

Philosophy 324A

Philosophy of Logic

2016

Note Eighteen

COMMENTS ON SIMCHEN'S NR

CHAPTER SIX

“Sherlock”

“My name is Sherlock Holmes”

He himself, in “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle” (1892)

1. *Roots of reference*

In previous chapters I ‘ve had more to say about Sherlock the man than about “Sherlock” the name. In the present one, I’ll say something further about the name. In most cases, e.g. that of Laura Secord (1775-1868), the nominatum of a name cannot palpably be presented by the name’s user. What I mean by this is that I wouldn’t be able to invite you to tea with her. When I say that Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 B. C. and was cut down by his assassins five years later, I refer to Caesar by name, but it was not I who made him or made him reference-susceptible. Of course, there are plenty of exceptions. One is the naming of something by the person or persons who made it, polymers for example or, much more commonly, Julius Caesar and all those others who owe their namability and reference-susceptibility to their mums and dads. Kripke was on to something like this in the early 1970s,¹ conceiving of a name’s enduring and identity-preserving referential efficacy as secured by its presence in a historical chain descending from “Julius”’s initial bestowal², which Kripke mistakenly describes as baptism. Names are sometimes given at baptism, but they aren’t bestowed *by* baptism. Infants are baptized under the names they already possess or are concurrently given by their parents at the baptismal

¹ Saul Kripke, “Identity and necessity”, pages 161-191 of the Munitz volume on *Identity and Individuation*; reprinted in Kripke’s *Philosophical Troubles: Collected Papers*, volume 1, pages 1-26, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. “Naming and Necessity: Lectures given to the Princeton University Philosophy Colloquium”, in Gilbert Harman and Donald Davidson, editors, *Semantics of Natural Language*, pages 253-355, with Addenda at pages 763-769, Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972; reprinted with a new preface as *Naming and Necessity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

² I take liberties. Caesar’s full name was “Gaius Julius Caesar”, in which each of the three has a different nominative function. The complexity of Roman names need not detain us here.

font. The Christian rite of baptism is a variation of Tevilah, the Jewish purification ritual of washing in preparation for conversion. In the Roman rite, baptism is a sacrament in which a human soul is cleansed of original sin and admitted to permanent communion within the Mystical Body of Christ. When for reasons of state, a newborn's name is officially registered, the convention used to be that the registered name would be the baptismal name. As with conventional arrangements of all kinds, this was a contingent one.

The Kripkean idea is easily grasped. I owe my use of "Julius Caesar", in which I refer by name to that selfsame emperor-god, to its use by someone I know who knew someone else who owes it to someone else, who owed it to some further one, who . . . , and so on until we get to the head of the chain and link up with Julius's mum and dad on the occasion of their putting that name to that particular referential use. What we have here is a *sayso-chain*. We learn Caesar's name when someone who knows it *tells* it to us. She in turn learned it when someone else made her aware of it, and he in turn of that turn when he too was told it. At the head of the chain we find the first people who ever knew Caesar's name. In a good many cases, they got to know it in the course of bestowing it, which is the act that makes it the case that that is indeed the name they'd given to their newborn son. This too was knowledge by sayso, but was sayso with a difference. The saying that gave Caesar's mom and dad their knowledge of his name was the saying that bestowed it. For the rest of us, the sayso that gives us knowledge of his name is the sayso of knowledge-transmitting telling. The original sayso made it true that "Julius Caesar" was Julius Caesar's name. The others, the reportorial ones, passed knowledge of that truth down the line of history.³

Reference is prior to naming, hence prior to referring by name. Having a name is possible without having it bestowed in any given act of naming. Some parents, we're told, never get around to naming the kiddies, especially the younger ones in large and loosely jointed families. The initial point of reference could be negotiated indexically, as in "What's its sex?" In time, reference might be carried by "our colicky wee bastard", and later by "Colic", and later still by "Mad Dog Col", whose bearer now terrorizes the World Wrestling Entertainment industry. Never once in this referential evolution need there have been anything like an act of authoritative nomination. Let's put it, then, that

- (1) *The reference by name thesis*: The chief value of a thing's having a name – whether acquired or bestowed – is the good that's done by its being subject to recurring and sustainable reference, for as long as the name retains its referential currency.

It is more commonly believed than it should be that Kripke embeds his view of the bestowal and circulation of names in a causal understanding of the historical chain from the initial naming to subsequent referrals by name. It is easy to see in this the accuracy of Kripke's insight regarding the historico part of the historico-causal chain. If the historico part of the attribution is true to Kripke, the causal part is not. In *Naming and Necessity* Kripke says that

³ This, too, is a bit simplified. If I hear you address someone as Saul, I have reason to think that "Saul" is his name. If I am on hand to see the person you're addressing as Saul, I have some first-hand awareness of who your addressee is. He is that well set-up blue-eyed young fellow with the blonde Force Recon haircut. So he is not Saul A. Kripke, whom I also know on sight.

causal chains cannot deliver the referential goods for all the names passed on through history. He also noted that some *bona fide* nominata – π say – are causally unavailable to us. A further point has to do with wandering. “St. Nicholas” wandered from its fourth century’s naming of a bishop to its present day naming of “a mythical immortal elf.”⁴

When we say that π is causally unavailable to us, we sometimes mean that it is physically unavailable. So it is. Pi’s irrationality and transcendence rule out physical contact. We can help measure our acreage with its help π , but we can’t put π in our pocket or use it as a door stop. Pi is an impalpable object, to which we bear real but impalpable relations, some of which are causal. Pi and its like caused Frege no end of foundational worry, which it took his *Habilitation* dissertation to lay to rest. It is open to question whether π was discovered or merely thought-up. It doesn’t much matter for what matters to us. The number π acquired that name in the 18th century, following a much earlier emergence in Babylonian thought in the period from 1900-1600 BC, and in subsequent stirrings in Egypt (\approx 1650 BC) and India (\approx 150 BC). Archimedes provided its first rigorous specification in \approx 250 C. From then until now we have developed a large and fascinating acquaintance with it. As of 2015 AD, its decimal expansion ran to 13 billion digits, with more coming as computational capacities enlarge. In the absence of those reference-preserving historical connections, none of this would have been possible. I mean none of this would have been about what the early Babylonians had cottoned onto in those days of yore.

