

VII. THE BOETHIAN COMPROMISE

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RUSSELL held that ordinary proper names—such names as “Socrates,” “Aristotle” and “Muhammad Ali”—are really truncated definite descriptions; “Socrates” for example, may be short (in a given person’s use) for something like, say, “the snubnosed Greek philosopher who taught Plato.”¹ If so, the result of replacing a name in a sentence by the right description will ordinarily express the same proposition; descriptions can be substituted for names *salva propositione*. On this view, proper names are *semantically equivalent* to descriptions. Frege’s view is both more subtle and less clear; but he too held that in many contexts a proper name such as “Aristotle” has the same sense as such a definite description as “the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great,” so that the sentence “Aristotle was born in Stagira” expresses the same thought as the result of replacing “Aristotle” therein by that description.² Let us call such views of proper names *Fregean views*.

According to John Stuart Mill, on the other hand, “Proper Names are not connotative; they denote the individuals who are called by them, but they do not indicate or imply an attribute as belonging to these individuals.”³ More recently, Keith Donnellan,⁴ Saul Kripke,⁵ David Kaplan⁶ and others have joined Mill against Frege and Russell. As they quite properly point out, no description of the sort Russell and Frege had in mind is semantically equivalent to a name like “Socrates.” Clearly “the snubnosed teacher of Plato,” for example, will not fill the bill, since

(1) the snubnosed teacher of Plato never taught Plato
or, better

(2) the snubnosed teacher of Plato was a non-teacher

expresses an impossible proposition, unlike

(3) Socrates was a non-teacher.

But the heart and soul of Fregean views is not that proper names are semantically equivalent to descriptions (after all, the right sort of description might not be available) but that they *have sense*, or *descriptive content*, or that they “*indicate or imply an attribute*”: more briefly, that they *express properties*. And the denial of this claim is the heart and soul of the anti-Fregean views. How then, on these views, do proper names function? Mill says proper names have denotation but no connotation; a proper name denotes without expressing a property. He seems to mean that the sole semantic function performed by a proper name is that of denoting its referent; its semantic function is *exhausted* in denoting its referent. The crucial contrast, then, between Fregean and anti-Fregean views is that on the former proper names express properties; on the latter they do not. In what follows I shall first argue that the anti-Fregeans are mistaken; I shall then suggest an alternative in the Fregean spirit.

I

Russell instructs us to test a logical and semantical theory by “its capacity for dealing with puzzles.”⁷ His own theory of ordinary proper names nicely passes muster with respect to three such puzzles: those presented by empty proper names, by negative existentials containing proper names, and by propositional identity in the context of propo-

¹ Bertrand Russell, “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,” in *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. by Robert Marsh (London, 1956), p. 200.

² Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Reference,” in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed. by P. T. Geach and M. Black (Oxford, 1952), p. 58.

³ *A System of Logic* (New York, 1846), p. 21.

⁴ “Speaking of Nothing,” *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 85 (1976), pp. 11–12.

⁵ “Naming and Necessity,” in *Semantics of Natural Language*, ed. by D. Davidson and G. Harman (Dordrecht, 1972), pp. 320, 327; “Identity and Necessity” in *Identity and Individuation*, ed. by M. Munitz (New York, 1971), p. 140.

⁶ “Demonstratives,” his hitherto unpublished address to the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association (March, 1976).

⁷ “On Denoting” (Marsh, *op. cit.*), p. 47.

sitional attitudes. On the other hand the anti-Fregean view, as I shall argue, founders on these rocks.

(i) If, as the anti-Fregeans claim, proper names do not express properties and do no more than denote their referents, then how shall we understand such sentences as

(4) Romulus founded Rome

as used by someone who believes the legend and is intending to assert part of what he believes? In his use "Romulus" denotes nothing at all. But then what proposition, on the anti-Fregean view, does (4) express? It is hard to see, on this view, how such a sentence could express any proposition at all. If a proper name does not express a property but serves merely to denote its referent, then when it fails to have a referent it presumably performs no semantic function at all—in which case (4) would express no proposition at all. Faced with these considerations, Donnellan suggests that sentences like (4) (under the envisaged conditions) do indeed fail to express propositions:

... a true negative existence statement expressed by using a name involves a name with no referent and the corresponding positive existence statement, if false, will also. But in other contexts, when a name is used and there is a failure of reference, then no proposition has been expressed—certainly no true proposition. If a child says, 'Santa Claus will come tonight,' he cannot have spoken the truth, although, for various reasons, I think it better to say that he has not even expressed a proposition.⁸

He adds, via a footnote, "Given that this is a statement about reality and that proper names have no descriptive content, then how are we to represent the proposition expressed?"

