

---

# WHAT'S IN A (*N EMPTY*) NAME?

BY

FRED ADAMS AND LAURA A. DIETRICH

---

**Abstract:** This paper defends a direct reference view of names including empty names. The theory says that empty names literally have no meaning and cannot be used to express truths. Names, including empty names, are associated with accompanying descriptions that are implicated in pragmatically imparted truths when empty names are used. This view is defended against several important objections having to do with differences in names, descriptions associated with the names, and considerations of modality. The view is shown to be superior to an alternative theory treating empty names as the “descriptive names” of Kripke and Evans.

## *I. Introduction*

There are many different names. Those that have bearers are filled names – names such as ‘Bill Clinton’ or ‘George W. Bush’. Those that lack bearers are empty names – names such as ‘Pegasus’, ‘Vulcan’, or ‘Mickey Mouse’. For direct reference theorists, sentences employing filled names express propositions into which are inserted the objects named.<sup>1</sup> For example, the sentence “Clinton was impeached” expresses the proposition identified by the ordered pair <Clinton, impeachment>. Although there are many descriptions associated with Clinton, such as, “first president in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, “last president to be impeached by the House of Representatives”, and so on, none of these is part of the content of the proposition expressed solely by the name ‘Clinton’. According to theories of direct reference, names contribute only their bearers to propositions expressed by their use.

What propositions are expressed by ‘Pegasus flies’, ‘Vulcan is the tenth planet’, or ‘Mickey Mouse loves Minnie Mouse?’ Empty names cannot contribute their bearers to propositions expressed by these sentences. So what is the content of the sentences, and what are the meanings of the

*Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 85 (2004) 125–148

© 2004 University of Southern California and Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Published by Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, UK and 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA.

empty names? One answer available to theorists of direct reference is that empty names lack meaning and propositions expressed by their use are incomplete or gappy.<sup>2</sup> So, for example, 'Pegasus flies' expresses the incomplete proposition identified by  $\langle \_, \text{flies} \rangle$ , and 'Mickey loves Minnie' expresses  $\langle \_, \text{loves}, \_ \rangle$ . These structured entities are incomplete propositions. They have slots for things designated by subjects and predicates, but whether a slot is filled depends upon whether the name is filled or empty. Furthermore, since the propositions are incomplete (or gappy), they are neither true nor false. Consequently, on this view what is expressed by 'Pegasus flies' or by 'Mickey loves Minnie' are neither true nor false. More controversially, and this is really the heart of the matter that we will discuss here, the content of 'Pegasus does not exist' is neither true nor false – and so on for other negative existential sentences employing empty names.<sup>3</sup>

This consequence is highly counterintuitive, we realize. Yet theories of direct reference have mechanisms to account for the contrary intuitions.<sup>4</sup> On the version of direct reference that we accept, all names (empty or filled) have associated with them various descriptions. None of these descriptions give the meanings of the names. Nonetheless, the descriptions become associated with names by learning. These psychological associations can explain why names (empty or filled) can seem to have meanings other than their bearers.<sup>5</sup> So for example, every U.S. schoolchild learns that George Washington chopped down a cherry tree and confessed and later became the first president of the U.S. So we are pretty much conditioned (stimulus-response style) to connect 'confessed to chopping down a cherry tree' and 'first president of the U.S.' with 'George Washington'. Indeed, associated with all names there will be sets of descriptions that we will call the *lore*<sup>6</sup> associated with the name.

There is lore associated with empty names as well as with filled. Nearly all of us learn the Greek Myths. We learn the Pegasus lore, and, thereby, come to associate 'the winged horse of Greek mythology' with the name 'Pegasus'. When we utter 'Pegasus flies', although we literally express the incomplete proposition  $\langle \_, \text{flies} \rangle$ , we pragmatically imply<sup>7</sup> complete propositions that would be expressed by taking a description associated with the name and substituting. So, for example, we pragmatically imply that the winged horse of Greek mythology flies. And if we utter 'Pegasus does not exist', we pragmatically imply that the winged horse of Greek mythology does not exist. We claim that this latter implied proposition is complete, true, and its truth misleadingly inclines us to think that a sentence such as 'Pegasus does not exist' says something true.

If we are right, there are at least two mechanisms at work: learned associations and pragmatic (as opposed to semantic) implications. And there are at least two potentially misleading outcomes due to these. First, one may come to think that one or more of the descriptions ('the winged

horse of Greek Mythology') gives the meaning of a name ('Pegasus'), when the name has no meaning. Second, one may come to think that one can express a truth using a vacuous name ('Pegasus does not exist'), whereas one at best pragmatically implicates a truth (that the winged horse of Greek mythology does not exist).

We are attracted to this theory for several reasons. First, it offers a unified account of the meanings of names. It says that in all cases, the meaning of a name on an occasion of use is its bearer. Mixed accounts could say that the meaning of a filled name is its bearer, but the meaning of an empty name is a description. We are inclined to think that it would be preferable to say that names make the same type of contribution to what is expressed whether filled or empty. Our account lets us say this. We believe that one should move to the mixed account only if a unified account fails. Part of our goal in this paper is to show that a unified account succeeds against several recent objections. Second, the account applies to fictional names as well as non-fictional names (Adams *et al.*, 1997). Once again, one may propose a mixed view where the meanings of non-fictional names are their bearers and the meanings of fictional names are descriptions or characters, or some other entities. We continue to believe that one should move to such a mixed view only if the unified view fails, and we will defend the unified view here. We will now consider objections to the direct reference theory of names that we have just outlined and its treatment of empty names.

## *II. Objections to the view*

### A: DIFFERENT NAMES

On this theory, negative existential sentences should all say the same thing. But it seems that some negative existential sentences say the same thing, while others say different things. Consider these three sentences:<sup>8</sup>

- (1) Santa Claus doesn't exist.
- (2) Father Xmas doesn't exist.
- (3) Superman doesn't exist.

Sentences (1) and (2) seem to say the same thing. Sentences (1) and (3) seem to say different things. An objection to the direct reference theory above is that it cannot account for what is the same about (1) and (2) and what is different about (1) and (3).

As with the intuition that such negative existential sentences express truths, our theory has to explain away these intuitive differences. The semantic contents of (1)–(3) are not different. They each express an

incomplete proposition of the form  $\langle \_\_\_, \text{non-existence} \rangle$ .<sup>9</sup> Now even though the semantic content of (1) and (2) is literally the same incomplete proposition, that is not what explains the appearance that (1) and (2) say the same thing and that (3) says something different. The intuitive sameness and difference, as the intuitive truth, is to be explained by appeal to the two mechanisms that we outlined above: association and pragmatic implication. We will also need to appeal to the causal history of a name. While (1)–(3) all express the same incomplete proposition, they do so using different names (or modes<sup>10</sup> of presentation). The apparent sameness and difference is due to sameness or differences that trace to the names (or modes).

