

Metalinguistic “Troubles” with Kripkean Proper Names

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Proper names interpreted as rigid designators do not allow us to formulate metalinguistic statements of the form ‘NN might not have been named “NN”’. All we can do is to show what we are trying to say. But we cannot properly formulate such a metalinguistic statement about a rigid name. The rigidity of the name establishes a relationship with its bearer that is much stronger than the contingent relationship that is supposed to exist in the natural languages between the name and its bearer. The sentence is intuitively true as expressed in natural languages, but once we translate it, if possible, into Kripkean formal semantics it is false because once the individual is rigidly named, she cannot have been named otherwise; or even worse, as I suspect, the whole sentence is untranslatable, because in Kripkean formal semantics there is no possible world in which she would not have had the name she rigidly has. This problem in Kripkean semantics could well be termed, as Wittgenstein would say, an ineffability. Kripkean semantics makes the actual contingent property anyone has of bearing a proper name ineffable, notwithstanding it is effable in natural languages.

Keywords: *rigid names, metalinguistic statements, rigid quoted names, ineffability*

Introduction

Proper names seem to present a straightforward example of how language relates to the world. However, philosophers and linguists disagree about many issues surrounding them. An important one is this: What is the role of proper names in a formal theory of language? That question has received at least two answers¹. Proper names are either formalized as constants or as a special kind of predicate.²

Kripkean modal semantics is a paradigm of the constant view because proper names are taken to be rigid designators that relate straightforwardly to those individuals they designate in the actual world and in any possible world in which the individual exists.³ A rigid designator is an excellent device to refer always to

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¹Schoubye (2016) opens up a third possibility, proper names are type-ambiguous. However, his proposal aims to develop a formal theory for natural language in which metaphysical modality is not at all the relevant topic in his discussion as it is Kripke’s semantic theory.

²For instance, Burge (1973, p. 430) notes that names as predicates have a mild self-referential element in their application conditions that is absent in most common predicates. For instance, an object could not be a Jones unless someone used “Jones” as a name, but an animal could be a dog, even if the word “dog” were never used as a symbol.

³According to Salmon (1981, pp. 32–41) a name is obstinately rigid if it refers to the same individual in all possible worlds including those worlds where the individual does not exist, and a name is persistently rigid if it refers to the same individual in all worlds where the individual exists

one and the same particular allowing us to state contingent and necessary truths of the referred object. We can say for example of Saul Kripke that he is necessarily identical to himself or that it is contingently true of him that he wrote *Naming and Necessity*, and so forth.

Many papers have been dedicated to support or oppose Kripke’s views on proper names but there is one important issue that has not been appreciated: the ineffability of his semantics, since there is at least one central kind of statement that cannot be formulated within his theory, namely, a type of statement about a rigid designator and its bearer. I claim that if proper names are rigid designators, then they are not suitable for formulating metalinguistic statements of the form ‘NN might not have been named “NN”’ in the formal system itself. All we can do is to show something that cannot be said. Stipulating that proper names are rigid designators preserves both the unicity of reference in Kripkean modal semantics and guarantees that any true *de re* identity statement is necessary.

Kripke’s Theory of Proper Names

We can briefly characterize Kripke’s theory of proper names as follows: a proper name is a singular term and its semantic contribution to propositional content is its referent; the relation between the name and its bearer is direct, that is to say, it is not mediated by any other propositional content; the reference of a name is modally stable, the name refers to the same individual in any possible world where the individual exists; and finally, names are individuated by their bearers. There are three salient features for my argument: (1) the rigidity or the modal stability of the name, (2) the rigidity of the quoted name,⁴ and (3) the claim that names differ among themselves whenever their bearers differ.⁵ This characterization helps us state a rigidity rule in Kripke’s semantics:

(RR) Any counterfactual circumstance in which the individual is located, must be stated in terms of possible worlds and with the use of rigid designators.

Let us address the metalinguistic problem⁶ by discussing the following central text in his celebrated *Naming and Necessity*:

but fails to refer in worlds where the individual does not exist. However, nothing in my discussion hangs on the choice between these two notions of rigidity.

⁴Gómez Torrente (2013, pp. 353–390) holds that any quoted name is rigid, unstructured and context insensitive. I section 3 I discuss and endorse his theory.

⁵Kripke (1980, p. 8, footnote 9) says: “distinctness of bearers will be a sufficient condition for distinctness of the names.” Therefore, Kripke distinguishes one name from another not because they are tokens of the *same type of name*, but because they have different bearers.

