proposition is true, or hope that it is true, or wonder whether it is true, and so on. But Quine, of course, does not accept this because for him, quantification with respect to a variable occurring in a context is possible only if the context is referentially transparent that means the singular term that is used in a statement can be replaced *salva-veritate*. But as singular terms in a modal context cannot be replaced this use will not be purely referential. So he needs to put forward another way of understanding statements of propositional attitude. Propositional attitudes are of two distinct kinds, *de re* and *de dicto*. As our given sense-data do not have any meaning of their own and dependent on some suitable description itself, so for Quine, neither *de dicto* nor *de re* essence is possible. Objects do not possess property necessarily, these features are not the intrinsic feature of the object itself, for them necessity was specific to a particular conceptual scheme, it is ultimately determined by the particular scheme of beliefs imposed on a barrage of sensory stimulations. Necessity resides in the way we talk about the thing not in the thing itself. Kripke brought back names to their original non-descriptioal status. In order to identify ‘Aristotle’ as Aristotle we do not require any of its properties. The object directly enters into our identification in the actual or possible world not via properties. Kripke was a no-sense theorist. For Frege, the sense of a proper name is the mode of presentation by which we can reach at the referent. A proper name has both sense and reference and what he means by ‘sense’ comes so close to what is called connotation by Mill and what is called descriptive meaning to Russell. Kripke seeks to open up a new connection between the nature and function of proper names and the issue of essence and necessity. He departs from both Frege and Russell, for whom proper names were reduced to definite descriptions (for different reasons) and from Quine for whom necessity (reduced to synonymy) was specific to a particular

conceptual scheme – it did not have any space for a truth that is necessary in all possible worlds. Kripke by bringing back names to their original non-descriptioal status opens up a way of rehabilitating essence and necessity. Kripke thinks that Mill rightly pointed out proper names to be non- connotative- they are arbitrary labels of an individual, they do not describe any of its property. For Mill however a common name does describe an abstract property or stands for a group of individuals. (We shall see that Mill and Kripke differ on the status of common names.) Kripke uses the common term ‘designator’ which is applicable to both proper names and definite descriptions. Proper names are no more than ‘empty tags’ which directly label objectsiii but do not connect to the referent in virtue of certain conceptual associations, they do not require any cognitive fix to get hooked into the reality. Quine claims that QML (Quantified Modal Logic) connects essence to the things that finally landed on *de re* essence. In other words, QML is tied up with essentialism. Quine rejects the idea of *de re* necessity, consequently, the possibility of quantification into modal contexts, as QML requires. Kripke brought back essentialism by restoring names to their original non-descriptioalstatus. For Kripke in order to identify ‘Aristotle’ as ‘Aristotle’ in actual or possible worlds we do not require any of his properties, which shows that proper names rigidly designating the same transworld entity - outgrowing all possible variations of observable properties across possible worlds. In Kripke’s theory *de re* essential properties are not required to be analytic, i.e., they do not require to be conceptually connected with each other. They are meaningful, not by virtue of their conceptual content; they are meaningful in so far as they underlie the varying properties of an object in different conceivable universes. The natural extension of the possible-worlds interpretation to *de re* is known as ‘identity across possible world’ or ‘transworld identity’. For Kripke *de re* modality comprises essentialism by introducing the concept of trans-world identity. As already noted, Kripke holds that proper names refer rigidly and non-descriptioally to the same object in all possible worlds; so proper names are ‘rigid designators’. According to him, even if the object does not exist in the actual world, that particular object, if there be any, will designate the same object in all other possible world and not via any properties. Thus Kripke made a wide range of utilization of the idea of a possible world in defending the eloquence of modality - both *de re* and *de dicto*. Though Kripke did not answer directly to Quine’s anti-essentialism - not at least in

