

Kripke's *Naming and Necessity*
Lecture One

A Priority, Analyticity and Necessity

Rob Trueman
rob.trueman@york.ac.uk

University of York

A Priority, Analyticity and Necessity

Preliminaries

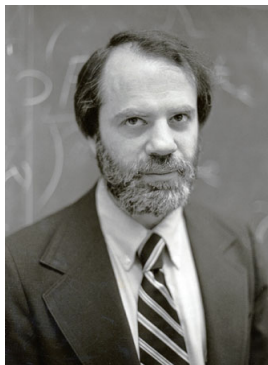
Three Important Distinctions

Possible Worlds

Summary

Saul Kripke

- In this module, we are going to focus on *Naming and Necessity*, by Saul Kripke
- Kripke is one of the most famous philosophers in the analytic tradition
- He started off working in modal logic, and had published important results before he was 20!
- *N&N* is one of his best known works



Saul Kripke

Introducing *Naming and Necessity*

- Kripke begins *N&N* by presenting some new ideas in the philosophy of language
- He objects to an old picture of how names work, and replaces it with a new one
- Kripke then goes on to draw a number of startling metaphysical conclusions from this new picture
- In just 155 pages, Kripke covers all of these topics: reference; necessity; a priority; essence; natural kinds; and the relation between the mind and the brain



Why Study *Naming and Necessity*?

- Part of the reason for studying *N&N* is just that it is full of interesting philosophical ideas
- But it is also important because *N&N* has had a **huge** influence on philosophy
- A great many contemporary philosophers take Kripke's ideas for granted, and so if you want to understand their work, you first need to understand Kripke's

Why Study *Naming and Necessity*?

- More than that though, *N&N* has become something of a paradigm example of contemporary analytic philosophy
- Here are some features of contemporary analytic philosophy
 - It tends to be a very “logical” discipline, in that it makes heavy use of formal logical tools
 - It tends to take metaphysics very seriously, and is happy to ask distinctively metaphysical questions about the world
 - It tends to rely heavily on intuitions
- All of these features are very clearly present in *N&N*, and in fact, this book was one of the influences which shaped contemporary analytic philosophy
- Studying *N&N* will give us an insight into how our subject evolved into its current form

Reading *Naming and Necessity*

- *N&N* was originally presented as a series of three lectures; the book is mostly just a transcript of those lectures
- In some ways, this makes *N&N* very easy to read
 - It is written in a very chatty, conversational way
- But in another way, it can make *N&N* **very hard** to read, especially the first time round
 - Kripke takes a lot of sophisticated philosophical ideas for granted
 - He also presents things in odd orders, starting on a topic before he really should, then leaving it, then coming back to it later
 - Kripke also mixes his new ideas in with lengthy criticisms of other philosophers from the 70s, and so it can be easy to get lost on a first read through

A Guide to Reading *Naming and Necessity*

- Because of all this, it is essential that you make the most of these lectures and the seminars
- In particular, you should think of these lectures as offering you a guide through *N&N*
- I will pick out the things that it is most important for you to understand, and I will ignore the things that do not matter so much
 - None of the questions in the exam will be about any of the things I do not discuss in these lectures
- None of this means that you do not actually need to read the book!
- Use these lectures to help find your way through *N&N*

The Seminars

- The seminars are your chance to discuss *N&N*: these discussions will be absolutely essential if you are to get to grips with the book
- Before each seminar, you will be expected to read the following portions of *N&N*:
 - Seminar 1: read Lecture One of *N&N*
 - Seminar 2: read Lecture Two of *N&N*
 - Seminar 3: re-read Lecture One of *N&N*, and read up to p. 116 of Lecture Three
 - Seminar 4: read all of Lecture Three of *N&N*
- I will also post a set of questions to the VLE before each seminar
- You must bring short written answers to these questions to the seminar

Formative Assessment

- For your Formative Assessment, you will need to write a 500 word essay
- The title for that essay will be '**What puzzles me the most is...**'
- The idea is that you lay out an issue that has been puzzling you, explain why it has been puzzling you, and then do your best to resolve that puzzle or difficulty
- The deadline for submission will be noon, Monday Week 3
- Please submit your essay by e-mail to me at:
rob.trueman@york.ac.uk

Office Hours

- My office hours are Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 14:30–15:30
- Feel free to come by then and discuss anything to do with the module
- If you can't make these times, e-mail me at:
rob.trueman@york.ac.uk
- We can either book another time to meet, or otherwise I'll try to answer your questions over e-mail

Summative Assessment

- The Summative Assessment will take the form of a **one hour** exam
- The exam will take place on Tuesday, 16th of May at 18:00
- The exam will be made up of **four** questions, and you must answer **all** of them