⁶The problem is metalinguistic because there is no way to structure a statement in a language employing Kripkean modal semantics for depicting the possibility of detaching a name from its bearer. This problem reveals a deeper one: Kripkean semantics makes the actual contingent property anyone has of bearing a proper name ineffable. I suspect that the latter arises because Kripke assumes that every entity is necessarily identical to itself and that to state such a metaphysical claim he argues that rigid designators should flank the identity sign. Therefore, the rigidity of the term and the metaphysical necessity of identity seem together to make ineffable what

In these lectures I will argue, intuitively, that proper names are rigid designators, for 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'). Those who have argued that to make sense of the notion of rigid designator, we must antecedently make sense of 'criteria of transworld identity' have precisely reversed the cart and the horse; it is because we can refer (rigidly) to Nixon, and stipulate that we are speaking of what might have happened to him (under certain circumstances), that "transworld identifications" are unproblematic in such cases. (Kripke 1980, p. 49)

Let me make two remarks before turning to my argument for the claim that Kripke's semantics does not allow us to formulate metalinguistic statements of the form "NN might not have been called 'NN'". The point of Kripke's sentence is to distinguish Nixon's name as a rigid designator from non-rigid terms expressing properties (e.g., becoming President) or what he might have been called, e.g., "Tricky Dick". Names are rigid. What someone is *called* is not.

My second remark is about the naming/calling distinction (Katz 2001, p. 142). It is reasonable to think that Kripke can say, truthfully, that Nixon might not have been called Nixon, because calling someone X does make X a name, X could be a nickname or a pejorative expression neither of which are rigid designators. We can say "Nixon might not have been called 'Tricky Dick'". What Kripke cannot say is that Nixon might not have been named "Nixon", which I assume is the intended reading of Nixon might have had another name. Perhaps the reason that he cannot meaningfully say the sentence "NN might not have been called 'NN'" has not been recognized before is that the difference between calling and naming has not been appreciated.

In order to remedy that, let us now turn to an examination of Kripke's theory of names. Rigidity is a relation between the name and its bearer in every possible world including ours, whenever the referent exists.⁷ Thus, this account of rigid designation captures Kripke's (2011, p. 2) metaphysical assumption that $\Box(x=x)$. For example, if "Tully" and "Cicero" are both rigid designators for the same person, any statement of the forms "a=a" or "a=b", in which those names are replaced by the constants, if true, is a necessary *de re* identity statement. It is crucial to note that two theses are affirmed here, one about language and the other about the metaphysical modality. About language, Kripke clearly acknowledges that: "This terminology certainly does not agree with the most common usage." (Kripke 1980, p. 8) and as I will argue, this terminology strengthens the relation between a name and its bearer, contrary to our common use of proper names.

in natural languages is effable. Philosophical and terminological constraints are at the bottom of this problem. However, exploring this issue is a task beyond the scope of this paper.

⁷Later in this section I will examine a proposed way to deal with the problem of ineffability that is much more complex and show that it, too, does not work.

The Metalinguistic Trouble Points to Ineffability

How well does stipulating proper names as rigid designators allow us to express metalinguistic modal claims? Consider the following example used by Kripke in the above quotation:

(1) Nixon might not have been *called* “Nixon”.

Kripke when using (1) presupposes that Nixon bears “Nixon” as his proper name and also asserts that it is contingent of Nixon to bear that proper name, because he might not have been called “Nixon”. There is no kind of necessity involved in the name-bearer relation, because even if to be the bearer of a proper name were a property, it would be a contingent one. All there is to the name-bearer relation is a mild self-referential element in the application conditions of proper names because an object could not be a ‘Jones’ unless someone uses “Jones” as a name. As Burge (1973, p. 430) said, the sentences: “Jones is necessarily a Jones” and “this entity called ‘Jones’ is necessarily an entity called ‘Jones’” come out false in any occasion of use. Notice that Burge doesn’t distinguish between ‘called’ and ‘named’. By parity of reasons, we could say that “this entity named ‘Nixon’ is necessarily an entity named ‘Nixon’” is false, while “Nixon might not have been named ‘Nixon’” is true.

