

# Kripke, “Naming and Necessity”

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# Lecture 1

- Proper names
  - People, countries, cities, etc.
  - Kripke uses 'name' to refer solely to these, not to definite descriptions
- Definite Descriptions
  - The  $x$  such that  $Ax$
  - $X$  is the referent, the object uniquely satisfying the conditions in the definite description
  - Designators
    - Common terms to cover names and descriptions
    - May be used by speakers to refer to something besides the definite description, which the speaker thinks is the proper referent of the description

# Relationship Between Names and Descriptions - Mill

- Names have denotation, not connotation
  - Dartmouth example
- Names don't have senses
- Not all phrases of the form:  
“the x such that Fx” are descriptions rather than names
  - Holy Roman Empire
    - Isn't holy, Roman, or an empire
    - This is a name, not a definite description

# Relationship Between Names and Descriptions – Frege and Russell

- A proper name, properly used, is a disguised or abbreviated definite description

# Kripke's Problems - Mill

- How can we determine what the referent of a name is when used by a given speaker?
- If there isn't a descriptive content to the name, how can people ever use names to refer to things?
- Our reference seems to be determined by our knowledge of the referent.
- Mill gives no account for how reference is determined.

# Kripke's Problems – Two Names With The Same Reference

- Hesperus and Phosphorus example
- We often express this by the identity statement: “Hesperus is Phosphorus.”
- But, this is something we've discovered, and it's something that could be proved wrong, so it must be more than just an identity statement

# Kripke's Problems – Names and References

- Do names have any reference?
- Did Aristotle ever exist?
  - Is there anything that has all the properties that we associate with the name?

# Kripke's Problems – Cluster Concepts

- According to Frege, there is some sort of looseness or weakness in our language
  - Different people may give different senses to the same name
  - Definitions of names cannot be part of the sense of a name because we can discover them to be false
- What we really associate with a name is a family of descriptions
  - The referent of a name is determined not by a single description but by some cluster or family



# Kripke's Problems – Cluster Concepts, Cont'd.

Two ways of viewing this theory:

1. The cluster or the single description actually gives the meaning of the name
2. Even though the description in some sense doesn't give the meaning of the name, it is what determines its reference, even though the meaning and descriptions aren't synonymous

# Kripke's Problems – Cluster Concepts, Cont'd.

“If, on the other hand, ‘Moses’ is not synonymous with any description, then even its reference is in some sense determined by a description, statements containing the name cannot in general be *analyzed* by replacing the name by a description, though they may be materially equivalent to statements containing a description.” (Kripke, 197)

# *A priori* – Necessary – Analytic – Certain

- Kripke doesn't use *a priori* and necessary interchangeably
- *A priori* – something which *can* be known independently of any experience
  - In some sense, it's *possible* to know this independently of any experience
- Some philosophers, Kripke says, change *can* to *must*, as if something that is possibly known *a priori* must be known *a priori*
  - He argues that this is wrong

# *A priori* – Necessary – Analytic – Certain, cont'd.

- Necessity
  - If something is false, it's not necessarily true
  - If it is true, might it have been otherwise?
    - If no, this fact is necessary
    - If yes, it is contingent
  - This has nothing to do with anyone's knowledge of anything, according to Kripke
- 2 theses: Everything *a priori* is necessary or everything necessary is *a priori*

# *A priori* – Necessary – Analytic – Certain, cont'd.

- Goldbach's Conjecture
  - There is only one way to prove something to be false, namely, by direct computation, therefore, if it is true, it is necessarily true because the results of the direct computation are necessary.
    - In the absence of mathematical proof, we don't have any *a priori* knowledge about whether or not it is true, and we certainly don't know anything *a priori* about it

# *A priori* – Necessary – Analytic – Certain, cont'd.

- Analytic

“An analytic statement is, in some sense, true by virtue of its meaning and true in all possible worlds by virtue of its meaning. Then something which is analytically true will be both necessary and *a priori*.” (Kripke 199)

# *A priori* – Necessary – Analytic – Certain, cont'd.

- Certainty

“Whatever certainty is, it’s clearly not obvious the case that everything which is necessary is certain.” (Kripke 200)

“Something can be known, or at least rationally believed, *a priori*, without being quite certain.” (Kripke 200)

# Designators

- Rigid designators
  - In every possible world, it designates the same object
  - Strongly rigid - a rigid designator of a necessary existent
  - A property that is true of an object in any case where it would have existed (necessary existence)
- Non-rigid/accidental designators
  - Doesn't designate the same object in every possible world
- Kripke holds that proper names are rigid designators



# The Meter Example

“There is one thing of which one can say neither that it is one meter long nor that it is not one meter long, and that is the standard meter in Paris.” – Wittgenstein (Kripke, 201)

# The Meter Example, cont'd.

- The stick serves as a standard of length, so we can't attribute length to it
- Is the statement, "The stick, *S* (the standard meter in Paris), is one meter long," a necessary truth?
- Someone who thinks that everything *a priori* is necessary might say that the length of the stick is the definition of a meter, and that this is a necessary truth
  - Kripke argues that this person is using this definition to fix the reference of the meter, not to give the meaning of a meter

