Elizabeth Anscombe's INTENTION

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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).
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> — (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*.

Kripke not only argues for the "necessary *a posteriori*" he argues for the "contingent *a priori*" as well. Notwithstanding the fact that only the first has been shown to have a direct bearing on causation, we shall entertain, briefly, arguments for a contingent *a priori*. Strictly speaking, for Kant this would be a contradiction. Our discussion of whether this is a useful idea begins with Kripke's discussion of an analogy raised by Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations* discusses, at one point, the impossibility of attributing 'being' to *elements* of one's ontology. He brings up what he thinks is an analogous impossibility:

> *There is one thing of which one can say neither that it is one metre long, nor that it is not one metre long, and that is the standard metre in Paris.—But this is, of course, not to ascribe any extraordinary property to it, but only to mark its peculiar role in the language-game of measuring with a metre-rule.*

> — (Wittgenstein [1953] 50)

Kripke is incredulous. Immediately, before, entering objections to Wittgenstein's view, he dismisses consideration of the concept of 'the length of' as "not important." (Kripke [1972] p. 54) We shall, soon, see that it is the very thing Wittgenstein has in mind. Kripke, then, remarks that he thinks Wittgenstein "must be wrong." (Kripke [1972] p. 54). The reason he gives for believing he's wrong is that since I can take a ruler and measure the stick in Paris, discovering that it is 39.37 inches, I *can* attribute being a meter long to the stick residing in Paris. In this case, however, it can hardly be maintained that S's being 39.37 inches is contingent *a priori*, since in this case knowing by measurement in inches that S is one meter one is known by observation. When Kripke argues that 'Stick S is one meter long at t_0' is *a priori* he must be thinking of S in its special employment as introducing a unit of measurement. Insofar as it can be regarded as an ordinary stick it can be measured with a ruler to confirm its being a meter long, but then we can't say its being a meter is known *a priori*. On the other hand, if we treat it as a special stick, we cannot regard the sentence as contingent. In the course of Kripke's argument there appears to be a shifting back and forth between these two ways of regarding the stick. The problem is that we can't tell what he means when he uses 'S'. Taken

under one description, 'used as a standard for determining the unit *meter*' the sentence may be necessary, assuming we can overcome Wittgenstein's claim that we can't even attribute being a meter to it. In this case, using a ruler to determine its length as one meter will just beg the question by, eventually, raising another the question, viz. the question of the standard for fixing 'one inch' and how we know its length.

Consider the sentence

(Q1) S is one meter long.

If we take 'S' to stand for 'the standard meter stick' then I know *a priori* the truth of 'S is a meter long', since

(Q2) The standard meter stick is one meter long.

is true of any standard meter stick. In addition (Q2) is necessary with this understanding. It must be kept in mind that 'Standard meter stick' is not like 'United Nations', applied to nations that are in fact divided, or 'Holy Roman Empire', where the Church is not being described thereby as Roman or an empire. 'Standard' is being used in 'standard meter stick' as an adjective, not part of name, although one *could* give the stick this name.

Even if the stick is heated, as long as I don't specify a time it will still be a meter long, regardless of how much it expands. Or, we might treat the notion of being a meter as subject to change depending on the temperature and, therefore, the length of the stick. The reference is not fixed but the sentence Q2 is nonetheless true and *a priori*. If I stipulate a time, then Q2 retains its status as *a priori*, adjusted for time of utterance, but is no longer necessary, according to Kripke's proposal, because if heated its length changes. Q3 is warranted:

(Q3) The standard meter stick at t_0 is one meter long.