Let us read (1) using Kripke’s rigid designators. I will show that (1) cannot be literally said in Kripkean semantics as Wittgenstein suggests (1983: §6.522), we can only show but not say the statement that we aim to state. I will use the subscript “R” to emphasize that the name is a rigid designator, or as Salmon (2012, p. 430) puts it, “Nixon” is a “specific name” that cannot name anything else other than its bearer⁸. Properly stated (1) should say:

(1*) Nixon_R might not have been named “Nixon_R”

In the intended reading of (1*) the first occurrence of “Nixon_R” is used to rigidly refer to Nixon. “Nixon_R” is a specific name. The second occurrence merely quotes that specific name. Kripke’s point is that “Nixon_R” rigidly designates the person that in our natural language was baptized as “Nixon”. The rigid designator “Nixon_R” helps us to state counterfactual scenarios where Nixon himself, might not have been the President of the United States, or might have been lefthanded, or a bachelor, or whatever else might have happened to him. We can state any of those scenarios by applying (RR). We use the rigid designator “Nixon_R”, which is a specific name that cannot name anything else other than its bearer, and thus, we need no criteria of transworld identification of the bearer.

Regarding the quoted name in (1*) Soames (2002, p. 251) says that an intuitive test of the claim that the term “Nixon” is a rigid designator is that: “A singular

⁸Salmon says: “A distinction must be drawn between a *generic* expression, which is an expression-form in abstraction from any particular use, and what I call a *specific* expression, which is use-loaded and good to go. The terminology is meant to suggest the distinction between *genus* and *species*.” (Salmon 2012, p. 430)

term *t* (of English) is a rigid designator of an object if **the individual that is (was) *t* could not have existed without being *t* (and no other than that individual could have been *t*)** expresses a truth.⁹ Therefore the object that is “Nixon” is such that it could not have existed and failed to be “Nixon” (and no other object could have been “Nixon”) is intuitively true.¹⁰

The crucial question to consider now is this one: is there a counterfactual scenario or possible world, where that specific man might not have been named “Nixon”? Can we properly state (1*) without violating (RR)? Let’s elaborate this a bit more. There are at least two tangentially related issues, that might mistakenly seem to be relevant here: on the one hand, the same concatenation of letters could make up a name for someone other than our Nixon; on the other hand, our Nixon may have another name besides the name “Nixon”, let’s say “Kripxon”. In the first case, Kripke would say that the names are homonymous but different in that they name different people.¹¹ For example, given that “Nixon” is a family name, let us assume that there are at least two family members bearing it, thus we have two different specific names, “Nixon₁”, “Nixon₂”, and the problem I am discussing depends only in considering any of these particular specific names because regardless of your choice the problem arises. In answering whether Nixon might have had a name other than “Nixon”, if someone else happens to have a name made up with the very same characters, that name will be a different name just because its bearer is a different person. Homonymous names are not at issue when we ask about whether Nixon might have had another name than the name he has, we are concerned about the specific man who was the USA President and whose specific name happens to be “Nixon” and we are wondering about him if there is a possible world where he himself is not named “Nixon”.

The second case, the case of coreference, happens when there is more than one name for a person, for instance, as in the “Tully/Cicero” example, each name is a specific name for the same person. However, co-reference is not at issue, because the question is not whether one individual has more than one name, rather it is if she has some name, it might not have been that very name. In other words, if the famous orator has “Cicero” and “Tully” as his names, the point is whether he might not have had either of these two specific names. We can always pose the question for every name a person has. That is, we could also ask if that person might not have been named ‘NN’ and so forth, no matter how many names the person has.

To correctly state the answer to the question of whether Nixon might have not been named “Nixon”, according to (RR), we must use rigid designators to move around Kripkean possible worlds in order to attempt to find at least one world where that specific person is otherwise named. But how can we map that specific

⁹Soames (2002, p. 251, footnote 11) says that bold italics indicate corner quotes.

¹⁰Soames calls this expedient the “linguistic test” for rigidity of noun phrases. Gómez-Torrente (2013, p. 371) says that it is thought that all other standard tests would deliver the same verdict.

¹¹Kripke says: “For language as we have it, we could speak of names as having a unique referent if we adopted a terminology, analogous to the practice of calling homonyms distinct ‘words’, according to which uses of phonetically the same sounds to name distinct objects count as distinct names (Kripke 1980, pp. 7–8).

person into possible worlds? It is obvious that in order to say of Nixon that he could have been named otherwise, he has to be named “Nixon” in the first place.

