

## Chapter Four

### Concluding Remarks

The thesis over the chapters attempts to evaluate various aspects of the theory of reference. Language has various aspects through which one can come to know about the world. In fact, the main contention of linguistic philosophy or philosophy of language is to develop the relationship between language and reality (world). Linguistic philosophers over the years have developed various theories to show the relationship between language and reality. Of course, linguistic philosophers over the years have disagreed about the nature of language and also about the nature of language and about their relationship. Whatever the nature of language and reality may be, one thing is very clear that language refers. The referential function of language determines the meaning of language. In this regard we can mention the name of Bertrand Russell who developed referential theory of meaning.

In this thesis we have outlined three different broad schools of referential theory of meaning. One is philosophically known as the classical (descriptive) theory of reference expounded by Russell, Frege, Searle, Carnap and others. The other theory is philosophically known as the causal theory of reference expounded by Saul Kripke, Donnellan, Putnam and others. The other school is known as the neo-classical theory of reference expounded by Chomsky, Katz, Fodor and others. While correlating these theories, we can say that the classical theory of reference may be taken as *thesis*, the causal theory reference may be comprehended as anti-thesis and finally the neo-classical theory of reference may be comprehended as *synthesis*. This clearly suggests that

the classical theory of reference and the causal theory of reference are diametrically opposite in nature because each of these theories develops and interprets the concept of reference in a different manner. The neoclassical theory of reference appears as a *synthesis* in the sense that it tries to overcome the defects of classical theory of reference in the eyes of causal theory of reference and makes an attempt to synthesis both the classical theory of reference as well as the causal theory of reference. We think that even though the theory of reference has immense varieties but all the varieties must belong to either one of the broad school of reference as mentioned above. The descriptive theory of reference or the classical theory of reference may be designated as the *primitive theory of reference* in the sense that this theory of reference initiated or began with the theory of reference. Here the problem of reference is to determine how thoughts and sentences can be about objects. If we take up the case of the hungry Cat, there is, first, the *referring expression* 'my Cat'. Then there is the *constituent of the proposition* introduced by the referring expression. The third element is the mental *representation* of the Cat. Finally, there is the *speech act of referring* itself that ties all these elements together. We think these four elements obviously correspond to expressions, propositions, beliefs, and speech acts, respectively, and each highlights a different aspect of the general problem of reference. If we put these problems into questions, then we can say how are referring expressions related to object? What propositions are expressed by sentences containing referring expressions? What is the role of mental representation in beliefs about objects? What is the correct analysis of the speech act of referring? While answering to the questions; how referring expressions are related to objects, Frege goes on to say that all names must have a sense that mediates between them and the objects they stand for. However, Searle rejects Frege claim, but insists that each name must be *backed by* a set of identifying descriptions. This position of Frege and Searle has been criticized

by Kripke who sees names as lacking any intrinsic sense or descriptive content. According to him, names are related to objects through a special sort of *causal chain* stretching from the moment a name is given, to any particular use of that name. We think that these different accounts attempt to provide a partial answer to the first question, such as, how are referring expressions related to objects.

The question then is; what proposition is expressed by sentence containing referring expression? To illustrate this point, we have to distinguish between general and singular proposition. The statement “The queen of England is ill” expressed the proposition *there is one and only one thing with the property of being the queen of England, and it is ill*. Such a proposition is called ‘general’ because here all references to particular things have been eliminated, and all that we have instead is a quantifier, and a bound variable. A statement such as “7 is prime,” on the other hand, is said to express the proposition 7 is prime, which is called ‘singular’. Here we note the vast difference between ‘7’ and ‘The queen of England’ as far as their contribution to the logical structure of the proposition is concerned. Here the referring expression ‘7’ simply introduces the integer 7 into the proposition, but the phrase ‘The queen of England’ is surely to be distinguished from her majesty herself.

We cannot ignore the role of mental representation in beliefs about objects. In this regard one can distinguish between *de dicto* and *de re* beliefs. A belief *de dicto* is a belief that a certain general proposition is true. A belief *de re* is a belief about a particular thing that it has a certain property. Accordingly, we can say that my belief that there are spies is *de dicto* but not *de re*. But the belief I have about myself that I am left handed is certainly *de re*. However, any belief that the President of United State in 1987 is old seems to be both *de dicto* and *de re*. It is the belief that the proposition under consideration is true and hence it is *de dicto*. In addition, the content of

the beliefs contains a representation of Ronald Regan. Here I am attributing the property of being old to Regan and so myself is *de re* as well. We further think that referring as *speech act* also plays significant role to the general problem of reference.

