

# Introducing Proper Names: Semantic and Metasemantic Issues

## International Masterclass

24-26 October 2023 • Università di Bologna • Sala Rossa • Via Azzo Gardino 23

**Course Description** — Proper names have been the object of increasing discussion in the last decades and a variety of different semantic and metasemantic approaches have been presented in the recent literature. The aim of the class is to present an overview of some possible answers to these three main questions: (1) What is the meaning of proper names? (2) How is the meaning of names determined? (3) What are proper names?

### Tuesday 24, 09:30-13:00 – Introduction and Classical Debates

What is a proper name and what is its meaning? We will start with a brief introduction of the classical debate between Millians and descriptivists, emphasizing the change in orthodoxy in the debate on proper names and specifying some ways in which the Millian picture can be specified. Then, we will proceed to discuss two central issues for the semantic analysis of names. First, we will present the semantic characteristics manifested by names in their ordinary uses, with particular emphasis on their apparent rigidity. Second, we will briefly approach the problems related to the metaphysical individuation of proper names, discussing some of the main ways in which it seems possible to identify these expressions.

Compulsory Text: Rami 2021, Chapter 1 & 2

### Wednesday 25, 14:30-18:00 : The Semantics of Names and Alternative Proposals

What is the best semantic analysis of names? Are names semantically simple? After a presentation of the general ideas behind the influential LD-system for context-sensitive expressions developed in Kaplan 1989, we will proceed to describe and discuss an example of some new approaches to the semantics of proper names based on this framework. Emphasising more in detail the problems concerning the criteria to individuate proper names, we will proceed to present a possible context-sensitive semantic theory of proper names.

Compulsory Text: Pelczar & Rainsbury, 1998 (*OPTIONAL:* Kaplan 1989 §§ I, II, III, V, VI (both (i) and (ii)), VII)

### Thursday 26, 14:30-18:00: The Metasemantics of Names

What determines the meaning/reference of proper names? The problem of individuating the best semantic analysis of names is partially related to the main metasemantic problem of providing a suitable theory for the mechanisms whereby the meaning of these terms are determined. Using the relatively new refinement of the causal theory presented by Micheal Devitt in a recent paper as a case study, we will discuss various issues concerning the foundational task of providing an account of how names acquire their meaning.

Compulsory Text: Devitt 2015

### Bibliography:

1. Kaplan, D. (1989). *Demonstratives*, in Almog, Perry, Wettstein (eds.), *Themes From Kaplan*, OUP: 481-563.
2. Devitt M. (2015). *Should Proper Names Still Seem So Problematic?*, in Bianchi A. (ed.) *On Reference*, OUP.
3. Pelczar, M. & Rainsbury, J. (1998). *The Indexical Character of Names*. *Synthese* 114 (2): 293-317.
4. Rami, D. (2021). *Names and Context: A Use-Sensitive Philosophical Account*, London: Bloomsbury.

### Further Readings:

- a) Evans, G. (1973). *The Causal Theory of Names*. *Aristotelian Society* SV 47 (1):187–208.
- b) Dickie, I. (2015). *Fixing Reference*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- c) Kripke, S. (1980). *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- d) Predelli, S. (2017). *Proper Names: A Millian Account*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- e) Sainsbury, M. (2005). *Reference Without Referents*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- f) Recanati, F. (1993). *Direct Reference: From Language to Thought*. Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell