

The Necessity-A Priority Correspondence Claim

1. Kripke on the Relation between Necessity and A Priority

Kripke articulates and criticizes a *Necessity-A Priority Correspondence claim*:

(NAP CORRESPONDENCE) A truth P is *a priori* iff P is necessarily true.

(NAP CORRESPONDENCE) is, he claims, often advanced or used, as if there is no salient question as to whether it is true. This is, according to Kripke, a **big mistake**:

The terms ‘necessary’ and *a priori*, then, as applied to statements, are *not* obvious synonyms. There may be a philosophical argument connecting them, perhaps even identifying them; but an argument is required, not simply the observation that the two terms are clearly interchangeable. (p. 36)

2. The Subject Matter Argument:

We ask whether something might have been true, or might have been false. Well, if something is false, it’s obviously not necessarily true. If it is true might it have been otherwise? ... If the answer is ‘no’, then this fact about the world is a necessary one. If the answer is ‘yes’, then this fact about the world is a contingent one. **This in and of itself has nothing to do with anyone’s knowledge of anything.** it’s certainly a philosophical thesis, and not a matter of obvious definitional equivalence, either that everything *a priori* is necessary or that everything necessary is *a priori*. (p. 36, emphasis added)

The argument seems to be:

(a) The claim

(1) $2 + 1 = 3$ is *a priori*

is, in part, a claim about how one might know that $2 + 1 = 3$.

(b) The claim

(2) $2 + 1 = 3$ is necessary

is not a claim about how one might know that $2 + 1 = 3$.

- (c) The *a priori* and necessity claims, (1) and (2), are not obviously synonymous.

3. **The Goldbach Conjecture Argument:** Consider the following two facts.

- (1) If Goldbach's Conjecture ("Every number is the sum of two primes") is true, it is necessarily true, and otherwise it is necessarily false.
- (2) It is not obvious that we can know *at all* that Goldbach's Conjecture is true, if it is. And it is not obvious that we can know that it is false, if it is.

SUPPORT FOR (2): Suppose Goldbach's Conjecture is false, but the decimal numeral representing the counterexample contains more digits than there are elementary particles in the universe. Then presumably the calculation is "too big" for a being like us to handle. If we cannot know at all whether Goldbach's Conjecture is true or false, then we cannot know it "independently of experience." Hence (2) implies:

- (3) It is not obvious that we can know *a priori* that Goldbach's Conjecture is true, if it is. And it is not obvious that we can know that it is false, if it is.

Thus, though we know that, however Goldbach's Conjecture comes out, the result will be necessary, it is nevertheless not obvious that the result is *a priori*. Hence, it is not obvious that (NAP CORRESPONDENCE) is true in this case.

4. **REMARKS:**

- (a) **Kripke's Fix Abandoned:** Notice that (NAP CORRESPONDENCE) cannot even be **stated**, much less assessed, unless we abandon Kripke's Fix, and start using '*a priori*' as an adjective again. Notice that Kripke starts out the discussion of the Goldbach's Conjecture argument using his fix, and then abandons it on p. 37.
- (b) **The Arguments are modest:** they do not show that (NAP CORRESPONDENCE) is **false**. All they show is that we need an argument if we are to accept it.

- (c) **Kripke has other avenues of attack:** we will later be discussing another avenue of attack on (NAP CORRESPONDENCE): That there are things we cannot know *a priori* that are nevertheless necessary, and things we do know *a priori* that are nevertheless contingent.

- (d) **But this avenue of attack is more important:**

More important than any particular example of something which is alleged to be necessary and not *a priori* or *a priori* and not necessary, is to see that the notions are different, that it's not trivial to argue on the basis of something's being something which maybe we can only know *a posteriori*, that it's not a necessary truth. It's not trivial, just because something is known in some sense *a priori*, that what is known is a necessary truth. (pp. 38-9)

- (e) **Defending (NAP CORRESPONDENCE):** What's required to defend the claim is thus **not just** a bunch of objections to Kripke's *a posteriori* contingencies and *a priori* necessities, but also an **argument for** (NAP CORRESPONDENCE). **The default position is that (NAP CORRESPONDENCE) is false!**

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3. The Goldbach Conjecture Argument:

Here are three facts:

(1) If Goldbach’s Conjecture (“Every number is the sum of two primes”) is true, it is necessarily true, and otherwise it is necessarily false.

(2) It is not obvious that we can know *at all* that Goldbach’s Conjecture is true, if it is. And it is not obvious that we can know that it is false, if it is.

(3) It is not obvious that we can know *a priori* that Goldbach’s Conjecture is true, if it is. And it is not obvious that we can know that it is false, if it is.

4. REMARKS:

- (a) **Kripke's Fix Abandoned**
- (b) **The Arguments are modest**
- (c) **Kripke has other avenues of attack**
- (d) **But this avenue of attack is more important:**

More important than any particular example of something which is alleged to be necessary and not *a priori* or *a priori* and not necessary, is to see that the notions are different, that it's not trivial to argue on the basis of something's being something which maybe we can only know *a posteriori*, that it's not a necessary truth. It's not trivial, just because something is known in some sense *a priori*, that what is known is a necessary truth. (pp. 38-9)

- (e) **Defending (NAP CORRESPONDENCE)**