But surely this is wrong. Someone who utters (4), intending to tell the sober truth, has surely asserted *something*. What he asserts entails, for example, that Rome has not always existed, but had a founder. If so, however, (4) does express a proposition, under these conditions, and the semantic function of "Romulus," therein, can't be that of denoting its referent, since it has no referent to denote. But then there will be no adequate anti-Fregean account of an empty proper name as used by someone who mistakenly believes it non-empty and intends to predicate a property of what it denotes.

(ii) A second difficulty for the anti-Fregean is

presented by negative existentials. How, on this view, are we to understand such a sentence as

(5) Romulus did not exist?

Here, of course, we cannot sensibly say that the sentence expresses no proposition; clearly it expresses a truth. But *what* truth? And how does the name "Romulus" there function? Obviously it does not denote an *existent* object; so if it denotes anything at all, it denotes a *non-existent* object. Accordingly, one can give an anti-Fregean account of (5) only by holding that "Romulus" denotes a non-existent object therein, the rest of the sentence quite properly predicating non-existence of that object. In addition to the things that exist there are, on this view, some more that do not. The above mentioned anti-Fregeans show little inclination towards this view, and for (as I see it) good reason: the view is clearly false.⁹ So "Romulus" denotes nothing at all in (5). Clearly enough, however, (5) expresses a proposition (since it expresses a truth); hence "Romulus" plays a semantical role of *some* sort therein, though not that of denoting its referent. But how then *does* it function? Is it semantically equivalent in this special existential case to a description? No, says Donnellan:

... on any view we must, I think, accept the following:

(E) That Socrates did not exist entails that it is not true that Socrates was snub-nosed.

Our theory tells us that the second occurrence of 'Socrates' in (E) is not a concealed definite description. But then neither can the first occurrence be one. For if we take some definite description such as the one suggested as what the first occurrence of 'Socrates' stands for, rejection of the principle of identifying descriptions for the second occurrence means that it *could* be true that Socrates was snub-nosed even though no unique individual existed who satisfied that description. That is to say, if "Socrates" in "Socrates did not exist" is a concealed definite description, but is not in "Socrates was snub-nosed," then the antecedent of (E) could be true while the consequent is false. Since we want to accept the entailment expressed by (E) our theory cannot treat "Socrates" as a concealed description in existential statements (p. 22).

How then *are* we to understand (5) and the function of "Romulus" therein? Donnellan's "Speaking of Nothing" is the most explicit published treatment of existentials by an anti-Fregean; but he tells us little, there, about the function of empty

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁹ See my *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford, 1974), Chaps. 7 and 8.

proper names in sentences like (5), and less about the propositions expressed by such sentences. What he gives is a “rule for negative existential statements . . . that purports to give the truth conditions for negative existential statements containing a name . . . :

- (R) if *N* is a proper name that has been used in predicative statements with the intent to refer to some individual, then “*N* does not exist” is true if and only if the history of those uses ends in a block” (p. 25).

I refer you to Donnellan’s piece for the idea of a block. What is important to see in the present context is that a rule like (R) could function in more than one way. On the one hand it could give logically necessary and sufficient conditions for the truth of the *proposition* ordinarily expressed by “*N* does not exist,” in which case it would identify that proposition up to logical equivalence. But (R) does not function in that way. If it did, the proposition

- (6) Socrates does not exist

would be equivalent to

- (7) The history of (some specific use of) “Socrates” ends in a block.

But clearly (6) is not equivalent to (7): clearly Socrates could have existed no matter what the history of anyone’s use of “Socrates”; he could have had another name or no name at all. Hence is true but (6) is false in those worlds where, let us say, Socrates exists but is named “Muhammad Ali,” and the history of the appropriate uses of “Socrates” ends in a block. (6) is logically independent of such propositions as (7) that detail the history of “Socrates.”

If so, however, (R) does not give necessary and sufficient conditions for such propositions as (5) and (6). What then does it do? Presumably it tells us, not under what conditions the *propositions* (5) and (6) are true, but under what conditions the *sentences* (5) and (6) express true propositions. These, of course, are quite different enterprises. The sentence (6) expresses a truth in just those situations in which the history of certain uses of the name “Socrates” ends in a block; and, as we have seen, these are not the same situations as those in which Socrates does not exist—that is, they are not the same situations

as those in which the proposition in fact expressed by (6) is true. So Donnellan’s (R) does not give truth conditions for the *propositions* expressed by (5) and (6); nor does he tell us what those propositions *are*. The question therefore becomes acute: how, from the anti-Fregean vantage point, shall we understand sentences like (5) and (6) when they contain empty proper names? What proposition is expressed by such a sentence? The answer is unclear. What is clear, however, is that the anti-Fregean cannot properly stick to his anti-Fregean principles for proper names in existential sentences.

