

Elizabeth Anscombe's INTENTION



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the arrangement, given the tactics and psychology of the players involved, etc. Stated another way, the contrast is between the relation of a given configuration of pieces and possible antecedents as a set of available permutations, and a given configuration of pieces and a preceding set of configurations in what is, essentially, a causal process; where we make no assumptions about the relation of reasons and causes. But even in the case involving the causal process in a concrete circumstance events are not, if Anscombe is right, pre-determined. No move has been made that has been required by the rules of the game, etc. But, now, suppose I find myself in check with only one move affording me an escape. By the *rules*, I must either resign or move to that space. In this case, my move is "pre-determined," by the rules. There are, then, moves that are not "pre-determined" on the basis of the, given, arrangement of pieces—which includes the result of all moves up to the point of check—and there are moves that having been made "pre-determine" an action, such as moving out of check. In this latter case, we have what is analogous to causes which necessitate. Anscombe, however, does not reject *all* necessitating causes.

There is a sense in which some regularity theorists believe that all explainable events are like the move of the chess player who "must" remove his king from check, i.e., where there is only one available square into which he *can* move in conformity with the rule (law), although, of course, he does have the option of conceding the game. These would fall under what Anscombe calls "necessitating causes." Anscombe is quite right to say that in chess, while the moves are not determined, it may be the case that no one breaks the rules. (Anscombe [1971] p. 143) Some determinists, as we have noted, are determinists who take a radical regularity view of causation, and "reduce" causation to law governed change. They allege that all moves are determined, and that if we removed ourselves to a wider perspective, such as when someone moves back to capture the entire image of a large painting, all moves would be like that of the player who must move out of check; that is, they are "necessitated." In this case, not only are there laws, but initial conditions must be determined in lawlike fashion. The chess analogy may, also, be thought of as suggesting that all states of affairs on the board are "non-necessitated," even for the player who finds himself in check who may, after all, resign. A chess player, then, may be unaffected, causally, by a preceding move, that move being "non-necessitating."

However, he may have *reasons* for moving the way he does, given his opponents move, without being *caused* to make the move he does. We see, then, a relationship between singularity, as a view on causation, and the idea of reason distinct from causes, even where there are causes involved in how reason is exercised.

g) Applying Kripke to Singular Causation

In the last great masterpiece of analytical philosophy, Saul Kripke (Kripke [1972]) casts doubt on both the belief that necessary truths are *a priori* and that that all *a priori* truths are necessary. We, next, examine one attempt at relating Kripke's position to the debate over singular causation. Some will consider the next section, where we discuss the contingent *a priori*, an unnecessary digression. However, there is a common component, the theory of rigid designation, underlying both issues, and while we shall not engage this theory, specifically, we will examine a number of its applications.

In an artful display of philosophical skill, David Armstrong addresses the issue of singular causation. We cannot take up his numerous proposals and insights. Instead, we examine his claim that Anscombe views causation as "essentially" singular. In particular, we examine his claim that singular causation instantiates laws of nature. (Armstrong [1997] p. 202) Armstrong asks "Why should it not be the case that the identification of a causal sequence with the instantiation of a law" is a necessary *a posteriori* truth? Elsewhere, Armstrong and Adrian Heathcote in a brief but thought provoking essay provide reasons for believing that we *should* make this identification. (Heathcote and Armstrong [1991]) Such a belief, if correct, would amount to a compromise position between singularist and regularity theorists; but it would, also, amount to the rejection of singularism as an *alternative* to the regularity view. It is doubtful that Anscombe would have agreed with their take on the matter. We shall examine why she might have found their reasoning unconvincing. Our examination will yield the added dividend that by accepting our intentional actions as knowable independently of experience, as Anscombe did, we are afforded additional insights into the relation of the intentionality of sensations, such as pains, to action. Although Anscombe might not approve of some of the

arguments to be proposed, it is quite likely she would have rejected the Heathcote/Armstrong application of Kripke's notion of the *necessary a posteriori*.

