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MILLIAN DESCRIPTIVISM*

ABSTRACT. In this paper, I argue against Millian Descriptivism: that is, the view that, although sentences that contain names express singular propositions, when they use those sentences speakers communicate descriptive propositions. More precisely, I argue that Millian Descriptivism fares no better (or worse) than Fregean Descriptivism: that is, the view that sentences express descriptive propositions. This is bad news for Millian Descriptivists who think that Fregean Descriptivism is dead.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I argue against Millian Descriptivism: that is, the view that, although sentences that contain names express singular propositions, when they use those sentences speakers communicate descriptive propositions. Or, more precisely, I argue that Millian Descriptivism fares no better (or worse) than Fregean Descriptivism: that is, the view that sentences that contain names express descriptive propositions. This is bad news for Millian Descriptivists who think that Fregean Descriptivism is dead. In Section 1, I present Millian Descriptivism; in Section 2, I present arguments for the claim that Millian Descriptivism can't solve the problems that it's supposed to; and, in Section 3, I argue that, if Millian Descriptivists can reply to the arguments from the previous section, then Fregean Descriptivists can reply to parallel arguments against Fregean Descriptivism.

2. MILLIAN AND FREGEAN DESCRIPTIVISM

There is a dispute between *Millianism* and *Fregeanism* about the contents of names, where the content of a name is what it contributes to the propositions expressed by sentences that

contain it. According to Millianism, the content of a name is the object that it refers to. As a result, a sentence that contains a name expresses a singular proposition, one that contains the object that the name refers to.¹ According to Fregeanism, by contrast, the content of a name is, not the object that it refers to, but rather a mode of presentation of that object, where a mode of presentation is something that picks out that object. There is a further dispute within Fregeanism about what modes of presentation are. According to *Fregean Descriptivism*, modes of presentation are descriptive: that is, they pick out objects by describing them as having certain properties. As a result, a sentence that contains a name expresses a descriptive proposition, one that contains a descriptive mode of presentation.² According to *Fregean Nondescriptivism*, by contrast, modes of presentation are nondescriptive: that is, they pick out objects, but not by describing them as having certain properties.

There are two well-known problems with Millianism.³ The first problem is about the cognitive value of simple sentences. For example, it seems that

(1) Cary = Cary.

and

(2) Cary = Archie.

differ in cognitive value: (1) is trivial, uninformative, and *a priori*; whereas (2) is nontrivial, informative, and *a posteriori*. But “Cary” and “Archie” corefer. (“Cary Grant” is the screen name of Archibald Alexander Leach.) So, according to Millianism, (1) and (2) express the same singular proposition and hence it seems that Millianism cannot account for the apparent difference in cognitive value between them. The second problem is about the truth-value of propositional-attitude ascriptions. For example, it seems that

(3) George believes that Cary = Cary

and

(4) George believes that Cary = Archie

can differ in truth-value: (3) can be true even if (4) is false. (3) expresses a proposition, about George and the proposition expressed by (1), to the effect and he bears the belief relation to it; and (4) expresses a proposition, about George and the proposition expressed by (2), to the effect that he bears the belief relation to it. And, according to Millianism, (1) and (2) express the same proposition. So, according to Millianism, (3) and (4) also express the same proposition and hence it seems that Millianism cannot account for the apparent difference in truth-value between them.

Fregean Descriptivism can avoid these problems, but Fregean Descriptivism faces three well-known problems of its own.⁴ The first problem is about the truth-value of simple sentences. For example, it seems that

(5) Peano is Italian.

is true. But the descriptive mode of presentation that speakers associate with “Peano” might be given by “the discoverer of the Peano axioms”, and that descriptive mode of presentation picks out Richard Dedekind rather than Giuseppe Peano. In that case, assuming that the descriptive mode of presentation that is the content of a name is the descriptive mode of presentation that speakers associate with that name, Fregean Descriptivism entails that (5) expresses the proposition that the discoverer of the Peano axioms is Italian; and that proposition is false, since Dedekind is not Italian.⁵ So it seems that Fregean Descriptivism cannot account for the apparent truth-value of (5). This is *the semantic argument* against Fregean Descriptivism. The second and third problems are about the modal and epistemic profile of simple sentences, where the modal profile of a sentence includes information about whether it’s necessary or contingent and the epistemic profile of a sentence includes information about whether it’s *a priori* or *a posteriori*. For example, it seems that

