

THE CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE DIRECT REFERENTIALIST
SOLUTIONS TO THE SEMANTIC PROBLEMS OF EMPTY NAMES

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Thesis Abstract

Mustafa Polat, “The Critical Assessment of the Direct Referentialist
Solutions to the Semantic Problems of Empty Names”

Direct Referentialist account of proper names fundamentally contends that the sole semantic meaning of a proper name is its referent if and only if it has any. By the principle of semantic compositionality, it entails the conclusion that a proper name in a sentence is used to express a proposition if and only if it has a referent. Thus, for Direct Referentialist account, empty names such as “Santa Claus” and “Vulcan” have no semantic meaning and empty-name sentences fail to express a proposition. Considering the truth-conditional and semantic function of a proposition in the conventional sense of truth-conditional semantics, Direct Referentialism implies that empty-name sentences fail to express a meaningful and a truth-evaluable content. However, it does not jibe with our common semantic and truth-theoretical intuitions about empty-name sentences. As our linguistic intuitions suggest, empty-name sentences are meaningful and truth-evaluable. Hereby, Direct Referentialism appears to confront with the semantic problems in terms of our linguistic intuitions of what is said by an empty-name sentence. In order to divorce Direct Referentialism from the burden of being a counter-intuitive account, a number of Direct Referentialist philosophers propose distinct solutions. Nonetheless, these solutions also include theoretical flaws in terms of their explanatory efficacy and of their compatibility with the fundamental thesis of Direct Referentialist account.

Tez Özeti

Mustafa Polat, “The Critical Assessment of the Direct Referentialist
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Doğrudan Göndergecilik özel isimler hakkında temel olarak şu tezi savunur: Bir özel ismin semantik anlamı onun göndergesidir ancak ve ancak herhangi bir göndergesi varsa. Cümlede semantik kompozisyon ilkesine dayanarak; bu tez şu sonucu kapsar: Özel bir isim ancak ve ancak göndergesi varsa bir önerme bildirmek için kullanılabilir. Böylelikle; Doğrudan Göndergeciliğe göre, göndergesiz olan boş isimlerin (“Noel Baba” gibi) anlamı yoktur ve bu boş isimleri içeren boş-isim cümleleri önerme bildirmez. Önermenin cümlenin doğruluk değerini ve anlamını taşıyan içerik olduğu genel kanısı ile birlikte, bu yargı Doğrudan Göndergeciliği şu sonuca taşır: Boş-isim cümlelerinin hiçbir semantik anlamı ve hiçbir doğruluk değeri yoktur. Ancak bu noktada, boş-isim cümlelerinin ne söylediği hakkındaki dilsel genel kanı aksini işaret etmektedir. Nitekim buna göre, bu cümleler anlamlıdır ve birer doğruluk değeri vardır. Doğrudan Göndergeciliğin bu sorununu çözmek adına, bu teorinin savunucusu olan birçok filozof bazı çözümler getirmiştir. Ancak, bu ilgili çözümler de açıklayıcı yeterlilik ve Doğrudan Göndergeciliğe uyumluluk açısından bazı teorik açıklar içermektedir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to Direct Referentialist account of proper names, the sole semantic meaning of a proper name is its referent if and only if it has any. On the semantic function of a proper name within a sentence, it is further endorsed by the principle of semantic compositionality that a proposition expressed by a sentence is a function of the semantic meanings of the sentence's constituents.¹ Holding the semantic compositionality, Direct Referentialist account entails the conclusion that a proper name in a sentence can be used to express a proposition if and only if it has a referent, namely a semantic meaning.

Thus, for Direct Referentialist account (hereafter, DR), a referring proper name such as "Aristotle" can be used to express a proposition to which the name contributes only its referent. In other words, a well-formed declarative sentence employing a referring proper name expresses a proposition if the other sentential constituents are meaningful as well. Thus, DR maintains that the sentence "Aristotle is a philosopher", for instance, expresses the proposition identified by the ordered pair $\langle \text{Aristotle, being a philosopher} \rangle$ at where the semantic meaning of the name "Aristotle" is nothing but the individual man himself.

Nonetheless, some proper names (e.g. Santa Claus, Sherlock Holmes, and Vulcan) are empty from an actual or an extensional referent and thereby these names

¹ In the conventional sense, a proposition is the semantic content of an assertive utterance of a well-formed declarative sentence whose all constituents have semantic meaning. Thus, in this paper, I speak of a certain sort of sentences. For the sake of brevity, I prefer to not underline it each time but it is worth noticing that I mean an assertive use of a well-formed declarative sentence by the term "sentence" unless otherwise is stated. Thus, our general interest here is as to the occurrences of proper names in such sentences whose other constituents do not lack any meaning. Hereby, conniving uses, for instance, are simply excluded out of the discussion (E.g. "Sure, Santa Claus exists... if the Pope says so [Sarcastically])

are non-referring proper names when they are taken to speak of actual individuals involving in states of affairs in actuality. In the case of such non-referring proper names, DR therefore implies that an empty name has no semantic meaning to use to express a proposition. That is to say, sentences employing an empty name, i.e. empty-name sentences,² fail to express a proposition, namely a complete semantic function. For most of DR theorists, the empty-name sentence “Santa Claus is jolly”, for instance, expresses an incomplete semantic function that could be represented by the “gappy” proposition $\langle ___, \text{being jolly} \rangle$ at where the argument slot designated for the semantic meaning of the name “Santa” remains unfilled.³

Furthermore, it is conventionally accepted in truth-conditional semantics that a proposition posits the meaningful and truth-evaluable content expressed by a sentence. If it is the case, and empty-name sentences fail to express a proposition, then DR entails the two further conclusions: (1) Empty-name sentences fail to express something meaningful and (2) Empty-name sentences fail to express something truth-evaluable.

The above conclusions driven by DR are confronted with some apparent challenges by our linguistic intuitions about the semantics of what is said by an empty-name sentence. In a word, these conclusions do not jibe with our common semantic and truth-theoretical intuitions about empty-name sentences. Firstly, as our semantic intuitions suggest in most cases, empty-name sentences such as “Vulcan is the tenth planet”,⁴ “Santa Claus doesn’t exist” make sense and this implies that empty-

² Following Wyatt (2009), I prefer to call sentences containing empty names as “empty-name sentences”.

³ This incomplete semantic function or thought is tentatively called as “gappy”, “unfilled”, “structurally challenged” or “incomplete” [Adams et.al (1994, 2004, and 2007), Braun (1993, 2005), Salmon (1998)]. In this paper, I prefer to call it as a “gappy” proposition for the sake of terminological simplicity

⁴ In the 19th century, French astronomer Anthony LeVerrier postulated a planet between Mercury and the Sun to account for the anomalies in Mercury’s orbital trajectory. He dubbed this postulated planet with the name “Vulcan”. After several scrutinies for finding a trace of this celestial body, it turned out

name sentences, unlike DR predicts, say something meaningful. Hence, it further implies that an empty-name sentence expresses a proposition. Respectively, I call this complication as the Problem of Meaningfulness (hereafter, PM). Secondly, it also appears that competent speakers judge empty-name sentences to be truth-evaluable in most cases. The sentence “Santa Claus doesn’t exist”, for instance, seems to be true for our truth-theoretical intuitions once we have an informed reflection that there is no such a thing in discourse about actuality. In contrast to the Direct Referentialist conclusion, this seeming truth-evaluability of empty-name sentences implies that these sentences say something truth-evaluable. Again, it further implies that an empty-name sentence expresses a proposition. Throughout the paper, I dub this second complication as the Problem of Truth-Evaluability (hereafter PT).

As long as the alleged inconsistency between DR’s conclusions and our intuitions about empty-name sentences remains intact, it casts a doubt on Direct Referentialist stand about the semantics of empty names and of empty-name sentences. Thus, Direct Referentialist ought to be able to account for where our semantic and truth-theoretical intuitions about empty-name sentences come from without dropping their fundamental thesis that the sole semantic meaning of a proper name is its referent. It is a significant problem to explain away, because not only it overshadows the soundness of Direct Referentialism but also it degrades the explanatory efficacy of their theory over the opposing theory of proper names, namely Descriptivist account of proper names.⁵ This account simply holds that an empty name such as “Vulcan” has a semantic meaning that is an associated definite description

that there was no such planet situated between Mercury and the Sun and the name “Vulcan” turn out to lack a referent.

⁵ In this paper, I have no intension to go over each debate between the two opposing camps of theories of reference. My all concern is here to evaluate how a Direct Referentialist can deal with the semantic problems of empty names rather than questioning which accounts of proper names are more explanatory about the semantics of empty names. I mention about the Descriptivist account only for underlining the significance of the problem for Direct Referentialism

such as “the tenth planet”. Assuming the semantic compositionality, for Descriptivist account, an empty name can be used to express a proposition, thereby; an empty-name sentence has a meaningful and a truth-evaluable content. Thus, Descriptivism goes accord with the intuitive sensibility and truth-evaluability of empty-name sentences.

A number of Direct Referentialist philosophers, [Adams et. al (1994, 1997, 2002, 2004, 2007), Braun (1993, 2005), Donnellan (1974), Evans (1982), Kripke (1980), Reimer (2001, 2007), Salmon (1998), Taylor (2000)] propose divergent solutions -partially or not- to the relevant semantic problems about empty names. In this paper, I cover the most essential semantic problems of empty names, i.e. PM and PT, and I argue some of the proposed Direct Referentialist solutions to these problems. In particular, I discuss Braun’s (1993, 2005) gappy proposition theory and the Pragmatic Referentialism as it is developed in Adams et al., (1994, 1997, 2004, 2007).⁶ By doing so, I assess their argumentative efficiency in explaining away the problems and I argue the viability of each account by highlighting the relevant critiques directed to each account.

⁶ I shall discuss both the gappy proposition theory and the Pragmatic Referentialism as in the way these authors propose, because, there are distinct versions of both theories. Many Direct Referentialists including Braun endorses that an empty-name sentence expresses a “gappy” propositional structure that does not correspond to a complete semantic and truth-conditional content [Adams et. al (1994, 1997, 2004, 2007), Reimer (2001, 2007), Salmon (1998), and Taylor (2000)]. However, Braun’s theory, which originally named as “the unfilled proposition” view, differs from the commonly accepted notion of a gappy proposition on the question of what propositional characteristics a “gappy” proposition entertains. It is commonly agreed that a “gappy” proposition, unlike a proposition, have no meaning and a truth-value but it just has a propositional structure lacking a complete semantic and truth-conditional content. Yet, as we shall see, Braun’s gappy proposition theory (1993, 2005) begs to differ and contends that a “gappy” proposition has a truth-value though it does not express a complete thought. Again, in addition to Adams and his co-authors, Tyler (2000) and Wyatt (2009) propose another pragmatic account combined with Direct Referentialism. All Pragmatic Referentialist accounts share the same strategy. In order to explain why Direct Referentialist predictions conflict with our intuitions, they simply appeal to the Gricean distinction between what is communicated by a sentence and what is said by it. The difference between these two distinct pragmatic accounts depends on the question of how this Gricean mechanism works in the case of empty-name sentences. At this very point, it is quite early to mention about this subtle difference without proposing one of these accounts fully. However, I shall mainly argue the Pragmatic Referentialism by which Adams, Dietrich, Fuller, and Stecker.

In this context, the paper roughly consists of four related sections: In the first section, I begin by highlighting the preliminary notions and motivations for Direct Referentialist account of proper names. By doing so, I demarcate under what sense the problems occur. In the second section, I introduce the essential problems for Direct Referentialist stand on the semantics of empty-name sentences. In the third section, I analyze the solutions brought by Braun (1993, 2005) by assessing the soundness of his account with respect to the objections directed by Adams and Stecker (1994), Everett (2003), Piccinini and Scott (2010), Salmon (1998). In the fourth section, I introduce the Pragmatic Referentialist approach put forward by Adams and his co-authors (1994, 1997, 2004, and 2007). I present this account as a better alternative to Braun's stand on the relevant problems. Then, I mention the critiques made by Everett (2003) in order to call this pragmatic strategy into question. In this respect, I debate to what extent the Pragmatic Referentialism as Adams and his co-authors developed is sustainable account although it seemingly explains away the relevant problems more palatably as compared to Braun.

CHAPTER 2

EMPTY NAMES

The problems of empty names for Direct Referentialist account of proper names emerge from the semantics of empty names. In this respect, it is worth considering what an empty name is and what it informatively says if it does. Far simply, empty names are proper names failing to refer. Regardless of thinking the semantic meaning of empty names, all theories of reference agree on this austere claim on empty names. Hence, it is important to explicate what a proper name is and in what sense it fails to refer. Thus, I begin explaining empty names in terms of reference and reference failure.

Referential Role of Empty Names

A proper name (e.g. “John Perry” and “Santa Claus”) is a singular term whose role is to single out a particular individual only and nothing else in a given domain of discourse.⁷ Strictly speaking, a proper name can be formulated in terms of its referential role in the following way:

(PN_{RF}) For any proper name N, N is a singular term stipulated by a speaker S in a language L to refer to a particular object O only and nothing else in a domain of discourse D where O is considered to take place.

⁷ In conversational discourse, there are several sorts of singular expressions such as singular common noun phrases (e.g. a cat, a vampire), quantified expressions (each student, one apple) and so on. Some of these different sorts of singular expressions specifically function to refer to particular individuals by their linguistic roles. Along with proper names (e.g. John Perry, Santa Claus), Definite descriptive expressions (e.g., the present queen of Netherlands, the present king of France) and noun phrases with singular demonstratives (e.g. this cat, that mermaid) set examples for a singular expression functioning to pick a particular individual out from among the other things in a given domain of discourse. Direct Referentialist account puts forward that proper names differ from these two sorts of singular expressions based on the way by which they single out their referents. On the other hand, for Descriptivist account, a proper name exactly functions as a definite description. I will explain different notions of how a proper name singles out its nominatum in the course of the relevant section.

