

KAPLAN ON DEMONSTRATIVES

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Phil Language

1. Indexicals and demonstratives

Words that refer to different things, depending on the context in which they're used. Demonstratives require a demonstration, e.g. pointing. 'That', 'he', etc. Indexicals don't: 'I', 'now', 'here'.

2. Puzzles about indexicals and demonstratives

They have descriptive meanings but also seem to be rigid designators:

I might not have existed

I might never have spoken

It might have been the case that no one was ever here.

In three hundred years everyone who is now alive will be dead.

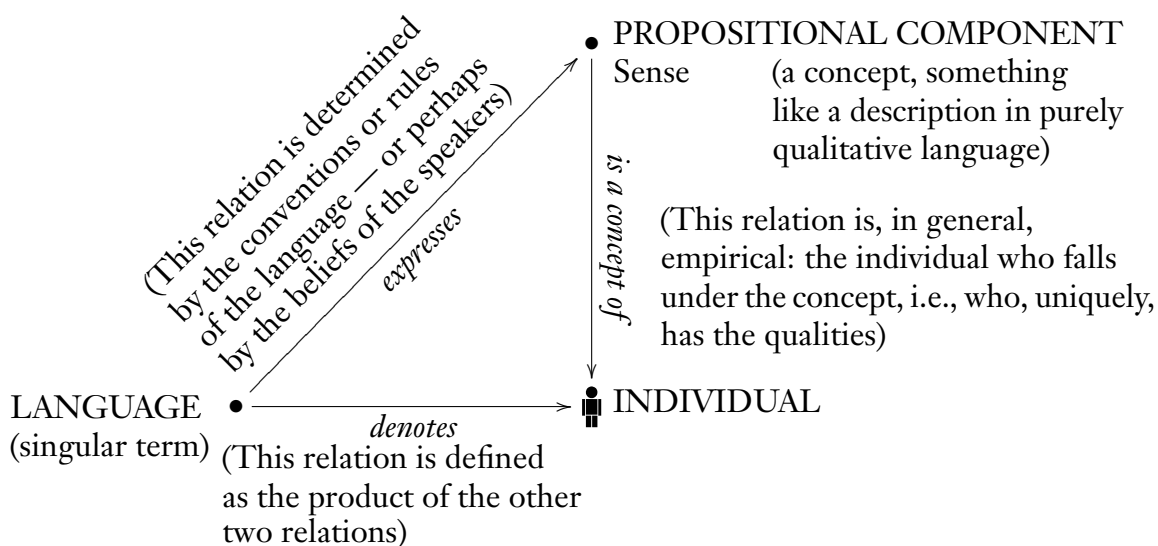
There/that/you/her/he might never have been addressed or pointed at.

3. Direct reference

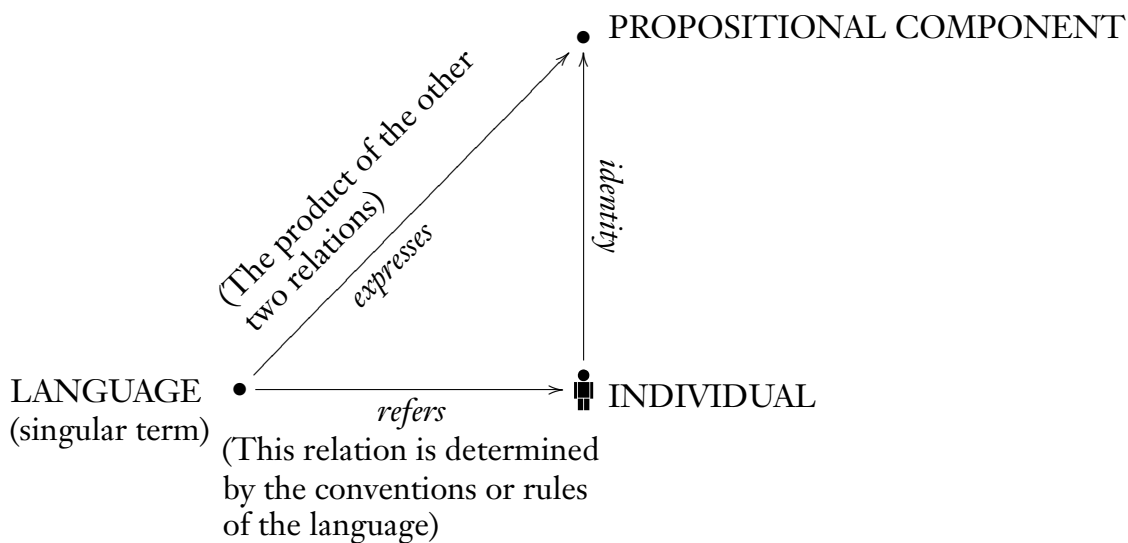
...certain singular terms refer directly without the mediation of a Fregean *Sinn* as meaning. ("Demonstratives", p. 483)

The *propositional contribution* of a directly referential term is not a Fregean sense that determines a referent, but rather the referent itself.

Fregean Picture



Direct Reference Picture



For me, the intuitive idea is not that of an expression which *turns out* to designate the same object in all possible circumstances, but an expression whose semantical *rules* provide *directly* that the referent in all possible circumstances is fixed to be the actual referent. In typical cases the semantical rules will do this only implicitly, by providing a way of determining the *actual* referent and no way of determining any other propositional component. (“Demonstratives”, p. 493.)

4. Singular propositions

If I may wax metaphysical in order to fix an image, let us think of the vehicles of evaluation—the what-is-said in a given context—as propositions. Don’t think of propositions as sets of possible worlds, but rather as structured entities looking something like the sentences which express them. For each occurrence of a singular term in a sentence there will be a corresponding constituent in the proposition expressed. The constituent of the proposition determines, for each circumstance of evaluation, the object relevant to evaluating the proposition in that circumstance. In general, the constituent of the proposition will be some sort of complex, constructed from various attributes by logical composition. But in the case of a singular term which is directly referential, the constituent of the proposition is just the object itself. (“Demonstratives”, p. 494)

5. Circumstances vs. contexts

We should be aware of a certain confusion in interpreting the phrase ‘designates the same object in all circumstances’. We do not mean that the expression *could not have been used* to designate a different object. We mean rather that given a *use* of the expression, we may ask of *what has been said* whether *it* would have been true or false in various counterfactual circumstances, and in such counterfactual circumstances, which are the individuals relevant to determining truth-value. Thus, we must distinguish possible occasions of *use*—which I call *contexts*—from possible circumstances of *evaluation* of what was said on a given occasion of use...A directly referential term *may* designate different objects when used in different *contexts*. But when evaluating what was said in a given context, only a single object will be relevant to the evaluation in all circumstances. (“Demonstratives”, p. 494)

Circumstances of evaluation are possible situations with respect to which a proposition can be true or false. *Contexts* of utterance are possible situations in which one might utter a sentence, and determine which proposition would be expressed by the sentence if it were uttered.

- i) 'I' is directly referential; on any occasion of use its propositional contribution is just its referent (on that occasion of use)
- ii) There is a semantical rule governing 'I' that each competent speaker masters: In each possible context of use it refers to the agent of the context

6. Two kinds of meaning: character and content

According to Kaplan, indexicals have two sorts of meaning.

Content A sentence's content (with respect to a context) is what is said by that sentence (relative to that context)—the proposition it expresses. The content of an expression other than a sentence (with respect to a context) is the propositional contribution it makes (relative to that context).

Character The character of a sentence or other expression is the rule that determines what its content is in any given context. For example, the character of 'I' is the rule that associates with any context whose agent is *a* the object *a*

7. Frege's puzzle again