Russell's descriptive theory of reference has been marked as the paradigm of reference because Russell's theory plays an important role in providing the modifications that enable the descriptive program to overcome its difficulties and serve as a foundation for the computational model. We think that Russell's account of reference has both an epistemological and a semantic segment and they are entwined with each other. The epistemological segment describes how knowledge of objects is possible and the semantic segment describes how referring expressions are to be interpreted. Russell's epistemological segment is comprehended with the help of finding out the distinction between *knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description*. For Russell, one has knowledge by acquaintance of an object when one has a direct cognitive relation with it, i.e., when one is directly aware of the object itself. On the contrary, one has knowledge of description of an object when one knows that there exists one and only one object having a certain property. The property is the descriptive content of the object. For example, since I am directly aware of a pain in my left knee, Russell would say that I have knowledge by acquaintance of my pain. On the other hand I am not acquainted with the twelfth president of the United States, but I know that there was one and only one person in the world who happened to be the twelfth president of United States. Here I have knowledge by description of him. It is important to note here that Russell's theory of knowledge contains two postulates, such as, (i) every proposition that we can understand must be composed of constituents with which we are

acquainted and (ii) we do not have knowledge by acquaintance of physical objects. Thus, it seems to us that Russell's account of names and descriptions mirrors his epistemological distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by descriptions. A proper name designates its objects directly, but it has no meaning apart from the designated object. That is why Russell's theory of proper name has been attributed as non-sense theory of proper name. Accordingly, when a name is employed, the object itself is a constituent of the proposition, which, in turn, is a singular one. Since we are never acquainted with physical objects, they cannot participate in propositions we can understand. As a result of that the proper names we use to designate physical objects are not really proper names at all but **abbreviated descriptions**. A description, on the other hand, does not designate an object directly. Rather it is capable of denoting an object that satisfies its descriptive content. We think that the contribution made by a definite description to a proposition is rather complex. To have knowledge by description is to know that one and only one object possesses a certain property. Russell's account of logically proper names is indeed inconsistent with the descriptive theses. When we talk of descriptive or classical account of reference after Russell we are primarily convened with Russell's descriptive theory of proper names what we generally terms as 'ordinary proper names'. Except expressions containing logical proper names, all other referring expressions are descriptions. Thus, Russell's theory of description would be an integral part of the descriptive program of theory of reference.

Strawson's paper 'On Denoting' (1950) poses what is still an influential objection to Russell's theory of descriptions. Strawson bases his objection on certain distinction that Russell neglected. Strawson insists, "'Referring' is not something an expression does; it is something that someone can use an expression to do. Mentioning, or referring to, something is a characteristic of a use of an expression, just as 'being about' something, and truth-or-falsity, are characteristic of a use of

a sentence.”<sup>53</sup> We think the debate between Russell and Strawson is praiseworthy in philosophy of language. But we think Strawson fails to understand Russell in the true sense of the term. First and foremost their interpretations and approaches are different in nature. Russell’s descriptive theory of reference would be a part of semantics; whereas Strawson outlook is pragmatic in nature. Thus, at the very outset there lies methodological difference. Of course, expressions are used to refer; assertions are true or false and sentences are used to make true or false assertions. Nevertheless, these distinctions fail to undermine Russell’s theory. Let us state how Strawson represents Russell’s position. According to Russell, anyone who asserted “The king of France is wise” would be asserting that ‘there is one and only one king of France and whoever is king of France is wise’. If this is what Russell held, Strawson’s objection would have merit. But Russell’s talks not about assertions would have merit. However, Russell talks not about assertions but about sentences and about propositions, which he talks to be the meanings of sentences. We think he does not speak of asserting sentences, and his theory concerns the meanings of description sentences, not assertions made in using them. We think it would have been helpful if Russell had explicitly distinguished between sentences and the assertions made in using sentences, but nothing Russell does say implies that his claims about sentences were to apply to assertions they are used to make.