his Naming and Necessity – we can develop his theory of possible worlds and rigid designation to construct a plausible refutation of Quine’s pointed arguments against de re modality. Saul Kripke introduced the notion of rigid designators and non rigid designators which are very technical and perfectly adequate to handle The terms ‘rigid designator’ and ‘non-rigid designator’ and their corresponding notions as introduced by Kripke are markedly technical, and are sufficient to combat Frege-Russell model of semantics. Kripke denied Frege-Russell theory and claimed that proper names cannot be reduced into definite descriptions. Nor are there any extraordinary or logically proper names (as in the scheme of Russell) standing for bare individuals. So by holding that proper names refer rigidly and non-descriptively to the same object in all possible worlds Kripke revived de re essences on the one hand, and got rid of bare particulars on the other by bringing back names to their original nondescriptive status. To repeat, names for him do not refer to bare particulars, they are rather non-descriptive or non-qualitative – in so far as they are not available for use in an analytic proposition. So the principal idea of Kripke was that if something is necessarily such and such in this actual world, then we must designate the same object in all conceivable world in which it exists. Kripke extended the idea of essence beyond individuals to kinds of things such as gold and water. For Kripke it is not just a law or regularity that water is H<sub>2</sub>O but rather the essence of the natural kind. These ideas were already there in Aristotelian Essentialism. The dominant status of essence for Kripke consists in its persisting beyond all attempts of conceiving a thing in a different way, all attempts of thinking it to have different properties – for all such attempts of de-essentialising an objects ironically feed on its essential identity. And this essence is constituted by its non-qualitative identity – its origin or its atomic structure. And Kripke has pursued the main line of his contention consistently till the extreme point . He insists that all apparent possibility that a thing may be exactly alike in its observable properties and yet come out of a different material origin in a different world is not a genuine possibility. Such seeming disruption of an object’s essence is actually a counterfactual on the actual world and not a counterfactual on the origin or the atomic structure of the object. What such de-essentialising moves actually propose is that – our actual world might have contained an exact facsimile of this object where the facsimile has a different origin or a different atomic structure. Similarly if one proposes that a thing may undergo

complete metamorphosis in its atomic structure, Kripke will still insist that such a possibility is a possibility about the actual universe – that the universe may be such that it changes the nature of objects through the passage of time. For Kripke such a counter-factual does not affect the non-temporal essence of the objects. According to Locke and Mill, proper names such as ‘Socrates’, ‘Plato’, ‘Aristotle’ denote an object denotatively that means it denotes the object of which it is the name, but there are some proper name ‘Pegasus’ for example have no denotation. For Mill, a connotative term is one which denotes a subject and implies an attribute. But ‘proper names’ do not indicate any attributes (it opposes definite description, do not express properties which he calls connotative individual names). a proper name is simply a name. It simply refers to its bearer and has no other linguistic function. Unlike a definite description, a name does not describe its bearer as possessing any special identifying properties. Russell would say, if we want to reserve the term ‘name’ for things which really just name an object without describing it, the only real proper names we can have are names of our own immediate sense data, objects of our own ‘immediate acquaintance’. The only such names which occur in our language are demonstrative ‘this’ or ‘that’. Russell agrees with Mill by saying that proper names are devoid of connotations but differs from him in maintaining that the expressions which Mill regarded as proper names are not proper names at all, they are only abbreviated description. ‘Socrates’ is only an abbreviation of ‘The master of Plato’ or ‘the philosopher who drank Hamlock’. Like Russell Quine also said that the terms that appear to be singular are not at all singular terms, they actually are bound variables, there are no singular terms.

Singular terms like ‘Socrates’ and ‘Plato’ perform their referring function only in so far as the propositions like ‘Socrates’ refers to the individual known as ‘Socrates’ & ‘Plato’ refers to the teacher of Aristotle. But as there are singular terms having no reference, to solve this problem Quine also favors the elimination of singular terms. On the other hand, Frege holds that ‘to each proper name a speaker of the language associates some property or conjunction of properties which determines its referent as the unique thing fulfilling the associated property (or properties). These properties constitutes the ‘sense of the name’.’ For, Frege, a proper name has both sense & reference and what he means by ‘sense’ comes so close to what is called connotation by Mill and what is called descriptive meaning to Russell. The sense of a

proper name is the mode of presentation of the object of which it is a name. 'the morning star' & 'the evening star' not only refer to a particular planet 'venus' but also they have their respective senses. The two expressions have the same reference, 'The Venus' but they do not have the same sense because the mode of presentation corresponding to one of them is different. Quine said, objects do have meaning but not in Fregean sense. Morning star & evening star both have different intention but the same extension. If the intention & the extension were alike then the statement would be analytic. A context is extensional if and only if replacing any expression within that context by another of the same extension leave the truth-value of the whole unchanged. It is called 'substitutivity of identity'.

