

V NAMING & NECESSITY, LECTURE ONE

The Frege-Russell view of ordinary names

There has been much discussion as to whether Kripke represented the views of Frege and Russell accurately. We shan't review this. It is enough to note that the view he criticizes under this heading has been widely held; and that it is unclear whether, if the views of Frege do diverge, they can escape his criticisms.

The Frege-Russell theory: the referent of a name is whatever is denoted by the definite description associated with it.

The cluster theory (Wittgenstein; Searle): the referent of a name is whatever is denoted by most or enough of the cluster of definite descriptions associated with it. (31)

Some advantages of both the Frege-Russell account and the cluster account:

- (1) it explains how names can refer to things, and in particular, how they can refer to things with which we are not acquainted. (27-8)
- (2) it explains how identity statements can be informative (28);
- (3) it explains how an existential claim can be informative, and how it can be possibly false (28)

To understand a name is to grasp the description (cluster of descriptions) that is (are) associated with it. So someone who is competent with a name will know *a priori* that the bearer of the name (if there is one) fits the description (most of the descriptions). (64)

Will someone who understand the name also think that the claim that the bearer of the name (if there is one) fits the description is *necessary*? That depends on whether the description (cluster of descriptions) is (are) being used to give the meaning of the name, or to fix its referent. To see what this means, and what is at issue here we need to get clearer on what is meant by 'a priori' and 'necessary'.

A priori

At base an epistemic notion: a sentence is *a priori* iff it could be known independently of experience. (Note: it could in fact be known *a posteriori* though)

Necessary

At base a metaphysical notion: a sentence is necessary iff it is true in every possible world. Some people have claimed that necessity is relative to (and is an artifact of) language. As it is sometimes said: all necessity is *de dicto*: 'It's only a statement or a state of affairs that can be

either necessary or contingent! Whether a particular necessarily or contingently has a certain property depends on how it is described' (40). (Quine, in so far as he accepts necessity at all, says something along these lines.) Kripke is radically opposed to this. (Note the claims in the paragraph on p. 40, from which the above quotation is taken, are put in the mouth of some imagined opponent; Kripke is *not* endorsing these claims.) He thinks that there are many necessarily true sentences that are true independently of language. They are necessary *de re*. In particular: he thinks that ordinary names are *rigid designators*, in the sense that they pick out the same thing in every possible world in which they pick out anything. But then an identity sentence, $a=b$, containing two rigid designators will be necessarily true. One source of the suspicion of *de re* necessity comes, Kripke suggests, from a confusion about the role of possible worlds in understanding necessity. (42–8)

Analytic

Kripke doesn't give a full account. He says that he will understand analytic sentences to be those that are true in virtue of meaning, and true in virtue of meaning in every possible world ('That's sort of stipulative') (39)

Sentences that are necessary but not *a priori*

Many identity sentences concerning physical objects.

True mathematical statements that lack proofs (perhaps: 'Every even number greater than 2 is the sum of two primes' — Goldbach's conjecture).

Sentences that are *a priori* but not necessary

The meter stick is one meter long. (The meter stick is used to fix the reference of the term 'one meter')

I am here now.

The actual F is F (The actual inventor of the zipper is the inventor of the zipper)

So, if a theory claims simply that the description is used to fix the reference of the name, speakers will not need to think that it is a necessary truth that the bearer of the name fits the description.