

Philosophy 1765

Second Short Paper

Below, you will find seven groups of questions about *Naming and Necessity* and some of the papers we have read. Choose one and write a short (3–5 page, maximum of 1500 words) paper addressing the questions posed. One could, to be sure, write a good deal more about any of these questions. But you should adjust the depth of your discussion to its length.

Let me also suggest that, if you haven't already done so, you have a look at Jim Pryor's Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper.

The Questions

1. In the first lecture of *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke offers an argument against a form of the 'Description Theory of Names'. Explain this argument. Make sure you explain which form of the description theory Kripke is attacking and what is distinctive about it, as well as what role the distinction between necessity and apriority plays in that argument.
2. Kripke takes the argument he gives in the first lecture to refute only one particular form of the 'Description Theory of Names', a form he attributes to Russell (and Frege). What textual basis might there be for attributing this view to the Russell of "On Denoting" and "Knowledge By Acquaintance and Knowledge By Description"? Russell does not, in either of those papers, express a view about whether such statements as "St Anne was the mother of Mary" are necessary. Why should one suppose he is committed to the view that they are? Why, for that matter, should anyone be committed to the view that they are?
3. One way to understand the Description Theory of Names is as the view that proper names abbreviate definite descriptions. But there

are different views about how descriptions themselves work. Consider the views of Russell and Strawson: What sorts of views about proper names would emerge from the different forms of the ‘Description Theory’ one would get by marrying it to these different accounts of descriptions? How do these views relate to the different forms of the Description Theory discussed by Kripke?

4. On pp. 58–9, Kripke claims that, if you abandon the Description Theory in the strong form that includes thesis (6), then you thereby “give up some of the advantages of the theory”. In particular, he claims, one can no longer explain the informativity of identity-statements involving names in the way explained on pp. 28–9. Is that true? Can the Description Theory of reference-fixing not explain the informativity of identity-statements? Why or why not?
5. In Lecture II, Kripke argues against the Description Theory as a theory of how the reference of names is fixed. What are his two central arguments against this view? Why does he give both of these arguments? Would one of them be enough or do they make somewhat different points? Is one of them better than the other?
6. Putnam presents his own views as being much in the spirit of Kripke’s. Indeed, his H₂O–XYZ and elm–beech examples might themselves seem reminiscent of examples that Kripke uses. How are these examples, and the conclusions for which Kripke and Putnam are arguing, similar? How are they different?
7. The central examples Burge discusses in “Individualism and the Mental” have, as he mentions, two key features: They involve ‘conceptual error’, and they involve ‘incomplete understanding’. One might well think there was a natural relationship, then, between Burge’s examples and some of Kripke’s. Discuss that relationship and compare the conclusions that they use their examples to reach.
8. It’s often been suggested that Putnam and Burge crucially depend upon ‘intuition’ in their arguments for externalism and anti-individualism, respectively. If so, then one might well worry that these ‘intuitions’ may not be as universal as Putnam and Burge seem to expect. What role does ‘intuition’ play in their discussions? What role does it *need* to play? You are welcome to restrict

your attention to one or other other of these authors, as discussing both of them might take more space than you will have.

9. Alternatively, there were many questions asked in the reading notes for the readings by Kripke, Putnam, and Burge. If you would prefer to write about one of them, you are welcome to make such a proposal to the instructor.