(6) If Cary exists, then Cary is an actor.

is neither necessary nor *a priori*. But the descriptive mode of presentation that speakers associate with “Cary” might be

given by “the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story*”. In that case, assuming again that the descriptive mode of presentation that is the content of a name is the descriptive mode of presentation that speakers associate with that name, Fregean Descriptivism entails that (6) expresses the proposition that, if the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* exists, then the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* is an actor; and that proposition is necessary *a priori*. (6) doesn’t seem necessary; but, according to Fregean Descriptivism, the proposition it expresses might be; so it seems that Fregean Descriptivism cannot account for the modal profile of (6). This is *the modal argument* against Fregean Descriptivism. Similarly, (6) doesn’t seem *a priori*; but, according to Fregean Descriptivism, the proposition it expresses might be; so it seems that Fregean Descriptivism cannot account for the epistemic profile of (6) either. This is *the epistemic argument* against Fregean Descriptivism.

To avoid the arguments against Fregean Descriptivism, one might want to adopt Millianism instead. But, in that case, one would need to solve the two problems with Millianism. To solve these problems, some Millians say that, although sentences that contain names express singular propositions, when they use those sentences speakers communicate descriptive propositions.⁶ (The expressing relation is to be distinguished from the communicating relation: the first holds between *sentences* and propositions, whereas the second holds between *speakers* and propositions.) This is *Millian Descriptivism*.⁷

Millian Descriptivists disagree about a number of details: for example, about (i) how descriptive propositions are communicated, (ii) what sorts of descriptive propositions are communicated, and (iii) how many descriptive propositions are communicated. First, some Millian Descriptivists think that speakers communicate descriptive propositions by asserting them. For example, Soames (2002: 212–213) says,

Suppose that Harry reads an obituary and forms a belief that he expresses to Tom by assertively uttering, *Carl Hempel died last week . . .* In

so doing, Harry asserts a proposition the content of which is approximated by [S1].

[S1]. The philosopher Carl Hempel died last week.

Later, Tom reports Harry's belief to Dick by assertively uttering [S2].

[S2]. Harry believes that Carl Hempel died last week.

... [I]n assertively uttering [S2] Tom conveys, and even asserts, a proposition the content of which is approximated by [S3] ...

[S3]. Harry believes that the philosopher Carl Hempel died last week. (emphases in original)

By contrast, other Millian Descriptivists think that speakers communicate descriptive propositions by conveying them without asserting them, in some cases by using sentences that conventionally implicate those descriptive propositions. For example, Michael Thau (2002: 173) says of "Hesperus", "Phosphorus", "Clark Kent", and "Superman",

I want to suggest that these names and other names for which the Fregean intuitions dominate have something like a conventional implicature associated with them. ... [T]hese names have a descriptive content as part of what they *conventionally* implicate. ... [A] sentence of the form *Hesperus is F*, besides conveying to listeners that Hesperus is F, also conventionally implicates that the thing that satisfies the description is F; and sentences of the form *S believes that Hesperus is F*, besides conveying to listeners that S believes that Hesperus is F, may also convey that S believes that the thing that satisfies the description is F. (emphases in original)

Second, some Millian Descriptivists think that speakers communicate complex descriptive propositions that are expressed by sentences like "The x such that x is an actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* and $x = y$ is an actor" relative to an assignment of Cary Grant to " y ". For example, in the passage quoted above, Soames says that, in uttering "Carl Hempel died last week", a speaker can assert the descriptive proposition expressed by "The philosopher Carl Hempel died last week"; and Soames takes

that proposition to be the one expressed by “The x such that x is a philosopher and $x = y$ died last week” relative to an assignment of Carl Hempel to “ y ” (see e.g. Soames 2002: 142). By contrast, other Millian Descriptivists seem to think that speakers communicate simple descriptive propositions that are expressed by sentences like “The actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* is an actor”. For example, Thau (2002: 173) suggests that the descriptions that competent speakers associate with “Superman” and “Clark Kent” are “the super-powered protector of Metropolis” and “the bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter”, respectively, rather than “the x such that x is a super-powered protector of Metropolis and $x = y$ ” and “the x such that x is a bespectacled *Daily Planet* reporter and $x = y$ ” relative to an assignment of Superman to “ y ”.