Every proper name (e.g. “John Perry” and “Santa Claus”) has a function to refer uniquely to a particular individual in virtue of being stipulated to single out this particular individual only and nothing else in a given domain of discourse. Yet, this assigned referential function does not say much of this exclusive referring relation in which a proper name is put into effect. The referring relation in which a proper name engages can be stated as follows:

(PN_R) For any proper name N, N, as a speaker S used, refers exclusively/uniquely to the object O in a domain of discourse D iff there is such a particular object in D.

Contrapositively, the statement above suggests that a proper name N fails to refer to O in D iff O does not take any place in D where the name N is stipulated to refer. So, the projected referring relation between a name and its putative referent may not hold because there may be no such referent in a given discourse. Thus, an utterance of a proper name might fail to refer although it has a referential function.

In this sense of reference failure, a proper name failing to refer is vacuous from a referent in relevant discourse; hereby it is called as an empty name. To clarify how an empty name occurs in conversational discourse, suppose that the speaker S comes to believe that there is a single chocolate chip cookie in the opaque jar next to her and S obtains this belief without any prior or present acquaintance with this cookie or with the content of the jar. Suppose further that S introduces the name “Brookie” to refer to this (putative) cookie in the jar only and nothing else. Strictly speaking, the name “Brookie”, as the speaker S used, fails to refer and turns out to be empty if there is no such a cookie in the jar. For example, S simply may find out that the jar is in fact empty.⁸ In that case, the name “Brookie” fails to refer in discourse about actuality and turns out to be an empty from an actual referent.

⁸ In our example, the speaker S introduces the empty name “Brookie” via the definite description “the (unique) chocolate chip cookie in the jar (at time of utterance)”. Considering how the name is

Similarly, proper names of non-actual individuals from fictional, hypothetical, and mythical contexts (e.g. “Santa Claus”, “Vulcan”, and “Pegasus”) appear to be empty from a (actual) referent when they are introduced to speak of actuality.⁹ Thus, utterances of the name “Santa Claus” fail to refer in discourse about actuality if these utterances are taken to refer to an individual in discourse about actuality.¹⁰

However, of course, a proper name lacking an actual referent such as “Santa Claus” might not fail to refer in fictional discourses. If referring relation involves a speaker, an expression, and context, and then under which context a speaker intends to use a proper name determines the referent of this name. Thus, with the right intention, a speaker may use any of these names above to refer to a non-actual individual in discourse about fiction or in fiction [Donnellan (1974), Braun (2005)]. Considering the below statements 1(a)-(d), proper names in these sentences fail to

stipulated, we can consider a curious case of reference failure in our example. For instance, S may find out that there are more than one chocolate chip cookies in the jar. Since he introduced the name Brookie as “the (unique) chocolate chip cookie” then in this many-cookie case uniqueness condition of a proper name fails. Therefore, the name Brookie again fails to refer to any of these cookies.

⁹ It is important to notice that names for hypothetical or fictional entities are not necessarily “non-actual”. A name can be stipulated in hypothetical context but it may still refer to an actual object. To illustrate, in hypothetical discourse, a speaker may acquire the knowledge of an entity by descriptions and projections without any direct acquaintance with this putative entity in actuality. In turn, this hypothetical entity may or may not have an actual referent. For instance, the planet Neptune was also found by mathematical prediction, by knowledge of description (“the planet exterior to Uranus”) then it was demonstrated that there is such an actual planet named “Neptune”.

¹⁰ At this point, Abstract Referentialists like Salmon (1998) beg the difference here in Meinongian manner and they hold that the so-called empty names of all hypothetical, fictional, and mythical individuals refer to “abstract” or “non-existent” individual objects consisting of unactualised properties in the non-actual contexts where they occur. The name “Santa Claus”, for instance, refers to a particular abstract object having such and such fictional properties no matter under which discourse it is stipulated. Hence, Abstract Referentialists hold that names such as “Santa Claus” and “Vulcan” are not (genuine) empty names at all since they have abstract referents. Here, Abstract Referentialism can be ignored based on the sense of reference failure I adopt. According to this reference failure, a name, as the speaker used, fails to refer if the putative nominatum does not take place in the discourse where the speaker stipulates the name to refer. Therefore, even if the name “Vulcan” stands for an abstract or putative object, it fails to refer to any object in actuality when it is taken to refer in actuality. Thus, a speaker’s utterance of “Vulcan” fails to refer when speaker intends to refer to an actual planet. In this sense of reference failure, it seems redundant to differentiate empty names as genuine or not.

refer in discourse about actuality if the statements are asserted to speak of actual individual objects and their states of affairs in actuality.

- (1) (a) Pegasus exists.
- (b) Sherlock Holmes is a detective.
- (c) LeVerrier's Vulcan is not Mr. Spock's home planet.
- (d) Odyssey set ashore while sound asleep.

However, the first statement for instance may be intended to refer to the mythical winged horse of Greek mythology and the statement may be used to convey, "Pegasus (fictionally) exists". Similarly, the third one may be an utterance about trans-fictional discourse where the fictional objects from the different fictional discourses take place in the same statement. Finally, the fourth statement says of something about a character with respect to discourse in fiction. In brief, these names do not fail to refer when they are taken to speak of fictional discourses although they fail to refer when they are taken to speak of actuality.¹¹ Regardless of thinking utterances of a particular empty name with respect to different domains of discourses, an empty name, in broad sense, lacks a referent in the domain of discourse where the name is stipulated to refer. Hence, the name "Sherlock Holmes" in the sentence (1) (b) does not have any referent when it is taken to speak of an actual detective having properties and relations in discourse about actuality. Thus, proper names for non-actual individuals are empty names in discourse about actuality.

¹¹ The subject matter of this paper does not cover discussions on empty names in fictional, trans-fictional, and meta-fictional contexts although a Direct Referentialist, who holds that proper names failing to refer mean nothing, has to account for the occurrences of such names under these contexts as well. General strategy to deal with empty names in fictional discourses is to regard that such sentences contain a covert fiction operator like "fictionally" or "According to this or that fictional narrative" as in the above token of utterance of "Pegasus exists" [Braun (2005) and Donnellan (1974)]. For the sake of brevity, this paper will not cover the further questions and problems about proper names under fictional discourses. For further discussion, see Donnellan (1974), Braun (2005), Adams et al. (1997), Salmon (1998), and van Inwagen (1977).

Semantic Role of Empty Names

According to its referential role, a proper name functions to say of a particular object only and nothing else. Setting aside how a proper name functions to refer, what does a proper name informatively say? In other words, what semantic meaning/content¹² do we put forward by uttering a proper name that functions to say of a particular object?

On the above questions, the opposing theories of reference, Descriptivism and Direct Referentialism, give two opposing answers. Firstly, both theories agree on that a proper name functions to stand uniquely for a particular object. However, they disagree on how a proper name functions in this way. To Descriptivist account (hereafter DS), a proper name functions to say of its referent uniquely via a definite descriptive content associated with the proper name. Conversely, for Direct Referentialism (DR), a proper name functions to say of its referent uniquely on its own right. Thereby, they disagree on what a proper name informatively says of and they give different answers to the question of what the semantic meaning of a proper name is.

Descriptivism

To Descriptivist account, proper name N functions to speak of the individual named “N” uniquely in virtue of stipulating the name N as a disguised definite description

¹² Regarding different linguistic functions of a proper name, Many Direct Referentialist philosophers [David Kaplan (1989), Adams & Stecker (1994)] distinguish different aspects of meaning of a proper name. In terms of the referential function, a proper name is, in the first place, introduced to name a putative particular individual and a proper name N only says in a reflexive manner that the name N stands for “the individual named ‘N’”. For example, the name “Santa Claus” corresponds to “the individual named ‘Santa Claus’”. This meaning of a proper name is often called as a linguistic meaning/content. By linguistic meaning, we do not obtain any information of which individual thing is in question or of which properties this individual has. For instance, the name “David Braun” just trivially corresponds to “the individual named ‘David Braun’” due to the way by which the name “David Braun” is stipulated [Adams & Stecker (1994)]. That is to say, the linguistic meaning of a proper name is semantically and truth-conditionally irrelevant. What we are interested in is the informatively significant meaning of a proper name, i.e., semantic meaning, rather than this uninformative content.

the (unique) D with which the speaker associates the individual named N.¹³ Thus, the definite description “the D” is a semantic mediator -between the name and the referent- that enables the speaker to identify the individual named “N” uniquely. To illustrate, the name “Aristotle”, on particular occasion of use, function to stand uniquely for a particular man because speakers associate the name “Aristotle” with definite descriptions such as “the student of Plato” or “the teacher of Alexander the Great” and so on. In this direction, DS holds the following thesis on the semantic meaning of a proper name:

(DS_{THESES}) For any proper name N, the semantic meaning of N is a definite descriptive content “the D” (or a cluster of definite descriptive contents) at where a speaker S associates the D with N.

Therefore, Descriptivist thesis permits that empty names just as other proper names have semantic meaning although they fail to refer. For instance, the utterance of a name “Santa Claus”, as some speaker used, may correspond to the definite description “the jolly bringer of Christmas” and then this definite descriptive content will be the meaning of the name “Santa Claus” on this particular occasion of use.

Since all proper names including empty names have semantic meaning then DS follows that an empty name can be used to construe a proposition. Namely, an

¹³ In this articulation of Descriptivist account, the associated definite description the D is a singular content, which the speaker takes from publicly accessible associations concerning with the object. Thus, to this form of Descriptivism, descriptive content for a singular entity named “N” may vary based on by which singular descriptive content a speaker associates with the name on particular occasion of use, thereby the associated content for the very same proper name may vary from speaker to speaker and may even vary for the same speaker over time. To illustrate, “Aristotle”, on particular occasion of use, may be taken to represent “the author of Categories” single-handedly as well as it may be taken to represent “the pupil of Plato” on some other particular occasion of use. On the other hand, for another articulation of Descriptivist account, the descriptive content revealed by a proper name does not have to be selectively singular as in the last example, and, the descriptive content “the D” for the name N may be a cluster of definite descriptions where each one is associated with the object on certain occasions. Therefore, a set of descriptions such as {the D1, the D2, the D3...} may compromise the descriptive content in the disjunctive form such as the D: {the D1 V the D2 V the D3 V...} and this gives the semantic meaning of the relevant proper name [Searle (1958)]. In this paper, I have no intension to choose one articulation of Descriptivist account over another, thus, I do not particularly take one articulation to Descriptivist account unless otherwise stated.

empty name contributes its associated definite descriptive content to the proposition expressed by the sentence in which it occurs. For instance, assertive utterances of empty-name sentences “Santa Claus is benevolent”, “Santa Claus does not exist” would express the propositions identified by the following ordered pairs ¹⁴:

Pf_{Des}: <The jolly bringer of Christmas, being benevolent >

Pf_{Des} :< <The jolly bringer of Christmas, existence>NEG>

In this vein, empty-name sentences, for DS, express complete semantic functions, i.e. propositions. Thus, for Descriptivist account, empty-name sentences, just as other sentences employing referring or “filled” proper names, express meaningful contents with definite truth-values under the Russellian analysis of these sentences.¹⁵

To wrap up, Descriptivist account holds that every proper name including empty names has a semantic meaning, namely an associated definite descriptive

¹⁴ This sentence-like representation of propositions is generally called as the structured view of propositions. According to this view, a proposition is a structured entity that contains positions or slots corresponding to semantically relevant positions in the sentential structure and these positions are “ready to receive basic semantic values (individuals and relations)” that compositionally construe the proposition (Braun 1993, p. 471). Therefore, the atomic sentence “Santa Claus is F” generates the propositional structure < (), ()> at where the slots designated by brackets are preserved for the semantic values of the sentential constituents “Santa Claus” and “F”. Better yet, the proposition expressed by the sentence can be represented as the ordered pair <S, being F> at where S stands for the assumed semantic meaning of a sentence. On this view, propositions are identified with ordered pairs of n objects and an n-place relation. Therefore, the sentence “Santa Claus is identical to Father Xmas” express the structured propositional function < S, being identical, S> at where “S” stands for the semantic meaning of the name. In this paper, I take this notion of proposition granted in the way the Direct Referentialist theorists [Adams et. al (1994, 1997, 2004, 2007), Braun (1993, 2005), Reimer (2001, 2007), Salmon (1998), Taylor (2000)] use. In this paper, I have no intention to put forward a debate over the notion of propositions and the other conventions to represent them. For this reason, I use the structured view of propositions by convention and I keep this notion intact for the sake of arguments.

¹⁵ To the Russellian analysis of empty-name sentences, the definite description the D associated with the empty name N amounts to the claim that there is a unique D. Accordingly; an atomic empty-name sentence is a complex expression consisting of the conjuncts. Simply, the sentence “Santa Claus is benevolent” initially corresponds to the descriptive claim that the jolly fat man is benevolent and then they analyze it to be the conjunctive statement that there is a unique jolly fat man and it is benevolent. Moreover, this conjunction comes out false because the first conjunct is false because there is no such and such unique individual in actuality. Again, under the correct reading of the scope of the negation, the sentence “Santa Claus does not exist” means that it is not the case that there is a unique individual such and such and it exists. Then the sentence “Santa Claus does not exist” comes out true since the embedded conjunction is false and its negation is true.

content. Thus, all proper names can be used to express a proposition, which is the meaningful and truth-evaluable content for a sentence. From this respect, Descriptivist account of proper names proposes a unified account for the semantics of proper names. It means that the semantics of empty names, as presented by Descriptivist account, does not occur as an abrupt case in Descriptivist account of the semantics of proper names.¹⁶

Direct Referentialism

In contrast to Descriptivist account, Direct Referentialist account maintains that the proper name N functions to speak of the individual named “N” uniquely on its own right without any descriptive content mediating the name N with the individual named “N”.¹⁷ From this respect, a proper name uniquely maintains which thing is in question without conveying any other informative or semantic content. To put it

¹⁶ This seeming theoretical advantage of The Descriptivist account does not mean that Descriptivist account of the semantics of proper names is free from some alleged errors. In this context, Donnellan (1970) and Kripke (1980) produce serious challenges against this stand. Here, we can speak of three basic problems as Kripke and Donnellan formulated against Descriptivist semantics of proper names. According to the Modal Problem, if a proper name N is a disguised definite description the D then the sentence with N and the sentence with the D have the same truth conditions in all modal profiles. So, the sentences “Aristotle was a philosopher” and “The teacher of Alexander the Great was a philosopher” have the same truth conditions for the descriptivist theory of reference. However, it seems erroneous because each sentence might have been true while the other is false. To the epistemic problem, if N meant the D then “N is the D” would be tautological. Nevertheless, “Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great” is not a trivial at all. The last problem, the semantic problem, contends that the D associated with N also refer to some other singular entities having the relevant property but N only designates the bearer of N, if it has any (See footnote 18 on rigidity). For instance, the name “Aristotle”, as the speaker use, seems to stand uniquely for Aristotle himself whereas the association “the Greek philosopher” seems to stand uniquely for some other individuals (such as “Plato” and “Socrates”) in addition to “Aristotle”. I do not evaluate the soundness of these arguments just as I do not argue against or for one of these opposing theories of reference. Here, all I want to show is that the significance of empty names.

