

PHIL 4603: Metaphysics
Prof. Funkhouser
Kripke, “Identity and Necessity”

- Here are some examples of some supposed (by some) contingent identities: mind-brain; self-body; Hesperus-Phosphorus; and water-H₂O.
- Kripke begins by providing an argument against contingent identity statements between proper names. This argument uses a version of Leibniz’s Law. The idea is that identical “things” must share all properties, including modal properties like necessary self-identity. Kripke notes that many 20th Century philosophers have been reluctant to accept this conclusion.
- Q: Why doesn’t Kripke think “The first Postmaster General of the United States is identical with the inventor of the bifocals” is a counter-example to his conclusion?
- Proper names simply refer (tag) — they are not shorthand for descriptions of their referents.

Identity statements between proper names have to be necessary if they are going to be true at all. (74)

- If this is true, then we can establish *actual* non-identity just by establishing *possible* non-identity. Thinking about other worlds teaches us about this one!
- Some definitions:

rigid designator: a term that refers to the same object in every possible world in which that object exists

non-rigid designator: a term that refers to different objects in different possible worlds

Some are skeptical of the very notion of a rigid designator, as they deny the possibility of transworld identity. Kripke asserts that transworld identities can simply be stipulated. See p. 78.

- Kripke distinguishes the epistemological category of the *a priori* from the metaphysical category of the *necessary*. (79)
- Kripke uses the examples of Goldbach's conjecture, the lectern, and Hesperus-Phosphorus to make this point.
- There are situations in which something else besides Hesperus is the star that appears in the evening, but that is not a case in which Hesperus and Phosphorus are distinct. Compare this with the discussion of the sensation of heat and its relation to molecular motion, on pp. 83–84.
- Reference-fixing descriptions, and their relations to names, are explained on p. 83.