



Book Review

Ezbozo de la Filosofía de Kripke, by Manuel Pérez Otero

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Barcelona: Montesinos, 2006, 276 pp.

Manuel Pérez Otero's *Ezbozo de la Filosofía de Kripke* is a brief monograph on Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge (1980): Harvard University Press), the book that was based on a transcript of the famous three lectures that Kripke gave at Princeton University in 1970. *Naming and Necessity* is one of the most discussed and influential books of 20th century analytic philosophy. Here and in a few other articles published between 1970 and 1980 (among which 'A Puzzle about Belief,' in *Meaning and Use*, ed. by A. Margalit, Reidel: Dordrecht and Boston) Kripke established the agenda for the subsequent investigations in philosophy of language, metaphysics and epistemology.

Two main paradigms characterize the debates in philosophy of language during the 20th century. The first is what Kripke calls the Frege-Russell theory of proper names that says that a proper name means the same as a certain definite description. The second was initiated by Ruth Barcan Marcus ('Modalities and Intentional Languages,' *Synthese*, 13, 1961, pp. 303–22) who termed proper names as mere 'tags' and it was later promoted by the contributions of Kripke, Keith Donnellan and Hilary Putnam at the beginning of the '70s and by many others since then. Their proposals differ in many aspects but some philosophers have been tempted to assimilate them into one and the same theory. For instance Quentin Smith ('Marcus, Kripke, and the Origin of The New Theory of Reference,' *Synthese*, Vol. 104, No. 2, August 1995, pp. 179–89) identified Marcus's view of proper names with the theory of reference given in *Naming and Necessity*. However, the idea of proper names as mere tags without descriptive content that is so typical of Millianism is not Kripke's idea of names as rigid designators, i.e. names that designate the same object with respect to all relevant worlds, for 'rigidified' definite descriptions are rigid designators but still have a descriptive content.

Among the many merits of Pérez Otero's monograph is the fact that he carries out an impressive work of systematic clarification of the fundamental aspects of *Naming and Necessity* by carefully avoiding typical,

mistaken generalizations and yet not requiring any previous specialist knowledge by the reader. For these reasons, I think that his monograph can be indicated as an appropriate guide for any graduate course.

The book is structured in three parts. The first part (Ch. 1–2) defines the philosophical context in which *Naming and Necessity* was written and the fundamental traits of the Frege-Russell theory of language that Kripke criticizes. The second part (Ch. 3) presents Kripke's objections to this paradigm and to its complementary metaphysical and epistemic theses. Furthermore the chapter presents Kripke's positive theses about necessity and its relations to epistemic concepts, the notion of possible worlds, his endorsement of Aristotelian essentialism, the relation between a name and its denotation, the nature of particular objects and of natural kinds. Three main chapters (Ch. 4–6), which are intended as three appendixes, constitute the last part. They are dedicated to Kripke's arguments supporting mind-body dualism (Ch. 4), his further criticisms to the Frege-Russell theory of belief reports (Ch. 5) and some general conclusions (Ch. 6).

Here I will concentrate on some fundamental matters that Pérez Otero treats in a particularly illuminating and original way. I start with his acknowledgement of John Locke's general empiricism as the proper source of many theses of the Frege-Russell paradigm.

Some of the upholders of this paradigm — among which Bertrand Russell, Rudolf Carnap and W.O. Quine — explicitly recognized the influence of David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) on their theories. But in the first chapter of his monograph Pérez Otero individuates in John Locke's *An Essay on Human Understanding* (1690) the real theoretical framework of such views (for a similar interpretation see: Manuel García-Carpintero, *Las palabras, las ideas y las cosas*, Barcelona (1996): Ariel).

