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Kripke's Critique of Descriptivism and the Conceptual Challenges of Necessity and Contingency

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ABSTRACT

This investigation offers a systematic critique of Saul Kripke's anti-descriptivist theory of rigid designation through five converging lines of argument, aiming to demonstrate that descriptive content is not merely auxiliary but philosophically necessary for reference. First, the analysis shows that Kripke's causal–historical model cannot function without informational elements that effectively operate as descriptions, thereby reintroducing the very resources it seeks to exclude. Second, it argues that rigid designation presupposes a stable criterion of identity across possible worlds, a requirement that cannot be satisfied without descriptive individuation. Third, Kripke's modal arguments concerning necessity and contingency are shown to depend implicitly on descriptive relations, particularly in cases involving mathematical necessity and essential properties. Fourth, the paper critiques Kripke's appeal to scientific essentialism, exposing the arbitrariness and contingency of the empirical criteria used to ground supposedly necessary identities. Finally, a contemporary challenge is introduced through the problem of declaration, which reveals that all speech acts are fundamentally performative and that the authority to fix reference depends on socially recognized declarative practices rather than on metaphysical discovery. Taken together, these arguments motivate an alternative framework—Declarative Descriptivism—according to which names require descriptive associations, not as fixed identificatory conditions, but as performatively constituted structures embedded in social and institutional practices. This proposal reframes the traditional debate between descriptivism and direct reference by shifting the focus from metaphysical grounding to the pragmatic and authoritative conditions under which reference is stabilized.

Keywords: Reference Theory; Descriptivism; Rigid Designation; Speech Acts; Performativity

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1. Introduction: The Inescapability of Description in Theories of Reference

1.1. The Central Problem

The philosophy of language faces a fundamental question: how do names successfully refer to their objects? This question has generated one of the most significant debates in twentieth-century analytic philosophy, centering on the tension between *descriptivist* and anti-descriptivist theories of reference. At stake is not merely a technical issue about semantic mechanisms, but a deeper philosophical problem about the relationship between language, meaning, and reality.

Descriptivism, as developed by Gottlob Frege[1] and Bertrand Russell[2], maintains that proper names derive their referential capacity through association with *definite descriptions*. These descriptions both characterize the intended referent and provide the mechanism by which names successfully refer across different contexts and possible worlds. On this view, names like "Aristotle" refer via associated descriptions such as "the teacher of Alexander the Great" or "the author of the Nicomachean Ethics."

Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity*[3] launched a sustained assault on this descriptivist framework, arguing that names function as "rigid designators" that refer directly to their objects without descriptive mediation. Kripke's critique has been widely influential, leading many philosophers to abandon descriptivist approaches in favor of direct reference theories grounded in *causal-historical chains* of reference transmission.

1.2. The Thesis of This Investigation

This investigation argues that Kripke's critique of descriptivism ultimately fails and that his alternative theory suffers from more fundamental problems than those it seeks to resolve. More significantly, the analysis reveals that descriptive content is not merely useful, but necessary for any coherent theory of reference. The attempt to eliminate descriptions from semantic theory encounters insurmountable obstacles that point toward the inescapability of descriptivist insights.

The argument proceeds through four interconnected stages, each revealing different aspects of this fundamental tension.

1. *The Kantian Foundation*: The first stage examines what might be termed Kant's "Paradox of Analyticity"—a fundamental instability in the analytic-synthetic distinction that underlies both descriptivist theories and their critics. Kant's analysis of mathematical judgments reveals that supposedly synthetic operations become analytic *retroactively*, once the relevant conceptual relationships have been established. This paradox suggests that the relationship between names and descriptions is more intimate than direct reference theorists acknowledge.

The Kantian analysis demonstrates that naming practices necessarily involve both analytic and synthetic elements. Names function as *forms of definition*, and definition is inherently analytic within consistent conceptual frameworks. This insight challenges attempts to eliminate descriptive content from theories of reference by showing that successful naming presupposes the very descriptive relationships that critics seek to eliminate.

2. *The Circularity of Rigid Designation*: The second stage analyzes the internal contradictions in Kripke's theory of necessity and contingency. While Kripke attempts to ground reference in purely causal-historical chains without descriptive content, such chains necessarily contain informational elements that function as descriptions. The causal transmission of reference requires descriptive properties at each link to maintain referential continuity.

Moreover, Kripke's appeal to self-identity as the foundation of rigid designation creates a *circular argument*. The principle that objects remain identical to themselves across possible worlds cannot explain how we identify which object we mean without invoking the descriptive properties that supposedly play no role in reference. The *substrate* required for contingent properties presupposes necessary descriptive content that fixes reference across counterfactual variations.

3. *The Persistence of Description*: The third stage demonstrates how Kripke's specific arguments against descriptivism reveal the persistent necessity of descriptive elements. His treatment of proper names and common names, his analysis of mathematical necessity, and his discussion of non-simultaneous contradictions across possible worlds all inadvertently rely on the descriptive mechanisms his theory claims to eliminate.

When Kripke argues that "the number 9 necessarily has the property of being odd," he demonstrates a necessary relationship between a name (9) and a description (being odd)—precisely what his anti-descriptivist thesis denies. His attempts to distinguish between "properties" and "descriptions" collapse under scrutiny, revealing that his theory requires the very descriptive content it seeks to reject.

4. *The Fallacy of Scientific Essentialism*: The fourth stage examines Kripke's appeal to scientific discovery as a foundation for essential properties and rigid designation. This analysis reveals that Kripke's confidence in scientific methodology commits him to a problematic *empiricist foundationalism* that his own theory of necessity should reject (since this is metaphysical).

Kripke's examples—from the queen who might be an automaton to tables that must be made of specific materials—demonstrate *arbitrary criteria* for determining essential properties. His reliance on biological origins and material constitution as grounds for necessity reveals a circular argument: these supposedly essential properties are identified through *contingent scientific methods*, making their necessity dependent on the reliability of empirical discovery.

1.3. The Broader Implications

This investigation reveals that the debate between descriptivism and its critics involves more than competing theories of reference—it illuminates fundamental questions about the nature of meaning, necessity, and the *relationship between language and reality*. The persistent return of descriptive elements in every attempt to eliminate them suggests that descriptivism captures something essential about how reference actually functions in human linguistic practice.

The analysis also demonstrates the philosophical sophistication required for any adequate theory of reference. The concepts of necessity and contingency that ground contemporary debates contain internal contradictions and aporias that raise questions about whether these notions can be coherently manipulated without systematic error.

1.4. Reference beyond Pure Causation

Recent work in the philosophy of language and social ontology has increasingly converged on the claim that linguistic meaning and reference are systematically underdetermined by semantic form alone, requiring pragmatic, normative, and socially structured mechanisms of stabilization. Contemporary pragmatic accounts emphasize that successful reference depends on contextual enrichment and shared inferential uptake rather than on purely semantic or causal mechanisms [4]. At the same time, metasemantic discussions have highlighted the role of linguistic practices, coordination, and authority in fixing reference, even within broadly non-descriptivist frameworks [5]. Parallel developments in social ontology further reinforce this picture by showing that many referential and classificatory facts depend on normative and institutional structures rather than on mind-independent essences [6,7]. Taken together, these approaches place significant pressure on purely causal–historical theories of reference, suggesting that descriptive and normative elements are indispensable for referential success. The present investigation radicalizes this emerging consensus by arguing that such elements are not merely pragmatic supplements but are performatively constituted through declarative acts that stabilize reference within socially recognized practices.

