# On the Alleged Incompatibility between Wittgenstein and Kripke

*Panu Raatikainen*
Tampere University

## 1 Introduction

The publication of both Wittgenstein's PI and Kripke's NN had a dramatic and long-lasting impact to the philosophical world. The philosophical outlook of these two influential and original thinkers is certainly rather dissimilar. Eager followers of both tend to emphasize their differences and see their views as fundamentally incompatible. In the present paper, I prefer to take a little more conciliatory attitude: it seems to me that their views sometimes cohere a bit more than is common to recognize. Without belittling the undeniable differences of these two unique philosophers, I would like to argue that there are, in addition, underneath the surface, interesting points of contact: more than once, Kripke and Wittgenstein arguably at least "pull to the same direction." My focus in what follows is somewhat more on Kripke; in particular, I want to settle some apparently popular misunderstandings concerning Kripke's views relevant for the theme. These considerations also hopefully help make clearer what the genuine and substantial differences between Wittgenstein and Kripke then really are.

Much ink has been spilled over Kripke's reflections on rule-following in his WRPL, which were obviously inspired by Wittgenstein's relevant considerations. However, I shall set that theme aside here. Instead, I shall focus on the certain somewhat less-scrutinized relations between the later Wittgenstein and the Kripke of NN. One may wonder, though, why there is no mention of Kripke's significant ideas of, for example, causal-historical chains of reference from NN in his discussion of meaning-skepticism in WRPL? They would seem at least *prima facie* relevant. Although NN was published a decade earlier than WRPL, one may speculate whether Kripke developed these ideas in the opposite order. Namely, in the Preface of NN, Kripke reported that most of the views of NN were formulated in about 1963–64 (NN, p. 3). In the Preface of WRPL, Kripke said that he came to think about these themes in the way expounded the book around

1962–63 (WRPL, p. viii).[1] Consequently, we know at least that Kripke already knew Wittgenstein's PI quite well when his new ideas that became to constitute NN started to emerge. We may perhaps also charitably assume that he understood the relevance and the force of various considerations by Wittgenstein even if he has not explicitly underwritten them in NN or elsewhere.

It is quite well-known that Kripke mentions Wittgenstein in a somewhat critical light at a couple of places in NN; namely, in the discussion of the standard meter (NN, p. 54–57; cf. PI §50) and Wittgenstein's discussion of "Moses" (NN, pp. 31–33; cf. PI §79). The case of the standard meter is convoluted, and there is already an ample literature on it. I shall also set it aside, as well as the whole theme of contingent *a priori*. The latter seems to me, though interesting, in the end less important than what I take to truly be the key conclusions of NN[2] (even many otherwise loyal followers of Kripke apparently have varying degrees of doubt concerning them).

I shall also be very brief with the "Moses" case: Kripke's principal targets were Strawson (1959) and especially Searle (1958), who advocated the cluster theory variant of descriptivism as a general theory of reference. Although neither explicitly mentioned Wittgenstein, it is plausible to assume that their proposal was inspired by his remarks on "Moses" (PI, §79). Kripke noted the connection and cited Wittgenstein (NN, p. 31). It is unclear, though, whether Wittgenstein really intended to put forward any sort of general theory of names, and what exactly was his true aim here (see e.g., Travis 1989; Schulte 2009; Bridges 2010).

There are also less obvious gestures towards Wittgenstein in NN: For example, in the middle of discussion of the sentence "Socrates is called 'Socrates'" and the threat of circularity, Kripke suddenly remarks: "See how high the seas of language can rise. And at the lowest points too" (NN, p. 73). This seems to echo Wittgenstein's remark, "See how high the seas of language run here!" (PI §194).

## 2  Kripke and the Augustinian Picture of Language

Wittgenstein famously began PI with a quote from Augustine. Instantly after that (still in §1), Wittgenstein identified as his target "a particular picture of the essence of human language" which, put schematically, goes as follows:

(A1) The individual words in language name objects.

(A2) Sentences are combinations of such names.

(A3) Every word has a meaning.

[1] If Kripke really kept the ideas that became WRPL in his mind two decades without his later important ideas affecting them at all, this may perhaps tell something interesting about his mind.

[2] In (Raatikainen 2024), I suggest that those are: (1) the arguments from ignorance and error against descriptivism (and related traditional views on meaning and reference) (cf. footnote 9); (2) the largely new idea of reference borrowing, and the resulting historical chain picture of reference; (3) the clear separation of the (possible) use of a description in the initial fixation of the reference of an expression from its meaning (in particular, even if a name is introduced with the help of a description, the name does not thereby necessarily become synonymous with the description); and (4) the conclusion that there are necessary truths which are knowable only *a posteriori*.

