ANALYTIC TRUTHS AND KRIPKE'S SEMANTIC TURN

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> "Like everything metaphysical
> the harmony between thought and
> reality is to be found in the grammar
> of language."
> Wittgenstein, Zettel 55

I. Behold analytic truths; for they can serve to indicate that issues hitherto considered metaphysical are actually semantic. With this way of putting the moral of my paper, the reader may easily get the impression that I am trying to revive some tenet of 'the linguistic turn'. The moral is impeccably described—still, what I am after is a different revolution.

My aim is to get a better handle on the most prominent turn in the philosophy of language over the past half century, a contribution that continues to be widely misunderstood: Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* lectures held in 1970. The presumed metaphysical consequences of these lectures mostly turn out to be illusory. In fact, by ushering in rigid designation and metaphysical necessity, Kripke has introduced what is at bottom a semantic rather than a metaphysical innovation.

II. Distinguishing between analytic truths and non-analytic, that is, synthetic truths has a considerable history in the work of Leibniz, Locke, and Hume. But let our story begin in 1783 with Kant's definitions: a synthetic judgment adds something new relative to what is already contained in the concept given by the subject, whereas an analytic judgment merely analyzes what is already included in the subject concept.[1] For example, it is a synthetic truth that bachelors have a lesser tendency for obesity than males in general, whereas it is an analytic truth that bachelors are unmarried. Occupying subject position in both examples is the concept for 'bachelor', which contains unmarriedness but says nothing about obesity tendencies.

A century later, in *The Foundations of Arithmetic* first published in 1884, Frege suggested that we base the notion of analytic truth on the more exact notion of logical truth (FREGE 1984):

P is an analytic truth $=_{df}$
substituting synonyms for synonyms, *P* can be converted into a logical truth.

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[1] Kant discusses analytic and synthetic *judgments* in both the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Prolegomena.* By contrast, the definitions given by Frege and subsequent representatives of the analytic tradition are about analytic *truths,* that is, *statements* that are analytically true.

For example, starting from the statement 'every bachelor is unmarried', we can use the pair of synonyms 'bachelor–unmarried adult male' to arrive at the logical truth that 'every unmarried adult male is unmarried'. This way, the Fregean definition concurs with Kant's in making 'every bachelor is unmarried' an analytic truth.

Twentieth century analytic philosophy adopted the Fregean definition (under Carnap's guidance), subsequently criticized it (under Quine's direction), and also refined it (see for example CARNAP 1947; QUINE 1951). The outcome was a definition now considered commonplace:

P is an analytic truth =$_{df}$ *P* is true by virtue of the meanings of its words alone.

Refinements yield an epistemic, understanding-based definition:

P is an analytic truth =$_{df}$
understanding *P* is sufficient for recognizing that it is true.

III. The reader might be puzzled over the fact that analytic truths occupy center stage in this essay. On the one hand, 'analytic' has acquired a bad reputation in the wake of Quine's convincing arguments against the analytic-synthetic distinction (QUINE 1951): what role is left for analytic truths when they cannot be separated off from synthetic ones? On the other hand, in Kripke's writings, 'analytic' is hardly ever mentioned. Within his "Identity and Necessity" lecture, he notes that besides the categories of 'a priori' and 'necessary', that of 'analytic' should also be distinguished, immediately adding that he wants to focus on the first two (KRIPKE 1971, 149–50). 'Analytic' is likewise pushed into the background in the longer lecture volume *Naming and Necessity.* The word appears less than ten times, mostly mentioned on the side, in passing, in footnotes. Then how much could it illuminate with respect to Kripke's work?

Still, I maintain that 'analytic' provides a useful heuristic for understanding Kripke's theory of meaning.

IV. Kripke does not even bring forth a genuine theory of meaning, not even in its bare-bones outline! So the reader might object. Indeed, Kripke's focus is elsewhere: he emphasizes that the semantics of proper names should not be specified in terms of descriptions. He criticizes two description-based proposals: that the proper name 'Anna Regina Reuter' is synonymous with some definite description, for example, '(the woman who is) Immanuel Kant's mother'; and that the description fixes or determines the reference of the name. Kripke does not offer an alternative to replace the description theory (or theories). Instead, he contents himself with making two observations:

(A) The reference of proper names is fixed by causal-historical chains (and not by descriptions): the name 'Anna Regina Reuter' refers to a certain woman because she is at the end of the chain of communication associated with the use of 'Anna Regina Reuter'.
(B) Names are rigid designators. That is, they refer to the same individual in every possible situation (world) in which they refer at all.