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Three Important Distinctions

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Summary

Three Distinctions

- Here are three philosophical distinctions:
 - (i) The a priori/a posteriori distinction
 - (ii) The analytic/synthetic distinction
 - (iii) The necessary/contingent distinction
- Philosophers have sometimes been very bad at telling the difference between these distinctions
- One of the first things Kripke does in *N&N* (pp. 34–47) is insist that we get very clear on the difference between these distinctions

The A Priori/A Posteriori Distinction

- The a priori/a posteriori distinction is an **epistemological** distinction, i.e. a distinction concerning knowledge
- Roughly: to say that a statement is **a priori** is to say that we do not need any experience of the world to know whether it is true
- Roughly: to say that a statement is **a posteriori** is to say that we cannot know whether it is true without some experience
- These definitions are only rough, but we can explain what we mean with some examples

The A Priori/A Posteriori Distinction: Some Examples

- Here are three (plausible) examples of **a priori** truths
 - (i) $7+5=12$
 - (ii) If grass is green, then grass is green
 - (iii) All bachelors are unmarried
- It seems that you can know that all of these statements are true without going out and experiencing the world
- Of course, you maybe you *could* use experience to find out that these statements are true
- But the important point is that you **don't need** to use experience: you can figure out that (i)–(iii) are true just by thinking it through

The A Priori/A Posteriori Distinction: Some Examples

- Here are three (plausible) examples of a **posteriori** truths
 - (i) Grass is green
 - (ii) The Earth orbits the Sun
 - (iii) Trump is the President of America
- You couldn't know that any of these statements are true without going out and experiencing the world

The Analytic/Synthetic Distinction

- The analytic/synthetic distinction is a **semantic** distinction, i.e. a distinction concerning truth and meaning
- Roughly: to say that a statement is **analytic** is to say that the statement is true (or false) purely by virtue of the meanings of the words it contains
- Roughly: to say that a statement is **synthetic** is to say that it is true (or false) partly by virtue of the meanings of the words it contains, and partly by virtue of how the world is

The Analytic/Synthetic Distinction: Some Examples

- Here are three (plausible) examples of **analytic** truths
 - (i) $7+5=12$
 - (ii) If grass is green, then grass is green
 - (iii) All bachelors are unmarried
- It is at very least tempting to say that each of these statements is true purely by virtue of the meanings of the words they contain
- For example, (iii) is true just because 'bachelor' means 'man who has not yet been married'

The Analytic/Synthetic Distinction: Some Examples

- Here are three (plausible) examples of **synthetic** truths
 - (i) Grass is green
 - (ii) The Earth orbits the Sun
 - (iii) Trump is the President of America
- None of these statements is true just because of the meanings of the words they contain
- In each case, the world is needed to make them true
- For example, it is not just the words in (iii) which make (iii) true; it also took a particular course of events in the world to make (iii) true

The Necessary/Contingent Distinction

- The necessary/contingent distinction is a **metaphysical** distinction, i.e. a distinction about the kinds of facts that statements describe
- Roughly: to say that a statement is **necessarily** true is to say that not only is it true, it *had* to be true; it *couldn't* have been false
- Roughly: to say that a statement is **contingently** true is to say that although it is true, it didn't *have* to be true; it *could* have been false

The Necessary/Contingent Distinction: Some Examples

- Here are three (plausible) examples of **necessary** truths
 - (i) $7+5=12$
 - (ii) If grass is green, then grass is green
 - (iii) All bachelors are unmarried
- It is at very least tempting to say that each of these statements *had* to be true
- $7+5$ couldn't have been anything but 12!

The Necessary/Contingent Distinction: Some Examples

- Here are three (plausible) examples of **contingent** truths
 - (i) Grass is green
 - (ii) The Earth orbits the Sun
 - (iii) Trump is the President of America
- None of these statements *had* to be true
- If things had gone just a little bit differently, Clinton would have been president, not Trump

Are these Distinctions Co-Extensive?

- You might have noticed something: we used exactly the same examples to illustrate all three distinctions
- Here's a very natural conjecture to make at this point:
 - A statement is a priori iff it is analytic, and it is analytic iff it is necessary, and it is necessary iff it is a priori
 - A statement is a posteriori iff it is synthetic, and it is synthetic iff it is contingent, and it is contingent iff it is a posteriori
- When distinctions line up like this, we say that they are **co-extensive**

They Are Still Different!