In Strawson’s view, when a speaker uses a description sentence to make an assertion, not only does the speaker not assert what Russell’s supposedly says he asserts, the speaker does not assert something that has to be either true or false. If there is no king of France, according to Strawson, the assertion of the sentence under consideration is neither true nor false. As a result of that the truth nor falsity of this sentence does not arise and the speaker is not really asserting that there is

---

<sup>53</sup> Strawson, P. F., “On Referring”, 1950, p.80.

a king of France, but is merely implying it. He can successfully use 'the king of France' to refer only if there is a unique king of France. Strawson would later put it, the sentence, not merely the speaker, presupposes the existence and uniqueness of the king of France. By this Strawson perhaps could not mean that the sentence is true or false only if its presupposition holds, for in his view the truth and falsity of sentences does not arise. Rather it would be the assertion made in using the sentence that is true or false, if the presupposition holds. In such a case, presupposition is not a semantic property of sentences.

We think that the trouble with Strawson's objection is that the claims on which it relies pertain not to description sentences but to assertion made in using them. In our sense, Russell's theory of descriptive meaning does not concern such assertions but rather *the meanings of the sentences themselves*. It was meant to exhibit the form of proposition expressed by description sentences, not a theory of their use. Even though Strawson defines presupposition as a property of sentences, it is so only derivatively. The property is not a semantic property and a sentence possesses it only by virtue of a property of assertions made in using the sentence. Our position is that, to be relevant to Russell's theory, it would have to be a *semantic property*, not merely a pragmatic property. Russell examines with regard to semantic property, whereas Strawson criticizes Russell with regard to pragmatic property.

For Russell, descriptions are not meaningful in isolation, but only within the context of a sentence. Russell like Frege was not much interested in language as a system of communication. But he would have agreed that the purpose of using referring expressions in conversation is to identify an object for the hearer. However, the descriptive theory of Russell, Frege and others has been denied by the new approach. According to the new approach, reference is determined by facts outside the mind. The descriptive theory seeks to explain reference in terms of properties of

mental states. We think that the shift from the descriptive program to the new approach was initiated by Donnellan (1966) just by way of introducing a distinction between the referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions. We think that Donnellan's referential/attribution distinction plays an important role in arguments against the descriptive theory of reference. While making the distinction clear, Donnellan starts with the single sentence 'Smith's murderer is insane'. Suppose first that we come upon poor Smith foully murderer. From the brutal manner of the killing and the fact that Smith was the most loveable person in the world, we might explain, "Smith's murderer is insane". I will assume that in a quite ordinary sense we do not know who murdered Smith. This, I shall say, is **an attributive use of the definite description**. Now supposed further that Jones has been charged with Smith's murder and he has been placed on trial. Imagine that there is a discussion of Jones's odd behavior at his trial. We might sum up our impression of the behavior by saying, "Smith's murderer is insane." If someone asks to whom we are referring, by using this description, the answer here is 'Jones'. This is a referential use of a definite description. We think that in the referential use, the intended referent can be identified even though no single entity fits the description used. The intended referent may also be identified even if something else altogether fits the description. In Donnellan's example, the speaker would have been referred successfully to Jones in the trial even if Jones had not been the murderer. In the attributive use, if nothing fits the description, no entity can be said to have been picked out and referred to. Consequently, if nothing fits the description in the referential use, the speaker act may still be successful. If the speech act is in assertion, the speaker may still say something true with respect to his intended referent. However, in the attributive use, if nothing fits the description, the assertion cannot be true of anything.

Summarily it can be said that a description in referential usage is just a tool for identifying the referent and other descriptions that can perform the same task may also be employed. In attributive usage, the speaker is referring to whatever fits the description and there is no particular entity to be identified apart from the description employed. We think Donnellan's distinction will be used here as a methodological tool for the systematic presentation of general objections to the descriptive approach. This does not, however, make sense to say that what Donnellan's has claimed against descriptive theory of reference is right. Kripke, for example, has attacked significant parts of the descriptive theory, while at the same time rejecting some of the alleged consequences of Donnellan's distinction. To me descriptive theory of reference is based on the essence of the referential expressions where essence is determined by meaning. To me the only way to establish the required relation between a referring expression and an object is by having a descriptive content that is associated with an object. This descriptive content in a loose sense is the meaning of the expression. But in the referential uses of definite descriptions, the descriptive content plays no direct role in establishing the relation between the expression and the object. The expression 'Smith is murderer' in its referential use refers to Jones, but the descriptive content seems irrelevant. Of course, there are some cases where reference is established independently of meaning.