Let us take a quick look at (B). The name 'Anna Regina Reuter' (used to) stand for a certain woman. As a rigid designator, the name refers to her even in a counterfactual situation in which she stays in Bavaria along with her family, never visits Königsberg, does not meet Johann Georg Kant, Immanuel Kant's father. In this imagined scenario, Anna *herself* is the person who stays in Bavaria, etc., leading a life altogether different from her actual life. Unquestionably, the sentence below is about Anna, describing the counterfactual situation in question:

(1) Anna Regina Reuter could have lived her entire life in Bavaria without ever meeting Johann Georg Kant.

Kripke used this intuitive—and to my mind, revolutionary—observation to motivate the idea that names are rigid designators.

Based on the foregoing, we have learned little about the meaning of names. (A) does not even mention meanings, addressing only the issue of what fixes the reference of names. (B) tells us that names are rigid designators, holding on to their reference in counterfactual situations. What (B) does not tell us is how, through *what kind of meaning*, names achieve this feat. It seems straightforward to *identify* the meaning of a name with its reference, the meaning of 'Anna Regina Reuter' with Anna herself. This is how proponents of Direct Reference read Kripke, thereby returning to a Millian theory of the meaning of proper names.[2] But indirectly, Kripke was distancing himself from this alternative by choosing to maintain the following distinction (while also purposely sustaining an air of mystery):

(2) Königsberg = Kaliningrad
      That is, 'Königsberg is identical to Kaliningrad.'
(3)   Königsberg = Königsberg.

According to Kripke, (2) expresses an a posteriori, empirical truth, whereas (3) expresses an a priori, trivial one (KRIPKE 1971, 152–6; 1980, 101–105). We have good reason to expect that a difference in meaning is behind the fact that one statement is a priori, while the other, a posteriori. The only way to achieve this is by distinguishing the meanings of the proper names 'Kaliningrad' and 'Königsberg'.[3] But this option is unavailable to

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[2] The theory of Direct Reference was first proposed by David Kaplan, its prominent defenders include Scott Soames és Nathan Salmon (See KAPLAN 1977, 492–497; SALMON 1986; SOAMES 2002).
These Direct Reference theorists tend not to talk more about the *semantic content* of proper names rather than their *meaning*. This raises the possibility: could not meaning include components other than semantic content? This suggestion does not change the argument in Section IV. I will briefly explain why.
If I utter 'I am sleepy', the semantic content of 'I' is me. But 'I' also has a more general sort of meaning (one natural way to think of this is as a Kaplanian character, KAPLAN 1977): the word always refers to the speaker of the utterance. The crucial question is: can we drive a wedge between the meanings of 'Königsberg' and 'Kaliningrad' based on some difference in their general meaning? According to Direct Reference theorists, we cannot: in the case of proper names, their general meaning at best adds minimal extra stuff to their semantic content, and that definitely will not be enough to draw a difference between proper names that share the same semantic content (see for example Soames 2002, 55–6). They therefore think that for proper names, concerns about their meaning come down to their semantic content, because semantic content is supposed to be the level at which semantic expectations are met.
[3] Kripke doubts that this argument is ultimately effective in establishing that the meaning of 'Königsberg' and 'Kaliningrad' should be distinguished (KRIPKE 1979, 385–388). He also adds the following though: „»Naming and Necessity« never asserted a substitutivity principle for epistemic contexts." (*ibid.* 404, footnote 10.) Why is it important to stress the absence of such a principle? For otherwise Kripke could not

Direct Reference theorists, for whom the meaning of both names is one and the same Prussian turned Russian city.[4]

This way, two constraints on the meaning of a proper name emerge from Kripke's work: whatever that meaning is, it must insure rigid designation; and the meanings of coreferring names *can* differ (e.g. 'Kalningrad' and 'Königsberg').