¹⁷ Here, it is worth noticing that Direct Referentialists only deny associated descriptions as the semantic content of proper names. That is to say, for Direct Referentialism, a proper name does not inherently contain nor suggest any definite descriptive content. However, Direct Referentialists do not deny that names in most cases are associated with some kind of sense or identifying descriptions in interlocutors’ cognitive strands about the uses of names in conversational discourse. Yet, to them, these associations are truth-conditionally irrelevant, no part of propositional content. To illustrate, the name “Aristotle” does not inherently say of his being (unique) such and such. Nonetheless, many Direct Referentialists also endorse that an interlocutor, who speaks or thinks of the proper name Aristotle, might cognitively identify the name “Aristotle” with descriptions in conversational discourse. As we shall see while discussing the Pragmatic Referentialism, they utilize from this association mechanism while explaining the relevant problems.

mildly, DR contends that a proper name, if it has a referent, directly stands for its referent only and nothing else.¹⁸ The semantic meaning of a proper name, to DR, can be formulated as follows:

(DR_{THESES}) For any proper name N, the sole semantic meaning of N, if it has any, is the referent of the name “N”

In this vein, DR thesis contends that a proper name has a semantic meaning if it has a referent (in a given discourse of utterance). Therefore, only “filled” proper names have a semantic meaning. The name “Kripke”, for instance, refers to Kripke himself and thereby the sole semantic content of the name “Kripke” is nothing other than this individual man himself. Moreover, a proper name, if it refers, solely contributes its referent to the proposition expressed by the sentence in which occurs. For instance, assertive utterances of the sentence “Kripke is a Direct Referentialist” express the singular proposition that can be identified by the ordered pair < Kripke (the man himself), being a Direct-Referentialist >¹⁹.

¹⁸ At least for Kripkean articulation of Direct Referentialism, a proper name, if has any referent, refers to its referent not only in a direct manner but also in a rigid manner. According to this trait of rigidity, a proper name necessarily designates to the same referent “in all possible worlds as it is used in the actual world” (Kripke, 1980, p. 77). That is to say, a proper name “John Perry”, for instance, always refers to John Perry himself in all possible worlds where the name exists as it is used in the actual world. Hereby, referring proper names “John Perry are called as rigid designators and non-referring proper names, i.e. empty names, are called as rigid non-designators since they have rigidity due to their referential role but still designates nothing in discourse about actuality. Furthermore, to this articulation of Direct Referentialism, rigidity distinguishes a proper name from a definite description. To clarify a bit further, the definite descriptive expression the D , which can be associated with a proper name N, also functions to stand exclusively for the particular object named “N” on a particular occasion of use but on another occasion of use it might also stand exclusively for another particular individual satisfying the relevant conditions contained in the D. For instance, “the student of Plato” can be stipulated to pick out Aristotle in a particular occasion of use but it can also be stipulated to pick out some other individual, another disciple of Plato, in one other utterance of the definite description. On the other hand, a Direct Referentialist argues that a proper name N rigidly designates the same referent of this name on all possible occasions of use (Kripke, 1980). For instance, the name “Aristotle” always refers to the same individual dubbed with this name no matter if this individual satisfies the associated descriptions such as “the Greek philosopher”, “the founder of Academia”, “the author of Categories” and so on.

¹⁹ In order to endorse a structured representation of the semantic content (the proposition) expressed by a sentence, a Direct Referentialist, in the first place, has to accept the view of structured propositions. According to this view, a proposition has a logical structure reflecting upon the syntactic structure of the sentence expressing it and it can be identified with argument positions mirroring the relevant sentence’s parts. Here, a Direct Referentialist might reject the representation of propositions

On the other hand, DR thesis also entails that a proper name has no semantic meaning if it has no referent in a given discourse of utterance. Since empty names are proper names without a referent in a given discourse of utterance, then DR firstly follows the conclusion that empty names have no semantic meaning (under the given discourse of utterance). For instance, empty names such as “Vulcan” and “Santa Claus” have no referent in discourse about actuality hence the utterances of them in discourse about actuality have no semantic meaning.

Holding the semantic compositionality, DR conclusion on the semantic meaning of an empty name secondly entails the conclusion that empty-name sentences fail to express a proposition. After all, a proposition, as the semantic compositionality suggests, is a complete semantic function comprised of the semantic meanings of a sentence’s parts (e.g., individuals, relations, properties). If a proposition comprises the semantic meanings of sentential constituents in a sentence, then a sentence, which lacks a semantic meaning of its part or parts, fails to express a proposition. In this respect, such a sentence does not posit a complete semantic function. Since empty names, for DR, have no semantic meaning, then DR follows that a sentence employing an empty name, i.e. an empty-name sentence, lacks a semantic meaning of its part. Thus, for DR, empty-name sentences fail to express a proposition, namely a complete semantic function.

as an ordered pair in terms of Russellian view of structured propositions, simply because she might not believe that there is such a thing like a proposition. it is possible that a Direct Referentialist may reject the representation of propositions as an ordered pair in a logical structure and she can still hold that Direct Referentialist account to some extent. She might simply reject that there is such an entity like a proposition and she can still hold that a proper name solely stands for its referent on its own right (Braun, 1993, Reimer, 2001). Although Direct Referentialism does not necessarily intertwine with this view, the problems that my paper covers particularly emerge from the Direct Referentialist accounts endorsing entity-like structured propositions. However, once this view is endorsed then an atomic sentence with a proper name, for Direct Referentialism, expresses a singular proposition if this name has any referent. After all, the sole semantic contribution of a proper name, if it has any, is a unique singular object.

In this respect; the empty name sentences in (2), for example, fail to express a proposition, because the names in (2), for DR, have no semantic meaning to construe a complete semantic function in unison with the semantic meanings of the sentences' other constituents.

- (2) (a). Santa Claus is jolly.
- (b). Clark Kent does not exist.
- (c). Superman is identical to Clark Kent
- (d). Superman is not a grapefruit.

Instead, most DR theorists hold that an empty-name sentence generates an incomplete semantic function that can be identified by a propositional structure absent from the semantic value of an empty name. Therefore, the “gappy” ordered pairs can identify these incomplete functions expressed by the sentences in (2):

- (2)(a). <__, being jolly>
- (b). <<__, existence>NEG>²⁰
- (c). <__, being identical to, __>
- (d). <<__, being a grape fruit>NEG>

These incomplete functions are called as a “gappy” proposition. Just as a (complete) proposition has, a gappy proposition has a structure with argument positions that reflect the logical structure of an empty-name sentence expressing it. For instance, the sentence “Vulcan is a planet” generates an atomic propositional structure preserving for one-place relation of a singular object just as the sentence “Neptune is a planet” produces. Simply, they both produce the structure < (), ()> at where brackets correspond to the semantic values of the relevant terms. However, the only difference is that the former sentence lacks a semantic value of its part corresponding to the object position. Although it also encodes semantic fact such as “being a

²⁰ In order to represent these negative statements (2) (b) and (2) (d), I use negated propositions for now but one can equally use predicate negations to represent these sentences in a gappy “content” such as <__, being-not-a-grapefruit>. Language appears to allow both readings of a negative sentence but I particularly explicate this point for Braun’s gappy proposition theory. For now, we can consider such negative statements in the way of reading I give in (2) (b) and (2) (d).

planet”, there is no object that it can be related with this property. Thus, a gappy proposition fails to be a complete semantic function since its propositional structure generated by the relevant sentence lacks a semantic contribution of an empty name to bring out a complete semantic function. In this sense, a “gappy” proposition is a non-propositional content under a propositional structure.²¹ In brief, for DR, an empty-name sentence fails to express a proposition; instead, it just expresses a “gappy” proposition.

If empty-name sentences, as DR suggests, fail to express a proposition then DR entails two further conclusions due to semantic and truth-conditional roles of a proposition: (1) Empty-name sentences fail to express something meaningful (2) Empty-name sentences fail to express something truth-evaluable. Firstly, according to the conventional maxim in truth-conditional semantics on propositions, a proposition is the semantically meaningful content expressed by a sentence. That is to say, a proposition is what is meaningfully expressed by a sentence [(Braun (1993, 2005), Strawson (1950), and Rickless (2012)]. Thus, if a sentence fails to express a proposition then it also fails to express something meaningful (semantically).

If empty-name sentences fail to express a proposition then DR therefore entails that an empty-name sentences fail to express something meaningful. For another conventional maxim on propositions, only propositions express truths and falsehoods [Armstrong (2004), Braun (1993, 2005), and Rickless (2012)]. In order for an expression to be truth-evaluable, an expression has to express a proposition.

²¹ Again, the gappy proposition view is an outcome of the view of structured propositions that is conventionally held in this paper with respect to the DR theorists under question. Therefore, a DR theorist can compatibly accept that an empty-name sentence does not express a structured “gappy” content although it fails to express a structured complete content (a proposition). She may simply deny that a semantic content expressed by a sentence has a structure. However, here, all DR theorists under question endorses that empty-name sentences posits a gappy propositional structure where empty names have no semantic contribution. Yet, as we shall see in Braun’s section, DR theorists have different opinions on the truth-theoretical roles of a gappy proposition though they agree on the fact that a gappy proposition is an incomplete semantic function expressed by a sentence.

Thus, sentences fail to express something truth-evaluable if they fail to express a proposition. Therefore, DR entails that empty-name sentences fail to express something truth-evaluable.

In conclusion, Direct Referentialist thesis entails that proper names can be used to express a proposition iff they have a referent in the given discourse of utterance. At this point, empty names occur as a curious case for the Direct Referentialist thesis. Hence, empty names have no referents in the relevant discourses and thereby they cannot be used to express a proposition. In other words, for DR, empty-name sentences fail to express a proposition. Instead, an empty-name sentence expresses a gappy proposition. If a proposition is the meaningful and truth-evaluable content expressed by a sentence, DR ends up with two further conclusions: Firstly, empty-name sentences fail to express something meaningful; and secondly, empty-name sentences fail to express something truth-evaluable. Nonetheless, these two conclusions appear to pose *prima facie* problems for Direct Referentialism with respect to our semantic and truth-theoretical intuitions about sentences with an empty name. Far simply, our common linguistic intuitions imply the opposite of the Direct Referentialist conclusions for the semantics of empty-name sentences. In what follows, I introduce the relevant problems by elaborating how they exactly emerge.²²

²² On semantics of proper names, empty names appear to be particularly problematic for Direct Referentialism but it does not mean that semantics of proper names cause no further challenges for DR thesis. Initially, Direct Referentialist thesis entails that co-referential terms such as “Hesperus” and “Phosphorus” have the same meaning since they have the same referent. However, synonymy of co-referential terms appears to entail two apparent problems. Firstly, if co-referential terms have the same semantic meaning, then the sentences “Hesperus is Hesperus” and “Hesperus is Phosphorus” should express the same trivially true statement. However, the sentence “Hesperus is Phosphorus” seems to be informative rather than trivial. Furthermore, Direct Referentialism entails that co-referential terms are *salva veritate* be intersubstitutable, because they have the same semantic contribution, i.e. the same referent, to propositions. Based on this, the speaker S believes that Hesperus is shining iff the speaker S believes that Phosphorus is shining. However, it seems incorrect because it does not account for the case at where the speaker S believes that Hesperus is shining without having any belief or knowledge of Phosphorus. Several Direct Referentialists have produced arguments against the problems under question [Kripke (1980), Donnellan (1970)]. However, these semantic problems and their solutions are not subject matter of this paper.

CHAPTER 3

THE SEMANTIC PROBLEMS

FOR DIRECT REFERENTIALIST ACCOUNT

Assuming that the empty-name sentences (3)(a)-(d) have been assertively uttered in discourse about actuality, DR holds that they all fail to express a proposition, a complete semantic function, instead they all express a “gappy” proposition. Thereby, DR engages in three conclusions about the empty-name sentences below: (i) They all fail to express something meaningful ; (ii) They all fail to express something truth-evaluable ; (iii) (3) (a)-(c) express the same gappy content

- (3)(a) Sherlock Holmes does not exist. Pf :< <____, existence>, NEG>>
- (b) Santa Claus does not exist. Pf :<< ____, existence> NEG> >
- (c) Father Xmas does not exist Pf :<< ____, existence> NEG> >
- (d) Vulcan is a planet. Pf: <____, being a planet>
- (e) Pegasus is a winged horse. Pf :< ____, being a winged horse >

However, our linguistic intuitions about these sentences appear to suggest the opposite with respect to each conclusion. Firstly, According to ordinary speakers’ intuitions of what is said by the sentences (3) (a)-(e) these sentences are meaningful. Hereafter I call this problem as The Problem of Meaningfulness (shortly, PM). Secondly, our linguistic intuitions imply that the sentences (3) (a)-(e) is truth-evaluable. In this respect, I call this problem as The Problem of Truth-Evaluability (hereafter PT). Finally, our linguistic intuitions suggest that the sentences in (3) do not say the same incomplete content. Hereby, I call this third complication as The Problem of Sameness and Difference (PSD). In what follows, I elaborate the relevant intuitive challenges for Direct Referentialist conclusions.

