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Is Kripke right about statements of identity between names?

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Introduction

Saul Kripke's rejection of the possibility of contingently true statements of identity between names is expressed in the book *Naming and Necessity*[1] and also in the earlier article "Identity and Necessity"[2]. Previously, it was taken for granted by most philosophers familiar with the topic that there are certain identity statements like "Cicero is Tully" or "Hesperus is Phosphorus" (statements of the form "A is B", "A is the same thing as B", "A is identical with B"; or "A=B" in logical notation, where 'A' and 'B' are names) that are contingently true.

Kripke's argument for rejecting this established doctrine centres on a distinction concerning truths (necessary vs. contingent), that is common currency in analytic philosophy but which needs to be clarified at the beginning of this research report to ensure a full understanding of my discussion of Kripke's arguments. To simplify, I will concentrate on how the distinction applies to identity statements between names, and by 'statement' I will mean a sentence[3] which describes a fact or a state of affairs, and is either true or it is false.

For the truth of a statement to be contingent, as opposed to necessary, it must be the case that even though the statement is true, it could have turned out false or could turn out to

[1] Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2006.
[2] Kripke, Saul. "Identity and Necessity", in Munitz, Milton K. *Identity and Individuation,* New York University Press, New York, 1971.
[3] For convenience, I abbreviate identity statements in English like "Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus" to "Hesperus = Phosphorus", using the logical and mathematical symbol '=' which stands for the identity relation

be false. A statement that is true necessarily is a true statement that could not have been false and cannot turn out to be false. A statement is true if the fact it describes is the case in reality, the actual world. It is false if the fact it describes is not the case in reality.

Kripke thinks that all statements asserting identity between names are necessary if true. He rejects the possibility of there being any statements like “Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus” or “Cicero is Tully” that are true but might turn out, or might have turned out, to be false. I want to ask if Kripke’s rejection of the possibility of contingently true statements of identity between names and the arguments he uses to reach this conclusion, are correct.

I will address this essay to the following question: Is Kripke right that all true identity statements between names are true necessarily? My aim is to come up with a good reason to reject Kripke’s conclusion that it is not possible to have true identity statements between names that are true contingently.

In Section 1) I will reconstruct Kripke's argument against the possibility of contingently true identities between names, which I will extract from the relevant parts of “Identity and Necessity” and *Naming and Necessity*. Specifically, I will discuss Kripke's endorsement of the argument from logic against the possibility of contingent identity between objects from the former, and his views on naming and reference from the latter. With these two elements I can show why Kripke wants to reject contingently true statements of identity between names. In this essay I will rely heavily on Kripke's

Hesperus-Phosphorus example,[4] a paradigm case of identity between names, to illustrate Kripke's intuitions and conclusions.

After I have set out Kripke's position I will explore the possible flaws in it in Section 2). I will do this by identifying key assumptions of the Kripkean position on identity statements between names, and looking at the literature to see how other philosophers have challenged each of these assumptions. I will evaluate these criticisms of the Kripkean position, and also consider how the Kripkean defence against these attacks fares.

Lastly, I will explain my disagreement with the Kripkean position, and provide my own arguments against the Kripkean assumptions that lead to the rejection of the possibility of contingently true identity statements between names. This will enable me to answer the topic question in the negative. I will try to support my view that Kripke is wrong, and that there can be contingently true identity statements between names.

Section 1

Extracting Kripke's Argument

In "Identity and Necessity", Kripke endorses the following modal[5] argument regarding

[4] Introduced on p.28 of *Naming and Necessity*.
[5] Taken from modal logic, the branch of logic dealing with the categories that truths fall under. Modal arguments are concerned with notions such as necessity, contingency and possibility.

the identity relation[6]:

1) The law of the substitutivity of identity: for any objects x and y, if x is identical to y, then if x has a certain property F, so does y.

2) Every object is necessarily self identical therefore:

3) For every x and y, if x is identical to y, then it is necessary that x is identical to y.

Kripke accompanies this argument with its equivalent in logical notation. It goes as follows[7]:

1) $(x)(y)\ [(x=y) \rightarrow (Fx \rightarrow Fy)]$

2) $(x)\ \Box(x=x)$

3) $(x)(y)\ (x=y) \rightarrow [\Box(x=x) \rightarrow \Box\ (x=y)]$

4) $(x)(y)\ ((x=y) \rightarrow \Box\ (x=y))$

Line 3) is a substitution instance of 1), with the predicate F being replaced by the property of being necessarily identical with x. The conclusion, 4), follows from 2) and 3), with '$(x)\ \Box(x=x)$', the premise that necessarily all objects are self-identical, dropping out of 3) because it is already asserted in 2). What this argument proves is that there cannot be contingent identity between objects because all objects are necessarily self-identical.

My concern in this essay is the modal status of true identity statements between names,

[6] In what follows I reproduce Kripke's arguments almost word-for-word and entirely symbol-for-symbol. Any changes in the wording and the re-arrangement of the material are meant for simplification. These arguments come from "Identity and Necessity", p.136.

[7] This argument makes use of the standard symbols of predicate logic, with the inclusion of $\Box$ to denote necessity. In other arguments the $\Diamond$ symbol is used to denote possibility.

whether these statements fall under the category of necessary truths or contingent truths. In other words, I want to replace the variables 'x' and 'y' with names in the conclusion of the logical argument and evaluate whether the conclusion still holds. So to explain why Kripke thinks that the conclusion of this argument, the rejection of contingent identity, also holds in the case of statements asserting identity between names, I have to first outline Kripke's views on naming.

In *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke presents the following picture of naming and reference[8]. The most important function of a name is its referential function, the fact that the name is a place-holder in a language for the object in the world that it is a name for. In other words names can be said to be tags or labels for people, places or things. When used properly in language, the name allows the speaker to single out the appropriate thing in the world that he is talking about or referring to, and then say something about that object.

For a person or a group of people to refer to something, there needs to have been what Kripke calls an "initial 'baptism'"[9] of that thing. This baptism can occur in either one of two ways. Firstly, if the language users are not in direct proximity to the object being baptised and hence can't look at or point to it, the baptism can occur through the use of some type of definite description, which is a phrase that singles an object out uniquely by describing it in words.

[8] *Naming and Necessity,* pp. 90-93.
[9] *Naming and Necessity*, p.96.

For example, “the first African to have gone into space” is a definite description of Mark Shuttleworth. We could therefore perform a sort of baptism where we agree that by the name ‘Mark Shuttleworth’ we shall be referring to the person who uniquely fits the description “the first African to have gone into space”.

To do this is to use a definite description to fix the reference of a name. This is different to claiming that a name means the description that is used to fix it, the central claim of the description theory, which I will discuss fully in Section 2). Kripke accepts that descriptions can be used at an initial baptism to attach a name to an object, but rejects the view that the name therefore means the description or set of descriptions that are associated with it.

The second way the initial baptism could be achieved is through ostensive definition, in other words by pointing at the object while in direct proximity to it and attaching a name to it in that way. So if the person, Mark Shuttleworth, is in our presence, we could point to him (focus our attentions on him) while saying the name ‘Mark Shuttleworth’, and thereby implicitly agree to refer to that individual when we use the name ‘Mark Shuttleworth’.

What is important is that at the baptism, a sort of mental ceremony takes place in the witnesses of the baptism, and the result of this ceremony is that thereafter it is understood that the name given to the thing baptized will refer to that thing when those people use it. This process of attaching the name to the object is how the reference of the name is fixed,

it is the process of deciding what the name denotes (refers to), or deciding of a particular object what name it will thereafter be denoted by.

Those people that participated in the baptism can then pass the name on to other language users. These other people can use the name provided that they intend to use it to refer to the thing that was baptized. In this way the name goes from link to link and a community of speakers is able to refer to that object[10]. This picture of naming and reference is more plausible, according to Kripke, than the description/cluster theory that had been predominant until then, and which I will discuss fully in Section 2).

