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Phil Language

Kripke, "Speaker's Ref and Semantic Ref"

Thesis: Donnellan's considerations do not refute Russell's theory of descriptions.

- *Against Russell*: "I doubt that [improper definite descriptions, such as 'the table'] can always be regarded as elliptical" (p. 255).
- *Against Donnellan*: "unitary theories, like Russell's, are preferable to theories that postulate ambiguity" (p. 256)

Part I: Preparatory Work
Donnellan-Examples:

(1) The man over there drinking champagne is happy tonight

(Suppose the guy is only drinking sparkling water.) If the guy is happy, then Donnellan says (1) is true, Russell says it's false, (and Strawson/Frege give it a truth-value gap).

Kripke's variant: Suppose there is another guy "over there" drinking champagne, who is miserable. Then, everyone except Donnellan would say (1) is false.

Other examples: [Linsky] 'Her husband is kind to her.' (Suppose the guy treating her kindly is not her husband, and her actual husband is cruel.) [L. Crocker] 'The Messiah'; [Kripke] 'Smith's murderer is insane' (Suppose the insane defendant isn't the murderer.)

Donnellan: The examples show that definite descriptions (hereafter, "DDs") can be used *referentially* as well as *attributively*. Yet Russell assumes only the latter.

Let's distinguish some distinctions:
Donnellan's distinction is not the de dicto/de re *distinction*:

- *De dicto* ≠ attributive:

  (a) J believes the richest debutante in Dubuque will marry him.

  Suppose *de dicto* this is true. If the speaker falsely thinks there are no debutantes, the DD is not used attributively to talk of the *de facto* richest debutant.

  (b) It is possible that the present king of France ("PKF") is bald.

  True if read *de dicto*. But again, the DD is not used attributively to talk of a *de facto* PKF. (Even if PKF existed, the DD would denote *him* only if read *de re*.)

- *De re* ≠ referential:

  (c) The number of planets (whatever it may be) is necessarily odd.

  (d) Smith's murderer (whoever he is) has been caught by the police.

  If read as true, the DDs are *de re* yet used attributively.

Donnellan's distinction is not the same as Russell's scope distinctions:

\ (2) The number of planets might have been necessarily even.

If read as true, the DD is neither *de dicto* nor *de re*, since the quantifier symbolized below by '(∃x)' has neither the largest nor the smallest possible scope:

(2a) $\Diamond\Box\,(\exists x)$(There are x planets & x is even.)
(2b) $(\exists x)$ (There are x planets & $\Diamond\Box$ (x is even))
(2c) $\Diamond\,(\exists x)$(There are x planets & $\Box$ (x is even)).

(2a) gives the quantifier the smallest scope (= *de dicto*), and (2b) gives it the largest scope (= *de re*), yet both are false. (2c) is true, and the quantifier has *intermediate* scope. So no *two-fold* distinction can replace Russell's notion of scope.

Similar cases: 'J doubts that H believes that Smith's murderer is insane.' 'H charged that the Berrigans plotted to kidnap a high American official.'

Donnellan's distinction is not the rigid/flaccid distinction:

- *Rigid ≠ referential*:
  (e) That bastard—the man who killed Smith (whoever he may be)—is surely insane!'
  'That bastard' plausibly rigidifies the descriptor, yet the DD is attributive.

<u>Dialectical Relevance to *Naming and Necessity*:</u>
Kripke: If Schmidt proved incompleteness and Gödel was a fraud, 'Gödel' would still refer to the fraud. So 'Gödel' is not equivalent to 'the guy who proved incompletness'.

Objection: If the DD is understood referentially, then 'the guy who proved incompleteness' could still refer to Gödel even if he was a fraud.

Kripke: It could be used referentially only if Gödel was not known to be a fraud. Yet if that were discovered, the DD could no longer be used to refer to Gödel (p. 261, top). But the name 'Gödel' would refer to the fraud regardless.

