Propositions, Meaning and Names

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ABSTRACT

The object of this paper is to sketch an approach to propositions, meaning and names. The key ingredients are a Twin-Earth-inspired distinction between internal and external meaning, and a middle-Wittgenstein-inspired conception of internal meaning as role in language system. The focus here is not on working out all the details, but on outlining the approach and showing how it offers a promising solution to the problem of the meaning of proper names. This is a plea for a neglected way of thinking about these topics.

Keywords: Propositions, meaning, proper names.

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In Section 1, I will explain in a preliminary way what I mean by 'proposition' and situate my project with respect to other projects in philosophy which give a central place to the word 'proposition'. In Section 2, I will be more specific about what I mean by 'proposition', occasioning some methodological remarks as well. In Section 3, I will separate two aspects of linguistic meaning, internal and external. In this I am guided by Putnam's Twin Earth thought experiment. In Section 4, I will further develop the notion of internal meaning using the notion of a role in a language system. In this I am guided by Wittgenstein (his middle period especially). By way of further explanation I will compare and contrast my notion of internal meaning with certain ideas associated with the phrases 'conceptual role semantics' and 'narrow content'. In Section 5, I will say a bit more about external meaning. In Section 6, I will apply my account of internal meaning to names. (Another application, which I won't

pursue here, might be to apriority: it seems characteristic of *a priori* knowable propositions that you can't coherently depict a situation in which a proposition with the same internal meaning gets a different truth-value.)

1. Preliminary Explanation

By 'proposition' I mean, roughly, a declarative sentence in meaningful use.[1] Thus I consider propositions to be linguistic items which have semantic properties. They can be true, false, and be about things.

It is a commonplace that 'sentence' is type/token ambiguous; using it the type way, we say that this:

Snow is white.

and this:

Snow is white.

are *instances* of a sentence - the same sentence. Using 'sentence' the token way, we say that each of the things I drew your attention to *is* a sentence. It is useful to use 'proposition' ambiguously in this way also (disambiguating when necessary).

Using 'proposition' the token way, we can say literally that propositions come out of people's mouths, get written in ink, are heard and seen, etc.

Now for some negative points about what sort of account of propositions I am going to sketch.

No stance taken on the "primary truth-bearer" issue. Some authors have discussed and taken positions on an issue about what the *primary bearers* of properties like truth and falsity

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[1] My usage differs from another kind of usage, more common in present day analytic philosophy, according to which sentences *express* propositions and sentences in different languages can express the same proposition. (I of course can say that two propositions mean the same.) While my usage is not the most common within analytic philosophy nowadays, it has ample historical precedent and a good deal else to recommend it.

are.[2] Some, for instance, may allow that the things I call 'propositions' can be said to possess properties like truth, falsity, necessity, contingency, and the like, but maintain that they possess these properties derivatively. Others may maintain that the things I call 'propositions' are the primary bearers, and that other things, for instance beliefs, possess these properties derivatively. I am not taking a stance on any such issue. I am not even taking a stance on whether it is an intelligible issue.

My use of 'proposition' not functional or role-based. Some authors begin with the roles that propositions are to play, and then propose theories about what sort of thing propositions should be taken to be. This is particularly clear when the word 'proposition' is introduced by means of the stipulation that it is to apply to the things, if there are any, which play, or best play, the nominated roles.[3] I have no objection to such a practise, but it is not what I am doing here. Rather, I am *specifying directly* what sort of thing I mean by 'proposition', and then sketching an account of that sort of thing.

No theoretical stance on belief-reports or "propositional attitudes". Philosophers sometimes want the things they call 'propositions' to play a role in explaining the meaning of belief-reports like 'Smith believes that Jones is in town' - and perhaps in explaining, in turn, the things we explain with such reports, such as the behaviour of people. For instance, some defend the idea that belief-reports ascribe a relation, that of believing, which holds between agents and the things they call 'propositions'. Belief is sometimes called a 'propositional attitude', and sometimes other such attitudes are proposed, such as desire and fear (and there is debate about whether this is appropriate). I am not here taking a stance on any of these topics.

However things are, it would be hard to deny that connections exist between what I call 'propositions' and the topics of belief-reports, "propositional attitudes" and the like. Indeed, some of the interest of what I have to say may depend on that being the case. But I am not trying to elucidate those connections here.

2. Being More Specific

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[2] For a book-length study of this issue see Rojszczak (2005). For a more recent treatment of the issue see Hanks (2014). Mosteller (2014, p. 110) shows how Russell's views went back and forth on this issue. Haack (1978, p. 73) argues that debate about it has been 'neither very conclusive nor very fruitful'.

[3] Two clear examples of this are McGrath (2014, Intro.) and Smith (2016, pp. 84 - 85).

In the initial gloss above, I said that by 'proposition' I mean, roughly, a declarative sentence in meaningful use. But this is not quite right, since declarative sentences can be given non-propositional meaningful uses. For example, they may be used performatively (e.g. 'I pronounce you man and wife'). Perhaps another problem with this gloss is that signs which we are not inclined to call 'declarative sentences' may be used propositionally (more on 'propositionally' below).

One way of improving on the initial gloss might be to swap in, for the notion of a declarative sentence, something more tailor-made. For example, Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus* (3.12) wrote:

> The sign through which we express the thought I call the propositional sign. And the proposition is the propositional sign in its projective relation to the world.

Or, we could supplement the 'in meaningful use' part, and say that a proposition is any sign whatever in this kind of use. I will pursue this latter course.

So, we want to supplement 'in meaningful use' so that it applies in all and only cases of things we want to call 'propositions'. 'Propositional' is a good word for this - we can say that a proposition is a sign 'in meaningful propositional use'. We can now drop 'meaningful' too, since all propositional uses are meaningful. But the question now is: what does 'propositional' mean here?

We can say that propositional uses of signs are characterized by the fact that, given such a use, we can ask: is that true or false?

We can say of signs used propositionally that they express claims about how things are. And of course we can give many clear examples of propositional uses of signs, such as this very sentence.

Can we say much more than that? I am inclined to think not. For one thing, I believe that the concept I am trying to convey here is open-textured, i.e. that it is not everywhere definite. Furthermore, I think this is essential to this concept, in the sense that if you "made it definite" you would in fact be replacing it with something else.[4] There is a place in philosophy for

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[4] See Wittgenstein (1953), §59, §65, §68, §71 especially, and §§92 - 137 (§135 especially).

constructing definite concepts corresponding to indefinite ones, but there is also a place for working with and theorizing about indefinite concepts themselves, perhaps refining and elaborating them, but retaining much of their original character, indefiniteness included. We should allow both methods, and here I am mostly using the latter.

3. Internal and External Meaning

The first port of call for the distinction between internal and external meaning is Putnam's famous Twin Earth thought experiment, as given in his (1973) and (1975). It may be that the distinction itself cannot be attributed to Putnam, since it seems he was mainly interested in another lesson which can be drawn from the thought experiment.[5]

Here is the setup of the thought experiment as originally given by Putnam:

> For the purpose of the following science-fiction examples, we shall suppose that somewhere there is a planet we shall call Twin Earth. Twin Earth is very much like Earth: in fact, people on Twin Earth even speak *English*. In fact, apart from the differences we shall specify in our science-fiction examples, the reader may suppose that Twin Earth is *exactly* like Earth. He may even suppose that he has a *Doppelganger* - an identical copy - on Twin Earth, if he wishes, although my stories will not depend on this.