Third, some Millian Descriptivists think that speakers communicate multiple descriptive propositions. For example, Soames (2002: 83) says that, in “the most common” sort of cases, there is a range of descriptive propositions q_1, \dots, q_n such that “it is determinate that the speaker’s utterance [of a single sentence] is an assertion of each q_i .” By contrast, other Millian Descriptivists seem to think that speakers don’t communicate multiple descriptive propositions. For example, in the passage quoted above, Thau (2002: 173) considers only two propositions that speakers communicate when they use a sentence of the form ‘Hesperus is ϕ ’: one singular, the other descriptive.

But, although they disagree about details such as these, Millian Descriptivists agree that sentences that contain names express singular propositions and that, when they use those sentences, speakers communicate – in one way or another – descriptive propositions. Millian Descriptivists also agree that those descriptive propositions play a role in solving the two problems with Millianism. According to Millian Descriptivism, (1) and (2) express the same singular proposition; but, when they use those sentences, speakers can communicate different descriptive propositions. For example, when they use (1) speakers might communicate the trivial, uninformative,

and *a priori* proposition that the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* = the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story*; whereas when they use (2) they might communicate the nontrivial, informative, and *a posteriori* proposition that the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* = the boy from Bristol who ran away to join an acrobatic troupe. This is supposed to explain speakers' intuition that (1) and (2) differ in cognitive value. Similarly, according to Millian Descriptivism, (3) and (4) express the same singular proposition; but, when they use those sentences, speakers can communicate different descriptive propositions. For example, when they use (3) speakers might communicate the true proposition that George bears the belief relation to the proposition that the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* = the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story*; whereas when they use (4) speakers might communicate the false proposition that George bears that relation to the proposition that the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* = the boy from Bristol who ran away to join an acrobatic troupe. This is supposed to explain speakers' intuition that (3) and (4) differ in truth-value.⁸

To solve the problems with Millianism, Millian Descriptivists must assume that speakers' intuitions about sentences that contain names – particularly about the truth-value and cognitive value of those sentences – are sensitive, in one way or another, to the descriptive propositions that they communicate when they use those sentences. This is *the explanatory hypothesis*. On one version of the explanatory hypothesis, speakers have the intuition that (1) and (2) differ in cognitive value because, when they use those sentences, speakers communicate descriptive propositions that do differ in cognitive value; and speakers have the intuition that (3) and (4) differ in truth-value because, when they use those sentences, speakers communicate descriptive propositions that do differ in truth-value. This is *the metaphysical version* of the explanatory hypothesis. On another version of the explanatory hypothesis, speakers have the intuition that (1) and (2) differ

in cognitive value because, when they use those sentences, speakers communicate descriptive propositions that they *believe* to differ in cognitive value; and speakers have the intuition that (3) and (4) differ in truth-value because, when they use those sentences, speakers communicate descriptive propositions that they *believe* to differ in truth-value. This is *the epistemological version* of the explanatory hypothesis.

3. ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE EXPLANATORY HYPOTHESIS

To solve the problems with Millianism, Millian Descriptivists need to appeal to some version of the explanatory hypothesis. But the semantic argument against Fregean Descriptivism can be turned into an argument against the metaphysical version of that hypothesis. For example, it seems that

(5) Peano is Italian.

is true. But, according to Millian Descriptivism, when they use (5) speakers might communicate the proposition that the discoverer of the Peano axioms is Italian; and that proposition is false, since Dedekind is not Italian. And, according to the metaphysical version of the explanatory hypothesis, speakers should have the intuition that (5) is false. But they don't. So the metaphysical version of the explanatory hypothesis is false. Still, speakers who communicate the descriptive proposition that the discoverer of the Peano axioms is Italian when they use (5) believe that that proposition is true. So, according the epistemological version of the explanatory hypothesis, speakers should have the intuition that (5) is true. And they do. So the semantic argument against Fregean Descriptivism can't obviously be turned into an argument against the epistemological version of the explanatory hypothesis.