Saul Kripke in a remarkable argument based on his theory of "rigid designation" has argued that, if sentences like 'water = H₂O' are true, they are necessarily true, albeit *a posteriori*. (Kripke [1971] *passim*) His argument, briefly considered, is this: 'water' and 'H₂O' are "rigid designators," meaning that they refer to the same thing in every possible world in which they designate at all. Thus, if 'water = H₂O' is true, it is true in all possible worlds, meaning that it is a necessary truth; and because 'water = H₂O' is established by observation and experiment knowledge of 'Necessarily (water = H₂O)' is to be regarded as *a posteriori* knowledge.

We will challenge this idea, but before we do we will address singular causation in light of Heathcote and Armstrong's contribution to the discussion of singular causation.

Elsewhere, I have argued that Kripke's argument when applied on behalf of Cartesian dualism is vulnerable to considerations having to do with diversity, rather than identity. (Bayne [1988]) Our objective in what follows will be to show that, contrary to what has been argued by Heathcote/Armstrong, Kripke's argument can be turned against the very position to which they enlist its support. According to Heathcote/Armstrong the identity of instances of singular causation with instantiations of laws is necessary *a posteriori*. The position they argue for is that "Just as investigation shows that water is H₂O and can be nothing else, so investigation shows that causal sequences are essentially nomic." (Heathcote and Armstrong [1991] p. 67) What we wish to call into question is whether the identification of singular sequences with instantiations of laws is sustainable. Let us begin with a brief restatement of Kripke's original argument.

We have it that 'water = H₂O' is a necessary truth. Suppose, however, this is challenged by claiming that since I can imagine water's not being H₂O it may not *be* H₂O. The one asserting the identity must explain the illusoriness of this appearance of contingency. (Kripke [1971] pp. 100-101). The "illusion of contingency" is explained by pointing out that we might be in the very same "epistemic situation" as we are in when identifying a substance as water, even though what we are presented with is not water at all. Thus I may go to Mars; come upon a substance and be in the same

epistemic situation as I am on Earth when presented with water but in fact be presented with some different substance. The point is that I pick out water by means of contingent properties. As long as there is a contingent property by which I identify water, the illusion of contingency can be explained. There are cases, however, where identities are asserted but where no contingent property is present by which we identify at least one of the things asserted to be identical. The sentence 'pain = C-fibers firing' is one such instance. A consideration well worth pursuing comes from David Wiggins who contends that if a name, such as 'water', is to stand for a natural kind there must be some "nomological grounding." (Wiggins [1980] p. 80) But how much of this "grounding" is required in order to justify an identity statement, such as 'Water = H₂O'? If we believe, perhaps following Bohm, that this "grounding" has no natural end, that it goes on indefinitely as a consequence of there being infinitely many physical variables, then there is some question whether identity statements about kinds are ever known to be true, and possibly never are true.

One might care to consider another identity statement, 'Heat = Molecular Motion'. One potential difficulty for rigid designation is using submolecular exemplars in order to fix the reference of 'heat', say, plasma. In this case 'heat' may not refer to the same thing in all possible worlds in which there is heat. This may not be an intractable problem, if it is a problem, but it warrants attention it has not received. For now, we focus on the more immediate case at hand, the case of pain and brain states.

In such a case there is no "epistemic counterpart" of pain which is *not* pain; that is, there is no contingent property we use in identifying pain which is such that that property is instantiated even though there is no pain, as there may be some epistemic counterpart of water which is not water. Whatever way we experience pain is, itself, pain. From this Kripke infers that pain cannot be identified with neurological states, whereas water can be identified with H₂O. What Heathcote and Armstrong maintain is that "singular causation is identical with the positive instantiation of a law" in the same sense that water is identical to H₂O. (Heathcote and Armstrong [1991] p. 71)

What first arouses our suspicion that there may be something wrong with their argument is that they supply no sentence analogous to 'water = H₂O'.

In other words, they provide us with no assertion of identity where something takes the place of 'water' or 'H₂O', only assurances that for any instantiation of a law there is some singular causal sequence with which it is identical. Is this omission evasion, unavoidable, or suggestive of a potential flaw in their argument? Let's consider the last possibility. Since they don't supply the relevant sentence, let us attempt to supply it. It must be emphasized, however, that owing to the uncertainty of what they are, actually, claiming owing to this omission the argument we discuss may not be the one they had in mind.