V. Because Kripke does not offer a full-fledged theory of meaning, it is well to check what kinds of commitments and assumptions are behind his semantic observations. This is where we can glean oft-neglected yet clear considerations by examining which statements can count as analytic truths for Kripke—statements whose truth can be recognized solely on the basis of the meaning/understanding of the statement. For the purposes of this paper, we need not sharpen this any further. Based on some remarks Kripke made on the side in *Naming and Necessity,* we can already effectively delineate the range of analytic truths. Kripke discusses at length the categories of 'a priori' and 'necessary', but treats 'analytic' as a third fiddler, relating it to the other two notions by means of a stipulation: "… let's just make it a matter of stipulation that an analytic statement is, in some sense, true by virtue of its meaning and true in all possible worlds by virtue of its meaning. Then something which is analytically true will be both necessary and a priori." (KRIPKE 1980, 39.)[5]

A brief clarification is in order: (a) let us think of possible worlds as counterfactual situations (like the one mentioned before, in which Anna Regina Reuter lives her life in Bavaria); accordingly, (b) counterfactually (metaphysically[6]) necessary truths are those that are true in every world (in which the proper names involved refer at all). In this sense, every true identity statement involving a pair of proper names is necessarily true, including (2) above. The reason: there are no counterfactual situations in which Königsberg exists but is not identical to Kaliningrad.[7]

VI. Kripke therefore commits himself to the following:

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maintain an epistemic difference between the sentences (2) and (3). If the principle of substitution were in effect, then it would yield (3) based on the truth of (2), and *vice versa*. And if the principle were in force within epistemic contexts, then the aposteriority of (2) would lead to the aposteriority of (3), so we could not simultaneously maintain that (2) was a posteriori, whereas (3), a priori.

[4] More precisely, Königsberg is a Prussian turned Polish turned Prussian turned German turned Soviet turned Russian city.

[5] Kripke returns to this stipulative definition twice (KRIPKE 1980, 56, 21. lábjegyzet; 122), hardly saying anything more about 'analytic'.

[6] Following Kripke, this is usually dubbed 'metaphysical necessity'. I follow Burgess' remarkably keen interpretation of Kripke and adopt the more neutral term 'counterfactual necessity' (see Burgess in press; see also Burgess 1998). In what follows, I will try to show why I opt for this latter terminology and find 'metaphysical necessity' a misleading name.

[7] I summarize the oft-repeated argument: of course, the two names could have been assigned so 'Kaliningrad' and 'Königsberg' became names of two distinct cities. But this is not a situation in which Kaliningrad (as we actually use the name) is distinct from Königsberg (as we actually use that name). Provided we fix the actual usage, in *every* counterfactual situation in which the names refer at all, they corefer, so (2) is true (see KRIPKE 1971, 150–157; 1980, 102–4).

Is (2) true in a possible situation in which there are no cities? And for (2) to count as a necessary truth, do we need it to be true in every situation, or is it enough if it is never false? We need not take a stance on these issues here (or on the so-called weak versus strong necessity distinction). A parenthetical remark: hidden in these questions is a metaphysical detour: do we need to posit Kaliningrad/Königsberg in some sense even in cityless situations, so that it can make the identity statement true? See Section VII and KRIPKE 1971, 145–6; 1980, 48.

(K)　　If a statement *P* is analytic, then it is necessary and a priori

We can reword (K) in terms of two clauses:

(K1)　If *P* is not necessary, then *P* is not analytic.
(K2)　If *P* is not a priori, then *P* is not analytic.

Let us consider both in turn.

According to (K1), <u>statements that are only contingently true (they happen to be true without being necessarily true) turn out to be synthetic</u>. (4)–(6) lists some examples:

(4) The standard kilogram in Sèvres (let us call it 'Kyle') weighs one kilogram.[8]
(5) I am here.
(6) Bucephalus had a sizable head (when the horse got his name).