> Although some of the people on Twin Earth (say, those who call themselves "Americans" and those who call themselves "Canadians" and those who call themselves "Englishmen," etc.) speak English, there are, not surprisingly, a few tiny differences between the dialects of English spoken on Twin Earth and standard English.

> One of the peculiarities of Twin Earth is that the liquid called "water" is not H_2O but a different liquid whose chemical formula is very long and complicated. I shall abbreviate this chemical formula simply as XYZ. I shall suppose that XYZ is indistinguishable from water at normal temperatures and pressures. Also, I shall suppose that the oceans and lakes and seas of Twin Earth contain XYZ and not

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[5] Putnam's lesson was that mental states do not determine extension. I am using the Twin Earth thought experiment to help separate out an aspect of meaning, internal meaning, which also does not determine extension (in general), but which is not to be thought of in terms of mental states.

water, that it rains XYZ on Twin Earth and not water, etc. (Putnam (1973), pp. 700 - 701.)

Of course, people have become aware that water is H_2O, and this could be expected to make things here on Earth different in further ways from on Twin Earth. But Putnam has us consider things as they were in 1750, and has us imagine them having been paralleled on Twin Earth (pp. 701 - 702). He has us imagine a particular ordinary speaker from 1750, Oscar, along with his Twin Earth counterpart, Twin Oscar.[6]

That is the setup. I will now take over and use it to distinguish internal and external meaning. I will then consider some worries about the case. Then I will offer a different Twin-Earth-like case, involving individuals rather than stuffs, for which the same worries don't arise, and explain how the case of indexicals further illustrates the distinction.

The meaning of 'water' as Oscar uses it seems to differ in an important respect from the meaning of 'water' as Twin Oscar uses it; the word as Oscar uses it applies to a different stuff from what it applies to as used by Twin Oscar. Similarly, the meaning of a proposition uttered by Oscar containing the word 'water' will differ in an important respect from the meaning of the corresponding proposition uttered by Twin Oscar.

But obviously, there is something in common between Oscar's uses of 'water' and sentences containing it, and Twin Oscar's corresponding uses. And it is not just that they are a bit similar but also a bit different - rather, in virtue of how the case has been set up, they are in an important respect *exactly* the same. The case reveals two different aspects, or factors, in what we pre-theoretically call the 'meaning' of a word or a proposition. I call the factor which is the same for Oscar and Twin Oscar *internal meaning*, and I call the factor which differs *external meaning*.

I will now consider two worries about this case. The first worry is that maybe, especially given that Oscar is from 1750, 'water' as Oscar uses it actually applies to the same stuff (or stuffs) as 'water' in Twin Oscar's mouth, so that both H_2O and XYZ fall under each use. In philosophical jargon, maybe the word should be understood phenomenologically, or functionally, rather than as a natural kind term. That is, maybe it applies to anything that

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[6] Putnam used 'Oscar$_1$' and 'Oscar$_2$' to name them, but it has since become customary to call these characters 'Oscar' and 'Twin Oscar'.

seems watery, or plays a certain role (sustaining life, etc.). My response is that maybe that's right, or closer to the truth, when it comes to 'water', especially as typically used in 1750. That is at least partly an empirical matter. But it need not concern us here: it is enough that we can see a possible meaning for 'water' which behaves in the imagined way.

The second worry is that XYZ - a liquid different from H_2O whose chemical formula is long and complicated - couldn't possibly behave in the same way as H_2O. There may be good scientific reasons for thinking this. My response to this is that, while this may be physically impossible, or impossible in any other number of senses, there is a more unrestricted sense in which it is possible, and that's all that matters for the thought experiment.

Happily, I need not rely entirely on these responses being adequate. We can imagine a different sort of case which does the job, but for which these worries do not arise.

Let us remove the stuff about XYZ from Putnam's setup, and just imagine another planet exactly like Earth. We still have Oscar and Twin Oscar, but the watery stuff on this Twin Earth may as well be the same stuff as here. Now suppose Oscar comes home one day, and someone says 'Oscar's home!', announcing his arrival to the rest of the household. And suppose that exactly the same thing happens with Twin Oscar (remember, 'Twin Oscar' is *our* name for Twin Oscar - in his own life he is called simply 'Oscar'). Now, the two propositions - 'Oscar's home!' here and on Twin Earth - clearly differ in meaning in an important respect. One is about Oscar, and one is about Twin Oscar. The first would have been false if Oscar hadn't come home then, but that can't be said of the second. But again, in another respect, these two propositions are exactly alike in meaning. And not just because they both say, of *someone*, that they are home. There's more to the similarity than that. The word 'Oscar' for both speakers plays an exactly similar role in their speaking and thinking. It is elicited by exactly the same stimuli. Its pattern of use is the same.

Clearly, the two worries that arose in the previous case do not come up here. It cannot reasonably be maintained that in these cases 'Oscar' is used as a kind of general term applying to anyone sufficiently Oscar-like. That's obviously not how names work. The second worry doesn't arise, because no different chemical is being posited.

However, this case has its own downsides, not affecting the 'water' case. One is that it may set off alarm-bells for philosophers sympathetic to, or even just aware of, the Millian view of

proper names according to which they have no meaning, or none except for their referent. That is not an internal problem for my account, since in Section 6 I will be proposing a contrary view of names using the very notion of internal meaning I am introducing here. Still, this is a downside. Another downside has to do with the case relying on being far-fetched in a particular way that isn't as important in the 'water' case: the point of Oscar and Twin Oscar being exactly similar in the 'water' case is just to dramatise the point that all that needs to differ for the overall meaning to differ is the nature of the watery stuff. In the present case on the other hand, it is quite crucial that Oscar and what goes on around him matches Twin Oscar and what goes on around *him*. Since we do not actually ever encounter anything like this situation of exactly similar people leading exactly similar lives, the judgement that 'Oscar's home!' here and on Twin Earth are in a certain respect exactly alike in meaning, while I think it is quite natural, is a judgement about alien territory.

Finally, another sort of case which helps to illustrate the distinction between internal and external meaning is that of indexicals: you and I may use 'you' and 'I' with the same internal meaning, but different external meanings. 'Today' has the same internal meaning from day to day, but its external meaning changes from day to day.

Such is the distinction between internal and external meaning, at least in a preliminary form. Based as it is on an intuitive notion of meaning, it may seem a bit fragile. It will be strengthened in the following sections as I sketch a philosophical account of internal meaning and say a bit more about external meaning.

4. Internal Meanings as Roles in Language Systems

So far we have got a preliminary, intuitive characterization of internal meaning as distinct from external. But it is based on intuitive, unrefined talk of meaning, and our ordinary linguistic practice with 'meaning' and similar words is very multi-faceted. Here I will try to refine the notion of internal meaning, first by abstracting away from some aspects of the ordinary usage of 'meaning', and secondly by offering a positive characterization of what we are interested in.

