

THE CAUSAL THEORY OF REFERENCE: OBJECTIONS AND RESPONSES

A version of Kripke's causal account of the reference of proper names

Objections to this account

Kripkean responses

Given a subject, S, and a proper name, 'Stan,' S denotes an object X by 'Stan just in case

I. Frege's original arguments for sense in addition to reference

1. 'Hesperus=Hesperus' seems to convey different information than 'Hesperus=Phosphorus'

Both sentences *semantically* encode the same information. We think otherwise only because they *pragmatically impart* different info, as blowing one's nose may impart the info that one has a cold. (In this case one sentence imparts the significant fact that 'Hesperus' denotes the same thing as 'Phosphorus' while the other imparts the insignificant fact that 'Hesperus' denotes the same thing as 'Hesperus.' But this difference is not a difference in *meaning*.)

either

2. 'Hesperus' cannot be substituted for 'Phosphorus' in modal, epistemic and doxastic contexts (e.g. it is *necessary* that Hesperus=Hesperus but not necessary that Hesperus=Phosphorus)

It is necessary that Hesperus=Phosphorus. We think otherwise only because our qualitative epistemic situation is compatible with 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' denoting different things.

(1) (a) S bestowed the name 'Stan' in an initial dubbing
and
(b) the object dubbed was X

3. The theory seems to require that such a sentence as 'Neptune does not exist' *mean* something different if Neptune exists than if it does not: if Neptune exists, it means<Neptune, nonexistence>; this position is not available if Neptune does not exist

→ *Perhaps* these consequences can be swallowed if we make liberal application of the distinction between semantically encoded and pragmatically imparted information.

or

(2) (a) S acquired the name 'Stan' from someone else
and
(b) S intends to refer by 'Stan' to whatever the person he acquired the name from referred to

4. The theory seems to require that sentences containing nondenoting proper names express no proposition.

and
(c) S acquired the name 'Stan' from someone who (acquired it from someone who . . .) bestowed it on X in an initial dubbing.

II Searlian Objections

A. Kripke's conditions are not *sufficient*

(1) Can't account for change of reference (e.g. 'Madagascar'
(2) could refer to no one even though conditions were met (if one thought 'Thales' denoted the frog next door, he would not denote Thales even if all Kripke's conditions were met)

Granted. The theory needs to be beefed up with more conditions. (*Perhaps* these will move it in the direction of descriptionism.)

B. Kripke's conditions are not *necessary*. Counterexamples:

(1) hunting-gathering community: all names taught by ostension

→ Kripke's conditions are met here. What the teacher uses the term to refer to matter more than what she/he ostends (as cases of mistaken ostension show).

(2) '387': numbers can't cause anything

→ doesn't matter: the initial dubbing in this case is by descriptions (& numerals are descriptions)

(3) 'M Street': need know only existence of a certain naming system

→ that's enough only to know the name denotes *something* --not enough to know *what* it denotes