The names ‘Santa’ and ‘Father Xmas’ share similar causal histories. They both come out of the same Western cultural tradition. They are both associated with the same lore – the same set of descriptions. So for instance, they are both associated with descriptions such as ‘the man who lives at the North Pole’, ‘the jolly fat man who brings presents to the world’s children on Christmas day’, ‘the man with the red suit and white beard who drives a sleigh pulled by eight reindeer’. (1) and (2) seem to say the same thing because, associated with the same lore, their utterances pragmatically convey propositions resulting from substituting the names for descriptions from the lore. That is, they pragmatically impart the same information. That is why they are taken to say the same thing, even though they employ different names.

‘Superman’, however, is not only a different name, but it has a different causal history and is associated with entirely different lore, such as: ‘the man of steel’, ‘the man from Krypton’, ‘man faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive’. So, (3) pragmatically imparts that the man of steel does not exist. It does not imply that the man who lives at the North Pole does not exist. These features, we claim, account for the appearance that one says different things in utterances of (1) and (3).

One further wrinkle we should consider is the sentence below:

(4) Elf Bu does not exist.

Suppose that from a non-Western culture there is a name ‘Elf Bu’ that has a different origin and causal history than either ‘Santa Claus’ or ‘Father Xmas’ but is associated with the exact same set of descriptions as in the Santa and Father Xmas lore.<sup>11</sup> Then we claim that an utterance of (4) by a member of that culture expresses the same incomplete proposition as (1)–(3), and it may pragmatically impart similar information as expression of (1) or (2). Of course (4) expresses the same incomplete proposition as (1)–(3) using a different name. (4) may pragmatically impart the same propositions as (1) and (2) because replacement of ‘Elf Bu’ with any of the descriptions we associate with ‘Santa’ would generate

similar truths for them – such as that the man with the red suit and white beard who drives a sleigh pulled by eight reindeer does not exist. Of course, they may not intend to be talking about the same man with the same red suit or the same sleigh pulled by the same reindeer, because of the differences of culture and causal chains of origin of the names. We say more about this kind of thing below. No one would say “Elf Bu = Santa Claus” because the two names have different causal histories and it is sheer accident that the different names become associated with similar descriptions. Naturally, *we* would not say this because it does not express a truth (or a complete proposition).

#### B: DIFFERENT DESCRIPTIONS

We have explained how we account for the apparent sameness and difference of contents of utterances by the same speaker using the same or different names. And we have explained how we might account for apparent similarities and differences of different speakers using different names, where the descriptions associated with those names are the same. How would our account explain the apparent sameness or difference of contents of utterances for different speakers using the same name or by the same speaker over time using the same name? For example, Anthony Everett (2003) worries that our account would face the following difficulty. He claims that he is likely to associate radically different descriptions with the name ‘Faust’ now than he did ten years ago. Or different speakers Gary and Ken may associate radically different descriptions at the same time with the name ‘Faust’. Won’t our view have to say that an utterance of “Faust doesn’t exist” by Everett ten years ago says something different than an utterance by Everett now? And won’t the account have to say that Gary and Ken simultaneously say something different, as well? If so, Everett claims that our account will not handle the seeming stability of content of utterances containing empty names across times and speakers. Everett claims that the content of ‘Faust doesn’t exist’ is stable across times and speakers.

First, on our account the *semantic content* of ‘Faust doesn’t exist’ is *stable across times and speakers*. Everett’s utterance, Ken’s or Gary’s all express the same incomplete proposition <\_\_\_, non-existence>. So our account *does explain* the sameness of semantic content. Differences of descriptions associated with the name ‘Faust’ do not change the meaning of the name. Our account, being unified, says this whether a name is filled or empty. If Everett first associated ‘the president with wooden teeth’ with ‘George Washington’, and much later associated ‘the president who chopped down a cherry tree and confessed’, this would not change the meaning of ‘George Washington’. Therefore, changes associated with an empty name like ‘Faust’ would not change the meaning of that name

either. Second, Everett must be thinking of the sameness or difference of what is pragmatically imparted by a speaker who uses the empty name 'Faust'. What is pragmatically imparted will depend on the causal history and origin of the name the speaker utters and the lore associated with the name by the speaker and hearer. Here we think it is not problematic that there may be departures in what is pragmatically imparted, as we will now explain.

Let's consider Everett's cross-temporal utterances of "Faust doesn't exist." Everett in 1991 may associate with 'Faust' a certain set of descriptions 'doctor in Goethe's play', 'seducer of a young girl depicted in Goethe's play'. In 2001, Everett may associate with 'Faust' radically different descriptions 'maker of a pact with the devil from Goethe's play', 'personification of evil from Goethe's play'. Suppose that neither of the latter descriptions were associated with 'Faust' by Everett in 1991. Now won't there be different pragmatic implications of the utterances by Everett of 'Faust does not exist' over time, due to the differences of descriptions associated? Yes.<sup>12</sup> Will the descriptions be so different that there is nothing in common implied by Everett's cross-temporal utterances? Probably not. If Everett's use of the name 'Faust' on both occasions traces back to Goethe's use of 'Faust', then there is good reason to think that Everett's implications are about the same Faust. Everett himself may associate with 'Faust' on both occasions that this is 'a central figure in Goethe's work of the same name'. The causal history of Everett's use tracing to Goethe's use preserves that much – that Everett is imparting information about the same Faust.

However, since Everett associates different descriptions with 'Faust' on the two occasions, he imparts different (but related) propositions on the two occasions. In 1991, he imparts that the doctor of Goethe's play doesn't exist and that the seducer of a young girl depicted in Goethe's play doesn't exist. In 2001, Everett's utterance imparts that the maker of a pact with the devil from Goethe's play doesn't exist and that the personification of evil from Goethe's play doesn't exist. Everett's cross-temporal utterances may pragmatically impart different information on different occasions without raising a problem for our view. This is perfectly consistent with our view, as long as the semantic content of the utterances does not change, as we maintain it does not.

The same would be true in the case where the utterances were simultaneous but across persons. In 2001, Ken's utterance may express what Everett's does in 1991, and in 2001, Gary's utterance may express what Everett's does in 2001. This would be true if Ken associates the same descriptions with 'Faust' as does Everett in 1991 and Gary associates the same descriptions with 'Faust' as Everett in 2001. Where there would be a significant possibility for departure is where Ken's and Gary's use of 'Faust' (or Everett's use over time) derived from different sources and

with different causal histories. Suppose Ken's use derived in the normal way from Goethe, but Gary's derived from an unknown author Schwartz. Suppose Schwartz's use did not derive from Goethe, and that Schwartz depicted a Faust as a race car driver from Long Beach, but an otherwise pretty nice chap. Now the pragmatic implications of Gary's and Ken's utterances of "Faust does not exist" would significantly depart no less than our utterances of (1) and (3) above, and for similar reasons. Although the name 'Faust' would appear to be the same string of letters, the use by Gary and Ken are different – as different as for the filled names John Kennedy (the president) and John Kennedy (the car salesman here on the East Coast). The same letters can be used to name different people in the case of filled names, as we all know. Similarly, the same letters can be used to depict different characters in the case of empty names. That two Fausts are being depicted by Goethe and Schwartz are revealed by the different (and unrelated) descriptions the two authors use in their separate fictions. The differences in empty names 'Faust' are due to differences in authors, and intentions of authors, and difference in descriptions the authors associate with 'Faust'.<sup>13</sup> Those differences are then passed on through the readers (and the culture) down different causal chains with different histories.