1.5. Methodological Approach

The investigation employs close textual analysis of key philosophical arguments, supplemented by logical reconstruction and critical evaluation. Rather than merely defending descriptivism against Kripke's criticisms, the analysis seeks to understand why descriptive elements prove so difficult to eliminate from theories of reference. This approach reveals both the strengths and limitations of competing theories while pointing toward more adequate philosophical frameworks.

The argument draws on insights from multiple philosophical traditions—Kantian epistemology, Aristotelian metaphysics, and contemporary philosophy of language—to illuminate the deeper issues at stake in debates about reference and meaning. This synthetic approach demonstrates how seemingly technical issues in philosophy of language connect to fundamental questions in metaphysics and epistemology.

The following analysis will demonstrate that Kripke's critique of descriptivism, despite its influential status in contemporary philosophy, fails to establish the inadequacy of descriptivist approaches and instead reveals the necessity

of descriptive content for any coherent theory of reference. This conclusion has significant implications, not only for philosophy of language, but for broader questions about the relationship between language, thought, and reality that continue to shape contemporary philosophical inquiry.

The *connection* between these four stages is strictly inferential rather than thematic. The instability of the analytic/synthetic distinction in Kant is not introduced as historical context, but as the foundational reason why descriptivism cannot be eliminated: if analyticity is retroactively constituted through conceptual synthesis, then reference must depend on descriptive associations rather than independent metaphysical essences. This conclusion directly forces the second step, because any attempt to ground reference in rigid designation requires a criterion of identity across possible worlds; Kripke's causal-historical model is examined precisely to show that this criterion cannot be provided without reintroducing descriptive content. The failure of rigid designation then motivates the third stage, where the persistence of descriptive mechanisms is demonstrated through Kripke's own paradigmatic examples, revealing that his argument depends on the same informational content it seeks to exclude. Finally, the collapse of metaphysical criteria for necessity and essence leads to the question of how reference is established in practice; here, the authority of declarative speech acts replaces metaphysical grounding, showing that reference is not discovered in objects but constituted through socially recognized performative acts. In this way, each stage is not a thematic shift but the logical consequence of the previous one, moving from metaphysics to semantics to pragmatics through a single argument: descriptive content cannot be removed from theories of reference because the very mechanisms that attempt to remove it presuppose the performative constitution of meaning.

The aim is not to resolve *every* debate in metaphysics or speech-act theory, nor to provide exhaustive histories of Kant, Kripke, or Searle. Rather, the paper defends a single conceptual claim: that attempts to eliminate descriptive content from theories of reference fail because (i) analytic status can be retroactively constituted via conceptual practice, and (ii) the institutions and practices that confer authority on declarative acts are necessary to stabilize reference.

2. Kant's Paradox of Analyticity and the Foundation of Descriptivist Critique

2.1. The Descriptivist Framework and Its Kantian Foundations

The descriptivist theory of reference, developed by Gottlob Frege[1] and Bertrand Russell[2], maintains that proper names derive their referential capacity through association with definite descriptions. These descriptions both characterize the intended referent and establish the mechanism by which names successfully refer to their objects.

While Saul Kripke's Naming and Necessity[3] presents a sustained critique of descriptivism, claiming its foundations are fundamentally incoherent, his arguments inadvertently rely on Kantian distinctions that themselves contain *unresolved paradoxes*. Understanding these paradoxes is crucial for evaluating both descriptivist theories and their critics.

2.2. The Problem of Direct Reference

Contemporary critics of descriptivism, as Lycan[8] observes, often advocate for direct reference: "*Some theorists maintain that names are directly referential, as a name contributes nothing to the meaning of the sentence in which it appears except its referent*". This position attempts to eliminate descriptive content from semantic theory entirely.

However, this approach encounters what might be termed Kant's "Paradox of Analyticity"—a fundamental tension in how we understand the relationship between naming, definition, and meaning. The paradox emerges from the inherently analytic nature of naming practices and their apparent dependence on synthetic operations.

2.3. The Analytic Nature of Naming

Consider the paradigmatic example: "bachelor" names the condition of being an "unmarried man." These terms define each other analytically—the meaning of one is contained within the meaning of the other. This relationship reveals that naming functions as a form of definition, and definition is inherently analytic when operating within consistent

conceptual frameworks.

The analytical relationship between names and their meanings suggests that successful reference requires some form of descriptive content. A name without any descriptive associations would lack the semantic resources necessary to fix reference or enable successful communication about its referent.

2.4. Kant's Mathematical Challenge

Kant's[9] treatment of mathematical judgments reveals the deeper complexities underlying the analytic-synthetic distinction. He famously argued that mathematical propositions are synthetic rather than analytic, claiming they do not contain their own meaning, but depend on previously constructed conceptual frameworks.

Consider Kant's analysis of "2 + 2 = 4": this equality holds because "1 + 1 = 2" and similar foundational relationships have been established. As Kant explains: "*A synthetic proposition can indeed be considered under the principle of contradiction, but only so far as another synthetic proposition is presupposed, from which the first can be deduced—not in and of itself*".

2.5. The Circularity Problem

This analysis reveals a *fundamental circularity* in Kant's argument. He assumes as a premise what he aims to demonstrate—that mathematical judgments are synthetic. The criterion of analyticity relies on the principle of non-contradiction, which Kant treats as providing *apodictic certainty*. Yet this principle itself must be accepted *a priori*, creating the same problems of arbitrariness and infinite regress that Kant sought to avoid.

As Ribeiro[10] notes, even Aristotle recognized the potential circularity in foundational principles, acknowledging that the law of non-contradiction itself might require justification that could lead to infinite regress or arbitrary stopping points.

2.6. The Intuition Solution and Its Problems

Kant attempts to resolve these difficulties by grounding the analytic-synthetic distinction in *intuition*, as outlined in the Transcendental Aesthetic, where he privileges intuitive knowledge over purely conceptual understanding. However, this solution encounters the classical Cartesian problem of sensory deception and the unreliability of empirical foundations for necessary truths.

If intuition provides the foundation for distinguishing analytic from synthetic judgments, then the necessity that Kant seeks to establish becomes vulnerable to the contingency and fallibility inherent in sensory experience. This undermines the very objectivity and necessity that the distinction was meant to secure.

2.7. The Retroactive Nature of Analyticity

A more fundamental problem emerges when we examine the *temporal dimension* of Kant's account. Mathematical relationships like "2 + 2 = 4" appear to become analytic only *after* the relevant conceptual synthesis has been performed. *Once the identity is established* through synthetic operations, any denial of the equality would indeed violate the law of non-contradiction.

This suggests that analyticity is *retroactive*—it emerges only after synthetic work has been completed. This temporal dependence reveals a fundamental absurdity: analytical judgments, which should provide *stable* foundational grounds, end up depending on synthetic judgments that are themselves supposed to derive from analytical foundations. The distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments thus collapses into a temporal sequence rather than a logical classification. What begins as synthetic becomes analytic through the process of conceptual establishment.