(A4) This meaning is correlated with the word.

(A5) The meaning of a word is the object for which the word stands.

It is customary to call this conjunction of views "the Augustinian Picture of Language."[3] Wittgenstein then proposed that first, this one-sided focus on names suggests a highly misleading picture and overlooks vast variety of different kinds of uses of expressions and sentences, and second, that it gives a flawed account of even proper names. For example, he noted that if a person named "N.N." dies, or the legendary sword called "Excalibur" gets destroyed, we would not thereby say that the *meaning* of "N.N." died (PI § 40), or that the name "Excalibur" no longer has *meaning* (PI § 39, 44). Wittgenstein instead concluded that for a large class of cases in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: "the meaning of a word is its *use* in the language" (PI, § 43). Wittgenstein also notably put forward critical considerations relating to ostensive definitions. For him, (A1)–(A2) and the idea that ostensive definitions constitute the foundation of language were intimately related.

Kripke by contrast focused in NN visibly on proper names and their reference (and to some extend on natural kind terms, which he contended have "a greater kinship with proper names than is generally realized"; NN, p. 134). He was primarily interested in the following question: in virtue of what does a name stand for a particular object? Kripke also suggested that a new proper name is typically—though not necessarily— introduced to a language with the help of an ostension. Consequently, one can easily get the impression that there is a fundamental conflict of views between the two philosophers here. In other words, one may wonder whether Kripke was committed to "the Augustinian Picture," thoroughly or at least partially.

To begin with, it is quite evident that Kripke never even pretended to present an overarching theory[4] of words and sentences, not to mention the essence of human language. His ambitions were much more modest, and his interests were far more local and specific. Therefore, he clearly was not for that part—that is, (A1)–(A2)—committed to "the Augustinian picture." Nonetheless, did Kripke not advocate Millianism, that is, the Direct Reference Theory—the view that a proper name directly designates an object, only the object contributes to what is expressed ("the Russellian proposition"), and that the object is the meaning of the name? And if so, certainly he is vulnerable at least to Wittgenstein's critique of the later parts of the "Augustinian picture"—of (A5) in particular?

One must keep a sharp eye here. For example, one must be cautious with what exactly it is that Kripke agreed with Mill? Kripke did indeed say, in NN:

My own view ... regards Mill as more-or-less right about 'singular' names. (NN, p. 127)

The present view [Kripke's own] ... endorses Mill's view of singular terms… (NN, p. 135).

Kripke later stated that his own view is *closer* in various respects to Mill's view than to the descriptivist tradition (see Kripke 1973/2013, p. 11; Kripke 1979, 125)—even that "a

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[3] It is quite well recognized that Augustine does not really commit himself explicitly to all these ideas; the analyses of this discrepancy have varied; for an illuminating discussion, see Stern 2004.

[4] More of the "theory" aspect in the next subsection.

Millian line should be maintained *as far as is feasible*" (1979, p. 137; my emphasis). And Kripke did endorse the substitutivity of co-referential names in the contexts of alethic modalities (that is, contexts involving the notions of necessity and possibility).

Kripke certainly contended that proper names do not have "connotation" or "sense," if the latter is interpreted in descriptivist lines. To this extent at least, he really did agree with Mill. However, contrary to what seems to be a very popular interpretation, Kripke never identified the meaning of a proper name with the object it denotes. The contrary assumption seems to be based on a problematic background assumption, a false dichotomy, that the meaning of a name must be either descriptive or the bearer (see Raatikainen 2020). Furthermore, in Kripke's view, proper names do not denote their bearers directly, in some absolute sense of "directly."[5] Instead, the referential relation between the two may be constituted by a long historical chain of uses of the name by various language users. Moreover, contrary to what many seem to have assumed, Kripke never maintained that the chain is cast-iron once the expression is introduced: he allowed that the chain can sometimes break down[6] and that the reference can even shift from one referent to another in specific circumstances.[7]

In the new 1980 introduction to NN, Kripke points out:

> My view that the English sentence 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' could sometimes be used to raise an empirical issue while 'Hesperus is Hesperus' could not shows that I do not treat the sentences as completely interchangeable. (NN, p. 20)

Furthermore, it indicates, according to Kripke, that "the mode of fixing the reference is relevant to our epistemic attitude toward the sentences expressed" (NN, p. 20–21). He then moves on to reflect how this relates to the question what "propositions" are expressed by these sentences, and in general, how to treat names in epistemic contexts. Kripke grants that these are "vexing questions," and concludes:

> I have no 'official doctrine' concerning them, and in fact I am unsure that the apparatus of 'propositions' does not break down in this area.[footnote omitted] Hence, I sidestepped such questions; no firm doctrine regarding the point should be read into my words. (NN, p. 21)

Kripke never presented any positive theory of *meaning* whatsoever—not even a theory restricted to proper names.[8] In any case, it is a mistake to count Kripke as an unreserved advocate of the full-blown Direct Reference Theory. In particular, Kripke did not commit himself to (A3)–(A5) which Wittgenstein criticized.