(iii) The third difficulty is presented by propositional identity. If we think, with the anti-Fregeans, that a proper name typically exhausts its semantic role in denoting its referent, then presumably the result of replacing it in a sentence like

- (8) Mark Twain was a pessimist

or

- (9) Mark Twain is the same person as Samuel Clemens

by another name of the same object will express the same proposition. In other words, the anti-Fregean seems committed to the principle that codesignative proper names in such contexts are intersubstitutable *salva propositione*. Donnellan,¹⁰ indeed, explicitly endorses this principle; and it certainly seems to follow from the views of Mill seconded by Kripke. But surely it is wrong. Clearly a person could know the proposition expressed by (8) without knowing that expressed by

- (10) Samuel Langhorne Clemens was a pessimist,

just as Lois Lane knows, of course, that Superman is faster than a speeding bullet but does not know that the same goes for Clark Kent. There are various expedients that might tempt anti-Fregeans here; none, I believe, is satisfactory. I don’t have the space to pursue the matter here; some of these problems are clearly brought out in Diana Ackerman’s “Recent Work in the Theory of Reference.”¹¹

In what follows I shall suggest a view that (dare I say it?) displays the virtues of both Fregean and anti-Fregean views, but the vices of neither. The first principle of this view is that proper names do indeed express properties. But what is it, exactly,

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹¹ *American Philosophical Quarterly*, forthcoming.

for a singular term to express a property? The anti-Fregeans deny that proper names express properties; precisely what is it they are anti? We might make a beginning as follows. Suppose we agree that such a singular term as “the shortest spy” expresses at least one property: that of being the shortest spy. It is because that term expresses this property that the sentence

(10) The shortest spy is a non-(shortest spy)

expresses an impossible proposition, as does

(11) The shortest spy is a non-spy.

This suggests the following initial attempt to capture the notion of property expression. Let’s suppose we know what it is for a predicate, such as “is a spy” to express a property, such as *being a spy*. Then we might say that

(12) A singular term t expresses a property P (with respect to a given context of use) if the sentence ‘ t is \mathcal{P} ’ expresses a necessary falsehood (with respect to that context of use)

where \mathcal{P} is a predicate that expresses P and ‘ $\bar{\mathcal{P}}$ ’ is its complement. It is then clear that “the shortest spy” expresses the properties *being a spy* and *being a shortest spy*, while “Paul J. Zwier” does not, despite the fact that Paul J. Zwier *is* the shortest spy. On the other hand, it is obvious, given (12), that proper names do express *some* properties—those, for example, like *self-identity* or *being unmarried, if a bachelor*, that are trivially essential to everything. Clearly the sentence

(13) Quine is self-diverse

(where “is self-diverse” expresses the complement of *self-identity*) expresses a necessarily false proposition; hence “Quine” expresses self-identity. It also expresses a more interesting property: (13) is impossible; but so is

(14) Quine is diverse from Quine.

But then “Quine” expresses identity-with-Quine as well as self-identity. The former, of course, is distinct from the latter; *everything*, naturally enough, has self-identity, but Quine alone has identity-with-Quine. Some philosophers find this property somehow objectionable; but the fact (as it seems to me)

is that identity-with-Quine is a perfectly intelligible property. In any event it is gratifyingly easy to state the conditions under which an object has it: x has identity-with-Quine if and only if x is Quine.