We represent a particular singular causal sequence as ' $C_{1,2}$ ' and the instantiation of a scientific law this way, ' $L_{a,b}$ '. The sentence at issue, then, would be ' $C_{1,2} = L_{a,b}$ '. It is important to note that, whereas in the case of 'water = H₂O' we are concerned with *kinds*, in the case of ' a ' and ' b ', etc., we are dealing in particulars. Nevertheless, let's consider whether ' $C_{1,2} = L_{a,b}$ ' can be regarded as a necessary *a posteriori* truth, as 'water = H₂O' typically is. It is an important part of Kripke's argument that 'water = H₂O' has the *appearance* of contingency. Whoever asserts 'water = H₂O' must be able to give an explanation of this appearance, for if it cannot be explained, then the possibility that the identity fails has not been ruled out; and if that cannot be ruled out, then the sentence is possibly false; and, if it is possibly false, then (contrary to hypothesis) the sentence cannot be necessary; and if it is not necessary, then the original identity sentence is false. The claim being made appears to be this: any pair of events regarded as singular and not as kinds is identical to the instantiation of *some* law. Let's take the ordered pair of events in a singular causal relation, $\langle 1, 2 \rangle$, as being expressed by ' $C_{1,2}$ ', and let's take the ordered pair which is the instantiation of a law, $\langle a, b \rangle$, as being represented by ' $L_{a,b}$ '. The claim is that ' $C_{1,2} = L_{a,b}$ ' and 'water = H₂O' are alike in all relevant respects. We say "relevant" because the second pertains to natural *kinds* not particulars. Still, if this is the case, then ' $L_{a,b}$ ' must be a rigid designator. This sentence states a particular instantiation of a law, L . One problem with this is that, as Russell may have been the first to note (Russell [1912-13] p. 198), laws may have duration; that is, laws may not persist throughout all of time. There is nothing necessary about a scientific law beyond physical necessity. The duration of a law in one world may not be the same as in another possible world. If this is the case, then the following possibility cannot be ruled out: at some future time the identity

' $C_{1,2} = L_{a,b}$ ' will not be true, let alone necessary. Moreover, either it fails because ' $L_{a,b}$ ' doesn't designate at all, although ' $C_{1,2}$ ' does, or it will not designate an instantiation of a law. In other words, there will be at least one occasion where the identity fails, even if it succeeds at some other time. There is at least one other problem, one having to do less with matters of necessity and more with the *a posteriori* side of 'necessary *a posteriori*'. If, as Russell says, laws may not endure indefinitely, we are faced with a puzzle Russell did not discuss. This is not to say that no one realized the potential problems that might arise were it the case that scientific laws are transitory. Karl Popper claimed that if laws are transitory, then "it would be the end of scientific progress." (Popper [1957] p. 103)

Insofar as Russell is a classical determinist in the sense that from an initial world state, and differential equations, any subsequent state of the universe is said to be predictable, it is peculiar that he did not, explicitly at least, consider the possibility that not only may the laws not endure, but if they do not his Laplacian determinism must vanish of necessity. This would hold even without considering the quantum indeterminacies that would, later, make indeterminism the dominant point of view.

Since we are dealing not in kinds but singular instances, there is some question as to whether we can in fact know, even if it is true, that $C_{1,2}$ is identical to $L_{a,b}$. Suppose the scientific evidence has it that experiment has permitted the "meta-inference" (Harthcote and Armstrong [1991] p. 71) that singular causal processes are identical with instantiations of laws. What is to exclude any particular case from being evidence to the contrary? 'Singular causal processes' will in this case refer to a sort or kind, not an instance of a singular causal process. If we compare this circumstance to that where chemistry has shown that water is H₂O certain important differences become, immediately, obvious. One can show that in all likelihood *this* water is H₂O, but can experiment show that *this* pair of events is identical to some instantiation of a law? The "meta-inference" may not suffice to enable this inference. I can take a sample of water and show that it is H₂O but can I show on the basis of my knowledge of *this* singular sequence of events, *qua* causal relation, that it is *this* instantiation of a law? This seems very unlikely, if not impossible, altogether.