A description theory of names explains the referential properties of one category of term, names, by appeal to those of another, definite description. On causal theory, 'a' designates x in virtue of being associated with 'the F which denotes x; designation in terms of denotation/reference. The referential properties of descriptions are explained, in turn, by appeal to those of the general terms: 'the F' denotes x in virtue of the fact that 'F' applies to x and nothing else; denotation is explained in terms of application. It has been criticized by saying that description theories can

give no clues as to how, ultimately, language is *referentially linked to reality*. These theories pass the referential buck, but *the buck must stop somewhere*. We think that the essential incompleteness of description theories of reference was not adequately address or notice until recently. It is still ignored by most writers on reference. Frege himself is responsible for this. While developing his descriptive theory, he does not rule out the reference of empty proper names. Philosophers of language who are common about the view that language refers not sure about the locus of reference and the descriptive theory of reference cannot overcome this shortfall. Hillary Putnam repurposes description theory of **natural kind terms** and in turn helps us to bring out this incompleteness. Imagine that somewhere in the universe there is a planet, Twin Earth. Twin Earth, as its name suggests, is very like Earth. In particular, each Earthling has a doppelganger on Twin Earth who is molecule for molecule the same as the Earthling. Consequently, many Twin Earthlings seek a language that seems like English. Indeed it is phonologically and syntactically the same as English. The question is: Is it semantically the same too? It cannot be if we deem it to include the proper names that Twin Earthlings use, because it is not referentially the same. When an Earthling uses a name in English, he refers to an object on Earth. When his doppelganger uses what is apparently the same name, he refers to an object on Twin Earth. When Friend Oscar declares his voting intentions” ‘I’ll vote for Regan; we need a dangerous president for a dangerous world’. Here he is talking about our local Earthly Regan. Twin Oscar produces an utterance that sounds the same, but he is not referring to Regan. Even he has never heard of Regan nor of any other Earthlings. He has his own problem with in Twin Regan in Twin USA.

It thus shows that reference, and hence meaning, does not depend solely on the association of some words with other words. For all those associations are the same in Twin English as in

English. Further, there is no internal state of the speaker that determines the reference, and hence the meaning, of his words. For Oscar and his twin are alike internally. No association of descriptions or mental images will make Oscar's words refer to Regan rather than Twin Regan. No state of Oscar's brain will do the job. As Putnam put it "meanings' just ain't in the head'. We must look for some relation that language and mind have to things outside themselves to explain meaning. How could meanings be in the head? Meaning depends on reference and reference relates a person and his words to something outside him. To hold that something internal to an object is sufficient to determine its relation to a particular object external to it is to suppose that it has a truly magical power. However, a person no more has the power over the relation of reference than he has it over the relation of kicking, teaching, being taller than, or being the father of. Having said this, there are some important truths in the description theory. The idea that we must know something about an entity in order to refer to it by name is appealing. The idea of reference borrowing is especially important. It highlights what Hillary Putnam calls 'the linguistic division of labour'.<sup>54</sup> Our ability to use our language is, in part, a social capacity. It depends on our interactions with others in a community of varying interests, capacities and expertise. Putnam made the point about general terms: our capacity to talk about chromosomes, microchips and curved space time, despite our ignorance of these things, is a result of our social links to other whose acquaintance with them is more intrinsic. The same is true of names. A person often succeeds in designating an object only in virtue of being at the end of reference chains running through her linguistic community to the object. However, our view of the nature of those links is very different from that of the description theorist.

.....

---

<sup>54</sup> Putnam, Hillary, 1975, 27-28.

**The basic idea of causal theories of reference** is that a term refers to whatever is causally linked to it in a certain way, a way that does not require speakers to have identifying knowledge of the referent. Here the causal links relate speakers to the world and to each other. In our sense, the basic idea of causal theory is based on the idea that the name is introduced ostensibly at a formal or informal dubbling. To perceive something is to be causally affected by it. As a result of that, a witness to the dubbling will gain ability to use the name to designate the object in virtue of one's causal link to the object, i.e., ostension of the object prompted the thoughts which led the use of the name. In short, those present at the dubbling acquires a semantic ability that is causally grounded in the object.