Identity-with-Quine is an *individual essence*¹² (individual concept, haecceity) of Quine. Let’s say that a property P is *essential* to an object x iff it is not possible that x have its complement—equivalently, iff there is no possible world in which x exists but lacks P .¹³ Then an essence of Quine is a property that he has essentially and is such that it is not possible that there be an object distinct from him that has it. In terms of possible worlds, an essence of Quine is a property he has in every world in which he exists, and one such that in no possible world is there an object distinct from him that has it. The view that proper names express individual essences has impressive historical credentials: it goes back to Scotus and, before him, to Boethius, who put the matter thus:

For were it permitted to fabricate a name, I would call that certain quality, singular and incommunicable to any other subsistent, by its fabricated name, so that the form of what is proposed would become clearer. For let the incommunicable property of Plato be called ‘Platonity’. For we can call this quality ‘Platonity’ by a fabricated word, in the way in which we call the quality of man ‘humanity’. Therefore, this Platonity is one man’s alone, and this not just anyone’s but Plato’s. For ‘Plato’ points out a one and definite substance, and property, that cannot come together in another.¹⁴

So far as I know, this is the first explicit recognition that proper names express essence; let us therefore call this view “Boethianism.” On the Boethian conception, an essence of Plato is a property he has essentially; it is furthermore, “incommunicable to any other” in that it is impossible that something distinct from him should have had it.

The second principle of the present view, then, is that proper names express essences. It is crucially important to see, furthermore, that an object typically has *several* essences. This is evident as follows. Suppose we say that Plato has the *world-indexed* property P -in- W if and only if W includes Plato’s having P (if and only if, that is, it is not possible that W be actual and Plato not have P). Now consider any property P that Plato has—*being erudite* for example—and note that the world-

¹² See *The Nature of Necessity*, Chap. 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁴ *In Librum de Interpretatione editio secunda*, PL 64, 462d–464c. Quoted in H. N. Casteñeda, “Individuation and Non-Identity: a New Look,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 12 (1975), pp. 135–136.

indexed property *being-erudite-in- α* (where ' α ' is a proper name of the actual world) is essential to him. For while indeed there may be worlds in which Plato is not erudite, there are none in which it is not the case that α includes Plato's being erudite. World-indexed properties are *non-contingent*: for any object x and world-indexed property P -in- W , x has P -in- W essentially, or x has its complement essentially.¹⁵ Where P is a property, let's say that the α -transform of P (call it " $P\alpha$ ") is the world-indexed property P -in- α ; and if \mathcal{P} is a predicate expressing P , its α -transform $\mathcal{P}\alpha$ expresses $P\alpha$. And now consider a property Plato alone has — *being Socrates' best student*, for example, or *being born at P, T* where ' P ' names the place and ' T ' the time at which he was born. The α -transforms of these properties are *essences* of Plato. All of Plato's world-indexed properties are essential to him; hence these two are. There is no possible world, furthermore, in which there is an object distinct from Plato that has either of these properties¹⁶; they are therefore among his essences. But (*being Socrates' best student*) α is certainly not the same property as (*being born at P, T*) α ; for clearly a person could know of the first that Plato has it without knowing of the second that he has it. They are therefore (by Leibniz' Law) distinct properties; hence Plato has several distinct essences.

The several essences of Plato, furthermore, are logically but not epistemically equivalent. They are logically equivalent: for any such essences E and E^* there is obviously no possible world in which E is exemplified by an object that does not exemplify E^* . On the other hand, they are epistemically inequivalent: it is clearly possible to know or believe that an object has E without knowing or believing that it has E^* . I might know, for example, that Plato has the α -transform of *being Socrates' best student* without knowing that he has the α -transform of *being Aristotle's teacher*. This multiplicity of essences, furthermore, is crucially important to the Boethian view I want to suggest. For if Plato has several distinct essences, then distinct proper names of Plato can express distinct essences. But then (just as Frege and Russell thought) the result of replacing an ordinary proper name in a simple sentence S by a codesignative proper name need not express the same proposition as S . The

Boethian view is an improvement on Frege and Russell, however, in that on the former but not the latter proper names express only *essential* properties of the objects they denote. Boethius therefore deserves credit for making an important improvement on the Frege–Russell view and for offering a more subtle, adequate, and up-to-date version of it.

But if we are to hold that different proper names of an object express different essences, we shall need a more discriminating account of property expression than that provided by (12). According to (12) a term expresses any property entailed¹⁷ by any property it expresses; but then if a proper name expresses an essence of an object, it will express every property essential to that object and hence all of its essences.¹⁸ How can we achieve a more discriminating notion?