2.8. Geometric Contradictions

Kant's own treatment of geometry further illustrates these tensions. While maintaining that mathematical judgments are generally synthetic, he acknowledges that some geometric principles appear analytic, directly contradicting his systematic position. This acknowledgment reveals the instability of his categorical distinctions.

Ultimately, Kant appeals to the necessity of spatial and temporal intuitions as the foundation for synthetic *a priori* knowledge. However, these intuitions are themselves contingent—space and time could conceivably not exist or could have different structures. The necessity Kant claims is thus built upon contingent foundations, creating a paradox

at the heart of his system.

2.9. Implications for Reference Theory

This paradox has profound implications for theories of reference and meaning. If the analytic-synthetic distinction is unstable, and if naming practices necessarily involve both analytic and synthetic elements, then attempts to eliminate descriptive content from semantic theory face fundamental obstacles.

The descriptivist insight that names require descriptive associations to function successfully gains support from recognizing the inherently definitional nature of naming practices. Names work because they participate in *networks of meaning* that necessarily involve descriptive content, even if this content is not always explicitly articulated.

Kant's "Paradox of Analyticity" reveals fundamental instabilities in the conceptual foundations underlying both descriptivist theories and their critics. The retroactive nature of analyticity, the circularity of foundational principles, and the contingency of supposedly necessary intuitions all point toward a more complex picture of how names, descriptions, and reference interact.

Rather than supporting the elimination of descriptive content from semantic theory, these Kantian insights suggest that the relationship between names and descriptions is more intimate and necessary than direct reference theorists acknowledge. The paradox indicates that successful reference requires the very descriptive elements that critics of descriptivism seek to eliminate, making descriptivism not a theoretical error, but a recognition of the fundamental structure of meaningful linguistic practice.

The instability of the analytic/synthetic distinction has been the subject of extensive debate in contemporary Kant scholarship. Longuenesse[11], Allison[12], and Hanna[13] have emphasized that Kant does not treat analytic judgments as primitive givens, but as results of rule-governed acts of synthesis, and that the distinction itself is sensitive to the conditions under which concepts are instituted. This reading supports the present argument: if analytic status is retroactively constituted through the unification of representations, then the individuation of objects cannot be metaphysically prior to the practices that render such individuation intelligible. Recent metasemantic accounts emphasize that reference-fixing depends on coordination, linguistic practice, and shared norms rather than on purely metaphysical relations[14].

The argument developed below follows this line by shifting the question from whether analytic truths reflect metaphysical essences to how such truths become stabilized within the practices that make reference possible.

3. The Paradox of Reference in Kripke's Theory of Necessity and Contingency

The causal-historical theory of reference has been the subject of continuous refinement since Kripke's original lectures. Donnellan[15] emphasized the distinction between attributive and referential uses of descriptions, opening a path for tracking reference without full descriptive content. Evans[16] developed the notion of information-based links between speakers and objects, while Devitt[17] and Soames[18] defended a metaphysically robust form of rigid designation grounded in modal semantics. Recanati[19] and others have introduced cognitive mechanisms (mental files) as the basis for stable reference across modal contexts. Although these developments differ significantly, they hold in common the idea that the identity of the referent can be secured independent of descriptive individuation. The present analysis questions this shared assumption: if identity across possible worlds is not descriptively grounded, it must be grounded in some other constitutive mechanism. We argue that this mechanism cannot be metaphysical in the sense required by essentialism; rather, it is *performative*—it depends on socially authorized acts that declare and stabilize reference.

3.1. The Millian Foundation and Its Discontents

Kripke's strategy attempts to occupy a *middle ground*: deny that names are synonymous with clusters of descriptions while maintaining that they are not mere empty labels. Empirically and conceptually, however, this middle ground *does not hold*. If names are simply labels whose only semantic contribution is the object, then propositional attitudes concerning co-referential names (like "Túlio" and "Cícero" referring to the same person, even though deciding this is precisely the current problem we are analyzing here) become

inexplicable without ad hoc epistemic machinery that itself carries descriptive information. If, instead, we explain the attitude data by associating names with individuating cognitive content (modes of presentation, mental files, historical descriptions), then *we have reintroduced* descriptivism—even if under a new label. Consequently, anyone who rejects descriptivism but refuses Millian minimalism must either (i) accept that names are functionally only labels and provide an independent account of attitude ascriptions that does not depend on content, or (ii) acknowledge that names, in use, carry informational/descriptive structure. Anti-descriptivism that *declines both horns* of this dilemma therefore collapses: it is either Millian labeling in theory or descriptivism in practice. The proposal defended here (Declarative Descriptivism) argues that the latter—the performative and institutional constitution of descriptive associations—is the only coherent way to account for both referential rigidity and the cognitive asymmetries observed in belief ascriptions.

As Lycan observes, Kripke's solution to the reference problem relies on a *historical-causal model*: "*a given use of 'Marion Jones' refers to Marion Jones because of a causal chain linking this utterance back to the original naming ceremony*"[8]. While this approach attempts to ground reference in *historical facts* rather than descriptive content, it inadvertently reintroduces the very descriptive elements it seeks to eliminate.

3.2. The Inescapability of Description

The fundamental problem with Kripke's causal-historical theory lies in its implicit reliance on descriptive properties. Each link in the causal chain necessarily carries *informational content* that helps establish and maintain reference. Without such content, the name would lack any mechanism for successful transmission across speakers and contexts.

Lycan[8] acknowledges this tension:

> He was right to insist that some kind of historical-causal chain is necessary for reference and that descriptions do not do the work that Russell or even Searle thought they did; but (as critics including Kripke concede) descriptive conditions still exist. The trick is to move back toward descriptivism without endorsing Searle's weak descriptivist doctrine."

This observation reveals a crucial paradox: the moment we invoke context, history, or any mechanism to fix reference, we are necessarily employing descriptive elements. The causal chain *itself* becomes a complex description of how reference is established and maintained.

3.3. The Circularity of Pure Reference

Consider the fundamental question: "Is Frank Frank?" If Frank's properties are genuinely contingent, as Kripke maintains, then determining which Frank we mean becomes logically problematic. A purely tautological answer (Frank = Frank) provides no informational content and *fails to distinguish* between different possible Franks across various contexts or possible worlds.

This problem can be formalized as follows:

$$R \rightarrow P_1$$
$$R$$
$$R \rightarrow P_2$$

Where R represents the referent and P_1, P_2 represent different property sets. If R is stripped of all descriptive properties, it becomes *semantically vacuous*. The arrow (→) denotes "properties of x described by P_x," and it is precisely these descriptive elements that enable meaningful reference and distinguish between different possible referents.

3.4. The Aristotelian Challenge

This paradox connects to fundamental insights from Aristotelian metaphysics. In the Categories[20], Aristotle establishes that *univocal terms* have not only a common name, but also the same definition. Names require a *rationale*—a principled basis for reference. Since all substances possess properties, and names function to signify existence and indicate entities, they cannot coherently *lack descriptive content*.

Kripke's attempt to transform contingency into *shifts in essence* rather than mere accidents would face Aristotelian objections. The distinction between essential and accidental properties requires that names maintain some stable descriptive core that *persists across possible worlds*—precisely what rigid designation is supposed to provide.