Part II: Referential Uses and Pragmatics
<u>Is the Attributive/Referential Distinction pragmatic?</u>
Kripke*:* Donnellan would contradict Russell if he were to say that 'Her husband is kind to her' has non-Russellian truth-conditions. But Donnellan doesn't say that, e.g., it is true iff the *lover* is kind to her. Instead, Donnellan explicitly says that his distinction is not due to syntactic nor semantic (lexical) ambiguity—and grants that it is possibly *pragmatic*.

Kripke: It's not pragmatic. That's because (?) if it were pragmatic, then indirect discourse reports would be the same kind of speech act as the discourse reported. ('The police are around the corner' said as a warning, vs. 'Jones said the police are around the corner.')
"It is not 'uses,' in some pragmatic sense, but *senses* of a sentence which can be analyzed" (p. 262).

But how can *we* say that 'Her husband is kind to her' is true under the circumstances, knowing that her husband is not kind to her?

Distinguish Speaker-Meaning from Sentence-Meaning

(i) The cops are around the corner.

What the *words* mean is: the cops are around the corner. What the *speaker* means in uttering (i) may be "let's scram!!" even though that's not what the words mean.

But consider the magician case:

(ii) It *looked* red

Distinguish what the words mean, from *what the words mean on that occasion*, and distinguish both of those from what the speaker meant in uttering those words, on that occasion. (Counterexample to Grice? See Kripke's parenthetical remark on p. 263.)

"The notion of what words can mean, in the language, is semantic: it is given by the conventions of our language. What they mean, on a given occasion, is determined, on a given occasion, by these conventions, together with the intentions of the speaker and various contextual features. Finally what the speaker meant, on a given occasion, in saying certain words, derives from various further special intentions of the speaker, together with various general principles, applicable to all human languages regardless of their special conventions. (Cf. Grice's "conversational maxims)" (ibid.).

But ignoring cases of indexicality, ambiguity, etc., we can just speak of what the speaker refers to and what the words refer to. [Switch to talk of reference rather than meaning]

'What is Jones doing?' 'Raking the leaves.' (Suppose the guy isn't Jones but Smith). The speakers have communicated using 'Jones' to name Smith. How to account for that?

"[D]efine the speaker's referent to be that object which the speaker wishes to talk about, on a given occasion, and believes fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent of the designator….(which may not really be the semantic referent, if the speaker's belief that it fulfills the appropriate semantic conditions is in error)" (p. 264).

"my hypothesis will be that…the 'referential use' is…the 'complex' case [where the speaker's belief is in error]. If such a conjecture is correct, it would be wrong to take Donnellan's 'referential' use, as he does, to be a use of a description as if it were a proper name. For the distinction of simple and complex cases will apply to proper names just as much as to definite descriptions." (ibid.)

Kripke Against Donnellan: Preparatory Remarks

Kripke's contention: Donnellan does not refute Russell because it is still *possible* that the attributive/referential distinction (hereafter, "A/R distinction") is pragmatic.

Kripke's argument-strategy:

(1) Imagine a language L where we *stipulate* that Russell is right about DDs.
(2) We want to show that referential DDs still exist, due to the pragmatics of L.
(3) If we succeed at (2), then the existence of referential DDs does not debunk Russell's semantic analysis.

Varieties of Russellian Languages

- "Weak" Russellian language: A language stipulated to have only Russellian (i.e., attributive) DDs, yet (contra Russell) these DDs are primitive designators
- "Intermediate" Russellian language: A language stipulated to have only Russellian/attributive DDs, and a sentence of the form "The *x* is *F*" abbreviates the Russellian paraphrase: (a) There is at least one *x*, (b) there is at most one *x*, and (c) whatever is *F* is identical to *x*. (Or in brief, it abbreviates "there is a unique *x* that is F")
- "Strong" Russellian language: A language stipulated to *lack* DDs so that Russellian paraphrases always are used instead.