We must begin by noting that the sentence

(15) 3^2 is odd

expresses a different proposition from that expressed by

(16) $\frac{27}{8} \int_0^2 x^2$ is odd;

clearly one might know the one without knowing the other. Indeed, those of us with an imperfect grasp of the calculus may know the first proposition but not even possess the concepts necessary to apprehend the second, thus being unable to *believe* it, let alone know it. (15) and (16), therefore, express different propositions; and this is due to the fact that their singular terms express different properties. " 3^2 " and " $\frac{27}{8} \int_0^2 x^2$ " both express essences of 9, but epistemically inequivalent and hence *different* essences. But if these singular terms can express epistemically inequivalent essences, why can't the same be said for proper names? Perhaps, for example, "Phosphorus" expresses something like the α -transform of *being the last heavenly body to disappear in the morning*, while "Hesperus" expresses the α -transform of *being the first heavenly body to appear in the evening*. And perhaps we can state the relevant notion of property expression as follows. Let us suppose, once more, that we know what it is for a predicate to express a property. The predicate "is the square of 3" expresses the property *being the square of three*; it does not express the properties *being*

¹⁵ See *The Nature of Necessity*, pp. 62–63.

¹⁶ For argument, see *The Nature of Necessity*, p. 72.

¹⁷ Where a property P entails a property Q iff it is not possible that there be an object that exemplifies P but not Q .

¹⁸ See *The Nature of Necessity*, pp. 72–73.

$\sqrt[3]{729}$ or *being* $\frac{27}{8} \int_0^2 x^2$, despite the fact that anything having one of these properties is obliged to have the others. A definite description 'the \mathcal{P} ' then expresses the same property as 'is the sole \mathcal{P} '; and a proper name N expresses (in English) a property P if there is a definite description D (in English or some extension of English) such that D expresses P and N and D are intersubstitutable *salva propositione* in sentences of the form " t is \mathcal{P} ".

The third principle, then, of the Boethian view I advocate is this: different proper names of an object can express logically equivalent but epistemically inequivalent essences of that object. This view, I believe, displays at least three important virtues. First, it enables us to accommodate the insights of the anti-Fregeans within a Fregean context. Secondly, the Boethian view succeeds where the anti-Fregean view fails: (a) it enables us to see how such sentences as

(17) Hesperus is the evening star

and

(18) Phosphorus is the evening star

can express epistemically inequivalent propositions, and how

(19) Hesperus is identical with Phosphorus

can express an informative proposition; (b) it enables us to see what propositions are expressed by sentences containing empty proper names; and (c) it enables us to see what propositions are expressed by existential sentences containing proper names. Finally, as a sort of bonus, the Boethian view enables us to see that proper names in existential sentences function in just the way they do in singular sentences generally.

(i) One of the insights of the anti-Fregeans, of course, is that proper names do not express the sorts of properties Frege, Russell, and their followers take them to. More specifically, in criticizing Frege and Russell, what they really point out (although they don't always put it this way themselves) is that proper names do not express properties *inessential* to their bearers.¹⁹ With this, of course, the Boethian enthusiastically concurs; a use of a proper name of Socrates expresses an essence of Socrates and hence does not express any property *inessential* to him. But the anti-Fregeans have other insights. Kripke states one as follows:

¹⁹ See e.g., Kripke, *loc. cit.*

²⁰ "Naming and Necessity", p. 302.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 302.

A rough statement of a theory might be the following: an initial baptism takes place. Here the object may be named by ostension, or the reference may be fixed by description. When the name is 'passed from link to link' the receiver of the name must, I think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference as the man from whom he heard it.²⁰

and according to Donnellan:

The main idea is that when a speaker uses a name intending to refer to an individual and predicate something of it, successful reference will occur when there is an individual that enters into the historically correct explanation of who it is that the speaker intended to predicate something of. That individual will then be the referent and the statement made will be true or false depending upon whether it has the property designated by the predicate.²¹

Donnellan and, less explicitly, Kripke hold that proper names do not express properties; and we might suppose that this is a consequence of their view as to how the reference of a proper name is determined. But it isn't. It is entirely possible both that the reference of a proper name is determined in the way they say it is and that proper names express essences. For consider that complex historical relation R , whatever exactly it is, that on the Kripke-Donnellan view holds between an object and the names that name it. There is an initial complication: the same proper name may name different objects. So what an object stands in R to is not a name *simpliciter* but a name in a given use—in the case of "Socrates," perhaps its use in Plato's *Dialogues* and in history books and philosophy classes. But suppose we ignore this complication, or deal with it by pretending that such names are homonymous: for each person named "Socrates" there is a different name spelled "S o c r a t e s." Now of course

(20) The person that stands in R to "Socrates" was wise

does not express the same proposition as

(21) Socrates was wise;

(21) but not (20) is true in a world where Socrates is wise but no one is named "Socrates." So "Socrates" does not express the property *being the person that stands in R to "Socrates."* But perhaps it can express the α -transform of that property. If the fact is Socrates alone *does* stand in R to "Socrates" then

(being the person that stands in R to "Socrates") α is an essence of Socrates, so that the proposition expressed by

- (22) the (person that stands in R to "Socrates") α was wise

is at least equivalent to (23). And if "Socrates" does express this property, then the reference of "Socrates" is determined in the way Kripke and Donnellan say it is; for then "Socrates" refers to an object x if and only if x stands in R to "Socrates." Thus from our Boethian vantage point we see how it could be both that proper names express essences and that their reference is determined in the way the anti-Fregeans say it is.