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[5] As, for example, Russell's "logical proper names" allegedly denoted sense data, objects of acquaintance, or such.

[6] See Kripke's discussion of "Santa Claus" (NN, p. 93) and "George Smith" (NN, pp. 95–97).

[7] See NN, p. 163; Kripke 1973/2013, pp. 136–137; cf. Raatikainen 2024.

[8] Devitt, a close ally of Kripke, has suggested from early on (Devitt 1974, 1981) that the Kripkean historical chain relevant for a name can play, at least in many respects, the role of the sense, or the meaning, of the name. Kripke himself has remained officially uncommitted, but he has at least mentioned the idea few times; see NN1972, p. 346 n. 22 (the note was omitted from the 1980 book version); and Kripke 1979, p. 248; see also Raatikainen 2020.

## Ostensive Definitions and Ostensive Teaching

What then about ostension in Kripke and Wittgenstein's critique? To begin with, the notion of *ostensive definition* which Wittgenstein was primarily pondering was a very strong notion cherished mainly by the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle in the 1930s (see Baker and Hacker 1986). According to that view, ostensive definitions were supposed to be the ultimate source of all meaning and provide the foundation of both language and of knowledge as follows: Every meaningful sentence was supposed to be reducible to elementary sentences, the latter in turn analyzable in terms of ostensive definitions of their primitive expressions, and in this way be all conclusively verifiable or falsifiable. Understanding the latter expressions was supposed to consist in the ability to apply them to given objects unfailingly—the capability to recognize an item as the same as the item to which the expression was applied in the occasion of ostensive definition. Ostensive definitions were expected to be immune to misinterpretation and the application of the defined expression infallible. Items so namable were assumed to be what is given by direct acquaintance and is actually directly observed, sense data or such, and themselves be the meanings of those expressions (ibid.).

Kripke's mundane view of the role of ostension in the occasion of "baptism" of ordinary names is evidently nothing like that. Kripke's main target of criticism in NN, descriptivism, is instead closely related to the logical positivist version of "the Augustinian Picture" with their idea of ostensive definitions, both contentually and historically. Far from being committed to the latter, Kripke can be rather viewed as carrying out its critique further: his all-important arguments from ignorance and error against descriptivism at the same time effectively refute that picture too.[9]

Furthermore, Wittgenstein's key point was in any case that one simply cannot construct an entire language from scratch (especially, without already having another language; cf. PI, §32), provide the foundation of language, simply by using ostensive definitions:

> … the ostensive definition explains the use—the meaning—of the word when the overall role of the word in language is clear… One has already to know (or be able to do) something in order to be capable of asking a thing's name. (PI, §30)

> We may say: only someone who already knows how to do something with it can significantly ask a name. (PI, §31)

Such a project of providing the foundation of language is emphatically not what Kripke was aiming at. Therefore, he could have easily agreed with Wittgenstein here. He was simply noticing that the introduction of a new proper name often involves ostension. There can well already be a lot of language (or language-like thought) in place.

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[9] For a clear summary of those arguments, see Devitt & Sterelny 1999, pp. 54–57. Very briefly, Kripke argued that an average language user may often be both unable to recognize the bearer of the name and incapable to associate with the name any correct and sufficiently identifying description: they may be too ignorant (e.g., one only knows that Cicero was a famous Roman, or that Feynman is a physicist; NN, p. 81) and/or too erring (e.g., one believes that Einstein was the inventor of the atomic bomb, or that Columbus was the first European to discover America; NN, p. 85; Kripke's vivid, purely fictional Gödel–Schmidt-story (NN, pp. 83–84) also entertainingly illustrates the error aspect). Similar arguments can be easily constructed for all sorts of referring expression.

In as much as it is also a part of the Augustinian picture that language users in general *learn* a word ostensively by learning which object it corresponds to,[10] Kripke obviously did not advocate this view even in the case of proper names. He on the contrary criticized it in his own way: according to him, a name is very often learned from other language users in a situation in which the bearer of the name is absent; one does not even need to learn a way to recognize the object or a way to describe it uniquely. The practices of the linguistic community, which stretch back in time—the historical chains of communication and reference-borrowings—take care of reference, in Kripke's picture. In it, language users participate in a general practice of reference-borrowing. One can perhaps even view it as a kind of "use" or "usage," in a Wittgensteinian mood, if one wants.

