

Title: Lexical ambiguity and rigidity of proper names

Abstract: In Naming and Necessity, Saul Kripke considers the objection that 'the simple fact that two people can have the same name refutes the rigidity thesis' and responds to it by arguing that 'rigidity has nothing to do with the question of two people having phonetically the same name'. (Kripke, 1980, p. 8, fn. 9) Pace Kripke, this article makes and defends the claim that the two theses—i.e., the thesis that the same name can be borne by distinct individuals ("lexical ambiguity") and the thesis that names are rigid designators—cannot be true together. The argument for the claim proceeds in three steps: I will first identify a desideratum that any characterization of the notion of rigid designation must satisfy: proper names are rigid designators, but definite descriptions are not. Second, I argue that any characterization of rigid designation that satisfies the desiderata must deny that ordinary language names are lexically ambiguous. Third, I anticipate and respond to a particularly illuminating objection: proper names can be both lexically ambiguous and rigid designators à la demonstratives (or indexicals) which, like names, can be used to refer to distinct individuals but are nevertheless thought to be a rigid designator.