And now consider John Searle's Fregean view. Searle holds, roughly, that the name "Socrates" expresses the property *being the person who had enough of the S_i* , where the S_i are the identity criteria associated with that name.²² "Socrates", however, does not express *that* property:

- (23) Socrates had scarcely any of the S_i

and

- (24) the person who had enough of the S_i had scarcely any of the S_i

do not express equivalent propositions; the proposition expressed by (24) is necessarily false, while that expressed by (23) is true in those possible worlds where, let's say, Socrates meets with a fatal accident at the age of 6 months, thus having scarcely any of the properties that constitute the identity criteria we associate with "Socrates." But the fact is Socrates alone did have enough of the S_i , so that the α -transform of *being the person that had enough of the S_i* is an essence of Socrates. Hence

- (25) the (person who had enough of the S_i) α had scarcely any of the S_i

expresses a contingent proposition equivalent to (23). "Socrates" can't express the property Searle says it does; but there's no reason why it can't express the α -transform of that property.

According to Frege, a proper name of a person may express different properties in the mouths of different persons or in the mouth of the same person on different occasions; perhaps the truth, then, is that "Socrates" serves on some occasions to express the α -transform of *being the person who stands in R to*

"Socrates" and on others to express the α -transform of *being the person who had enough of the S_i* . In this way we can bring about a *rapprochement* between the Fregeans and the anti-Fregeans—a sort of group marriage, California style, among Donnellan, Frege, Kaplan, Kripke, Russell, Searle, and anyone else who is interested, with Boethius as presiding clergyman. On the Boethian compromise, proper names express properties, just as the Fregeans hold; but their references, in at least some cases, are determined in the way the anti-Fregeans suppose. We can then see the Fregean-anti-Fregean dispute as a relatively minor domestic quarrel as to just which essence of an object its name expresses. Perhaps the truth is: sometimes one, sometimes another.

(ii) Secondly, let us note how the Boethian view copes with the difficulties besetting the anti-Fregeans.

(a) In *The Nature of Necessity* I unwisely conceded that if proper names express essences, then it is plausible to suppose that different proper names of the same object express the same essence—in which case

- (19) Hesperus = Phosphorus

expresses the same proposition as

- (26) Hesperus = Hesperus.

If so, however, we shall have to say that the ancient Babylonians, despite their sincere protestations to the contrary, knew all along that Hesperus is identical with Phosphorus. After all, they knew the truth expressed by (26); but that is the very truth expressed by (19). They knew the truth expressed by (19) and (26); what they didn't know was that (19) and (26) express the same truth. They were thus deceived about the *sentence* (19) (or its counterpart in Ancient Babylonian) thinking it expressed a proposition distinct from that expressed by (26).

Now perhaps this is not wholly implausible; it does have about it, however, a certain air of the arcane.²³ In any event, a better explanation is available, once we recognize that different names of the same object may express different essences. For then we can say simply and straightforwardly that the Babylonians knew (26) but did not know (19). This, after all, coincides with their own claims and seems to be no more than the simple truth. On our Boethian account the sentence (19) expresses something like

²² See his "Proper Names", *Mind*, vol. 67 (1958), p. 171, and *Speech Acts* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 169.

²³ See Diana Ackerman's "Plantinga, Proper Names and Propositions," *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 28 (1976), pp. 409-412.

(19*) the (morning star) α = the (evening star) α
or perhaps

(19**) the (heavenly body last visible in the
morning) α = the (heavenly body first
visible in the evening) α ;

and we can see how the Babylonians could have gone wrong with respect to such items as (19*) and (19**). Here their situation is like that of one who knows, of course, that

$$(27) 3^2 = 3^2$$

but doesn't believe that

$$(28) 3^2 = \frac{27}{8} \int_0^2$$

" 3^2 " and " $\frac{27}{8} \int_0^2$ " both express essences of 9, but *different* essences; and it is easy enough to fail to realize that these essences are exemplified by the same object. (27) and (28) thus express epistemically inequivalent propositions. But the same goes for (19) and (26); since "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus" express epistemically inequivalent essences of Venus, (19) and (26) express epistemically inequivalent propositions, so that (19) can be informative. And of course exactly similar considerations apply to

(29) Hesperus is visible in the morning

and

(30) Phosphorus is visible in the morning;

these also express epistemically inequivalent propositions. Surely this is the natural and intuitively plausible position; surely a person could believe (26) and (29) without believing either (19) or (30)²⁴.