Should the historical chain have proved entirely reference-preserving, we would have had from antiquity onwards intellectual contact with what “ π ” names. But if we examine in detail the historical line from 1900 BC until now, it can hardly be denied that at various points, the names that named what we now name “ π ” may have started losing mathematical contact with its original nominatum. At some point, we might find it appropriate to say something like this:

- (2) What we now conceptualize as π began its mathematical life as x in Babylon, and emerged as x' in Egypt, became x'' in India, and was more x' -like than x -like in the calculations of Archimedes.⁵

That Santa started out as a gift-giving bishop of Myra and is now the jolly old gent who spreads greedy joy at Christmas is no different. If you are four years old at Christmastide 2018, you’ll know who “Santa Claus” names. You might not know who “St. Nicholas” names. It doesn’t matter. Someone knows it, and knows of the name’s wanderings from then until now. No one thinks that the jolly fat man who lives at the North Pole is Nikolaos of Myra. The received wisdom is that Santa Claus, the bringer of Christmas gifts, has been named in honour of the venerated gift-giver of Myra.

Pi’s history carries a useful reminder. Istanbul has been named that only since 1923, and was named “Constantinople” for centuries beforehand and “Lygos” long before that. Lygos was a Thracian colony in the 13th to 11th centuries BC. Perhaps it would be going too far to say that

⁴ John P. Burgess, *Kripke*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013; p. 32.

⁵ Let’s note that Yann Martel’s 2001 fantasy novel *The Life of Pi* makes no fictionalizing use of π .

(3) Lygos = Istanbul

but it can safely be allowed that

(4) The place where Lygos was is subsumed by the place where Istanbul now is.

Over time there have been different namings of the various habitations at that site. It turns out that, like everything else in human life, names have life-spans. If Sally wants to know whether there is jet-service to Istanbul on Thursday afternoon at 5:00, she'll be doing herself no good by asking whether there's jet-service to Lygos then. When "Lygos" still had the currency that "Istanbul" now has, the question would still have been the wrong one to ask, not because of the referential failure of "Lygos" but rather because of the semantic barrenness of "jet-service".

Kripke acknowledges that the movement of names through historical chains is furnished by tellings. Many philosophers have trouble in seeing the causal side of sayso chains, owing to the ease with which they see their transmissions as epistemic, hence *not* causal. They grant that sayso chains are chains of knowledge, but deny that knowledge is causal. My answer in chapter one was to the contrary, that indeed knowledge *is* causal. That was a good part of the point in having written that chapter in the first place. Rather often, when information is processed in a certain way, it causes an agent's belief-producing devices to produce a belief. If the chapter's further conditions were met, the agent's belief would amount to knowledge. Here they are again. X is the agent in question. I is information he is now processing and *p* a newly arrived belief. Then X knows that *p* on I when processing I causes X's belief-making devices to produce the belief that *p*, X's cognitive devices are in good working order and functioning there in the normal way, I is good information, and there is no interference caused by negative externalities. If this is right, knowledge is the causal product of information-processing under favourable conditions. This matters for Kripke's approach to name-learning. That the sayso line is a chain of knowings does nothing to deny it the causal character which Kripke and others are reluctant to claim for it. I said in the first chapter that one of the reasons to favour the idea that in the general case human beings implement a causal response epistemology, rather than a command and control one, is the former's hospitality to an approach to reference that works well for reference in fiction, against the comparative unfriendliness of command and control treatments of it. One of the flies in the command and control ointment is its approach to knowledge by telling. There is a large and unsettled literature about the epistemic reliability of testimony and about the conditions under which knowledge is distributed by sayso. The dominant approaches subject testimonial reliability to a justification condition. Testimony is reliable when it comes from a source whose *bona fides* are a justified assumption. There is no space to rehearse the ups and downs of this idea.⁶ I will only say again why I don't subscribe to it. In all essentials it is for the same reason that I don't accept the JTB model as providing the general conditions on knowledge.

⁶ A compact review of the justificationist wars can be found in Appendix A, "Justificationism Fights Back", of *Is Legal Reasoning Irrational?*, 2015; 262-273.

In each case, it is the widespread behavioural discomfort with J-conditions on the equally widespread acquisition of knowledge. We are much better at acquiring beliefs that are knowledge than we are at justifying what makes those beliefs reasonable to hold.