What I want to abstract away from is, so to speak, incidental mentalistic accompaniments of language. The word 'meaning' is sometimes used to talk about associations and feelings

connected with bits of language. One particularly clear example of this aspect of the use of 'meaning' is the way we say that if you repeat a word over and over it 'loses its meaning'.

Wittgenstein expressed versions of this attitude in various places. For instance, in a lecture in the early 1930's (Wittgenstein (1979), §2):

> The meaning of a word is to be defined by the rules for its use, not by the feeling that attaches to the words.

And in Part I of *Philosophical Grammar*, 'The Proposition and its Sense':

> 44. What interests *us* in the sign, the meaning which matters for us is what is embodied in the grammar of the sign.

> We ask "How do you use the word, what do you do with it" - that will tell us how you understand it.

> Grammar is the account books of language. They must show the actual transactions of language, everything that is not a matter of accompanying sensations.

> In a certain sense one might say that we are not concerned with nuances.

These quotes may help you to understand the account being sketched here, because they express an attitude which is similar with respect to the sort of thing being abstracted away from. But there are important differences too. For instance, in the first quote, the mention of 'rules' does not accurately represent anything about my account. I don't want to say that internal meanings can in general be captured by rules.[7] But the negative part of this quote *is* a fitting expression of the kind of refinement of the ordinary use of 'meaning' I want to make here.

The second quote, considered as a description of the account I want to uphold, may be criticized for making the attitude seem more austere and fixedly coarse-grained than it is. There *is* room for inclusion, under the heading of internal meaning, of what might be called

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[7] You might ask 'How then can they be captured?'. The questions of how, and how fully, internal meanings may be described are interesting questions, but I will not pursue them here.

'nuances', but as Wittgenstein said, it is in a 'certain sense' - not every sense - that one might say that we are not concerned with nuances.

Now to specify what it is we *are* interested in. The leading idea of this section is that the internal meaning of an expression may be regarded as the role it plays in the system of language to which it belongs.[8] [9]

One problem you might have with this formulation is that it mentions this thing, 'the system of language' to which an expression belongs. I take it as beyond dispute that, in some sense, language is systematic - the notion of a system can be applied to it.[10] But what is *the* system to which an expression belongs? Is it something which a speaker can carry around with them? Is it something which can differ from speaker to speaker? Or is it something more universal and public?

I have two things to say in response to this worry. Firstly, having more than one candidate is surely better than not having any. Secondly, perhaps we should think of the notion of internal meaning as being flexible on this point, or coming in different versions corresponding to different ways of thinking about 'the system'. When dealing with some expressions, we may be able to think of 'the system' as something understood and shared by all speakers of the language being used. At the other extreme, when dealing with other expressions, such as proper names or very specialized terms, we may, for some purposes at least, prefer to think

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[8] Compare:

> A name has meaning, a proposition has sense in the calculus to which it belongs. (...)
> I might say: the only thing that is of interest to me is the *content* of a proposition and the content of a proposition is something internal to it. A proposition has its content as part of a calculus.

> The meaning is the role of the word in the calculus. (Wittgenstein (1974), §27, p. 63.)

[9] This is perfectly consistent with the point made above in Section 1 about my use of 'proposition' not being functional or role-based. The point there was that I am specifying directly what sort of thing I mean by 'proposition', rather than outlining a theoretical role and stipulating that 'proposition' is to be used for whatever best satisfies that role. The suggestion here is that the internal meanings of bits of language, including the internal meanings of the things I call 'propositions', be thought of as roles in language systems.

[10] Johnson (2004) argues that language is not systematic, *given* an understanding of systematicity based on the idea of being able to substitute expressions of the same category while preserving grammaticality. The data he presents are interesting and instructive, but needless to say, they do not establish that language is not systematic in the ordinary sense. After all, he proposes counterexamples to systematicity understood in a particular way and expects us to agree, even if we haven't encountered the counterexamples before. It can be said that here he is relying on the systematicity of language in order to prove that language does not have what he calls 'systematicity'.

of 'the system' as something belonging to a small group of people, or a pair of people in a conversation, or even just one person.

Further light can be shed on the notion of 'the system' and the work it is doing here by asking: why not simply say that the internal meaning of an expression is the role it plays *simpliciter*? (Or the role it plays in our lives, or in the world?) To see why not, consider the following example of Wittgenstein's:

> 498. When I say that the orders "Bring me sugar" and "Bring me milk" make sense, but not the combination "Milk me sugar", that does not mean that the utterance of this combination of words has no effect. And if its effect is that the other person stares at me and gapes, I don't on that account call it the order to stare and gape, even if that was precisely the effect that I wanted to produce. (Wittgenstein (1953), §498. Also appears in Wittgenstein (1974), end of §136, p. 188.)

What makes this example so instructive is that it shows us a use of words which is meaningless but not pointless. It has a function, or a role in life, but the string of words in question has no internal meaning because it is not used significantly, or as part of a system of language. Its use is, so to speak, isolated. I hasten to add that the distinction here, between being meaningful and being meaningless yet not pointless, is probably vague - but it is no less real for that.

Another potential worry about the idea of this section concerns propositions (or other units of language) which are likely to be used only once, or some small number of times. It is one thing to think of a single word ('of', 'cat', 'description'), or a phrase ('the point is', 'no pun intended', 'plumb the depths'), or a short and often-repeated proposition ('The sky is blue', '3 x 4 = 12') as playing a role in a system, but what about a proposition like the one at the beginning of this paragraph ('Another potential worry […]')? It can seem a bit odd to speak of such a proposition as playing a role in a system. I accept that there is a slight oddity here, and that there may be important things to note in this connection, but I don't think it vitiates the account. We can maintain that the proposition at the start of this paragraph plays a role in a language system, even though this role only ever opens up and gets played in the context of this part of this paper - especially if we are ready to allow that this is a somewhat extended, special use of the notion of 'playing a role'.

I have now said something about internal meaning - that an expression's internal meaning may be regarded as the role it plays in the system of language to which it belongs - and given an indication of what work is being done by the reference to the system of language.

I will now try to clarify my notion of internal meaning further by saying more about what it is not.

To begin with: it is no part of my account that the roles I speak of can properly be thought of as being constituted just by inferential relationships between bits of language. So this is not a form of inferentialism. Also, it is no part of my account that the roles I speak of can be captured in explicit rules of usage. I am wary of overly reductive accounts of the role an expression plays in a language system, or of the language system itself.

Language systems are essentially *open systems* - i.e. it is essential that they have connections to things which aren't symbols, things which aren't part of the apparatus of language. That said, we do not want to count *having H_2O in its extension* and *having Oscar as a referent* as part of the internal meanings of 'water' and 'Oscar' as used in the thought experiments of Section 3.

We are steering between two extremes in our conception of (a role in) a system of language: thinking of it as, so to speak, a disconnected structure, vs. thinking of it as external meaning involving.

Guided by Twin Earth considerations, we can perhaps give a good idea of the *extent* of internal meaning, so to speak, with the following "insensitivity" heuristic: internal meaning is insensitive, at least for a large class of cases, to the numerical identities of the objects being talked about, and to the underlying natures of the objects or stuffs being talked about.