3.5. The Border Paradox

A thought experiment illuminates these difficulties. Imagine foreigners who must cross a border by 6 p.m. or face execution. Their truck becomes stuck, so one foreigner moves the border sign to a new location. Does "border" refer to the legal concept of territorial demarcation or to the physical sign's location?

If "border" denotes the legal concept, it is not contingent, but refers to an *institutional rule*—a form of description. If it refers to the sign's physical location, then moving the sign *invalidates* its reference entirely. In both interpretations, the term "border" relies on fixed descriptive content rather than purely contingent properties.

3.6. The Mathematical Analogy and Qualitative Specificity

Mathematical problems illustrate Kripke's neglect of qualitative aspects. To determine how many 1/9 pieces of cake satisfy giving 2/3 to a brother and a whole cake to a mother, we solve: $1/9 \times X = 1 + 2/3$. This computation requires no qualitative names—it operates purely quantitatively. However, this apparent independence from descriptive content is misleading: something descriptively physical must initially be counted and conceptualized to create our capacity for abstract mathematical operations that seemingly refer to nothing particular.

Kripke treats names similarly, focusing on referential relationships while neglecting qualitative, descriptive content. However, naming presupposes qualitative specificity. We name things because they possess distinctive characteristics that merit linguistic designation. This qualitative dimension necessarily involves descriptive content.

3.7. Aristotelian Physics and the Substrate Problem

Lucas Angioni's[21] analysis of Aristotelian physics provides additional insight into the necessity-contingency relationship. Aristotle distinguishes between natural movements intrinsic to objects and movements occurring through association. A plant transported from the Acropolis to Piraeus undergoes motion by *concomitance*, not by nature.

Natural movement requires:

The moved object (A) contains the movement (B) within itself
A possesses the internal principle (C) that governs movement B

This analysis reveals that contingency *presupposes an existing substrate*. Contingent properties apply to movements and accidents, not to the essential nature of the object itself. What exists "in itself" possesses natural necessity—it cannot be otherwise while remaining what it is.

3.8. The Substrate Requirement

Applied to Kripke's theory, this Aristotelian insight suggests that rigid designators require a *stable substrate*—some essential descriptive core—to ground their necessity across possible worlds. Without such a substrate, there would be nothing to maintain identity through counterfactual variations.

The contingent properties that vary across possible worlds presuppose necessary properties that remain *constant*. But, these necessary properties function precisely as descriptions that fix reference—the very elements Kripke's theory attempts to eliminate. Kripke believes that the possible world test demonstrates that things can *lose* their properties without having them as necessary attachments to the designated object. Yet this view faces a fundamental problem: the designated thing must retain *something* stable that *can be described*, for otherwise, how could a name be applied to what would amount to *nothing at all*?

Kripke's theory of necessity and contingency faces an insurmountable paradox. His attempt to ground reference in purely causal-historical chains without descriptive content fails, because such chains necessarily contain informational elements that function as descriptions. The rigid designation that maintains reference across possible worlds requires exactly the kind of stable descriptive content that his anti-descriptivist position rejects.

The Aristotelian requirement for substrates underlying contingent properties points toward an inescapable conclusion: meaningful reference necessarily involves descriptive elements that provide the qualitative specificity required for successful naming practices. Rather than eliminating descriptivism, Kripke's work reveals its fundamental necessity for any coherent theory of reference and meaning.

3.9. The Arbitrariness Problem in Kripke's Modal Arguments

Kripke's modal reasoning reveals a fatal arbitrariness in rigid designation theory. When he claims "Plato could have been a bricklayer," he must arbitrarily decide which properties to strip away and which to preserve as the substrate for modal transformation.

The core problem: Kripke has no principled criteria for determining where to stop removing "non-essential" properties from the referent. If we eliminate "philosopher," why not eliminate "Greek"? If we remove "student of Socrates," why not remove "human"? Each decision about what constitutes the essential substrate appears arbitrary rather than grounded in logical necessity.

This arbitrariness leads to a devastating conclusion. If Kripke consistently removes all descriptive properties he deems "contingent," we eventually reach a point where only the bare proper name "Plato" remains. But a name stripped of all descriptive content becomes semantically vacuous—it carries no informational commitment capable of fixing reference to any particular entity.

The result is self-defeating: in attempting to preserve rigid designation by eliminating descriptive dependencies, Kripke destroys the very possibility of reference. A vacuous name with no descriptive anchoring cannot maintain referential continuity across possible worlds, because there are no criteria for identifying what entity we're tracking through modal transformations.

Kripke's theory thus faces an impossible dilemma: either accept descriptive content as necessary for fixing reference, or reduce names to empty labels that refer to nothing whatsoever.

4. A Critique of Kripke's Theory of Rigid Designators

4.1. The Problem of Non-Simultaneous Contradictions

Kripke argues that if names were synonymous with descriptions, they could not function as *rigid designators*, since different objects might satisfy the same descriptions across possible worlds. However, this argument contains a fundamental flaw regarding the nature of contradiction across possible worlds.

Kripke[3] states:

> "If the name means the same as the description or cluster of descriptions, then it will not be a rigid designator. It will not necessarily designate the same object in all possible worlds, since in other worlds other objects might have the given properties"

The critical oversight in this reasoning lies in Kripke's treatment of temporal succession in counterfactual scenarios. When he posits that contradictory properties assigned to the same name across different possible worlds violate the Principle of Non-contradiction, he fails to recognize that these worlds are not simultaneous. Consider the name "love": in our world, it signifies something "good," while in an alternative historical trajectory, it might signify something "bad." These contradictory descriptions do not violate logical consistency, because they occur in non-simultaneous possible worlds.

Kripke[3] himself acknowledges this temporal distinction:

> "I have argued against misleading uses of the concept that see possible worlds as if they were distant planets, similar to what surrounds us but existing somehow in a different dimension... Only one of these mini-worlds... is the 'actual world'... Therefore, possible worlds that are not actual are not ghostly duplicates of the 'world'."

4.2. The Circularity of Essential Properties

Kripke's defense of rigid designation ultimately relies on the concept of *self-identity*, which he treats as the only necessary property that remains constant across all possible worlds. However, this creates several problems:

First, when Kripke claims that "the meter has one meter" represents an *a priori contingent* truth, he inadvertently demonstrates that rigid designators do possess definite descriptions, contradicting his own thesis. If this statement is definitional, then it is analytic, and the meter's length is *contained* within the concept of "meter."

Second, in cases like "water = H_2O," Kripke argues for *a posteriori necessity* based on *scientific discovery*. Yet this raises the question of how many properties are sufficient

to characterize something definitively. The three properties typically attributed to water (transparency, tastelessness, odorlessness) are *insufficient*, and this number could extend *infinitely*. Science might continue discovering new ways to characterize H_2O without ever reaching a definitive alternative name for "water."

4.3. The Mathematical Analogy Problem

Kripke's treatment of mathematical truths reveals another inconsistency. He states: "*Does the number 9 necessarily have the property of being odd? It is surely true in all possible worlds that 9 is odd*"[3]. This example demonstrates a necessary relationship between a name (9) and a description (being odd), precisely what his anti-descriptivist thesis denies.