The Problem of Meaningfulness

DR endorses that the assertive utterances of empty-name sentences fail to express something meaningful semantically. If it is correct then the assertive utterances of empty-name sentences are non-sense. However, ordinary competent speakers intuitively make sense of these so-called non-sense sentences. It seems that interlocutors sensibly employ these sentences in their beliefs, thoughts, and inferences without recognizing that the propositional contents expressed by them are non-sense. Thus, our semantic intuitions of empty-name sentences imply that these sentences express something semantically meaningful. Therefore, it further implies that DR is incorrect. At this point, PM undermines Direct Referentialism so that a Direct Referentialist has to account for where interlocutors' seeming ability to make sense of so-called non-sense sentences such as "Vulcan does not exist" comes from.

The Problem of Sameness and Difference

According to DR, empty-name sentences only express a "gappy" proposition. A "gappy" proposition stands for an incomplete semantic function structured based on the logical form of the empty-name sentence. Moreover, a "gappy" proposition encodes the semantic contributions of meaningful constituents of a sentence in its propositional structure. Yet, it fails to express a complete function since it lacks the semantic contribution of an empty name to stand in a semantic relation with the other encoded meanings. Thus, when empty-name sentences share the same logical form and encode the same semantic values, they express the same gappy proposition. For instance, both sentences "S is F" and "O is F" express the same gappy proposition $\langle _, \text{being F} \rangle$ if "S" and "O" are empty names.

Considering the below sentences in (3), DR, therefore, entails that all sentences in (3) express the same incomplete semantic function. Nonetheless, it does

not jibe with ordinary speakers' intuitions about the contents expressed by these sentences. Ordinary speakers, who have informed reflection about the names in (3), feel that these sentences differ in content. Therefore, it appears that the sentences (3) (a) and (3) (b) say something different while the sentences (3) (b) and (3) (c) say the same thing.

- (3) (a) Sherlock Holmes does not exist. Pf :< <____, existence>, NEG > >
- (b) Santa Claus does not exist. Pf :< <____, existence>, NEG >>
- (c) Father Xmas does not exist. Pf :< <____, existence>, NEG >>

Thus, our intuitions suggest that empty-name sentences express semantically distinguishable propositional contents. Direct Referentialist theorists have to account for how ordinary speakers have different content intuitions if empty-name sentences having the same predicate express the very same gappy proposition. The question is as to why an ordinary speaker does not grasp the same gappy content from those sentences.

The Problem of Truth-Evaluability

The third problem has to do with DR conclusion that empty-name sentences express nothing truth-evaluable. If empty-name sentences fail to express something truth-evaluable, then what is expressed by an empty-name sentence has no truth-value. However, our truth-theoretical intuitions suggest that empty name sentences have truth-values.

To illustrate, the sentence (3) (d) Vulcan is a planet seems to be false if this sentence is taken to the effect that a non-actual entity has a property in actuality. In a more significant manner, our intuitions strongly suggest that the negative existential sentences (3) (a)-(c) such as "Vulcan doesn't exist" are true. In the first place, the reason why empty names fail to refer in discourse about actuality is that they are not existent individuals in actuality. Therefore, the negative existential sentences such as

“Santa Claus does not exist” seems likely to be true since it is asserted to the effect that what there is not in actuality does not exist in actuality. Furthermore, for our truth-theoretical intuitions, identity statements containing an empty name have certain truth-values. For instance, the sentences “Vulcan is identical to Neptune” and “Vulcan is the planet Phaeton” seems to be false whereas the sentences “Father Xmas is Santa Claus”, “Father Xmas is Father Xmas” seems to be true. Thus, our truth-theoretical intuitions about such cases imply that empty-name sentences have truth-values. Hence, Direct Referentialism needs to account for these intuitions since its conclusion on the truth-evaluability of the empty name sentences does not go accord with our intuitions.

Regarding these 3 problems (PC, PT and PSD), it can be said that Direct Referentialism does not a fortiori accommodate with allegedly common feelings on semantic and truth-theoretical content of the empty name sentences.²³ Hereby, the essential drawback for Direct Referentialism is proposed to be incompatible with our intuitions of semantics of empty names. Specifically, Direct Referentialism does not preserve the propositional contents that the empty-name sentences intuitively seem to have.

²³ Interlocutors’ intuitions on what is said by an empty-name sentence vary in various ways depending on their epistemic, cognitive, or meta-linguistic stands about the given utterance of a sentence by non-semantic means (e.g. syntactic and communicative means) as well. Furthermore, such stands seem to be sufficient ground for an ordinary interlocutor to call that utterance to be “meaningful” or to be “true” in the ordinary and non-semantic senses of the terms “meaning” and “truth.” As Braun (2005) suggests, a speaker can believe in the meaningfulness of the utterance of an empty name sentence just because he has a belief that the one who uttered the sentence is a reliable source to take her utterance as meaningful. Again, Piccinini and Scott (2010) share a survey in which the subjects were asked whether the given empty name sentences are true, false, or truth-valueless. This survey also indicates that the ordinary speakers’ intuitions on the very same sentences display variation without any specific theory-oriented manner. Because of this sort of factors and variation, it is unmerited to expect from the semantic theory to cover all non-semantic intuitions of ordinary speakers. Thus, I would prefer to scrutinize ordinary speakers’ intuitions of meaningfulness and truth-evaluability as long as they fall under theoretical senses of the terms. In a word, I only focus on the intuitions on the informative and declarative content that are considered to be imparted by an utterance of an empty-name sentence.

Nonetheless, this point is not a demonstratively compelling challenge for DR. Because, as in the cases of speech acts or of Gricean implicatures, our intuitions about what is said by a sentence do not have to be synonymous with the propositional content literally expressed by the sentence. To put it mildly, as the semantics-pragmatics distinction suggest, what is literally said by an utterance does not have to be the same with what is pragmatically implicated by that utterance. To illustrate, the utterance “I’ve lost a contact lens” literally says of a speaker’s having lost any contact lens but it may pragmatically implicate the sentence “I’ve lost a contact lens of my own” depending on the conversational context in which the former sentence is uttered (Green,2007) . Although Direct Referentialist account does not have to take it empty-name sentences as a matter of the semantics-pragmatics distinction, it gives a sufficient rationale for Direct Referentialism to argue that the gappy proposition literally expressed by an empty-name sentence might not be the same with what is communicated or cognated by empty-name sentences. Thus, divergent contents expressed by the very same empty-name sentence could be conversational or not, but in either way this divergence is an effective way to explain our intuitive conflicts.

Hereby, the essential challenge for Direct Referentialism is to account for why and how this inconsistency between our intuitions and the direct Referentialist predictions about sentences with empty names occurs. In this regard, Direct Referentialist has under the burden of explaining away these semantic and truth-theoretical intuitions. In what follows, I will introduce and discuss two different Direct Referentialist accounts that proposed to solve the problems PM, PT and PSD.

CHAPTER 4

THE SOLUTIONS

In this section, I present and evaluate the proposed solutions for the semantic problems stated above. In this direction, I argue out two distinct Direct Referentialist accounts. I firstly discuss Braun's (1993, 2005) the Gappy Proposition theory then I secondly present Adams and his co-authors' Pragmatic Referentialist account as a favorable alternative to Braun's account in order to deal with the relevant problems. Both of these accounts are proposed to solve the stated semantic problems by a unified account in the sense that these theories aim to solve the problems by one general treatment applying to all assertive utterances of all sorts of well-formed empty-name sentences (e.g. predicative, negative, and existential ones) without dropping the Direct Referentialist conclusions.²⁴

²⁴ Another common strategy on the semantic problems of empty-names is to explain away the different sorts of empty-name sentences by separate treatments. Particularly, some Direct Referentialist theorists explain away the problems only for the existential uses of empty-name sentences (e.g. "Pegasus exists"; "Vulcan does not exist"). Their motivation behind attributing to such priority to the existential uses of empty-name sentences is either because of the semantic status of "existence" as a property (first order or not), or because of ordinary speakers' highly strong intuitions for meaning and truth-value of such existential statements. In this vein, Donnellan (1974), for example, holds Direct Referentialist solutions for the semantic problems, particularly for (PT), that exclusively applies to the existential statements employing an empty name. In order to deal with the semantic problems for existential statement, Donnellan put forwards the following rule:

(R) If N is a proper name that has been used in predicative statements with the intention to refer to some individual, and then "FN does not exist" is true if and only if the history of those uses ends in a block. (1974, p. 25)

This rule simply contends that the empty name sentence "Vulcan does not exist" is true iff the name "Vulcan" does not refer. Therefore, according to Donnellan's rule, negative existential sentences such as "Vulcan does not exist" come out true, after all, his rule states that Vulcan does not exist iff 'Vulcan' does not refer. The essential reason why I do not cover such un-unified accounts in this paper is that they have no theoretical advantage in explaining our semantic intuitions about all other uses of empty name sentences such as predicative ones. Furthermore, Donnellan's account for instance has its own problems even if it is taken as an answer to the problem of truth-evaluability by itself. Braun (1993) and Adams and Stecker (1994) point out that Donnellan's strategy seems to be problematic because "reference" and "existence" are not mutually exclusive in all possible worlds. In other words, the first statement driven from Donnellan's rule is contingent while the other statement is necessary: If Vulcan does not exist, then 'Vulcan' does not refer; if 'Vulcan' does not refer, then 'Vulcan' does not refer. As a result, Donnellan's rule does not capture correct truth-values under all possible worlds. For these reasons, I narrow down the scope of solutions to the unified accounts aiming to resolve the given semantic problems.

In this regard, both theories initially endorse three Direct Referentialist conclusions:

- (1) Empty names have no meaning.
- (2) Empty-name sentences fail to express a proposition
- (3) Empty-name sentences express a gappy proposition.

By accepting these conclusions, they also confront with the problems PM, PT and PSD. Now, I would like to maintain their proposed solutions to these given semantic problems.

Braun's Gappy Proposition View

Braun on PM

As a proponent of DR account in the stated way, Braun holds that empty-name sentences fail to express a proposition but they only express incomplete semantic functions in a propositional structure as gappy propositions (1993, 2005). Holding that propositions are semantically meaningful contents of sentences, Braun holds that empty-name sentences fail to express something meaningful. To put it mildly; for Braun (1993), gappy propositions expressed by empty-name sentences are non-sense, because these sentences, for him, fail to express a proposition that is the semantic meaning for a sentence (p. 451-456). Hereby, Braun faces the Problem of Meaningfulness (PM).

As it is stated before, this challenge simply holds that we intuitively make sense of empty-name sentences and our seeming ability to make sense of them entails that empty-name sentences express semantically meaningful contents and thus it further implies that empty-name sentences posit complete propositions. Thus, the question, which Braun has to confront, is as to how rational ordinary interlocutors can make sense of utterances and hearings of empty-name sentences if these sentences express non-sense contents, which are "gappy" propositions.

On PM, Braun suggests an explanation relying on cognitive contents of empty-name sentences with connections to speakers and auditors' beliefs. He firstly accepts that ordinary speakers intuitively make sense of empty-name sentences despite the fact that they do not literally express completely sensible contents. For Braun (1993), unlike the paradigmatic pieces of non-sense expressions such as "all mimsy were the borogoves" and "hit boy girl the the", rational speakers believe and sincerely assert empty-name sentences to convey their belief states and these utterances of empty-name sentences cause the production of belief states in auditors (p. 456-459).

To illustrate, when a speaker sincerely asserts the sentence "Vulcan is between Mercury and the sun", she simply uses the sentence to convey her belief state that she finds completely meaningful. This speaker entertains empty-name sentences with "Vulcan" sensibly without any lapse in her rationality. Again, another interlocutor can make sense of a hearing of the sentence. For instance, depending on her epistemic stand about "Vulcan", the later interlocutor can even assert her own belief state against it by the sentence "No. Vulcan does not exist". In this case, neither of these sentences, for each speaker, seems to be non-sense. Intuitively, these speakers seem to communicate by meaningful contents rather than merely uttering non-sense utterances. Therefore, Braun (2005) agrees with the present challenge on the claim that rational speakers make sense of allegedly non-sense empty-name sentences (p. 599)

However, Braun disagrees with PM on the claim that interlocutors' seeming ability to make sense of empty name sentences entails that empty-name sentences in fact express semantically meaningful content, i.e. propositions. To Braun (1993), this entailment presupposes that the propositional content speakers believe or cognate by

an empty-name sentence has to be the same with the propositional content literally expressed by this sentence (p. 459-462). Braun here underlines that what is literally said by a sentence and what is grasped by a sentence can diverge as in the case of speech acts. Thus, according to Braun, when an interlocutor hears or assertively utters an empty name sentence, he may believe some content in his cognition other than what is literally expressed by an empty-name sentence.

Therefore, Braun thinks that interlocutors make sense of utterances and hearings of empty-name sentences because they believe sensible contents by them in their cognitions rather than non-sense contents that are literally expressed. To illustrate, when an interlocutor sincerely asserts the sentence “Vulcan does not exist”, he believes a sensible propositional content by the sentence other than the non-sense gappy proposition <<__, existence> NEG> which is literally expressed by this sentence. This point gives a rise to the question of how an interlocutor can believe such a propositional content by a sentence instead of believing what is literally said by this sentence.

For Braun, it is possible when an interlocutor has a cognitive representation of the sentence where the words do not “stand in the right causal-historical relations to objects in the world” (1993, p. 457). For Braun, LeVerrier, for instance, believes in a sensible content by his utterance of the sentence “Vulcan is the tenth planet”, because he holds an inaccurate cognitive representation where the name “Vulcan” refers to an actual planet. Thus, this mental representation of the sentence falsely corresponds to a complete proposition where the name “Vulcan” has a putative referent by contrast to actuality (1993, p. 458-462). Thus, according to Braun’s explanation, when LeVerrier sincerely asserts the sentence, he believes in the proposition <Vulcan, being the tenth planet> at where the name “Vulcan” is wrongly

represented to have a referent in actuality. To wrap up, for Braun, ordinary interlocutors make sense of literally non-sense empty-name sentences because they cognate sensible contents by these sentences. Furthermore, interlocutors acquire such sensible contents instead of recognizing literally non-sense contents of them when they have inaccurate cognitive representations of the sentences that express propositions unlike accurate representations of them. By this line of thoughts, Braun explains away PM.