# Lecture #2

## Theses for a Theory of Naming

1. To every name or designating expression 'X', there corresponds a cluster of properties, namely the family of those properties  $\varphi$  such that A believes ' $\varphi X$ '.
  2. One of the properties, or some conjointly, are believed by A to pick out some individual uniquely.
  3. If most, or a weighted most, of the  $\varphi$ 's are satisfied by one unique object  $y$ , then  $y$  is the referent of 'X'.
  4. If the vote yields no unique object, 'X' doesn't refer.
  5. The statement, 'If X exists, then X has most of the  $\varphi$ 's' is known *a priori* by the speaker.
  6. The statement, 'If X exists, then X has most of the  $\varphi$ 's' expresses a necessary truth (in the idiolect of the speaker).
- C. For any successful theory, the account must not be circular. The properties which are used in the vote must not themselves involve the notion of reference in such a way that it is ultimately impossible to eliminate.
- not a thesis, but a condition on the satisfaction of the other theses

# Converses for Thesis 5

5. The statement, “If X exists, then X has most of the  $\varphi$ 's” is known *a priori* by the speaker.
- Certain converses of this statement also hold true *a priori* for the speaker
  - “If any unique thing has most of the properties  $\varphi$  in the properly weighted sense, it is X. So really one can say that it is both *a priori* and necessary that something is X if and only if it uniquely has most of the properties  $\varphi$ .” (203)
  - Kripke says that this is essentially just a theory of proper names

# Converse for Thesis 6

6. The statement, “If X exists, then X has most of the  $\varphi$ 's” expresses a necessary truth (in the idiolect of the speaker).
- If in a cluster of properties associated with a proper name, only one property is given any weight at all, then certain things will seem to be necessary truths when they aren't.

# Converse for Thesis 6, cont'd.

- Ex. Aristotle taught Alexander the Great
- Searle argues, it is a contingent, not necessary, truth that Aristotle went into pedagogy, therefore we should associate a cluster of properties with a name, not just a single definition
- Kripke argues that it is not necessary that Aristotle had any of the properties that we attribute to him.

# Converse for Thesis 6, cont'd.

- Kripke says that according to Searle's view, "once a certain individual is born, that he is destined to perform various great tasks and so it will be part of the very nature of Aristotle that he should have produced ideas which had a great influence on the western world," therefore it is only a contingent fact that Aristotle ever did any of the things commonly attributed to him. (204)

# Converse for Thesis 6, cont'd.

- Kripke believes that we must “cross off Thesis 6 as incorrect.” (205)
- The other theses don't deal with necessity, so we don't have to worry about them yet
- “If I use the name ‘Hesperus’ to refer to a certain planetary body when seen in a certain celestial position in the evening, it will not therefore be a necessary truth that Hesperus is ever seen in the evening. That depends on various contingent facts about people being there to see and things like that.” (205)



# Thesis 1

1. To every name or designating expression 'X', there corresponds a cluster of properties, namely the family of those properties  $\varphi$  such that A believes ' $\varphi X$ '.
- Kripke says it's just a definition.

# Thesis 2

2. One of the properties, or some conjointly, are believed by A to pick out some individual uniquely.
  - E.g. “‘Cicero’ denotes the man who denounced Catiline”
    - This contains another name, ‘Catiline’
    - We can’t say that Catiline was the man denounced by Cicero. If we do, we won’t be picking out anything uniquely, just a pair of objects A and B, such that A denounced B.
    - We can pick out someone uniquely, but we may not pick them out in such a way as to satisfy the non-circulatory condition C, so Thesis 2 is false.

# Thesis 3

3. If most, or a weighted most, of the  $\varphi$ 's are satisfied by one unique object  $y$ , then  $y$  is the referent of 'X'.
- “The picture associated with the theory is that only by giving some unique properties can you know who someone is and thus know what the reference of your name is.” (207)

# Thesis 3, cont'd.

- Schmidt-Godel thought experiment
  - Kripke says that we often use a name on the basis of “considerable misinformation” (208)
  - Therefore, he argues, this thesis is false because it is not always true that if most of the  $\varphi$ 's are satisfied by one unique object  $y$ , then  $y$  is the referent of the name.

# Thesis 4

4. If the vote yields no unique object, 'X' doesn't refer.
- Suppose the vote yields *no* object, that nothing satisfies most, or even any, substantial number of the  $\varphi$ 's
    - Does this mean that the name doesn't refer?
    - No, Kripke argues, just as you can have false beliefs about a person that are actually true about someone else, you may have false beliefs which are true of absolutely no one.

# Kripke on Description Theory

- Kripke says, “the whole picture given by this theory of how reference is determined seems to be wrong from the fundamentals.” (210)
- “In general our reference depends not just on what we think ourselves, but on other people in the 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.” (211)

# Chains of Communication

- “It is not how the speaker thinks he got the reference, but the actual chain of communication, which is relevant.” (210)
  - Santa Claus example
- 1. Initial “baptism” takes place – the object is named by ostension, or the reference is fixed by a description.
- 2. The name is passed on, and the receiver intends to use it with the same reference from the person who told it to her. It is likely the inability to keep the reference fixed that accounts for the divergence of present uses from originals.
- Kripke asserts, “I may not have presented a theory, but I do think that I have presented a better picture than that given by description theorists.” (212)

# Debate Topic

Is the statement, “the stick,  $S$  (the standard meter in Paris), is one meter long,” a necessary truth?