When pressed to justify why "being odd" is an analytic property of "nine," Kripke would argue that this property resists counterfactual testing—it's impossible to imagine 9 without this property in any possible world. However, this creates a circular argument: the property resists testing *because* it's analytic, and it's analytic *because* it resists testing. The circularity becomes even more problematic when we consider that labeling this "Kripke's circular argument" would itself suffer from the very contradiction it describes. This supposed definition—which should be rigid according to Kripke's own theory—contains self-contradictory properties, creating a paradoxical regress that extends infinitely.

"Kripke's attempt appears legitimate: removing all the elements that make naming problematic—namely, the contingent descriptions—seems like a *natural way* to isolate what is *truly necessary*. However, this reductive movement ultimately defeats its own purpose. By stripping away the properties that supposedly complicate reference, Kripke eliminates the very mechanisms that enable reference to function. Without descriptive properties to anchor a reference, nothing remains to sustain the referential relationship, and *reference itself is lost entirely*. The solution destroys the phenomenon it was meant to preserve.

4.4. The Equivalence of Properties and Descriptions

Kripke attempts to distinguish between "properties" and "descriptions" to maintain his position, but this distinction collapses under scrutiny. In his summary of descriptivist theses, he writes: "*Every name or designative expression 'X' has a cluster of properties corresponding to it, namely: the family of those properties P such that A believes 'PX'*"[3]. Here, he uses "properties" interchangeably with "descriptions," undermining any meaningful distinction between them.

4.5. The Circularity Critique and Its Self-Application

Kripke criticizes descriptivist theories for circularity, stating:

> For any satisfactory theory, the explanation it provides must not be circular. The properties used in the scrutiny must not themselves involve the notion of reference in a way that is ultimately non-eliminable[3].

However, Kripke's own theory falls victim to this critique. When examining Kneale's proposal[22] that proper names have sense (meaning "the man called Socrates"), Kripke argues this is circular, because it doesn't help determine reference. Yet Kripke's alternative—grounding reference in self-identity—is equally circular. The statement "Socrates was called 'Socrates'" expresses the truth of self-identity, but this truth is precisely what needs explanation in a theory of reference.

4.6. The Kantian Connection

The fundamental problem underlying Kripke's distinctions traces back to Kant's synthetic *a priori*, which represents something that was initially *a posteriori*, but became *a priori* after its establishment. Mathematical truths like "7 + 5 = 12" illustrate this: the equation doesn't inherently mean 12, but once it does, we can say it always did. Kant himself acknowledged this transition between necessity and contingency in *The Metaphysics of Morals*[23]: "An imperative is a practical rule through which an action that is contingent in itself becomes necessary."

Kripke's attempt to separate names from descriptions ultimately fails, because it relies on the very descriptivist mechanisms it seeks to reject. His theory of rigid designation, grounded in self-identity, cannot escape the circularity

he attributes to descriptivism. The distinction between rigid and non-rigid designators dissolves when we recognize that necessity and contingency are not absolute categories, but represent different aspects of how we fix reference in language. Rather than eliminating descriptivism, Kripke's work reveals its inescapability in any coherent theory of reference.

5. Kripke, Scientific Essentialism, and the Circularity of Empirical Foundation

5.1. Rigid Designation across Possible Worlds

Kripke's theory maintains that if X is a name of an object and therefore designates it rigidly, then it remains possible to refer to that object as X across all possible worlds—in any counterfactual situation *concerning the object under discussion* in the "actual world." Descriptivists argue that for something to exist, it must possess at least a *cluster of descriptions* containing its most (arbitrary) important properties to fix reference. Without descriptions, X cannot exist as a meaningful referent.

However, Kripke challenges this position: "*If they say: 'Suppose that Hitler had never been born,' the name 'Hitler' refers here, still rigidly, to something that would not exist in the counterfactual situation described*"[3]. According to this view, even when a rigid designator is associated with descriptions different from those originally attributed to it in a counterfactual situation, or when it fails to exist entirely in that situation, reference to the same object remains possible (How!? And, without descriptions?). Therefore, descriptions do not determine the existence of a reference with name X, but rather provide conditions for the existence of its rigid designator.

5.2. The Empiricist-Intuitive Appeal and Its Vulnerabilities

Kripke's argument relies fundamentally on an empiricist-intuitive foundation that has been subject to criticism since the rationalist tradition. More problematically, Kripke himself acknowledges the *infinite possibilities* of contingent properties in objects—precisely the *central difficulty* confronting empirical approaches to knowledge.

If the original properties from the actual world *sufficiently enable us* to identify which object we mean when referring to it in counterfactual worlds, *what purpose* does contemplating these alternative scenarios serve? Kant anticipated this difficulty: "*It is true that experience teaches us that something is constituted in this or that manner, but not that it cannot be otherwise*"[9].

5.3. The Fallacy of Scientific Essentialism

Kripke falls into the fallacy of essentialism by arbitrarily defining criteria that supposedly determine which properties or descriptions are essential to objects. He presents scientific discovery as providing "reliable access" to these essential properties, yet this confidence in scientific methodology is philosophically problematic.

Consider Kripke's example regarding the queen's essential properties:

> There is no contradiction in an announcement that the queen, this thing we thought was a woman, would in fact be an angel in human form or an automaton cleverly constructed by the royal family, which did not want the successor to be this bastard so-and-so, or something of the sort. None of these announcements represent things we could not discover[3].

5.4. The Problem of Scientific "Discovery"

Kripke's concept of "discovery" assumes that science provides criteria so certain and reliable that scientific findings can serve as sufficient reasons to contradict any claims about given objects. This assumption is philosophically naive. Scientific discoveries are as contingent as if nothing had actually been discovered at all—science can always subsequently admit that a "discovery" was mistaken.

The history of science demonstrates the fallibility of empirical methods and the provisional nature of scientific knowledge. Treating scientific findings as providing essential properties commits the same error that Kripke attributes to descriptivists: *relying on contingent features to establish necessary truths*.

5.5. Origin as Arbitrary Essentialism

Kripke's discussion of personal identity reveals his reliance on arbitrary criteria for determining essence. He asks: "*How could a person originating from different parents, from a completely different sperm and egg, be this same woman... what is more difficult to imagine than that she came from different parents?*"[3].

Here, Kripke's primary criterion for determining essentiality is origin—specifically, biological origin understood through scientific reproduction theory. This reveals a fundamental circularity in his argument: Kripke assumes that biological origin is essential in order to prove that biological origin is essential. When he asks how someone could be the same person if they came from different parents, he presupposes that parental origin is what makes someone who they are—the very conclusion he seeks to establish. He uses the intuitive implausibility of different origins to demonstrate the necessity of actual origins, but this intuition only works if we already accept that origins are essential to identity. The argument is circular because it takes for granted the essentiality of origins in order to prove that origins are essential.

5.6. Substance and Material Constitution

Kripke extends this essentialist approach to material objects:

> In the case of this table, we may not know from what piece of wood the table came. Well, could this table have been made from a completely different piece of wood?... So, though we can imagine a table made from another piece of wood or even made of ice, with the same appearance as this one, and though we could have placed it in this same position in the room, it seems to me that this is not imagining this table made of wood or ice, but rather imagining another table, similar to this one in all external details, made from another piece of wood, or even of ice[3].