Before further explaining external meaning, let us briefly compare and contrast this notion of internal meaning with two proposals belonging to a cluster of theories in the philosophy of language and mind. Theories in this cluster are versions of what is called 'conceptual role semantics'. (For a recent bibliography on this see Båve (2015).) Seeing how the present notion of internal meaning differs from the notions figuring in these two proposals will help us get a more precise idea of the former. We can find them both in a paper by Ned Block

(1998). We will call the first one *Simple CRS,* and the second one (following Block) *Two-Factor CRS*.

Here is Block's characterization of Simple CRS:

> According to Conceptual Role Semantics ("CRS"), the meaning of a representation is the role of that representation in the cognitive life of the agent, e.g. in perception, thought and decision-making. (Block (1998), Abstract.)

What is being said here about 'the meaning of a representation' is strikingly similar to what I say about the internal meaning of an expression. One difference is that the 'role' being referred to is characterized more psychologically and less linguistically than in my account of internal meaning. But this difference is minor compared to the one which emerges when Block writes that

> CRS supplements external use by including the role of a symbol *inside* a computer or a brain. (Block (1998), Abstract.)

So, the notion of 'conceptual role' Block is working with here differs from mine not just in being cashed out in more psychological terms, but also in being exclusively about what is internal to an agent. (For me the 'internal' in 'internal meaning' means 'internal to language', not 'internal to a person'.)

Another difference is that Simple CRS is put forward as an account of 'the meaning' of a representation - not just one aspect of meaning, as in my account. But Block goes on to consider a challenge to Simple CRS - Putnam's Twin Earth thought experiment, which we used above to distinguish internal from external meaning - and describes Two-Factor CRS, a view designed to overcome it:

> Putnam (1975) raised what might seem to be a powerful objection to any CRS. He pointed out that many "natural kind concepts," such as *water* and *gold*, depend in part for their meaning upon something other than the role of a representation in a person's head, namely upon what happens to be in their external environment. (...) Some proponents of CRS have responded by favoring a "two-factor" version of CRS. On this view, meaning consists of an internal, "narrow" aspect of meaning - which is

handled by functional roles that are within the body - and an external referential/truth-theoretic aspect of meaning, which might handled by some of the other metaphysical theories of meaning (e.g. a causal one) that we mentioned earlier. According to the external factor, 'Superman flies' and 'Clark Kent flies' are semantically the same since Superman = Clark Kent; the internal factor is what distinguishes them. But the internal factor counts 'Water is more greenish than bluish' as semantically the same in my mouth as in the mouth of my twin on Twin Earth. In this case, it is the external factor that distinguishes them. (Block (1998), §3.)

This version of CRS shares a further similarity with my notion of internal meaning: the desire to separate two factors of meaning such that one factor - the internal factor - is the same for expressions here and their Twin Earth counterparts. But the bit about 'within the body' is no part of my account. The internal factor Block has in mind here, or a mental-state based analogue of it, has been called 'narrow content' and discussed in the philosophy of mind. As the introduction to Brown's (2011) encyclopedia article on 'Narrow Mental Content' says:

> A *narrow* content of a particular belief is a content of that belief that is completely determined by the individual's intrinsic properties. An *intrinsic* property of an individual is a property that does not depend at all on the individual's environment.

Again, my notion of internal meaning, unlike 'narrow content' and Block's notion of conceptual role, is not about what is intrinsic to an agent. It goes beyond that, and what goes on inside the brain is not emphasized. Indeed, it is tempting to say that that is in a certain sense irrelevant from our point of view. In this, my notion of internal meaning is closer to Wittgenstein than the notion of conceptual role used in Two-Factor CRS.

5. External Meaning Further Explained

Based on the intuitive introduction of the distinction between internal and external meaning given in Section 3, it would be natural to think of external meaning as being something like extension. After all, that is the most obvious thing which differs in the cases used: in the first case 'water' has a different extension here from what it has on Twin Earth, and similarly, in the second case 'Oscar' refers to one man here and a different man on Twin Earth.

In most cases, you won't go far wrong thinking of it this way. But it's not quite right. This is shown by cases where a term happens to lack extension. For instance, Oscar might be out walking on a misty night and fancy he has seen a shrouded figure, when in fact no one was there. He might introduce the name 'Enigma', intending for it to refer to the figure he believes he has seen. Suppose that exactly the same thing happens with Twin Oscar. Now, we want to distinguish semantically between 'Enigma' here and on Twin Earth, and between propositions here containing 'Enigma' and the corresponding propositions on Twin Earth. But we can't say that the difference here lies in the extension of 'Enigma', because both names are alike as regards extension - neither refers to anything. The difference is, so to speak, that they *aim* at different places, although neither hits anything.

So, our concept of the external aspect of meaning must include this. 'Enigma' here has a different external meaning from 'Enigma' on Twin Earth. We might say that the external meaning of an expression involves, at least in a large range of cases, the *external projective relations* it bears to the world.[11]

This raises delicate questions about how exactly our notion of external meaning is to work. What about expressions whose internal meaning determines their extension? For example, expressions like '4', 'is an even number', and perhaps 'the property of happiness'. (This talk of 'determining extension' may be equivocal, not least of all because 'extension' may be equivocal, but we won't go into that here.) Should we say they have external meaning, but don't bear any external projective relations to the world? Or should we say they have no external meaning? I propose that it is most convenient to go the former way and think of what I call 'external meaning' as involving any extensions of the expression and subexpressions involved (so that John himself is involved in the external meaning of, not just 'John', but 'John runs'), together with any external projective relations the expression and subexpressions involved bear to the world. Thus there will be cases where an expression's external meaning involves just extension ('4', '2 + 2 = 4'), cases where it involves just external projective relations ('Enigma'), and cases where it involves both ('Oscar', 'water', 'Oscar's home!'). (There also seem to be cases where we have neither. Perhaps the right thing to say about 'yes' or 'hello' for example, is that these words, in their primary use at least, have no external meaning.)

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[11] This jargon is adapted from the *Tractatus* 3.12, where Wittgenstein says that a proposition is 'a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world'. Since in the *Tractatus* the 'projective relation' is the only component besides the sign, whereas I have the sign, internal meaning, *and* external projective relations, it seems reasonable to suppose that the Tractarian notion of projective relations may have covered more than is covered by my notion of external projective relations.

6. Names

A major question about proper names in the philosophy of language is:

(N) Do proper names have meaning, and if so, what does the meaning of a proper name consist in?

The account of meaning being sketched here, applied to names, yields an answer to (N) which offers satisfying and elegant solutions to problems which other answers struggle with.

