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Title: The Conditions of Rigidity -- A simple new account of the nature of rigidity

Abstract:

Proper names are rigid designators—they refer to the same thing in all possible worlds. Definite descriptions are non-rigid designators—they can refer to different things in different possible worlds. Two hard questions emerge: are there good notions of rigidity for non-designators? And if so which such expressions are rigid and which are not?

Answers to one question have generally presupposed answers to the other. (e.g. Schwartz, Stephen P., 2002, Soames, Scott, 2002, Devitt, Michael, 2005) I present an account which presumes neither but answers both—a theory of the conditions necessary and sufficient for an expression to be rigid. Taking proper names as a paradigm case, I argue that by definition a designator is rigid just if what it designates is fixed by facts about the world where it is uttered, and not about the world under discussion. I then show that everything in this account unique to proper names can be replaced by appropriately related notions for other types of linguistic phenomena. All that is required is that the linguistic phenomenon have instantiation which can vary depending on facts about the world. Since all linguistic phenomena are conventional, and conventions are contingent, all are variable in this way.

References

Devitt, Michael (2005). *Rigid Application*, Springer Science and Business Media LLC.

Schwartz, Stephen P. (2002). *Kinds, general terms, and rigidity: A reply to LaPorte*, Springer Science and Business Media LLC.

Soames, Scott (2002). *Beyond Rigidity: The Unfinished Semantic Agenda of Naming and Necessity*, Oxford University Press.