This argument suffers from the same foundational problems as the origin-based argument. It presupposes criteria for distinguishing between different substances without justifying these distinctions. What makes wood different from ice or fire? As we have seen, scientific explanations provide *nothing necessary* to answer this question. Basing arguments on such foundations is philosophically unsound.

5.7. The Return of Description

A crucial structural tension emerges at this point. Kripke explicitly distances his position from the consequences of a purely Millian approach, stating that he "never intended to go so far" as to claim that only the referent contributes to what is expressed. However, once descriptivism is rejected, it is not clear how the theory can avoid precisely the result he denies. If the historical chain is meant to supply the individuating conditions that block universal substitutability, it must introduce elements that function as descriptions of the named object—otherwise, co-referential names would be semantically indistinguishable in every context. In other words, the very mechanism that Kripke proposes to escape Millian consequences implicitly reintroduces descriptive content. Rather than occupying a neutral position between descriptivism and Millianism, the view oscillates between these two poles without coherently establishing a middle ground. If the aim was to discuss necessity while rejecting descriptive senses, the analysis would have required a more precise criterion of necessity—one restricted to apodictic certainty, as in Kant's principle of self-identity (which has problems already, as we have seen above)—so that the claim of "necessity" does not depend on properties that covertly smuggle descriptions back into the semantic relation.

However, given the difficulties presented above, determining what makes something identical to itself is precisely our initial question—we cannot use the thesis to ground the hypothesis. On the contrary, the thesis is necessarily a consequence of hypotheses, not their foundation.

5.8. The Aporias of Necessity and Contingency

The concepts of Necessity and Contingency that Kripke employs contain aporias within their very definitions. These conceptual difficulties raise fundamental questions about whether human minds can manipulate these concepts without falling into systematic errors.

Kripke's appeal to scientific essentialism attempts to ground necessity in empirical discovery, but this move un-

dermines the very necessity it seeks to establish. If essential properties are discovered through contingent scientific methods, then their necessity becomes contingent on the reliability of those methods—a logical contradiction.

5.9. The Persistence of Descriptivism

While descriptivism faces legitimate criticisms—particularly the *simple logical possibility* of attributing different properties to a given object—these criticisms reveal deeper complexities rather than fatal flaws. For an object to undergo property changes, it must possess some fixed properties that ground the transformation *from one state to another*. We might even consider the necessary properties that govern contingency itself, alongside the contingent properties that characterize necessity. Despite these challenges, Kripke's alternatives suffer from more severe problems that not only fail to undermine the positions of Frege and Russell, but actually illuminate the sophistication required for any adequate theory of reference.

The descriptivist insight that names require descriptive content to function successfully gains support when we recognize the inevitable return of descriptive elements in *any attempt to specify essential properties*. Whether through origin, material constitution, or scientific discovery, attempts to ground rigid designation necessarily invoke the descriptive mechanisms that the theory claims to eliminate.

Kripke's critique of descriptivism reveals more about the philosophical challenges facing any theory of reference than about the inadequacy of descriptive approaches. His reliance on scientific essentialism, arbitrary criteria for necessity, and circular appeals to empirical discovery demonstrates that eliminating descriptive content from semantic theory might be impossible.

Rather than refuting descriptivism, Kripke's work illuminates the delicate conceptual issues surrounding Necessity and Contingency. These concepts contain internal contradictions that leave open whether they can be coherently manipulated by human understanding without systematic error—including this very conclusion. The persistence of these aporias suggests that descriptivism, despite its limitations, might capture something essential about how reference actually functions in human linguistic practice.

6. The Problem of Declaration and the Authority Crisis in Reference

6.1. The Illocutionary Foundation of All Speech Acts

Kripke's theory of rigid designation faces a contemporary challenge that strikes at the heart of his causal-historical account of reference: the problem of *declaration*. This challenge emerges from developments in *speech act theory* that reveal fundamental issues about authority, reality, and the performative dimensions of language that Kripke's framework cannot adequately address.

Searle and Vanderveken, in their Foundations of Illocutionary Logic, demonstrate that every illocutionary act is essentially and primarily a declaration, which endows all speech acts with their performative character[24]. This insight transforms our understanding of how language relates to reality, revealing that even apparently descriptive statements carry *declarative force* that shapes rather than merely reports facts about the world.

The implications of this analysis extend far beyond technical issues in speech act theory. If all illocutionary acts are fundamentally declarative, then the supposed distinction between descriptive and performative uses of language collapses. Names do not simply refer to pre-existing objects through causal chains; they participate in *ongoing processes* of world-constitution through declarative acts.

6.2. The Authority Problem and Cohen's Challenge

This declarative dimension of language creates what Euclides Souza identifies as a fatal problem for theories of reference that depend on external verification of truth conditions. In his investigation, *O Problema de Cohen nos Atos de Fala e a Questão do Comprometimento com o Discurso* (The Cohen's Problem in the Speech Acts and the Issue of the Commitment with the Utterance)[25], Souza demonstrates that speakers can *declare the existence of objects* or the *possession of properties* without any *definitive* criteria for verifying declarative authority.

The problem becomes acute when we consider paradigmatic cases of institutional authority. When a judge declares

someone innocent, the declaration creates legal reality regardless of the underlying facts. The judge's authority derives from institutional recognition, but this recognition itself depends on *further declarations* embedded in complex social and legal frameworks. The authority to declare thus involves infinite regress or circular dependence on other declarative acts.

This diagnosis is further reinforced by recent developments in speech act theory and social ontology, which converge on the view that reference is stabilized through normative and institutional structures rather than through external verification. Contemporary accounts emphasize that successful reference depends on communicative intentions, uptake, and the commitments speakers undertake within publicly recognizable practices[26]. Parallel work in institutional ontology shows that many referential facts are constituted by declarative acts operating within socially authorized frameworks, where, we conclude, authority itself is recursively sustained by further declarations[27]. Moreover, analyses of social kinds and classification highlight that reference is governed by normative constraints embedded in social practices rather than by fixed metaphysical essences[28]. Taken together, these approaches support the claim that reference is performatively and institutionally stabilized, thereby intensifying the problem faced by theories that attempt to ground reference in purely causal or truth-conditional terms.

6.3. The Epistemological Crisis of Self-Reference

Souza's analysis reveals an even more fundamental challenge through what might be called *Cohen's Problem*[29] in speech acts. Consider the case of someone who declares in court: "I declare that I have never gone to a communist country." This statement creates an epistemological crisis that undermines traditional approaches to verification and truth.

The speakers might reasonably *claim* special authority regarding facts about their own life—after all, they are presumably the best-positioned witness to their own travel history. As the "owner" of their own biographical narrative, they possess what appears to be privileged access to the relevant facts. Yet this privileged access cannot be definitively verified by external criteria.

The declaration thus becomes *performatively self-validating*: the speaker's assertion that they have never traveled to communist countries becomes true through the act of declaration itself, regardless of historical facts (Or should such a declaration itself be taken as a criterion for the constitution of history?). The speech act creates the reality it purports to describe, making traditional correspondence theories of truth inadequate for understanding how such statements function.

6.4. The Collapse of Factual Determination

This problem reveals a deeper crisis in our understanding of factual determination. As Souza argues, we ultimately lack definitive criteria for determining what makes something what it "really" is[25]. The Cohen Problem demonstrates that our access to reality is mediated through declarative acts that shape rather than merely report facts about the world.