A further example of referent-preserving reference is indexical self-reference. If someone says “I want to go to Ithaca” intending to convey that it is *she*, as opposed to *someone*, who wants to go, she must supply herself as “I”’s referent on that occasion. Classical first-order logic can’t handle indexicals. But this has not stopped the production of formal semantics for them of considerable mathematical virtuosity. Think here of Montague’s essays in *Formal Philosophy*.⁷

It took Julius Caesar’s mum and dad to make him available for reference. It took Conan Doyle’s literary writings to turn the trick for Sherlock. In both cases, creation was required for nameability. In the first case, the creation preceded the naming. In Doyle’s case, the creation was coterminus with the penning of the sentences of which Sherlock is true. There is a nice difference here. There are numbers of truths about Caesar prior to the acquisition of an expression that names him. There were several orders more facts about Sherlock that took hold before the age at which he was introduced to Doyle’s readers. But not one of those facts could have obtained in the absence of Doyle’s pennings. It is almost certainly true that Sherlock was baptized, and like Caesar, had a brief history prior to that sacred event. The modesty of that history is a function of the earliness after birth of the baptism which Sherlock’s mum and dad arranged for him. But none of even *that* history could have come to pass in advance of the pennings that brought him to pass in the context of Doyle’s doings in 1887, notwithstanding that the setting was earlier.⁸ All the same, the cross-time-identity preservations of “Julius Caesar” and “Sherlock Holmes” have a nicely causal tang along Julius’ and Sherlock’s Kripkean historical lines.

This inclines me towards further recommendations.

- (5) When reflecting upon fictional discourse, do not short-sheet the historico-causal account of the identity-preserving durability of reference-originations over time.
- (6) Do not dismiss the applicability of this account to the identity-preserving durability of originating reference to fictional objects, not only story-to-story but also in the historical flow of real-world discourse about these same referents,

And now another more substantival card:

- (7) *The referential rootless of naming*: Naming is not the root of reference.⁹

⁷ Richard Montague, *Formal Philosophy: Selected Papers of Richard Montague*, edited by Richmond H. Thomason, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.

⁸ A reminder: Sherlock made his début in *A Study in Scarlet*, 1887. The novel is set in 1882.

⁹ Quinean words for non-Quinean purposes.

Many philosophers think that nothing is true of Holmes unless (at best) expressly provided by Doyle's original sentences and nothing else. Though I say it again, this is not what the neurotypical reader at large would say. If the objection held water and the reader at large believed it, there would be no readers of fiction. Who would be interested in the travails and triumphs of a 19th century London adventurer, who walked and sat but who had no spine, who spoke his well-reasoned mind but had no larynx, who had a brother but no mum, who enjoyed afternoon tea but lacked an alimentary canal, was fit as a fiddle, except for his cocaine habit, but had no acquaintance with the means for removal of toxins within, and neither occasion nor equipment to make use of the Gents at Victoria Station? This was the upshot of the no spine-no readers thesis of chapter three. The reader at large might agree that we'll never know the number of hairs on Sherlock's head at 9:00 on September the 18th, 1894¹⁰, but he will jib at the suggestion that we have no basis to assert that Holmes had a larynx and a mum. Perhaps my presumption of Sherlock's baptism isn't quite so secure, but many of his readers will take it to have been a matter of course. People of Sherlock's time, place and class were usually baptized in the established English Church. I see no reason to suppose otherwise in Sherlock's case just because Doyle never got around to saying so expressly. That is the inference that we'd draw about Britain's former Prime Minister David Cameron. Why not draw it about Holmes?

2. Names and necessity

Could the name "Oswald" have been given to Charles the Prince of Wales? The common sense answer is yes. Is Charles Wales's first name the first name of Charles Darwin? Again the common sense answer is yes. David Kaplan asks, "Is it possible that a name which in fact names a given individual, might have named a different individual?"¹¹ This we might call the inclusivity question for naming. Exclusivists answer it negatively, "It is not possible for a name that in fact names a given individual to have named a different individual."¹² In light of our two commonsense answers, Darwin and Wales have the same name. But in light of of the exclusivist answer they don't. This gives us two questions to reflect on:

- (a) Whether a name that in fact names Charles Darwin might have failed to do so.

- (b) Whether a name that in fact names Charles Darwin might have named someone else.

The exclusivist's answer to (a) is no and, in so saying, it is also no to (b) "under the plausible assumption that a name cannot name two – or more – individuals at once."¹³ What would all those Korean Kims have to say about that, I wonder?

¹⁰ Of course, the same is true of William Gladstone at that same time.

¹¹ David Kaplan, "Words", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 64 (1990), 93-119.

¹² Ori Simchen, *Necessary Intentionality: A Study in the Metaphysics of Aboutness*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, sections 3.1 to 3.4; p. 54.

¹³ Simchen, *Necessary Intentionality*, p. 54.

Simchen is sympathetic to the history-mindedness of A. N. Prior:¹⁴

“It is always a useful exercise (and one insufficiently practised by philosophers), when told that something was possible, i.e., could have happened, to ask ‘When was it possible?’ When could it have happened? So if Caesar could have had different parents, when could he have had them? After his birth, indeed after his conception – it was clearly too late for him to have had different parents. But why not before? Do not the possible worlds in which Caesar figures include alternative sequels to what happened before he existed, in which we have him entering the stage at a different point? My difficulty here is that before Caesar existed (whether we suppose his conception or some other event to constitute the start of his existence) there would seem to be no individual identifiable as Caesar, i.e., the Caesar we are now discussing, who could have been the subject of this possibility.” (p. 688)

This moves Simchen to say:

“... if the fact that a name refers to a particular individual at a given time t is determined the name’s history up to t , then it will not be possible at t for the name not to refer to the individual.” (p. 210)

Simchen thinks that, while true, Prior’s answer to Kaplan’s question is not all that helpful. (p. 55) What’s needed, he says, is an “interesting” answer, and goes on to frame one within a type-token framework for names. Why would Simchen think that Prior’s answer is sound but uninteresting? The reason is clear from the remarks he makes in the aftermath of the ones he quotes from Prior. Prior is not talking about “Julius Caesar” the name. He is talking about Julius Caesar the man. Supposing, as he does, that Prior is right about Caesar, but not in ways of interest to what interests Simchen, what are we to infer? I infer that Simchen thinks that whatever makes Prior right about Caesar is not the kind of thing that makes Simchen right about “Caesar”. The core of it all is that Simchen thinks that aboutness is essential to “Caesar”’s nominative success, and not essential for the question of whom, apart from his own mum and dad, Caesar’s parents could possibly have been.