The causal theory of reference is based on three assumptions, such as, (i) referential relations are constituted out of causal relations, (ii) there exists a rich enough set of causal relations to give individuation conditions for the causal *relata* of native utterances and (iii) these rich causal relations are epistemically accessible to the field linguist given the tools at her disposal. Being a behaviorist conceptualist, Quine objects regarding (ii). Assumption (i) can be attacked by arguing that reference cannot be constituted out of causal relations as claimed by the causal theory of reference because **referential relations have normative properties** that causal relations do not. This is how there creates a huge gulf between causality and reference. Here one may claim that causal relations are not sensitive to mistakes about what we are causally interacting with, although referential relations are. We can have causal relations to rabbit even though we think we are trafficking with rabbit fusion. In fact it might be called **Davidsonian strategy** which asserts that causes are part of scientific world picture. Reference, by contrast, must be projected onto natives via a charitable interface with a simultaneous attribution of beliefs to them. In this sense we can say that even if assumption (ii) is right, still reference cannot be

constituted out of causal relation. For Davidson, reference is *a theoretical relation* rather than a causal relation. We have slightly a different position unlike *Davidsonian strategy*. We want to say something more about how the causal theorist should defend assumption (i) and argue that the normative flavor we sense in reference is there because of its links to truth. Thus, he should argue that there is nothing more to reference than what we do to refer. We think that assumption (iii) can be attacked by a variant of the *Davidsonian strategy* against (i). To recognize how natives are affected causally, we must attribute psychological states to them. But these are beliefs and so access to the very causes that the causal theorist needs are themselves inextricably tied up with belief-attribution. Accordingly, it can be said that these causes are not robust items independent of variations in how we attribute beliefs to natives, but the softer result of the holism of interpretation.

Another related way to attack assumption (iii) is to grant epistemic access to the causal relations constituting reference, but deny that the particular causal relations is actually constitute reference can be distinguished from other causal relations without attributing beliefs. In fact, there is much discrimination to causal imputes that does not emerge into the light of reference. While responding to both of these attacks we can say that the Davidsonian has the *evidential picture* backwards. Recognition of the appropriate causal factors precedes psychological attribution and hence does not rely on it. The robustness of the pertinent causal factors and our access to them are veiled by the language describing the relevant causes, because such language is invariably *psychologically loaded*. However, the apparently holistic latitude is psychological attribution encloses a rigid core of appropriate causal relations that underwrite successful psychological attributions. Accordingly, the causal theorist concedes the need to attribute beliefs, but at the same time denies this infirms the robustness of the causal factors recognized. The question then

is: what causal relation can individuate the object being causally interacted with in a way that the causal theorist needs? If we are restricted to perpetual relations, we will not find any. These relations are, at best, to the surfaces of things. The causal relations needed are those at work during the *entire history* of the interaction of a speaker with a kind of thing. If I point at the ocean or at a rabbit, my causal relations at that moment are pretty limited in both cases. In fact, there is nothing to reveal whether my interaction with the ocean is with one big thing or with lots of little things. The same is true of rabbit fusion. However, once my interactional capacities to make distinctions among things are brought to bear on the situation, and my causal history with regard to the ocean, and to rabbits, is perused, it can be seen that the ocean –causally speaking- is one big thing for me, and that rabbits are not. This, however, makes clear those causal relations are rich enough to individuate things in quite different ways and it is also easy to perceive that creatures with different powers individuate things differently.

The other limitation of **causal theory of reference**, we do reckon, is that it is not committed to a metaphysical claim about there being a fact in nature about how things are individuated. Metaphysics deals with being-qua-being and the causal theory of reference cannot reach up to that level. Instead, a causal theorist can at best be said that in most general cases the causal relations between a speaker and a kind of thing provide individuation conditions: they tell us the causally relevant units the speaker interacts with. Devitt claims that the causal theory of reference cannot fix references of the natural kind terms of our language because talk of ‘causality’ is just more theory and this theory can be reinterpreted along with all the previously reinterpreted theory. This clearly suggests that the causal theory of reference in isolation cannot determine the reference of referential expressions. The causal theorist thinks that what fixes the references of terms are causal relations. He thinks that there is a fact of the matter about whether