In sum, at least as far as the focus is on "the Augustinian picture" and ostensive definitions (or ostensive teaching), the alleged incompatibility of the views of Kripke and Wittgenstein are merely specious and simply not real.


**Theories in Philosophy**

As well known, Wittgenstein rejected utterly the idea that legitimate philosophy could result theories or theses. According to Wittgenstein, "we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations" (PI §109). Philosophical problems are to be solved "through an insight into the workings of our language, and that in such a way that these workings are recognized—despite an urge to misunderstand them"—"not by coming up with new discoveries, but by assembling what we have long been familiar with" (ibid.). Accordingly, "If someone were to advance theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (PI §128). "Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language," Wittgenstein aphoristically summarized his view (PI §109).

It appears to be a quite common interpretation that Kripke in contrast aimed to put forward a strong and generalizing philosophical theory of metaphysics and language and is therefore definitely in the opposite camp. Some sympathizers of Wittgenstein seem to consider Kripke's NN as more or less the worst example in contemporary philosophy of the kind of philosophy Wittgenstein contested. Yet I would like to suggest that their distance may not be here as immense as it is usual to think.

In fact, Kripke said even several times in NN that he is *not* presenting a *theory*;[11] for example:

> Let me state then what the cluster concept theory of names is. (It really is a nice theory. The only defect I think it has is probably common to all philosophical theories. It's wrong. You may suspect me of proposing another theory in its place; but I hope not, because I'm sure it's wrong too if it is a theory.) (NN, p. 64)

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[10] This idea is not explicitly included in (A1)–(A5), but it clearly occurs in the quote from Augustine, and is discussed by Wittgenstein under the label "ostensive teaching."

[11] See NN, pp. 64, 93, 96, 97, 139.

I think I said the other time that philosophical theories are in danger of being false, and so I wasn't going to present an alternative theory. (NN, p. 93)

… At any rate more refinements need to be added to make this even begin to be a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. In that sense it's not a theory, but is supposed to give a better picture of what is actually going on. (NN, p. 96).

Kripke's comments on the description theory of reference in the new 1980 introduction to NN are also interesting: he granted there the "power" of the once prevailing complex of ideas, that is, descriptivism, he then abandoned. Kripke wrote: "The natural and uniform manner by which these ideas appear to account for a variety of philosophical problems—their marvelous internal coherence—is adequate explanation for their long appeal" (NN, p. 5). And he then confessed of himself: "it took some time to get free of its *seductive* power" (ibid.; my emphasis). Such a talk of "seduction" is of course familiar from Wittgenstein. A larger part on NN is precisely simply attempts to get free from the seduction of that powerful philosophical theory, and not so much proposing one's own general philosophical theory.

Kripke's discussion of the once popular thesis—Quine was an influential advocate—that whether a particular has a certain property contingently or necessarily depends on the way it is described[12] appears likewise relevant here:

Suppose that someone said, pointing to Nixon, 'That's the guy who might have lost'. Someone else says 'Oh no, if you describe him as "Nixon", then he might have lost; but, of course, describing him as the winner, then it is not true that he might have lost'. Now which one is being the philosopher, here, the unintuitive man? It seems to me obviously to be the second. The second man has a philosophical theory. (NN, p. 41)

That is, Kripke seemed to suggest that it is plain common sense that the pointed person, Nixon, might have lost, period; whereas the antithesis according to which this is not unequivocally true but depends critically on how the person is described complicates without need the simple issue—that the latter is a counterintuitive consequence of a substantial (and problematic) philosophical theory. Kripke apparently saw himself by contrast merely elaborating the obvious here. Does this not have a certain Wittgensteinian ring?

Kripke also insinuated that the much-discussed problem of "transworld identification" is, in reality, largely a pseudo-problem (NN, p. 48 (fn. 15), p. 50) generated by "a totally misguided way of looking at things" (Kripke 1971, p. 11)—a flawed philosophical theory or picture of how one should consider "possible worlds." The picture involves viewing commonplace counterfactual scenarios as if they were entire separate foreign countries or distant planets, which we then observe through some kind of telescope. Consequently, it is assumed that the worlds are and must be given purely qualitatively. We then allegedly have to somehow identify world by world, who in the given world is, say, Nixon, via

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[12] Quine's discussion involving the "mathematical cyclist" example in particularly well-known; see Quine 1960, pp. 199–200.

purely qualitative properties.[13] Kripke commented: "All of this talk seems to me to have taken the metaphor of possible worlds much too seriously in some way" (Kripke 1971, p. 11). His own no-nonsense alternative is the following: "on the contrary, we begin with the objects, which we have, and can identify, in the actual world. We can then ask whether certain things might have been true of the objects" (NN, p. 53). Kripke said that good deal of the literature on "transworld identification" is just intuitively bizarre (NN, p. 76). Again, at least I myself sense something Wittgensteinian in the tone of Kripke here.