The second and third difficulty for the anti-Fregean, you recall, are presented by empty proper names and by proper names in existential sentences. It is extremely difficult, on anti-Fregean principles, to see what propositions are expressed by sentences containing empty proper names; it is equally hard to see what propositions are expressed by simple existential sentences containing proper names—in particular, true negative existentials or false affirmative existentials. The Boethian view encounters no difficulty at all here; its felicitous account of these matters, indeed, is one of its strengths. As we have seen, in the typical case where a proper name occurs in such a sentence as

(31) Leigh Ortenburger is the author of *The Climber's Guide to the Grand Tetons*

the name expresses an essence. (31) expresses a truth, furthermore, if and only if Leigh Ortenburger has the property of being the author of *The Climber's Guide to the Grand Tetons*—if and only if, that is, the essence expressed by that name is coexemplified with that property. More generally, where N is a non-empty proper name and F a predicate that expresses a property, a singular sentence of the form " N is F " expresses a proposition that is true in just those possible worlds where the essence expressed by N is coexemplified with the property expressed by F .

But the case of the existential sentence is just a special case.

(32) Leigh Ortenburger exists

expresses a proposition true in just those possible worlds where the essence expressed by "Leigh Ortenburger" is coexemplified with existence; these, of course, are the worlds where that essence is exemplified. If "Leigh Ortenburger" expresses *being the (author of *The Climber's Guide to the Tetons*) α* , then (32) expresses the same proposition as

(33) the (*author of *The Climber's Guide to the Tetons**) α exists

which is equivalent to

(34) There exists just one (*author of *The Climber's Guide to the Tetons**) α .

And of course the denial of (32), namely

(35) Leigh Ortenburger does not exist

is true in those worlds where (32) is false.

But now suppose N is empty. Suppose you come to doubt the existence of Ortenburger. How, you say, could any one man know as much about the Tetons as the *Climber's Guide* contains? You come to believe that the Stanford mathematics department collaborated on the *Guide*—and that, inspired by the example of Bourbaki, they invented Ortenburger out of whole cloth, playfully ascribing the *Climber's Guide* to him. And now let's add that you are right. When you assert (35) and I assert (32), do I predicate a property of some object? And is there an essence E such that what I say is true if and only if E is exemplified? How shall we understand a negative existential sentence like

(5) Romulus did not exist

where the proper name is empty?

²⁴ This corrects the account of the Babylonian intellectual economy given in *The Nature of Necessity*, pp. 83–87.

Here we must recognize, as Boethians, that proper names display a certain subtlety of function. The name “Romulus,” on the Boethian view, expresses the α -transform of such a property as *being the thing that stands in R to “Romulus.”* But this property is unexemplified; so its α -transform is unexemplified in α . But if a world-indexed property *having-P-in-W* is not exemplified in W , then it is not exemplified in any possible world at all. We saw earlier that the α -transform of an exemplified singular²⁵ property is an essence; we now see that the α -transform of an unexemplified singular property is incapable of exemplification. But then “Romulus” in (5) expresses an impossible property. The proposition expressed by (5), however, is true if and only if the property expressed by “Romulus” is not co-exemplified with existence—if and only if, that is, it is not exemplified. (5), therefore, expresses a necessary truth and its negation,

(36) Romulus existed,
a necessary falsehood.²⁶

Take another example: suppose Socrates had never existed—suppose he’d been frivolously invented by Plato, Xenophon and Aristophanes, the rest of us having been quite unaware of the hoax. What property would have been expressed by “Socrates”? In fact, that name expresses an essence—perhaps the α -transform of some such property as *standing in R to “Socrates.”* But if Socrates had not existed, some world β distinct from α would have been actual; our name “Socrates” would have expressed a property not exemplified in any possible world; and the sentence

(37) Socrates existed

would have expressed a necessarily false proposition. It follows, of course, that (37) would not have expressed the proposition it does *in fact* express; for *that* proposition is contingently true and hence not necessarily false in any possible world. So if Socrates had not existed, (37) would not have expressed the proposition it *does* express, but a necessary falsehood instead. On the Boethian account, therefore, a proper name N in an existential sentence $\lceil N \text{ exists} \rceil$ expresses the α -transform $P\alpha$ of a singular property. If N is non-empty, $P\alpha$ is an essence and $\lceil N \text{ exists} \rceil$ expresses a proposition true in just those worlds

where $P\alpha$ is exemplified. If N is empty, $P\alpha$ will be an impossible property and $\lceil N \text{ exists} \rceil$ will express an impossible proposition.