Kripke also thinks that names are rigid designators. This notion of rigid designation is something Kripke introduced into the debate about names in *Naming and Necessity*, even though the initial consideration he puts forward for regarding it as relevant to his discussion, namely that "…we are speaking of a possibility that certainly exists in a formal modal language"[11], is less than convincing. Nevertheless I will proceed by adopting Kripke's definition of "rigid designator", keeping in mind Kripke's comment that it is a term that he uses "quasi-technically"[12].

According to Kripke a term (or symbol or phrase) is a rigid designator "if in every possible world it designates the same object…"[13] and by "designates" he means the same

[10] This is why Kripke is said to hold a causal theory of names. See, for example, Evans, G. "The Causal Theory of Names" in A.P. Martinich, ed., *The Philosophy of Language*, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 271-283.
[11] *Naming and Necessity,* pp. 3-4.
[12] *Naming and Necessity,* p.48.
[13] *Naming and Necessity,* p.48.

function as I described as referring or denoting, in other words picking out an object in the world. The notion of a possible world is another concept used in the literature on modality in a sense that is slightly different from its non-philosophical meaning, so I will next define it as simply as possible.

The notion of a "possible world"[14], a phrasing Kripke himself finds misleading and suggests should be replaced with something like "counterfactual situation"[15] or "counterfactual scenario", is a description of the way the world, or reality, would have been if the things that are actually the case in reality, the actual state of the world, had turned out differently. For example, it could have turned out that I chose to do research on a philosopher other than Kripke. We can therefore say that there is at least one possible world or counterfactual situation in which I am not now writing an essay on Kripke.

So a rigid designator is something that not only refers to or denotes some specific object in the actual world, but also refers to that very thing when considering counterfactual situations, scenarios where things turned out differently to the way they actually turned out in the real world. If this is what a rigid designator is, then I can go on and explain why Kripke thinks names are rigid designators.

He provides the following intuitive test for deciding whether names are rigid

[14] In the next section I will say more about possible worlds when I discuss the work of David Lewis.
[15] *Naming and Necessity,* p.15.

designators[16]. According to Kripke, any property we consider to be essential to an object "is true of that object in any case where it would have existed."[17] The question becomes whether we intuitively feel that an object's name is like one of its essential properties (for example, it can be said that it is an essential property of Kripke that he is human), or a non-essential property (Kripke's property of being bearded, for example). The view that names are essential properties of the objects they denote is endorsed by Kripke when he says: "… although the man (Nixon) might not have been the President, it is not the case that he might not have been Nixon (though he might not have been *called* 'Nixon')."[18]

To illustrate, consider the name 'Mark Shuttleworth'. When we use this name when discussing counterfactual situations, or when we speak about Mark Shuttleworth in other possible worlds, Kripke says our intuition is that we are still referring to the person who is designated by that name in the actual world.

For example, when we speak of a scenario where Mark Shuttleworth failed to make it into space we are still speaking about the same man, Mark Shuttleworth, and considering what would have happened to him, if he himself had failed to reach space. Thus names refer to what they refer to in the actual world, as well as in all other counterfactual situations. This means that names are essential properties of the objects they denote, they pass Kripke's intuitive test for rigid designation, and this is why he claims that names are rigid designators.

[16] *Naming and Necessity*, pp.48-49.
[17] *Naming and Necessity,* p.48.
[18] *Naming and Necessity,* p.49.

Finally, Kripke agrees with John Stuart Mill[19] that names only have denotations and have no connotations (intentional meanings or Fregean[20] senses). They are words that stand for the objects they denote, and the associations that these words might call to mind are irrelevant to their functioning as names. This means that Kripke believes that the only meanings that names have is referential meaning, and the only function they perform in statements, is to refer to the objects they have been attached to.

To illustrate why connotation is considered unimportant for names, consider why it is possible for a taller than average person to have the surname 'Short'. It seems that unlike with other types of words, the associations that this word produces are irrelevant to the way we use it, while the fact that it denotes a certain object is all-important.

I have now recounted enough of Kripke's work to explain exactly why he says that true identity statements between names are true necessarily. I have thus far given sufficient background about what Kripke's views are on naming and reference, and the distinction between necessary and contingent truths. I will next describe the Hesperus-Phosphorus scenario[21], one of Kripke's central thought experiments about identity statements between names.

The names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' were used to refer to what everyone considered to be two different stars. The name 'Hesperus' was given to the object that fitted the

[19] *Naming and Necessity,* p. 26.
[20] From Frege, Gottlob. "Sense and Reference", *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 57, No. 3 (May, 1948), pp. 209 – 230.
[21] *Naming and Necessity,* pp.28-29.

description “the morning star” and “the evening star” was called ‘Phosphorus’. Someone then made the discovery that “the evening star” as well as “the morning star” denoted the same object, the planet Venus. This means that both ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’ are names for the same object, the planet Venus. This discovery reveals to us that the identity statement “Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus” (Hesperus = Phosphorus) is true.

Now that we know it is true, Kripke asks us to consider whether it is true contingently or necessarily. So we ask whether it could have turned out (or could turn out) that Hesperus is not identical to Phosphorus. Intuitively, we feel that the question of Hesperus's identity with Phosphorus could have turned out either true or false. Surely we can imagine a scenario where the discovery about the planet Venus isn't made, and we go on believing that Hesperus and Phosphorus are two different stars. Our intuition seems to be that while it is true that Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus, this is only contingently true, and could have been otherwise. Kripke argues that this intuition is wrong.

He reasons as follows[22]. It is true that Hesperus is identical with Phosphorus, in other words the object that the name ‘Hesperus’ designates, the planet Venus, is the same object that the name ‘Phosphorus’ designates. So in all counterfactual scenarios or possible worlds where the planet Venus exists, it is designated by the names ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’.

This means that the only scenario where the statement “Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus” could turn out false is one where the planet Venus is not identical with

[22] See for example pp. 103-105 and 108-109 of *Naming and Necessity*.

itself. But we know from the argument in logical notation that necessarily, all objects are self-identical.

There is no scenario where the planet Venus is not identical with itself, and hence where Hesperus is not identical to Phosphorus. We have to conclude that the statement "Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus" (and by implication all other statements asserting identity between two names), if true, is true necessarily.

The false idea that we can imagine things turning out differently, making the statement "Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus" false, is caused by two notions that Kripke rejects. The first is the tendency to treat names as if they were the descriptions associated with them[23] or with the descriptions used at their baptisms. This leads us astray because the description "the morning star", unlike the name 'Hesperus', is not a rigid designator.

For Kripke, we confuse scenarios where it is false that the morning star is the evening star with the impossible scenario in which Hesperus is not identical with Phosphorus. Our tendency of confusing the identity of these two definite descriptions with the identity of the corresponding names, is what leads us astray and results in false views about the modal status of true statements such as "Hesperus = Phosphorus", according to Kripke.

The second cause of the mistake, according to Kripke, is misunderstanding the difference between two philosophical distinctions, namely the necessary\contingent distinction and

[23] *Naming and Necessity*, pp.143-144. In the next section I will discuss in detail how Kripke rejects the view that names are shortened descriptions.

the *a priori**a posteriori* distinction[24]. The latter is an epistemological (concerned with knowledge) distinction that is understood as follows. When we can only know that a certain statement is true after some experiential justification, then the statement is true *a posteriori*. If we can come to know that a statement is true without recourse to experience, then that statement is true *a priori*.

For example, the statement "There are more than two chairs in this room" can only be judged to be true or false after looking at the room and counting the number of chairs. If the statement turns out to be true, then it is a piece of *a posteriori* knowledge. However, the statement "All triangles have three sides" can be known to be true without having to examine any actual triangles, and its truth is therefore *a priori.*

The discovery that the statement "Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus" is true is an empirical discovery, making its truth *a posteriori*, because it can only be known through experience. This does not mean that it is also contingent, contrary to the tendency of some philosophers to confuse the two distinctions. Kripke says that the epistemological considerations about how we acquire knowledge must not be confused with the metaphysical (concerned with the way the world is, not with our knowledge of the world) issue of the modal status of truths.