Undeniably Kripke did sketch, as an alternative to descriptivism, a new "picture" of how reference works: his notable picture of historical chains. According to it: "Through various sorts of talk the name is spread from link to link as if by a chain" (NN, p. 91). However, that was in fact little more than everyday knowledge of how names are often transmitted and how we typically acquire a name; not a Philosophical Theory (with capital "P" and "T"). It is an "oversimplified"[14] *model* not completely unlike the simple language-games Wittgenstein described and definitely not even intended as an overarching theory of language. Kripke moreover expressed skepticism concerning the possibility of reductive analysis of important philosophical concepts such as *reference*: "philosophical analyses of some concept like reference, in completely different terms which make no mention of reference, are very apt to fail" (NN, p. 94). Accordingly, few have categorically denied what Kripke described there; even his opponents have most often either attempted to accommodate the phenomenon of reference-borrowing in their dissenting views, or simply ignored it and focused on other (real or alleged) aspects of Kripke's ideas. Wittgenstein wrote: "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it" (PI, §124). Isn't this quite a bit what Kripke was doing here?

Admittedly, especially in the third, last lecture of NN, Kripke allowed himself to be more speculative and contemplate some more tentative lines of thought—I am thinking of his reflections of the necessity of origin, for example. This may well have been "hypothetical" in the sense that Wittgenstein would not have accepted in philosophy. All in all, even if Kripke may well have had somewhat less radical attitude towards philosophical theses and theories than Wittgenstein, their differences in this respect should not be exaggerated either.


**Some Wittgensteinian Opposition to Kripke**

Some self-proclaimed Wittgensteinians such as Hacker (1996), Hanfling (2000), Glock (2003, 2017) and Loomis (2017), for example, have quickly dismissed Kripke's whole approach. Hacker, for example, writes:

> It is a leitmotif of Wittgenstein's reflections on meaning that the meaning of an expression is given by what are accepted as correct explanations of meaning, which constitute rules for the use of the expressions explained. Rules for the use of expressions are not true or

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[13] Kripke discussed the theme in this way at several passages thorough the first half of NN; see also Kripke 1971, pp. 10–13.

[14] Kripke's own characterization; see NN, p. 162.

false, and are not answerable to reality for their correctness (an aspect of what he called 'the arbitrariness of grammar' or 'the autonomy of language'). (Hacker 1996, p. 250)

In Hacker's interpretation, Kripke and Putnam by contrast argued that "scientific discoveries about the inner constitution of the items" belonging to the extension of a natural kind term "may reveal its real meaning" (ibid.). Hacker concludes: "If this account were true, it would spell ruin for Wittgenstein's philosophy. However, the scientific realist semantics is gravely flawed" (ibid., p. 251).

As Loomis sees it, Kripke's views stand at odds with Wittgenstein's accounts of necessity and apriority from TLP onward. According to him:

> Wittgenstein's accounts involved an identification of expressions of necessity with tautologies, or conventional rules of syntax or grammar, which were known a priori either through calculation, as in the *Tractatus*, or though stipulation. (Loomis 2017, p. 355)

Loomis concludes that "Wittgenstein was thus committed to the very identifications [of necessity and apriority] that Kripke denied" (ibid.). Glock writes that the essentialism of Kripke and Putnam "creates a gap between nature and meaning; but it is subject to Wittgensteinian objections" (Glock 2017, p. 240). Hacker and Glock then refer to Dupré (1993) and Hanfling (1984, 2000); Loomis refers to Needham (2011). According to Hanfling, the Wittgensteinian philosophy of "what we say" is "about the meanings of words and these 'lie open to view,' given that the meaning of a word is displayed in its normal use." The latter assumption is, he continues, contrary to the realist account of Kripke and Putnam, "which drives a wedge between meaning and use, so that according to it the meanings of our words can be hidden from us" (Hanfling 2000, pp. 237–38).

Yet these critiques are disappointingly sketchy and undetailed, and often simply off the mark. For example, much of Hanfling's critical assessment focuses on details (often in Putnam and not Kripke) that are tangential to the core issues, and/or is directed primarily against a very strong and generalizing theory, the ascription of which especially to Kripke is questionable. Hanfling also argues against the view that meaning never changes, which he attributes to Kripke and Putnam; yet definitely neither of them contended that. Glock for his part also suggests that transworld identification poses a serious challenge to Kripke. This, however, ignores Kripke's frequent discussion of that alleged problem which, I think, quite successfully deflates it (see above).