causality or something else does this fixing. So it's no argument against him to invoke causality as a possibility for our referential account. He can protest that, after all, there is no reason to think whatsoever the relations that fix our terms causal ones. We think that the causal relations the causal theorist wants are ones studied in science, namely, biology, sociology, physics, etc. In fact, the causal relations in question should amount to other relations we are already familiar with in other terms, relations, like 'touches', 'sees', 'hears about', etc. What we can say at this juncture is that the causal theory of reference will not rely on accounts we have of resources for fixing the references of relation-terms between us and the world. At the end we conclude by saying that the actual causal relations is underwriting the referential relations holding between terms and their referents.

Putnam offers us an interesting causal theory of reference. He always carefully prefaces his presentation of permutation argument with a discussion of 'operational' and 'theoretical' constraints on reference. Theoretical constraints are a set of sentences fixed in truth-value and containing the terms in question. These are assertability conditions associated with our sentences or experimental conditions that can be measured or observed. The operational and theoretical constraints exhaust all our resources for fixing the references of the terms of the language what Putnam called 'metaphysical realism' which holds that our terms refer to external objects must be wrong. As the argument applies to all our terms, one possible way of attempting to fix reference by the causal theory of reference seems ruled out. Accordingly, talk of causality is just more theory and one can reinterpret the term 'causes' just as we reinterpret any other term. In this regard we perceive a philosophical debate between Putnam and his opponents, namely, Devitt, Glymour, and Lewis. The first objection they raised against Putnam's causal theory of reference is that there is nothing to do with the word 'cause'; rather it has to do with *causality*

*itself*. For them, it is causality, i.e., the causal glue between the uses of our terms and the world, that fixes the references of our terms, and, consequently, it is that same causality that fixes what ‘cause’ itself refers to Putnam. Putnam begs the question against the causal theorist by shifting from causality to ‘causality’. Having said this, we think Putnam deserves credit for giving a slightly different causal theory of reference. Here he is taken to be employing a kind of skeptical strategy stating that the causal theorist tells a story about how our terms refer and on the basis of this the causal sceptic then ask questions about how the terms for that story are referentially fixed. Glymour (1982:177) describes it as an *endless dialogue* and in turn draws an analogy with logical positivistic demands for definitions. Devitt alludes to the childish habit of always asking ‘why’ and notes that the possibility of such a maneuver does not show the desire goal. Lewis’s position is far more interesting as he says that what Putnam has shown is that a ‘voluntaristic’ theory of reference that eventually leads to disaster. According to Putnam, since language is a creature of human convention, we can refer however we like and we have seen fit to establish a language in which reference works thus, individually or collectively, implicitly or explicitly, we have made this theory of reference true by definition. “We interpret our language or nothing does” If it were to be the case, then surely any proposed constraint would be just more theory. Because the stipulation that establishes the constraint would be something we say or think something we thereby add to total theory.<sup>55</sup> Lewis then concludes by saying, “Referring isn’t just something we do. What we say and think not only doesn’t settle what we refer to’ it does not even settle the prior question of how it is to be settled what we refer to. Meanings – as the saying goes – just ain’t in the head.”<sup>56</sup> Here Lewis sees two ways out of this quandary. Either one must stick with a causal theory of reference, not causal description, not the view that it is a theory

---

<sup>55</sup> Lewis, David., ‘Putnam’s Paradox’, *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, p.63.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.63.

using causal terminology that fixes reference, or one must adopt elite classes, i.e., a coarser grid of available extensions for kind terms than that afforded by set theory. For Putnam, causal connection is attached to a particular referential relation by causal connection, not by any metaphysical glue. Accordingly, it can be said that causal connection is self-identifying. Here Devitt and Glymour emerge Putnam at the wrong point. To them, Putnam's error is similar to that in Quine's *Word and Object* (1960). According to Putnam, a causal theorist must take operational constraints seriously, because they contain the causal relations needed to affix terms to the world. However, such constraints are not operational. As a result of that operational constraints, on the causal picture, cut deep into the world. They don't stop only at what we observe, and consequently, to honor their restraints we must accept that they fix more than appearances. We think that Putnam's operational constraints stop at the observational level and at times he claims that 'operational constraint' and 'observational constraint' are *interchangeable*.<sup>57</sup> Here we see that Putnam's position is at par with Quine's position that a strict distinction between theory and observation is not available. Putnam claims that 'cause' is just a word and each time critics think he is opening himself. Anyway, we think that Putnam's version of the permutation argument that has been based on operational constraints is too weak as they are explicit, observational constraints only. Putnam says nothing about exactly how far the causal resources available to us to underwrite reference fall short.

