THE THEORY OF STANDARD NAMES.

While commenting on the views of Quine regard-
ing the 'opaque' context of the singular term- the
context, that is, in which the singular term does not
occur purely referentially, as the occurrence of
'nine' in, 'Nine is greater than five' is a truth of
Arithmetic', in contrast to 'Nine is such that the
result of writing it followed by 'is greater than five
is a theorem of Arithmetic' in which we put 'nine'
into purely referential position – David Kaplan
observes, "It just is not enough to describe the
(latter) form and say that the predicate expresses a
property of numbers so that both Leibniz's law and
existential generalization apply. What property of
number is this? It makes no sense to talk of the
result of writing a number. We can write numerals
and various other names of numbers but such talk
as the (latter), in the absence of a theory of
standard names is surely based on confusion of ment-
ion and use."[1] The purpose of this paper is to con-
sider the so-called theory of standard names and
examine the claim of Kaplan vis-a-vis that of Quine.
Interest in the nature of singular terms can be traced
back to Frege and Russell. Frege in "Sense and
Reference" and Russell in "On Denoting" and "Philoso-
phy of Logical Atomism" consider the nature of such
terms. The importance of such a consideration cannot
be denied as it has bearing on their ontology,
epistemology, logic and language. In what follows I
propose to consider the views of Russell, Quine and
Kaplan in that order on the nature of proper names
which happen to be one kind of singular term.

I

Russell's views about proper names are quite
familiar but are nevertheless important. The use of
his analytical method and the Occam's Razor led him

on the one hand to 'particulars' and on the other to 'proper names'. They are the logical atoms out of which respectively facts and propositions are constituted. He defines 'particulars' as :

Particulars = terms of relation in atomic facts. Df. and 'proper names' as:

Proper names = words for particulars. "The names that we commonly use, like 'Socrates'" he says, "are really abbreviations for descriptions; not only that, but what they describe are not particulars but complicated systems of classes or series. A name, in the narrow logical sense of a word whose meaning is particular, can only be applied to a particular with which the speaker is acquainted, because you cannot name anything you are not acquainted with."[2] As the example of such logically proper names Russell gives words like 'this' or 'that'. When such demonstratives ᵣ are used quite strictly to stand for and actual object of sense they are really proper names. But he adds, "In that it has a very odd property for a proper name, namely that it seldom means the same thing two moments running and does not mean the same thing to the speaker and the hearer. It is an ambiguous proper name." This means that a logically proper name is devoid of all descriptive content since Russell's view was that simple particulars have no essences. In spite of this it is credited with a meaning. So its meaning has to be the particular that it signifies, just as the meaning of the simple word 'red' has to be the quality that it signifies.

Thus Russell bases his theory of logically proper names on the analogy between the role of logically proper names on the one hand and simple general expression like 'red' and on the other on the analogy between the role of logically proper names and the demonstratives. But as Pears says, "this lands him in a dilemma". If logically proper names are likened to the simple general expressions, like 'red', then they must be names of particulars which, for Russell,

are devoid of essence, and then the question would be: How would Russell make the identity statement intelligible? Pears observes in this context, "Logically proper names entirely lack the descriptive foot-hold which is exploited by such standard names as numerals".[3] If on the other hand, logically proper names are likened to the demonstratives then they will have only contingent references. That is to say the same logicallly proper name cannot have the same referent in all the possible worlds. In this case the relation of meaning between logically proper name and its referent will not be necessary. And this, as Pears says, 'amounts to an abandonment of Russell's distinctive contribution to philosophical atomism.'[4]

How Russell will escape through the horns of this dilemma is not quite clear. The atomic proposition 'This is red' has the demonstrative 'this' as the subject term which is also a singular term, and a simple general expression 'red' as the predicate term, which is also a singular term. Does 'is' function in 'This is red' as identity or as predication? There is reason to say that it functions as predication here as in 'Scott is mortal' as against its function in 'Scott is the author of Weaverly' where it functions as identity. If it is so, how can Russell avoid the essence and the descriptive content of the logically proper name? With this question in mind let us turn to Quine.

