

Kripke opposes the Description Theory of names and makes a counter proposal Evans calls the Causal Theory.

Two description theories (not distinguished by Kripke)

1. DT of speaker's denotation:
→ "the cluster of information [a speaker] S has associated with the name determines its denotation upon a particular occasion by fit. If the speaker has no individuating information he will denote nothing." (p. 636)
2. DT of what a name denotes
→ To be the bearer of a certain name, an entity has to satisfy a set of descriptions a community believes to be true about this entity, where not every user of the name must know the description.

Kripke attacks the first:

1. **Conditions aren't necessary:** we can denote an entity without knowing a description (Feynman example).
2. **Conditions aren't sufficient:** we associate an entity with a wrong description (Gödel example)

According to Evans, Kripke still fails to show that the "weaker [DT-]thesis - that some descriptive identification is necessary for a speaker to denote something" (p. 637) is false.

Two thoughts constitute this thesis, which also Evans thinks is false:

1. Speaker must have a certain intention to utter a sentence
2. "[...] to have an intention or belief concerning some item (which one is not in a position to demonstratively identify) one must be in possession of a description uniquely true of it."

Causal Theory:

Evans states the Causal Theory as follows:

"A speaker, using a name 'NN' on a particular occasion will denote some item x if there is a causal chain of *reference-preserving links* leading back from his use on that occasion ultimately to the item x itself being involved in a name-acquiring transaction such as an explicit dubbing or the more gradual process where nicknames stick." (p. 639)

Shortcomings of the Causal Theory

- ignores the importance of surrounding context
- regards the capacity to denote something as a magic trick
- doesn't have the generality of the description theories
- no obvious application to syntactic ambiguity or to ambiguity produced by attempts to refer with nonunique descriptions or pronouns

Evans sketch of a theory

Objection against DT: absurd that the referent of a description could be isolated from the speaker's community, just because it fits the description better.

→ no causal relation

Kripke realized, but he saw the causal relation between the item's name and the speaker's use of it, while, according to Evans, the relation is between "the item's states and doings and the speaker's body of information"(p. 645)

→ "[...] the denotation of a name in the community will depend in a complicated way upon what those who use the term refer to, but we will so understand 'intended referent' that typically a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for x's being the intended referent of S's use of a name is that x should be the source of causal origin of the body of information that S has associated with the name." (p. 645) (causal chain)

For his theory, Evans "borrows" from communication theory. In a community we can get across propositions, even if we literally speaking fail to communicate the proposition. But because the community has a certain belief about what we wanted to say, we still succeed. "The speaker will have referred to a,[...] only if he has succeeded in getting across that Fa."(p.646)

Which strictly speaking leads to the fact that we, by referring to an object by describing it, we do not denote it. The object is the cause of our information about it, but it is not the satisfier of the body of information we have.

Because of misidentification, the cluster of information we have, which we believe is about a certain item, might in fact be dominantly about another.

Definition:

'NN' is a name of x if there is a community C

1. in which it is conventional that 'NN' refers to X
2. in which 'NN' is commonly used to refer to x and the referential success is not based on common knowledge about some predicate embedded in 'NN'

Sometimes we don't use expressions in the conventional way, but in order to conform to some people's use of the expression. Then we use this expression **deferentially**.

If, in a community, a name has been used incorrectly, e.g. the Goedel example, as soon as the misapprehension is uncovered, the community would change the use of the name.

Two reasons for this:

- a) the item's not bearing the name 'NN' (Khan, Malachi, Goedel)
- b) the item's not being NN

Lorina's question:

Q.3 (on Evans): The deferential use of the name has a flavor of the arbitrariness with which proper names seem to refer to unique objects. If in a conversation, I hear talk about Louis and then not knowing who he is refer to him, asking a question or making a statement where his name is used, I am using this name to refer to an object for which I do not have a concrete reference.

Can we say that a proper name has the ability to cut out a conceptual space where a unique object is located? This unique object exists unspecified until the context of the utterance and the community where the utterance is made fills in specificity, via descriptions. I am proposing that if I am in an empty room and utter a proper name for which I do not have a referent, I would already have a unique mental space where the object could be located. The later supplied descriptive content makes the reference to a concrete object possible, but the name itself has prepared the ground for the denotation in advance. Is this possible, or is this not in the analytic tradition of the treatment of proper names?