There are two classic types of answer to (N): Frege-Russell descriptivism and Millianism. I will now rehearse these, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. Then I will put forward my answer, and show how it combines the strengths of both while avoiding the weaknesses. But first, a word on the dialectical situation is in order. There are sophisticated descendants of Frege-Russell descriptivism[12] and sophisticated versions of Millianism[13]. Sophisticated Millians have in my view made a good case against the views of sophisticated descriptivists, and vice versa. So - going with the thrust of both of sets of criticisms, without trying to add substantially to either - my starting point here is that it is time to consider another approach.[14]

Frege held that names can have two aspects of meaning: sense and reference.[15] The referent, if the name has one, is the object to which it refers. Its sense, Frege held, was a *mode of presentation* (Frege (1892), p. 26). Frege seems to have held that senses are, or can (at least sometimes) be given by, definite descriptions. He writes things like this, for example:

> In the case of an actual proper name such as 'Aristotle' opinions as to the sense may differ. It might, for instance, be taken to be the following: the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. (Frege (1892), p. 27, f.n. 2.)[16]

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[12] Such as Dummett (1973, p. 110), Jackson (1998), Nelson (2002), or Chalmers (2004).
[13] Such as Salmon (1986), Soames (1987, 1989, 1990, 2002), Fine (2007), or Båve (2008).
[14] Compare Fine (2007, p. 37): 'Current philosophical thinking on Frege's puzzles has reached an impasse'.
[15] Regarding 'aspects of meaning': here I am describing Frege's view in my terms.
[16] The page reference is to the original German publication. The translation is Max Black's.

Russell held that names - at least ordinary proper names, which are our topic here - are disguised definite descriptions:

> We may even go so far as to say that, in all such knowledge as can be expressed in words, with the exception of "this" and "that" and a few other words of which the meaning varies on different occasions - no names in the strict sense occur, but what seem like names are really descriptions (Russell (1919), p. 178, 'Descriptions'.)

These two answers to (N) share some great strengths. They offer solutions to the following puzzles:

(1) How can a true identity statement[17] of the form '*a* is *b*' differ in meaning from the corresponding '*a* is *a*'?

(2) How can a true negative existential proposition '*a* does not exist' have a meaning at all?

(3) How can different true negative existential propositions involving names differ in meaning?

Frege-style solution to (1): a true identity statement of the form '*a* is *b*' can differ in meaning from the corresponding '*a* is *a*', because while '*a*' and '*b*' will have the same referent, they can differ in sense, leading to a difference in meaning between the propositions.

Russell-style solution to (1): a true identity statement of the form '*a* is *b*' can differ in meaning from the corresponding '*a* is *a*', because '*a*' and '*b*' may be different disguised descriptions.

Frege-style solution to (2): '*a* does not exist' can be true and have a meaning, because while the name '*a*' will lack reference in that case, it can still have sense.

Russell-style solution to (2): '*a* does not exist' can be true and have a meaning, since in that case it will be a disguised proposition of the form 'The so-and-so does not exist'. (If puzzlement persists, i.e. if it seems problematic that a true proposition of the form 'The so-and-so does not exist' can have a meaning while 'The so-and-so' lacks reference, then

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[17] Statements are just propositions, but I use 'identity statement' instead of 'identity proposition' because the former is a familiar linguistic unit in discussions of these issues.

we can go on to apply Russell's theory of descriptions and analyze this in turn as saying that it is not the case that there is exactly one so-and-so.[18])

Frege-style solution to (3): True negative existentials involving names can differ in meaning from one another because the names involved can have different senses.

Russell-style solution to (3): True negative existentials involving names can differ in meaning from one another because the names involved can be different disguised descriptions.

However, these two answers to (N) also share some serious weaknesses. This was forcefully argued by Kripke in *Naming and Necessity*. In rehearsing Kripke's arguments I will for ease of exposition stick to Russell's version of descriptivism, just because of its clear implication that ordinary proper names are synonymous with definite descriptions. (Nothing extra about disguise or abbreviation is relevant to the weaknesses.) Frege's version is a little more open to interpretation, and whether the arguments apply equally to Frege's view of names may perhaps be doubted, but it is hard to escape the conclusion that the view of sense and reference suggested by his writings, particularly (1892), is vulnerable here.[19]

Kripke's modal argument.[20] Kripke pointed out that names are *rigid designators*. When we describe counterfactual scenarios using names which have a reference in the actual world, those names always designate, with respect to those counterfactual scenarios, the same object: the object that they actually designate. Definite descriptions, on the other hand, can designate different objects with respect to different counterfactual scenarios. 'The teacher of Alexander' designates, with respect to counterfactual scenarios in which someone else taught Alexander, whoever *that* was, rather than Aristotle. This difference is reflected in the fact that 'Had things gone differently, Aristotle might not have been the teacher of Alexander' has a true reading, while 'Had things gone differently, Aristotle might not have been Aristotle'

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[18] This is just a handy way of summing up the way Russell would analyze such a proposition, not the full analysis, which does not contain a word for 'exactly' and which makes use of scope distinctions.
[19] Jeff Speaks navigates this matter well in a course handout:
> Russell explicitly claimed that the meanings of proper names were equivalent to the meanings of descriptions associated with those names by speakers, and Frege consistently uses definite descriptions in explaining the sense of proper names, which indicates that he thought that there was some very close relationship between the sense of names and the sense of descriptions. (http://www3.nd.edu/~jspeaks/courses/mcgill/415/kripke-descriptivism.html, last accessed: 1 June 2018.)
[20] See Kripke (1980, pp. 48 - 49, 71 - 77).

does not (at least, none corresponding to what the first sentence means on *its* nearest-to-hand true reading).[21]

Kripke's epistemic argument.[22] If a name like 'Aristotle' were synonymous with some definite description - suppose it's 'the teacher of Alexander' - then the proposition 'If Aristotle exists, Aristotle is the teacher of Alexander' would be analytic and therefore knowable *a priori*. But it is not, so the name 'Aristotle' cannot be synonymous with 'the teacher of Alexander'.

Kripke's semantic argument.[23] If a description we associated with a proper name turned out not to apply to the object we thought it applied to, we would not ordinarily conclude that the name designates, not the object we thought it did, but the object which actually satisfies the description. Kripke's main example is known as 'the Gödel-Schmidt case': suppose we associate with the name 'Kurt Gödel' the description 'the prover of the incompleteness of arithmetic'. Now, if it turned out that Gödel actually stole the proof from someone else, Schmidt, and passed it off as his own, we would not conclude that 'Kurt Gödel' designates Schmidt, so 'Kurt Gödel' is not synonymous with 'the prover of the incompleteness of arithmetic'.[24]

Frege-Russell descriptivism faces some more direct intuitive difficulties as well. You might say:

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[21] One neo-descriptivist response to this argument, found in Dummett (1973, pp. 110 - 151), is to hold that a name's associated description must always take wide scope, so that 'Necessarily, *a* is F', if we associate the description 'the G' with '*a*', gets analyzed as 'The G is such that, necessarily, it is F' rather than as 'Necessarily, the G is F'. Kripke argues against this in the preface to the second edition of *Naming and Necessity* (Kripke (1980, pp. 13 - 14), complaining that this privileging of a wide scope reading is 'unaccountabl[e]', and pointing out that, in any case, we could always just utter '*a* is F' and then say 'What that sentence expresses could not have failed to be the case'. Another neo-descriptivist response to this argument is to 'rigidify' the descriptions they appeal to using an 'actually' operator (see Jackson (1998b)), or Kaplan's 'dthat' operator (see Kaplan (1978), Chalmers (1996)). The rigidification strategy is criticized extensively in Soames (2002, Chapter 2), along with further criticism of the wide scope strategy already discredited by Kripke.
[22] See Kripke (1980, pp. 78, 86 - 87).
[23] See Kripke (1980, pp. 78 - 85).
[24] Neo-descriptivists have generally focused more on Kripke's modal argument than on the epistemic or semantic arguments, but they have responded to these latter by offering more sophisticated descriptive contents, or opting for a more attenuated connection between names and descriptions. Chalmers pursues this last strategy, suggesting that, while his view could be thought of as a 'highly attenuated form of descriptivism', he prefers calling it 'two-dimensionalism' and sees it as a distinct, but still Frege-inspired, view. (Chalmers (2006), p. 3.) For another response to the semantic argument appealing to a minimal notion of linguistic competence see Stanley (1999).