This conclusion has devastating implications for Kripke's causal-historical theory of reference. If reality itself is constituted through ongoing declarative processes, then the supposedly objective causal chains that ground rigid designation become suspect. The "initial baptism" that establishes reference cannot be separated from the declarative acts that constitute both the object being named and the authority to perform the naming.

6.5. The Performative Constitution of Objects

The declarative nature of all illocutionary acts suggests that objects *do not exist independently of the linguistic practices* that constitute them as objects of reference. When we name something, we do not simply attach a label to a pre-existing entity; we participate in the ongoing constitution of that entity as a stable object capable of bearing a name.

This performative dimension explains why attempts to eliminate descriptive content from theories of reference systematically fail. Names require descriptive associations, not merely for cognitive or communicative reasons, but because the objects they purport to name are themselves constituted through descriptive practices embedded in declarative acts.

Consider Kripke's example of "water = H_2O." The identification depends not merely on scientific discovery, but *on the authority of scientific institutions* to declare the essential nature of substances. This authority itself depends on com-

plex social and institutional frameworks that are constituted through ongoing declarative processes. The supposedly necessary truth "water = H_2O" thus depends on contingent social facts about scientific authority.

6.6. The Crisis of Reality and Reference

The Cohen Problem ultimately calls into question our understanding of reality itself. If we cannot definitively determine what makes something what it really is, and if our access to facts depends on declarative acts whose authority cannot be definitively established, then the relationship between language and reality becomes fundamentally unstable.

This instability undermines the metaphysical foundations that Kripke's theory requires. Rigid designation presupposes stable objects that maintain their identity across possible worlds, but the declarative constitution of reality makes such stability contingent on ongoing social and linguistic processes that cannot guarantee metaphysical necessity.

The problem extends beyond individual cases to the entire framework of possible worlds semantics. If reality itself is constituted through declarative acts, then the modal distinctions between necessary and contingent, actual and possible, become artifacts of particular linguistic and social practices rather than fundamental metaphysical categories.

6.7. Implications for Philosophy of Language

The problem of declaration reveals that Kripke's critique of descriptivism addresses only surface-level issues while missing deeper problems about the performative constitution of reality through language. Rather than choosing between descriptivist and direct reference theories, we must recognize that both approaches inadequately address the fundamental declarative dimensions of linguistic practice.

A more adequate theory of reference must acknowledge that names function within complex performative frameworks that constitute rather than merely describe reality. This performative dimension explains why descriptive content proves impossible to eliminate: such content is not merely cognitive or communicative, but constitutive of the objects that names purport to designate.

The authority problem also reveals why causal-historical theories cannot provide stable foundations for reference. The causal chains that supposedly ground rigid designation depend on social recognition of authority that is itself constituted through declarative acts. The foundation thus proves circular: causal authority depends on social authority, which depends on declarative constitution, which depends on causal efficacy.

A parallel intuition can be found in contemporary enactivist approaches, which seek to dissolve the classical opposition between internalist descriptivism and externalist referentialism by relocating sense-making within the actions of cognitive subjects. Rather than treating meaning as a passive representation of a pregiven reality, enactivism conceptualizes reference as emerging from the agent's *situated* and *embodied* participation in the world. On this view, understanding does not consist in constructing an accurate internal picture of objects from an external standpoint; it is constituted through the practices by which subjects enact the domains that matter to them [30,31]. Participatory sense-making thus involves the co-production of meaning through coordinated activity, interaction, and the ongoing negotiation of relevance. This claim brings enactivism close to the declarative descriptivism defended here, to the extent that both positions deny the possibility of a neutral, description-free access to reference. Yet the present proposal remains a semantic thesis about the indispensability of descriptive structure for linguistic reference, whereas enactivism is a broader cognitive framework concerning the constitution of meaning in embodied agents.

Recent work in metasemantics and social ontology further reinforces the claim that reference and ontological commitment are governed by normative and practice-dependent constraints rather than by metaphysically fixed relations. Contemporary metasemantic accounts emphasize that reference-fixing depends on linguistic coordination, communal practices, and shared standards of use, even when resisting traditional descriptivism [14]. Parallel developments in social ontology argue that many ontological categories are constituted through rules, norms, and classificatory practices rather than discovered as mind-independent kinds [6]. These lines of research converge with broader contemporary discussions in philosophy of language and pragmatics, which increasingly acknowledge the role of social coordination and institutional authority in stabilizing meaning and reference [32,33]. Taken together, this literature supports the view that reference is not secured by purely causal or

truth-conditional mechanisms, but by *socially regulated practices*—thereby providing further motivation for the declarative framework developed in this investigation.

In summary, the problem of declaration represents a contemporary challenge to Kripke's theory that cannot be resolved within his theoretical framework. The recognition that all illocutionary acts are *fundamentally declarative*, combined with Cohen's Problem regarding the *verification* of declarative authority, undermines the metaphysical and epistemological foundations that rigid designation requires.

Rather than supporting either classical descriptivism or direct reference theory, these insights point toward more radical reconceptualizations of how language relates to reality. Such reconceptualizations must acknowledge the performative constitution of objects through ongoing declarative processes while recognizing the fundamental instability this introduces into traditional theories of reference and truth. We have, thus, seen how pragmatic inference and sociopragmatic structures contribute to the interpretation of referential expressions beyond their literal semantic content, showing that social context and language use jointly shape what meanings become stabilized in communication [34].

The investigation thus concludes not merely with a defense of descriptive content, but with a recognition that the entire debate between descriptivism and its critics might rest on inadequate assumptions about the relationship between language and reality. The problem of declaration reveals that this relationship is more complex, unstable, and performatively constituted than either side in the traditional debate has acknowledged.

7. Conclusions

This investigation has demonstrated through multiple converging lines of argument that Kripke's critique of descriptivism ultimately fails to establish the coherence of direct reference theory. More significantly, the analysis reveals that descriptive content is not merely useful, but philosophically necessary for any adequate theory of reference. Each stage of the argument has illuminated different aspects of this fundamental requirement, creating a cumulative case for the inescapability of descriptivist insights.

The Kantian analysis revealed that the analytic-synthetic distinction underlying contemporary debates contains internal paradoxes that actually support rather than undermine descriptivist approaches. The retroactive nature of analyticity—whereby synthetic operations become analytic once conceptual relationships are established—demonstrates that naming practices necessarily involve the definitional relationships that descriptivism recognizes.

The examination of Kripke's theory of necessity and contingency showed that rigid designation requires exactly the kind of stable descriptive substrate that his anti-descriptivist position rejects. The causal-historical chains meant to replace descriptive content necessarily contain informational elements that function as descriptions, making the elimination of descriptive mechanisms impossible.

The detailed analysis of Kripke's specific arguments against descriptivism revealed systematic contradictions in his position. His treatment of mathematical necessity, proper names, and counterfactual reasoning all depend on descriptive relationships while claiming to eliminate them. The distinction between "properties" and "descriptions" proves untenable under philosophical scrutiny.

The critique of Kripke's scientific essentialism exposed the arbitrary and circular nature of his criteria for determining essential properties. His confidence in empirical discovery as a foundation for necessity commits him to exactly the kind of contingent foundationalism that rigid designation was meant to transcend.