Thus far I have explained why Kripke rejects the possibility of identity statements between names that are contingently true. He argues that all true identity statements between names are true necessarily. In the next section I will look at how other

[24] *Naming and Necessity*, pp.34-36.

philosophers have responded to this Kripkean argument.

Section 2

Responses to Kripke

2.1) Kripke on Names

Kripke's work on naming was motivated by, and a response to, the serious flaws he could see in the description theory of names. Before Kripke's work on naming, the description theory had been the pre-dominant philosophical theory of naming, and while it is somewhat inaccurate to consider it a 'response' to Kripke, I feel that it is important to pay this theory adequate attention in this essay, particularly because under the description theory the idea that there could be contingent identity statements between names is unproblematic. Explaining the description theory and Kripke's rejection of it will make it clearer why Kripke believed names functioned according to his 'picture'.

Different versions of the description theory of naming were held by different philosophers, but in this essay I will (following Kripke) focus on the central idea that all these theories hold in common. The popularity of the description theory of names was due to Bertrand Russell's success[25] in formulating an analysis of how denoting works that revealed the hidden logical structure of statements containing denoting phrases.

[25] Russell, B. "On Denoting". *Mind,* New Series, Vol. 14, No. 56. (Oct., 1905), pp. 479-493.

The most important aspect, for my paper, of what Russell asserts in "On Denoting" is his view on definite descriptions, phrases of the form "the so-and-so" which are meant to pick out one individual object. For example, I might pick out the individual Mark Shuttleworth with the phrase (definite description): "the first African to have gone into space". Now in uncontroversial cases like this there doesn't seem to be any problem with understanding statements containing such phrases.

But now consider the statement "the current King of France is bald"[26] uttered today and keeping in mind that France has no monarch. Can we make sense of this statement? What does it mean? Is it true or false? There seems to be a problem as soon as we come across problematic definite descriptions like "the current King of France" or "the last unicorn on the planet", phrases that are of a form that suggest they should pick out something uniquely, but that in fact have no referents.

Russell asserted that in cases like these we are led astray by the grammatical form of these statements. When we say "the present King of France is bald" it looks like we have the run-of-the-mill subject-predicate form where "the present King of France" is the subject and "is bald" is the predicate. The problem is caused by us having nothing corresponding to the subject in these types of statements, and so there is no referent on which to peg the predicate "is bald".

Theorists before Russell attempted to explain this away by coming up with certain types of ontological status, short of actual existence, for the entities that were supposed to be

[26] "On Denoting", p.482.

denoted by phrases like “the present King of France” or by distinguishing the sense, or meaning, of these phrases from what they were meant to refer to. Russell, however, came up with the novel thought that the subject-predicate grammatical form led us astray in these types of examples, and he proceeded by digging out what he thought was the underlying logical form of definite descriptions to show why.

Russell showed that despite appearances to the contrary, definite descriptions did not function in the way that the subject of a sentence functions, but were rather inseparable from the complex claims in which they occurred. These claims work according to the form C(x)[27] where C is any predicate phrase and the variable x can be replaced by the definite description under consideration. So on our example C= is bald and the x is replaced by “the present King of France”.

Russell analyses C(x) under this interpretation to be asserting (loosely) the following: “there is at least one x, and at most one x, such that x is the King of France, and this x is bald”. The simple-seeming statement containing a definite description asserts three different and important things according to Russell[28] - it asserts: 1. That there is an x (an object) which exists and is the referent of the denoting phrase. 2. That this object is unique, i.e. it is not the case that there is more than one object which is the referent of the phrase. 3. That this object is possessed of the predicate, property, relation which we asserted of it, in our case, “is bald”.

[27] “On Denoting”, p. 480.
[28] “On Denoting”, pp. 481-482.

So how does this help us? Well, according to Russell the statement "the present King of France is bald" and all such problematic cases will turn out false whenever one or more of the three elements/assertions of these statements (which I outlined above) are not satisfied. So as soon as we look at assertion 1, the claim that there exists an object corresponding to "the present King of France", we can reject it as false, making the entire statement containing it false also[29].

The success of Russell's theory of descriptions meant that if names could be shown to be analysable in terms of definite descriptions, then similar problems regarding naming and reference could also be handled by the theory. It became popular as a theory of naming, therefore, to reduce names to a definite description or to a cluster of definite descriptions. This theory is the biggest target of attack for Kripke in *Naming and Necessity*.

According to the description/cluster theory, a name is simply a shortened definite description or a shortened set of definite descriptions. The name 'Mark Shuttleworth', according to this view, means "the first African to have gone into space" or a cluster of related descriptions that pick out Mark Shuttleworth uniquely.

For someone who accepts this theory of naming, a statement like "Hesperus = Phosphorus" has to be seen as true only contingently. According to this theory the name 'Hesperus' means "the morning star" and the name 'Phosphorus' means "the evening star", and so the statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus" describes the fact of the object satisfying the description "the morning star" being the same object that satisfies the

[29] See "On Denoting", p.490

description “the evening star”. Given that it is possible for other objects to have satisfied the descriptions “the morning star” and “the evening star”, it is only contingent that the morning star is identical with the evening star, and so the statement “Hesperus = Phosphorus”, while true, is only true contingently.

Kripke’s argument against the possibility of there being contingently true identity statements between names will therefore be a lot stronger if he can convince us that there are grounds for rejecting the description theory of names. This is exactly what he does in *Naming and Necessity*, and in what follows I discuss how he goes about doing it.

Kripke’s characterization of the description/cluster theory of names (which he feels is a strong and accurate statement of the theory) goes as follows:

> “1)To every name or designating expression ‘X’, there corresponds a cluster of properties, namely the family of those properties φ such that A believes ‘φX’.
> 2) One of those properties, or some conjointly, are believed by A to pick out some individual uniquely.
> 3) If most, or a weighted most, of the φ’s are satisfied by one unique object y, then y is the referent of ‘X’.
> 4) If the vote yields no unique object, ‘X’ does not refer.
> 5) The statement, ‘If X exists, then X has most of the φ’s’ is known *a priori* by the speaker.
> 6) The statement, ‘If X exists, then X has most of the φ’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 reference in such a way that it is ultimately impossible to eliminate."[30]

Kripke constructs this set of theses as a characterization of the description theory, and then sets about exposing the flaws in each thesis separately, gradually eroding the credibility of the theory. He argues convincingly that each thesis in turn can be shown to be false. I won't go into any of his arguments for rejecting each thesis in detail here, but will demonstrate the crux of his attack using my example.

We know that Mark Shuttleworth is the first African to have gone into space. According to the description theory, the name 'Mark Shuttleworth' means "the first African to have gone into space", or it means a cluster of such descriptions which pick out that person uniquely. The cluster might include, for example, "the youngest African IT entrepreneur".

Kripke points out, however, that even if we discover tomorrow that John Smith, another African, beat Shuttleworth to space or is an African IT entrepreneur and is younger, when we use the name 'Mark Shuttleworth' we use it to pick out that individual, not the person that now satisfies our original description, namely John Smith. And if we consider any name, and look at the cluster of descriptions that is supposed to constitute its meaning, we can construct a counterfactual scenario where the referent of the name fails to satisfy the description, even all the descriptions, that are associated with it.

[30] *Naming and Necessity*, p.71.

Kripke's point is that if we can continue using the name to speak about its referent, to the person or object it designates, even in scenarios where all the descriptions associated with it are false (or do not pick out that thing at all, but rather some other thing or nothing at all), then the name cannot mean the description or cluster of descriptions associated with it. Instead, Kripke thinks that names work according to his picture of naming, which I explained in Section 1.