Let us consider why these are contingent. It could have easily happened that a piece broke off from Kyle, leaving it with a weight of 95 dekagrams. I happen to be in downtown Budapest when I utter (5), but I could have been in Vienna at that very moment.[9] In the absence of adequate nutrition, Bucaphalus—whose head was like an ox's, as his name suggests—could have grown up to be a frail horse with a diminutive head.

According to (K2), <u>every a posteriori (that is, empirical) statement is synthetic</u>; cases in point are (2), (7) and (8):

(2) Königsberg = Kaliningrad.
(7) Kant's mother was Anna Regina Reuter.
(8) Gold is a yellow metal.

(2) and (7) are clearly a posteriori; (8) is more controversial. It shows how much Kripke's conception of 'analytic' and 'a priori' has diverged from Kant's: in the *Prolegomena,*[10] (8) is mentioned as an example of an *a priori analytic* truth, whereas for Kripke, it is an *a posteriori synthetic* truth. Why a posteriori? For him, the finding that gold is a yellow metal constitutes empirical discovery. We can discern this if we point out: (8) is empirically verifi*able* and falsifi*able*. To see this, we need only recognize the following hypothetical possibility: studies could have shown that the gold surrounding us has thus far seemed yellow to us because of the emission of specific gases. Due to changes in atmospheric conditions, however, after a while, gold samples would appear blue to us, say. In this scenario, we would, without a doubt discover something surprising *about gold*: that under certain circumstances, it is not yellow, or does not appear to be yellow

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[8] The standard kilogram in Sèvres is special: to this day, this platinum-iridium cylinder continues to determine the unit mass for the kilogram. By contrast, the unit length for the meter is no longer tied to a certain rod. ('Cylinder' in Greek is 'kylindros', hence the name 'Kyle'.)

[9] Kaplan (1977) does not agree with this. Nonetheless it is clear that maintaining (K) prevents Kripke from regarding (5) as an analytic truth, even though it is quite plausible to think that the truth of (2) follows from, or can be understood based on the meaning of its words alone.

[10] In the *Prolegomena,* Kant writes that "… to know that gold is a yellow metal […] all I need is to analyse my concept of gold, which contains the concept of being a yellow metal." (Kant 2005, 8; Preamble 2b.) Kripke objects to this: (8) is empirically falsifiable—we can discover about gold that under certain circumstances it is not yellow after all—so yellowness cannot be included within the concept because what would be the status of that yellowness part, should gold fail to be yellow? Chalmers (1997) has tried to capture the Kantian as well as the Kripkean intuitions within his two dimensional framework.

(for present purposes, this makes no difference). It would not occur to us to conclude that what we had thought was gold is not gold after all (for more details, see Kʀɪᴘᴋᴇ 1980, 117–119). In this hypothetical situation, empirical findings would falsify (8). It is likewise an empirical result when we ascertain its opposite, that gold is in fact yellow.

(K1) and (K2) can be applied in tandem to any statement that is simultaneously contingent *and* a posteriori. Perhaps some of the above statements are like that. For the sake of simplicity, let us consider an uncontroversial example:

(9) Kant was a bachelor.

(K1) and (K2) separately yield the verdict that (9) is synthetic.

Having illustrated the definitions, let us return to (2), which is not only a posteriori, but is also necessary based on the arguments at the end of Section V. Using the customary '□' notation for counterfactual (metaphysical) necessity, we can say that (2□) is an a posteriori truth:

(2□) □ Königsberg = Kaliningrad.

VII. The sight of an a posteriori necessity can set our imagination in motion (it is a common reaction),[11] prompting us to stray towards the following, fundamentally misleading path:

> (2□) is a metaphysical result secured by semantics. What we see, after all, is an example of (metaphysical) necessity that follows from the behavior and meaning of proper names. This is no trivial accomplishment; it must come with a price tag: answering numerous weighty questions about metaphysics. For example:
> - How can we justify that we possess intuitions about metaphysical necessities? What affords access to these intuitions? How else could we realize that (2□) is true?
> - On what basis do we identify objects and people across possible worlds? For example, how do we identify the actual Anna Regina Reuter with the woman living in Bavaria in the described counterfactual scenario?
> - In order to resolve transworld identity issues, many consider it a preliminary task that we delineate essences, and then we are headed into a metaphysical jungle. Is being married an essential property of a person? We think not. And who his biological mother is? We mostly think yes. And who gave birth to him? Earlier we might not have distinguished this question from the previous one, but today we take into account the possibility of gestational surrogate mothers and maintain, with good reason, that the answer is 'no'. For a host of such questions we do not have a clear answer, or we think that there is a good chance that our opinion would change with time, just as it did with the 'Who gave birth to the baby?' question. It is worth noting that should we opt for the plausible position that it is Kant's essential property that his (biological) mother was Anna Regina Reuter,

