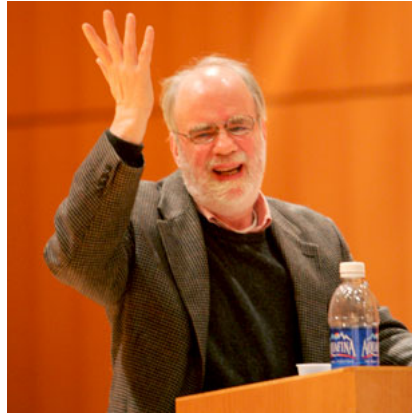


Saul Kripke



1 Philosophical Significance

Saul Kripke has made significant contributions to a variety of philosophical fields, including philosophy of language, logic, philosophy of mathematics, metaphysics, and epistemology. When he was a teenager, he developed and published a semantic theory for modal logic – that is, logic dealing with the notions of “necessity” and “possibility.” He is also famous for his “causal theory of reference,” according to which the reference of a particular name is determined, not by the descriptions in the mind of the speaker, but by the causal history of the name in question. Kripke is also known for his articulation of a “skeptical paradox about meaning” that he got from reading Wittgenstein, and a theory of truth designed to avoid certain logical paradoxes.

2 Writing Style

Kripke’s writing style is fairly typical of contemporary analytic philosophy, though a bit more conversational than most. In *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Kripke is articulating a paradox that occurred to him as he was reading Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*. Thus he often references that text. However, to understand Kripke’s points, it is not necessary to have read *Investigations*. This is convenient, because that book is widely regarded as extremely challenging.

3 Reading Questions

These reading questions are intended to help you focus when doing the reading. You are not required to write up answers; this is purely for your benefit. This class tests you on how well you understand the authors that we cover, and these questions are intended to help promote that understanding.

- 1) What is the skeptical paradox that Kripke is proposing?
- 2) Why is it not sufficient to answer the skeptic by saying that when I add 68 and 57 to get 125, I merely go on in the same way as I always have?
- 3) Kripke poses an objection to the skeptic involving counting marbles. What is that objection? What is the skeptic's response?
- 4) What is the "dispositional response" to the skeptic? Why does Kripke think it is unsuccessful?