'When you have named an object as a preliminary to saying something about it, you haven't, just by naming it, already said anything about it - haven't yet *described* it at all. You have just *picked it out*.'

Now, a Frege-Russell descriptivist can agree with this, by maintaining that it is only by using a complete sentence that you can say something. But the core of this objections remains. Suppose you do utter a complete sentence beginning with a name, and thus end up saying something. While the Frege-Russell descriptivist can maintain that, when you had just said the name, you hadn't yet said anything, it would seem that they cannot agree that the name, *in the context of the whole sentence*, just picks an object out without describing it.[25]

'It sounds funny to ask "What does 'John' mean?".'[26]

This is puzzling for Fregean descriptivism, which would seem to suggest that this question can be answered by specifying the sense of the name (and thereby any reference as well) using a definite description. Likewise for Russellian descriptivism, which would seem to suggest that this question can be answered by giving the undisguised description that 'John' is a disguised version of. (You might think that there is a way to avoid this puzzle by appealing to the fact, certainly admitted by Frege, that in ordinary language people's senses don't always match up - that they use expressions with different senses, something which

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[25] Compare this passage from Kripke's 'Identity and Necessity':

At least if one is not familiar with the philosophical literature about this matter, one naively feels something like the following about proper names. First, if someone says "Cicero was an orator," then he uses the name 'Cicero' in that statement simply to pick out a certain object and then to ascribe a certain property to the object, namely, in this case, he ascribes to a certain man the property of having been an orator. If someone else uses another name, such as, say, 'Tully', he is still speaking about the same man. One ascribes the same property, if one says "Tully is an orator," to the same man. So to speak, the fact, or state of affairs, represented by the statement is the same whether one says "Cicero is an orator" or one says "Tully is an orator." It would, therefore, seem that the function of names is simply to refer, and not to describe the objects so named by such properties as "being the inventor of bifocals" or "being the first Postmaster General." (Kripke (2011), p. 5.)

[26] Compare:

One response is to insist that proper names do indeed have meaning (...). But this seems strange. One does not find them in the dictionary, and the question 'What does "David" mean?' sounds confused. (Whiting (2016), 4.b.)

(What the response is a response to doesn't matter here.) Incidentally, the claim that names don't appear in the dictionary appears to be false. For instance, the current (June 2018) Merriam-Webster dictionary has an entry for 'France', and even one for 'Aristotle'. (The latter entry just gives his dates and says 'Greek philosopher'.) And that names don't *all* appear in the dictionary is not a serious problem for the idea that they have meaning. After all, people certainly use expressions which are not names, and which clearly have meanings, despite not appearing in dictionaries. Think of technical expressions, and expressions confined to close-knit groups or pairs of people.

wouldn't be allowed in a proper scientific language, but manage to get on anyway because the senses determine the same reference. But 'What does "John" mean *in your usage*?' sounds even stranger than 'What does "John" mean?'.)

Now, let us compare Millianism. Millianism may be regarded as the thesis that proper names have no meaning, or it may be regarded as the thesis that the meaning of a proper name is just its referent, if it has one. Both versions entail that a proper name has no meaning beyond its referent. (According to the "no meaning" version this will be true *a fortiori*.)[27]

One great strength of Millianism is its compatibility with, indeed its implication or near-implication of, Kripke's insight that proper names are rigid designators; if there's nothing to the meaning of a proper name beyond its referent, then of course it will designate that same referent with respect to any counterfactual scenario, as long as that referent exists in that scenario.

Millianism, at least given the plausible assumption that 'the teacher of Alexander' *does* have a meaning beyond its referent, correctly predicts that 'Had things gone differently, Aristotle might not have been the teacher of Alexander' differs in meaning from 'Had things gone differently, Aristotle might not have been Aristotle'. So the fact that the first is naturally read as true and the second is naturally read as trivially false is no problem for Millianism.

Millianism is also free from descriptivism's epistemic problem - it doesn't wrongly imply that a proposition like 'Aristotle is the teacher of Alexander' is analytic and therefore *a priori* - and it avoids the semantic problem, suggesting the right answer in the Gödel-Schmidt case: finding out that Schmidt and not Gödel proved the incompleteness of arithmetic wouldn't make us think that 'Gödel' designates Schmidt, and that is just what Millianism would suggest, since according to Millianism 'Gödel' has no meaning beyond Gödel himself.

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[27] J.S. Mill held two theses about names which for him were intimately related. (1) That they denote but do not connote, i.e. do not 'indicate or imply any attributes as belonging to' their referents. This is supported with the famous Dartmouth argument. (See Mill (1843, I, ii, §5, p. 20).) (2) That they have no 'meaning' or 'signification'. (See Mill (1843, p. 21).) As we are understanding Millianism here, and as it is commonly understood in contemporary philosophy, it is (2) that constitutes (the "no meaning" version of) Millianism. (1) all by itself does not imply Millianism as understood here; the view of names I propose, which contradicts Millianism, is compatible with (1). An expression may not indicate or imply any attributes, but still have a meaning (beyond any referent it may have). I am not taking a position on (1) in this paper.

Finally, Millianism comports well with the intuitive thoughts about naming expressed above. To review:

'When you have named an object as a preliminary to saying something about it, you haven't, just by naming it, already said anything about it - haven't yet *described* it at all. You have just *picked it out*.'

That is exactly what Millianism predicts. How could you say something about an object just by using its name, if that name has no meaning beyond the object?[28]

'It sounds funny to ask "What does 'John' mean?".'

This is no problem for Millianism. Obviously, the no-meaning version of Millianism is in an especially good position here: if we hold that thesis, we can reply 'Of course it sounds funny - "John" doesn't have a meaning.' The meaning-is-the-referent version is, while perhaps less glaringly free from this problem, also without cause for embarrassment. After all, if we were asking for a specification of the *referent* of a man's name, we wouldn't say 'What', but 'Who'.

So Millianism is strong just where descriptivism is weak. But the reverse is also true. For Millianism, puzzles (1) - (3) above are serious problems.

(1) How can a true identity statement of the form '*a* is *b*' differ in meaning from the corresponding '*a* is *a*'?

In responding to this question, a defender of Millianism could either deny the presupposition of the question, that such propositions can differ in meaning, or accept that they can and try to reconcile it with Millianism. Both options are problematic. The first option[29] is problematic chiefly because it just does seem that a true identity statement of the form '*a* is *b*' can differ in meaning from the corresponding '*a* is *a*'. 'Clark Kent is Superman' seems to mean something different from 'Clark Kent is Clark Kent'. This seems so basic that any sophisticated theoretical attempts to deny it are bound to be suspicious. (It is one thing to

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[28] You might feel that this raises another issue, on which Millianism fares worse than Frege-Russell descriptivism: the issue of how reference is determined. If so, see Objection 1 to my answer to (N) below, and the reply.