Locke contends that *intuitively* we would say that the meaning of natural kind terms as 'gold,' 'water' or 'tiger' consists in a semantic relation to something extra-linguistic, a substance (gold or water) or an animal species (tiger). The *relata* of such semantic relations have observable external properties (for instance water is a liquid that has no colour, no taste or odour, it flows in rivers and seas, etc.), but they also have some other properties that are not directly observable (for instance, nowadays we know that water is H₂O). Properties of the last kind constitute what Locke calls the *real essence* of an object, i.e. an internal structure epistemically inaccessible for us that causally determines the external properties that we can perceive. These

external properties constitute what Locke calls the *nominal essence* of a natural kind, even though the term is ambiguous and sometimes Locke uses it to define the ideas produced in us by their perception. However, the nominal essence cannot determine the real essence of the correspondent natural kind because different people perceive different nominal essences and nominal essences are defined on the basis of their effects on people's minds. Hence, Locke maintains an anti-essentialist view with respect to natural kinds.

Pérez Otero individuates three other main theses (p. 35, p. 178–9) that together with Locke's anti-essentialism constitute the philosophical background of the Frege-Russell paradigm criticized by Kripke:

- (i) *Knowledge entails Certainty*: we can only know that of which we have certainty.
- (ii) *Principle of Transparency of Representational Content*: we know exactly the content of our representations, we know what we think just as we know what the words of our language mean.
- (iii) *Semantic Internalism (or Individualism)*: the meanings of the words of our language consist of subjective mental entities that can vary from individual to individual.

Thesis (i) has been rejected by contemporary epistemology. Thesis (ii) is implicit in the Fregean conception of sense and in Russell's principle of acquaintance. However, one cannot apply an analogous principle at the level of denotation. In fact it is possible that we do not know that 'Aristotle' and 'the Stagirite teacher of Alexander the Great' share their referent. Hence, it seems that meaning should be at the level of sense rather than at the level of reference. And thesis (iii) was still endorsed by Russell, but it was already criticized by Frege's notion of sense as intersubjective and publicly available to the speakers of each linguistic community.

In Ch. 3 Pérez Otero shows how Kripke criticizes these views. First, let us consider Kripke's rejection of the Frege-Russell anti-essentialism that was originally proposed by Locke and later endorsed by Russell, Quine, Wittgenstein and Carnap among others. Kripke argues against them by appealing to our intuitive answers to certain mental experiments about modal properties. As Pérez Otero notices, this methodology is perfectly analogous to the scientific methodology. Scientific experiments try to build an ideal simplified situation; men-

tal experiments (through imagination) create a simplified situation in which we test our intuitions. In philosophy, intuitions have the same role that perception has in scientific experiments.

In the Frege-Russell tradition all necessity is linguistic or representational; it is a sub-product of the use of linguistic representational systems. If modality does not depend on the world, if objects do not have modal properties in themselves, then modality is reducible to the epistemic-representational domain and the truth-value of modal statements depends on language itself or on the internal states of our concepts. Kripke relates the epistemic-representational theory of modal discourse to descriptivism coherently to Quine's own distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* modality ('Reference and Modality,' in *From a Logical Point of View*, New York (1961): Harper & Row). But if following Quine we assume that necessity is predicated primarily of sentences (namely, if we take *de dicto* necessity to be fundamental) it is impossible to derive a concept of necessity predicated of the things themselves (namely *de re* necessity) independently of how we represent them.

Metaphysical necessity instead is predicated primarily of the relation between properties and particulars. From here, you can derive an application to representations. Essentialism agrees with our pre-theoretical conception of the world. So, it is the anti-essentialist theorist who has to prove that essentialism is wrong. The expressions 'essential properties' and 'essentialism' express concepts and theses that pertain to common sense. An essence is what characterizes univocally an entity and can be thought as the collection of all the essential properties of such an entity that together distinguish it from others. For instance, water is H_2O , and being H_2O is its essence because no other entity different from water is H_2O . It is more controversial whether or not particular objects have an essence, namely a set of properties that together distinguish (or identify) an object from any other. For instance, Socrates is essentially human, but *being human* is a property shared by all human beings. This means that the fact that an object has essential properties is not sufficient to individuate its essence.