Therefore, I ask again, can we adequately satisfy (RR) and say that there is a possible world where: (1*) “Nixon_R might not have been named ‘Nixon_R’” is true of Nixon? Strictly speaking (1*) shows what Kripke cannot say if we comply with (RR). Once we use a rigid designator to specifically refer to a person in whatever possible world that person exists, we can neither deprive that person of her rigid designator, nor we can say anything counterfactually about her without the use of her rigid designator. True, if we did not know that in Kripke’s semantics proper names are rigid, it would not seem to be necessary of the self-same Nixon to bear the proper name “Nixon”. It would seem to be a contingent fact about him, but how could we state such a contingent fact about him without using his rigid designator? According to (RR) we cannot. Sentence (1*) seems to be the straight way to do it, but (RR) imposes the use of rigid designators while the predicate “might not have been named ‘Nixon_R’” seems to indicate its elimination. To make my point clearer, we could read the predicate as saying “... might not have been rigidly named ‘Nixon’”. But once again, he has to be rigidly named in the first place in order to say anything counterfactual of him. Again, according to (RR) naming has to be a rigid naming.

Maybe another interpretation for (1*), contrary to the rigidity test for quoted names considered above, is that the used occurrence of the name is rigid while the mentioning of the rigid name is not a rigid designator, because it does not rigidly refer to the bearer of the name, it only mentions the name, and if so, there is no tension between (RR) and the indication of “...not have been named ‘Nixon’”. However, obvious questions arise: what is the relation between the two occurrences of the name in sentence (1*)? Do quoted names refer at all? And do they, thereby, contribute to the truth value of a statement in which they occur? In general, how are we to account for the role of quoted names in a Kripkean modal semantics?

It is well known that Davidson (1984, pp. 79–92) observed that quotations, unlike typical names, must be interpreted in a way that exploits the salient pre-referential relation between a quotation and the expression between its quotation marks. In “How Quotations Refer?” (2013) Gómez-Torrente discusses recent theories of quotation and provides a well-argued proposal that accommodates Kripke’s semantics by making the quoted expression an unstructured, rigid, context insensitive term. He holds that quotations can be understood as being much closer to typical names (Gómez-Torrente 2013, p. 368); and yet get their referents fixed wholesale with the help of a general rule that he calls “The Interiority Principle”:

(Interiority) A quotation refers to the expression within its quotation marks.

Interiority [...] assigns a referent to a quotation as a function of the identity of one of its morphological components, the quoted expression, hence exploiting the salient pre-referential relation between a quotation and its intended referent ... Interiority assigns a reference to each quotation type, independently of any sensitivity to contextual factors. (Gómez-Torrente 2013, p. 340)

According to Gómez-Torrente's theory it is only on the basis of linguistic knowledge that a competent user could associate any quotation with one or more particular reference-fixing descriptions for that quotation, but the quotation is not equivalent to the (unquoted) corresponding reference-fixing descriptions.

Therefore, the pre-referential relation between the used and the quoted name in (1*) is preserved under Gómez-Torrente's theory. Thus, according to the theory, the used name refers to Nixon while the quoted expression "Nixon_R" refers to the rigid name of Nixon.

Is there a criterion to establish whether these two occurrences are of the one and the same name? Interiority helps us in answering: A quotation refers to the expression within its quotation marks. Therefore, a proper name is individuated by its bearer while a quoted name is individuated by Interiority. Isn't it a good support for Interiority that in (1*) we are not saying something like "Nixon_R might not have been named 'Kripxon_R'"? If the answer is "yes", then why isn't it obvious that when saying "... might not have been named 'Nixon_R'"? We have to be referring to Nixon's name and no one else's name.¹²

Although I have given enough reasons to argue that (1*) cannot be formulated in Kripkean semantics, I will now consider two final possible ways out of the problem of ineffability that I have discussed. Kripke could try to say what he appears to want to be truly saying: there is a possible world where Nixon is not named "Nixon". If that were the case, (1*) would be true. But we have already seen that if we use Nixon's rigid designator, namely the name he has, to place him in a possible world and predicate of him that he does not bear his name, we will be back to the problems discussed above. For those reasons, perhaps a first desperate alternative would be to recognize that although in this world the person is named "Nixon", in another possible world he is not named that way. If that were to happen, then it would be true of Nixon that he might not have been named "Nixon". So let us move from natural language to formal language and use a name that is different from the name the subject bears in this world in order to say that in a possible world he is not named as he is in the actual world, and therefore it is true of Nixon that he might not have been named "Nixon". But do we satisfy the assumption that he, Nixon, is not named "Nixon" by stipulating in our formal language that he is named differently? I do not think we do, because by formulating a statement that uses a different name than the one Nixon has in our world, in the formal language we say nothing more than something like "NN_R might not have been named 'NN_R'" and we have returned to the starting point.

