

*Terms and Truth: Reference Direct and Anaphoric*, by A. Berger.  
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002. Pp. xi + 234. H/b £??.??, \$?.??., P/b £??.??, \$?.??.

If asked for an example of a rigid designator it is likely that one would suggest a name, like 'Aristotle' or 'Tony Blair', or a demonstrative, like 'that book' said whilst pointing at a certain text. Intuitively, what these expressions have in common is the central role they accord to perception of an object: you can see the book you want to talk about, there are people around in our community who have bumped into Tony, and, although no one alive today perceived Aristotle directly, it seems plausible to claim that our ability to use the name now relies on the fact that someone, sometime, did perceive him directly. However, as anyone at all familiar with rigid designation knows, not all such expressions follow this model. Kripke himself stressed that certain definite descriptions have a constant extension across all possible worlds (for example, 'the smallest prime number', 'the actual prime minister of Great Britain now') and thus meet the criterion for being rigid designators; while Kaplan emphasized the role of a descriptive rule in determining the referent for a token utterance of an indexical, like 'I' or 'tomorrow'.

It is this discrepancy between what seem to be very different kinds of referring terms which forms the subject matter of *Terms and Truth*. Berger's aim is to introduce a framework for rigid designation capable of accommodating both perception-based and non-perception-based expressions. He then uses this framework to address a number of well-entrenched puzzles surrounding referring terms (including reference change over time, vacuous and fictional names, and propositional attitude attributions) and to provide a comprehensive account of anaphoric pronouns. Berger's stress throughout on the need for a proper understanding of anaphoric chains in reference determination is compelling, as is the work he is able to get this notion to do for him, and, although I did find myself at times a little unclear on the precise status of some of Berger's key points, it is clear that this book constitutes an important and interesting contribution to the study of reference.

Berger's starting point, then, is the distinction between those rigid designators where reference is determined by some kind of direct perceptual encounter with an object—which he terms '*F*-style' rigid designators, where '*F*' stands for focus—and those rigid designators where reference is determined by an object's satisfaction of certain properties—which he terms '*S*-style' rigid designators, where '*S*' stands for satisfaction-based. Now the difference between *F*-style and *S*-style terms is not simply that the latter has, while the former lacks, a descriptive component, for Berger points out that even in cases of *F*-style naming there may well be a descriptive component, or what he terms an

‘anaphoric background’ (or ‘A-B’) condition, in play. So, for instance, the vicar who baptizes the child he is holding with the name ‘Joe Bloggs’ may well be thinking of the child as the son of Mr. Bloggs. Similarly, the speaker who introduces the name ‘Sonia’ may intend it to refer to the first woman to land on Mars in the year 2051 (p. 25). What makes the former an *F*-style, and the latter an *S*-style, rigid designator is the force of the *A-B* condition. For the *F*-style term, the descriptive material is used referentially or *ascriptively*: the description ‘son of Mr. Bloggs’ may be used to help the audience identify the object of the speaker’s focus, but it does not play a constitutive role in reference determination. If the vicar is mistaken, and the child he is holding is actually Mr. Smith’s, still the referent of the name ‘Joe Bloggs’ will be the child in his arms he is focusing on. On the other hand, in the case of an *S*-style expression, the description is used *attributively*: nothing can be the referent of (this instance of) the name ‘Sonia’ unless it is the first woman to land on Mars in the year 2051. In the latter case, no ostension to a referent is needed, since the object referred to is settled entirely via description.

Now this way of capturing the distinction between types of rigid designator is indeed appealing, but I found myself somewhat unsure as to the precise force of the categories here. One question concerns whether the difference between being an *F*-style or an *S*-style term is a difference of meaning (a semantic difference) or a difference of use (a pragmatic difference)? One reason to think that it is the latter is that, since both expressions qualify as rigid designators (that is, they refer to the same object in all possible worlds in which they refer at all), it might seem that they form a univocal semantic category (making the same kind of contribution to sentences/propositions in which they occur). In which case, either Berger’s distinction is non-semantic or questions of semantic form are not exhausted by adumbrating semantic categories and propositional contributions. Berger apparently opts for the latter position here, retaining the semantic status of his division by denying that semantics is merely concerned with propositional contributions. The distinction between *F*-style and *S*-style terms revolves around the way in which a referent is determined, and this he takes to be a proper part of a semantic theory. He writes:

It is important to understand that when I talk about the semantic information conveyed by a given term, I am not talking about information that is part of the content or that is expressed by the proposition of the sentence containing that term. I simply mean part of the information that plays the semantic role in determining the referent of the term. (p. 60)

However, the assumption that the mode of object identification is a proper part of a semantic theory, and how it is embedded within such a theory, is a point that perhaps deserved further exploration at the outset.

Furthermore, if it is right to think that being an *F*-style rigid designator is a part of a term’s semantic profile, it seems that we should have a clear definition of the focusing relation itself, yet Berger is somewhat vague on this point.