#### C: NO DESCRIPTIONS

Can there be cases where we associate no descriptive content with an empty name? Suppose Laura and I overhear Joel telling a story about Henri. We do not hear the details of the story itself, but we do pick up that it is about Henri. Later Laura says to me "Henri doesn't exist."<sup>14</sup> Our theory says that Laura literally expressed <\_\_\_\_, non-existence> and she did it using the name 'Henri'. What could Laura have pragmatically implied? Laura did not acquire any of the Henri lore that Joel was spinning. So she cannot associate any of Joel's descriptions with the name and we cannot substitute any of those for the name 'Henri' (from Laura's cognitive perspective). One might think that there is no clear pragmatically conveyed true implicature, in such a case.<sup>15</sup>

Anyone who heard Joel spin the lore about Henri will have many descriptions to choose from and substitute for the name and many true pragmatic implications to take away from Laura's utterance. But none of these will be cognitively available to Laura. Of course, Laura, not being privy to Joel's tale, *may not have* the intuition that she did utter a truth. For all Laura knows, Henri may exist (her utterance may be playful or what Quine calls 'conniving'). Nonetheless, it is possible that it may *seem to Laura that she did say something true*. If so, there ought to be something that could explain the seeming.

We believe that when one acquires a name, to the best of one's abilities, one keeps a file of particulars: where, when, from whom one heard the

name.<sup>16</sup> So at the very least, Laura would associate with 'Henri' the description 'the one Joel was talking about'. If so, she would have pragmatically imparted, at a minimum, that there is no one named 'Henri' whom Joel was talking about. Alternatively, if Laura has a very good memory, she might even have implicated that there is no one Joel was talking about at a precise date, time, and location (at 8:42 PM at the Iron Hill Pub on April 16, 2001, say). So, Laura's pragmatic implicature may not have to involve the name 'Henri'.

We should further consider the case where Laura and I forget from whom we heard the name 'Henri'.<sup>17</sup> If we just remember that we heard the name from someone, but cannot remember from whom (from Joel or Chris or whomever), in uttering 'Henri does not exist', Laura would be pragmatically imparting that there is no one named 'Henri' that she was hearing about from whomever. Now, of course, she may be wrong. If so, she may pragmatically impart a falsehood. After all, if she cannot remember from whom she heard about Henri and she cannot remember the place or time she heard about Henri, then she may have heard about an actual Henri ('Henri' may be a filled name, not empty). But if she is not wrong, in so far as she pragmatically imparts a truth, it will be the truth that there is no one named 'Henri' that she was hearing about.

Everett<sup>18</sup> is suspicious of such a move because he points out that I might utter 'Henri doesn't exist' simultaneously with Laura. And my utterance might impart that there is no one named 'Henri' whom I was hearing about, whereas Laura would impart that there is no one named 'Henri' that she was hearing about. These are clearly different truths and could not explain the sameness of our sayings. True, but it is not the sameness of our sayings that needs explaining. That sameness is accounted for by the sameness of the incomplete propositions that Laura and I express by our utterances. What is to be accounted for here is the sameness of appearance of having uttered truths. And this is accounted for even if Laura pragmatically imparts a truth involving her (not me) and I pragmatically impart a truth involving me (not her). Our claim here, as in the case of 'Faust' above, is that there are pragmatically imparted truths that can account for the appearance of truth of 'Henri does not exist'. It need not be the same truth that accounts for the appearance of truth in each case, when it is the truth of pragmatic implication that is at issue.

As for whether Laura and I have said the same thing when we both simultaneously utter 'Henri does not exist', this is to be explained by our expressing the same incomplete proposition and our both using the name 'Henri' to do so. In addition, we will pragmatically impart the same thing if we associate the same lore with 'Henri' (as presumably we would, since we acquired the name 'Henri' from the same source and in the same way at the same time).

We suppose that we should also consider a case where Laura has the misfortune of Stich's<sup>19</sup> character "Mrs. T". Mrs. T, you will recall, assented to 'McKinley was assassinated', but claimed not to know who McKinley was or if one is dead, when assassinated. So suppose Laura, as Mrs. T, literally associates no descriptions with the name 'Henri'. Then we suggest that were she to utter 'Henri does not exist', Laura would pragmatically imply nothing, as far as she can tell or from her cognitive perspective.<sup>20</sup> Laura would have no view about whether she had said anything true or false for she would have no view about who Henri is (or is not). Let's not forget that the intuition that our account needs to explain away is that one utters *a truth* in uttering 'Santa doesn't exist'. If one has *no idea* who or what something is, an utterance of 'Framus doesn't exist', may call forth no intuitions of truth or falsity to explain away. We suggest that were Laura free of all associated descriptions with the name 'Henri', then there would be no intuitions of having uttered a truth that need explaining away. For anyone who has intuitions that a truth has been uttered, there will be descriptions to associate with the name in question.

#### D: FILLED NAMES

Even if our replies to objections are good so far, there is still the challenge lurking that, if we mistake the semantic content of expressions using empty names for the contents (and truth) of their corresponding pragmatic implicatures, then we should make the same sorts of mistake with filled names. But we do not. Therefore, either there must be some mechanism in language that explains why we make the mistake sometimes and not others, or, barring such a mechanism, our theory must be false.<sup>21</sup>

We agree that there are no such mechanisms that turn attention to pragmatically imparted information, as opposed to semantically imparted information (or turn it back off). We will later suggest that the lack of such mechanisms in language is a reason we reject views of Taylor (2000) and Schiffer (1996). Instead, we disagree that no such mistakes are made generally, or with filled names in particular.

So let's look more closely at this objection. Is it true that there is nothing similar going on in cases of filled names? In the cases of filled names, there are usually complete propositions expressed in their use. This is not always the case, and we will look at some of those instances below, but it is usually the case. When Laura says (5):

- (5) George Washington had wooden teeth,

there is a complete proposition expressed, and that proposition is true. So the fact that it seems that Laura has said something true is no illusion. Therefore, the objection cannot be that with filled names we don't make

the mistake of thinking that a complete and true proposition has been expressed, as we do in cases of empty names. For in the cases of filled names, more than likely, complete and true (or false) propositions are expressed. So what types of mistakes ought one find, if our theory is true? We would expect that in some cases speakers (or hearers) would take a pragmatically imparted proposition (whether true or false) to be expressed rather than the literal, semantic content of the utterance using the filled name. So the objection must be that this kind of thing never happens. We disagree. We maintain that it does happen.

Sticking with the Washington example, someone might easily take Laura to have said that the first president of the U.S. had wooden teeth. Surely if someone overhearing Laura's uttering (5) were asked "what did Laura say?" it would not be unexpected or inappropriate for someone to answer "Laura said that the first U.S. president had wooden teeth".