I have doubts about the type-token framework. The worry is that the distinction here doesn’t do enough heavy lifting to pay its way, never mind add value. The distinction is as old as metaphysics, but we owe this wording of it to Peirce.¹⁵ Observing that there are only twenty-six letters in the English alphabet, Peirce recorded the fact in a well-made English sentence containing a great many more letters than that. If we took on board Peirce’s distinction for

¹⁴ A. N. Prior, “Identifiable individuals”, *Review of Metaphysics* 13 (1960), 684-696.

¹⁵ C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 4.537. Originally published as “Prolegomena to an apology for pragmatism”, *Monist*, 16 (1906), 492-546.

names, we'd be led to think that, like the bicycle, which is unrideable, the name "Charles" is unbestowable.¹⁶ Of course, "bicycle" here denotes the type, not the bicycle I have in my shed. If we handled the name "Charles" in like manner, the "Charles" that can't name anything would be an abstract entity tokenable but unbearable.

A less cluttered way of proceeding would be to put on our thinking-caps and abduce our way to something of which the negative answer to Kaplan's inclusivist question could plausibly be taken for true. We could then put our minds to the obvious follow-up question. How, if true, would this newly abducted hypothesis help us to get to the bottom of "Sherlock", assuming that until we learn differently the way to handle "Sherlock" is the very way we handle "Charles", in the wake of our abandonment of the existence law – that is, Basic Law II.

What is there about the Prince of Wales' being named Charles that makes it impossible for anyone but he to be named it, never mind Charles I and II, Charles Dickens, Charles Chaplin, Charles Coburn, Charles Manson, and little Charlie who lives in the house across the lane from me. Suppose that in all these cases the bearers of the names that token the unbearable name "Charles" are the people whose respective token names are *about*. Then the "Charles" that names the Prince of Wales would bear an aboutness relation to him and to no one else. How could this be so? We might be prepared to grant that

(8) The name that names Wales is about him

and also perhaps that

(9) The property of being about Wales is a property of him only.¹⁷

But if we inferred from (8) and (9) that

(10) The name that names Wales is about him only

we'd commit so elementary a nonsequiter as to draw the ire of a teacher of first-year logic. True, if we could have (10), we would have

(11) The name that names Wales names him alone.

¹⁶ Simchen sometimes speaks of name types as generic names "that neither name anyone nor purport to do so." (p. 54, n. 2)

¹⁷ In the spirit of "Only Yogi Berra can catch Yogi Berra's catches."

But we don't, so we can't.

One way in which (11) is said to be so is that a name can't be given in the absence of the intention to have it name that particular nominatum. That may be so. The intention that "Charles" be the name of the royal couples' first born son was the *nominators'* intention, not the names's. This leaves the question of how it sometimes comes to pass that "He has jug-ears" is about that selfsame person christened Charles Philip Arthur George in 1948 at Buckingham Palace. It strikes me as wholly implausible that the aboutness of that unkind and exaggerated remark is in any way a function of the exclusivist aboutness of his name. A further reason to dislike this brand of exclusivism is its anthropomorphism. People who intend to say something about some given thing are assisted in doing so by the words they choose. But to upload the speaker's referential intentions to these helpful words is really too much of a stretch.

When the infant who would be the successor of Elizabeth II was given the name "Charles", he was given the name that everyone named "Charles" had. But on the occasion of the future's king being given it, "Charles" was used in yet another referentially specific way. What made it so was that the person referred to in that use of that name wasn't any of the others referred to by other like uses of the name. Consider the sentence

(12) Charles = Charles.

If the "Charles" of (12) is a type, its referential barrenness denies it an occurrence in "... = ...". So (12) is false for types. If "Charles" is a token, and the first "Charles" names Charles Wales and the second Charles Manson, the identity relation lacks relata. But if, each time, "Charles" names Charles Wales, all is well.¹⁸ One way of getting at this difference is that identity is undefined for referents by type, made so by the unbearability of type-names, and only gain traction for referents by token.

Someone walks into his club in St. James's Street in a state of high dudgeon. "Where in hell is Smith?" he demands. "Which Smith would you be wanting, sir?", comes the servile reply. Suppose that in response to the porter's perfectly good question the rude man replied, "Charles, damn it, Charles Smith!"? The odds aren't bad that the next question from the desk would be, "Would that be Colonel Charles Smith from Essex, or young Mr. Charles Smith from Notting Hill?"