There are attempts by some philosophers to pick out the weaknesses in Kripke's alternative picture of naming. Kripke's picture is sometimes called the causal theory of names, and has been criticized for being inconsistent with his view that true identity statements between names are true necessarily. For example, his comments about a name being passed on from link to link in a community of speakers is seen as introducing a huge element of contingency into his picture of naming.

Michael Wreen[31] points out that if causal connections are contingent, and if names are passed on from speaker to speaker in a causal chain, then the truth of an identity statement between two names has to be contingent: "For if it's contingent that a certain causal chain is grounded in an object, and contingent that a second causal chain is grounded in an object, it would certainly seem to be contingent that both chains are grounded in the same object."[32]

[31] Wreen, Michael. "Proper Names and the Necessity of Identity Statements", *Synthese* Vol. 114, (1998), pp. 319-335.
[32] "Proper Names and the Necessity of Identity Statements", p. 322.

However when applied to the Hesperus-Phosphorus example, this criticism seems unconvincing as a response to Kripke's argument. While it's true that causal chains are contingent, it is not correct to say that if one or more of the links between the planet Venus and the names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' had broken, Kripke would have to admit that the statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus" would be false.

This is because according to Kripke's picture, if somewhere along the line people mistakenly started using the word 'Phosphorus', let's say, to refer to the planet Mars, they would be making a completely different identity statement, namely "Hesperus = Phosphorus". The fact that they do so has no effect on the truth of the original statement, in which Phosphorus denotes the planet Venus.

Paul Ziff questions Kripke's view that names can be "miraculously attached"[33] at a baptism, and that the name can function as a rigid designator because of this baptism. In reality, we use many different names to refer to the same object and we can also use the same word, and variations on that word, as a name for different objects at different times and in different contexts. Kripke, it seems, lays too much emphasis on what his logic-biased intuition says the function of a name should be, and too little emphasis on how names are actually used in everyday language.

The most controversial aspect of Kripke's picture of naming, however, is his claim that names are rigid designators. In the first place, it is not clear that there is any such thing as a rigid designator. It is not clear whether talk of rigid designation is simply an attempt by

[33] Ziff, Paul. "About Proper Names", *Mind,* New Series, Vol. 86, No. 343. (Jul., 1977), p. 331.

Kripke at explaining how he thinks some words and phrases should be used when we explore our modal intuitions[34], or whether he thinks there is really a category of linguistic and logical symbols called 'rigid designators' which names fall under.

So there is at least enough doubt to justify some skepticism about the notion of rigid designation and the view that names are rigid designators. In Section 3 I will give reasons for my own suspicions about treating names as rigid designators. In Section 2.2), I will discuss some other issues concerning the view that names are rigid designators, but this discussion will only make sense after my discussion of counter-examples to Kripke's argument.

2.2) Attempts at Describing a Counterexample

If we consider the conclusion to the logical argument as it pertains to names, which I outlined in Section 1), we have to set it out as follows:

4') $a=b \rightarrow \Box\, a=b$

Without the scope restrictions when dealing with the variables 'x' and 'y', this conclusion asserts that if a certain antecedent (a=b) is true, then a certain consequent (□ a=b) has to be true also. To reject 4') what is needed is a case where the antecedent is true but the consequent is false.

[34] See, for example: Smith, Peter. "Names, Identity and Necessity", in Hacking, Ian. (Ed.) *Exercises in Analysis: Essays by Students of Casimir Lewy,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, p. 165.

This is the strategy adopted by Allan Gibbard[35] and Andre Gallois[36], whose counterexamples are meant to be cases where the place-holders 'a' and 'b' are filled in, and "a=b" is true, but "□ a=b" isn't. To do this, it must be shown that:

c) a=b & ◊ ~a=b (a=b but possibly it is false that a=b)

For such a counterexample to work, it must be true that a=b, while for the same 'a' and 'b' there must be at least one possible scenario where it is false that a=b.

In "Contingent Identity" Gibbard comes up with the following thought experiment[37]. Imagine a sculptor making a statue of Goliath using two separate pieces of clay. At the moment the two pieces of clay are stuck together a new lump of clay and a statue are formed. We name the lump 'Lumpl' and we name the statue 'Goliath'.

The next day, when the clay has dried, we smash the statue with a hammer, thereby bringing to an end the existence of both Goliath as well as Lumpl. This means that Goliath and Lumpl come into existence at the same time, share identical properties for the duration of their existence (including spatial location), and go out of existence at the same time. Given all this, Gibbard says we have to conclude that Goliath is identical with Lumpl, (Goliath = Lumpl). The statement "Goliath = Lumpl" in this scenario is therefore true. Is it true contingently or necessarily?

Gibbard thinks that in the following scenario the statement "Goliath = Lumpl" is false, in

[35] Gibbard, Allan. "Contingent Identity", *Journal of Philosophical Logic,* Vol. 4 (1975), pp. 187-221.

[36] Gallois, Andre. "Rigid Designation and the Contingency of Identity", *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 95, No. 377. (Jan., 1986), pp. 57-76.

[37] "Contingent Identity", p.191.

other words its truth could have turned out otherwise, and it is therefore contingent. Imagine the same artist bringing Goliath and Lumpl into existence as outlined above. In this new scenario, however, the artist squeezes his creation into a ball before it has the chance to dry. This means that in this scenario "the statue *Goliath* would have ceased to exist, but the piece of clay Lumpl would still exist in a new shape."[38]

If Goliath and Lumpl go out of existence at different times here, then it must be the case that Goliath and Lumpl are not identical in this scenario. Hence "Goliath = Lumpl" is false in this scenario (possible world), which is all we need to conclude that "Goliath = Lumpl" is contingent if true.

Gallois paints the following two scenarios[39]:

Scenario 1): In a certain world, W, a ship called Mary built from a collection of planks, C, is maintained by replacing its worn planks with planks from C1, a different collection of new planks. When every plank that constituted Mary has been replaced, we call the new ship, every plank of which comes from C1, 'Alice'. In this scenario, most of us would agree that Mary is identical with Alice. Therefore the statement "Mary = Alice" is true.

Scenario 2): In another possible world, W1, the ship is built as in the first scenario with planks from C, and we call this ship 'Mary1'. The pile of planks C1 exists as in the first scenario. However, in this new scenario Mary 1 is not maintained by replacing its worn

[38] "Contingent Identity", p. 191..
[39] "Rigid Designation and the Contingency of Identity", p.58.

planks with planks from C1. Instead all the planks in C1 are used to construct another ship, called 'Alice1'. In this new scenario, W1, the original identity statement, "Mary = Alice", is false, and therefore contingent.

Gibbard's purported counter-example (Goliath-Lumpl) has been criticized as being misleading in its implication that the relation that obtains between an object and the substance that makes it up, is the relation of identity. One example of this strategy is Mark Johnston's "Constitution is not Identity"[40], a direct response to Gibbard's purported counterexample. He argues that what Gibbard wants to present as a case of identity between Goliath and Lumpl falsely appeals to the contingent relationship, which is not identity, between an object (the statue Goliath) and the matter that constitutes it (the clay).

The flaw in Gibbard's thinking is demonstrated by the following thought experiment[41]. Imagine that Goliath is formed in the way Gibbard describes. The next day, the artist dissolves the statue's arms and legs in acid. While this signals the end of Lumpl, Johnston says that the statue Goliath carries on existing, albeit without its arms and legs.

This is supposed to show that for any object, scenarios can be sketched where certain persistence criteria are no longer satisfied, if we regard the self-identical object under certain concepts. The scenario Gibbard outlines is simply one where the object (which is both Goliath and Lumpl) continues existing as a lump of clay but not as a statue.

[40] Johnston, Mark. "Constitution is not Identity", *Mind,* Vol. 101 (1992), pp. 89-105.
[41] "Constitution is not Identity", .p.89.

Johnston's example shows how the same object can continue existing as a statue but not as a lump of clay. However, in neither case has that object failed in being self-identical.