Objections to Braun's Solution to PM

In general, Braun's strategy to deal with PM appears to be quite convincing to certain extent. Firstly, Braun's initial premise against PM is strongly defensible. In other words, it is a fair point that our seeming ability to understand empty-name sentences does not strictly entail that they literally express complete semantic contents. At best, our intuitions just imply it but this is not a strict entailment. Here, Braun is right in pointing out that what is believed by an empty-name sentence may diverge from what is literally expressed by it. Thus, an interlocutor may believe a complete proposition (fully sensible content) by an empty-name sentence instead of recognizing a so-called gappy proposition (non-sense content) expressed by it.

Nonetheless, Braun's explanation for how an interlocutor can cognate this complete proposition by an empty-name sentence needs to be revised. Firstly, Braun's explanation supposes that an utterer or a hearer, who makes sense of an empty-name sentence, has an inaccurate cognitive representation of the sentence where the words are wrongly believed to refer to actual objects, relations, and properties. It is worth noticing that Braun's explanation depends on the ignorance of an interlocutor to the relevant discourse about actuality where the given empty names and their stated relations are stipulated to take place. That is to say, according to his

explanation, interlocutors believe a complete proposition by an empty-name sentence such as “Vulcan is near Mercury” only if they are ignorant to the fact that “Vulcan” does not have any referent in actuality. Here, it is agreeable that a speaker such as LeVerrier can cognate a complete proposition by the sentence “Vulcan is near Mercury” because of his misrepresentation of the sentence where the name “Vulcan” refers.

However, Braun’s strategy does not straightforwardly explain how an interlocutor, who knows the name “Vulcan” does not refer, can sensibly believe and utter the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” without realizing that the literal content of it is non-sense “gappy” proposition. At this point, it is less desirable to accept that this interlocutor cognates a complete proposition by the sentence because of his misrepresentation of the sentence where the name “Vulcan” refers to something in actuality. After all, this interlocutor believes the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” primarily because he knows that “Vulcan” does not refer in actuality. Thus, what content the interlocutor believes by the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” cannot conceivably correspond to the content where the name “Vulcan” has an actual referent. This point suggests that Braun needs to explain how this interlocutor believes a sensible content by the allegedly non-sense empty-name sentence “Vulcan does not exist” although the interlocutor seems to not have an inaccurate mental representation of the sentence in terms of reference.

However, of course, the proposed objection does not refute Braun’s general strategy depending on the claim that what a speaker cognates by a literally non-sense empty-name sentence may be a completely sensible content. For instance, as we shall see in the Pragmatic Referentialism, a speaker can still cognate a complete proposition by a literally “non-sense” empty-name sentence because of his inaccurate

mental representation in terms of the semantic meaning of an empty name rather than its referent. Nevertheless, this objection undermines Braun's answer to the question of how an interlocutor cognates a completely sensible content by an empty-name sentence.

Braun on PSD

Holding that empty-name sentences express gappy propositions, Braun also faces with the objection PSD concerning with distinguishing the sentences expressing the same gappy proposition. According to it, the sentences below say the very same gappy proposition whereas the interlocutors feel that the first two sentences express the same content while the third one says something different. So how ordinary speakers have intuition of different contents by these sentences if they all express the same gappy content?

- (3) (a) Santa Claus does not exist. Pf :< <____, existence>, NEG >>
- (b) Sherlock Holmes does not exist. Pf :< <____, existence>, NEG >>
- (c) Father Xmas does not exist. Pf :< <____, existence>, NEG >>

Braun's solution to this problem contains the similar strategy with his solution for PM. According to Braun, these sentences literally express the very same gappy propositional content, however, a speaker may fairly fail to recognize the gappy proposition expressed by the sentences above if they cognate a different content by each sentence. For Braun (2005), a speaker may believe a complete content by an empty-name sentence depending on how she cognitively represents it. Furthermore, speakers' ways of representing different sentences may vary (p.602). Thus, the sentences above may differ in cognitive contents based on speakers' different ways of believing or disbelieving them. Thus, depending on how a speaker cognitively represents it, a speaker may cognate the very same content with the first and the second sentence whereas she, by the third sentence, may cognate a different content

than what she cognates by the first and the second (2005, p. 602-605). To illustrate, a speaker believe the same content by the sentences (3)(a) and (3)(b) when he has an inaccurate cognitive representation where “Father Xmas” and “Santa Claus” refer to the very same causal-historical relations.

At this point, I do not propose any particular objection to Braun’s solution to PSD because this also bears the burden of objection about how a speaker can acquire such a cognitive content by misrepresentation of an empty-name sentence in terms of reference. In what follows, I would like to argue Braun’s solution to the Problem of Truth-evaluability.

Braun on PT

Most Direct Referentialist theorists including Braun hold that empty-name sentences fail to express a proposition; instead, they express a “gappy” proposition. For instance, the sentence “Vulcan is the planet” would express the “gappy” proposition $\langle _, \text{being the planet} \rangle$ which is not a complete semantic function. If it is true that only propositions express truths and falsehoods, then Direct Referentialism entails that gappy propositions express no truth-conditional content to assign a certain truth-value. After all, in the common way of truth-value assignment, the following principle is in play: A proposition $\langle O, \text{being } P \rangle$ expressed by the sentence “O is P” is true if the object O has the property of being P; it comes out false if O does not have the property of being P. (Piccinini 2010, p. 264). However, in the case of empty-name sentences, the sentence “N is P”, at where the name N is empty, expresses the “gappy” proposition $\langle _, \text{being } P \rangle$ and this gappy proposition expresses neither truth nor falsehood since there is no object named “N” at the argument slot to stand in truth-conditional relation with the property P. Thus, it seems that there is no truth-value to assign to “gappy” propositions but our intuitions

suggest in many cases that what are expressed by empty name sentences have truth-values.

To deal with this problem; Braun (1993, 2005) generates an indigenous strategy that denies the maxim that only propositions express truths and falsehoods. Unlike other DR theorists, Braun holds that “gappy” propositions are truth-evaluable thereby they have certain truth-values. If gappy propositions indeed have truth-values, then this straightforwardly accommodates with our truth-theoretical intuition that empty-name sentences have truth-values.

Thus, according to Braun, we feel that sentences containing empty names have truth-values because, in fact, they do. At this point, it is worth considering on what basis Braun thinks that “gappy” propositions have truth-values. In this regard, he generalizes the common way of truth-value assignment to propositions so that we can assign truth-values to gappy propositions. In this direction, Braun (1993) puts forward the following principle for truth-assignment of a proposition:

If P is a proposition having a single subject position and a one-place property position, then P is true iff the subject position is filled by one, and only one, object, and it exemplifies the property filling the property position. If P is not true then it is false. (p.463)

According to Braun’s this principle, a propositional content expressed by a well-formed sentence such as “O is P” comes out false in two ways. Firstly, the sentence “O is P” is false if “O” in the subject position has an actual referent yet it fails to exemplify the property “being P” in discourse about actuality. This sense of Braun’s truth-assignment principle covers the sentences such as “Kripke is a geologist”. Secondly, the sentence “O is P” is false if “O” the subject position has no actual referent to bear any property in discourse about actuality. Empty-name sentences such as “Vulcan exists” fail to be true in this second way (1993, p.464).

Based on Braun's principle, a "gappy" proposition $\langle _, \text{existence} \rangle$, which is expressed by the sentence "Vulcan exists", is not true because the name "Vulcan" has no referent to occupy the subject position in the propositional structure. Since a "gappy" proposition is not true in this sense, then the principle implies that it is false because the falsity condition in the sentence simply says that if the expression P, which has a propositional structure, is not true then it is false.

Employing this principle to empty-name sentences, Braun reaches the conclusion that all atomic "gappy" propositions expressed by empty-name sentences are false (2005, p.607). In this respect, the following empty-name sentences all come out to be false:

- (4) (a) Santa Claus exists. $\langle _, \text{existence} \rangle$
- (b) Vulcan is near to Mercury. $\langle _, \text{being near to Mercury} \rangle$
- (c) Vulcan is Hesperus. $\langle _, \text{being Hesperus} \rangle$
- (d) Pegasus flies. $\langle _, \text{flying} \rangle$

Reaching the upshot that all atomic gappy propositions are false, Braun also concludes that propositional negations of them are straightforwardly true. That is to say, if a gappy proposition is false, then the negation of something expressing falsity comes to be true. To illustrate, for Braun, the gappy content $\langle \langle _, \text{being-a-planet} \rangle, \text{NEG} \rangle$ is true iff the embedded proposition is false. Here, Braun supposes that negative empty-name sentences have a structure like this negation of an untrue gappy content. Specifically, he interprets negative empty-name sentences as the wide-scope negation is in operation. What is negated by such sentences, for him, is the truth-value of an embedded atomic proposition in the sentence. Regarding this interpretation, negative empty-name sentences, according to Braun, turn out to be true. In this regard, the following sentences, for him, are true:

- (5) (a) Pegasus does not exist. <<____, existence>, NEG >
 (b) Vulcan is not the tenth planet <<____, being the tenth planet>, NEG >
 (c) Sherlock is not a grape fruit <<____, being a detective>, NEG>
 (d) Father Xmas does not live in the North Pole.
 <<____, living in the North Pole>NEG>
 (e) Father Xmas is not Sherlock Holmes <<____, identity, __>NEG>

Briefly, Braun sets a generalized principle for truth-evaluability of propositions by which all empty-name sentences have truth-values. Particularly, all atomic gappy propositions expressed by these sentences come out false whereas their negations come out true. Allowing gappy propositions have truth-values, Braun goes accord with the truth-theoretical intuitions about the sentences employing an empty name. Thereby, he straightforwardly accommodates with our truth-theoretical intuitions about empty-name sentences. However, in order to assess the viability of Braun's solution; we can scrutinize two questions on his principle: First, is it a valid or compelling principle to demonstrate atomic gappy propositions to be false? If it is so, then does it sufficiently capture truth-values of empty-name sentences that intuitively seem to have? The present objections to Braun's solution for (PT) can easily be associated with these two questions on his principle. In what follows, I discuss these objections.

Objections to Braun's solution to PT

Firstly, what is called into a question as to Braun's solution is the falsity condition in his extended truth-assignment rule for gappy propositions. According to Braun's extended principle, for any expression E that has a propositional structure with subject and property positions, if E is not true then it is false. Thus, for Braun, gappy propositions are false because they are not true.

As several authors indicate, if atomic gappy propositions are false in virtue of their being not true then one can equally extend it to the claim that all untrue things,

including gappy propositions, are false in virtue of being not true.²⁵ After all, there is no compelling reason to apply the principle to certain untrue things only. That is to say, Braun's principle can fairly be extended to the claim that all untrue things are false since they are not true. If the principle can be extended in this way then things such as Piccadilly Circus and Russell's singleton set would be false (Salmon 1998). In addition to such entities, non-sense expressions like "All mimsy borgoreves", "Framus glibs" and "Hit boy girl the the" would come out false²⁶ (Adams and Stecker 1994, p. 397). Thirdly, in case there is no apparent ellipsis and such pragmatic enrichment about some sub-sentential expressions, expressions like "...does not exist"; "Santa Claus is..." would be counted to be false if Braun's principle can permit to all untrue things to be false.

Nevertheless, such things, in the first place, do not express a proposition. Thus, it is absurd to hold the claim that all of these untrue things bear propositional truths or falsehoods. Unless Braun shows the privilege status of gappy propositions in having a truth-value, his principle can reasonably be extended to this unpleasing upshot. In other words, Braun has to purport a compelling reason for the claim that only gappy propositions, of all other untrue things, express falsehoods and truths. Thus, Braun needs to answer the question of what gives the ability to bear truth-values to "gappy" propositions just as filled propositions entertain.

²⁵ This point is originally made by Salmon (1998). Moreover, the other authors [Adams et.al (1994, 2004, 2007), Everett (2003), Green (2007), Reimer (2001), Piccinini et. al (2010)] reiterated Salmon's original objection by coupling with some other examples and further points. The version of objection I introduced above covers all original emphasis made by these authors.

²⁶ Adams and Stecker (1994) put forward the "mock" sentence "Framus glibs" in the way that neither of these separate phonemes have sense and both of them are just random phonemes seemingly stand to be a subject and a predicate.

Braun (2005), in response to this objection, makes the following remarks:

Atomic gappy propositions are distinctive because they are objects of belief and assertion, and so are propositions. Only propositions, or items that express propositions, can bear truth-values. Piccadilly Circus and Russell's singleton set are not propositions, and do not express propositions. So, atomic gappy propositions are false, though Piccadilly Circus and Russell's singleton are not. (p 605)

Again, in the same paper, Braun says:

...some things are untrue, and yet are not false, for instance, Piccadilly Circus and the Eiffel Tower. The most salient difference between untrue objects that are false and untrue objects that are not false is that the former are propositions (or items that semantically express propositions). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that this is the crucial difference between being untrue and being false: untrue objects that are also propositions (or things that express propositions) are false. Atomic gappy propositions are propositions and are untrue. Therefore, they are false. (p. 606)

In this vein, according to Braun, gappy propositions are capable of having a truth-value because they are propositions unlike ordinary things, non-sense expressions, and sub-sentential utterances. However, as Piccinini and Scott (2010) points out, Braun begs the question by holding that a gappy proposition is a proposition. Is not the very reason why we take them as a "gappy" proposition that they are incomplete semantic functions? Does not Braun, in the first place, endorse that an empty-name sentence fails to express a proposition, which is a complete semantic function? Thus, if an atomic gappy proposition can bear truth and falsity because it is a proposition, then what is expressed by an empty-name sentence should be endorsed as a complete semantic and truth-conditional content. Yet, it is quite unacceptable for Direct Referentialist who argues that empty-name sentences fail to express a proposition due to the thesis that empty names have no semantic meaning to contribute to what is expressed by the sentences employing them. Thus, if one takes "gappy" propositions, as propositions in its traditional sense then the one cannot hold this view without dropping Direct Referentialist stands on the semantic meaning of empty names and

of empty-name sentences. Hence, Braun's this explanation seems to be even less desirable for a Direct Referentialist.