Or working in reverse, suppose Madonna has acquired the accolade of "the most controversial woman of rock". Everyone comes to associate that description with her. Madonna enters a noisy L.A. bar and Laura is overheard by some to say "Hey look, the most controversial woman of rock is here". Someone else has a hard time hearing and asks "What did she say?" It is so noisy in the bar that the answer he gets back is "Madonna is here". To which he replies "Oh, the most controversial woman of rock is here". This seems to us to be perfectly ordinary in every way and to be just what our theory predicts might happen.

In addition, in much of the psycholinguistic literature on text comprehension<sup>22</sup> it is not uncommon to find that subjects access the gist of a sentence, but do not always retain the exact wording. Therefore, it would not be surprising at all if one recalled some of the pragmatic implicatures from a traditional "restaurant script", say,<sup>23</sup> not the literal, semantic contents of all of the sentences. This is all pretty familiar in cognitive psychology and happens independently of whether the names are filled or empty.

For another type of example, consider a case of what is now known as non-sentential assertion (Elugardo & Stainton, forthcoming). Suppose someone on Capitol Hill asks, "who authorized limited stem cell research?" The answer received is "Bush". Repeat of the question: "Who?" Answer: "The president" (said in 2001).<sup>24</sup> Now we suspect that many would claim that the second response is just a re-iteration of the answer. Unlike some, we are *not* inclined toward the view that "Bush" constitutes a full-blown, non-sentential assertion (the assertion *that Bush authorized the stem cell research*). Rather, we are inclined to say that in uttering 'Bush' it was pragmatically imparted (but not actually stated) that Bush authorized the stem cell research or that the president authorized the stem cell research, and so on. Thus, we suspect that here is a case where a filled name does not express a complete proposition (not literally) but where everyone

would take away from this a complete, true, pragmatically imparted proposition with no difficulty whatsoever.<sup>25</sup> Hence, we see this as exactly the kind of case involving a filled name that parallels what happens in the case of vacuous names – just the kind of thing Everett claims does not happen.<sup>26</sup>

For our final example, we will try to give one where there is a genuine mistake. Following an example of Saul Kripke's (1972), suppose 'Godel' really refers to Schmidt (and few know this). Suppose further that everyone associates with 'Godel' the description 'the man who proved that arithmetic is incomplete'. Now suppose that Gary utters 'Godel worked on some math problems'. We suspect that most would respond with a disapproving "Duh!" Why? Because most would take from Gary's utterance the nearly analytic 'the man who proved that arithmetic is incomplete worked on some math problems'. In actuality, Gary would have expressed the proposition that Schmidt worked on some math problems (a non-trivial truth for people who don't know that 'Godel' refers to Schmidt).<sup>27</sup>

We anticipate the following sort of objection, as well. If there can be pragmatically associated implications with filled names, what happens when the implications conflict? So suppose Bill associates 'the 35<sup>th</sup> president' with 'G. W. Bush' (mistakenly). And suppose that Bill asserts "Bush does not exist". Now what? It seems that Bill semantically expresses something false, since G. W. Bush certainly does exist. However, it seems Bill pragmatically imparts something true, viz. that the 35<sup>th</sup> president does not (now) exist. We see no reason in principle why this could not happen. If Bill and those like-minded think that Bill said something true, the associated (false) descriptions can account for that (mistaken) appearance. For the rest of us, we would correctly see that the semantic content of Bill's utterance is false. It may be an interesting exercise for those interested in pragmatics generally to try to develop an algorithm for when semantic or pragmatic content takes precedence, in such cases. However, we do not see that as our role here. The mere fact that these two types of implication can come apart in cases of filled names is consistent with our view and this type of example offers no evidence to the contrary.

A further objection that we anticipate is that folks can have all sorts of strange lore and associations. One might associate with 'Vulcan' (mistakenly) the description "the ninth planet". Then when Bill utters 'Vulcan does not exist' he may pragmatically impart that the ninth planet does not exist. Again, in the mistaken world of Bill's idiosyncratic lore, this may account for why *he* thinks he said something true. To the rest of us, this would not explain it because we don't think that there is no ninth planet. But we do think there is no tenth. So for the rest of us, a different description (the intended one by those who introduced the name) would explain the apparent truth. What follows from the fact that folks can have all sorts of strange views? Our answer is that their strange views can

explain why they thought they said true things. But this is the case whether names are filled or empty (as the two examples immediately above would show). So again, we do not see the mere fact that this can happen as damaging to our view. We offer a mechanism to account for this phenomenon. The mechanism will allow for strange outcomes. But so far, the mere notice of this does not show that the theory is incorrect. Rather it correctly points to the flexible nature of the pragmatic dimension of language and thought (as opposed to the somewhat less flexible nature of the semantic dimension of language and thought).<sup>28</sup>

#### E: MODAL PROFILES

Our theory explains the intuition that a negative existential sentence such as ‘Santa Claus does not exist’ is true by appeal to pragmatically imparted truths obtained by substituting associated descriptions from the Santa Claus lore for the name ‘Santa Claus’. This obtains truths such as ‘the jolly fat man who brings presents to all the world’s children doesn’t exist’. Truths such as this can explain away intuitions that the negative existential sentence expresses a truth. It doesn’t, but the pragmatically imparted sentences do. Even if this can explain away our intuitions that negative existential sentences containing empty names are true, it can be objected that this explanation will not account for modal intuitions concerning sentences that contain empty names.<sup>29</sup>

Consider sentence (6):

- (6) Santa is identical with John Perry.

A sentence like (6) elicits the modal intuition that it expresses a necessary falsehood. How is this modal intuition to be explained? It might be thought that it must be explained by appeal to a pragmatic implicature, as above – the goal being to find an implied necessary falsehood that could explain away the intuition that (6) is necessarily false. But substituting from the lore at best yields something like (7).

- (7) The jolly fat man who brings presents to all the world’s children is identical with John Perry.

At best (7) expresses a contingent falsehood. There are possible worlds where a plump John Perry brings presents to all the world’s children. So it cannot explain the intuition of necessary falsehood associated with (6). And, if one must explain modal intuitions by appeal to the very same mechanisms that one explains intuitions of truth, then our account would fail to explain one’s modal intuitions with regard to (6) and sentences like (6).

In reply, there is no reason why the exact same mechanisms that explain one's intuitions of truth are the ones that explain one's modal intuitions. We maintain that one's modal intuitions are explained by one's semantic intuitions with respect to sentences of the form "a = a" or "a = b". First, "a = a" is a sentence schema for expressing necessary truths. There must be a filled name on both sides of the identity sign and the names on either side must name the same individual. So, our modal intuitions are that any sentence of this form, if it expresses a truth at all, will express a necessary truth. Second, "a = b" is also a sentence schema. Unless one knows that 'a' and 'b' name the same thing, one will not have a modal intuition that it expresses a necessary truth, as opposed to a necessary falsehood. But one will have the modal intuition that if it expresses a truth, it expresses a necessary truth, and if it expresses a falsehood, it expresses a necessary falsehood.