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[11] There is no need to give examples, because just about everyone—sometimes even Kripke himself—thought that the Kripkean views give rise to one or the other of the metaphysical challenges. David Lewis' otherwise brilliant work has initiated a particularly large number of metaphysical excursions (see for example Lewis 1973, 1986). On the other end, Burgess' work stands out with its exceptional acuity (Burgess 1998, in press).

then we would consider (7) an a posteriori *necessary* truth (like 2). (See Kripke 1980, 110–113; we will return to this example in Section IX.)

· How can we maintain <u>necessary truths involving contingent existents</u>? The truth of (2□) should be consistent with the fact that Kaliningrad, like most other cities, objects and people, does not exist necessarily.

· How can we <u>narrow the range of logically or analytically possible worlds to get the metaphysically possible ones</u>?[12] For obviously, some necessary truths are not analytic truths, 'Königsberg = Kaliningrad' provides an example. That is: in some worlds among the analytically/logically possible ones, the statement 'Königsberg = Kaliningrád' comes out as false, even though every metaphysically possible world makes it come out as true. (See Fine 2002 for why the narrowing cannot be done.)

In fact, there are no such metaphysical tasks mounting ahead of us, just as there are no substantive metaphysical results in the offing. (2□), despite its aposteriori nature, holds neither surprise nor metaphysical interest.

VIII. We can realize just how trivial (2□) is by considering a statement that Kripke would take to be an analytic truth as well as an a priori and necessary one:[13]

(2→) Königsberg = Kaliningrad →[14] □ Königsberg = Kaliningrad
That is: 'If Königsberg and Kaliningrad are identical, then they are necessarily identical.'

(2→) is analytic in the approximate sense that is completely adequate for Kripke's purposes: based on considerations limited to the characteristic features of the meanings of proper names, we can recognize that (2→) is true. It is, after all, part of what names mean that they are rigid designators; and an analogue of (2→) would hold for any pair of rigid designators.[15] Put differently, we could ascertain the truth of (2→) even if all we knew about the names 'Königsberg' and 'Kaliningrad' was that they referred to individuals. (We would have to know, however, that the names in question were *not* brand names.)[16] For we would be in a position to recognize that whatever these names picked out—be it a city, a statue or a person—once we fix the actual usage, (2→) is guaranteed to be true.

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[12] See Fine (2002) for why there is no underlying conception of possibility on which we can base both logical possibility and counterfactual (metaphysical) possibility. Upon the emergence of the latter, relating these two senses of possibility was considered crucial because until the 1960's, logical and analytic necessity were considered the basic notions of necessity (see for example Carnap 1947, Quine 1953).

[13] Of course, based on (K), (2→) as an analytic statement cannot but be a priori and necessary.

[14] To keep the notation transparent, for 'if… then…', I use the connective '… → …', understood as the common material implication.

[15] Even though Kripke is in complete agreement with this, he is hardly ever explicit. (But see Kripke 1971, 140–1; 1980, 109.)

[16] I have purposely excluded brand names (like the candy brand 'Pez'). These do not pick out individuals but resemble natural kind terms (like 'water', 'tiger', and 'gold'). With respect to Kripke's remarks about proper names, natural kind terms raise very interesting issues and parallels. But the proposals Kripke put forth for natural kind terms and theoretical terms are much too hasty, and clearing them up would take a separate paper. I think that Kripke was right on with respect to proper names and did not realize that his points do not generalize to other terms.