[29] See Salmon (1986), Soames (1987, 1989, 2002), and Båve (2008). These authors attempt to explain away the anti-Millian appearances by means of pragmatic considerations, making especial use of Grice's notion of conversational implicature (see Grice (1989)).

develop a theoretical account of names which uses 'meaning' in such a way that 'Clark Kent is Superman' and 'Clark Kent is Clark Kent' are said to 'mean the same', and uses other language to describe the difference, but it seems reasonable to think that any such theory must be using 'meaning' and the like in a specialized sense, and *not* in the intuitive sense it is used in in the question (N).)

The second option[30] - accepting the meaning-difference and trying to reconcile it with Millianism - is problematic, because the salient difference between 'Clark Kent is Clark Kent' and 'Clark Kent is Superman' is that the second proposition contains a different name. The natural thing to do is to lay the difference in meaning between the two propositions at the door of the different names: 'Superman' differs in meaning from 'Clark Kent', leading to a difference of meaning in the two propositions. The contrary idea, that the names have, if any meaning at all, exactly the same meaning, but that the two propositions differ in meaning anyway, seems unnatural and mysterious.

(2) How can a true negative existential proposition '*a* does not exist' have a meaning at all?

Millianism has trouble here, since if '*a* does not exist' is true, then '*a*' has no referent, and according to Millianism it must therefore have no meaning. But it seems to be making a crucial contribution to the meaning of the proposition. Denying that such apparent propositions have meanings is implausible. Accepting that they have meanings despite the names in them not having meanings makes it unclear how such propositions are supposed to work, and what the names are doing in them. This may lead to attempts to give an analysis of such propositions, unpacking them into a different construction. But such analyses face serious difficulties.[31] Secondly, it may be questioned whether such analyses, even if they did work, actually put Millianism in the clear: if we have a kind of analysis which yields different propositions for different inputs of the form '*a* does not exist', depending on what goes in place of '*a*', isn't it for that very reason problematic to say that the names which go in the '*a*' position lack meaning?[32]

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[30] See Fine (2007). A drawback of Fine's account, pointed out in a review by Ostertag (2009, p. 348), is that it does not offer an analogous solution to what Ostertag calls 'the monadic form of Frege's Puzzle': 'Tully was an orator' and 'Cicero was an orator' are not, in Fine's account, counted as saying different things.

[31] See the last chapter of Kripke (2013).

[32] I am not aware of an existing source for this (proto-)objection. This is not the place to develop it, but to do so might be worthwhile.

(3) How can different true negative existential propositions involving names differ in meaning?

For Millianism, this question just compounds the two sorts of difficulty we saw above.

Let us now see how the present account of internal and external meaning, when applied to names, yields a view which has all of the above strengths of Frege-Russell descriptivism and of Millianism, and none of the weaknesses. This view, I will argue, combines the meaning-conferring and difference-making power of descriptivism, i.e. the ability to solve puzzles (1) - (3), with Millianism's compatibility with names being rigid designators and its invulnerability to Kripke's anti-descriptivist arguments. It also squares well with the intuitive ideas about naming we have been considering.

According to the present account, the answer to (N) is as follows: the meaning of a proper name consists in its external meaning (if it has one[33]) together with its internal meaning, i.e. the role it plays in the language system to which it belongs.

Let us first see how this enables us to solve puzzles (1) - (3) just as satisfyingly as could Frege-Russell descriptivism:

(1) How can a true identity statement of the form '*a* is *b*' differ in meaning from the corresponding '*a* is *a*'?

Solution: the names '*a*' and '*b*' can have different internal meanings - play different roles in the language system to which they belong - leading to a difference in internal meaning between the propositions. (For instance, 'Clark Kent' and 'Superman' play different roles in the language system to which they belong. This is intuitively correct, and it explains how Lois Lane could express surprising knowledge with 'Clark Kent is Superman' but not with 'Clark Kent is Clark Kent'.)

(2) How can a true negative existential proposition '*a* does not exist' have a meaning at all?

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[33] Perhaps a name in mathematics whose putative reference is fixed using a definite description which in fact doesn't and couldn't refer should be thought of as having no external meaning.

Solution: the proposition can have a meaning because, while '*a*' lacks a referent in this case, it can still have an internal meaning, i.e. it can still play a role in its language system.

(3) How can different true negative existential propositions involving names differ in meaning?

Solution: they can differ in meaning because the names involved may differ in internal meaning, i.e. play different roles in their language system, leading to a difference in internal meaning between the propositions.

These solutions seem every bit as straightforward and plausible as those given by Frege-Russell descriptivism. Let us now see how our proposal fares with Kripke's anti-descriptivist arguments.

Modal. Names being rigid designators is perfectly compatible with their playing roles in language systems, and with these roles being an aspect of their meaning. Indeed, the rigid designation thesis gives us information about what sort of role they play; it is part of the sort of role names play that, when we consider counterfactual scenarios, they designate, with respect to those scenarios, the same objects that they actually designate (provided those objects exist in those scenarios). And there is no problem either in the fact that 'Had things gone differently, Aristotle might not have been the teacher of Alexander' has a true reading to which no reading of 'Had things gone differently, Aristotle might not have been Aristotle' corresponds - this can be so because 'Aristotle' and 'the teacher of Alexander' differ in meaning, a fact which is perfectly compatible with the present account.

Epistemic. For a name to play a role in a language system, it does not need to be synonymous with, or otherwise closely tied to, any definite description. Again, 'Aristotle' and 'the teacher of Alexander' differ in meaning, and there is no tendency for the present view to push us toward the implausible claim that a proposition like 'If Aristotle existed, Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander' is analytic, or knowable *a priori*.

Semantic. Again, no problem. If we discovered that Gödel didn't prove incompleteness, but rather Schmidt did, we wouldn't be pushed toward the view that 'Gödel' designates Schmidt, since the role played by 'Gödel' does not make it designate whoever proved completeness - 'Gödel' has a different meaning from 'the prover of incompleteness'.

So Kripke's arguments against descriptivism leave the present account unscathed. What about the intuitive thoughts about names which we saw descriptivism struggle with, and which Millianism handled so well?:

'When you have named an object as a preliminary to saying something about it, you haven't, just by naming it, already said anything about it - haven't yet *described* it at all. You have just *picked it out*.'

This is no problem for the present view. Names having internal meanings, i.e. playing roles in language systems, is perfectly compatible with the idea that just by naming something, you haven't yet described it, but just picked it out. We can agree with this and say: yes, the role a name plays is not that of a description.

'It sounds funny to ask "What does 'John' mean?"'

Just because it sounds funny to ask for the meaning of some expressions, that doesn't mean they don't have meanings. It is natural to construe such a question as asking for a synonymous expression, or a definition - something else which has the same meaning, and which perhaps *unpacks* the meaning of, the expression being asked about. But a proper name can have an internal meaning - play a role in a language system - without it being the case that there is another expression, perhaps a more complex one, which has the same internal meaning. Names, we might say, are in a sense indefinable - and in that case, no wonder the question sounds funny.[34]

I have now indicated how this paper's account of meaning yields an answer to (N) which combines the major strengths of Frege-Russell descriptivism with those of Millianism, while avoiding the major weaknesses of both. I will conclude by responding to some objections.