On the other hand, this objection overlooks one point in Braun's reasoning. Braun holds "gappy" propositions to be a proposition in terms of truth-evaluability, not in terms of expressing a complete semantic function. Thus, if Braun shows that "gappy" propositions are bona fide propositions in terms of truth-evaluability then he will have a reason to argue that "gappy" propositions just as complete propositions can have truth-values unlike other untrue things. In this direction, Braun proposes a reason to show why a "gappy" proposition is a proposition in terms of bearing a truth-value although it is not a proposition in terms of having a complete semantic content. According to Braun, "gappy" propositions bear truth-values because of their resemblance to filled propositions that always have certain truth-values.

Firstly, "gappy" propositions formally resemble to "filled" or "complete" propositions, because, they both generate propositional structures and encode some semantic facts. On the other hand, again, Braun's explanation for why a "gappy" proposition has the ability to bear a truth-value appears to be insufficient. As Adams and Stecker (1994) suggests, resemblance relation with filled propositions by itself is not compelling argument to accept that a gappy proposition is truth-evaluable. Even if a gappy proposition does not have any truth-value, they can still formally resemble to the propositions that have always truth-values. For instance, the gappy proposition <__, being a planet> will resemble to the form of a filled proposition no matter if this gappy proposition has a truth-value or not. Furthermore, Adams and Stecker (1994) notes that most expressions such as commands, promises, and questions encode semantic facts as well, nonetheless this does not make them bear propositional truths

and falsehoods. Thus, there is no reason to think that this resemblance relation makes a gappy proposition have a truth-value.

Considering these complications, Braun's principle does not persuasively show why, of all other untrue things, "gappy" propositions ought to have a certain truth-value. Since Braun's principle has no compelling or independent reason to isolate his principle for empty-name sentences, then his principle becomes ad hoc. Furthermore, Braun's principle, at best, permits all untrue things to be false and it is equally undesirable upshot considering our truth-theoretical intuitions.

Even if Braun's principle is convincing to claim that all gappy propositions have certain truth-values then it is still questionable whether this principle accurately bestows the truth-values to the empty-name sentences. Braun thinks that all atomic empty-name sentences are false and negated ones are true. To what extent do intuitive truth-values of empty-name sentences go accord with the ones captured by Braun's principle?

Firstly, Everett (2003) raises a couple of objections against Braun's principle because it predicts counter-intuitive truth-values about certain sort of sentences employing an empty name. As Everett proposes, let us consider the identity-statements and their negations in (6)

- (6) (a) Santa is identical to Santa. <__, being identical, __>
- (b) Santa is self-identical. <__, being-self-identical>
- (c) Santa is not identical to Santa. <<__, being identical, __>NEG>
- (d) Santa is not self-identical <<__, being-self-identical> NEG>

On Braun's view, atomic gappy propositions expressed by (6) (a) and (6) (b) are false while the negations of them, namely the sentences (6) (c) and (6) (d), are true.

However, as Everett (2003) suggests, it seems highly counter-intuitive to hold these self-identity statements to be false and the negations of them to be true (p. 9-10). Our truth-theoretical intuitions about them imply the opposite truth-values. In other

words, (6) (b) “Santa is self-identical”, for instance, appears to express a necessary truth if we can indeed assign a truth-value to what is said by an empty-name sentence. Therefore, Braun’s principle fails to capture our intuitions concerning the truth-values of certain utterances containing empty names. Even if gappy propositions have certain truth-values as Braun proposes, his proposal yields intuitively wrong truth-values.

Everett’s second objection relies upon different scope readings of a subject-predicate sentence including a negation. As Braun admits, there are two possible readings of the negation in a subject predicate sentence no matter if this ambiguity is “lexical or a matter of scope” (2005, p. 622). Namely, these available readings of a negative subject-predicate sentence are wide-scope and narrow-scope readings.²⁷ On wide-scope reading, what is negated in a negative subject-predicate sentence is the proposition expressed by the subject-predicate claim. Let us consider the sentence “Santa Claus does not exist”. On wide-scope reading, negation applies to the propositional relation between the subject “Santa Claus” and the property “being existence”. Thus, according to the wide-scope reading of the sentence, what is negated by the sentence is the subject-predicate claim “Santa exists”. However, language permits another reading of a negative subject-predicate sentence, namely a narrow-scope reading. According to it, the negation applies to the predicate rather than to the subject-predicate claim as a whole. According to this reading, the sentence “Vulcan is not a planet” corresponds to the propositional relation between the negated predicate “being not-a-planet” and the subject “Vulcan”.

Braun supposes that this wide-scope reading negation takes a role in negative empty-name sentences. Although Braun admits the availability of such reading for

²⁷ Here, I adopted commonly used names for those distinct readings in the way Russell introduces us. However, some authors like Salmon (1998) call “wide-scope reading” as “exclusion negation” and call “narrow-scope reading” as “choice negation”.

negative empty-name sentences, he only allows wide-scope reading of these sentences without proposing any particular reason. As Everett argues, Braun does not provide any independent motivation to deny that "Santa does not exist" and "Santa is not self-identical" involve a predicate negation" (2003, p. 10-12). From this aspect, since there is no compelling reason to deny predicate negations in empty-name sentences, then Braun's principle should also be applicable to them.

In this regard, as we recall, Braun's principle simply contends that the sentence "O is P" is true if the object O has the property of being P and false otherwise. In the case of a predicate negation, Braun principle similarly contends that the sentence "O is not-P" is true if the object has the property of being not-P and false otherwise. This implies that the utterance of a subject-predicate claim consisting of an empty name and a negated predicate will be counted as false owing to the fact that empty name in the subject position does not refer and thereby it does not have the negated property to come out true. Thus, an utterance of the sentence "Vulcan is not a planet" will be false because it does not satisfy the property "being not-a-planet" to be true. Under the narrow reading, Braun's principle ascribes falsehood to the sentences in (7).

- (7) (a) Santa Claus does not exist. <__, non-existence>
- (b) Vulcan is not an actual planet <__, being non-actual>
- (c) Sherlock is not existent. <__, being not-existent>

Although Braun's principle, under narrow scope reading, assigns falsity to the sentences above, our intuitions imply that they are true. After all, the names "Santa Claus", "Vulcan", "Sherlock Holmes" are thought to be "non-actual" or "non-existent" in actuality in the first place. Thus, these readings of the sentences occur to us to be true. Thus, Everett (2005) notes that Braun's principle entails to counter-intuitive truth-values in case of predicate negation unless Braun gives us a solid

reason to accept that negative empty-name sentences cannot be read under the narrow scope.

Concluding Remarks on Braun's Gappy Proposition Theory

In conclusion, Braun's solutions for the relevant problems PM, PSD and PT confront with the difficulties I introduced above and Braun's solutions are unsusceptible to these challenges. Setting aside his convincing and relatively effective strategy to deal with PM and PSD, his solution to PT is particularly unpalatable due to the objections above. On PT, Braun contends that what is said by an empty-name sentence, a "gappy" proposition, is truth-evaluable and it accommodates with speakers' truth-theoretical intuitions on this allegedly truth-valueless content. To show how a sentence lacking complete truth-conditional content has a truth-value, he stretches the notion of falsehood and truth so that all untrue things may equally be counted to be false. However, it is an unpleasing upshot for the sake of the notion of propositional truth. Again, Braun's plea for taking a "gappy" proposition as a truth-evaluable entity like a normal proposition fails as well, because resemblance relation is insufficient to purport that "gappy" propositions have truth-evaluable content. Apart from this insufficiency of Braun's solution to PT, Everett has a good point to argue against the efficacy of Braun's principal in assigning intuitively correct truth-values to the empty name sentences. Though Braun's principal capture the intuitively correct truth-values in most cases such as "Santa does not exist" or "Vulcan is between Mercury and the sun", his principal fails to capture our truth-theoretical intuitions about identity statements and negative statements under narrow-scope reading. For these reasons, it is unpleasing to support Braun's fundamental claim that gappy propositions have certain truth-values.

Thus, I think it is more palatable for a Direct Referentialist to claim that a gappy proposition, if indeed it is expressed by an empty-name sentence, has no truth-value. Yet, this sort of Direct Referentialist stand still needs to explain away the mismatch of our intuitions and Direct Referentialist predictions. As we shall discuss later, the Pragmatic Referentialism, which Adams and his co-authors discuss, proposes an account that meet with our truth-theoretical intuitions without dropping the thesis that a gappy proposition has no truth-value. However, for now, I want to evaluate the second flaw of Braun's principle. In the following section, I will discuss an alternative account put forward to solve the relevant problems and I will propose it as a more pleasing account considering the challenges that Braun's account faces.

The Pragmatic Referentialism: Adams, Dietrich, Fuller, Stecker

A part from Braun's Direct Referentialist treatment of the relevant problems, Adams, Dietrich, Fuller, and Stecker (1994, 1997, 2002, 2004, and 2007) propose the Pragmatic Referentialist account (hereafter, PR) to explain away the relevant semantic problems in favor of Direct Referentialist semantics of empty names. In this regard, Adams and his co-authors embrace the generic Direct Referentialist conclusions that empty-name sentences do not express a proposition but express a gappy proposition. Holding a proposition to be the semantically meaningful and truth-evaluable content for a sentence, they also accept the derived conclusions that empty-name sentences say nothing meaningful semantically and nothing truth-evaluable. That is to say, for Adams and his collaborators, the gappy proposition <<__, existence>NEG> expressed by the sentence "Santa Claus does not exist" has no meaning semantically and no truth-value.²⁸ Endorsing the Direct Referentialist

²⁸ Adams and his co-authors represent the negative existential empty-name sentences in the form of <__, non-existence> because they take the property of existence as the second-order property. However, here I see no harm in using the form <<__, existence>NEG> for the sake of notational simplicity.

convictions, PR follows the problems PM, PSD and PT as in the way I stated. In short, they encounter with the question of why we have certain intuitions that seem to conflict with Direct Referentialist conclusions on what is said by an empty-name sentence.

In order to account for these semantic and truth-theoretical intuitions about what is said by an empty name sentence, they adopt a “pragmatic maneuver” that appeals to the Gricean notion of implicatures²⁹ (Reimer, 2007). Simply, they evaluate empty-name sentences by relying upon the distinction between what is said and what is communicated by a sentence. According to their pragmatic strategy, an utterance of an empty-name sentence semantically conveys a gappy proposition. However, an utterance of this sentence pragmatically conveys a “filled” or complete proposition in which the gappy argument position is substituted with a description or a set of descriptions that is causally and historically associated with the uses of the name in conversational discourse (1994, p. 389-392 ; 2004, p. 125-127). Thus, for PR, empty-name sentences pragmatically implicate meaningful and truth-evaluable contents though these sentences literally express non-sense and truth-valueless

²⁹ According to Grice (1989), the term “implicatures” corresponds to a proposition that an agent may imply, suggest, or mean by a sentence, as distinct from what this sentence literally says. In the broad sense of Gricean implicatures, what a speaker implicates may go beyond what speaker literally says in two ways. Firstly, it is possible because of the conventional meanings of certain terms, such as 'but' and 'and'. These terms can contribute to what is imported by the sentence employing them by implicating their conventional meanings other than their semantic meanings or functions. For instance, the sentence “He is a politician, but honest” conventionally implicates that there is a tension between being politician and honest due to the conventional meaning ascribed to the term “but”. These sort of implicated contents are called as “conventional implicatures”. Secondly, for Grice, it is also possible for a speaker to implicate a different content from what is literally said by a sentence when a speaker oversteps the cooperative principle that customarily governs our conversational practices (Green, 2007). According to Grice, we customarily comply with this Cooperative principle in our conversations for the sake of the course of communication; furthermore, it consists of the following rules: 1. Quantity: give the right amount of information; 2. Quality: try to say only what is true; 3. Relevance: be relevant. ; 4. Manner: be clear, avoid ambiguity, be brief, be orderly, etc... In case of overstepping one of these conversational rules, we, for Grice, conversationally implicate a proposition as different from what is literally said. For instance, the sentence “Hand me the keys” may conversationally implicate the sentence “Hand me the keys now” with respect to the maxim of relevance. Moreover, the sentence “Stephanie has 12 children” may implicate the sentence “She has no more than 12 children” with respect to the maxim of quantity.

contents. Based on this distinction, Adams and his collaborators propose an explanation that involves speakers' conflation the literally expressed contents with the pragmatically implicated ones. According to this strategy, ordinary speakers have intuitions that what is said by an empty name sentence has a meaning and a truth-value because they conflate what is literally said by the empty name sentence with what is pragmatically conveyed by it. Here, it is worth asking what propositional content is pragmatically implicated by an empty-name sentence and how it is implicated. In this vein, Adams and his co-authors (2007) speak of two-folded mechanism that enables the empty name sentences convey complete propositions in conversational discourse: (1) Association and (2) Pragmatic conveyance

On the Association step, Adams and his collaborators (ADFS, for short) put forward that speakers are capable of associating names with a set of descriptions or "the lore" consisting of what she heard about names and where, when, from whom she heard these names.³⁰ Thus, for ADFS, all proper names, including empty names, have associated descriptions in so far as speakers cognitively associates them with the descriptions that are causal-historically related with the uses of these names in a linguistic community. In other words, all proper names have accompanying descriptions depending on speakers' cognitive associations oriented by the causal-historical uses of these names in conversational discourse (2004, 2007). Thus, on particular occasion of use, an interlocutor may come to associate the name "Santa Claus" with the descriptions "the jolly fat man who lives at the North Pole", "the man who brings presents on Christmas day" and "that whomever Richard Dawkins

³⁰ By the term "lore" Adams and his co-authors (1994, 1997, 2004, and 2007) follows Recanati (1993) who holds that a speaker acquires a name as its used in linguistic community and then she keeps a "mental file" or "mental dossier" of associations with the name which enables her cognitively track the uses of this name in conversational discourse. Thus, the term "lore", in the Pragmatic Referentialism we discuss, stands for a set of descriptions that a speaker cognitively associates with a name in terms of causal-historical uses of the relevant name in conversational discourse

does not believe”. Unlike Descriptivist account of proper names holds, ADFS contends that none of these associated descriptions has a semantic significance for names. In other words, associated descriptions are not embedded in names as their semantic contents but they are pragmatically associated with them.