But the modal and epistemic arguments against Fregean Descriptivism can be turned into arguments against either version of the explanatory hypothesis. For example, it seems that

(6) If Cary exists, then Cary is an actor.

is neither necessary nor *a priori*. But, according to Millian Descriptivism, when they use (6) speakers might communicate the descriptive proposition that, if the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* exists, then the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* is an actor. According to the explanatory hypothesis, speakers' intuitions about the truth-value and cognitive value of (6) are sensitive to that descriptive proposition. It is implausible that speakers' intuitions about modal profile have a different source than their intuitions about truth-value. After all, the modal profile of a sentence includes, not only whether it's necessary or contingent, but also which worlds it's true in and hence whether it's actually true; and it's implausible that speakers' intuitions about whether a sentence is actually true should have a different source than their intuitions about whether it's true *simpliciter*. Similarly, it's implausible that speakers' intuitions about epistemic profile have a different source than their intuitions about cognitive value. After all, the cognitive value of a sentence includes whether it's *a priori* or *a posteriori*, as does its epistemic profile. So the explanatory hypothesis should cover speakers' intuitions, not only about the truth-value and cognitive value of sentences, but also about the modal and epistemic profile of sentences. In that case, speakers' intuitions about the modal and epistemic profile of (6) should be sensitive to the descriptive proposition that, if the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* exists, then the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* is an actor. That proposition is necessary *a priori*, and speakers believe that it is. So, according to either version of the explanatory hypothesis, speakers should have the intuition that (6) is necessary *a priori*. But they don't. So neither version of the explanatory hypothesis is true.⁹

There are a number of replies that Millian Descriptivists might make, but none of them is particularly promising. First, Millian Descriptivists might say that there is something special about the form of (6) in virtue of which speakers have the intuition that it is contingent *a posteriori*.¹⁰ But this reply

is implausible, since it requires speakers' intuitions about the modal and epistemic profile of (6) to have a different source than their intuitions about its truth-value and cognitive value: their intuitions about the modal and epistemic profile of (6) come from its form, whereas their intuitions about its truth-value and cognitive value come from the descriptive propositions that they communicate when they use it.

Second, Millian Descriptivists might say that, when they use (6), speakers communicate many descriptive propositions, not all of which are necessary *a priori*. For example, when they use (6) speakers might also communicate the descriptive proposition that, if the guy who married Dyan exists, then the guy who married Dyan is an actor. That proposition is contingent *a posteriori*, and speakers believe that it is. Millian Descriptivists might say that speakers have the intuition that a sentence is necessary *a priori* only if all of the propositions that they communicate when they use it are necessary *a priori*. But speakers have the intuition that

- (7) If the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* exists, then the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* is an actor.

is necessary *a priori*, even if one of the propositions that they communicate when they use it is the contingent, *a posteriori* singular proposition that, if Cary exists, then Cary is an actor.

Or, third, Millian Descriptivists might say that, when they use (6), speakers communicate the rigidified descriptive proposition that, if the x such that x is actually the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* exists, then the x such that x is actually the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* is an actor. That proposition is contingent, and speakers believe that it is contingent. So, according to either version of the explanatory hypothesis, speakers should have the intuition that (6) is contingent, and they do. But the rigidified descriptive proposition is *a priori*, and speakers believe that it is.¹¹ So, according to either version of the explanatory hypothesis, speakers should

have the intuition that (6) is *a priori*. But they don't. So neither version of the explanatory hypothesis is true.

4. FREGEAN DESCRIPTIVISM REDUX

Perhaps one of the replies considered above works. (Perhaps speakers' intuitions about modal and epistemic profile do have a different source than their intuitions about truth-value and cognitive value; or perhaps speakers don't have the intuition that (7) is necessary *a priori* when they use it to communicate a contingent *a posteriori* singular proposition; or perhaps the rigidified descriptive proposition is *a posteriori*.) So perhaps Millian Descriptivists can reply to the modal and epistemic arguments against the explanatory hypothesis.