To answer Gibbard's purported counterexample to Kripke's conclusion about the impossibility of contingently true identity statements, Johnston argues that statements like "Goliath = Lumpl" are not really identity statements. To be more accurate, we should rather view them as cases in which we say of the statue Goliath that it is made up of a certain lump of clay, which we might want to name. But to say this is not to say that it is identical with the clay that constitutes it. If these are not identity statements then any purported counterexamples employing them are misguided. Therefore, Kripke's conclusion that identity statements between names must be necessary if true, is unaffected by Gibbard's example.

The counterexample put forward by Gallois of the identity of the ships Mary and Alice, can be rejected if Kripke's conclusion that names are rigid designators is upheld. The persuasiveness of the ship counter-example is diminished if one feels that the name 'Alice' is a rigid designator. If, as in the example, the ship in the first scenario is given the name 'Alice', then that name denotes that same ship even in the scenario W1 where another ship is built with planks from C1 (the same collection used to build Alice), and is called 'Alice1'. So it can be denied that Alice is identical with Alice1, and also denied that the original statement "Mary = Alice" is false in W1.

Furthermore, Gallois complicates matters unnecessarily when he constructs scenario 2) in an attempt to make his case more convincing. This is why he chooses to call the ship in W1 'Mary1' instead of 'Mary'. If we follow Kripke and insist that even in W1 we are considering what happens to the original Mary, then we also have to admit that given that Mary is Alice, whatever happens to Mary in W1 also happens to Alice.

The upshot is that even in the second scenario Gallois paints, the identity statement "Mary = Alice" is still true. If Kripke is right that names are rigid designators, and if he is right about what rigid designators are, then the possibility of contingently true identities between names is excluded, despite what this purported counter-example suggests.

This result leads Gallois to question what Kripke says about names as rigid designators. He thinks that the plausibility of his example of a contingently true identity statement justifies a re-examination of the way proper names function. He thinks Kripke is right about how names work, and that the way names refer to their objects differs from how other words or phrases do: "…it is plausible to say that there is a modally related difference in the semantic behaviour of 'Mary' and 'Alice' on the one hand, and a non-rigid, or, as Kripke sometimes puts it, accidental designator such as 'John's favourite ship' on the other."[42]

So he agrees with Kripke that names are more rigidly bound to their referents than some of (but not all) the definite descriptions that are true of the object, in the actual world. In other words he endorses Kripke's rejection of the description theory of names. However

[42] "Rigid Designation and the Contingency of Identity", p. 67.

he disagrees with Kripke's claim that names also pick out their referents in all counterfactual scenarios.

He makes use of the principle of the necessity of origin (the view that, for example, this table could not have come from a different piece of wood because then it would have been some other table), which Kripke strongly endorses, to pose the following problem regarding the second scenario he sketches in his counter-example: "… the necessity of origin provides a compelling reason to refuse to identify Alice1 with either Mary or Alice. On the other hand, Mary1 shares its origin in common with Mary and Alice."[43] This yields an unpalatable result: "Mary1 is necessarily identical with Mary/Alice, and that Mary/Alice is necessarily non-identical with Alice1."[44]

His solution is to propose that names can be restricted rigid designators. What this amounts to is the claim that while 'Mary1' rigidly designates a certain ship in a certain world, there are possible worlds in which 'Alice1' rigidly designates that very ship, without Mary1 being identical to Alice1. This is because the fact that a name rigidly designates a certain object in a particular world, world W1 say, is a fact that holds within W1 but does not have to hold in all worlds. Therefore, Gallois has provided a reason, if he is right that there can be restricted rigid designators (RRDs), to believe that it is not the case that all true identity statements between names have to be true necessarily.

[43] "Rigid Designation and the Contingency of Identity", p. 60.
[44] "Rigid Designation and the Contingency of Identity", p. 60.

Ramachandran[45] takes issue with this strategy, and with it the idea that names can be rigid designators only in a sub-set of all possible worlds. His worry is that this view not only makes it possible to have contingently true identity statements between two different names, but also implies that genuinely necessary statements of self-identity could be false: "The challenge, then, is to provide a way of using RRDs to express a genuine contingent identity (the contingent identity of x and y, say) without at the same time expressing, falsely, the contingent identity of an object and itself…"[46]

His point can be demonstrated by assuming that 'Hesperus' is a restricted rigid designator for the planet Venus. Take the statement "Hesperus = Hesperus", a statement of self-identity, and assume that there is a world in which the 'Hesperus' on the right hand side, because it is restricted, does not denote the planet Venus. The result would be that the self-identity statement "Hesperus = Hesperus" turns out false and hence contingent in this world. This is obviously a problem, because it contradicts our deeply held intuition that there cannot be an object that fails to be self-identical.

The crux of this debate, as Ramachandran points out in another paper, is really the issue of what exactly it is that identity statements between names express[47]. The Kripkean position, exhibited by Ramachandran, is that whatever you want to make of the notion of a rigid designator and whether they can be restricted, what gets expressed by a true identity statement between names is the self-identity of the object that is the referent of

[45] Ramachandran, Murali. "Restricted Rigidity: The Deeper Problem", *Mind,* New Series, Vol. 102, No. 405. (Jan., 1993), pp. 157-158.
[46] "Restricted Rigidity: The Deeper Problem", p. 158.
[47] Ramachandran, Murali. "Sense and Schmidentity", *The Philosophical Quarterly,* Vol. 39, No. 157. (Oct., 1989), p. 465.

both names. Given that this identity is a necessary one, contingently true identity statements between names are not possible. On the other hand, defenders of contingent identity like Gallois insist that there has to be some underlying difference between identity statements like "a = b" and statements of self-identity like "a = a".

Considerations about exactly what it is that an identity statement between two names expresses, or as I would put it, exactly what fact gets described by an identity statement between two names, is also taken up by critics of the Kripkean position in a related debate, stemming from an old puzzle about identity statements.

The concern with the issue of naming and identity is partly a result of the following puzzle put forward by Frege[48]. Using our central example, consider these two sentences:

1) Hesperus is Hesperus

2) Hesperus is Phosphorus

Why is it, Frege asks, that 2) can be informative while 1) cannot be, given that the names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' designate the same object? His answer is that while the two names have the same referent, they do not have the same meaning, or in his terminology they diverge in sense. In other words, the fact described by 1) is different from the fact described by 2). The statement "Hesperus is Hesperus" describes one fact, or expresses one truth, and the statement "Hesperus is Phosphorus" describes a different fact.

[48] Frege, Gottlob. "Sense and Reference" in *The Philosophical* Review, Vol. 57, No.3 (May, 1948), pp.209-230.

For Kripke, who holds that names have no connotations, this solution to the puzzle cannot be accepted. However it is difficult to come up with any sort of answer to this puzzle if Kripke's picture of naming is adopted because for Kripke names only have referential meaning. All of this is important to my question because I want to show that there is some reason to doubt the Kripkean account about what identity statements between names express. Specifically, I am skeptical about the view that all statements like "Hesperus = Phosphorus", where identity is asserted between two different names, describe the same fact as statements like "Venus = Venus", a statement of self-identity.

The problem is that Kripke's lack of an answer to Frege's puzzle can be defended in more than one way, and the problem itself does not address directly the claim that true identity statements between names are true necessarily. For example Ramachandran defends the Kripkean position's short-coming in answering this puzzle by pointing out that Kripke is looking for answers to metaphysical questions, while "… informativeness is an *epistemic* notion, not a semantic one, and is *person-relative*."[49] Similarly, De Sousa[50] sees the difference between 1) and 2) type statements in the Fregean puzzle as an epistemic one concerned with how the truth of these statements get discovered.

The reason the statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus" seems to express something different to "Hesperus = Hesperus" is, according to De Sousa, because unlike the latter statement it requires, for us to know that it is true, a discovery. However "… this discovery is a precondition of knowing that 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' *expresses* an identity. That

[49] "Sense and Schmidentity", p. 469.
[50] De Sousa, R.B. "Kripke on Naming and Necessity", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. 3, No. 3. (March 1974), pp. 447-464.

identity itself is necessary…"[51]. In other words, both 1) and 2) ultimately express the same self-identity, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding.