Once between flights in Chicago's O'Hare airport a public announcement was aired and I was there to hear it. Would Mr. Sinatra please pick up a white phone? Several minutes later, another message: Would Mr. F. Sinatra kindly pick up a white phone for an important message? Twenty or thirty minutes later something more pressing: It is urgently requested that Frank Sinatra proceed at once to the VP lounge for an important message. O'Hare was busy that day. There was little notice paid to the first message, but markedly more to the second. With the

¹⁸ Apart from minority reservations about the identity relation's dyadicity and reflexivity.

arrival of the third, the whole place was abuzz. Where is he?” people wondered “Where’s Frank?”. Autograph books were readied for presentation. (It was a long time ago). In the 1980s and 1990s, there were plenty of contexts in which the mere mention of Frank was a reference to Old Blue Eyes. No single act of bestowal gave Old Blue Eyes the name of Frank. His parents named him Francis Albert, and usage and custom took over from there, generating “Frank”’s remarkable currency. It appears that its bearer never ceased being Francis in the company of his mother and at his several subsequent weddings, but for the rest of the world Francis Sinatra was Frank.¹⁹

These are instructive examples, far from exotic or even uncommon. They remind us that the efficacy of reference has nothing intrinsically to do with the name originally bestowed on its nominatum.

Prenatal naming is now rather common, owing to the ease of sex-identification *in utero*. Some philosophers see in the historico-causal approach the necessity of the namer’s acquaintance with her nominatum at the point of bestowal. Prenatal naming calls this into question. If a woman learns the sex of her unborn baby at ten weeks into her pregnancy and on the spot names him “Saul”, it is implausible to say that she has acquired an acquaintance with its nominatum so early in the proceedings, but not plausible at all that she hasn’t managed to name him. Perhaps the reason why is that she has achieved the acquaintance of a uniquely identifying description of him. He is “the male member of the species *homo sapiens* currently resident in my womb”.

Preconceptive naming is another story, and a trickier one. There is nothing to stop an unpregnant woman from picking a child’s name now, in case she ever finds that she’s having one. If efficiency were her goal, “Kelly” would be a safe choice, and sex screening would be unnecessary for purposes of nomination. If the woman’s husband were suddenly dead in a car crash, she might in her grief resolve to carry no child but his. If she cleaved to that resolve, she would die without issue. Could we say that the child who would never be created is one and the same with the bearer of the name “Kelly”? Or would it be better to say that the name “Kelly” lacked all occasion for its intended application? There was a uniquely identifying description for the bearer of “Saul”, but none for the bearer of “Kelly” once the decision to remain childless had been made. But this leaves the question of what to make of the woman’s situation *before* the question of childbirth were closed in the negative. Whom would “the child my husband and I hope to conceive on the evening of my twenty-ninth birthday” uniquely identify?²⁰

Some older readers of this book will have made first referential footfall with Sherlock at the movies when the popular Basil Rathbone flicks were making the rounds between 1939 and 1946.²¹ It is a fair guess that numbers of his fans were unaware at the time – and in some cases ever after – that the Sherlock of their movie-house acquaintance was a cinematic borrowing of a character of Doyle’s origination. This adds some complexity to the historico-causal reference line from readers of Doyle in London in the last quarter of the 19th century to those youngsters

¹⁹ Mind you, in the 1940s the whole world knew Francis as “Frankie”. We owe to “Frankie” that odd socio-evolutionary contortion known as the teenager, thanks to taboo-smashing responses to standing-room performances at New York’s Paramount Theatre.

²⁰ Assume a blooming and healthy fertility and a timely fixing of cycle.

²¹ The first really good cinematic treatments of Sherlock date from the early 1920s.

in the Roxy Theatre on Dunlop Street in the mid-1940s. The Rathbone movies are problematic. In some of them, Holmes and Watson join forces to ferret out Nazi spies in wartime England. It is a plausible cinematic borrowing by the moguls of Hollywood, but it creates difficulties. Since Sherlock was born in 1854, he would be sixty in 1914, therefore ninety in 1944. The Holmes stories begin in 1884 and end in 1909. There is no sign of this in some of Rathbone's portrayals, whose cinematic goings-on could not have come from a man of such elderly purchase. Is Rathbone's Sherlock Doyle's own? Can a ninety year old man be the same man as the man portrayed in say 1869? If Doyle's Sherlock has a larynx, a mum and a member, how could he not be subject to those same actuarial regularities to which Doyle and his fellow later Victorians were themselves subject?²² If so, what Hollywood borrowed in 1944 was not the person whom Doyle created but rather the name he created in bringing that person about. What Hollywood borrowed was the name and a fair bit of its connotation. But not its denotation.

3. *Meaning*

I have been speaking of late of the "semantic significance" of subsentential elements for the "semantic significance" of sentences in which they occur. It is commoner I suppose to speak of *meaning*. There is good reason to shirk talk of meanings in the model theories of semantically lifeless artificial languages. When I say "semantically lifeless" I mean here "devoid of meaning", which is what natural languages brim over with and artificial ones entirely lack. Still, as we saw, for reasons of their own, model theorists want for their artificial object languages something which could be called "semantically significant" under protective cover of Tarski's tort. The doctrine that an L-sentence's semantic significance is bestowed by its T-conditions can rightly be called a T-conditional formal semantics for L. But if we say in like-sounding terms that the meanings of English sentences are furnished by their truth conditions, we equivocate twice over. We confuse semantic significance in L with meaning in English, and we confuse T-conditions in L with truth conditions in English. Since referentialist model theory cannot proceed without a formal notion of truth, it may be that a T-conditional semantics is the way for it to go. But to think the same for a pre-Tarskian theory meaning in English would have none of that motivation. So why would we do it? Why would we sign on to a truth conditional approach to natural language meaning? I suppose would be in some sense explicable were we to decide to formulate our views of natural language meaning under the gravitational pull of the formal semantics of meaningless artificial ones. My advice a chapter ago was that we shouldn't. So I won't.