In this case the sentence is neither necessary nor *a priori*. So far our alternatives are Q2, which is both necessary and *a priori*; or, Q3, which is contingent and a posteriori. So where does Kripke get the idea that the sentence Q1 is both contingent and *a priori*? (Kripke

[1980] p. 56). If we are right his proposal trades on an ambiguity, an ambiguity that is papered over by using 'S' instead of 'The standard meter stick in Paris'. Using 'S' creates the illusion that we are talking about just any stick, rather than some stick taken under the description 'standard meter stick'. If we construe 'S' as a proper name of a stick, then

(Q4)   Necessarily S is one meter long

is false. If we take 'S' as a description, 'the standard meter stick', then

(Q2)   The standard meter stick is one meter long

is necessary and *a priori*; that is, where S is taken under the description 'standard meter stick' 'S is one meter long' is both necessary and *a priori*, just as 'The number of planets is necessarily greater than 7' is *false* where 9 is taken under the description 'the number of planets' (Quine). But in case 'S' simply names a stick then 'S is one meter long' is, merely, contingent and a posteriori. What Kripke does in order to get a "contingent *a priori*" is shift back and forth from one reading to another. That is, in order to get the *a priori* reading he takes 'S' as 'the standard meter stick'; but in order to get the contingent reading he regards 'S' as just the name of a stick. This can be expressed in familiar terminology. Consider (Q5)

(Q5)   The standard meter stick is necessarily one meter long.

If we regard 'necessarily' as *de dicto*, then it is necessary and *a priori*. If we construe it as *de re*, then it is false but contingent. By surreptitiously alternating his reading of (Q5) he feels that he can assert that (Q1) is both contingent and *a priori*. It should be noted that the objection being raised depends on Dummett's suggestion that the theory of rigid designation comes down to scope. (Dummett [1973] p. 128) Nor, even, that deriving the possibility of a contingent *a priori* amounts in any way to a reductio ad absurdum argument against the theory. Only that Kripke arrives at seemingly paradoxical conclusions by equivocation. It is easy to overlook another aspect of his treatment of this situation, one that is especially important.

He says that the one, whoever it is, who fixes the reference of 'one meter' has a certain length in mind that he "wants to mark out." (Kripke [1972] p. 55) and, so, he finds a stick that has "that length." This is a peculiar thing to carry around in one's mind, that is, the idea of a particular length. What would be the "vehicle" for such an idea? Might it be something like the idea of being some fraction of the distance between the moon and Jupiter? But, then, we need some unit measure in order to begin our search for a standard meter; either that or we have very long arms. What, exactly, *do* I have *in mind*? How do I determine that the length of this stick is the length to which I want to fix the reference of 'one meter'? In any event, armed with this idea, he sets out to find some stick having this length, and behold, he finds it.

Alternatively, we may discard this notion of a pre-existing idea of a certain length. But, now, Kripke notes that in the case of S it is not the meaning of 'one meter' that is being given, even though, in some sense, he calls the procedure a "definition"; rather, what is going on is that the reference of 'one meter' is being *fixed*. This notion of giving a definition without giving the meaning, actually, goes back to Schlick's notion of coordinate definition. Suppose we say that by 'one meter' we "mean" 'the length of S' (whatever that might be). Kripke is, fully, aware that we might have chosen another stick, even though, if we were looking to fix reference to a particular length we have in mind, we would have to find a stick of the same length. A word, next, on the alleged cases of necessary *a priori* truths.

I can know *a priori* that if 'a = b' is true, then 'Nec(a = b)' is true; that is, that it is true in all worlds. But from my knowledge that *a* and *b* are identical I cannot know from this fact, alone, that they are identical in all possible worlds. So when Kripke describes the necessary truth of 'a = b' he is fine, but when he adds "*a posteriori*" he is equivocating, moving from the metalinguistic idea of the *truth* of 'a = b' to a truth about objects, not sentences. Let's be clear about something, I think, Kripke misses. From the fact that two things are identical it may follow that they are necessarily identical. But the fact that 'a = b' is true in all possible worlds in not known a posteriori. In other words, the sentence 'Necessarily (a = b)' is *not* known by experience; it is known by *inference*; what we know by inference. I may know 'a = b' by experience, but I cannot know 'Necessarily (a = b)' by looking, even if I can only know 'a = b' by looking. To