Fitch[52] appeals to these Fregean concerns, as well as the idea of rigid designators, to argue that "Hesperus = Phosphorus" cannot be a necessary *a posteriori* truth. Fitch puts forward the following argument against Kripke's conclusions about the Hesperus-Phosphorus example:

> "1) The terms 'Venus', 'Hesperus', and 'Phosphorus' are rigid designators.
>
> 2) The objects of knowledge are propositions.
>
> 3) If S is a sentence containing a rigid designator α, and S' is a sentence obtained from S by substituting a rigid designator β for α in S, and α and β designate the same object, then S and S' express the same proposition.
>
> 4) We know *a priori* that Venus is Venus.
>
> 5) We know *a priori* that Hesperus is Phosphorus."[53]

This conclusion, which contradicts what Kripke says about the identity between Hesperus and Phosphorus, is a result of equating the fact described by the statement "Venus is Venus" with the fact described by the statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus", something

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[51] "Kripke on Naming and Necessity", p. 451.

[52] Fitch, G.W. "Are There Necessary *A Posteriori* Truths?" *Philosophical Studies,* Vol. 30 (1976), pp. 243-247.

[53] "Are There Necessary *A Posteriori* Truths?", p.244.

that seems unavoidable if Kripke's picture of naming is correct. If they are the same fact, Fitch argues, why isn't our knowledge of them the same?

In response, Carney[54] claims that Kripke rejects "the view that when S knows that p, the object of his knowledge is what 'p' expresses."[55] His point is once again that these criticisms conflate epistemic with metaphysical considerations. His view is that to say "Hesperus = Phosphorus" is true (or knowable) *a posteriori,* is not to say that the content of what "Hesperus = Phosphorus"' expresses, or the fact it describes, is *a posteriori*, "but that the content of the associated description is knowable *a posteriori*."[56]

This move leaves space for holders of the Kripkean position to insist that just because the associated description (the identity of the morning star with the evening star) is known *a posteriori,* there is still no reason to doubt that the truth underlying the statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus" is the truth of the planet Venus's self-identity.

Tye[57] provides an argument for rejecting the view that all identity statements between two different names are equivalent to, or assert the same as, the self-identity of the object that is denoted by both names. Moreover, Tye thinks that the rejection of this view can be justified on Kripkean grounds. Consider again these two statements:

1) Hesperus = Phosphorus

[54] Carney, James D. "The Hesperus and Phosphorus Puzzle", *Mind,* New Series, Vol. 89, No. 356. (Oct., 1980), pp. 577-581.
[55] "The Hesperus and Phosphorus Puzzle", p. 579.
[56] "The Hesperus and Phosphorus Puzzle", p. 579.
[57] Tye, Michael. "The Puzzle of Hesperus and Phosphorus", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. 56, No. 3, (December 1978), pp. 219-224.

2) Venus = Venus

Tye says of these two statements: "It is a consequence of Kripke's account that the truth which (1) expresses is different from the truth which (2) expresses. For the former truth has a property which the latter lacks, namely being *a priori*."[58] Again, there is reason to hold that statements of identity between two different names are different to, and do not boil down to, statements of some object's self-identity.

In contrast Tienson[59] argues for a separation between what gets expressed by an identity statement, and its truth conditions because "… it is (typically) not possible to have non-linguistic thoughts that have the same truth conditions as (statements made with) sentences containing proper names"[60]. He argues that our thoughts about objects always have to involve properties of that object, whereas names simply denote the object and have nothing to do with the object's properties. So the truth conditions for "Hesperus = Phosphorus" are the same for "Venus = Venus", even if the two statements call to mind different properties of the planet Venus.

In this sub-section I hope I have shown that Kripke's position about exactly what it is that an identity statement between names expresses, is susceptible to doubt. I have outlined the debate over this topic in the literature, and described why there might be a problem, or at least the suspicion of one, in equating statements of self-identity like "Venus =

[58] "The Puzzle of Hesperus and Phosphorus", p. 220.
[59] Tienson, John. "Hesperus and Phosphorus", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. 62, No. 1 (March 1984), pp. 16-25.
[60] "Hesperus and Phosphorus", p. 25.

Venus" with statements like "Hesperus = Phosphorus" even when it is true that the planet Venus is denoted by both the names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus'. My own response to Kripke's argument, which I present in Section 3), will reinforce this skepticism.

2.3) Kripke on Modality

Kripke's ideas about what the terms 'necessary' and 'contingent' signify and his views about how to go about determining whether a truth is necessary or contingent, are not universally accepted. There is a competing, and infamous, theory of modality called modal realism that provides a good explanation for why there can be contingently true identity statements between names. In what follows, I explain modal realism and how Kripke's conception of modality contradicts it.

David Lewis provides a unique account of how we go about determining the modal status of truths, whether they are contingent or necessary. Lewis[61] puts forward the following paragraph expressing his argument for realism about possible worlds. I will use mostly his words but will number the sentences in an attempt to put them in some type of standard from.

1) "It is uncontroversially true that things might be otherwise than they are. I believe, and so do you, that things could have been different in countless ways." But this means…

[61] Lewis, D.K. "Possible Worlds". Chapter 4.1 in his *Counterfactuals*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1973, p.84.

2) To paraphrase 1: “there are many ways things could have been besides the way they actually are.”

3) “There are many ways things could have been besides the way they actually are” is an existential quantification - “it says that there exist many entities of a certain description, to wit ‘ways things could have been’”.

4) “I therefore believe in the existence of entities that might be called ‘ways things could have been’. I prefer to call them ‘possible worlds’.”

Conclusion: Modal Realism - the view that there exist other possible worlds besides the one we inhabit.

Lewis thinks that when we use the phrase “ways things could have been” we are really talking about other possible worlds. Thus we all believe in the existence of these entities, and if they exist they are just as real as our world even though they are not actual. When we examine the same uncontroversial statement that we started with, we also see that all along we have agreed that these entities are “ways things could have been”. But because “ways things could have been” are just “possible worlds”, we end up with the final step, the commitment to the existence of possible worlds.

Lewis's modal realism is relevant to my question for the following reasons. If modal realism is correct, and other possible worlds are as real as this, the actual world, then the procedure for determining the modal status of the true statement “Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus” is not quite what Kripke makes it out to be. This is because according to modal realism, when we speak about what happens to Hesperus and Phosphorus in other

possible worlds we are not talking about the actual objects Hesperus and Phosphorus but rather to counterparts of Hesperus and Phosphorus in those worlds.

The relevant counterpart of an actual object in a different possible world is the object in that possible world that comes closest to being the real object. For example, we could decide that my counterpart in W2, a possible world, is the object X2 because it has more of its properties in common with me than the other objects in that world. However Lewis warns that we mustn't make the mistake of believing that I am identical to object X2. This is because the relation between myself and X2, the counterpart relation, "… serves as a substitute for identity between things in different worlds."[62] The actual Hesperus and Phosphorus only exist in the actual world.

While it is true that Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus in our world, it is not true that we cannot conceive of a possible world where Hesperus is not identical to Phosphorus, if Lewis is right. According to modal realism, all we have to do to achieve this is to imagine a world where the object which is the closest counterpart to Hesperus is a different object to the one that is the closest counterpart to Phosphorus.

The easiest case to imagine is one where two different planets take up the positions in the sky that Venus actually takes up in the morning and evening respectively. Here, we would still call the morning star Hesperus, but in this possible world the object thus named would be Hesperus's counterpart, and similarly for a different object which is

[62] Lewis, David. "Counterparts of Persons and Their Bodies", *The Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. 68, No. 7. (Apr. 8, 1971), p.206.

Phosphorus's counterpart. In this possible world it is false that Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus. So the true statement "Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus" is true but only contingently true.