We maintain that these semantic intuitions account for the modal intuition that (6) expresses a necessary falsehood. We know that 'Santa' and 'Perry' do not name the same individual. So we know that if (6) expresses a falsehood, it will express a necessary falsehood.<sup>30</sup> The intuition of necessity comes from the logical form of the expression. The truth or falsity comes from whether or not the names are names of the same individual. If one did not know who Perry was, nor who Santa was, one would still be able to have the modal intuitions. So we do not need to look at the pragmatic implicatures to account for one's intuitions of modality. And we reject the notion that our theory commits one to looking to the pragmatic implicatures to account for modal intuitions.<sup>31</sup> One can have the modal intuitions by considering the sentence schemas alone. And that is the difference between accounting for the modal intuitions and accounting for the intuitions of truth. One cannot account for the intuitions of truth by looking at sentence schemas alone.

#### F: GRICEAN MECHANISMS

Ken Taylor (2000) has defended a view of names that is very similar to our view. In fact, it is so similar that the main difference between his view and ours is that he claims sentences employing empty names express 'psuedo-assertions' that can have truth values. Whereas, we would say that such sentences do not express assertions or psuedo-assertions, but can pragmatically imply the very propositions that Taylor says are psuedo-asserted. So for example, Taylor says that Robin's utterance of 'Santa isn't coming tonight' expresses no proposition and does not have a truth value. But Taylor maintains that there are what he calls one and a half stage pragmatic mechanisms that turn on when an empty name is used, such that Robin psuedo-asserts *that the jolly fat man who brings presents to the world's children isn't coming tonight*. This psuedo-assertion may well be true.

Now we maintain that what Taylor calls a psuedo-assertion is just a Gricean pragmatic implicature. So we agree with Taylor on the types of propositions that can be true or false. We disagree on the mechanism and what to call the mechanism. He calls it psuedo-assertion. We call it pragmatic implication. Why does Taylor reject the view that the mechanism is pragmatic implication? The reason he gives is that he claims Gricean implicatures require complete propositions to be expressed in order for other propositions to be implied. Since 'Santa isn't coming tonight' does not express a complete proposition, Taylor maintains that no Gricean mechanisms are operative. So, Taylor invents new ones to operate in their place (his one and a half stage mechanisms).

We have three responses to this. First, Taylor gives no explanation for his claim that Gricean implicatures require complete propositions. It is true that most of the examples Grice gave, when describing the logic of conversation, employed complete propositions. But Grice nowhere said implicature could not take place via something less than a complete proposition. For instance, upon hearing that President Bush was in favor of relaxing the standards for tolerable amounts of arsenic in the water supply, Gary might say "Oh, that Bush!". Now we maintain that quite clearly Gary pragmatically imparts that he disapproves of Bush's action, but Gary did not express a complete proposition having this implication. We maintain that such examples are easy to generate and perfectly Gricean.

Second, Taylor maintains that psuedo-assertions only take place with empty names, not with filled. However, we have given many examples above where what we call pragmatic implicatures (but Taylor would have to call assertions or psuedo-assertions) do take place with filled names, but are not part of what the uttered sentences express. So that is another difference between our view and Taylor's (and one in our favor, we would maintain).

Third, Taylor's view requires that there be mechanisms or linguistic conventions that turn on when names are empty and turn off when names are filled. We just gave reasons why we do not believe there are such mechanisms that turn off when names are filled. As far as we can see, what is happening is that names are being replaced by descriptions from lore associated with a name and the resulting complete propositions pragmatically imparted may be true or false. But we see these mechanisms as being *always on*. If, as Taylor maintains, the linguistic mechanisms turn on and off, in correlation with whether a name is filled or empty, then Taylor needs to explain how such mechanisms work. Indeed, we maintain that speakers and hearers *may not know* whether a name they use is filled or empty. When astronomers first suggested that there was a planet Neptune, they were right. So there were no psuedo-assertions (according to Taylor). When astronomers later suggested there was a planet Vulcan, they were wrong, but didn't know that at first. So, their utterances expressed psuedo-assertions (according to Taylor). So by what cognitive device may such

linguistic mechanisms have switched *on and off*? It doesn't seem to us that there is a change in linguistic mechanisms here, just a change in reference (in one case reference was achieved, in the other not).<sup>32</sup>

With regard to fictional names, Stephen Schiffer (1996) has suggested that there are what he calls "pretending uses" and "hypostatizing uses" of fictional names.<sup>33</sup> An example of a pretending use would be Conan Doyle's penning the words "Sherlock Holmes lives at 22B Baker Street" in writing a fiction. An example of a hypostatizing use would be our saying "Sherlock Holmes was created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle". Schiffer seems to say that fictional characters exist and their existence is dependent upon our hypostatizing use of fictional names.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps something like this is what Taylor had in mind for a kind of thing that *switches on a* one and a half stage pragmatic process.

First, as far as we can tell, Schiffer's hypostatizing use is equivalent to what elsewhere (Adams *et al.*, 1997) one of us has called use of a fictional name to say something *about a fiction*.<sup>35</sup> Schiffer seems to think that when writing a work of fiction the author pretends to talk about *the individuals* named in the work – whereas when one talks about the work one seems to talk about the *fictional characters*. So there is a sense in which the existence of such fictional characters depends upon our hypostatizing use of fictional names.

Second, on our account fictional names are empty names in all uses. So 'Sherlock Holmes' is an empty name in either a pretending use or a hypostatizing use of the name. Thus, we do not countenance fictional characters. What Schiffer and others would call a fictional character we would call a set of descriptions comprising what we have called the *lore* associated with the fictional name.<sup>36</sup> Of course the lore depends upon pretending or hypostatizing uses of the fictional name. We maintain that none of this commits one to the existence of fictional entities.<sup>37</sup> For "Sherlock Holmes lives at 22B Baker Street" penned by Conan Doyle, we would say Doyle pretended to assert that \_\_\_ lived at 22B Baker Street, and he did this using the name 'Sherlock Holmes'. There would be plenty of pragmatically associated propositions that Doyle imparted as well, such as "a super sleuth lives in London at 22B Baker Street", and so on. We would say "Sherlock Holmes was created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle" expresses that sentences of lore containing descriptions were penned in the corpus of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (who did so using the name 'Sherlock Holmes'). Again, there would be a wealth of descriptions "a music loving, cocaine using, super sleuth exists" that Doyle either pretended to assert or implied by concatenating the descriptions with the name 'Sherlock Holmes'. In neither pretending nor hypostatizing use is the name 'Sherlock Holmes' a filled name.

An hypostatizing use of a name does not change its meaning. A pretending use of a name yields an incomplete proposition that is neither

true nor false. An hypostatizing use, since it is about a work, not about an individual entity (such as an actual man, Holmes), may yield a truth. So to say 'Sherlock Holmes was created by Doyle' is just to say that Doyle created the lore and attached the name 'Holmes' (which is true).

Now if what Taylor and Schiffer have in mind is similar, then suppose Gary says 'Sherlock Holmes is not coming tonight' (similarly to the sentence 'Santa isn't coming tonight'). Perhaps Taylor and Schiffer would both claim this is true. Taylor would say it pseudo-asserts that the super-sleuth from 22B Baker Street is not coming tonight. But is it an hypostatizing use? It seems to us as if this sentence is pretending to talk about the man, Holmes, no less than Doyle's penned sentences do. So we fail to see how Schiffer's hypostatizing use could be a cognitive or linguistic mechanism of a type needed by an account like Taylor's.

