

Philosophy Paper 108: The Philosophy of Logic and Language

2. Proper Names

How do proper names achieve reference – by association with a definite description, or in some other way? What is meant by a “rigid designator”, and are proper names rigid in this sense? Can a proper name have significance if there is nothing to which it refers, and if so, how?

READING

William G. Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge, second edition 2008), chapters 3 and 4 (read 1 and 2 also if you haven’t already).

This book is being used by the lecturer on Philosophical Logic (Dr Ofra Magidor) as a basis for her course, so it is very helpful to be familiar with it.

Robert M. Martin, *The Meaning of Language* (MIT Press, 1987), chapters 16 and 17

Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny, *Language and Reality* (Blackwell, 1987), chapters 3 and 4

These give useful alternative overviews of the terrain, but don’t feel compelled to read either or both.

Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Reference”, translated by Max Black, *Philosophical Review* 57 (1948), pp. 207-30 and reprinted in Peter Geach and Max Black (eds.), *Translations from the Philosophical writings of Gottlob Frege* (Blackwell, second edition 1960), also in Peter Ludlow (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Language* (MIT Press, 1997).

A classic essay, which we’ll be discussing more later in the course. Be warned that the translation of Frege’s terms “Sinn” and Bedeutung” is controversial – in this translation Black went for “sense” and “reference”, but in the third edition preferred “Meaning” instead of “reference”. Most people continue to use “reference”, because “meaning” is such an ambiguous word (even if it’s closer to the German “Bedeutung”). The main reason for putting the essay in this reading list is that some writers – such as Searle – use Frege’s terms to discuss the issue of proper names, but in fact Searle interprets them rather crudely: for him, the question whether proper names have “sense” comes down essentially to whether proper names refer by means of descriptions.

John R. Searle “Proper Names”, *Mind* 67 (1958), pp. 166-73, reprinted e.g. in P.F. Strawson (ed.), *Philosophical Logic* (Oxford Readings in Philosophy, 1967) and in Peter Ludlow (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Language* (MIT Press, 1997).

Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Blackwell, 1980). First published in Gilbert Harman and Donald Davidson (eds), *Semantics of Natural Language* (Reidel, 1972).

The single most important work on here, massively influential in both Philosophy of Language and Metaphysics.

Gareth Evans, “The Causal Theory of Names”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume* 47 (1973), pp. 187-208, reprinted e.g. in Peter Ludlow (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Language* (MIT Press, 1997).

Tyler Burge, “Reference and Proper Names”, *Journal of Philosophy* 70 (1973), pp. 425-39, reprinted e.g. in Peter Ludlow (ed.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Language* (MIT Press, 1997).