This still leaves us awkwardly positioned. The sentences S of the full story are concurrently true and not. Consider those of them that have the name of Sherlock in subject position. If, in those positions, the name is semantically significant, that is, plays a determining role in the sentences' truth status, how can we avoid saying either that the Sherlock of the true sentence can't be the Sherlock of the untrue one, or that it is one and the same and is the subject of inconsistent attribution? The trouble is that the sentence that's true is the same sentence as the one that's not. If the first alternative held, these self-same sentences would possess a referential semantic significance that aborted their sentential semantic significance, and cost them their readership. If the second alternative held, we'd have condemned the Sherlock-sentences and all

²² Benjamin Cumberbatch's masterly rendering of Sherlock as a high-functioning sociopath of the present-day runs into this same problem.

others in the full story to the systematic violation of the Law of Non-Contradiction. “No”, someone cries out. “It is a false alternative. The solution we want is obvious. It is that the sentences of fiction are systematically ambiguous”.

4. Ambiguity

“Sherlock” is a semantically significant part of sentences in which it appears in referential position. It establishes what those sentences are true and not true of. The sentences couldn’t have the semantic significance they do without “Sherlock” having the semantic significance it does. A substantial part of the semantic significance of

(13) “Sherlock resided at 221 Baker Street, London, in the late 1880s”

and

(14) “Sherlock didn’t reside at 221 Baker Street, London, in the late 1880s”

is that each is true. The semantic significance of “Sherlock” in (13) and (14) is that it refers to Sherlock. We know that “Sherlock” is subject to different reference conditions – its auctorially produced ones and its parentally provided ones. But no one who attends to the lived experience of readers seriously supposes that when, on these occasions “Sherlock” is used referentially, two different things are being referred to in two different senses of “refer”. The same I think is true of “true”. Granted that a true Sherlock-sentence is also not true, it is one and the same thing that is and isn’t, and is so in the same sense of “true”. This needs explaining.

A standard remedy for an unwanted inconsistency is to find two different things for it to say and two different things for it to be true of, as with “This wife of mine is rather dear” or “Visiting relatives can be boring”. *The Logic of Fiction*’s modal section would be my escape route.²³ I ascribed to “Holmes resided in Baker Street, London, in the late 1880s” a syntactic ambiguity in its deep structure as between

(15) “**A** (Holmes resided in Baker Street, London, in the late 1880s)”

and

²³ Chapter 5, sections 6 to 8.

(16) “**O** (Holmes resided in Baker Street, London, in the late 1880s)”.

A is a modal operator for actuality and **O** for fictionality. The **A-O** distinction would formally represent the commonly invoked distinction between truth in actuality and truth in fiction, thus modelling what began as adverbial modifiers of truth in application to a natural language sentence at surface-level, by adverbial modifications of the sentence’s deep structures.

There were virtues in this way of proceeding, or so I thought at the time. One was that it solved the problem of out of control inconsistency between a story and the world. The other was that it laid the way for a quantified modal formal semantics for Sherlock, thus applying to literary theory the refreshment of a well-understood and rigorously organized instrument of analysis. I have already expressed my reservations about the adequacy of formal semantics to take care of fiction’s distinctive business. A further and more particular difficulty has to do with twofold meanings which was what my modal semantics was meant to bring to light. If the intuitively true and not true sentence,

(17) “Holmes resided in Baker Street, London, in the late 1880s”

were syntactically ambiguous as between (15) and (16), it could be true in each rendition. However, in “How robust can inconsistency get?”²⁴, it dawned on me that what I was doing with my quantified modal logic for fiction was an exercise, not in disambiguation, but rather instead in *ambiguation*, that is, the generation of heretofore *nonexistent* ambiguities by what Quine calls “legislative postulation” and Russell “nominal definition. If we consulted any of the going theories of natural language meaning in the empirical linguistics community, we would find no takers of the idea that the English sentence “Holmes resided in Baker Street, London, in the 1880s” is lexically ambiguous, and none either that its deep structure bears any notable similarity to the deep structure that makes “Visiting relatives can be boring” syntactically so. From which I concluded that the meaning (17) bears in its occurrence in the scope of the referent of

(18) “**O** (Holmes resided in Baker Street in London in 1880)” is true

is the *same* meaning as in its occurrence in the scope of the referent of

(19) “**A** (Holmes resided in Baker Street in London in the 1880s)” is not true

²⁴ *IfCoLoG Journal of Logics and Their Logics*, 1 (2014), 177-216.

notwithstanding that (13) and (14) are themselves both true. There being no differences of meaning to take strategic advantage of here, fiction's out of control problem for inconsistency awaits a different solution. In some ways this is a setback. In other ways it is liberating. If the sentences of fiction bear the same meanings they bear in their occurrence in non-fictional settings, then once again there is no distinctive problem of meaning for a logic of fiction to solve. I say this notwithstanding my oft-repeated insistence that fiction's peculiarities be taken into serious theoretical account. The peculiarity rule applies to features that are genuinely peculiar to fictional discourse and literary experience. The rule lays no presumption claim to direct the traffic in matters not peculiar to it. It is my present submission that sentential meaning is one that isn't.

Let's suppose that the correct account of the meaning for English were supplied by a theory called NLM. I don't know how closely empirical linguistics has brought us to a robust fulfillment of NLM's mandate. This, too, doesn't much matter. What matters is that having a theory of meaning is no more a requirement peculiar to fictional discourse than it is to the dispatches from the shattered streets of Aleppo. By the methods currently in play here, it is no part of its mandate for fiction that it bring NLM one whit further to theoretical completion. This is an enormous burden removed from the shoulders of the theorist of fiction. The meanings of "refer", "true" and "infer" would be the same for fictional discourse as they already are for English. It would be NLM that rules here. So let's make it official:

(20) The meaning of "refers" in relation to fictional discourse is the *same* as it is for English at large, whatever that may be.