Kripke has a different view on modal matters. He does not accept modal realism, and put forward what he says is a better way of examining our notions of necessity and contingency. He argues that talk of "possible worlds" is misleading, and prefers talking about counterfactual scenarios. He makes use of the analogy between examining counterfactual situations and considering the faces of a pair of dice besides the two that face up after each throw of the dice[63]. The two sides of the dice that face upward correspond to the actual state of affairs and all the other combinations of sides represent counterfactual scenarios.

He says that his view about counterfactual states is more plausible than modal realism, which implies that we can only find out about non-actual states by staring at other worlds through a telescope of some sort[64]. In other words, it is false to believe that other possible worlds are real, so the way we find out about counterfactual scenarios or worlds is to observe or examine them. Kripke says counterfactual scenarios are imaginary constructs, not real worlds.

For Kripke possible worlds or counterfactual scenarios are stipulated by us[65], we decide on and describe exactly what goes on and exactly what exists in the counterfactual

[63] *Naming and Necessity*, p.18.
[64] Ibid. pp.44-46.
[65] *Naming and Necessity*, p.44.

scenarios. We do not find out what goes on in these non-actual worlds and thereby determine what is true at them. Instead we simply state what happens at those worlds or in those scenarios. This is the reason Kripke is unimpressed with the concern over trans-world identity (the question of which object in a possible world is identical with any given actual object) and does not accept the idea that there are counterparts of real objects in other possible worlds.

If we can stipulate what goes on under an alternative scenario, then in speaking about Aristotle, for example, in another possible world, it is not necessary to first determine Aristotle's closest counterparts in that world. We simply stipulate that it is the person that is actually Aristotle we are speaking about in considering a possible world or counterfactual situation where, for example, Aristotle never studied Philosophy[66].

This means that when we look for a scenario where Hesperus is not Phosphorus we are still speaking of the object, the planet Venus, that is designated by 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' in the actual world. Even if we can make sense of 'counterparts' of objects, this still does not produce cases where Hesperus and Phosphorus are not identical. Instead, these scenarios only prove that other objects besides the planet Venus could have been called 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus', or that counterparts of the morning star could fail to be identical with counterparts of the evening star.

Kripke's comment that the way to determine the truth of statements in counterfactual situations is to stipulate what happens in them, is viewed with suspicion by some

[66] *Naming and Necessity,* p. 57.

philosophers. Bostock[67], for example, thinks that if stipulation is enough justification to support the Kripkean intuitions about modality, then it should also be good enough for the view that there can be contingent identities between names: "So our reply is simply to *stipulate* that the situation is one in which Phosphorus has the one orbit and Hesperus the other. By our stipulation, it is Phosphorus and Hesperus that we are talking about."[68]

However it is difficult to make sense of how it is possible to stipulate a situation where Hesperus is not Phosphorus, if we know that 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' denote one object, the planet Venus. This amounts to stipulating a situation where the planet Venus is not the planet Venus, and hence once again a situation where an object fails to be self-identical. So while it is true that there is something suspect about simply being able to stipulate the nature of a counterfactual scenario, attacking this idea gets us no closer to defending the possibility of contingent identity statements between names.

What this sub-section shows is to what extent one's willingness to accept or reject the possibility of contingent identity statements between names is determined by the model, theory or picture that one accepts as the best for explaining modality, and hence exactly what is meant when we say a truth is 'necessary' or 'contingent'. I think that it is still possible, however, to reject Kripke's conclusion that all true identity statements between names are true necessarily without relying on the notion of counterparts of objects in other possible worlds, or on simple stipulation of a counterfactual scenario where, for example, Hesperus is not identical to Phosphorus.

[67] Bostock, David. "Kripke on Identity and Necessity", *The Philosophical Quarterly,* Vol. 27, No. 109. (Oct., 1977), pp. 313-324.
[68] "Kripke on Identity and Necessity", p. 320.

Section 3

My Response

My response to Kripke's argument starts with the question Kripke says we should ask when determining whether a true statement of identity between names is contingent or necessary. He says that we have to ask of such true statements whether their truths could have been otherwise or not. But what exactly does this mean, and is Kripke's answer to this question convincing?

I think the following sentence is the best possible description of what it is we mean when we speak about "the truth" of the statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus". The truth of the statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus" involves the statement's description of a state of affairs, in combination with the existence of that state of affairs in reality.

Now this characterization can be interpreted in different ways, which yield different results when evaluating the modal status of "the truth" of this statement. Kripke's interpretation is that once we know the statement to be true, its meaning is also fixed, and we hold the meaning of the statement rigid (especially the referential meaning of the names in that statement) when we search for a false-making scenario when determining modal status.

Our test for the modal status of the truth of our statement, according to Kripke, is really

about whether the statement can describe the state of affairs it (actually) describes, in scenarios where that state of affairs is not the case. This is my first point of disagreement with Kripke's argument. I will justify my position properly after I sketch my thought experiment. But for now, I want merely to flag as problematic Kripke's assumption that we judge a statement's truth or falsity in a counterfactual scenario based on its description of an actual state of affairs.

Also, it has to be acknowledged that this debate is influenced by the decision about what state of affairs it is that our statement describes. For Kripke, statements like "Hesperus = Phosphorus" describe the fact of the planet Venus's self-identity, and this is why the truth of this statement can never be otherwise, at least in all scenarios in which the planet Venus exists.

In what follows I describe a thought experiment where our intuitions clash with both of the aforementioned Kripkean positions, and where, in asking what the truth of an identity statement consists in and whether it could have turned out differently, we have in mind something completely different to what Kripke would have us believe.

Imagine the following scenario. I am holding two darts, one blue and one red. The blue dart I have named 'Hesperus' and the red dart 'Phosphorus'. I throw both darts at a dart-board without any specific target in mind. My friend, who knows the names for my darts, decides to attach the name 'Venus' to whichever dart lands closest to the bulls-eye.

He tells me after I have thrown both darts, and after seeing that the blue dart lands closest to the bulls-eye, that the statement “Hesperus = Venus” is true. I ask him if it could have turned out false, whether things could have turned out differently. Most of us would interpret my question as asking whether there was the possibility that, given a different configuration of the darts, the statement “Hesperus = Venus” could have turned out false instead of true.

Our pre-Philosophical (and Kripke-free) intuition strongly dictates the following interpretation of this thought experiment. Before the darts are thrown there is a chance that the statement “Hesperus = Venus” will turn out true, and an equal chance that the statement “Phosphorus = Venus” will turn out true. After the darts are thrown, when “Hesperus = Venus” is true, our intuition is that it was possible for Phosphorus to have landed closer, and hence for the statement “Hesperus = Venus” to have turned out false. Kripke would have us believe that this intuition is wrong, a result of confusing matters epistemological and metaphysical, or of treating names like descriptions instead of the rigid designators that they are.

However in this case our intuition that either dart could have turned out to be Venus, and that either statement could turn out true, has nothing to do with epistemic matters, with the fact that we find out *a posteriori* which dart turns out to be Venus. The matter of how the darts land on the board is divorced from concerns over how we come to know anything about the relative positions of the darts. It is a metaphysical consideration, because it is a matter concerning the way the world is.

It would also be strange to claim that our intuitions about my question are corrupted by treating the names as if they were descriptions. When asking the question about the truth of the statement I have no idea what criterion or criteria my friend used, if any, to fix the reference of 'Venus'. So it doesn't seem plausible to say that when I ask my friend whether the truth of the statement "Hesperus = Venus" could have turned out otherwise, I am using the names 'Hesperus' or 'Venus' as short-hand for descriptions.

Moreover, if, upon hearing my question, my friend does indeed interpret it (as everybody would, I am sure) as asking whether Phosphorus could have landed closer to the bulls-eye instead, thus committing the sin of treating 'Venus' as if it meant "the dart closest to the bulls-eye", this would merely show that our non-theoretical treatment of names when they are used in statements in everyday language, allows us at times to interpret them as equivalent in meaning to descriptions. I would, on the other hand, venture that nobody would interpret my question as one solely about the object which is now called 'Hesperus' and 'Venus'.