But, even if so, Millian Descriptivists should not rest easy. For Millian Descriptivists use the modal and epistemic arguments against Fregean Descriptivism.¹² And, if Millian Descriptivists can reply to the modal and epistemic arguments against the explanatory hypothesis, then Fregean Descriptivists can reply to the modal and epistemic arguments against Fregean Descriptivism. First, Millian Descriptivists might say, "When they use (6), speakers communicate a descriptive proposition that is necessary *a priori*; but they have the intuition that (6) is contingent *a priori* because of its form". But then Fregean Descriptivists could say, "(6) expresses a descriptive proposition that is necessary *a priori*; but speakers have the intuition that (6) is contingent *a priori* because of its form". Second, Millian Descriptivists might say, "When they use (6), speakers communicate many descriptive propositions, not all of which are necessary *a priori*; so they don't have the intuition that (6) is necessary *a priori*". But then Fregean Descriptivists could say, "(6) expresses a descriptive proposition that is necessary *a priori*; but, when they use (6), speakers communicate many other descriptive propositions, not all of which are necessary *a priori*; so they don't have the intuition that (6) is necessary *a priori*". Or, third, Millian Descriptivists might say, "When they use (6), speakers communicate a rigidified descriptive proposition, which explains why

speakers have the intuition that (6) is contingent *a posteriori*". But then Fregean Descriptivists could say, "(6) expresses a rigidified descriptive proposition, which explains why speakers have the intuition that (6) is contingent *a posteriori*". Millian Descriptivists need to explain why speakers have the intuition that (6) is contingent *a posteriori*. So do Fregean Descriptivists. The replies considered so far support the following generalization: *If the explanation that Millian Descriptivists offer of speakers' intuition that (6) is neither necessary nor a priori doesn't appeal to the content of (6), then Fregean Descriptivists can avail themselves of that explanation, too.*¹³

Millian Descriptivists might concede that the modal and epistemic arguments don't work against Fregean Descriptivism; instead, Millian Descriptivists might rely solely on the semantic argument against Fregean Descriptivism, since that argument can't obviously be turned into an argument against the epistemological version of the explanatory hypothesis.¹⁴ This reply concedes that the case against Fregean Descriptivism is much weaker than most Millians think. And it does not say how either Fregean Descriptivists or Millian Descriptivists can get around the modal and epistemic arguments. But, more importantly, Fregean Descriptivists can reply to the semantic argument. They might say that, although

(5) Peano is Italian.

expresses the false descriptive proposition that the discoverer of the Peano axioms is Italian, when they use that sentence speakers communicate a true singular proposition, about Peano, to the effect that he is Italian. This reply might have any number of vices; but, at least on the face of it, it is analogous to the Millian Descriptivists' reply to the second problem with Millianism: although

(3) George believes that Cary = Archie.

expresses a true singular proposition, when they use that sentence speakers communicate a false proposition, about

George and the descriptive proposition that the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* = the boy from Bristol who ran away to join an acrobatic troupe, to the effect that he bears the belief relation to it. So it seems that, if Millian Descriptivists can solve the second problem with Millianism, then Fregean Descriptivists can reply to the semantic argument against Fregean Descriptivism.

Millian Descriptivists say that sentences that contain names express singular propositions. As a result, Millian Descriptivists have no trouble accounting for the apparent truth-value of

- (5) Peano is Italian.

or the apparent modal and epistemic profile of

- (6) If Cary exists, then Cary is an actor.

But singular propositions don't account for the apparent cognitive value of

- (1) Cary = Cary.

and

- (2) Cary = Archie.

or for the apparent truth-value of

- (3) George believes that Cary = Cary.

and

- (4) George believes that Cary = Archie.

To account for the apparent cognitive value and truth-value of these sentences, Millian Descriptivists appeal to the descriptive propositions that speakers communicate when they use those sentences.

Fregean Descriptivists say that sentences that contain names express descriptive propositions. As a result, Fregean Descriptivists have no trouble accounting for the apparent cognitive value of (1) and (2) or the apparent truth-value of (3) and (4). But descriptive propositions don't account for the

apparent truth-value of (5) or the apparent modal and epistemic profile of (6). To account for the apparent truth-value and the apparent modal and epistemic profile of these sentences, Fregean Descriptivists can appeal to the singular propositions that speakers communicate when they use those sentences. Millian Descriptivists might explain speakers' intuitions about some sentences by appealing to the content of those sentences: that is, by appealing to singular propositions. But, even if so, Fregean Descriptivists can mimic those explanations by saying that, when they use those sentences, speakers communicate those singular propositions. The generalization drawn earlier can be strengthened: *Even if the explanation that Millian Descriptivists offer of speakers' intuitions about some sentence appeals to the content of that sentence, Fregean Descriptivists can offer a parallel explanation, by saying that speakers communicate the proposition that Millian Descriptivists say is the content of that sentence.* As a result, Millian Descriptivism fares no better (or worse) than Fregean Descriptivism.