(21) The meaning of "true" in relation to fictional discourse is the *same* as it is for English at large, whatever that might be.

(22) The meaning of "infer" in relation to fictional discourse is, with that same qualifying hedge, the *same* as it is for English at large.

The outlier, even so, is truth, as opposed to the meaning of "true". The focal point is truth-making and its regulating conditions. The conditions that make the sentences of full stories true are in the everyday meaning of that word *very* different from those that make them otherwise, as different as Doyle is from God or Big Bang. Their meaning is invariant under these conflicting conditions. Surely this lands us on the wrecking shoals of the Law of Non-Contradiction. Actually it doesn't.

5. *The Law of Non-Contradiction*

In large measure, the received view is that any true sentence whose negation is also true is, under the widely received assumptions of the Law of Excluded Middle and the Bivalence Law, concurrently true and false. Under a further entrenched assumption, sentences concurrently true and false are a standing insult to the Law of Non-Contradiction. In virtually all quarters, this has been taken as lights-out for the sentences of fiction, and correspondingly a vindication of its Basic Laws. There are less large literatures in which this trespass is called into face-saving question. Dialethic logicians concede the point in the general case, but press for exceptions for sentences whose concurrent truth and falsity derives from securely arrived at paradoxical sentences such as Russell’s for intuitive set theory and Tarski’s for intuitive truth. In this way of thinking, the joint truth and falsity of “pathological” sentences arises internally by virtue of the sentences’ self-referential semantic content, whereas the truth and falsity of other inconsistent sentences arises from the conjunction of each with its own negation.²⁵ A sentence in the form $\lceil S \wedge \sim S \rceil$ is seen as a genuine violation of the law that outlaws contradictions. Since “There is a set all of whose members are non-self-membered sets and only they”, lacks that form, it can’t be said to be a contradictory sentence, hence not one that trespasses against the law that forbids them. All the same, by the principles of logic, this pathological sentence implies that the set in question is both a member of itself and not. This might lead one to suppose that even if a contradictory sentence arises from a self-referentially inconsistent premiss, hence that its contradictoriness is derivative from a non-contradictory one, it doesn’t really count as a transgressing LNC. Perhaps there will be takers of this plea for excuse, but I am unable to convince myself to be one of them. Why should a sentence that implies a contradiction be spared the ignomeny that befalls contradictions?

A further difficulty for any system in which an inconsistency arises is caused by a theorem known as *ex falso quodlibet*, which can loosely be translated “from a logical falsehood, whatever you like.” *Ex falso* asserts that any system in which an inconsistency arises is a system in which all sentences whatever and their own negations are also derivable. Various measures have been considered for the avoidance of such disasters. In some, efforts are made to disable *ex falso* outright. In others, measures are developed for the containment of an inconsistent system’s poisonous derivational yield. With but one example known to me, any logic that takes such counter-measures is a *paraconsistent* one. All dialethic logics are paraconsistent, but comparatively few of them are *dialethic*.²⁶

There is a great deal of absorbing interest and technical virtuosity in these writings. But they are of only glancing relevance for fiction’s inconsistency problem. Our *systemic* problem is that every sentence of a full story that owes its truth, even in slender part, to its author’s sayso provisions, is both true and not, and therefore by Excluded Middle and Bivalence, both true and false. The *local* inconsistency problem typified by the inconsistency created by Ray Bradbury in “Sound of Thunder”, making it true and false in the story that Keith was elected president in the

²⁵ There is a good summary of dialethism in Graham Priest’s “Paraconsistency and dialetheism”, in Dov M. Gabbay and John Woods, editors, *The Many Valued and Nonmonotonic Turn in Logic*, pages 129-204, volume 8 of Gabbay and Woods, editors, *Handbook of the History of Logic*, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 2007. For a discussion of the “significance of pathology to fictional contexts, see Bradley Armour-Garb and James A. Woodbridge, *Pretence and Pathology: Fictionalism and its Applications*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

²⁶ Non-dialethic paraconsistency is well reviewed by Bryson Brown, in “Preservationism: A short history”, in Dov M. Gabbay and John Woods, editors, *The Many Valued and Nonmonotonic Turn in Logic*, volume 8 of Gabbay and Woods’ *Handbook of the History of Logic*, pages 95-127, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 2007.

year 2055. The systemic problem is the one I want to concentrate on here. I'll have a further word to say about the local one in the chapter ahead. The central question is whether fiction's systemic inconsistency violates LNC. The answer is that it doesn't.

Before moving to the Law, it would repay us to revisit the idea that because Doyle is the truth-maker for the sentences of his stories and the world is the truth-maker for their negations, there is no room in fiction's truth-makings for the truth-makings of the world. In fact, however, the contrary is the case. In earlier chapters, I've touched on this point. The time has come to nail it down. That Doyle gets *to be* the truth-maker for the Holmes stories *arises* from the truth-making powers of the world. In making the stories true, Doyle stands in a real but impalpable relation to the stories and to the people and events the stories relate. Doyle is palpably in the domain of this impalpable relation and is so in virtue of the doings that bring that membership about. That Doyle is in his domain is made true by the world, and that Doyle, being in it is the truth-maker for those in its counter-domain is also made so by the world's own truth-making powers. It could not be the case that a writer is truth-maker for the sentences the world makes false unless the world provided for that fact to come to be. The truths of fiction are the end products of truths made by the world. There lies in this disclosure an attractive idea. It is that LNC does no heavy lifting in a good semantics for fiction.