Objection 1: Your answer to (N) does not give us an account of the determination of reference. This is a major strength of Frege-Russell descriptivism: according to it, the reference of a name is determined by the associated description.

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[34] While I lean toward the idea that names typically are indefinable in this sense, there being a good reply here does not require this. If names were definable but not easily, or not usefully, this would lead us to expect questions as to their meaning to be unusual or even unheard of, at least outside of philosophy. This would suffice to account for our question sounding funny.

Reply: OK, Frege-Russell descriptivism gives you something to say there, and my answer to (N) does not. But, on reflection, we should not think that this gives the former any real edge over the latter. Here are three reasons for thinking it doesn't:

Firstly, the account of the determination of reference provided by Frege-Russell descriptivism seems to give wrong answers, in view of Kripke's Gödel-Schmidt case and similar thought experiments. And surely it is better for an answer to (N) to be silent on some issue than to make mistakes about it.

Secondly, there is no independent reason to think that any good answer to

(N) Do proper names have meaning, and if so, what does the meaning of a proper name consist in?

ought to be able to answer

(D) What determines the reference of a proper name?

They seem to be pretty different questions. Millianism, for all its faults, sets an instructive precedent here. It doesn't by itself give an answer to (D) either.

Thirdly, while my answer to (N) does not answer (D), it presents no special difficulties either. Internal meaning may be held to constrain reference, with other things doing the rest. This seems plausible; a name with the internal meaning of 'Julius Caesar' could never refer to, say, a number. So we might say that internal meaning constrains reference, without (in general) determining it. This leaves at least two options for a straight answer to (D): appeal to internal meaning as part of the story, or go deeper and frame an answer in terms of something which determines both internal meaning and reference. Alternatively, we could question the need for a straight answer and subject the question (D) to scrutiny.

Finally, it is worth noting in this connection that Kripke's causal-historical 'picture'[35] of how reference is determined is compatible with the present view - though I hasten to add that the present view does not require that picture or push us toward it in any special way of its own.

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[35] See Kripke (1980, pp. 88 - 97.)

Objection 2: Your answer to (N) may be able to account for the fact that different true negative existentials can differ in meaning from one another, and it may also differ from Millianism in not creating a special obstacle to their having meanings at all - but still, it does not remove all puzzlement surrounding existence propositions involving proper names.

Reply: I agree that puzzlement may remain, but would suggest that we look for its resolution some place other than in an answer to (N). That said, I think the notion of internal meaning being developed here may be of further use in this connection. Puzzlement about propositions of this sort, in my view, stems from assimilating them with (other) subject-predicate propositions and failing to make sufficient room for them in our taxonomies. By attending to the special sort of role they play in our language systems - i.e. by attending to the sort of internal meaning they have - and letting them be themselves, I think we can resolve the puzzlement. (Kant's famous contention that existence is not a predicate contained a lot of truth in this regard, but its significance needs to be made clearer.)

You might think that existence propositions involving proper names require an analysis - an account which spells out what they mean. But this needs to be considered critically. Analysis, in this sense, is one method in philosophy. Yes, descriptivism, at least in Russell's version,[36] employs that method with these propositions, but as we have seen, it runs into problems elsewhere. Millianism, while it doesn't provide an analysis, pushes one strongly toward thinking that singular existence propositions, and especially their negations, need to be analyzed. They clearly have meaning and can be true and false, and to square this with Millianism, it would seem you need to give some account of what they *really* say. Thus you get into the tortuous territory Kripke tried his best to navigate in the last lecture of *Reference and Existence*. But while these two approaches to names furnish (Russellian descriptivism), or make you need (Millianism), an analysis of existence propositions involving proper names, that doesn't mean we automatically need an analysis no matter what view we take. Once we have a better view of names, we don't need an analysis anymore. We can just attend carefully to how existence propositions work and make room for their peculiarities.

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[36] It is less clear exactly how, or whether, Frege dealt with problems pertaining to negative existentials and empty names.

Objection 3: OK, you may have shown that your answer to (N) outperforms Frege-Russell descriptivism and unsupplemented Millianism on some key issues. But what about <insert here the name of some sophisticated neo-descriptivist proposal, or a supplemented version of Millianism[37]>?

Giving a substantive answer to questions of this form is beyond the scope of this paper. Recall, my starting point here is that such sophisticated versions of descriptivism and Millianism face serious objections, and so it is time to consider another approach.

Also, it is worth mentioning here that what I have said about names may be compatible with some sophisticated versions of descriptivism; my account specifies, at a certain level of abstraction, what the meaning of a proper name consists in, and thus solves the puzzles. So for those puzzles, you don't really need a sophisticated descriptivism. Still, that does not mean such a theory might not have something to offer. Certain forms of descriptivism may be regarded as attempting to model or describe the internal meanings of names. Having said that, I hasten to add that my answer to (N) doesn't require or push us toward this view. It is neutral on the matter.

Objection 4: You may have made your answer to (N) look rather good on paper, but you have been evading the chief difficulty for any approach like yours: how are these things (internal meanings in your case) to be counted? That is, how are they individuated? What is their granularity? When do two expression-occurrences have the same internal meaning? If you cannot give general, principled answers to such questions, your account falls apart and your internal meanings are just a will o' the wisp.

Reply: One way of dealing with this objection would be to go along with the last sentence ('If you cannot…') and try to provide general, principled answers to the questions, or at least good reason to think that such answers are out there to be had. Another way of dealing with it would be to motivate a rejection of the idea behind that last sentence - a rejection of the idea that, if you cannot give general, principled answers to questions about the individuation of meanings, you are in philosophical trouble. I strongly prefer the latter strategy. Quine's influential complaint[38] that meanings lack clear criteria of identity mistook a feature for a bug - semantic granularity is flexible. As I argue in Haze (ms), recognizing this opens up exciting

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[37] For examples of each see f.n. 12 and f.n. 13 above.
[38] See for example Quine (1951, p. 22) and Quine (1970, p. 8).

philosophical prospects. (There seems to be growing recognition of the flexibility of the individuation of meanings, as the appearance of Shapiro (forthcoming) and Bjerring & Schwarz (2017) attests.)

Objection 5: You are not being sufficiently critical of treating the meaning of an expression as a kind of entity. This is what needs to be confronted in our philosophizing about meaning, and instead of doing this, you are just nominating a kind of entity - roles in language systems - to play the role of internal meanings.

Reply: I don't deny that there is a danger of going about things the wrong way at the point we have now reached, and getting into badly-framed lines of inquiry about "the nature of roles". There are battles in this area which this paper leaves unfought - including the battle to clarify what the worry expressed above really amounts to. Still, I think there is value in the proposal that we think of the internal meanings of expressions as roles in language systems. Indeed, part of the value of roles as the "choice of entity" is that our conception of them has shiftiness and flexibility built into it, so to speak. With roles we are ready to be nimble - less inclined to expect certain logical behaviour that we will not find. (Contrast proposals which identify the meanings of propositions with set-theoretic constructions with supposedly clear and unshifting criteria of identity.)

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