The other important aspect is that while developing the causal theory of reference, one should be alert about **the ontological status of causality**. It is particularly relevant to know about how Kripke elicits intuitions to support a causal interpretation as opposed to descriptive interpretation. Suppose, someone says that a baby is born and his parents call him by a certain

---

<sup>57</sup> Putnam, Hillary, 'Model Theory and the Factuality of Semantics', in Alexander George (ed.), *Reflections on Chomsky*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1989, p.215.

name. They talked about him to their parents. Other people meet him. Through various sorts of talk the name is spread from link to link as just like a chain. A speaker who is on the far end of this chain, who has heard about, say Richard Feynman, in the market place or elsewhere, may be referring to Richard Feynman even though he cannot remember from whom he first heard of Feynman or from whom he ever heard of Feynman. He knows that Feynman is a famous physicist. A certain passage of communication reaching ultimately to the man himself does reach the speaker. He then is referring to Feynman even though he cannot identify him uniquely. It thus reflects that our reference depends not just on what we think ourselves in the line of classical theory of reference, but on the other people of community, the history of how the name reached one, and things like that. It is by following such a history that one gets to the reference.<sup>58</sup> Here the pertinent discussions of the epistemic and ontological status of observational regularities can be brought to bear on the epistemic and ontological status of these causal relations. In this way the claims made there about observational regularities can be used to justify to some extent theories of reference that depend on causality in a serious way. In this way one can find a way out against the objections raised against the causal theory of reference. Here just remember Hume. Hume says that causal relations are nothing but constant conjunctions and that the necessity or law-likeness of such connections is imposed. The notion of ‘cause’ or ‘regularity’ is a purely theoretical one. Causes are events which are not observed in any sense. Hume’s position is hiddenly reflected in Davidson when he goes on to say that *reference is a theoretical relation that arises only within the context of the imposition of a truth-theory on a language and consequently it cannot be used by the causal theorist to fix reference as he would like*. However, the causal theorist again can reject this charge by pointing out that the causal relations in question are **observational regularities**.

---

<sup>58</sup> See Kripke, Saul, *Naming and Necessity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980, p.91.

The causal theorist, we think, also avoids the requirement that reference be identifiable in physicalistically acceptable scientific terms by noting that gross regularities are epistemically independent of the empirical sciences. The term ‘refers’ may pick out the appropriate causal relations without their being a definition of ‘refers’ available in more pristine causal terminology that can do the job. Now let us consider two arguments raised by Putnam against the causal theory of reference which are directed to nullify causality sufficient robustness for the causal theorist to take it as fixing the reference of empirical terms. The first argument has been developed by Putnam in his essay “Beyond Historicism” (1983a). It raises the concern that causality must link ‘cause’ itself to its referent. The second argument as raised by Putnam simply states that the ordinary use of ‘cause’ presupposes a distinction between *causes* and *standing conditions*. But such a distinction is related to **explanation** according to Putnam. Putnam illustrates this point just by citing a beautiful example. If a pressure-cooker has a stuck valve and explodes, we may say the stuck valve was a cause of the explosion, but we would never say the absence of the holes in the body of the vessel caused the explosion, despite the fact that the absence of other holes in the body of the vessel is a reason why there was an explosion and moreover despite the fact that a stuck valve just amounts to the absence of such a hole. The notion of cause needed here is one largely couched in ordinary language, and context-sensitive and interest-relative. Putnam clearly thinks the causal relation therefore must be a product of our theorizing in the sense that it cannot be a robust relation between us and items independent of our theorizing. Thus for Putnam, the notion of causation has a **cognitive dimension**, even when we use it in a statement about innominate object. The cognitive or intentional dimension lies in part in the presupposition that hearers of the statement regard such facts as that the vessel of the pressure cooker does not have a hole in it as ‘background conditions’ which may be taken for