Focusing is an intentional, epistemic relation concerning the way in which an agent knows about an object and, of course, any such appeal brings with it questions concerning the kinds of things which are available to us as the objects of perception and the precise nature of perceptual content. As with Russell's notorious 'acquaintance relation', it is not obvious that Berger can offer us a clear definition of 'focusing' which covers all and only the cases he is interested in. Berger also has a tendency to extend talk of focus from an individual to a community: 'As long as [later speakers] know that Venus is the object the community focused on in fixing the referent of the term, they know the term refers to venus' (p. 5). However, we might wonder whether a perception-based, epistemic notion like focus is one that extends in any simple, non-metaphorical sense to a community. To show that it does, I think it would have been useful for Berger to address concrete cases of community appeal in more detail. For instance, in questions of reference change for an *F*-style term (Sect. 2.2), Berger might have addressed the question of the extent of community focus required to affect such a change—is it enough that the new referent is focused on by one speaker repeatedly, a hundred speakers on a single occasion, everyone in the community all the time? Berger does go some way towards addressing these kinds of concern by privileging the position of some speakers (following Putnam's notion of deference to experts), but once again it might be felt that notions like 'rights of entitlement' for naming (p. 22) or 'institutional competence' (p. 126) with respect to certain topics are suggestive rather than well-defined.

Finally, with regard to *S*-style rigid designators, it seems that there is a serious question to be answered concerning how *A-B* conditions are in fact to be determined. Are we to take the anaphoric condition for these expressions to be given by what a speaker says (as in 'Let "Julius" stand for the inventor of the zip'), the background discourse into which a name is introduced (a point we will return to below), the shared contextual assumptions of interlocutors, or simply the descriptive properties the speaker herself has in mind when she introduces the term, which may or may not be obvious to her audience? The worry is that, if *A-B* conditions are to be semantically relevant, it would seem that we need some clear rules for determining what counts as part of the reference determining description, yet once again Berger is not entirely explicit on this point, seeming to take it for granted that it is intuitively obvious in each of the cases he discusses what the correct *A-B* condition is. Furthermore, if, as often seems to be the case, it is speaker intentions alone which determine the correct *A-B* condition, then there may be concerns about publicity which once again are somewhat at odds with the idea that being an *S*-style term is a semantically relevant notion.

However, we should note that Berger himself is well aware that some of the notions he deploys are vague, or a matter of degree, and he argues that in many respects this is desirable, since the phenomena to be explained are often themselves a matter of degree (this is especially so in the case of the distinction

between *de re* and *de dicto* belief attribution—see p. 79). Furthermore, once the framework is in place, it is clear that Berger’s approach pays off in a number of concrete respects. One clear instance of this is with respect to the issue of anaphoric pronouns themselves, addressed in the final part of the book. On Berger’s model anaphoric pronouns are best handled as S-style rigid designators: they are genuinely referential expressions (their extension, once fixed, is fixed for all possible worlds), but, as S-type terms, reference is determined by satisfaction (that is, the attributive use of a description). A major point of difference between Berger’s account and other analyses of anaphoric terms as bound variables comes in respect of the descriptive information via which reference is determined. For Berger is able to make use of his extant notion of an *A-B* condition, and this allows him a certain degree of liberality in constructing the correct antecedent for each anaphoric term. So, for instance, he is not compelled to claim that the antecedent be the determiner phrase immediately preceding the anaphoric expression. This move allows him to accommodate the well-rehearsed point that, in contexts where the immediate antecedent is an indefinite description, sometimes we want the binding expression to be an existential quantifier (for example, ‘Pedro owns a donkey and he beats it’), while at other times we require the binding expression to be a universal quantifier (as in ‘If Pedro owns a donkey then he beats it’, which intuitively means that he beats every donkey he owns). Berger’s solution is to look beyond the immediate antecedent to the *A-B* condition, which will sometimes involve an existential claim and sometimes not.

This move also allows him to avoid certain problems faced by accounts which take the binding expression to be constructed from the entire discourse (cf. the approaches of Heim and Kamp, discussed in section 7.3), for the *A-B* condition instead may be constructed from some sub-part of the entire discourse. Now, of course, both this move and that suggested above require us to have a good grasp on the way in which the correct *A-B* condition is in fact recovered, and this is a point where I’ve already suggested Berger may owe us some further elaboration. Specifically, we may want to know about the role of extra-semantic information (that is, information which is recovered from the context of utterance alone and which is not arrived at via syntactically encoded information) in semantic categorization. However, also as noted above, once the idea of the *A-B* condition itself is in place, it certainly offers us a powerful mechanism for avoiding difficulties faced by other accounts. Overall, although *Terms and Truth* leaves, in my opinion, some crucial questions hanging, still it offers us a novel and unified solution to a wide range of problems in this area, and thus provides an important and thought-provoking contribution to our understanding of one of the key doctrines of contemporary analytic philosophy.

University of Reading  
UK <Author to supply full affiliation/address>

EMMA BORG