

Kripke's *Naming and Necessity*

Some theses of *Naming and Necessity*

1. Names are rigid designators. If a name refers to an object *o*, it refers to *o* with respect to every possible world (in which *o* exists).
2. If one expression is a rigid and another is not, they cannot mean the same thing. Since the descriptions ordinarily associated with names by speakers are not rigid designators, they cannot give the meanings of those names.
3. There is a distinction between giving the meaning of an expression and saying how its reference is determined (or fixed).
4. While (in cases of ordinary proper names) descriptions never give the meanings of names, sometimes they play a role in the way that the reference of a name is fixed.
5. Typically, an account of how the reference of a name is fixed consists of two parts: an account of how the name was introduced to have a certain reference, and an account of how the name maintained, or kept, that reference. Names are usually introduced either by ostension or by description. Typically, their reference is maintained by a historical chain of people intending to use the name in the same way as their predecessors.
6. There is a conceptual distinction between necessity and a prioricity. A claim is necessarily true if and only if the world could not have been such as to make it false. A claim is knowable a priori just in case someone could know it to be true without appeal to empirical evidence. We can say that necessity is a metaphysical property of claims (i.e., propositions), whereas a prioricity is an epistemological property of them.
7. Some propositions are both contingent and a priori. E.g., the proposition expressed by 'Stick S is one meter long', in the scenario envisaged by Kripke.
8. Some propositions are both necessary and a posteriori. E.g., the proposition expressed by 'Hesperus is Phosphorus.'

Kripke's three arguments against the view that the meanings of names are the same as the meanings of descriptions associated with those names by speakers

The modal argument

1. Proper names are rigid designators.
 2. The definite descriptions associated with names by speakers are typically not rigid designators.
 3. If an expression is a rigid designator, then it cannot mean the same as any expression which is non-rigid.
- C. The meanings of names are typically not the same as the meanings of definite descriptions associated with them by speakers.

The semantic argument

1. The meaning of a name determines its reference.
2. Often, the descriptions associated with a name by speakers refer to something different than the name, or nothing at all.
- C. In at least these cases, the meanings of names are not the same as the meanings of definite descriptions associated with them by speakers.

The epistemic argument

1. If an expression x means the same as another expression y , then x may be substituted for y in any sentence without changing the truth value of that sentence.
2. In the case of a proper name N and a definite description D associated with N by speakers, *it is knowable a priori that D is D* will be true even though *it is knowable a priori that N is D* is false.
- C. In such cases, the meanings of names are not the same as the meanings of definite descriptions associated with them by speakers.

Outline of Naming and Necessity

The Frege-Russell picture of names and its strengths (26-29)

Three arguments for the classical, descriptivist picture of names:

1. It explains how the references of names are determined.
2. It explains Frege's puzzle about identity statements.
3. It explains what's going on with negative existentials.

A problem for the classical theory, and the move to 'cluster' descriptivism (30-32)

The distinction between necessity and the a priori (34-39)

Kripke introduces the conceptual distinction between necessity and a priority without yet arguing that there are any propositions which fall into one category

without also falling into the other. He illustrates this distinction with the example of Goldbach's conjecture.

He also goes through some reasons why philosophers have traditionally thought that every necessary proposition must be knowable a priori, and vice versa. Something to think about: if Kripke is right about there being, e.g., some necessary a posteriori propositions, there must be something wrong with these arguments. Kripke never tells us. Is there something wrong with these arguments, or was Kripke wrong about the necessary a posteriori?

Essentialism and the metaphysics of modality (39-53)

[SKIP]

The introduction of rigid designation and the modal argument (48-49, 73-77; also Preface, 6-15)

A rigid designator is an expression which refers to the same thing with respect to every possible world. He returns throughout the lectures to the claim that names are rigid designators, and to the fact that this shows that descriptions cannot give the meanings of names. (See the discussion of the modal argument above.)

The 'modal argument', which is an argument for the conclusion that names do not have the meanings of descriptions associated with those names by speakers, relies on the premise that if an expression is a rigid designator it cannot mean the same thing as any expression which is not a rigid designator. Why should we believe this premise? Can you think of any reason why Kripke felt justified in assuming it?

The example of the standard meter and the contingent a priori (53-57)

Here Kripke argues that there is not only a conceptual distinction between necessity and a prioricity, but also that there are actual counterexamples to the identification of the two. He suggests that for a speaker who introduces the term 'one meter' to pick out the length of a certain stick ('Stick S'), the proposition expressed by 'Stick S is one meter long' is contingently true, since Stick S could have had a different length, and yet also knowable a priori.

The distinction between meaning and reference-fixing: two versions of descriptivism (53, 57-60)

In the case of the standard meter, the description 'the length of Stick S' is used to determine the reference of 'one meter.' But it does not seem as though 'one meter' is thereby made a synonym for 'the length of Stick S'; even if the term is introduced in this way, it would not seem to follow that whenever people talk about something being X meters long, they are covertly talking about Stick S.

The distinction is even clearer in the case of ordinary proper names. Suppose

John's mother introduced his name in a slightly unusual way, by saying 'Let 'John' be the name of the cute boy wearing stripes in the crib.' This could be part of the way that the reference of the name is fixed; but it would not seem to follow that 'John' means the same as 'the cute boy wearing stripes in the crib.'

Outline of the 'cluster' theory (61-67)

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Descriptivism and the threat of circularity (68-70)

[SKIP]

The semantic argument (78-85)

Discussion of the examples of 'Cicero', 'Feynman', 'Einstein' and other names used to refer to individuals by speakers who do not possess any descriptions which pick out those individuals.

The epistemic argument (86-87)

[see above]

Kripke's 'alternative picture' (88-97)

We began this discussion by noting several arguments in favor of the classical theory of names. One of these which seemed particularly powerful was that it gives a story about how the reference of names is determined. Kripke reiterates this argument for the classical descriptivist picture on p. 80.

Kripke gives an alternative story about how the reference of names is fixed. The way he tells the story, it breaks into two parts: (i) an account of how the reference of a name is initially determined, when the name is introduced; and (ii) an account of how the reference of names is maintained over time.

Remember: Kripke distinguished between the meaning of a name and what fixes its reference. This may be a good account of what fixes the reference of a name; but, as yet, we have no positive account of the meanings of names. Kripke never provides such a positive account.

Identity statements (96-105)

Identity statements are, Kripke claims, an example of the necessary a posteriori. That they are necessary follows from the fact that names are rigid designators; but they seem to be a posteriori, since 'Hesperus is Phosphorus', for example, seems to express something which is knowable only on the basis of empirical evidence.