As we inspect (2→), we should keep in mind that it is an *analytic* statement.[17] This way, we can avoid another metaphysical excursion that would go something like this: "Look at the metaphysical result we have found—every true identity statement in metaphysically necessary! How is this guaranteed? And how can we have such confidence in it? And in general: what do we mean by necessary identity?" And so on. Let us keep in mind then that (2→) is an analytic truth and we can thereby avoid the distracting line of thought.

Even more important it is that we realize that there is absolutely nothing unexpected about the a posteriori (2□). It is the consequent of the a priori (2→) and we arrive at it by a simple application of modus ponens. Because the antecedent of (2→) is synthetic a posteriori (recall that the identity of Königsberg and Kaliningrad is an empirical, discoverable fact), (2□) "inherits" both features. This is how, based on language-related considerations together with the truth of the antecedent, (2→) serves up an a posteriori, synthetic and necessary truth. We have traveled light (packed carry-on baggage only), brought along no spectacular metaphysical commitments, and upon arrival, we still have no metaphysical excitement materializing—magically, out of nowhere—as we unpack. All we have is what we set out with, somewhat rearranged (it could perhaps use some ironing and refolding).

IX. The skeptical reader might suspect that we have reached interesting metaphysical findings after all, which I am now trying to cover up. She might reason as follows:

> Based on (7), we can formulate the a posteriori, synthetic (7□):
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> (7□)   □ (Kant's mother was Anna Regina Reuter)[18]
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> Recall that Kripke considers both (2□) and (7□) true (see Section VII. above). But how could one possibly deny that (7□) comes with a non-negligible metaphysical commitment? It states, after all, that unlike most other properties Kant has, it is a necessary property of his that Anna Regina Reuter was his (biological) mother.

My response is this: granted that Anna Regina Reuter was in fact Kant's mother, *having (7□) come out as an a posteriori necessary truth works only insofar as we can also maintain that (7→) is an a priori analytic truth:*

> (7→)   Kant's mother was ARR → □ Kant's mother was ARR
>   That is: 'If Kant's mother was ARR, then no-one other than her could have been his mother.'

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[17] Kripke does consider conditionals like (2→), but his focus is on setting apart 'a priori' and 'necessary'. It would have been far more helpful if he stressed that the conditional sentence expressed an analytic truth (KRIPKE 1971, 152–3).

[18] 'Kant's mother' is a definite description, which could suggest an analysis of (7) and (7□) in terms of an identity sign flanked by a definite description and a proper name. My arguments are independent of how we handle definite descriptions and arise far more generally—even with an awkward-sounding wording of (7□) as 'Anna Regina Reuter mothered Kant'. A more natural-sounding example without definite descriptions would serve just as well: 'ARR provided half of Kant's genetic material.'

At this juncture, two options arise. On the one hand, one might, based on reflections on the concept of 'mother' and the behavior of proper names, arrive at the truth of (7→). In that case, however, (7□) does not count as a substantive metaphysical result; it holds exactly as much (or as little) metaphysical interest as other truths that follow from considerations about language and meaning. Alternatively, the ground slips from underneath (7→), and nothing in what Kripke says could increase our confidence towards either (7→) or (7□).

X.[19] Contrasting (2→) and (7→) brings to the fore just how privileged a status the former has: in the light of Kripke's considerations about proper names, we can straightforwardly discern that (2→) is an analytic truth. All we need to do is reflect on how names work, and how their reference is in counterfactual situations. Moreover, there are other analytic truths that are just as evident, which tell us about the *absence* of necessity, as does the following example about Kyle (the standard kilogram):

$$(4\rightarrow) \quad \text{Kyle weighs 1 kilogram} \rightarrow \Diamond \text{ Kyle weighs 99 dekagrams}^{[20]}$$

That is 'Given that Kyle weighs exactly one kilogram, it (still) could have been one dekagram lighter'

We can convince ourselves that (4→) is true based on the following: (a) 'Kyle' is a proper name; (b) proper names refer to individuals (objects, people, cities, platinum-iridium cylinders etc.); and (c) these sorts of individuals are such that they can survive minor changes in their weight.