A second more complex option would be to suppose that sentence (1*) aims to say something like: (1**) There is a possible world at which no inhabitant of

¹²This issue is related to the objection that for non-structured quotations there would be no rule of interpreting them, that the relation between a quotation and the thing *x* that it quotes cannot be the relationship between a semantically unstructured expression and what it refers to, because any semantically unstructured expression could have been used to refer to *x*, but no quotation other than the one quoting *x* could have been used to quote *x*; that is it in the absence of structure we could get "Nixon_R may not have been named 'Kripke_R'". Gómez-Torrente provides Interiority as an interpreting rule to prevent it from happening. Therefore, he secures the relation between the name and its quotation while maintaining them both to be rigid.

that world uses the name "Nixon" to name Nixon. Under this interpretation we will assume that the name "Nixon" in our language is an obstinate designator, that is, that "Nixon" designates Nixon in all possible worlds whether or not Nixon exists in that world. Thus, on those possible worlds where Nixon does not exist, by stipulation, its inhabitants would not use the name "Nixon" to denote Nixon. We use the name *in the actual* world to refer to him in discourse about that other world. For instance, we can truly say of Aristotle that "Aristotle was born centuries before Nathan Salmon was born". This interpretation of sentence (1*) leaves two questions open: Would statement (1**) be on par with "Aristotle was born centuries before Nathan Salmon was born"? They are only on par in the sense that the names 'Aristotle' and 'Nixon' are obstinate designators because in both cases their referents are no longer in our actual world. We talk about Aristotle and Nixon from our world to refer to them in discourse about the other possible world. However, the great difference between both statements is important for our purposes. The predicate 'being born centuries after' differs widely from the predicate 'not using the name 'Nixon''. The difference is crucial, because as I said in previous sections, the latter predicate denies the application of the name that we need to use to build contrafactual scenarios, as established by rule (RR) and the Interiority Principle for the quoted name. We encounter again the same problem because although it is true that no inhabitant in that other possible world uses the name "Nixon", statement (1**) fails to capture the intuition that we try to express, when using our natural language by saying that Nixon might not have been named 'Nixon', rather than the name "Nixon" is not used by anybody. The point is clear: We use the name and then we predicate whatever might have happen to the named person. And that is precisely the issue at stake.

Let me summarize these desperate solutions. On the one hand, when we translate the sentence to our formal language, we used another name for Nixon to capture the idea that Nixon might not have been named "Nixon", but this led us to the case "Kripxon might not have been named 'Kripxon'". On the other hand, we pursued the idea that nobody uses the name "Nixon". We found two ways of accomplishing it. The first one is simply the case of coreference, in the actual world Nixon is named "Nixon" but in another possible world he is named "Kripxon". This did not give any solution to the ineffability problem, as I said in my remarks, co-reference is not the issue. For example, in one possible world they use "Tully" and in another world "Cicero" to refer to the same person, but each specific name may be instantiated in the scheme: "NN might not have been named 'NN'". The second option that deals with the idea that nobody uses the name as (1**) says, was to consider the name as an obstinate designator, which by definition the inhabitants of the possible world do not use the name where the individual does not exist. But the stipulation imposed on the inhabitants of that other possible world, does not eliminate the possibility of stating "NN might not have been named 'NN'". These desperate attempts to state what is ineffable, given Kripkean semantics, make more salient the incoherence of formally maintaining that the rigid name is not or cannot be a rigid name, that is, we do not stick to the rule (RR) that establishes the semantics proposed by Kripke. We would be violating (RR) and rejecting the fundamental basis for Kripkean modal semantics.