Since all names including empty names have descriptive associations in conversational discourses, utterances of these names conversationally implicate these accompanying descriptions although they do not semantically encode these associations in their semantic contents. On the Pragmatic Conveyance³¹ step, ADFS holds that the conveyance process of such associated descriptions is pragmatic rather than semantic. If an empty name pragmatically implicates the descriptions associated with it, then an empty-name sentence also pragmatically implicates the sentences employing the descriptions associated with this empty name. Thus, the empty-name sentence “S is F”, at where S is empty, may pragmatically implicate the sentence “the D is F” at where the D is a description or a set of descriptions with which the name S is associated in causal-historical relation with the uses of the name (2004,2007). For instance, on particular occasion of use, the sentence (8) (a), for a speaker S, may pragmatically implicate (8) (b)-(c).

- (8) (a) Vulcan exists.
- (b) The tenth planet exists.
- (c) The planet between Mercury and the sun exists.

Adams and his co-authors underline a crucial difference between the semantic contents of these sentences. Accordingly, the pragmatically implicated sentences (8) (b)-(c) express a proposition whereas the empty-name sentence (8) (a) fails to

³¹ Particularly, Adams and his co-authors understand Gricean conversational implicatures by the pragmatic conveyance mechanism by which a descriptive proposition is implicated from an empty-name sentence. Nevertheless, they do not argue how exactly it occurs as a flouting in the given maxims of conversation. As Green (2007) and Taylor (2000) point out, it is vague how a descriptive proposition implicated by an empty-name sentence is qualified as a Gricean implicatures. However, at this point, I keep their strategy simple. It is essentially a conversational implication by means of associated descriptions regardless of thinking ADFS’ further claim that this process is a conversational implicatures in Gricean sense

express a proposition literally. After all, the terms in the subject positions in (8) (b)-(c) have semantic meanings to construe a proposition.

Thereby, ADFS claims that an empty-name sentence literally expresses a “gappy” proposition. However, the pragmatically imparted sentences from an empty-sentence express a complete proposition. To illustrate, the empty-name sentence “S is F” literally expresses a gappy proposition because the name S lacks a semantic meaning (referent) to contribute. Nonetheless, the pragmatically implicated sentence “the D is F” conveys a complete proposition simply because the description “the D has” a semantic meaning, namely being a unique individual satisfying the property of being “D”. Thus, for example, the name “Pegasus” might be associated with the description “the flying horse” and the sentence “Pegasus flies” literally expresses the incomplete proposition $\langle _, \text{existence} \rangle$ but it will pragmatically implicate the sentence “The flying horse exists”. Unlike what is literally said by the sentence, the resultant sentence imparts the claim that there is a unique flying horse and it exists. Thus, for these PR theorists, an empty-name sentence pragmatically implicates a complete (descriptive) proposition by the contribution of the semantic meaning of a relevant associated description.

ADFS on PM, PT and PSD

For ADFS, an empty-name sentence pragmatically imparts a complete proposition. Thus, empty-name sentences pragmatically impart meaningful and truth-evaluable contents yet they have no meaning and no truth-value literally. Based on this conclusion, Adams and his co-authors develop an explanatory strategy that applies to the relevant semantic problems PM, PSD and PT. According to their strategy, the pragmatically imparted sentences “misleadingly incline us to think” that what is literally said by an empty-name sentence is a complete, meaningful, and truth-

evaluable content (Adams and Dietrich 2004, p. 126). In other words, speakers conflate the pragmatically implicated contents with the literally expressed contents.

In this direction, ADFS proposes a straightforward reply to each problem.

Consider the sentences in (9) and the ones in (9') that are pragmatically imparted from the sentences in (9) on a particular occasion of use by a speaker:

- (9) (a) Pegasus is self-identical <__, being self-identical>
 - (b) Santa does not exist <<__, existence>NEG>
 - (c) Father Xmas does not exist <<__, existence>NEG>
 - (d) Vulcan does not exist <<__, existence>NEG>
-
- (9') (a') The flying horse is self-identical.
 - (b') The jolly bringer of Christmas does not exist.
 - (c') The jolly bringer of Christmas does not exist.
 - (d') The planet between Mercury and the sun does not exist.

In response to PM, ADFS initially holds that empty-name sentences (9) (a)-(d) fail to express a proposition and they thus say nothing meaningful semantically.

Nevertheless, they propose that speakers intuitively make sense of these “non-sense” sentences because the pragmatically implicated sentences in (9') enable speakers to feel that these sentences are meaningful. So to speak, speakers conflate what is literally said with what is pragmatically imparted by these sentences and their intuition of meaningfulness about these literally non-sense sentences come from this conflation.

In the similar vein, according to the Pragmatic Referentialist theorists above, our truth-theoretical intuitions about empty-name sentences come from the same source. When an ordinary speaker comes to think that empty name sentences in (9) have a truth-value, she is misled by the truth-evaluability of what she pragmatically imparts by these sentences.

To illustrate, an utterance of a sentence “Vulcan does not exist” may pragmatically convey the sentence “The planet between Mercury and the sun does

not exist. Moreover, the implicated sentence “The planet between Mercury and the sun does not exist” has a complete truth-conditional content and thus it has a certain truth-value. As Adams and his collaborators propose, if we gloss the implicated sentence “in a Russellian fashion” then it corresponds to the truth-evaluable claim that it is not the case that there is a unique planet between Mercury and the sun and it exists. Since there is no such a unique planet then the embedded conjunction comes out false. Hereby, the negation of this conjunction turns out true. Hence, the implicated sentence “The planet between Mercury and the sun does not exist” comes out to be a true claim at the end. From this perspective, ADFS argues that speakers intuitively think that “Vulcan does not exist” is true because pragmatically implicated contents by this sentence invoke our intuitions of truth-evaluability. To wrap up, the proposition pragmatically implicated by an empty-name sentence has a truth-value and a sensible content that mislead the interlocutors to sense that this sentence is meaningful and truth-evaluable semantically.

Finally, these Pragmatic Referentialist theorists account for PSD by appealing to the same conflation strategy. To them, the empty-name sentences (9)(b)- (d) literally express the very same gappy proposition but what they pragmatically implicate depends on the sets of descriptions or “the lore” which are causal-historically associated with these names in conversational discourse. For instance, (9) (d) pragmatically implicates a proposition that is different from what is implicated by (9) (b)-(c). After all, the name “Vulcan” in (9) (d) has associated descriptions that are causal-historically distinct from the ones affiliated with the names “Santa Claus” and “Father Xmas”. Since these names have different descriptive associations, then they pragmatically impart different propositions although they literally express the very same gappy content. Therefore, according to ADFS, speakers feel that (9) (d) and (9)

(b)-(c) say different things because of the different contents which are pragmatically imparted from them. Furthermore, the sentences (9) (b) and (9) (c), on this occasion of use, pragmatically impart the very same contents because the names “Santa Claus” and “Father Xmas” share the same lore. Consequently, ADFS holds that speakers have intuitions of different contents for the empty-name sentences expressing the very same gappy proposition because these intuitions come from the differentiation in the pragmatically implicated contents.

Briefly, for the Pragmatic Referentialist theorists, the same strategy goes for all the problems under question. Empty-name sentences semantically impart “gappy” propositional structures lacking meaning and truth-value. Nonetheless, empty-name sentences pragmatically impart meaningful and truth-evaluable propositions in which the relevant empty names are substituted with descriptions that are causal-historically associated with the uses of these names in a linguistic community. Speakers have certain conflicting semantic and truth-theoretical intuitions about meaningless and truth-valueless empty-name sentences because they conflate pragmatically implicated contents with literally expressed contents.

Everett’s Objections to ADFS

Modal Profile Objection

Everett (2003) argues that even if the Pragmatic Referentialist account explains away our intuition about truth-values of empty-name sentences, it does not account for our modal intuitions about these sentences. Considering the sentence “Santa is John Perry”, Everett proposes that the sentence seems not only to be false but also seems to be necessarily false, because “there is no possible circumstance in which John Perry is Santa Claus”. To Everett, neither of the contents of an empty name sentence accounts for the apparent necessary falsity of the sentence “Santa is John Perry”. On

the one hand, what is semantically expressed by a sentence, i.e. the gappy proposition $\langle _, \text{being John Perry} \rangle$, does not explain the apparent falsity nor necessity because a “gappy” proposition, for the Pragmatic Referentialist theorists, does not have a truth-value. On the other hand, what is pragmatically implicated content apparently accounts for the seeming falsity of the empty name sentence “Santa is John Perry” by substitution of the name “Santa Claus” with some descriptive content. The name “Santa” may be associated with “The jolly fat man who brings presents at Christmas” and then an utterance of the above sentence may pragmatically implicate the sentence “The jolly fat man who brings presents at Christmas is John Perry”. As Everett suggests, even in that case, this resultant sentence do not explain our modal intuition about the sentence “Santa Claus is John Perry”. The pragmatically imparted sentence only accounts for the reason why we think the truth-valueless gappy proposition is false but it does not explain why we think that it is necessarily false. After all, to him, the latter sentence is contingently false at best because there is a possible circumstance in which John Perry is the jolly fat man who brings presents at Christmas. Thus, according to Everett, the Pragmatic Referentialist account cannot explain how such modal intuitions are invoked by the sentence “Santa is John Perry”, after all, the neither of alleged contents expressed by this empty name sentence can be a ground for the modal profile of this sentence.

In response, Adams and Dietrich (2004) initially agree that neither the semantically imparted content nor the pragmatically implicated content invokes the intuition that the sentence “Santa is John Perry” is necessarily false. They further agree on Everett’s point that the pragmatically imparted sentence “The jolly fat man who brings presents at Christmas” is contingently false as it is. However, they do not see any compelling reason to assume that the one of these contents only has to meet

with our feeling that “Santa is John Perry” express a necessary falsehood. That is to say, to them, the mechanism that explains “one’s intuitions of truth” does not have to explain the one’s modal intuitions. Thus, Adams and Dietrich explain the apparent falsity and the apparent necessity of the sentence “Santa is John Perry”. To them, the intuition of falsity about the sentence already comes from the pragmatically imparted claim that the jolly fat man who brings presents at Christmas is John Perry. On the other hand, as they suggest, the intuition of necessity about the identity statement “Santa is John Perry” arises from the logical syntax of this identity statement. In other words, the logical syntax of an identity statement triggers our modal intuitions prior to the appraisal of the propositional content. Thus, the sentence “Santa Claus is John Perry” is false owing to the pragmatically imparted proposition but prior to this, it is subject to be necessarily false or true due to its logical form if it express a genuine proposition at all.

Following Kripke’s (1980) thesis that all identities are necessary, Adams and Dietrich (2004) claim that sentences of the forms “ $a=a$ ” and “ $a=b$ ” express a necessary truth or falsehood if they express any truth or falsehood at all. Therefore, we know of the necessity “by the semantic structure of the identity sentence even prior to knowing that it is false” (Adams, 2002). Consequently, our modal intuition about the sentence derives from the logical form of the sentence “Santa is John Perry” prior to the appraisal of the semantic content expressed by the sentence.

Even when a speaker has no prior knowledge of the semantic contents and associations with the names “Santa Claus” and “John Perry”, her modal intuitions obtains that the expressions “Santa is Santa” and “Santa is John Perry” will express necessary truths or necessary falsehoods if they express a proposition at all. Based on this modal intuition prior to our truth-theoretical intuition about an empty-name

sentence “Santa is John Perry”, one has an intuition that “Santa is John Perry” is false then her modal intuition prior to it invokes the intuition that it expresses a necessary falsehood. Therefore, to Adams and Dietrich (2004), one obtains the intuition of necessity from the form of the sentence “Santa is John Perry” then the one’s modal intuition adheres to his intuition of falsity that comes from his conflation about the proposition expressed by the sentence “Santa is John Perry”. In brief, to Adams and Dietrich, Everett’s modal profile objection is insufficient to show that the Pragmatic Referentialist theorists cannot account for our modal intuitions; after all modal intuitions come from another mechanism, namely logical form of the sentence.

Different Descriptions Objection

Everett (2003) points out that associated descriptions of names, including empty names, often change across speakers and across time in the same linguistic community. For a speaker S1 at time t1, the name “Vulcan” may be associated with the descriptions “the celestial body which explains the perturbations in Mercury’s orbit”, however; for the same speaker at time t2, the name may further be associated with “the planet between Mercury and the sun” and “the planet causing changes in Mercury’s orbital trajectory”. On the other hand, another speaker S2 at time t2 may associate the name with the description “the tenth planet.” Therefore, different speakers, even sometimes the same speakers, may associate different descriptions with the same empty names cross-temporally.

Here, Everett poses a challenge for the Pragmatic Referentialist account in the following way: if associated descriptions about an empty name “Vulcan” can vary across time and speakers, then utterances of a sentence such as “Vulcan does not exist” also pragmatically impart different contents. In one instance, the sentence, for

the speaker S2 at t2, implicates the content that the tenth planet does not exist whereas the same sentence, for the speaker S1 at t2, implicates the content that the planet between Mercury and the sun does not exist. Again, for the speaker S1 at t1, the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” implicates the content that “the celestial body which explains the perturbations in Mercury’s orbit does not exist”. If the contents pragmatically expressed by the same sentence vary across time and speakers then it implies that utterances of the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” do not express the same content all the time for all speakers. However, as Everett argues, this conclusion, which the Pragmatic Referentialism entails, seems counter-intuitive because what is said by the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” seems to be stable across time and speakers. In other words, the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” seems to say the same thing in the above instances regardless of thinking which content is associated with them. Thus, the pragmatically imparted contents do not explain intuition that utterances of the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” express the same proposition strictly and literally.

