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Phil Language

Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*: Lecture I

Designator: A proper name or definite description, either of which can be used to pick out its normal "semantic referent" or (following Donnellan) what speakers *believe* to be the referent (see n. 3). Kripke is concerned only with their normal, semantic referents.

The Modal Argument

(1) 'Aristotle' is equivalent to some definite description, e.g. "the man who taught Alexander the Great." [Assume for *reductio*]
(2) Necessarily, Aristotle = Aristotle. [Trivial]
(3) Necessarily, Aristotle= the man who taught Alexander the Great [From (1), (2)]

"So, *being the teacher of Alexander the Great* cannot be part of [the sense of] the name" (p. 30, square brackets are in the original).

Objection: (Wittgenstein [?], Searle) "the referent of a name is determined not by a single description but by some cluster or family" (p. 31).
Reply: Distinguish a descriptivist theory of *meaning* vs. of reference-fixing. The modal argument only threatens the former, but Kripke thinks the latter is often correct.

Let's Distinguish Some Distinctions

A Priori vs. A posteriori. An epistemic distinction about whether someone can know on the basis of "*a priori* evidence" (p. 35) But "*can* know" does not imply "*must* know."
Necessary vs. Possible A metaphysical distinction about whether the world could have been different from how it actually is.
Something can be necessary without being known a priori: Goldbach's conjecture.
[Check out Kripke on Kant's "analytic" statement (p. 39), juxtaposed against note 11.]

Modal Matters [omitted in Martinich]
Against the Modal Skeptic (MS)
MS: Does 9 have the property of "necessary oddness?" It depends on its description: '9 is necessarily odd' is true, but 'the number of planets is necessarily odd' is false.
Kripke: This just shows that 'the number of planets' does not necessarily denote 9. It doesn't bear on whether 9, the number, is necessarily odd.
MS: In some other possible world W, no one may have all and only Nixon's actual properties. So who is Nixon in W?
Kripke: "A possible world isn't a distant country that we are coming across, or viewing through a telescope…A possible world is *given by the descriptive conditions we associate with it*. What do we mean when we say 'In some other possible world I would not have given this lecture today?' We just imagine the situation where I didn't decide to give this lecture [today]...Why can't it be part of the description of a possible world that… *Nixon* didn't win the election?... 'Possible worlds' are *stipulated* not *discovered*" (p. 44)

Essentialism: "This table is composed of molecules. Might it not have been composed of molecules? Certainly it was a scientific discovery of great moment that it was composed of molecules (or atoms). But could anything be this very object and not be composed of molecules? Certainly there is some feeling that the answer to that must be 'no'" (p. 47)

Rigid Designators
A rigid designator designates the same object in every world in which that object exists (and in no other world does it designate anything else).

Kripke: Names are rigid designators, but Russellian descriptors are (standardly) not. [Note 16: Demonstratives and free variables can also be used rigidly. Note 22: A definite description can always be made rigid using Kaplan's 'dthat' operator.]

"When I say that a designator is rigid, and designates the same thing in all possible worlds, I mean that, as used in *our* language, it stands for that thing, when *we* talk about counterfactual situations. I don't mean, of course, that there mightn't be counterfactual situations in which I the other possible worlds people actually spoke a different language. One doesn't say that 'two plus two equals four' is contingent because people might have…meant that seven is even" (p. 77)

The Standard Meter Example (omitted in Martinich)
'1 meter' is defined by the length of *S*, where *S* is a certain stick or bar in Paris. Is it possible that *S* should not have been a meter long?
Kripke: 'one meter' is rigid; 'the length of *S*' is not. Thus, it is impossible that 1 meter should be different than one meter long, but it is possible for *S* to have a different length. And this is ok, since the definition was not meant to fix *meaning* but rather *reference*. But weirdly: '*S* is one meter long' is *a priori* but contingent! So is: ' Socrates = the man called 'Socrates'," even though 'Socrates' *actually* designates Socrates *rigidly.*

Naming and Necessity: Lecture II

Against the Cluster Theory of Names. The theory is defined by six theses on p. 71; Kripke also gives his adequacy condition on a theory of names (that it fixes reference in a non-circular manner).

(6) is false, from the Modal argument, assuming the cluster has non-essential descriptors.

Counterexample to (2): "most people, when they think of Cicero, just think of *a famous Roman orator*, without any pretension to think either that there was only one famous Roman orator or that one must know something else about Cicero to have a referent for the name" (p. 80). And when (2) is satisfied, often the circularity condition is not.

Against (C): Your knowledge of who "Einstein" was and what the "theory of relativity" is may be circular. See p. 83.

Counterexamples to (3): Many people only know "Gödel" as "the man who discovered incompleteness." Yet if Gödel did not discover incompleteness (say it was "Schmidt"), the name 'Gödel' would still refer to Gödel. (Also, Peano vs. Dedekind, Columbus)

Counterexamples to (4): See the counterexample to (2). Also, suppose no one discovered incompleteness. 'Gödel' would still refer to Gödel. Also, Jonah.

Counterexamples to (5): Even if (3) and (4) are true, (5) may not be. Our actual beliefs about Gödel are hardly *a priori*.

> *Reply*: Try 'the man who most people *think* proved incompleteness.' Kripke: the Peano vs. Dedekind counterexample still makes the point.

Circularty Charge: (Omitted in Martinich) We could not refer to Gödel in calling him the discoverer of incompleteness, unless we can refer to Gödel by some independent means.

The Causal Theory of Reference

"I want to name an object. I think of some way of describing it uniquely and then I go through, so to speak, a sort of mental ceremony: By 'Cicero' I shall mean the man who (in fact) denounced Catiline" (p. 79). (But following Donnellan, sometimes the descriptor used will be false of its object, yet nonetheless succeeds in fixing-reference; see n. 34).

"a baby is born; his parents call him by a certain name. They talk about him to their friends. Other people meet him. Through various sorts of talk the name is spread from link to link as if by a chain…" (p. 91) See also p. 96.

Contra descriptivism: 'Cicero' still refers to Cicero even if you are mistaken about where you picked up the name. "On our view, it is not how the speaker thinks he got the reference, but the actual chain of communication, which is relevant" (p. 93).

But you need the *right kind* of causal chain: 'George Smith'. (Omitted in Martinich)

Contingent vs. Necessary Identity

Contingent: 'The man who invented bifocals was the first Postmaster General'
Necessary: 'Heat is the motion of molecules.' 'Hesperus = Phosphorus'
Granted, (i) 'Phosphorus' might have been used to name something other than Hesperus, and (ii) it is empirically known that Hesperus = Phosphorus. But even in a world where 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' were used to name different things, it still would be true that Hesperus = Phosphorus (assuming Venus exists in that world.)

"there's one sense in which things might turn out either way, in which it's clear that that doesn't imply that the way it finally turns out isn't necessary. For example, the four color theorem might turn out to be true and might turn out to be false…It still doesn't mean that the way it turns out is not necessary. Obviously, the 'might' here is purely 'epistemic'—it merely expresses our present state of ignorance or uncertainty."

"where we have exactly the same evidence…it could have turned out that Hesperus was not Phosphorus…But we, using the names as we do right now, can say if Hesperus and Phosphorus are one and the same, then in no other possible world can they be different" (p. 104).