George's question

1. It seems that so far we have talked about proper names in terms of having either a sense or reference, or both. After the Evans reading, it seems that these two parameters alone might not be sufficient to describe what goes on with reference, or that maybe these are the wrong parameters. Why would these two attributes not be sufficient? What other possible parameters could we add to more completely describe what is going on?

Cati's question

Also, about Evans, how is he different from our favorite context-based naming analyzers? He seems to be bringing up the same issues?!

Derek's questions

1. On p. 648, isn't his analysis of the Napoleon example just ridiculous?

If we were to concede Evans point, that (in case 2) person is to be called Napoleon, then who should we say he impersonated? 'An unknown Army Officer'? Is that also the name we will give to the person depicted in pre-1793 biographies of 'Napoleon' (a)? Will we note that the unknown Army Officer was called 'Napoleon' by his mother, and everyone else who knew him prior to his being replaced by an impersonator? What will we make of the fact that the name 'Napoleon' appeared on all the official paperwork relating to his schooling and military career prior to 1793? And of, will we say that Napoleon was actually called a different name by his mother, 'Charles' perhaps?

And that it was only after he began impersonating an unknown Army Officer (who himself was previously called 'Napoleon') that people actually called 'Napoleon' instead of 'Charles'? Evans says something about this on p. 651, but it doesn't seem to address these problems. Why wouldn't 'Napoleon was a fish salesman and was never at Waterloo' (where Napoleon refers to a) be a direct contradiction to the historian's claim 'Napoleon was at Waterloo?' Were historians referring to a only when saying the things true of a and referring to when saying things true of? In that case, wouldn't names be completely devoid of meaning such that we couldn't ever be wrong about them?

2. I had difficulty with the example about the story in the bar about someone named 'Louis.' Can you actually tell a story of the sort Evans refers to, along with the situation leading to the basketball playing confusion? Maybe then I can see what Evans expects us to see from that example.

Richard's question

It seems that Evans' theory would account for these statement "That woman's husband is kind to her," where the woman is not with her husband. Would this theory fully account for the following sentence: "That woman's husband, Sam, is kind to her," where the man is not Sam but rather Owen, the woman's secret romantic interest? The causal theory seems to account for descriptions well, but does it work well with Proper Names? Isn't the statement that includes the name 'Sam' a different type of statement than the first statement because of the addition of a Proper Name? Are these two statements wrong for entirely different reasons?

Questions about Kripke and Evans:

Kate

Kripke criticizes Descriptive Theory for existing in a social vacuum (without speaker/audience context), and Evans criticizes Kripke for not taking current usage context into account. What type of context is Evans missing, if any?

Tzuchien

1. It occurs to me that structuralists like Saussure have a similar theory of language with Kripke and Evans. Yet, rigidity in structuralism (in general) has a different meaning -names achieve their referents through their relationship with other referents. We know what Aristotle names because he has some relationship with Alexander the Great. We know what Alexander the Great names because of Hellenism. We know what Hellenism names because... It is through this causal chain of relationships that we learn names and tell them apart. Other possible worlds are coherent if the names that are used develop structural relationships with the chain of names that we are familiar with. In this sense, possible worlds are parasitic upon this one for its names and referents. Names are thus rigid designators as well as explained to be necessary in instances of identity. It is entirely confusing to me what the significant theoretical difference between the two theories of names espoused is here. Does structuralism satisfy Kripke's and Evans' theoretical problems? (I am, as of now, still a little confused by Kripke and Evans. This might be an entirely false dilemma.)

Joe

These essays seem to wander away from an argument about the existence of some essential quality of a referent as the thing being referred to, but they seem to wander into a different kind of essentialist argument: that there is some communally-shared essential notion of a referent that is distinct from any particular characteristics or properties associated with or attributed to the referent. My question is similar to the one I asked last week: how can we describe this essential quality, as it seems to be the vehicle of reference, the connection between a name and the thing being named, the "hook on which to hang" the properties and descriptions associated with the referent?