Hesperus = Phosphorus has to be an ordinary contingent, empirical truth. A certain mountain can be seen from both Tibet & Nepal. When seen from one direction it was called 'Gaurishankar' when seen from another direction it was called 'everest' And later on, the empirical discovery was made that Gaurishanker is Everest. Bertrand Russell would say as because statements like 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' & 'Gaurishanker is everest' are contingent, we can see that the names in question are not really purely referential. Here, we are just not tagging an object we are actually describing it. So Russell concludes, if we want to reserve the term 'name' for things which really just name an object without describing it, the only real proper names we can have are names of our own 'immediate acquaintance'. The only names which occur in language are demonstratives like 'this' and 'that'. So a proper name in ordinary sense Can not make identity statement. Kripke plays up the commonality between Frege-Russell theory against which he gave his own theory that proper names cannot be reduced into definite descriptions. Nor are there any extra-ordinary or logically proper names (as in the scheme of Russell) standing for bare individuals. Kripke uses the common term 'rigid designator' to present a full-fledged critique of the descriptonal theory of naming. Kripke holds that proper names refer rigidly and nondescriptonally to the same object in all possible world. so proper names are rigid designators'. According to Kripke, even if the object does not exist in the actual world, that particular object, if there be any, will designate the same object in all other possible world and not via any properties. Thus Kripke made a wide-range of utilization of the idea of a possible world in defending the eloquence of modality both de re and de dicto. Though Kripke did not answer directly to Quine in

his Naming and Necessity. Here we can assume that Kripke might have replied Quine's challenge as follows: For Kripke, the terms 'cyclist' and 'biped' are non-rigid designators. Therefore Quine's assumption that all cyclist are necessarily biped are unwarranted. Likewise morning star' and evening star' also non-rigid designators. i.e that the property of being morning star and the property of being the evening star get instantiated in one individual is contingent. Morning Star is identical with evening star is contingent. Similarly the property of being a cyclist and that of being a biped get necessarily instantiated in the same set of individuals is unwarranted i.e all cyclist is biped is wrong. Now I shall discuss an over-view of Plantinga's treatment of essence. For Plantinga, every object should have a property that it does not share with everyone, that property is uniquely possessed by the individual that has it. If Socrateity is an essence possessed by Socrates then in every possible world in which it is instantiated, it is instantiated by the individual Socrates and no other. There is no possible world in which something distinct from Socrates would have had Socrates identity. For him, an essence entails essential properties through definition. Socrates' world-indexed properties are essential to Socrates. So essence is that which the object x has not only in every possible world that he exists, but its essence also has to be instantiated in any given world by that particular object and by nothing else. For Plantinga proper names do not stand for bare particulars, they do indeed express properties. But one characteristic which Plantinga attributes to proper names is that they rigidly designate their referents. Though generally descriptions do not express essences, but some descriptions express essences. Also for Plantinga, there is a necessity in contingency—an individual having a property in this world is necessarily determined by that world to have that property. This world-bound contingency becomes a necessary property which he will carry on from one world to another. So we have seen, Kripke admitted transworld identity that is non-qualitative in nature, but Plantinga accepted the world-bound individuals. Adams also points out that de re identity or transworld identity is primitive in the sense that it cannot fall back on a more fundamental property or relation. And the mark of an identity being primitive or non-derivative is its power to explain why two apparently two individuals are really one or the reverse. Adams exposes a certain problem in Leibnitz's notion of an individual identity in so far as it is claimed to be purely qualitative. As for Leibnitz each quality is non-repeatable, i.e., it