One might claim that Schiffer's *pretending use* is closer to what Taylor needs. But even the pretending use fails in cases like that of Vulcan. When astronomers believed a very tiny planet that they called 'Vulcan' was influencing Mercury's orbit, they were not pretending. They really believed they were naming an actual planet. And they certainly were not giving 'Vulcan' an hypostatizing use.

In closing, it seems to us that neither Taylor's account nor Schiffer's handle cases where one acquires a name, but does not know whether it is filled or empty (as in the Henri case above). If one does not know whether a name is filled or empty, one cannot switch on or off a pretending use or an hypostatizing use. On our account, this is not a problem because there are no such mechanisms to switch on or off. All names, filled or empty, have associated lore. All uses of names will have pragmatically imparted propositions to explain any apparent truth or falsity. On Schiffer's view, if one didn't know a name was empty, one could not give it a hypostatizing use. On our view, if one didn't know a name was empty or filled, one would still be able to say things that pragmatically imparted truths or falsehoods (at least to others who knew, as in the Henri case above).

In response to this, one might claim that Schiffer's account can say the same thing. Namely, it can say that even if one doesn't know whether a name is filled or empty, one can still give it a *pretending use*. To us, however, this seems impossible. For to give a name a pretending use is an intentional action, and one would need to know one was pretending. So we do not think Schiffer's account can say the same thing as our account in cases where one doesn't know whether a name is filled or empty.

### ***III. Descriptive names: an alternative***

We will close by considering a possible theory of empty names that treats them as descriptive names. One might maintain that all empty names are

descriptive names.<sup>38</sup> We will now explain why one might be tempted toward such a view and why we think it fails.

Kripke (1972) and Evans (1982) discuss the possibility of descriptive names. An example of a descriptive name is introducing the name 'Julius' to stand for *whoever invented the zip*. Both Kripke and Evans suggest that names can be introduced in this way. If someone, say Ken, actually invented the zip then 'Julius' refers to Ken and can be used to make assertions about Ken ("That Julius was a smart guy").

Evans adds the remark that descriptive names are names "even if the name is empty" (p. 31). Evans may go on to say that if no single person invented the zip, then the name fails to refer. What then of the negative existential sentence 'Julius does not exist?' Since the name was introduced via the description 'the inventor of the zip' and there is no referent, the content of this utterance may be taken to be *that the inventor of the zip does not exist* – which would be true.<sup>39</sup> So on this view, empty names, if descriptive names would not express gappy or incomplete propositions. 'Julius is tall' would express the proposition that the inventor of the zip is tall (and would be false). And so on. Hence, if all empty names are descriptive names, one may be able to avoid the unintuitive consequences our theory is required to explain away by appeal to the mechanisms of association and pragmatic implicature.

One may be tempted to adopt this view of empty names for these reasons. It would be intuitively acceptable, and it would straightforwardly make negative existential sentences true assertions (not pragmatically implied truths). What's not to like?

We began this paper expressing our goal to defend a unified account of names. By that we mean, an account on which all names have the same semantic function. Perhaps another way to say this is that we hanker for an account in which all names make the same semantic contribution to their informational (or propositional) content on occasion of use. We shall explain why the theory of names we just described is not a unified theory of names. On it, filled names and descriptive names have two different semantic functions (make two different types of informational contribution to propositional content on occasions of use). The remainder of this paper will be devoted to explaining this and defending our account for the reason that it alone offers a unified theory of the semantics of names. Until or unless the unified account is shown to have a fatal flaw (or we are overwhelmed by the beauty of an alternate theory) we maintain that its simplicity and economy are still among its major strengths.

Descriptive names can be filled or empty. Let's first consider cases where they are filled. So let's suppose that we introduce the name 'Julius' for the inventor of the zip and the name is filled and refers to a very bright man also named 'Ken'. Since we maintain that all names work the same way, it would be no surprise to us if there were some lore associated

with 'Ken' (aka 'Julius'), such as 'the inventor of the zip' or 'a very sharp cookie'. Remember that on our account all names make the same semantic contribution and may have associated lore.

The unique thing about descriptive names is that the route from the introduction of the name to the bearer is not the same as Kripke's "initial baptisms". Normally, when someone introduces a name there is a more or less direct causal chain between the introduction of the name and the bearer of the name (causal via the cognitive capacities of the one introducing the name). So, at birth and in her presence Laura's parents decided to name her 'Laura'. In the case of descriptive names, there may be no direct causal path from the introducer of the name 'Julius' to Ken (the inventor of the zip). The description associated with the name (the lore, if you will) is a recipe for connecting the name to its bearer. Since Ken fits the description (the lore is true of him), it is via the lore that 'Julius' refers to Ken.

Okay. So far so good, but now when one utters 'Julius is a very sharp cookie', what proposition does one express? There are two choices:

- (a) The inventor of the zip is a very sharp cookie
- (b) Julius (aka Ken) is a very sharp cookie.

Some proponents (Evans, 1982; Recanati, 1993) of descriptive names would maintain that (a) is correct. We maintain that (b) only is correct.<sup>40</sup> We maintain this because we maintain that names always make the same semantic contribution. They contribute their bearers (if they have bearers) to the proposition they express. It is true (in the example) that Julius (aka Ken) is the inventor of the zip. However, if the name 'Julius' made the semantic contribution *the inventor of the zip* on an occasion of use, then the meaning of the name 'Julius' would be the description 'the inventor of the zip'. But the meanings of names are their bearers (if they have bearers). Or at least, that is the theory we are defending. So a name might be introduced via a description (a piece of lore associated with the name). And even though the description might help link the name with its bearer, once linked (and, hence filled) the informational content of the name on an occasion of use is its bearer. There is no reason to maintain that the meaning of the name is other than its bearer.

Why do some philosophers believe otherwise? We maintain that it is because they mistake the pragmatic implicature associated with a name via the lore for the semantic content of the expression using the name. So when one claims that (a) is true, we would agree, but argue that it is true only because it is a pragmatic implicature. (b) is the literal semantic content of 'Julius is a very sharp cookie'.

We would add that even Recanati agrees that once the name 'Julius' becomes established as a name for Ken, and we have additional lore

associated with 'Julius', the description 'inventor of the zip' may lose privileged status. We may even come to learn that it is true that Julius is not the inventor of the zip. This could not happen in any possible world where 'Julius' had 'inventor of the zip' as its meaning, but could happen where 'Julius' meant Julius (aka Ken).

So that is what we would say about filled descriptive names. There are no surprises here. Our account says the same thing about all names, filled or empty, descriptive or not. They make the same kind of semantic contribution. They are associated with various amounts of lore (or descriptions). And they contribute only their bearers to the propositions they express on occasions of use.

