

Can It Be that Tully=Cicero?

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Abstract: We show, that given two fundamental theses of Kripke, no statement of the form “a=b is necessarily true”, is true, if ‘a’ and ‘b’ are distinct rigid designators.

Keywords: =, K, necessary, proper name, rigid designator

We are told that Tully and Cicero were one and the same person. But how could that be for it is necessarily true that if ‘Tully=Cicero’ is true then ‘Tully’ and ‘Cicero’ refer to the same entity. And since ‘Tully’ and ‘Cicero’ are rigid designators, being proper names of Tully and Cicero, ‘Tully = Cicero’ is necessarily true. But if ‘Tully = Cicero’ is necessarily true then ‘Tully’ and ‘Cicero’ necessarily refer to the same entity.¹ But no distinct pair of proper names refer jointly necessarily to any entity. For no proper name implies another or names its bearer necessarily. Hence, Tully and Cicero need not have been one and the same person and therefore could not have been one and the same person.² Which of course is absurd.

The argument assumes two classical theses of Kripke, that proper names are rigid designators³ and that any statement of the form ‘a=b’ is necessarily true, if ‘a=b’ is true and ‘a’ and ‘b’ are rigid designators.⁴ The argument would have significant force even if it would turn out that ‘Tully’ and ‘Cicero’ are not rigid designators. For we have a proof for the second premise,⁵ and the argument shows independently of the first premise that if ‘a’ and ‘b’ are distinct rigid designators no statement of the form “a=b is necessarily true,” is true.

We now turn to the claim that no proper name refers necessarily to its bearer. ‘Tully’ or ‘Cicero’ is in fact our name for Tully. But clearly we could have used the names ‘Tully’ and ‘Cicero’ to name distinct entities or to name someone other than Tully. Or, in model theoretic terms, there is a possible world in which the proper names ‘Tully’ and ‘Cicero’ as used in that world refer to distinct entities. But given Kripke’s two classical theses, this cannot be (Appendix step 4).⁶

¹ We restate the argument from ‘Tully=Cicero’ is true, in more detail in the appendix.

² A consequence of the theorem that if an identity is possibly false then it’s necessarily false.

³ See Kripke (1980, 6, 40-9). For the theory in the making see Kripke (1971, 140, 143, 145).

⁴ See Kripke (1971, 140, 144-5), Kripke (1980, 3).

⁵ See Kripke (1971, 140), Kripke (1980, 3), and Burgess (2014, 1577).

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Appendix

1. \Box 'Tully=Cicero' is true Assumption
2. \Box ['Tully=Cicero' is true \supset 'Tully' and 'Cicero' refer to the same entity] Assumption
3. \Box 'Tully=Cicero' is true \supset \Box 'Tully' and 'Cicero' refer to the same entity' 2, K
4. \Box 'Tully' and 'Cicero' refer to the same entity 3, 1

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