<div align="center">II</div>

Quine, like Russell, contested the claim of essentialism, in the form of mentalism and intensionalism with his behaviourism and extensionalism respectively. It should be noted, however, that Quine does not accept Russell's view about the meaning of logically proper names. He rejects, in other words, the view that the meaning of a proper name is its denotation, accepting the 'usage' criterion of meaning. Admittedly, he joins Russell in favouring reduct-

ion of names to descriptions - 'Fa'='(∃x) (Fx.Ax)' -
but goes a step ahead in spelling out in greater
details the nature of description in terms of predica-
tes and bound variables. And he contends that
elimination of names in favour of predicates and
bound variables is essential for understanding how
language works. But let that pass. Here we are con-
cerned not with elimination of names but their use
in sentences.

Quine distinguishes between definite and inde-
finite singular terms. Examples of definite singular
terms are 'Leo', 'that lion', 'the lion' and sometimes
'he' and 'it'; examples of indefinite singular terms
are 'everything', 'something' 'every lion', 'Some lion',
and sometimes 'a lion'. As Strawson⁵ remarks, "This
is not merely a distinction of kind, of species within
a genus. It is more like a distinction of senses of the
phrase 'singular term'. Definite singular terms are
singular in the primary sense, indefinite singular
terms are singular only in a secondary or derivative
sense." The explanation of the fundamental distinction
in role between singular term and general term in
predicative position is an explanation which has to
be understood as applying to definite singular terms.
The position which definite singular terms occupy,
when they play a certain characteristic role in predi-
cation, may also be occupied by other terms which
do not play this characteristic role, but are allowed
the title of singular terms just because they occupy
this position., and these are the dummy or indefinite
singular terms.

Regarding the basic distinction between definite
singular terms on the one hand and general terms in
predicative position on the other, Quine says, "The
basic combination in which general and singular terms
find their contrasting roles are that of predication...
Predication joins a general term and a singular term
to form a sentence that is true or false according

as the general term is true or false of the object, if any, to which the singular term refers."[6] There is, thus, a distinction between the roles of definite singular terms and general terms in predicative position.

But what is this distinction? Following Strawson it can be said that the difference in the role of two terms might be held to be shown by the implied differences between <u>the ways in which there might fail to be such an object</u>. Thus the failure might be justly laid at the door of the general term; but only if (1) there indeed was certain object to which the singular term was correctly applied, and (2) the general term failed to apply to <u>that</u> object, i.e. <u>the</u> object to which the singular term was correctly applied. It is implied that in this case of failure the statement is false. The failure of application of the singular term on the other hand, would not like that of the general term depend on its partner's success. It would be a quite independent failure. And it appears to be implied here that the result of this failure would be not that the statement was to be assessed as false, but that it was not to be assessed for truth value at all. We will be reminded here of a similar point that Strawson makes in his polemic with Russell regarding the statements in which definite descriptions occur as the subject term. It concerns with the existence of the things denoted by the subject term. As Strawson puts it, "Singular terms are what yield truth-value gaps when they fail in their role. General terms are what yield truth or falsity, when singular terms succeed in their role, by themselves applying, or failing to apply, to what the singular terms apply to"![7] Strawson, it may also be pointed out, lays heavy stress on the <u>identificatory function</u> of the singular terms.

III

Turning to proper names it can be said that

they are singular terms which are used to refer their bearers. The question that interests us is : what is the nature of the meaning-relation between names and their referents. Is this relation necessary? If so, in what sense? These questions give rise to what is known as the theory of standard names, names that refer to the same referent in all possible worlds. It is to such names that Kaplan was appealing in the above quotation to overcome the difficulties posed by Quine while considering the occurrence of proper names in the opaque context, because only the standard names are admissible as instances of variables in opaque contexts.

Kaplan in his paper "Quantifying in" restricts his attention to "names which are so intimately connected with what they name that they could not but name it." According to him such a name necessarily denotes its object. Such a relation between the name to its object is available and is based on the notion of a standard name. Kaplan[8] says, "A standard name is one whose denotation is fixed on logical, or perhaps I should say linguistic, grounds alone. Numerals and quotation names are prominant among the standard names. Such names do, in the appropriate sense, necessarily denote their denotations". He objects to Russell's treatment of proper names of persons as standard names by emphasizing the purely referential function of such names and their apparent lack of descriptive content. For Kaplan thinks that what is at stake is not pure reference in the absence of any descriptive structure, but rather the reference freed of empirical vicissitudes." As he puts it, "To wonder what number is named by the German 'die Zahl der planeten' may betray astronomical ignorance, but to wonder what number is named by the German 'Neun' can indicate only linguistic incompetence."[9] Thus there is a certain intimacy between '9' and 9, lacking between

'the number of planets' and the number of planets,
which allows '9' to go proxy for 9 in assertions of
necessity.