Let's turn to empty descriptive names. What does our account say about them? The answer should by now be no surprise. For the account we have just given in this paper is our answer. That is, empty descriptive names occur when a name is associated with a set of descriptions (or lore) and no object is the bearer of the name. So suppose 'Julius' fails to refer because the zip had co-inventors, not just one. Then the question becomes what does 'Julius is a very sharp cookie' express? On our account it expresses the gappy proposition identified by <\_\_\_\_, property of being very sharp> and it does this by using the name 'Julius'. It does *not* express the proposition (a) that *the inventor of the zip is a very sharp cookie* because, while this is a true pragmatic implicature, the description 'inventor of the zip' is not the meaning of the name 'Julius'. We would say what 'Julius does not exist' *does express*, but all readers know that by now.

While we understand the motivation for thinking that consideration of descriptive names introduces a new theory of empty names, we have maintained that it does so at the expense of a unified theory of names. The resultant theory would treat the meanings of names as descriptions, which we maintain they are not. On our view, the descriptive part of descriptive names (filled or empty) is just the lore associated with names. That there would be such is addressed in our comments above about whether we might mistake the semantic content of expressions involving filled names with pragmatic implicature, if we do this with empty names. So we would add our discussion here to our earlier discussion in reply to Everett who maintained that we don't seem to mistake pragmatic implicature in the cases of filled names in the way our theory maintains happens in cases of empty names. If we are correct in what we have just said about filled descriptive names, we have identified another example of just such a mistake (mistaking (b) for (a)).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In this paper we have attempted to defend the view that empty names have no meaning because they have no bearer. Having no bearer, they cannot

contribute a bearer to the content of a proposition expressed on an occasion of use. Hence, they cannot be used to say things that are true or false.

We have given a mechanism to explain away any appearances that empty names can express truths in such cases as negative existential sentences. We explain away the appearance of truth by virtue of the associated lore of empty names and the pragmatic implicatures generated by the use of empty names.

In addition, we have considered several objections to our account that come in the form of worries about changes in the lore associated with a name or differences in the lore associated by the same person at different times. We have also considered cases where there may be a bare minimum of lore associated with a name. And in one case, we considered the result of no lore associated with a name at all. In each case, we've defended our view against the objections that were presumed to result from such cases.

We also considered worries over the so-called modal profiles that are associated with names. Here too we have defended our view against such concerns. We maintain that our account gives an adequate reply to such concerns.

And finally, we constructed an alternative to our theory based on the notion of a descriptive name. In the end, we explained that descriptive names really add nothing new to the issues surrounding empty names. Either the semantic contents of all names are their bearers (as we would maintain) or a new theory of the meanings of names (all names) is required. In this paper we have argued that no such new theory is required based upon the issues surrounding empty names that we have addressed.<sup>41</sup>

Department of Philosophy  
University of Delaware

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> We will follow Adams & Stecker (1994) in distinguishing the linguistic meaning of a name from its meaning on an occasion of use. The linguistic meaning of the name 'David' is "bearer of the name 'David'". But the meaning of the name 'David' on an actual occasion of use is the information content, the bearer of the name who is inserted into the subject slot of the proposition expressed when the name is not empty.

<sup>2</sup> This view is maintained by Braun (1993), and developed further and modified by Adams *et al.* (1992, 1994, 1997). In Adams *et al.* 1997, the claim that the current account of empty names can be extended to names of fiction is presented and defended. We will not be concerned with fictional contexts here.

<sup>3</sup> Unlike Adams *et al.* (1992, 1994, 1997), Braun claims that sentences of the form "a is F" employing empty names for 'a' are false and sentences of the form "a does not exist" employing empty names are true. For reasons given in Adams *et al.* and in Everett (2003), we reject Braun's conclusions and his reason for these claims. Here we will defend further the view that these sentences express neither truths nor falsehoods.

<sup>4</sup> We will not recount all of the moves that are available to theorists of direct reference, nor all of the moves we reject. See Adams & Stecker (1994) for why we reject the views of Braun and Donellan and Everett (2003) for even more of what's wrong in the account of Braun.

<sup>5</sup> For fiction, the associations of descriptions and names may be by stipulation of the author, and by learning for the reader. And, again, we are not talking about linguistic meaning or a type of meaning that all names might *share* (Recanati, 1993), but informational meaning contributed to a proposition expressed by an utterance on an occasion of use. We intend this reading throughout the paper.

<sup>6</sup> Please note that by 'lore' we will not mean that these descriptions must have been around a long time and be well known. So we depart a bit from the standard meaning of this term, but it is entrenched in earlier articles, so we continue to use the term. Others use 'file', 'profile', or 'dossier' – terms that do not have this connotation.

<sup>7</sup> Here we follow the ideas of Paul Grice who may have been the first to reveal the mechanisms of conversational (pragmatic) implicature (Grice, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> These examples and objections are due to Everett (2003). However, similar types of examples were discussed in Adams *et al.* (1997).

<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, we might express this as the incomplete proposition that there does not exist an *x* such that *x* = \_\_\_ (where one cannot fill the blank because the name is empty).

<sup>10</sup> For our purposes, we shall actually think of names as modes of presentation (in language or in thought). While filled names present individuals and empty names present nothing, they may so present similarly or differently depending on similarity or difference attributed to the names (modes) or to similarity or difference of the descriptions associated with the names (modes) (Adams *et al.* 1993a&b).

<sup>11</sup> It would be very surprising and an amazing coincidence if there was no causal influence of the one culture on the other and yet they had the same lore associated . . . indeed, it may be impossible for this case because of the connection of the lore with Christmas. But it may be possible for some other lore, so we will put this worry aside and just deal with the case for its general type of worry.

<sup>12</sup> This is actually a thorny matter that we will not be able to explore fully here. It will depend on how much speaker and hearer have to share in the background for pragmatic implicatures to secure uptake. For the purposes of Everett's worry, we will just assume that any departure of associations with a name can generate differences in pragmatic implicature.

<sup>13</sup> Everett (2003, footnote 34) also worries whether we can distinguish fictional or mythical characters who have the same name, such as the dead king and his son both called 'Hamlet' in the play of the same name. The Goethe/Schwartz use of 'Faust' should explain this as well. Shakespeare used 'Hamlet' differently when he associated the name with the descriptions 'dead king' and 'son'. It is clear from the difference of his associated descriptions that different Hamlets are being depicted.

<sup>14</sup> Everett would say Laura spoke truly, though he does not give a theory of empty names that explains this intuition.

<sup>15</sup> Everett certainly argues for this conclusion (Everett, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Compare Recanati (1993, pp. 181ff).

<sup>17</sup> Everett considers this as well.

<sup>18</sup> Everett carries his line of criticism further than we will follow here, but we think we have made clear how we would continue to respond to his line of criticism, if pressed.

<sup>19</sup> From Stich (1983).

<sup>20</sup> From the perspective of hearers who have descriptions to associate with the name, various pragmatic implicatures may suggest themselves.

<sup>21</sup> Everett makes something very close to this objection (2003), but we are elaborating it a bit.

<sup>22</sup> In particular, in the work of Bransford & Franks (1971, 1972).

<sup>23</sup> We have in mind the standard script. Tom entered the diner, ordered a burger, and left a tip. Many readers will say that Tom liked the burger and left the tip accordingly, when nowhere in the script did it even say that Tom ate the burger.