granted. Even Wittgenstein denies the causal theory of reference and finds transcendence of reference. In this regard Wittgenstein says, “If you’re asked: How do you know that it is a thought of such and such?” the thought that immediately comes to your mind is that of a shadow, a picture. You don’t think of a causal relation. The kind of relation you think of is best expressed by ‘picture’, ‘shadow’, etc.” We cannot rule out the elusivity of reference. All these as a whole suggest that reference cannot be denied in terms of underlying causal relations, nor can causal procedures of any sort be used to argument or restrict our notion of reference, just as truth cannot be characterized in terms of whatever truth-gathering methods are available at a given time. There might be instances of gold that we could never causally interact with no matter how much we perfect our procedures. However unlike referential irrealists we do not draw the conclusion that causality has nothing to do with reference. Our problem is related with the assertion of robust causality. It is not clear what role causality plays in our referential practices to ensure it as robust.

Even though the causal theory of reference is oversimplified in various ways, but it has many attractive features. First, it seems that it shares with description theories the capacity to account some special features of natural language, namely, stimulus independence, arbitrariness, medium independence. A name is stimulus independent in that the causal chain on which its use depends does not require the presence of the object. It is arbitrary and medium independent in that any symbol in any medium can be placed in the appropriate causal relation to the object. However, unlike description theories, it can also account for the apparent abstractness of proper names. Secondly, we think that the causal theory of reference avoids the problems of descriptive theory of reference. Since a name does not abbreviate a cluster of definite descriptions, there is no problem selecting which descriptions are in the cluster for a person. Here the connection between

naming and knowing is cut and here we do not require the name users be able to identify bearers. Here we sense a different view of competence with a name. Here no lender to be an expert about the object. Thirdly, the theory can solve the problem of identity statements. Here we identify the sense with the type of d-chain that makes up the network for the name. Moreover, the causal theory promises an explanation of the ultimate links between language and the world. The explanation in terms of causation seems agreeably naturalistic. We need an explanation of the external relation that the whole system of words bears to the world. We emphasized this with the help of Putnam's Twin-Earth fantasy. The causal theory of reference actually makes the reference of names dependent on an external relation. The causal theory of reference distinguishes empty names from nonsense syllables and there asserted that an empty name has an underlying causal network. What makes it empty is that its network is not property grounded in an object. Two reasons are behind this. First, a name may be introduced as results of a false posit and a person wrongly thinks that an entity exists. Secondly and more importantly, a name may be introduced in what is explicitly or implicitly a work of fiction, a story, novel, film, etc.

**The neoclassical theory** appears as a synthesis of descriptive theory and causal theory of reference. The classical or descriptive theory of reference asserts that knowledge of the meaning of a word is the basis on which speakers use it to refer. It is supposed to explain how the speakers have fixed, intersubjective criteria for applying words in their language and on the basis of this explanation it accounts for necessary truth in terms of criterion inclusion. The causal theory states that knowledge of causal relations to *an earlier baptismal ceremony* is the basis on which speakers refer. The causal theory of reference sees the weak point of the classical theory of reference precisely based on its conception of a doctrine of necessary truth. Thus, the causal theory of reference clearly stands against the classical theory of reference. The neoclassical

theory by contrasting it with the classical theory attempts to show how the differences enable it to avoid the causal theorist's objection to the classical theory. We think neoclassical theory differs from the classical theory in the sense that the neoclassical theory takes an uncompromised rationalist stance on natural languages. This can avoid the contradiction in the classical theory. It takes the stance adopting by Noam Chomsky's rationalist theory of grammatical structure. We think that Chomsky's position eventually helps neoclassical theory to escape the problem Donnellan found with the classical theory. The neoclassical theory thus supplies missing principle that we notice in classical theory, to distinguish sense and reference, semantic structure and extra linguistic belief, meaning and use.

Thus, we do conclude by saying that even though language refers and it has been accepted without begging question, but what language refers, where it refers and what is /are the modalities of referring is a matter of serious philosophical debate. This research works reflects it adequately. Philosophers of language were involved over the years to find a way out to the solution of the problem of reference, but there we do not find a single theory that would be taken without question begging. This actually reflects the importance and complexity of this theory within the realm of philosophy of language. The problem would remain so long linguistic philosophers would fail to come under the same perception about the very nature of language as well as the very nature of reality.