Besides that, these critics basically just defer the issue to certain philosophers of science. It is striking that they (apart from Hanfling; see below) virtually reduce Kripke's multifaceted ideas on reference to extreme natural kind essentialism they ascribe to him. Kripke's pivotal ideas of historical chains of communication and reference-borrowing, which often involve no natural kind terms at all, and their far-reaching philosophical consequences (see footnote 1), are not even properly mentioned.

Unlike many others, Hanfling does mention historical chains (or rather "causal chains") but then only muddies the water: The crucial conclusion of Kripke and Putnam is *not*, as Hanfling suggests (Ibid., p. 239), that ignorant or erring language users do *not understand* "Cicero" or "Columbus," for example, or are *not competent* with such names.[15] On the

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[15] Hanfling cites certain remarks by Putnam (1975), but I contend that he misinterprets it. Putnam's real point is arguably that competence with a particular word requires participation to the historical chain of

contrary, their proposal is that even such language users are able to refer successfully owing to other language users and resulting historical chains. The central claim is only that what they believe and how they use the word individually may not be alone sufficient to determine the correct bearer of the name.

One should recognize that Kripke's most powerful arguments against descriptivism are not fundamentally based on essentialism and need not fundamentally involve natural kinds at all. They are rather grounded on the mundane observation that people are often, unlike descriptivism predicts, rather ignorant and have many false beliefs about various items they nevertheless talk about ("the arguments from ignorance and error"; see footnote 9). If descriptivism were correct, all such people would fail to use many relevant words successfully in referring. They either would not really understand any of those commonly used words, or would refer quite randomly on alternating items, and the result would be a sort of radical skepticism concerning reference. Although Wittgenstein never commented this exact issue, it seems to me that the latter conclusion would be strongly against the spirit of the later Wittgenstein's thought. After all, he contended, early and late, that ordinary language is in order as it is.


## Natural Kinds and Essential Properties

As to natural kinds and their debated essential properties, instead of presenting what one might have expected—more or less Wittgensteinian arguments—these critics largely simply defer to certain standard critiques of essentialism by some philosophers of science (Dupré and Needham in particular). However, arguably such objections are in reality much less pertinent here than many philosophers seem to think.[16]

It is seemingly a widely-shared impression that Kripke (together with Putnam (1975)) put forward a general theory according to which all natural kinds have absolute (interest-independent) and intrinsic microphysical essences—where an essence is understood as amounting to precise necessary and sufficient conditions, with entirely sharp boundaries (no indeterminacy), for belonging to the kind in question. And philosophers of science have not got tired in arguing that such a theory does not stand closer scrutiny. Nevertheless, its popularity notwithstanding, such an interpretation has very little basis in NN.

We have already noted earlier that Kripke denied repeatedly that he intends to present any well-developed and generalizing theory. Moreover, critics often focus on certain peculiarities of Putnam's particular view (in the early 1970s), and many uncritically assume that Kripke is automatically committed to all of them too. Yet Kripke in fact never subscribed many of those ideas, was explicitly critical towards some of them, and was overall much more cautious to make any generalizations. Moreover, Dupré's critique

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*that word*; a language user is not competent, for example, with a phonetically indistinguishable word of her Doppelgänger on Twin Earth—even if they share by definition exactly the same narrow mental states and skills. And in any case, this remark is more a grace note in Putnam's work and not the main conclusion.

[16] In the following paragraphs, I draw from my recent papers, Raatikainen 2021 and especially Raatikainen 2024. In those papers, I argue in some detail that although the overall picture is certainly more complicated than the brief remarks of Kripke (and Putnam) may suggest, nevertheless the facts in the end support their central philosophical conclusions rather than undermine them.

focuses mainly on the complexities of biological kinds. Kripke in fact said very little about them; and *pace* critics, he did *not* contend that only intrinsic genetic properties matter (admittedly Putnam was less careful here). Philosophers of chemistry such as Needham in turn focus largely on certain intricacies of chemical compounds, and their critical observations do not automatically generalize to chemical elements. It should then be recognized that Kripke's separation of necessity and *a priori* knowability does not depend on the prevalence of counterexamples; even few will do. Consequently, if at least some chemical elements support his critical arguments, that is quite enough. The story of oxygen, for example, seems to provide a rather convincing case (see Hendry 2010; Raatikainen 2021, 2024). And again, Kripke's significant conclusion need not involve natural kinds and essential properties at all: an identity statement with two proper names, such as "Ricardo Klement is Adolf Eichmann," which can be known to be true only *a posteriori* and still arguably expresses necessary truth, is sufficient.