The reader might become suspicious at this point:

> How can we regard (4→) as *analytic* when we justify it in part by (c), which is about the metaphysics of individuals? According to (c), individuals' weight may change a little; we can reconcile the continued existence of *any* 1-kilogram individual with its losing 1 dekagram of its weight. (c) is undoubtedly true, but lies outside of the range of considerations related to language and meaning.

Before we leap to the conclusion that there is no way metaphysical considerations could serve as bases for analytic truths, let us consider the question: "Are there *any* semantic claims about proper names that are entirely free of metaphysical conclusions?". My answer is a surprising one: there aren't any. It is part of the semantics of proper names that they serve to pick out objects, people, and places—individuals. But then semantics cannot avoid mentioning the nature of individuals. What semantics says about individuals does not hold revelation or excitement. It will not specify the circumstances under which objects "survive" being sliced up or losing half of their volume. Nor will it specify when people come into existence: with the fertilized egg, with the morula stage, or with birth? Semantics does say, however, that <u>individuals possess dispensable properties</u>—on the one hand they can go on existing without the given property, on the other, they could have existed without ever possessing that property. One clear example of a dispensable property for an individual is its weighing (exactly) one kilogram, and we

[20] '$\Diamond$' is the common operator 'it is possible that …', which can be defined in terms of '□' as '□'.

can discern this from the meaning of "weighs exactly one kilogram". We see then that the metaphysics that (c) presupposes—the minimal metaphysics of individuals—does get specified within semantics. We can therefore maintain that (4→) is an *analytic* truth.

The minimal metaphysics of individuals is indeed minimal: it provides blurred contours only. It does not determine the essences of individuals, securing nothing beyond obvious and hence unexciting information: that a person could weigh slightly more than he in fact does, could have been born a second earlier than he in fact did, could get her hair cropped slightly shorter. But it does not specify one way or the other whether the person could weigh an extra ton, could become a great philosopher, or could exist as an unembodied soul.[21]

A more general lesson based on the foregoing is that the semantics of proper names presupposes a bit of metaphysics. We have thus partially reversed the linguistic turn: <u>many semantic statements are in part metaphysical</u>. This also reveals why I am not calling (2□) a semantic statement. I agree with Kripke that it is a metaphysical statement. But I also stress that it is a *trivial* metaphysical statement, one that follows from semantic considerations. Closer inspection reveals that it does not provide anything that was not already included in the minimal metaphysics contained within semantics.

A further point worth noting is that (2→) and (4→) have it in common that they are specific instances of semantic generalities—semantic super-truths. An analytic super-truth about names of individuals says that coreferring names necessarily corefer; (2→) is a special case of this. In addition, an analytic super-truth about the weight of individuals says that whoever or whatever the individual might be, it can continue to exist with a one-percent weight loss; (4→) is a special case of this.

XI. I therefore maintain that (4→) is an analytic truth. As with the other conditionals discussed earlier, from (4→) and the a posteriori, synthetic truth that Kyle weighs one kilogram, modus ponens yields another a posteriori, synthetic truth which states that Kyle could have weighed 99 dekagrams:

(4◊) ◊ Kyle weighs 99 dekagrams

Weight is a dispensable property then. Let us consider a couple of other examples of dispensable properties of individuals:
- *Marital status.* A bachelor—say, Kant—might have gotten married.
- *Head size.* Bucephalus' might have had a head the size of sheep's.
- *Nationality.* Königsberg might have been a Lithuanian city (in the sense that it could have been annexed by Lithuania).

We can write these up based on the pattern already familiar from (4◊). The truth of the resulting statements is again guaranteed by the minimal metaphysics of individuals.

By contrast, in a host of cases, there is disagreement about whether a certain individual possesses a certain property necessarily, and sometimes we cannot even imagine that a unequivocal answer could be given. For example:
- *Non-minor size variation.* Might Bucephalus' have had a head the size of a squirrel's?

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[21] Van Inwagen provides insightful considerations for what is and what is not determined by the minimal metaphysics of individuals (VAN INWAGEN 1998).

What range of possible head sizes can we attribute to Bucephalus? A mammoth's head size probably lies outside of that range, as does an ant's. Is a squirrel's head size within range?

- *Species membership.* Was Bucephalus necessarily a horse or might he have been a mule?

