

KRIPKE LECTURE 2

1. Dummett has replied to the modal argument (*Frege*: 112-116) that nothing in the Frege-Russell thesis commits us to accepting that (b) is the correct formalization of 'St Anne might have had no children'. If we understand the theory as saying that a name is a DD that takes *wide scope* in modal contexts then we can claim that it is (c), not (b) that the Frege-Russell Thesis offers as its 'translation' of (a):

- (a) $\diamond \forall z \sim Mxz$
- (b) $\diamond \exists x (\forall y (Myb \leftrightarrow y = x) \ \& \ \forall z \sim Mxz)$
- (c) $\exists x \forall y (Myb \leftrightarrow y = x) \ \& \ \diamond \forall z \sim Mxz$

And (c) is plausibly true.

2. Kripke's reply (*NN* 2d ed.: 12-13) is that the modal argument was not that the description theory of names implies falsely that (a) and (b) are synonymous. Rather, consider the *non*-modal sentences:

- (d) Aristotle was fond of dogs.
- (e) The last great philosopher of antiquity was fond of dogs.

Kripke's argument is that whereas the description theory implies that (d) and (e) are synonymous, they are *not* synonymous because they have *different modal profiles*: there are possible circumstances that (d) describes truly but (e) describes falsely, e.g. that in which Aristotle never went into philosophy (and dog-hating Plato was the last great philosopher of antiquity). But does a difference between non-modal sentences that *only* shows up in modal contexts warrant saying that (d) and (e) meant something different all along? (See further J. Stanley in R. Heck, ed., *Language, Thought and Logic* and my SK book pp. 20-26.)

3. So much for the counterexamples. What is more interesting is the conceptions of mind and language behind the description theory. The picture is that the world admits of a kind of metaphysical factoring into an external 'worldly' component and an internal 'mental' component. On this view the contents of my thoughts—so also the meanings of my words—is independent of what is going on 'outside'. If you mention an object in specifying a thought you are only so to speak *accidentally* characterizing the thought. It must be possible to specify its content in some way that does not mention anything worldly. And that is what the description theory of names secures—at least if you also accept Russell's Theory of Descriptions. The mental component of reality would have been the same even if the worldly component had not obliged by providing an object for the thought to be *of*. (See Evans, 'The Causal Theory of Names', in A. Moore, ed., *Meaning and Reference* pp. 211-2; also J. McDowell, 'The Sense and Reference of a Proper Name', in Moore p. 112.)

KRIPKE LECTURE 2

4. The most basic objection to this is what Wittgenstein meant when he said that had God looked into my mind he could not have seen there whom I meant. Suppose that you once met a person whom you now call 'Billy'. Billy has a twin that you've never met, and all of the descriptions that you now associate with 'Billy' fit the twin too. In that case there is nothing 'in your mind' to make it true that by 'Billy' you mean *that* person, not the twin.
5. One response is to make facts about what 'Billy' means depend on extrinsic connections of which you may not be at all aware. In particular it is the existence of *causal* connections between your uses of 'Billy' and your interaction with *that* person that makes the name refer to *him*. But these connections might be blankly external to you—you might even think that they do not exist. On this *externalist* view meaning is like pointing in the sense that you can point further than you can see.
6. More generally the externalist view is that reality is not factorizable into an inner and an outer component. The contents of the 'external' world reach right 'into' one's mind. 'God (or anyone) might see whom we have in mind... by—for instance—seeing whom we are looking at when we speak. That sort of thing—seeing relations between a person and bits of the world, not prying into a hidden place whose contents could be just as they are even if there were no world—is (in part) what seeing into a person's mind is' (McDowell in Moore p. 126). The analogy with perception is close and obvious, as also is the relevance to scepticism.
7. This model of externalist semantics leaves a great deal open. Kripke's own version of it—as he says, more a sketch than a theory—says roughly that a name refers to a person (or other thing) if there is a chain of communication that involves that name and which stretches back to the initial christening of that person or thing (NN 91). This makes it easy for even an ignorant person to refer: one could e.g. refer to a person of whom he knows nothing simply by picking up a conversation in a pub.
8. Kripke's thesis, that reference is secured by the existence of a causal chain stretching back from my use of an expression to the christening of its bearer, has some difficulties when it comes to cases of misidentification. Imagine evidence that the man christened 'Napoleon' was exchanged in infancy for an impostor who did all the things for which Napoleon is famous. If Kripke is right then this evidence shows that Napoleon never really fought at Waterloo at all. But this seems wrong: what it shows is that we'd misidentified Napoleon's *parents*. But if the evidence was of a *late* switch (say 1814), *then* the correct thing to say would be that Napoleon did not fight at Waterloo (in 1815). Evans concludes that the reference of a proper name is whatever happens to be the causal source of the 'dominant' beliefs that we use it to express.