But, now, with respect to ' $C_{1,2} = L_{a,b}$ ' we raise the question: "Do we pick out $C_{1,2}$ by means of a contingent property?" If so, what is that property? Heathcote and Armstrong need something like

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$\langle 1, 2 \rangle = \langle a, b \rangle$. To get this we need ' $1 = a$ '; but how do we arrive at this? Instantiating a general law will not allow this; and existential instantiation will not either. Moreover, given that there must be such identities, then we need 'Nec ($\langle 1, 2 \rangle = \langle a, b \rangle$)'—'Nec' meaning 'necessarily'—and there is no obvious way of doing this without showing ' $1 = a$ ', ' $2 = b$ '. This seems question begging. Do we want to say that since lawlikeness is what makes a causal relation necessary that since the identity obtains it follows by rigid designation that if a causal relation is identical to the instantiation of a law that is a necessary not contingent relation? Do we want to say that from ' $C_{1,2} = L_{a,b}$ ' we can derive 'Necessarily ($C_{1,2} = L_{a,b}$)'?

Because what is at issue are singular sequences, rather than types of singular sequences, the answer is not so clear. If ' $C_{1,2}$ ' designated a kind, rather than an individual sequence, then we might say that we rely on contingent properties of the sort Hume might invoke in alleging a causal connection, properties that include similarity to other sequences, for example. To know that a singular sequence is causal, according to the singularist, "we need only look. The verifying situation is right before our eyes." (Black [1958] p. 41) In order to know that a sequence is an instantiation of a law it is not enough to look. It is important to note, however, that I pick out an instance of singular causation on the basis of contingent properties. It may be the case that, although what is "right before our eyes" is an instance of singular causation, some other event caused the effect we attribute to what we thought was the cause. Thus, there is no way of ruling out the truth of identity statements involving a singular causal sequence, $C_{1,2}$, on the basis of the fact that we cannot imagine cases where we are in an identical epistemic situation as we are when we observe $C_{1,2}$ but where the identity fails. Significantly, we do not pick out causal events based on the property of singularity.

If I report seeing a rock breaking a window, I report an instance of singular causation. But it may turn out that the window broke a fraction of a second before the rock struck the window. So I can imagine being in the same situation, epistemically, even though something else broke the window. I can, therefore, identify the rock's breaking the window with the rock's going through the window, where that identity, if true, is necessary. But what I can't imagine is that the singularity of either event is a contingent property; that is, I cannot imagine being in the same epistemic situation I am

when I observe the event taking place but where *the* event is not singular.

One senses that this is important but what importance it is remains elusive. Moreover, although we have raised possible objections to arguments against the compromise solution to the conflict between singularist and regularity views, the proposed solution, Heathcote and Armstrong's, remains too obscure to say that we have disposed of it. Our point is that it is sketchy and, quite possibly wrong. However there is an important difference between observing that a rock in motion causes a window to break and knowing our own actions. Our extended remarks allow us a more precise statement of the unusual features of intentional action and our knowledge of them.

The sentence ' $a = b$ ' may be *a posteriori* and true, but even if we concede the force of what we shall call "the Barcan Principle," that from ' $x = y$ ' it follows that 'necessarily ($x = y$)', it does not follow from this that 'necessarily ($a = b$)' is *a posteriori*. For Kant *a posteriori* knowledge is knowledge we get "only...through experience." (Kant [1781] B3). It is true that, traditionally, the sole alternative to *a posteriori* is *a priori*, and that to be known *a priori* is to be known "absolutely independently of all experience." (ibid) This would suggest to some that 'necessarily ($a = b$)' cannot be *a priori* because it is from the identity ' $a = b$ ' that we come to know 'necessarily ($a = b$)' and, ' $a = b$ ' can be known only through experience, rendering 'necessarily ($a = b$)' *a posteriori*. But the proposition 'necessarily ($a = b$)' requires only the Barcan Principle applied to a proposition asserting a true identity. We ought no more consider 'necessarily ($a = b$)' *a posteriori* than we would consider 'The cat has two heads or the cat does not have two heads', or (and this is important) "Every change has a cause," as *a posteriori*. Both follow from logic, alone, applied to propositions, which are not propositions of logic, viz. ' $a = b$ ' and 'The cat has two heads', both of which may be *a posteriori*. Schematically the similarity can be represented, thusly,