LNC is arguably Aristotle's single most influential idea. In the *Metaphysics* he gives it three different and pairwise inequivalent formulations, and does so in the following order:

- *The doxastic formulation*: No one can believe that the same thing can (at the same time) be and not be. (1005^b 13-14)
- *The ontological formulation*: It is impossible that the same thing belong and not belong to the same thing at the same time. And in the same *respect*. (1005^b 19-20)²⁷
- *The logical formulation*: The most certain of all basic principles is that contradictory propositions are not true simultaneously. (1011^b 13-14)²⁸

Of the three the ontological version gives the fullest formulation of Aristotle's thinking, which means that the other two are incomplete. This is important: The *logical* formulation understates the law.

Perhaps the ontological formulation is itself somewhat lacking. Immediately after the words quoted here, Aristotle goes on to observe that "We must presuppose, in the face of dialectical objections, any further qualifications which might be added." An explanation of this

²⁷ Italics added. For something weaker (and earlier) see: "The same thing clearly cannot act or be acted upon in the same part of relation to the same thing at the same time in contrary ways." (*Republic*, 436B)

²⁸ Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised English Translation in two volumes*, Jonathan Barnes, editor. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

puzzling remark is ventured in chapter 5 of the revised edition of *Aristotle's Earlier Logic*.²⁹ Aristotle also says that a first principle is a proposition that is true, necessary and “most intelligible”, and that it neither requires nor admits of proof. If, as Aristotle avers, LNC is the most certain of first principles, then it is a principle that neither requires nor admits of proof. But consider the following argument:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| i. LNC is a first principle. | By agreement. |
| ii. LNC is true. | From (i) by def. |
| iii. LNC cannot be proved. | From (ii) by def. |

But $\langle(i), (ii), (iii)\rangle$ is a valid argument with true premisses. It is a proof of LNC at line (ii) and a proof that LNC can't be proved at line (iii). So, if our proof stands, whatever else it is, LNC is not a first principle. On the other hand, perhaps what (i) to (iii) give is a proof by contradiction, in which case, by substitution on “LNC”, nothing whatever is a first principle.

Perhaps it is not all that surprising that the logical formulation understates the law. The logical formulation is the one that holds sway in the *Prior Analytics*. It is a formulation that pivots on the technical notion of contradictoriness, whose defining characteristics are reflected in the square of opposition. In it we see that the reflexive relation of being a contradictory of is defined for the following pairs of categorical proposition schemata: $\{\neg\text{All A are B}, \neg\text{Some A are not B}\}$. and $\{\neg\text{No A are B}, \neg\text{Some A are B}\}$. Since the language of categorical propositions lacks the expressive capacity for *respects*, and the logical formulation of LNC is tailor-made for categorical-propositional languages, it lacks the means to capture the ontological intent of the law.

We could easily generalize the law to languages more complex than categorically propositional ones. In doing so, Bivalence could be safely dropped. A sentence would violate the law if it were unambiguously true and its negation were concurrently unambiguously true. If this were the complete story, the sentences of fiction would violate the law. Whether it does or not depends on whether we preserve the same-respects condition of the law's original ontological formulation. There is reason to think that should be retained for fiction. Here is why.

Aristotle insists that recognized contradictions cannot be believed. Fiction appears to be a vitiating counterexample. Aristotle insists that the only humanly possible response to recognized contradictions is to give them up. Fiction again countervails tellingly. Each time and together, we have a surprising or at least perplexing come-uppance – a blue-ribbon abduction problem. It leaves us wanting to know what hypothetical state of affairs, if real, would make all this a matter of course. In previous chapters, I floated the idea of truths as site-specific. In the law's ontological formulation, Aristotle floated the idea of truths as respect-specific, and did so even more scantily than my flotation of sites. Each is an hypothesis whose truth would make the events constituting fiction's systemic inconsistency problem a matter of course. Embedded here is the further abduction of why my site-centredness of truth really and rightly does escape the scorn of LNC. An hypothesis whose truth would set this to rest is that Aristotle's respects are an adumbration of my sites.

²⁹ John Woods, *Aristotle's Earlier Logic*, second expanded edition, volume 53 of Studies in Logic, London: College Publications, 2014; first edition with Hermes Science, Paris, 2001.

Beyond my scratchings in earlier chapters, I have no settled doctrine of sites to lay before the tribunal of philosophical judgement. I am confident that the world is a site and that stories are sites too. I am confident that the law is site-sensitive. What's true *in situ* the law is often false *in situ* the world. I am confident that beliefs aren't sites, and more confident that well-shaped and well-motivated theoretical models are, but beyond that have little else to say. To the best of knowledge, Aristotle has nothing specific to say about respects beyond the mention of them in LNC. Meanings might be respects, but they'd come nowhere close to being the only things that are.³⁰ Perhaps my own slightly more expansive remarks about sites will be of assistance in arriving at a somewhat larger understanding of Aristotle's respects. Sites and respects are an open question in the semantics of natural language. I bequeath it with hopeful invitation to the ongoing research programme. So here, too, let's make it official:

(23) *Misnaming*: In the general case, "contradiction" is the wrong name for the sentences of fiction.

Accordingly,

(24) *A problem solved*: Fiction's systemic inconsistency problem has a positive solution in the ontological formulation of the Law of Contradiction.

³⁰ Aristotle's *Categories* is two things at once, but not a study of respects. It is a metaphysically dressed-up book about ambiguity, the first extant one in Greek antiquity.