Finally, the problem of declaration reveals the most fundamental challenge to Kripke's theory. The recognition that all illocutionary acts are essentially declarative, combined with Cohen's Problem regarding the verification of declarative authority, undermines the metaphysical and epistemological foundations that rigid designation requires. When reality itself is constituted through ongoing declarative processes, the supposedly objective causal chains that ground reference become performatively constituted rather than metaphysically given.

These convergent arguments point toward conclusions with implications extending far beyond technical issues in philosophy of language. The persistent necessity of descriptive content, amplified by the declarative constitution of reality, reveals something fundamental about the relationship between language, meaning, and human understanding.

The investigation demonstrates that reference cannot be understood as a simple relationship between names and

pre-existing objects. Instead, successful reference depends on performative processes that constitute objects as stable referents through ongoing declarative acts. This performative dimension explains why attempts to eliminate descriptive content systematically fail—such content provides not merely cognitive accessibility, but the constitutive framework through which objects become available for reference.

The problem of declaration reveals that all theories of reference must confront questions of authority that cannot be resolved through purely semantic or metaphysical analysis. Who has the authority to establish reference? How is such authority constituted and maintained? These questions cannot be answered without acknowledging the social and performative dimensions of linguistic practice that traditional semantic theories ignore.

The Kantian insight regarding the retroactive nature of analyticity, combined with the declarative constitution of objects, illuminates crucial temporal and social dimensions in how reference is established and maintained. Names do not spring into existence with predetermined referential relationships; rather, they acquire their referential capacity through processes of social and performative development that necessarily involve descriptive mediation embedded in declarative practices.

The convergence of these arguments points toward a solution that transcends the traditional debate between descriptivism and direct reference theory. Rather than choosing between competing semantic theories, we must recognize that reference functions through what might be called declarative descriptivism—a framework that acknowledges both the necessity of descriptive content and its performative constitution through ongoing declarative acts.

Declarative descriptivism recognizes that:

- Names require descriptive associations to function successfully, but these descriptions are not fixed identificatory conditions in the classical sense.
- Descriptive content is performatively constituted through ongoing declarative acts rather than corresponding to pre-existing metaphysical properties.
- Reference is socially and temporally constituted through practices of authority recognition that are themselves embedded in declarative frameworks.
- Objects of reference are partially constituted through the very linguistic practices that purport to refer to them, making the relationship between language and reality more complex than either traditional descriptivism or direct reference theory acknowledges.

This framework resolves the primary problems that have plagued traditional approaches:

- Against Classical Descriptivism: It avoids rigid identificatory conditions while maintaining the necessity of descriptive content. Descriptions function not as fixed criteria, but as performatively constituted frameworks that enable reference.
- Against Direct Reference Theory: It explains why causal-historical chains cannot eliminate descriptive content while acknowledging that such chains play important roles in constituting authority for declarative acts.
- Against Modal Objections: It handles modal contexts by recognizing that possible worlds are themselves constituted through declarative acts rather than representing mind-independent metaphysical alternatives.
- Regarding the Authority Problem: It acknowledges that questions of referential authority cannot be resolved through purely semantic analysis but require attention to the social and performative dimensions of linguistic practice.

The declarative solution suggests that philosophy of language must become more interdisciplinary, incorporating insights from social theory, pragmatics, and institutional analysis. Semantic theories that ignore the performative and social constitution of reference will systematically miss crucial dimensions of how language actually functions.

This approach also suggests new research directions focusing on how declarative practices constitute objects of reference across different domains—scientific, legal, social, and personal. Rather than seeking universal semantic theories, we might develop domain-specific accounts of how declarative practices function in different institutional contexts.

The investigation's conclusions challenge traditional distinctions between language and reality, subject and object, necessary and contingent. The performative constitution of objects through declarative acts suggests that metaphysics and philosophy of language are more intimately connected than traditional approaches acknowledge.

The authority problem also reveals that epistemological questions about knowledge and justification cannot be sepa-

rated from social and performative questions about who has the right to make claims and under what circumstances. This suggests the need for more socially informed approaches to epistemology.

The critique of Kripke's scientific essentialism, combined with the declarative framework, supports approaches to scientific realism that recognize the important role of scientific institutions in constituting the objects of scientific inquiry. Scientific discoveries do not simply reveal pre-existing essential properties, but participate in ongoing processes of constituting natural kinds through declarative practices embedded in scientific institutions.

While declarative descriptivism provides a more adequate framework for understanding reference, it faces the challenge of potential infinite regress. If all authority is constituted through declarative acts, and all declarative acts presuppose authority, how do we avoid circularity? Future work must address this challenge while building on the insights developed here.

The framework must also account for how declarative practices vary across cultures and historical periods. If objects are partially constituted through declarative acts, how do we understand translation and communication across different declarative frameworks? This remains an important area for further investigation.

The declarative solution also raises normative questions about which declarative practices should be recognized as authoritative and under what circumstances. These questions require attention to political and ethical dimensions of linguistic practice that traditional semantic theories have largely ignored.

One of the most significant conclusions of this investigation is that the classical descriptivist insight—that names require descriptive associations to function successfully—represents not a theoretical mistake, but a recognition of something fundamental about human linguistic practice. However, this insight must be understood within the broader framework of declarative constitution rather than as a claim about fixed identificatory conditions.

The declarative solution thus preserves what was valuable in classical descriptivism while avoiding the problems that made it vulnerable to Kripke's criticisms. It acknowledges that descriptive content is necessary for reference while recognizing that such content is performatively constituted rather than metaphysically given.

The investigation began with a technical question about how names refer to their objects. It concludes with a framework that transforms our understanding of the relationship between language and reality. This progression illustrates how careful philosophical analysis of seemingly narrow technical issues can illuminate fundamental questions about the nature of meaning, authority, and social constitution that shape how we understand our place in the world.

The demonstration that descriptive content is inescapable, combined with the recognition that such content is performatively constituted through declarative acts, reveals something crucial about human linguistic practice: successful communication depends not merely on shared conceptual frameworks, but on ongoing social processes of constituting objects and authority through performative acts.

The persistence of the problems identified in this investigation—the paradoxes of analyticity, the circularity of rigid designation, the arbitrariness of essentialist criteria, and the authority crisis revealed by Cohen's Problem—suggests that these issues point toward deep features of how language relates to reality rather than merely technical difficulties to be resolved through theoretical innovation.

The declarative solution offers the most promising path forward precisely because it acknowledges this complexity rather than attempting to eliminate it. By recognizing that reference functions through performatively constituted descriptive frameworks, we can develop more adequate theories that capture both the necessity of descriptive content and its social and temporal constitution.

The investigation thus concludes not with a simple vindication of any existing theory, but with a recognition that adequate theories of reference must be more philosophically sophisticated than either descriptivists or their critics have typically acknowledged. The declarative framework provides the foundation for such sophistication by acknowledging the performative, social, and temporal dimensions of linguistic practice that make reference possible.

In this light, the future of philosophy of language lies not in choosing between existing alternatives, but in developing new frameworks that can accommodate the full complexity of how language actually functions in human social practice. The declarative solution represents a first step toward such frameworks, offering a path beyond the traditional

debates that have dominated the field while preserving the genuine insights that have emerged from those debates.

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