

PHIL 4233: Philosophy of Language
Prof. Funkhouser
Shorter Paper Assignment

Shorter Paper (200 points)

Write a short paper (approximately 5 to 7 pages) on the topic below. Make sure your paper is typed, double-spaced, written in proper English, stapled, with the pages numbered. Do not bother with a lengthy introduction or any other irrelevancies — stick to the assigned topic.

Paper Due Date: Thursday, February 28, 2008

Topic: Let us divide those who theorize about proper names into 2 camps: those who think that ordinary names are shorthand for definite descriptions and those who do not. Russell is our chief representative of the former camp; Kripke is our chief representative of the latter camp. Instead of holding that ordinary names are shorthand for definite descriptions, Kripke holds that ordinary names “directly refer” to that which they name. In *Naming and Necessity*, you will find Kripke mounting a sustained attack against the description theory. In particular, he claims that Russell’s theory gets things wrong when we evaluate various claims about counterfactual situations.

Kripke’s theory appears to have some significant advantages over Russell’s. But, I want you to focus on finding weaknesses with it. Specifically, I want you to do the following in your paper:

1. Briefly explain what it even means to claim that ordinary names “directly refer”.
2. Provide any objections you can muster against Kripke’s specific proposal for how ordinary names come to refer. You might address questions like these: Does this theory always get the referent right? Are there any insuperable epistemic problems with this theory? Etc.
3. If you feel like it, offer your overall assessment of Kripke’s theory of ordinary names. This should be a *reasoned* assessment, however.

Do you need to use secondary sources? Well, that is up to you. None are required, but you might find them helpful. If you use them, cite them. I am not particular about the formatting for references.