An important objection to essentialist philosophers is that they cannot offer a general and coherent conception of essential properties. But Kripke and David Wiggins (*Sameness and Substance*, Oxford (1980): Blackwell) respond to this objection. The answer is in the distinction between the modal profile of rigid designators and definite descriptions. Saying that 9 is an odd number (a necessary truth) is

neither synonymous nor equivalent to saying that *the number of planets is an odd number* (a contingent truth).

The second line of criticism to the Frege-Russell paradigm rejects thesis (ii). Kripke endorses the kind of semantic externalism that Putnam and Donnellan in those same years were independently promoting. This is the thesis that the meaning of some signs of our language (for instance proper names) depends on external entities that do not reside in the minds of each individual speaker. For Kripke (and for Donnellan and Kaplan) this thesis coincides with the causal theory of reference that explains the connection between a proper name and its referent in terms of causal relations. A name can be introduced into the public language by fixing its referent either by ostension (through a direct perceptual relation) or by using a definite description (a postulation) as 'Let us use 'Julius' for whoever invented the zip.' Once introduced, the name can be transmitted from one speaker to another through chains of communication. As is well known Gareth Evans ('The Causal Theory of Names,' in *The Philosophy of Language*, ed. A. P. Martinich, (1985): Oxford University Press) criticized the causal theory because it does not produce sufficient conditions to the determination of the referential relation between a proper name and its referent. It is therefore a modest theory. Furthermore it does not allow establishing a link between the name and its referent without using the notion of reference, and hence it does not offer a reductionist analysis of the concept of reference. However, Pérez Otero (p. 176) notices that Kripke does not aspire to a different proposal and points out two main reasons for the definitional non-eliminability of the concept of reference. The first is that the theory indicates only necessary and not sufficient conditions for the correct application of the schema 'z is the referent of the proper name 'X'.' The second is that you cannot have a reductionist definition of 'z is the referent of the proper name 'X',' because the causal theory invokes the concept of reference both in the mechanism of introduction and in the mechanism of transmission of the name.

However, Pérez Otero (see section 6.2) also notices that there are a few important distinctions concerning Kripke's attitudes towards the principle of transparency. It seems that in 'A Puzzle about Belief' Kripke rejects it completely by sustaining that the meaning of a rigid designator is exhausted by its referent (here he favours a strict Millian position). But in *Naming and Necessity* things are not yet so radical. In fact, here the notion of meaning that he endorses is richer and in-

cludes both the referent of a rigid designator and its associated descriptive content. Hence, one might think that Kripke does not completely reject (ii), because (ii) might be assumed at the level of descriptive content and rejected at the level of denotation.

But Pérez Otero also notices that in *Naming and Necessity* Kripke puts forward another thesis that can be distinguished from his semantic externalism, what Pérez Otero calls *linguistic* or *semantic particularism* (see sections 1.1, 3.4, 6.2). This thesis consists in recognizing that rigid designators (among which names) have a singularizing function that is external to the mind of each speaker, that integrates the communicative chains and that works also when these terms appear in modal statements. These singular terms, irreducible to the predicative function of predicates and descriptions, are the basic building blocks of our language. One can fairly say that in *Naming and Necessity* Kripke substitutes the individualistic thesis of the principle of transparency into a social account of the meaning of our words. The relations with other subjects of the linguistic community are fundamental to the determination of linguistic meaning. Language, coherently with what the later Wittgenstein contends in *Philosophical Investigations*, is social.

I concentrated on what I think to be the most original theses of Pérez Otero's analysis of *Naming and Necessity*, but many more details on Kripke's arguments are to be found in the book. I intentionally focused on Pérez Otero's characterization of the Frege-Russell theoretical framework and on its origins in Locke's empiricism to point out the merits of his monograph as a rich, complex and yet coherent analysis of a difficult text whose many theses have rarely received such a systematic work of interpretation and clarification.

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