Kaplan however, concedes that there are limita-
tions on the 'resort to standard names.' He says
"Only abstract objects can have standard names since
only they (and not all of them) lack that element of
contingency which makes the rest of us liable to
failures of existence."

Kaplan distinguishes the <u>descriptive contents</u> of
a name from the <u>genetic character</u> of the name on
the analogy of a picture which shows a single person.
(P.225) Those features of a picture, in virtue of
which we say it resembles or is a likeness of a part-
icular person, comprise the picture's descriptive
content. The genetic character of the picture is
determined by the causal chain of events leading to
its production. He says that the nature of the genetic
character is "<u>user-dependent</u>" while that of the
descriptive content is "<u>user-independent.</u>" He
describes the latter as "a function of the <u>picture-type</u>
while the former as "a function of the <u>picture-token</u>"
(P.226) The descriptive content of a picture not only
provides a link with reality by the relation of resem-
blances, but also determines its <u>vividness.</u>[10]

Like pictures, Kaplan contends, it is the descri-
ptive content of the names that determines what if
anything they denote. Thus <u>denotation is the analogue</u>
<u>for names to resemblance for pictures.</u> The genetic
character of a name in a given person's usage will
account for how he <u>acquired</u> the name. It is the
genetic character of the name that determines what
if anything it is a name <u>of</u>. And similar considera-
tions would apply to the case of proper names.
Kaplan asserts, "This having a name <u>of</u> x, I shall
later take to be essential to having a belief about

x, and I am unwilling to adopt any theory of proper names which permits me to perform a dubbing in absentia, as by solemnly declaring "I hereby dub the first child to be born in the twenty-second century 'Newman I'."

A vivid name is a little bit like a standard name, but not much, according to Kaplan.[11] It cannot guarantee existence to its purported object and although it has a kind of inner reliability by way of one's use of such name to order one's inner world, a crucial condition of reliability—The determinateness of standard indentities—fails.

A standard identity is an identity sentence in which both terms are standard names. It is a corollary, holds Kaplan, to the reliability of standard names, that standard indentities are either true under all circumstances or false under all circumstances. But not so for identities involving vivid names. Kaplan says, "we can easily form two vivid names, one describing Russell as logician, and another describing Russell as social critic, which are such that the identity sentence simply cannot be decided on internal evidence."[12]

In his reply to Kaplan Quine observes, "The question just which of the names of a thing to count as standard for a believer z, is the open end of Kaplan's theory. He is rightly in no hurry to close it, for it is just here that philosophical significance proceeds to ramify. Already his work on this problem suggests in a sketchy way the foundation of an imposing theory of names, along lines no less relevant to ontology and the philosophy of mind as to logic a preliminary part of his problem is Neil Wilson's question how wrong a man can be about something and still be said to refer to it. The central part of his problem is, given all the man's names for a thing, to separate the standard ones from the others. I feel that Kaplan's appeal to a

"vividness threshold" for this purpose is, for all its vagueness, much the right line, and I find his analogy of names to pictures suggestive."[13]

Let us leave the considerations of the concept of 'vividness threshold' for some other occasion and consider the ground we have covered so far. As we look back we see Russell considering 'singular terms', 'proper names', 'logically proper names' and landing himself in a dilemma. We see Quine dispensing with singular terms and stressing on predicates and quantifiers with his well-known principle, 'to be is to be the value of a variable', and the role of proper names in the so-called 'opaque contexts'. Kaplan anxious to salvage 'proper names' comes forward with his 'standard names', by comparing them with the role which the pictures play, with their 'discriptive content' and their 'genetic nature' and claiming that such standard names can meaningfully occur in the opaque contexts, since they refer the referents necessarily, and the meaning-relation between the name and the referent a necessary relation. But does it lead us away from essentialism and intensionalism to extensionalism which is claimed for it is an important question that can be merely raised at this stage.

Department of Philosophy,   S. W. BAKHALE
Nagpur University, Nagpur.

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