

Kripke: “Naming and Necessity”

A Conflation in Frege’s Notion of Sense

“Frege should be criticized for using the term ‘sense’ in two senses. For he takes the sense of a designator to be its meaning; and he also takes it to be the way its reference is determined. Identifying the two, he supposes that both are given by definite descriptions.”

Giving the semantic content

Meaning; what is grasped by the mind; Mill’s “connotation.”

Fixing the reference

Something weaker than meaning. A route to a referent (denotation), but not a synonymy.

A test case

1. Plato taught Aristotle.
2. ‘Aristotle’ means ‘Plato’s most famous student’.
3. ‘Plato’s most famous student’ fixes the reference of ‘Aristotle’.
4. Plato taught Plato’s most famous student.

(4) is a necessary truth. Given (2), it follows that (1) is also a necessary truth. But (1) is only contingently true. No unpalatable conclusion follows if we adopt (3) in place of (2).

A priori vs. necessary

A priori

Epistemological concept: what we can know **independent of experience**.
Contrasts with *a posteriori*.

Necessary

Metaphysical concept: what is **true in every possible world**. Contrasts with *contingent* (what could have been otherwise).

The traditional picture

Necessary <i>a priori</i>	Necessary <i>a posteriori</i>
Contingent <i>a priori</i>	Contingent <i>a posteriori</i>

The two shaded boxes are empty.

Kripke's picture

There are examples of all four kinds—none of the boxes is empty.

Necessary <i>a priori</i>	Necessary <i>a posteriori</i>
Contingent <i>a priori</i>	Contingent <i>a posteriori</i>

Necessary *a posteriori*

Goldbach's conjecture: every even number greater than 2 is the sum of two primes.

Fermat's theorem: ' $x^k + y^k = z^k$ ' has no solution in the domain of integers for any k greater than 2.

'Gold has atomic number 79'

'Water = H₂O'

'This table is made of wood'

Contingent *a priori*

'The standard meter stick is one meter long'

'Water boils at 100° C.'