- The first important thing to note, which Kripke rightly emphasises (e.g. *N&N*: 38), is that **even if** the three distinctions are co-extensive, they are still **different distinctions!**
- The distinctions mean different things:
 - The a priori/a posteriori distinction is **epistemological**
 - The analytic/synthetic distinction is **semantic**
 - The necessary/contingent distinction is **metaphysical**
- So if these distinctions do end up being co-extensive, then this is a substantive fact about how three different distinctions relate to each other

But Are They Even Co-Extensive?

- But more than that, Kripke wants to deny that these three distinctions are co-extensive at all!
- It is important to emphasise how radical this view is: pretty much **every** analytic philosopher in Kripke's day thought that the distinctions were co-extensive
- There was really only one philosopher before Kripke who was famous for denying that the distinctions were co-extensive: Kant
- According to Kant, some statements are **a priori synthetic**: they are true partly because of how the world is, but we can know that they are true without relying on experience

But Are They Even Co-Extensive?

- Kripke doesn't focus on these kinds of examples: in fact, Kripke has very little to say about the analytic/synthetic distinction in *N&N*
- Instead, Kripke argues that some statements are **a priori** but **contingent**, and some are **a posteriori** but **necessary**
- Kripke gives some examples in Lecture One, but we aren't going to look at them right now
- They will make a **lot more sense** once we have looked at Kripke's ideas about how names work

The Key Thing to Remember

- For now, the **KEY THING** to remember is that the following are three different distinctions:
 - (i) The a priori/a posteriori distinction (epistemological)
 - (ii) The analytic/synthetic distinction (semantic)
 - (iii) The necessary/contingent distinction (metaphysical)
- It is not just a given that these distinctions are co-extensive
- If they are (a big **IF**), then that is a substantive fact about how the distinctions relate to each other

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Summary

Possible Worlds

- Philosophers often use talk about “possible worlds” to articulate what they mean by ‘necessary’ and ‘contingent’
- For every way that the world could be, there is a **possible world** which is that way
- Since Trump **could** have lost the election, there is a possible world in which Trump loses the election
- Similarly, since pigs **could** fly (if the laws of nature were different), there is a possible world in which pigs do fly

Defining Necessity via Possible Worlds

- A statement is necessarily true iff it is true at **every** possible world
 - '7+5=12' is necessarily true because it is true at every possible world: 7 plus 5 is 12 in every possible world
- A statement is possibly true iff it is true at **some** possible world
 - 'Trump lost the election' is possibly true because it is true at some possible world; there is a possible world in which the election went differently, and Clinton won the election

Defining Contingency via Possible Worlds

- Amongst all the possible worlds, there is one special world: our world, the real world, or as it is known, the **actual** world
- A statement is contingently true iff it is true at the **actual** world, but false at some other possible world
 - 'Trump won the election' is contingently true because it is true at the actual world, but false at other possible worlds

Lewis on Possible Worlds

- Although most philosophers are happy to talk about “possible worlds”, there is lots of disagreement about how to understand this talk
- David Lewis very famously argued that other possible worlds are real, physical worlds, just like our own
- For Lewis, there is no metaphysical difference between the **actual** world and merely **possible** worlds
- When we talk about the “actual” world, we are just talking about the world we happen to live in
 - Compare: when we talk about “this country”, we are just talking about the country we happen to live in

Kripke on Lewis on Possible Worlds

- Kripke criticises Lewis' view of possible worlds in *N&N* Lecture One (pp. 43–7)
- His criticisms have to do with a problem for Lewis called the *Problem of Trans-World Identity*
- You do not need to worry about that problem for now!
- All that matters is that Kripke does not think about possible worlds in Lewis' way, which is good, because Lewis' way strikes many philosophers as absurd!

Kripke on Possible Worlds

- Kripke doesn't ever really tell us what he thinks possible worlds are
- However, he does repeatedly tell us that we are free to **stipulate** facts about possible worlds (e.g. *N&N*: 44)
 - For example, I am allowed to introduce a world by stipulating that it is a world in which Trump lost the election
- This makes it sound like possible worlds are a bit like stories we make up: in particular, they are stories which **could** be true (even if they actually aren't)

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The Key Things to Remember

- These are the two **KEY THINGS** to remember from this lecture
- (1) The following three distinctions are all different from each other, they all mean different things:
 - (i) The a priori/a posteriori distinction (epistemic)
 - (ii) The analytic/synthetic distinction (semantic)
 - (iii) The necessary/contingent distinction (metaphysical)
 - (2) We can define necessity, possibility and contingency in terms of possible worlds:
 - A statement is necessarily true iff it is true at **every** possible world
 - A statement is possibly true iff it is true at **some** possible world
 - A statement is contingently true iff it is true at the **actual** world, but false at some other possible world