Concluding my Argument

Kripke is right in that the self-same Nixon, who might not have been the President, could not but be Nixon. However, intuitively speaking, if “Nixon” is a specific name and we state any counterfactual claim about the relation between the bearer of the name and his name, it is also true that in Kripke’s formal semantics Nixon could not but bear his name. The mild self-referential element in the application conditions of the name is reinforced by the definition of rigid designation. Therefore, contrary to our intuitions and to Burges’ argument, if we could structure this kind of statements, it would seem that in our formal semantics “the entity named ‘Nixon’ is necessarily named ‘Nixon’” is true, and “Nixon might not have been named ‘Nixon’” is false. But if my argument is correct what cannot be said in Kripkean metalanguage is “Nixon might not have been named ‘Nixon’”. Kripkean semantics makes the actual contingent property anyone has of bearing a proper name ineffable.

As I said in section 2, there were two remarks to be made in order to frame my argument for the claim that Kripkean semantics does not allow us to formulate metalinguistic statements of the form “NN might not have been named ‘NN’”. On the one hand, the point of Kripke’s sentence is to distinguish Nixon’s rigid name as a rigid designator from non-rigid terms expressing properties; on the other, there is the naming/calling issue. I have concluded my comments about the former. And I now want to expand my comments about the latter.

Notice that “naming” imposes a restriction on the syntax of the sentence (1*) by not allowing to occur within it, right after “naming”, any other expression but a quoted proper name. Therefore, we need to explain more fully the role of quoted names in Kripkean modal semantics. Gómez-Torrente’s theory provides a suitable account: quoted names are rigid designators and they are also unstructured, context insensitive terms and, therefore, modally stable. The modal stability of the used and quoted name in (1*) strengthens the relation of the name to its bearer to such an extent that “Kripke_R is necessarily named ‘Kripke_R’” can be structured in Kripkean semantics and seems to be true in Kripkean modal semantics. However, if it is necessary for the bearer to bear his/her name and if my argument is correct, “Nixon_R might not have been named ‘Nixon_R’” seems to be false, logically impossible or ill-formed.

Another way to put what one would like to say is something like the following: Nixon, who is the bearer of a specific name in any possible world in which Nixon exists, might not have borne the specific name he bears. But it seems that we would have to say of Nixon that the rigid name we need to use to place him in some possible world is not really a rigid name after all.

In order to express that the referent of a rigid name might not have to bear the specific rigid name he bears, we must quote precisely that name and no other specific name in the predicate of the sentence. By quoting the specific name and saying that it might not have been the specific name that it is, we seem to be stating an impossibility: we are using the name as a rigid designator in the subject part of the sentence, establishing that it is necessary to use that name in every possible world in which the bearer of the name exists but then, when it appears

quoted in the predicative part of the sentence, we predicate that it is not necessary to use the name in every possible world. But that is to say nothing other than the used name is not rigid.

To summarize my argument: I suspect that “Nixon_R might not have been named ‘Nixon_R’” cannot even be properly formulated as an indicative proposition and, therefore, the question about its truth-value cannot even arise. Further, even if it could arise, what seems intuitively plausible, namely that Nixon might have been named something other than “Nixon”, would be false. For, if it were true, it would contradict the claim that the very name “Nixon_R” must only refer to Nixon_R in order to state any contrafactual claim about him and no one else.

Kripke is right to acknowledge that: “This terminology certainly does not agree with the most common usage.” The common usage of a name has only a mild self-referential element in its application conditions, but proper names as rigid designators strengthen it to the point of making it a necessary truth.

Rigid designation is an appropriate tool to capture Kripke’s metaphysical assumptions, but if proper names are rigid designators, we cannot make metalinguistic claims about rigid designators as in (1*). Kripke thought that a proper name, properly used, simply was a rigid designator that allows us to speak of whatever might have happened to its bearer. However, there is one thing that cannot happen to its bearer: once her name is rigid, she cannot but bear her name.

At the end of the day, Kripkean rigid designators guarantee the logical role of a proper name to univocally refer to one and the same object but do not allow us to make this kind of metalinguistic claim about them. Proper names are rigid designators, while quoted proper names rigidly designate their quoted name. There are no metalinguistic claims of the form “NN might not have been named ‘NN’.” Kripke’s “troubles” are being unable to formulate such metalinguistic statements about proper names as rigid designators.

My argument illustrates the fact that as philosophers, we face a tension between creating artificial languages and theorizing about metaphysical underpinnings of natural languages. The main issue is what adequacy conditions should be imposed on philosophically motivated semantics. These conditions differ widely. In the case discussed, the main motivation for designing rigid designators is to capture the metaphysical claim underpinning the intuition that self-identity is a necessary relation. But in doing so Kripke is unable to correctly portray the contingency between the bearer of the name and his/her name.

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