Wittgenstein undeniably raised doubts against the conviction that the sense (Fregean "Sinn") of an expression must be determinate. Kripke, as well known, did not believe in senses at all, at least if they are interpreted along the descriptivist lines. However, Wittgenstein at the same time questioned the determinacy of the extensions of many words—and that the latter would possess sharp boundaries and precise necessary and sufficient conditions. And did not Kripke (with Putnam and others) contend that at least natural kinds do? Therefore, in as much as Kripke assumed that the extensions of natural kind terms, for example, are determinate and have strict necessary and sufficient conditions, Wittgenstein's critique of determinacy is potentially relevant against him too.

However, already in NN, Kripke conceded: "To the extent that the notion 'same kind' is vague, so is the original notion of gold. Ordinarily, the vagueness doesn't matter in practice" (NN, p. 136). Later, Kripke has discussed, for example, the vernacular word "water" and whether the somewhat puzzling heavy water should have belonged to its extension or not. He concluded that the relation between natural language and scientific usage has a certain "degree of looseness" (Kripke 2023). The allowance of vagueness also entails that natural kinds may not have sharp *sufficient* conditions. This is compatible, though, with taking some properties, such as having the atomic number 79, or containing oxygen, as a property which is *necessary* for belonging to the kind.


### Necessary *A Posteriori* and Externalism

It is certainly true that in the austere framework of the early Wittgenstein's TLP, there was definitely no place for the kind of separation of necessity and *a priori* and necessary truths which could only be known *a posteriori* that Kripke later suggested. With the later Wittgenstein, however, the situation might be a bit less straightforward. That is, Wittgenstein himself later demolished many cornerstones of TLP which were his original reasons for such a denial—and it is not entirely clear what exactly takes their place. Possibly the spontaneous reaction of Wittgenstein could still have been negative, but who knows. It seems that this kind of questions simply were not that central for him anymore.

In any case, Wittgenstein's background was very much in the extensional logic of Frege and Russell. Its influence is obvious in TLP. But although it is in a lesser role in his later philosophy, even with all his genius, he probably simply never clearly foresaw the raise

of modal reasoning which crucially goes beyond extensional logic[17]—and especially the novel notion of possibility (and necessity) grounded on counterfactual scenarios, which was only for the first time clearly formulated by Kripke. Kripke rightly highlighted that reflections of counterfactual scenarios are a common part of our thinking in both everyday life and science. Kripke then basically observed that, in order to avoid making such counterfactual reasoning empty and futile, some things must be kept constant even in the varying counterfactual scenarios.

On Kripke's view, certain identities and other constancies across the scenarios can be built into the framework of counterfactual scenarios by stipulation: we reflect, for example, what could have happened *to Nixon*; that we are talking about Nixon is part of the framework, and the question of who is Nixon in a given scenario ("the problem of transworld identification") never arises. Or, if we want to consider how gold would behave in various counterfactual (perhaps even counternomic) scenarios, we are talking *about gold* (the element with atomic number 79; give or take some tolerable degree of indeterminacy) and how *it* would behave—and not about a substance which merely looks and feels like gold: "'Possible worlds' are stipulated, not discovered by powerful telescopes." (NN, p. 44.)

In contrast, it seems plausible that the kind of alleged necessity (which would go beyond "tautologies" or analytic *a priori*) Wittgenstein primarily had in mind and wanted to rule out was the purported class of deeply metaphysical synthetic *a priori* truths of the German idealist tradition, knowable by pure reason. The Kripkean *a posteriori* necessity which delimits counterfactual scenarios is so qualitatively different from the latter that it may be misleading to consider them as if they were only slight variants of one and the same notion. Is it even credible to assume that Wittgenstein had any reflected opinion concerning Kripke's counterfactual possibilities?

Although the label "externalism" is more obviously applicable to Putnam and Burge, for example, it is also quite common to count also Kripke as an advocate of meaning externalism—the view that the meaning of a referring expression may not always and exhaustively be determined by the (narrow) mental states of an individual language user. Their arguments, if sound at all, seem at the same time count against the sufficiency of individual's actual use and dispositions to use the expression too. As we have seen, several Wittgenstenian philosophers see such externalist ideas both fundamentally incompatible with Wittgenstein's views and severely flawed. They also more or less identify externalism with extreme natural kind microessentialism. However, in Kripke's intuitively compelling picture, what determines the reference of an expression as used by an individual depends on historical chains and earlier users of the expression. It is thus often determined neither by the mental states nor the behavior dispositions of the current individual language user. This already amounts to externalism and, to repeat, it depends in no way on any strong and general microessentialist theory of natural kinds, or whatever.