I said empty proper names display a certain subtlety of function in existential sentences; but this subtlety does not distinguish existentials from other sentences. For consider, again,

(4) Romulus founded Rome

This sentence expresses a proposition true in just those worlds where the property expressed by “Romulus” is coexemplified with the property expressed by “founded Rome.” But here, as in (36), “Romulus” expresses the α -transform of an unexemplified property such as *standing in R to “Romulus”* or *having enough of the R_i* . Hence (4) expresses a necessarily false proposition and

(38) it is not the case that Romulus founded Rome

a necessary truth. We thus see what propositions are expressed by simple sentences containing empty proper names. Such a name expresses the α -transform of an unexemplified singular property and therefore expresses an impossible property; as a consequence, a sentence like (4) expresses a necessary falsehood and one like (38) a necessary truth. And it is thus clear that proper names function in existential sentences in just the way they do in predicative sentences generally.

By way of summary: on the Boethian view I mean to suggest, a sentence of the form “ N is F ” (where N is a proper name and F expresses a property) typically expresses a proposition true in the worlds where the property expressed by N is coexemplified with the property expressed by F . If N is non-empty, then it expresses an essence, and $\lceil N \text{ is } F \rceil$ expresses a proposition true in the worlds where that essence is coexemplified with the property expressed by F . If N is empty, then it expresses not an essence but an impossible property, so that $\lceil N \text{ is } F \rceil$ expresses a necessary falsehood. Singular existential sentences of the form $\lceil N \text{ exists} \rceil$ present the special case where F is “exists.” If N is non-empty, then $\lceil N \text{ exists} \rceil$ expresses a proposition true in just those worlds where the essence expressed by N is coexemplified with existence: the worlds, that is where this essence is exemplified. If N is empty, then it

²⁵ A property that is possibly exemplified, but not possibly exemplified by more than one object.

²⁶ But can’t we easily imagine possible circumstances under which (36) would have been true? Isn’t it possible that there should have been someone who was named “Romulus,” collaborated with his brother in the founding of Rome, and so on for all the rest of the properties depicted in the story? That is indeed possible; those circumstances, however, are ones under which the *sentence* (36) would have expressed a truth; they are not ones under which the proposition (36) *does* express would have been true.

expresses an impossible property, so that $\lceil N \text{ exists} \rceil$ expresses a necessary falsehood and its denial a necessary truth.

These, then, are the essentials of the Boethian view: proper names express essences, and different proper names of the same object (or the same name on different occasions of use) can express different and epistemically inequivalent essences. In an effort to promote amity, I have suggested that proper names sometimes express the α -transforms of such properties as *stands in R to "Socrates"* and *has enough of the S_i*. But they can also express other essences. According to Frege²⁷ and Chisholm²⁸ each of us has a property that he alone can grasp or apprehend. Perhaps they are right; perhaps for each person there is an essence he alone grasps, an essence expressed by his own use of his name but not by

anyone else's. Perhaps in dubbings by description, as Kaplan calls them,²⁹ the name in question expresses the α -transform of the description; if I say "Let's name the shortest spy 'Shorty'", perhaps "Shorty" expresses the α -transform of *being the shortest spy*. If, furthermore, I name someone in full view "Sam," it may be that "Sam" expresses (in my idiolect) a property such that my only alternative means of expressing it then is by way of some such description as 'that person right there', where this latter is accompanied by an appropriate pointing. (There are further subtleties here, but I don't have the space to explore them here.) By way of conclusion, then, I repeat the essential points of the Boethian account: proper names express essences, and different names of the same object may express epistemically inequivalent essences.

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²⁷ See "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry," tr. by A. M. and Marcelle Quinton, *Mind*, vol. 65 (1956), p. 298.

²⁸ Roderick Chisholm, *Person and Object* (London, 1976), p. 37.

²⁹ "Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice" in *Approaches to Natural Language*, ed. by Hintikka, Moravcsic, and Suppes (Dordrecht, 1973), p. 499.