<u>Kripke Against Donnellan: The Argument</u>

(1) Since speakers are fallible, a speaker of a Russellian language may say 'The man over there drinking champagne is happy', thinking (falsely) that some man over there satisfies the DD.
(2) It still seems that the speaker refers to the man under the misimpression that he is drinking champagne. That's due to "a general theory of speech-acts, applicable to all languages: [The referent] is the object to which the speaker wishes to refer, and which he believes fulfills the Russellian condition for being the semantic referent" (p. 266)
(3) Hence, even when the language is Russellian, some DDs are referential, thanks to pragmatic factors.

Therefore: If the question is whether *English* is Russellian, the referential DDs do not prove that it is not. For even Russellian languages have referential DDs.

- For "weak" Russellian languages, the Russell analysis plus pragmatics is quite adequate to explain the referential DDs.
- Even with "strong" Russellian languages, Russellian paraphrases can be used referentially. ("Exactly *one* person is such that…" as a way of speaking indirectly about some delicate topic. Note the novelty of the example.)
- And if the point holds for strong Russellian languages, presumably it holds for "intermediate" Russellian languages as well. (Whether a sentence uses a Russellian paraphrase or an abbreviation thereof seems irrelevant.)

Varieties of D-languages

- Unambiguous D-language: uses 'the' for a Russellian DD, uses 'ze' for a referential DD.
- Ambiguous D-language: uses 'the' for both types of DD.

Donnellan insinuates (despite one statement to the contrary) that English is an Ambiguous D-language. Yet the evidence is not sufficient for this; indeed, it seems implausible in the 'Smith'/Jones case.

Against Ambiguity Accounts:

"It is very much the lazy man's approach in philosophy to posit ambiguities when in trouble. If we face a putative counterexample to our favorite philosophical thesis, it is always open to us to protest that some key term is being used in a special sense, different from its use in the thesis. We may be right, but the ease of the move should counsel a policy of caution: Do not posit an ambiguity unless you are really forced to, unless there are really compelling theoretical or intuitive grounds to suppose that an ambiguity really is present" (p. 268) [*Pace* Hintikka's ambiguity account of 'know']

Besides linguistic intuitions, we can discern ambiguities empirically, e.g, check whether one term of our language is translated by two (non-synonymous) terms of some other language. [Also, the zeugma test.] Thus, if English were an Ambiguous D-language, we would expect languages in which 'the' were given two different translations (corresponding to 'the' and 'ze' in the Unambiguous D-language). [Confusion in n. 29]

In Favor of the Unity of 'The'

- Methodological reasons: We need pragmatics anyway to explain 'Smith'/Jones cases—and since the A/R distinction can be explained by pragmatics, there's no need to posit a semantic ambiguity. (Parsimony). Also, the dramatic difference between DDs and proper names suggests we should not posit the *same* kind of ambiguity in each.
- Empirical reasons: The lack of a double-translation for 'the' in any foreign language would confirm that 'the' is unitary.
- Intuitions (or the infirmity thereof). Kripke: "Her husband is kind to her' may refer to her husband, even though it *seems* to refer to her lover.

<u>Questioning the Question</u>
"If there really is no direct evidence to distinguish the two hypotheses, how are they different hypotheses? If two communities, one of whom spoke the ambiguous D-language and the other of whom spoke the (weak) Russell language, would be able to intermingle freely without detecting any linguistic difference, do they really speak *two* different languages? If so, wherein is the difference?" (p. 269) [≠ verificationism]

Suppose that English speakers lack firm intuitions. "is this a respect in which English differs from both the Russell languages and the D-languages?" (ibid.)

But: You can aptly reply to 'Her husband is kind to her' with "No he's not. The man you're referring to isn't her husband." How can your use of 'he' refer to her actual husband if we have an Ambiguous D-language?

<u>Remaining Issues</u>:
i. Evaluate whether the A/R distinction is an amphiboly at the level of "deep structure"
ii. 'That scoundrel' can be rigid on one who isn't a scoundrel.
iii. Russell and indefinites and DDs like 'the table'. Assimilate to 'that table'?

<u>Conclusions</u>: Donnellan's argument sux, and referential DDs are probably better handled by pragmatics (via the distinction between speaker's/semantic reference).