exhausts in a unique individual, the same individual apparently recurring in possible worlds will actually amount to alternative sets of qualities or suchnesses – with no non-qualitative thisness spilling over these sets or clusters. Adams points out that in Leibniz's scheme it is not clear as to what constitutes the transworld qualitative identity of an individual, for there seems to be no underlying general principle that would govern which qualities or suchnesses are to be pooled together to form the individual in W1 and which are to form the identity in W2, nor will it settle the borderline cases between a set of qualities in one world (say tallness, baldness and intelligence in W1 and their opposites in W2.) To leave this matter entirely to conventional definitions will go against our intuitions. Hence Adams declares that while the identity relation in the same world is primitive and goes beyond the qualitative or non-qualitative character of thisness, when it comes to transworld identity – this is must better explained in terms of non-qualitative thisness. Without the latter no basis of identifying the same individual across the different and even contradictory sets of suchnesses can be secured. Adams contrives a special argument to demonstrate the transworld identity to be non-qualitative. He asks us to conceive three different worlds – W1 W2 and W3 - and places two objects viz. a and b in W1, preserves a and annihilates b in W2, and finally preserves b and annihilates a in W3. (I have used diagrams to give an explicit representation of Adams's argument in this connection.) Leibniz cannot argue that the two b-s in W1 and W2 are qualitatively different – the non-existence of b in W2 rules out that possibility. Hence a non-qualitative thisness of b irresistibly juts out as the transworld identity across W1 and W2, similar remarks apply to a as well.

According to Adams Leibniz laboured under the presupposition that the only way to secure two (or more) indiscernible (i.e. qualitatively identical but numerically distinct) individuals is to conceive different instances of the same qualities recurring in different positions of the same space-time framework – which would virtually inject qualitative differences in the putatively indiscernible objects. Leibniz did not explore the other possibility of placing the individual outside its actual spatio-temporal relations and thereby failed to hit upon world-differences that would preserve the same individual - purified of all differences of qualities pertaining to its different spatiotemporal positions. For Kripke too the transworld identity of an object consists in

its being free from the spatial interactions and the historical vicissitudes it enters into in the actual world. World -differences cannot be the difference between objects that are qualitatively the same but have different origins, i.e. have different spatio-temporal positions within the same framework. Adams points out that any proposal that an individual may be born at a different moment or go through a different stretch of time - will load that individual with a different history and a different repertoire of memory – which will make him virtually different from the original. Further one cannot posit that the individual in actual world i.e. W1 carries his history or memory content in W2 as well, for that would imply that the object in the possible world being causally linked to the original in the actual world. Adams affirms that possible worlds are in logical space, not causal space - i.e. there cannot be causal relations among possible worlds. According to Adams 'to say that actual world is constituted by the actual space-time coordinates is not to say that different worlds will be constituted by alternative space-time frameworks i.e., alternative space-time geometries or topologies. Between a linear time and a non-linear time, or between an Euclidean space and a non-Euclidean space the crucial transworld identity of individuals will not be preserved.' Thus overall Adams agrees with Kripke that transworld identity should be constituted by the individual's freedom from spatial positions, interactions and temporal history, and also insists that Leibniz should have constructed his theory of possible worlds on this freedom. It is this freedom from relational suchnesses that would turn out to be the non-qualitative transworld identity. But Adams at the same time points out that to admit that there are transworld identities and differences – there has to be necessary ground that would explain why a given thisness also incorporates certain suchness, say for instance why I fall under the category of a human person and not under those of dream, musical performance or football games. For Adams a non-qualitative thisness does not hold itself aloof from all qualities and their possible variations, but the necessary connexion between a non-qualitative thisness and the possession of its certain properties cannot obviously be laid out in the form of an analytic proposition. Kripke's reservation against a qualitative thisness consists in the fact that all objects may be falsely represented by inappropriate qualities – which renders all qualities as contingent and dispensable. But the need for this non-conceptual ground of possible variation of qualities was not explicitly appreciated in Kripke's scheme in Naming and Necessity.

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