NOTES

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¹ See, for example, Braun 1998, 2002; Salmon 1981, 1986; Soames 2002; Thau 2002.

² See, for example, Jackson 1998, Sosa 2001, Stanley 1997.

³ These problems come from Frege 1892.

⁴ These problems come from Donnellan 1970, Kaplan 1989, and Kripke 1972.

⁵ Strictly speaking, Fregean Descriptivism is not committed to the claim that the descriptive mode of presentation that is the content of a name is

the descriptive mode of presentation that speakers associate with that name. But Fregean Descriptivism is committed to the claim that the content of a name is some descriptive mode of presentation or other, so Fregean Descriptivists who deny that that descriptive mode of presentation is the descriptive mode of presentation that speakers associate with that name would need to provide an alternative account of which descriptive mode of presentation is the content of that name – and why. In the text, I assume that Fregean Descriptivists accept that the descriptive mode of presentation that is the content of a name is the descriptive mode of presentation that speakers associate with that name.

⁶ See Soames 2002, Thau 2002. For similar views, see Barber 2000; Ryckman 1986, 1989. For similar views in the special case of sentences that contain empty names, see Adams and Dietrich 2004; Adams et al 1993, 1997; Adams and Stecker 1994; Adams et al 1992, 1999; Ryckman 1988; Taylor 2000.

⁷ Millianism – that is, the claim that the content of a name is the object that it refers to – can be combined with various descriptivist claims. For example, Millianism can be combined with a descriptivist claim about what speakers communicate: namely, the claim that, when speakers use sentences that contain names, they communicate descriptive propositions. The combination of Millianism and this descriptivist claim is what I call “Millian Descriptivism”. Alternatively, Millianism can be combined with a descriptivist claim about how reference is determined: namely, the claim that the referent of a name is determined by a descriptive mode of presentation that speakers associate with that name (even if that mode of presentation is not part of the propositions expressed by sentences that contain that name). The combination of Millianism and this descriptivist claim is what Kroon (2004) calls “Millian Descriptivism”. In the text, I don’t address the latter view.

⁸ Soames (forthcoming a, forthcoming b) says that he isn’t committed to the view that, in *every* case in which speakers have the intuition that two simple sentences differ in cognitive value or that two propositional-attitude ascriptions differ in truth-value, their intuitions can be explained by appealing to the descriptive propositions that they communicate when they use those sentences. But he thinks that, in *many* such cases (including most, if not all, of the cases discussed in Soames 2002), their intuitions can thus be explained.

⁹ Independently, McKinsey (2005) uses a version of the modal argument against Soames (2002). Sider and Braun (forthcoming) use versions of the semantic and modal arguments against Soames (2002), and Everett (2003) uses a version of the modal argument against Adams et al. (Adams et al 1993, 1997; Adams and Stecker 1994; Adams et al. 1992, 1999) and Taylor (2000).

¹⁰ Adams and Dietrich (2004) offer a parallel response to Everett (2003).

¹¹ Soames (2002) uses the *a priority* of the rigidified descriptive proposition to make a parallel point against Fregean Descriptivism.

¹² For example, Thau (2002: 184) says that Kripke (1972) “drove a stake through the heart” of Fregean Descriptivism and that Soames (2002) “cut off the head and stuffed its mouth full of garlic”.

¹³ Thanks to Tim Schroeder for help with this paragraph. Soames (forthcoming b) suggests that, when they use (6), speakers don’t communicate the descriptive proposition that, if the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* exists, then the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* is an actor; rather, they communicate other descriptive propositions. But then Fregean Descriptivists can say that (6) doesn’t express the descriptive proposition that, if the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* exists, then the actor who played C.K. Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story* is an actor; rather, it expresses some other descriptive proposition. Similarly, Soames (2005) suggests that, when they use (6), speakers communicate a singular proposition that has the right modal profile. But, as we will see, Fregean Descriptivists can say that, too.

¹⁴ In conversation, Mike Thau has suggested that the semantic argument is the strongest argument against Fregean Descriptivism.

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