<sup>24</sup> Some may say this is just a case of VP-ellipsis with the elision supplied by the preceding interrogative and a genuine full assertion. If so, suppose instead that Cheney and Powell enter the Oval Office to find a mess on the president's desk, Cheney turns to Powell and says "Bush". Powell, looking at the mess says "Who?" and Cheney replies "The president", implying that Bush made the mess.

<sup>25</sup> We realize that we may be flying in the face of Elugardo & Stainton's own interpretation of what is going on in such cases and we have had some preliminary discussion of this with them, but we will not fight this out here.

<sup>26</sup> We don't wish to lean too heavily on the word 'mistake'. In some cases these types of examples may be analyzed as equivocation on what is "said". In other cases, some of the things that are understood are logical implications of what is said. But the point remains that there are perfectly natural cases with filled names where one utters 'a is F' and one takes away from this "The G is F" because one associates the description 'the G' with the name 'a'. That is all we need to defend the symmetry in our account. We see no reason why this would be any different in cases of filled names or empty, and our theory treats such cases equally, whereas Everett seems to suggest there is an asymmetry that we simply cannot find.

<sup>27</sup> Thanks to Richard Hanley and Gary Fuller for independently suggesting the Kripke example, and to Fuller for jazzing it up.

<sup>28</sup> There is an obvious trade off of what goes into semantics and what goes into pragmatics. We cannot fight every battle at once, so we won't attempt to give a precise demarcation here. We are guided by the work of Grice, of course, and our intuitions about direct reference theories of names and terms, generally.

<sup>29</sup> The following objection is due to Everett (2003).

<sup>30</sup> Of course, we maintain that (6) expresses a necessary non-truth (not a necessary falsehood). There is no possible world in which this sentence expresses a truth (or a falsehood, for that matter).

<sup>31</sup> Actually, we think that what explains the intuition of falsity of Santa = Perry may be different from what explains intuitions of necessity. Intuitions of falsity may indeed be due to realizing the implicature "Perry wears a red suit and lives at the North Pole" is false. But Perry could change his dress and address, so that won't explain the intuition of modality. Here we are saying that the explanation of modality is due to one's semantic intuition that if 'a' and 'b' do not refer to the same individual, then  $a = b$  is necessarily false. We maintain that people confuse Santa = Perry with things like Perry = Kripke. The latter is necessarily false and of the same form as the former. But former is necessarily neither true nor false.

<sup>32</sup> Everett (2003), p. 40ff finds Taylor's view equally problematic in this very point.

<sup>33</sup> Schiffer's paper is mainly about properties and propositions and whether these shadowy creatures depend in some way on what we do with language. We will not comment on this thesis here, but we will say that we find it dubious because for language to get up and running in the first place, having the meaning required to name properties or propositions, there must be relations between predicates and properties. So we are dubious that meaningful language could be something upon which properties or propositions depend for their existence. We will address similar worries here about Schiffer's treatment of fictional entities whose existence is claimed to depend upon our use of language.

<sup>34</sup> We say that he “seems” to think this because he also says “. . . fictional entities are created in a straightforward and unproblematic way by the pretending use of names. . . .”

<sup>35</sup> We can use fictional names within a fiction, to say something about a fiction, or to compare a fiction with something else (or another fiction). Schiffer’s hypostatizing use seems to be about either of the latter two.

<sup>36</sup> Of course, as we have pointed out, there can be lore associated with filled names.

<sup>37</sup> To be fair, Schiffer does not claim more for his view than that it is “reasonable to believe.”

<sup>38</sup> This view is suggested to us by reading certain remarks of Kripke (1972), Evans (1982), and Recanati (1993) – although as far as we can tell none of them actually formulate the theory. It was also suggested to one of us in conversation by David Pitt.

<sup>39</sup> We maintain that it is true as well, but that it is not the semantic content of the utterance but of the pragmatic implicature.

<sup>40</sup> Recanati observes that Kaplan maintains a view like ours for demonstratives introduced via descriptions (Recanati, 1993, p. 107).

<sup>41</sup> We would like to express our gratitude to Robin Andreasen, Dean Buckner, Anthony Everett, Ray Elugardo, Gary Fuller, and Richard Hanley for comments on earlier drafts of this paper and useful conversation about issues in the paper. A version of this paper was presented at Concordia University in Montreal, the Southern Society for Philosophy and Psychology in Nashville, and the Wittgenstein Symposium in Kirchberg, Austria. We thank those at Concordia, SSPP, and the Wittgenstein Symposium for useful comments. We also thank the Undergraduate Research Program at the University of Delaware for support of Laura Dietrich’s research on this project.

#### REFERENCES

- Adams, F., Stecker, R. & Fuller, G. (1992). “The Semantics of Thought,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 73, pp. 375–389.
- Adams, F., Stecker, R., & Fuller, G. (1993a). “Schiffer on Modes of Presentation,” *Analysis* 53, pp. 30–34.
- Adams, F., Stecker, R., & Fuller, G. (1993b). “The Floyd-Puzzle: Reply to Yagisawa,” *Analysis* 53, pp. 36–40.
- Adams, F. & Stecker, R. (1994). “Vacuous Singular Terms,” *Mind Language* 9, pp. 387–401.
- Adams, F., Fuller, G. & Stecker, R. (1997). “The Semantics of Fictional Names,” *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 78, pp. 128–148.
- Bransford, J. & Franks, J. (1971). “The Abstraction of Linguistic Ideas,” *Cognitive Psychology* 2, pp. 331–350.
- Bransford, J., Barclay, J. & Franks, J. (1972). “Sentence Memory: A Constructive vs. Interpretive Approach,” *Cognitive Psychology* 3, 193–209.
- Braun, D. (1993). “Empty Names,” *Nous* 27, pp. 449–469.
- Elugardo, R. & Stainton, R. (forthcoming). “Grasping Objects and Contents,” In A Barber (ed.) *Epistemology of Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Elugardo, R. & Stainton, R. (2001). “Logical Form and the Vernacular,” *Mind Language* 16, pp. 393–424.
- Evans, G. (1982). *The Varieties of Reference*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Everett, A. (2000). “Referentialism and Empty Names,” in Everett & Hofweber (eds.) pp. 37–60.
- Everett, A. (2003). “Empty Names and ‘Gappy’ Propositions,” *Philosophical Studies* 116, pp. 1–36.

- Everett, A. (Manuscript b). "Empty Names, Truth Conditions, and Propositions."
- Everett, A. & Hofweber (eds.) (2000). *Empty Names, Fiction, and the Puzzles of Non-Existence*. Stanford: CSLI Press.
- Grice, H. (1989). *Studies in the Ways of Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kripke, S. (1972). "Naming and Necessity," In D. Davidson & G. Harman (eds.) *Semantics and Natural Language*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Recanati, F. (1993). *Direct Reference: From Language to Thought*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Schiffer, S. (1996). "Language-Created Language-Independent Entities," *Philosophical Topics* 24, pp. 149–167.
- Stich, S. (1983). *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science: The Case Against Belief*. Cambridge, MA: MIT/Bradford.
- Taylor, K. (2000). "Emptiness without Compromise," in Everett & Hofweber (eds.) pp. 17–36.