Adams and Dietrich (2004) endorse Everett’s point that an utterance of an empty name sentence such as “Vulcan does not exist” may pragmatically impart different descriptive propositions depending on the changes in associated descriptions that is causally and historically related with the uses of this name in conversational discourse. Thus, the Pragmatic Referentialism accepts that what is pragmatically expressed by an empty-name sentence is not stable across times and speakers. Then, the question is that how utterances of a single empty-name sentence seem to express the same content or proposition while it pragmatically express different contents. To Adams and Dietrich, what changes across time and speakers is

information pragmatically implicated about the name “Vulcan” in the sentence “Vulcan does not exist”.

However, what is semantically expressed by the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” does not change across time and speakers. Although the pragmatic content of the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” may vary, the semantic content of the sentence always expresses a “gappy” proposition $\langle\langle ___, \text{existence} \rangle \text{NEG} \rangle$. For instance, the speakers in the above instance always express the same gappy proposition by uttering the sentence “Vulcan does not exist”. Thus, what is semantically said by an empty name sentence is stable across time and speakers no matter what it pragmatically implicates based on the alterations in descriptions about relevant empty names. Therefore, unlike Everett argues, the Pragmatic Referentialist accounts for seeming stability of what is said by an empty-name sentence.

At this point, Everett overlooks the fact that the name “Vulcan” does not radically change in each association in each token of the sentence “Vulcan does not exist”. In other words, ADFS already endorses that these associations are all connected in terms of causal-historical relation with the origin of the name “Vulcan”. Therefore, speakers pragmatically implicate different associations falling under the same lore, the lore of “Vulcan”. It explains why associations about the same name do not have to be ubiquitous in order for our sense of talking about a stable object or content. According to ADFS, the intuition of stability among tokens of the sentence “Vulcan does not exist” comes from the “gappy” semantic content literally expressed by the sentence-type “Vulcan does not exist” because each token literally speaks of the same name “Vulcan” with the same literal content.

No Description Objection

A part from the above challenges, Everett argues that there can be cases where an interlocutor associates no descriptive description with an utterance of an empty name. As Everett exemplifies, suppose that Stacie and her friend Laura at a party overhear Peter making up a story about someone named “Henri”. Suppose further that they only hear the name “Henri” and know the story about “Henri” but they do not listen to any details of the story that Peter tells. Assume that Stacie after a while says to Laura “Henri does not exist”. On this case, Everett suggests that Stacie and Laura have no descriptive associations with the name “Henri”. In that case, as Everett suggests, the sentence “Henri does not exist”, for the Pragmatic Referentialism, will fail to convey any descriptive proposition pragmatically because the name “Henri” has no associated description. Thus, the sentence “Henri does not exist”, for the Pragmatic Referentialism, will not pragmatically impart any descriptive proposition but it only expresses the gappy semantic content <<____, existence>>.

However, the Pragmatic Referentialist theorists claim that our truth-theoretical intuitions about empty name sentences are recovered by what is pragmatically imparted by these sentences. If it is the case, then Stacie and Laura will not have the intuition that the sentence “Henri does not exist” expresses a truth because the sentence does not express any truth-evaluable content pragmatically. However, according to Everett, it is incorrect because Stacie seems to say something truthfully and Laura seems to take this utterance as a truth-evaluable. Thus, contrary to what Pragmatic Referentialism entails, we still have the intuition that the utterances of sentences, which contain empty names without any descriptive content, express something that has a truth-value

Initially, Adams and Dietrich claim that a speaker will have no truth-theoretical intuition if she has no view about whom or what something she is talking. As Everett supposes, let us say that Stacie and Laura, in the above example, have literally no association with the name “Henri”. Suppose that they only hear the name but they have no further information about who “Henri” is or not and no information about where, when and from whom they hear the name “Henri”. Then, when Stacie utters the sentence “Henri does not exist”, she will have no idea about if the sentence expresses truth or falsehood because she has no idea about what or who “Henri” is. Adams and Stecker therefore claim that one cannot “call no forth intuitions of truth and falsity” if one has literally no idea about the subject in his utterance of the sentence “Henri does not exist”. Therefore, Stacie has to have some associations about the name “Henri” in order to assert the sentence “Henri does not exist” truthfully. Otherwise, she will not have any intuition about whether she says anything true or false since she has no idea about “Henri”. Thus, Adams and Dietrich claim, “for anyone who has intuitions that a truth has been uttered, there will be descriptions to associate with the name in question”. In other words, if Stacie and Laura, in the above example, have truth-theoretical intuitions about the sentence “Henri does not exist”, it suggests that there are available associated descriptions for the speakers to assert and grasp this sentence as true.

At this point, Adams and Dietrich question Everett’s example by asking if there really is no associated description about the individual named “Henri”. Firstly, in the above example, Stacie and Laura acquire the information that “Henri” is a fictional character in a story Peter made up. After all, they know the context in which the name “Henri” is used and know that the name “Henri” does not refer. Thus, they can truthfully utter the sentence “Henri does not exist” in virtue of having some

descriptive association based on their knowledge about the context in which the name “Henri” is stipulated. In that case, what is pragmatically implicated by the sentence “Henri does not exist” could be “the fictional character named “Henri” does not exist”.

However, let us assume that Laura does not realize the fictional context in which Peter stipulates the name “Henry” in his story and she just remembers hearing the name “Henri”. In that case, Everett may argue that Laura has no associated description about the name “Henri” yet she perfectly makes sense of Stacie’s utterance of the sentence “Henri does not exist”. Again, Adams and Stecker deny this no description case as well, because Laura would have a minimal description about the name based on where, when, from whom she heard the name “Henri” first. From Laura’s cognitive perspective, Stacie’s utterance of the name “Henri” in the sentence “Henri does not exist” may be associated with the description “the one I just heard from Peter at the party”.

On the other hand, as Adams and Dietrich accept, it is possible that Laura does not recall where, when and from whom she heard the name “Henri”. Even in this case, there is a minimal descriptive association available for Laura’s linguistic ability to make sense of the name “Henri”. Considering Stacie’s utterance of “Henri does not exist”, what is pragmatically implicated from her cognitive perspective, at a minimum, could be “the one named I heard about doesn’t exist”. In brief, Adams and Dietrich claims that genuine cases where names do not have any descriptive content do not call forth our truth-theoretical intuitions in the first place and if speakers have such intuitions about what they say then there must be some descriptive content associated with the names of which the speakers speak.

Filled Names Objection

Everett (2003) points out that the Pragmatic Referentialist theorists claim that all proper names have descriptive associations no matter if these names are filled or empty. According to Everett, If it is the case then it is reasonable to assume that an utterance employing a filled name pragmatically conveys a descriptive proposition where the filled named is substituted with a relevant associated description.

Moreover, if speakers tend to conflate the semantically expressed content of an empty-name sentence with the pragmatically implicated content of it, then speakers are also expected to engage in the same sort of conflation in cases of the sentences containing filled names. However, as Everett suggests, in cases of sentences employing filled names, we have no tendency to confuse the semantic contents expressed by them with the descriptive contents which may pragmatically imparted by them. For instance, to Everett, the sentence “George Washington had wooden teeth” may be replaced with the descriptive claim that “The first U.S president had wooden teeth”, however, it is hardly the case that speakers confuse the contents and truth-values of these two sentences. Thus, Everett concludes that the pragmatic mechanism that Adams and his-co-authors propose does not hold in the cases of sentences with filled names thus they at least explain why such conflation occurs on empty-name sentences only and not on others.

In response, Adams and Dietrich denies Everett’s premise that speakers do not conflate the semantic content of a filled-name sentence with the descriptive content pragmatically imparted by this filled-name sentence. According to Adams and Dietrich, there are a number of cases to suggest that speakers or auditors take a pragmatically imparted proposition by a filled-name sentence to be what is literally said by the sentence. For instance, in the cases of paraphrase, interlocutors are prone

to report utterances of others by replacing the relevant objects in the utterances with the descriptions with which interlocutors associate. To illustrate, consider Laura says to her friend Stacie that “George Washington had wooden teeth”. If Stacie associates the name “George Washington” with the description, “the first U.S president” then she may come to believe the claim that “the first U.S president had wooden teeth”. After her conviction to this claim, she can report what Laura said to her to the effect that Laura said that the first U.S. president had wooden teeth. As Adams and Dietrich argue, it is not “unexpected or inappropriate” for Stacie to paraphrase what Laura says in this way. Thus, in contrast to Everett’s premise, Adams and Stecker believe that such conflation is also possible in the cases of filled names.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Under truth-conditional semantics, Direct Referentialist thesis on the semantic meaning of an empty name follows allegedly counter-intuitive conclusions about what is expressed by a sentence employing an empty name. In this regard, for Direct Referentialist account, empty-name sentences fail to express meaningful and truth-conditional contents although our intuitions in most cases indicate the opposite. In order to revise Direct Referentialist semantics for empty names, Braun (1993, 2005) and Adams et al. (1994, 1997, 2004, and 2007) offer distinct accounts and they propose solutions to explain away these relevant semantic problems. Of these Direct Referentialist treatments, Braun's account articulates a less desirable solution for our intuitions of truth-evaluability about empty-name sentences. After all, he overrules our other linguistic intuitions about propositional truth by implementing an ad hoc principle that assigns a truth-value to empty-name sentences with respect to Direct Referentialist stands.

Firstly, both accounts rely on a similar strategy to deal with PM and PSD. Far simply, they agree on what is grasped by an empty-name sentence can differ from what is literally said by it. They both explain away speakers' intuitions of meaning for literally non-sense empty-name sentences depending on what content speakers grasp by an empty-name sentence. However, this grasped content, to Braun, is a cognitive representation of an empty-name sentence where the relevant empty name stands inaccurately in terms of reference. On the other hand, this content, to ADSF, is a pragmatically implicated content in terms of associated descriptions with empty-names. At this point, these accounts seem to be equally defensible and palatable.

However, they diverge on the solutions for PT. At this point, Braun drops the maxim that only propositions bear truths and falsehoods. Particularly, he holds that “gappy” propositions have truth-values by extending the ordinary way of truth assignment without any independent motivation behind it. As a result, his extended way of truth-assignment entails the truth-evaluability of all untrue things. Furthermore, his truth-assignment principle fails to capture counter-intuitive truth-values.

Here, the apparent advantage of the Pragmatic Referentialism over Braun’s account is that a Direct Referentialist does not need to drop the common sense maxim that only propositions can bear a truth-value. Supposing that what is pragmatically implicated by an empty name sentence is a descriptive proposition, one can viably hold that the implicated content has a truth-value whereas the literal content, the gappy one, does not have any. Hereby, a Direct Referentialist does not have to confront with the challenge about how an incomplete truth-conditional content bears a truth-value.

Moreover, ADFS goes accord with our truth-theoretical intuitions about the some identity statements employing an empty-name whereas Braun’s account does not jibe with those intuitions. Braun simply holds that all atomic identity statement employing an empty-name is false. Considering the sentences such as “Vulcan is Vulcan” and “Vulcan is self-identical”, our intuitions strongly suggest that the identity statements with empty names are true. Here, the PR theorists meet with our intuitions about it because the pragmatically implicated sentence, for instance the sentence “The tenth planet is the tenth planet”, comes out true.

Although the Pragmatic Referentialist account seems to have advantages on the explanation of the relevant problems, a number of authors raise critical questions

on the viability of this account. Specifically, they question the soundness of the proposed mechanisms giving a descriptive proposition, namely the association and the pragmatic conveyance in Gricean sense. In this respect, Everett (2003) casts a doubt on the mechanism of association by proposing four distinct objections³².

Adams and Dietrich (2004) defend their Pragmatic Referentialist account against these objections. Against Everett's attacks on their association mechanism, these Pragmatic Referentialist theorists defend their account convincingly however this part only covers the Descriptivist part of their account. The Pragmatic Referentialist has still under obligation to explain how their pragmatic conveyance mechanism is Gricean conversational implicatures. Unless they propose a compelling reason to show that their system of implication is a pragmatic process in that sense, they face with the danger of being ad hoc just as Braun's account. However, the efficacy of Pragmatic Referentialism can be tested fully after assessing their pragmatic conveyance account.

³²I only cover the objections raised against the mechanism of association but it does not mean that the mechanism of pragmatic conveyance is free from any challenge. Green (2007), Piccinini and Scott (2010) propose challenges to the mechanism of pragmatic conveyance. Adams and Fuller (2007) respond back to the proposed challenges by Green and they defend their account against them. In order to give a rough sketch of these debates, we can make a few remarks. Firstly, Adams and his co-authors present their pragmatic conveyance mechanism as Gricean conversational implicatures. Here, Green (2007), Piccinini and Scott (2010) question whether the pragmatically implicated sentences such as "The tenth planet exists" satisfy the characteristics of being a Gricean conversational implicatures such as cancelability. To illustrate, for Grice, what is conversationally implicated can be cancelled without self-contradiction. For instance, the sentence "The flag is white" implicates the claim that the flag is only white but a speaker can cancel this implication if he utters the sentence "The flag is white but there is a red cross on it". As Green (2007) discusses, a speaker recovers what is literally said by the sentence once the conversational implicatures of it is cancelled. However, according to Green (2007) and Piccini and Scott (2010), cancelability criterion does not apply to the implicatures that ADFS gives. To illustrate, the sentence "Vulcan is near Mercury" may implicate the sentence "The tenth planet is near Mercury", moreover, this implicated sentence is supposed to be cancelable when a speaker utters the sentence "Vulcan is near Mercury, but there is no tenth planet". In this cancellation case, these authors claim that speakers must recover what the sentence literally says, namely a gappy proposition but it seems that speakers still make sense of the sentence.

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