

## Philosophy 3A Exam Essay: Term 2

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The origins of the trusted theory of naming lie in description theories offered by Frege and Russell that argued that proper names have referents and that these referents describe the proper names in a specific manner, this manner is known as its sense. Russell believed that the meaning of the proper name is equal to the meaning of the definite description that the speaker associates with the proper name and that these definite descriptions could be seen as phrases that qualify the proper name to refer to its referent, Frege agreed that definite descriptions provide a sense for proper name. (Mill, 2008) Both men thought that the definite descriptions refer to the referent by its meaning being a condition that, if satisfied, is the meaning of the referent. From this both men come to the conclusion that there is no difference between proper names and definite descriptions. (Mill, 2008) This version of Description theory was evolved to the Cluster description theory of naming by scholars and philosophers to bolster its main assumptions from attacks that could harm the single description theory. The cluster theory as Kripke sees it's in Naming & Necessity, can be looked at in two ways, firstly, the description theories of naming give meaning to the proper names, secondly, the definite descriptions determine the referent when the proper name is used. At the end of Kripke's first lecture he concludes that supports of the cluster or description theories is implicated to committing to 6 theses that he specifies, and he adds a condition that these theses must abide by, which is the condition of non-circularity when describing a proper name. This essay will analyze Kripke's arguments against these 6 implications of the cluster theory to find out why they have been considered false by Kripke. The essay will examine the argument against each of theses, beginning with the second one and ending with the sixth, while excluding the first one as Kripke explains that it is a definition necessary for cluster theory, and therefore, can not be argued against.

The second thesis states that the properties that are believed to belong to the object pick it out uniquely. Kripke's point of objection is that generally people do not have a large enough conceptual or semantic knowledge to avoid using another proper name or description to assist in describing an object uniquely, therefore, by using another proper name to assist the speaker creates a situation where one is now describing two proper names instead of uniquely describing one of those. (Kripke, 1972:203) Kripke believes that this thesis is false because people will regularly commit this error of circularity and because one can create

a situation where it is easy to use a referent in a description that picks out another referent. (Kripke, 1972:203)

The third thesis states that if enough of the right weighted properties are satisfied by a unique object(A), then (A) is the referent for the speaker. (Kripke, 1972:203) Kripke's rebuttal to this thesis begins with him inferring that if Thesis 2 is false, then the rest should be as well, because if there are many counterfactual situations where (A) does not have any of these properties necessary to be a referent to the name or is not unique in satisfying those properties, this goes on the opposite direction of the goal of theories of naming, of explaining how we as speaker use language to pick out objects in the world uniquely. It would be false to say that the object(A) that refers to the proper name is a necessary truth. Kripke claims this is evident in examples where the reference may be used incorrectly like the Godel-Schmidt example.

(Kripke, 1972:204) Another example that shows this is if the examiner associated the description "the writer of this essay" with the proper name "Gary", but upon plagiarism enquiries the examiner finds out "Ben" actually wrote this essay. The example shows that another object "Ben" may be discovered to better satisfy the properties that actually "Gary" refers to, following from this it must be, based on cluster theory, that when the speaker uses the name "Gary" to refer to "the writer of this paper" then they are rather referring to "Ben", because if "Ben" satisfies the right properties of "the writer of this paper", then "Ben" is the referent. Based on this reasoning, Kripke concludes this thesis false as well.

The fourth thesis states that if no unique objects satisfy the properties, then the name does not refer to anything. Kripke believes this thesis to be false, as he claims there are examples where proper names still refer to objects but do not uniquely satisfy any of those properties apparently needed to refer.

(Kripke, 1972:204-205) For example, if I call my car "Speedy" because I think it's the fastest car in the world, but this fact is incorrect, but the name "Speedy" still refers to my car regardless. Situations where the descriptions or properties associated with a referent that turn out to be incorrect also provide opposition to this thesis, those associated descriptions may in turn be referring to no one at all, but the name still can refer to the referent. (Kripke, 1972:204-205)

The fifth thesis of Kripke's picture the Cluster theory states that if "X" exists, then "X" satisfies most of the properties if the object(A) it's referring to is known a priori. (Kripke, 1972:204-205) Cluster theory sees definite descriptions as equal to proper names, and therefore, can replace each other without change the value of the truth of the statement, so it should be true to say: if "n" is a proper name and "F" the definite descriptions referring to "n" and "F" exists, then

“F”=“F”, then “n”=“F” is a priori knowledge, but this is not the case as Kripke asserts. (Kripke, 1972:204-205) This must be a posteriori knowledge to be able to attach those descriptions to the object, therefore this thesis can be seen as false.

The final thesis states that if “X” exists, then it is a necessary truth that those properties a truth of “X”, Kripke says this implies that in any world those properties should still be true of “X” and the cluster of properties identifies as equal to the name and therefore must be necessarily attached to the “X” in all possible worlds. (Kripke, 1972:204-205) Kripke identifies two issues with this thesis, firstly, those associated properties or descriptions of the object are not necessarily true, but rather contingent, if true at all. Secondly, there is a confusion between the importance of the property or description with the necessity of it. The most important property to determining the reference may be a contingent fact, this confusing of important facts with properties illustrates why properties we think are important to determining the referent in cluster theory do not amount to necessary truths about the object. (Kripke, 1972:204-205)

Based in the arguments presented above I believe that Saul Kripke’s critique of cluster theories 6 theses is valid in its implications and analysis.

Oppositely, it can be said that the arguments for the cluster theory do have strengths that Kripke admits to, but does not convincingly lessen their significance, in my opinion. Firstly, in cluster theory, names are associated with descriptions and names references are fixed by these descriptions, and therefore, to merely state that a proper is the name for an object is enough to fix the referent to the name. Kripke believes this is an important strength of cluster theory, as it solves a crucial question of naming theories of how proper names link to objects. (Mill, 2008) Cluster theory solves this issues of identity statements that have two proper names by stating that we as speakers associates different descriptions with two names and then it’s discovered that these two differing descriptions refer to the same objects, as each proper name has its own associated properties that qualify it. (Mill, 2008) Thirdly, when inspecting questions of existence of proper names like “Does Plato exist?”, it may seem like one may not refer to an individual or their existence by including the proper name is question, but cluster theory sees this as a question of whether someone exists that has the properties that refer to Plato. (Mill, 2008) These three objections or strengths of Cluster theory may have had the value underestimated by Kripke.

However, it may be said that the arguments against the six main theses that underpin Cluster theory and the fact that cluster theory relies descriptions to give reference to proper names, because there seems no clear way to determine

which of the many varying descriptions of the same object provides the meaning to the proper name, were, in this case strong enough to persuade me to agree with Kripke's valuation of Cluster theory.

### **References**

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