For whatever it is worth, my own gut feeling has been for long that if only one reads the later Wittgenstein with an open mind, at least seeds of externalism can be seen here and

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[17] As it happens, his former student and eventually a close friend and trustee, Georg Henrik von Wright, nevertheless played a role in it; see e.g., von Wright 1951.

there. For example, from §138 onwards in PI, Wittgenstein moved on to discuss understanding and the apparent fact that we sometimes grasp a meaning of a word in a flash. The latter may suggest that understanding is a specific kind of mental state—a mental image of some sort perhaps. Wittgenstein then put forward a series of considerations which undermine this way of interpreting "understanding."

Wittgenstein's examples were often mathematical terms, which behave likely somewhat differently from mundane proper names and kind terms on which Kripke principally focused. And Wittgenstein concentrated on the use of a word, whereas Kripke's attention was on the determination of the reference of a referring expression. Nevertheless, one can perhaps see at least certain analogies between Wittgenstein's reflections and those of Kripke: Wittgenstein argued that the presence of a certain mental image in one's mind is neither necessary nor sufficient for being able to use a word correctly and thus understanding a word. Kripke for his part contended that the presence of a certain description in one's mind—associated with a word—is neither necessary nor sufficient for being able to successfully refer with the word. Wittgenstein wrote, for example:

> What is essential is to see that the same thing can come before our minds when we hear the word and the application still be different. Has it the same meaning both times? I think we shall say not. (PI, § 140)

Later in PI, once more focusing on mathematical expressions, but perhaps the moral is again more general, Wittgenstein was apparently arguing that others may very well know better than I whether I understand a sentence of an expression (see e.g., PI, §513–17; cf. Kenny 1973, p. 148).

I am not alone in seeing certain externalist tendencies in the reflections of the later Wittgenstein. Rowlands (2003), for example, views Wittgenstein as at least a predecessor of the more contemporary meaning externalism. Child (2010) does not hesitate to count Wittgenstein quite straightforwardly as an externalist. Child points out that Wittgenstein even used occasionally thought experiments not completely different from Putnam's famous Twin Earth science fiction: that is, Wittgenstein invited us to imagine that God creates somewhere an exact copy of England, but so that it has existed only two minutes. Wittgenstein then reflects whether people in the Twin England would really calculate (RFM, VI-34). Child argues that properly interpreted, Wittgenstein's key views are entirely compatible with contemporary semantic externalism. Sorgiovanni (2020) for his part develops a Wittgensteinian version of social externalism, based partly on Wittgenstein's same considerations on understanding and mental images I briefly mentioned earlier.[18] Most probably more examples could be found if only the literature were searched more extensively. Moreover, likely much more could be said about this theme. Indeed, I am inclined to think that this might turn out to be a fruitful line of research for the future Wittgenstein scholarship: to re-evaluate Wittgenstein's work in relation to externalism. It may well prove that Wittgenstein's thought in its entirety is less categorically internalist than some philosopher speaking on his behalf have insisted.

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[18] It would not be appropriate here to begin to repeat in detail what these scholars say; I refer the reader to their interesting works directly.

## Concluding Remarks

Wittgenstein and Kripke worked in different time periods and in very unlike philosophical environments. They reacted to rather dissimilar philosophical challenges. Differences in their views are therefore inevitable. It seems, though, that some over-enthusiastic admirers of them frequently exaggerate the incompatibility of their views. The degree of their disagreement should not be inflated either. They both criticized, for their own part and from different angles, a general picture of language which derived from Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein's own early TLP and the logical positivists. Sometimes their contributions rather complement each other. In general, we should approach the works of these two great philosophers dispassionately and with an open mind. They both deserve to be studied and compared carefully—to be objects of quality scholarship as free as possible from dogmatic prejudice and bias.

I have argued that, appearances notwithstanding, Kripke's views on names and reference are not vulnerable to Wittgenstein's critique of "the Augustinian Picture of Language" and of ostensive definitions, but that their views are here in fact quite compatible. Further, arguably the attitudes of these two philosophers towards theories in philosophy are not as a matter of fact as dissimilar as many have quickly judged. I have contended that some Wittgensteinian critics oversimplify Kripke's pregnant views and erroneously reduce them to extreme microessentialism concerning natural kinds. Although Kripke was certainly inclined towards the view that a natural kind may have some of its properties necessarily, he also allowed a certain degree of vagueness and looseness there and did not propose any overarching and strong essentialist theory. I have also underlined that in any case, most of his significant path-breaking ideas on meaning and reference do not in the least depend on such views on natural kinds. Finally, I have suggested that perhaps Wittgenstein was not as unequivocally a semantic internalist as some of his ardent followers have insisted. If I am on the right track, the views of Wittgenstein and Kripke may not have been that irreconcilably incompatible in this regard either.

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