  The trick question is: suppose that scientists figured out a genetic manipulation technique that would turn Bucephalus' zygote into an embryo of a mule; would the mule born from that embryo be Bucephalus?

- *Salient geographic feature.* Is Königsberg necessarily a port, or might it have been landlocked?

  Imagine that due to tectonic movements millions of years ago, the Vistula Lagoon area adjacent to Königsberg became part of the mainland, closing off direct access to the Baltic Sea. Could the city that would have then been founded at the same latitude and longitude have been Königsberg? Or is it necessarily a different city, however similar it might be to the actual Königsberg in terms of its history and culture?

- *Non-minor time variation.* Could Kant have been born in the Middle Ages?

  Here, we can bring in speculations about time travel and about the necessity of origin.

In thinking about these, there is no point in turning to the minimal metaphysics of individuals; no help will come from that direction. The absence of unequivocal answers may prompt misgivings about the system of possible/counterfactual worlds, about the conception of counterfactual necessity, about transworld identity, about the essences of horses, cities and humans. Do we have to confront these complex metaphysical questions in the end?

XII. I repeat: these are unnecessary metaphysical excursions.

The solution: all that needs figuring out is what certain statements about necessity and possibility *mean*. There is no need to fret if we do not know or cannot know whether those statements are true or false. We know with absolute certainty what the statements 'Kant might have gotten married' and 'Kant might have been born in the Middle Ages' say, what their meaning consists in: they claim about Kant himself that his life could have gone differently than it in fact did. This confidence is not in any way weakened by the fact that we are not in a position to decide about the second statement whether it is true or false.

This brings us to a truly exciting insight: proper names—'Kant', 'Königsberg'—ensure that we can talk about individuals—people, places—in counterfactual situations. From the perspective of semantics, this is a simple operation. A name presupposes the kind of reference to which/whom we can attribute complex features simply, without any metaphysical maneuvering: to Kant, the individual, we can attribute that *necessarily* his mother was Anna Regina Reuter, that he *might have* chosen to marry, that he *might have* been born ten seconds earlier. *The reason why making sense of talk about counterfactual situations is so effortless and easy is because semantics ensures the right units—individuals—to make things easy.* In this insight inheres the genuine Kripkean innovation, which Kripke himself tried to characterize imperfectly and misleadingly by saying that proper names are rigid designators.

Admittedly, introducing the notion of metaphysical necessity constituted a major turn in the philosophy of language. But it was a mistake to expect that substantive metaphysical commitments and tasks would ensue. The notion is at bottom grounded in semantics; that is where all the action is. Granted, there are truths about counterfactual

scenarios—like 'Königsberg and Kaliningrad are necessarily identical' and 'Kant might have gotten married'—but they are always backed by analytic truths we can discern by reflecting on how proper names work: 'If Köngisberg and Kaliningrad are identical then they are necessarily identical'; 'Even if Kant was a bachelor, things could have been otherwise and he could have gotten married'. Is there some metaphysics built into these analytic truths? Certainly. Proper names presuppose as their reference far more complex individuals than someone's (say, Kant's) specific course of life. The reference of the name 'Immanuel Kant' is an individual who could have been different, whose life could have gone differently—an individual who is unified across possible situations.[22] Semantics furnishes this sort of individual as the "unit of measurement" for proper name reference. With these units, we have packed some metaphysics for the road. Nonetheless, analytic truths are there to remind us that when we look through our luggage, we will not find more than what we had put in. Outside fairy tales, this is the way of things, including things metaphysical.[23]

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[22] Cf. Almog: "…modal individualism [is] the doctrine that it is meaningful to attribute to individuals, by themselves, modal properties (in the possible-worlds framework, modal individualism emerges as the doctrine that the transworld identity of individuals is *given*)" (ALMOG 1986, 226; emphasis in original). This gives an effective alternative terminology for formulating what I think Kripke's monumental insight was: that *the semantics of proper names presupposes modal individualism*. One sad aspect of Almog's intriguing paper is that he spells out the option of modal individualism with such clarity and then goes on to dismiss it in his interpretation of Kripke.

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