Our intuition that in this thought experiment the statement "Hesperus = Venus" could turn out true or false is based on the fact that the way the darts land is a contingent matter, and the way the darts land determines:

1) The referent of 'Venus'
2) The meaning of the statements "Hesperus = Venus" and "Phosphorus = Venus", or the respective states of affairs these two statements describe

3) Which state of affairs comes to be the case

4) Which statement is true and which statement is false

So here, if we are wrong about what the question "Could it have been otherwise?" means, it is not because we are confusing the epistemological and metaphysical distinction. We are not confusing how we come to know these truths with their metaphysical status.

I can't deny that our natural tendency to equate names with descriptions might be a factor in this example, and hence could provide defenders of the Kripkean position with a reason to ignore it. However I think that by far the most important and interesting result of this thought experiment, is that when I ask whether things could have turned out otherwise, my question and the thought behind my question have nothing to do with the self-identity of the object which is the blue dart. And our intuition suggests that this is right, that the fact that the object (the blue dart) is identical with itself is completely unrelated to the question whether the true identity statement "Hesperus = Venus" could have turned out false instead.

To me, this strongly suggests that the fact described by the statement "Hesperus = Venus" is not the self-identity of the blue dart, even though it is obvious after the throw that both the names 'Hesperus' and 'Venus' refer to the blue dart. Hence "the truth" of the statement consists in something other than the fact of the blue dart's self-identity.

This thought experiment also casts doubt on the view that names are rigid designators. When the treatment of 'Venus' or 'Hesperus' or 'Phosphorus' as rigid designators is

taken to extremes, it shows us exactly how bizarre Kripke's views on naming are. In this case, for example, he is committed to the view that given that "Hesperus = Venus" turns out true, 'Hesperus' and 'Venus' rigidly designate the object which is the blue dart. But this means that if we, using these names in our way, speak about the time before the darts are thrown, we still refer to the blue dart whenever we say 'Venus', even when we are describing a scenario where the red dart lands closer to the bulls-eye.

This is truly bizarre if you consider that accepting this means accepting that "Hesperus = Venus" is true, and true necessarily, even before the darts are thrown (the scenario that is unfolding before the darts are thrown, is, of course, counterfactual in a sense, because it is not happening now). Alternatively, imagine a scenario where I don't throw the darts at all.

The two names 'Hesperus' and 'Venus', being rigid designators, both designate the blue dart where it exists, according to Kripke, and the object which is the blue dart is necessarily self-identical. The blue dart exists before and after it is thrown towards the dart-board and in the scenario where I don't throw the darts at all. Surely, then, the statement "Hesperus = Venus" is true and true necessarily both before and after the darts are thrown and the name 'Venus' is attached. It is true, if Kripke is right, even in scenarios where I don't throw the dart at all, and where the name 'Venus' is not attached to anything.

Seen from this point of view, the way the darts land is a state of affairs, or fact, which

holds no consequences for the modal status of the true statement "Hesperus = Venus", and is irrelevant when we ask whether the truth of the statement could have turned out differently. This seems highly counter-intuitive, especially considering that the contingent matter of how the darts land on the board is what determines which object the name 'Venus' refers to, what the statements "Hesperus = Venus" and "Phosphorus = Venus" mean (the state of affairs they describe), and which of the two statements is true and which false.

The difference between my intuitions, as exhibited in my thought experiment, and Kripke's argument about determining the modal status of truths, is partly explained by Almog's comment[69] that Kripke operates on a "one-stage theory of evaluation" in which the notions of the intentional[70] meaning or expressed content of statements are ignored when evaluating the truth and modal status of statements. Instead, Kripke sees reference or denotation as all-important, and all that is needed when deciding such matters.

This is an unsurprising consequence of Kripke's convincing rejection of the description theory of names, but it is also, I think, a result of the misconception that as soon as one is willing to include more than the denotation of a name as a factor in one's theory or picture of naming, one leaves the door open for descriptions to become part of the meaning of a name.

[69] Almog, Joseph. "Naming Without Necessity", *The Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. 83, No. 4. (Apr. 1986), p. 213.
[70] Loosely, intentional meaning is the types of mental associations the name manifests, in contrast to extensional meaning, which is simply the object the name stands for.

But I, along with others, am not convinced of this. Crimmins, for example claims that "… the names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' express different modes of presentation of a single object."[71] And I think it is not difficult to characterize the notion of a "mode of representation" as something entirely different from and unrelated to definite descriptions.

But even if we insist that the pure domain of proper names has to be unsullied by anything other than reference, this still does not leaves us with Kripke's "one-stage" theory of evaluation. Just because names are purely referential mechanisms, it does not mean that identity (and other) statements containing names don't have determinate meanings or connotations.

Field, for example, thinks that "the meaning of a sentence is given by its referential meaning together with its conceptual role."[72] Again, the phrase "conceptual role" is vague enough to allow us to preclude associations with definite descriptions, but accurate enough to allow us to see why the two statements "Venus = Venus" and "Hesperus = Phosphorus", while having the same referential meaning, could differ in some way.

The following argument also shows, I think, why referential meaning cannot be all there is to the modal evaluation of statements like "Hesperus = Phosphorus". Take the following two statements:

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[71] Crimmins, Mark. "Hesperus and Phosphorus: Sense, Pretense, and Reference", *The Philosophical Review,* Vol. 107, No. 1. (Jan., 1998), p.1.
[72] Field, Harty (HHF). "Logic, Meaning,and Conceptual Role", *The Journal of Philosophy,* Vol. 74, No. 7. (Jul., 1977), p. 390.

1) Hesperus is identical to Phosphorus.
2) The planet Venus exists.

Now if considerations of reference are all that matters in the evaluation of these two statements, and if the two names in 1) denote the same object as what is referred to in 2), then it has to be said that the referential meaning of 1) and 2) are the same. Yet it is obvious that 2) is contingently true, while Kripke thinks that 1) is true necessarily. The conclusion has to be that 1) and 2) have different meanings, and this difference in meaning is pertinent to the evaluation of the modal status of the respective statements.

Finally I can spell out exactly why I am of the view that there can be contingently true identity statements between names. My view is that the statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus" is true because of two facts:

1) the fact that the planet Venus is denoted by the name 'Hesperus'
2) the fact that the planet Venus is denoted by the name 'Phosphorus'

If these two facts are part of reality, then the statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus" has to be true, if one or both of these facts is not the case the statement is false. I take the self-identity of the planet Venus to be so obvious that it is not even a consideration in evaluating the truth of this statement.

However, the true statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus" is true contingently, not necessarily. In a scenario where, for example, 2) is not the case because the planet Mars is denoted by 'Phosphorus', the statement "Hesperus = Phosphorus" is false.

I reject the Kripkean retort that this would simply be a scenario where something else is called ‘Phosphorus’, and this does not make the statement false. I reject this move because the fact that the planet Venus is denoted by ‘Phosphorus’ is a fact about the actual world, and should therefore not affect the evaluation of the truth value of the statement “Hesperus = Phosphorus” in other possible scenarios.

In short, the fact that the statement “Hesperus = Phosphorus” means what it means (including the fact that the names in the statement refer to what they refer to), is part of what makes it true in the actual world, in reality. Therefore its meaning something different in another possible scenario has to be a factor in judging its truth value in that scenario, and by implication its modal status.

Conclusion

In this essay I have explained Kripke’s rejection of the possibility of contingently true identity statements between names. I have given his arguments for this view, as well as the responses other philosophers have given to the important elements of his arguments. Finally, I have shown why I disagree with Kripke, and explained why I think it is possible to have true identity statements between names that are true contingently. I have justified my conclusion that Kripke is wrong that all true identity statements between names are true necessarily.

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