

Lecture 3

Elaborations on the Causal Account

1. Review

Twin Earth and Rigid Designation

QUESTION: Won't the Twin Earth argument go through as long as it is the case that the meaning of some word is at least in part a function of its extension?

- Isn't it the case that we **do not need to suppose that** (for instance) '**water**' **rigidly designates** in order for it to turn out that two different speakers could mean two different things by 'water' even if their psychological states are the same?

ANSWER: **No.** Here's why...

Objection to Twin Earth: In 1750 (before the chemical make-up of the substance we called 'water' was discovered) the extension of 'water' was 'the set of all things that matches the operational description of what we call "water"' (e.g. boils at 100 Celsius, falls from sky when it rains, etc).

If this is the case, then Oscar and Twin Oscar, in 1750, mean exactly the same thing by 'water'. As a result, this case would fail to be an example of divergence in meaning despite sameness of psychological states.

Response: 'Water' has a hidden indexical component.

"My 'ostensive definition' of water has the following empirical presupposition: that the body of liquid I am pointing to bears a certain sameness relation (say, *x is the same liquid as y*, or *x is the same_L as y*) to most of the stuff I and other speakers in my community have on other occasions called 'water'." (1975: 225)

- In order for it to come out that Oscar and Twin Oscar *mean* two different things by 'water' even though they are in the same psychological states, **it must also be the case that Oscar and (Oscar's 1950's descendant) Oscar 5.0 mean the same thing by 'water'.**
- If Oscar means 'any liquid that is the same_L as *this stuff*' by 'water', then he will turn out to mean something different from Twin Oscar.

2. Gareth Evans on the Causal-Historical Account

Problems for Kripke's Account:

Failure of Sufficiency

Suppose S is in a conversation with a group of people at the pub, and they begin speaking about some Louis. S might chime and say something like: 'What did Louis do then?'.

- S refers to the subject of the conversation with my use of 'Louis'.

Suppose that the people S was in conversation with at the pub were talking about Louis XIII. If being connected by the right kind of causal chain to a dubbing event *suffices* for the meaning of a name, then:

at any future time, no matter how remote or forgotten the conversation, no matter how alien the subject matter [to S] and confused the speaker, S will denote one particular Frenchman—[...]Louis XIII—so long as there is a causal connexion between his use at that time and the long distant conversation. (192)

Diagnosis

According to Evans, the reason for this is that, the causal account (as stated) "ignores the importance of surrounding context" (193).

Failure of Necessity

E.g. There is a naming convention on which “newly born children receive the names of deceased members of their family according to fixed rules” (195).

- Whenever naming conventions obey a set of rules → **we could successfully refer without being causally connected to the dubbing event.**

Diagnosis

The speaker’s role (perhaps their intention when speaking) is left out of the causal account.

Changes of Reference

The ‘switching’ case from last week. (i.e. ‘Flopsy’ and ‘Mopsy’)

Diagnosis

Causal account ignores the role that a **speaker’s intention** plays in determining what a name denotes.

Evans argues we need a kind of **hybrid account**:

We must allow then that the denotation of a name in the community will depend in a complicated way upon what those who use the term intend to 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. (198, original emphasis)

3. Evans’ Positive Account

A name ‘NN’ is the name of *x* if there is a community *C*...

- 1) in which the members of *C* use ‘NN’ to refer to *x*
- 2) it is common knowledge among the members of *C* that ‘NN’ is used to refer to *x*
- 3) on any given occasion of use, ‘NN’ successfully refers to *x* because of the knowledge in 2) (and not because of common knowledge of the satisfaction by *x* of some predicate embedded in ‘NN’)

Important: In order for members of *C* use ‘NN’ to refer to *x* it is necessary that *x* be the **dominant source** of information associated with ‘NN’.

‘Turnip’ Case:

Suppose a youth, *A*, has the nickname ‘Turnip’. *A* leaves their village while still young. Fifty years later, a distinct person *B* arrives in the village and lives as a hermit. There are a few elders in the village who remember *A* and mistakenly believe the hermit to be *A* having returned. As such they begin to call *B* ‘Turnip’. Then, the younger residents of the village pick up the elders’ use of this name, and start to call *B* ‘Turnip’ as well. Finally, the elders of the village die off; all those who continue to use the name use it to refer to *B*.

How is this a hybrid?

That a body of information is relevant is a **descriptivist** feature.

That bodies of information are individuated by their **source** is a causal feature.