reflect on an earlier proposal: I may know that 'Tom is tall' or 'Tom is not tall' only by way of experience, but no experience is required in order to know the truth of 'Tom is tall or Tom is not tall'. Let's return, briefly, to Kripke's discussion of Wittgenstein and the meter stick for some concluding remarks on why Kripke misunderstood Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein's point, as far as the meter stick is concerned, is that in its capacity as a *representation* of a unit of measurement it is a conceptual error to believe the stick can be checked to see whether it really succeeds at representing a meter. The question should be: "How can I say one way or the other whether the meter stick in Paris really *represents* a meter?" A ruler will not suffice to provide an answer to this question. Again, there is no fact of the matter to check. This is what Kripke misses. Any particular concept of length depends on what we select to measure length, not the other way around. It is possible Kripke sees this as a potential problem. However, this idea is the locus of Wittgenstein's argument. There are historical reasons for believing this to be true.

In a lecture some years ago, the philosopher of science, Rom Harre, commented on the early Wittgenstein's involvement with philosophy of science. The influence of Hertz is well known. But Harre's point struck a chord with this writer because he had been, strongly, impressed by the possibility of understanding some of the later Wittgenstein's aphorisms in terms of developments in physics. In most cases the influence is subtle, but it so happens that with respect to the discussion of the meter stick in Paris it is not so subtle. In particular, the influence of Reichenbach, whose views in connection with Wittgenstein have already been mentioned, seems nearly certain. Reichenbach makes *precisely* the same point Wittgenstein appears to be making, only many years earlier. Reichenbach addresses certain criticisms of the Theory of Relativity, distinguishing the "logical" and "technical" impossibility of measurement.

> There is the impossibility of making measurements which is due to the limitations of our technical means. I shall call it technical impossibility. In addition, there is a logical impossibility of measuring. Even if we had a perfect experimental technique, we should be unable to avoid this logical impossibility. It is logically impossible to determine whether the standard meter stick in Paris is re-

> ally a meter…It is arbitrarily defined as the unit, and the question whether it really represents this unit has lost its meaning.

> — (Reichenbach [1927] pp. 28-29)

Notice that the possibility of measuring the stick in Paris with Kripke's ruler is a *technical possibility*, but what Reichenbach and Wittgenstein are saying is that determining whether or not the stick in Paris *really* represents the length of a meter is *logically impossible*. What Reichenbach, and Wittgenstein, are saying casts doubt on the success of Kripke's argument that there is a "contingent *a priori*." For Wittgenstein and Reichenbach, the question of whether the stick is really a meter long, or really *represents* a meter, are one and the same. Kripke's move is based on exploiting a, seeming, ambiguity. But, the real problem for him is that introducing this stick as the "meter stick" *is* a way of giving *meaning* to 'meter'; it is not a way of singling out the length of this stick and fixing reference to that length. Kripke tells us that in the case of fixing the reference of 'meter' I am not giving the meaning, only the reference (Kripke [1980] p. 55); but if this is not giving the meaning, then what meaning, as opposed to reference, can 'meter' possess. The question is never raised.

i) The Singularist View and Knowledge of Actions

We have seen that one of Kripke's arguments for the necessary *a posteriori* relies on the idea of an *epistemic situation* or *epistemic counterpart*. Elsewhere I have discussed a problematic feature of this approach, one issuing from considerations of necessary diversity. (Bayne [1988]) Despite the doubts we have raised, for now we will accept the idea of necessary *a posteriori* truths as an applicable "technology" in addressing the identity of intentional actions.

Recall that Kripke establishes the contingency of identity statements such as 'water = H_2O' by pointing out that we might be in the same epistemic situation in identifying a substance as water as we might be in identifying some other substance, say a substance found only on the planet Mongo (our example), even though that substance is not H_2O. Kripke points out that in this case we have identified a substance based on contingent properties related to