(...or ~...) /<p>

(Nec ...) /<p>

In the first case, what is represented is the form of a proposition where 'p' is substituted, whatever it may be, for '...' in '(...or ~...);

similar remarks apply, as well, to the second. The point we take to be fundamental is this: Where it is the case that 'a = b' is an *a posteriori* truth, 'Nec(a = b)' is not an *a posteriori* truth. Why? I know the former to be true by way of experience, whereas I know the latter only by *inference*. Knowledge by way of inference is not knowledge by way of experience. Given that 'a = b' I know 'Nec(a = b)' independently of all experience. The skeptic will reply: "Of course if it is "given." But this riposte would be insufficient. Clearly, there are differences, as well as similarities, between 'Nec(a = b)' and 'Tom is tall or Tom is not tall'; I need to know 'a = b' by experience before I can know 'Nec(a = b)' but I do not need to know that 'Tom is tall' or 'Tom is not tall' in order to know 'Tom is tall or Tom is not tall', or that 'Nec(Tom is tall or Tom is not tall)'. What I need to know in order to know 'Nec(Tom is tall or Tom is not tall)' is that 'Tom is tall or Tom is not tall' is true in all possible worlds. I may claim to know this because I know, among other things, the truth table for 'or' and 'not'. It is a logical truth and, so, I am confident that I can infer 'Nec(Tom is tall or Tom is not tall)'. But what of 'a = b'? How do I know it is true in all possible worlds? I either infer it ala Barcan or I infer this from its truth *and* the fact that 'a' and 'b' are rigid designators. In either case knowledge of its truth is a matter of inference not experience.

In the case where we infer 'Nec(a = b)' from the fact that 'a' and 'b' are rigid designators and 'a = b' is true, we still fall short of being able to maintain that 'Nec(a = b)' is *a posteriori*. Why? Because no statement of necessity can be known to be true by way of experience; that is, I cannot know that a proposition is true in all possible worlds by way of my experiences in this world without some inference based on logic or a theory about all possible worlds and rigid designators; neither logic nor the theory of rigid designation are empirical. I may know that 'a = b' is true by experience in this world, but not 'Nec(a = b)'. "But, surely," it may be said, "if I know that 'a' rigidly designates the same thing in all worlds and I know 'b' designates the same thing in all worlds, and I know that in one of those worlds, this one, 'a = b' then I *must* know that 'Nec(a = b)'!" The interlocutor has missed the point. The point is that, even arguing from rigid designation, knowledge of 'Nec(a = b)' is inferred from *a priori* principles governing inferences based on rigid designation and logic. This is not to reject Kripke's theory of rigid designation. What we are challenging here is the notion of a "necessary *a posteriori*." At this point, we may not be able to rule out the possibility that such

statements of necessity are closer to being *synthetic a priori* than to being necessary *a posteriori*.

h) Calling into Question the Contingent *a Priori*

It is sometimes claimed (Aune [2008] p. 41) that Kripke argues against Kant's idea that all knowledge of necessary truth is *a priori*. What most people don't know is that the idea of a necessary *a posteriori* had been introduced, already, by another philosopher in attacking Kant's views. Again, we have occasion to mention Reichenbach.

It is therefore not possible, as Kant believed, to single out in the concept of object a component that reason regards as necessary. It is experience that decides which elements are necessary (italics added—srb).

— (Reichenbach [1920] p. 88).

Reichenbach proposed an alternative to Kant's synthetic *a priori*. Because of this he could not allow the Kantian idea of the "concept of object" to be determined *a priori*. Instead, following Schlick, he introduced the notion of "principles of coordination," principles having a basis in the "successive approximation" by induction to a concept of an object in circumstances characterized by our evolving knowledge of physics. If we accept neither Reichenbach's, nor Kripke's, view of the necessary *a posteriori*, then we are most likely to be driven back to Kant's idea of the synthetic *a priori*. There may be another, possibility, however, one such that those who are quick to accept Kripke's argument, as one directed against Kant's position, fail to consider. Kant's theory, as he actually states it, reveals that his concept of the *a priori* is not limited to knowledge which lacks empirical elements. For Kant, there is a distinction to be made. Not all *a priori* knowledge is "pure." It may be argued that allegedly necessary *a posteriori* knowledge is "mixed" rather than purely *a priori*. Whether all *a priori* propositions which are not "mixed" are synthetic *a priori* is a question we shall not pursue. There is, however, *another* issue, whether there is such a thing as a contingent *a priori*.