KRIPKE LECTURE 1

1. It was Frege's view ('On Sense and Reference' in M. Black & P. Geach (tr.), *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*) that a name has a sense as well as a reference. For if the meaning of a name is exhausted by what it refers to then the sentences 'a=a' and 'a=b' will if true have the same meaning; but they don't since one can believe the former and not the latter. The dimension along which their menaing differs is 'sense'.

2. What is the 'sense' of a name? Frege calls it the 'mode of presentation' of the reference but this hardly gets us any further. This much at least is clear: to grasp the meaning of a given word is to know what its sense is. According to K. (*NN* 27) the Frege-Russell thesis is that the sense of a name is that of some associated definite description e.g. the sense of 'Sir Walter Scott' is that of 'The Author of *Waverley*'; the latter may then be analyzed in Russell's way. NB it is important to distinguish this thesis, sometimes called the 'description theory of names', from Russell's theory of descriptions, which says nothing about names but only that 'The F is G' may be analyzed as $\exists x(Gx \land \forall y(Fy \leftrightarrow y = x))$. These theses are logically independent. I'll take Russell's theory of descriptions for granted.

3. The 'Frege-Russell thesis' gets Russell wrong in two ways. First, Russell didn't think that English names were real names at all (for metaphysical reasons that we'll touch upon in lecture 3. Cf. his *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*). The only real names were, for Russell, expressions like 'this', 'that' and (in his Cartesian but not his Humean phase) 'I' i.e. terms that denote objects given immediately to experience. And second, Russell didn't think that *these* expressions were equivalent to definite descriptions at all (K. was well aware of this: *NN*: 1n.4).

4. There are four points against the Frege-Russell thesis. The first is that if it were true then it would be a mere matter of definition that 'Sir Walter Scott wrote *Waverley*' is true, in which case it would be nonsensical to deny it. Plainly it isn't nonsense although it is of course false (*NN*: 30).

5. The reply is that most people attach not one but a cluster of definite descriptions to a name (see Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* s79). The sense of 'Sir Walter Scott' is then roughly that of 'The person who did most of the following things...'. This answer avoids the problem, for it would not on this theory be nonsense to deny that Sir Walter Scott did just one of those things e.g. write *Waverley*. This answer preserves the spirit of the Frege-Russell thesis. Its vagueness is harmless and merely reflects that inherent in names of ordinary English.

6. But second: what about names to which most people attach only *one* description? Most people know of Guy Fawkes only that he was the man who tried to blow up Parliament. So even on the modified Frege-Russell

view 'Guy Fawkes tried to blow up Parliament' is true in virtue of its meaning. Hence if we were to discover that in fact it was e.g. Sir Walter Raleigh who tried to blow up Parliament then we would on the Frege-Russell view be using 'Guy Fawkes' to refer to Sir Walter Raleigh (*NN* 82-5).

7. Reply: the sense of a proper name is conferred *communally* and therefore may even in the Guy Fawkes case be a cluster of definite descriptions. The fact is that there are *some* people who know other definite descriptions that uniquely identify Guy Fawkes (e.g. the only bearded child of so-and-so). Just because I don't know these definite descriptions myself *doesn't* mean that they cannot be part of the meaning of 'Guy Fawkes' in *my* tongue. It is a sort of division of linguistic labour. (Cf. Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, 2nd edn.: 137-43). Moreover where only one description is available to *any* person (e.g. 'Homer'(?)) we do regard the name 'Homer' as denoting whoever fits the associated description. 'It wasn't Guy Fawkes who tried to blow up Parliament but his brother Terry' seems all right. 'It wasn't Homer who authored the *Iliad* but his son Bart' seems *a priori* false.

8. The third point (NN: 85) is that there are many people who associate a name with the '*wrong*' description, in the sense that the name denotes someone who doesn't fit the description. E.g. 'Columbus' denotes Columbus, and not the first European to visit America, even though many people do associate *that* description with the name. But still some descriptinps are both common knowledge and correctly pick out the referent, e.g. 'The causal source of "Columbus"'.

9. The fourth objection works equally against the simple and the 'cluster' versions of the Frege-Russell thesis: assume the simple version. Suppose 'St Anne' means 'The mother of Mary'. Then they should behave the same way in *modal* contexts: one that involves an operator like 'It must have been the case that...' or 'It might have been the case that...', which we may write as □ and ◊ respectively. These are not epistemic i.e. registers of uncertainty, but descriptions of how things *might have* been; how they *are* in other possible worlds. 'I must exist' and 'Napoleon might have not invaded Russia' are respectively true and false when 'must' and 'might' are interpreted epistemically; but they are respectively false and true if those words carry a *metaphysically* modal sense.

10. But 'St Anne' and 'The Mother of M' do *not* in fact behave the same way in modal contexts: (a) 'St Anne might not have had any children' is true whereas (b) 'The Mother of M might have had no children' is false. But (b) can be got from (a) simply by interchanging a name and a definite description. So the expressions cannot be synonymous (*NN*: 73-8).