

## **A Defence of Textbook Kripkeanism: The Application of a Theory of Art and Representation to the Imagination**

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It is not unnatural for theories of art to be explained by the imagination. In this essay a theory of art explains the imagination. This allows one to make sense of an interpretation of Saul Kripke called textbook Kripkeanism. Textbook Kripkeanism interprets Kripke as making the following claim: conceptual modality is equivalent to metaphysical modality. The basic problem with this thesis is that what we think is conceptually possible is sometimes metaphysically impossible. Textbook Kripkeanism explains this as an error of conceivability. This essay uses a theory of art and representation to explain how this view can be accommodated in a theory of the imagination. A problem that Stephen Yablo raises for the version of textbook Kripkeanism outlined here is also sidestepped.

Keywords: Conceptual modality; Metaphysical modality; Textbook Kripkeanism; Imagination; Representation

### **Introduction**

Hume,<sup>1</sup> Gendler,<sup>2</sup> Kant,<sup>3</sup> Schelling,<sup>4</sup> Scruton,<sup>5</sup> Wollheim,<sup>6</sup> Walton,<sup>7</sup> etc. are all philosophers who have used the imagination to explicate our relation to art and artworks. This paper attempts to do the reverse. It attempts to provide an account of the imagination in terms of a theory of art. To do so allows one to defend a certain interpretation of Saul Kripke. This interpretation of Kripke is known as “textbook Kripkeanism”. Following Yablo (2000) textbook Kripkeanism is an interpretation of Kripke that holds:

(1) Conceptual modality is equivalent to metaphysical modality

This means that the inference relations between conceptual modality and metaphysical modality go in either direction. This isn't so controversial if, for example, we consider a conceptual necessity. A standard conceptual necessity is the following:  $7 + 5 = 12$ . It is also a metaphysically necessary truth. Other conceptual necessities seem to have the same relations to their respective metaphysical modality. So this direction of inference, from one necessity to another, seems immune to falsification by counterexamples. We can hold the following safe in such knowledge:

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<sup>1</sup> Hume, D. (1757).

<sup>2</sup> Gendler, T. S. (2000).

<sup>3</sup> Kant, I. (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Warnock, M. (1978).

<sup>5</sup> Scruton, R. (1974).

<sup>6</sup> Wollheim, R. (1972).

<sup>7</sup> Walton, K. (1990).

$$(2) \Box^C E \rightarrow \Box^M E$$

That says, if E is conceptually necessary, then it is metaphysically necessary.<sup>8</sup> However, consider the reverse:

$$(3) \Box^M E \rightarrow \Box^C E$$

That says that if E is metaphysically necessary, then it is conceptually necessary. But this leads to the contra-positive:

$$(4) \Diamond^C \neg E \rightarrow \Diamond^M \neg E$$

That says that if the negation of E is conceptually possible, then it is metaphysically possible. So in this instance we go from what is conceptually possible to what is metaphysically possible, and this presents a problem. Consider the following, where P abbreviates ‘water is H<sub>2</sub>O’:

$$(5) \Diamond^C \neg P \rightarrow \Diamond^M \neg P$$

That certainly *looks* false. It is, *prima facie*, conceptually possible that water is not H<sub>2</sub>O, after all it seems one can know what the ‘meaning’ of water is without knowing what water actually is; it wasn’t too long ago that this was true of all of us at a collective level (pre-1750)<sup>9</sup> and on a personal level (pre-chemistry classes).<sup>10</sup> Yet it is false, for any true Kripkean, that the negation in question is anything other than metaphysically impossible. So the conditional in question collapses. So how can textbook Kripkeanism be maintained? It is a puzzle and all good textbook Kripkeans need to say something about this problem.

No doubt, the thing to do is bite the bullet: accept that if the negation of P is conceptually possible, then the negation of P is metaphysically possible but insist that the negation of P is not actually conceptually possible. But that is going to require some serious graft to come up with a argument because, as said, on the face of it, it looks like it is conceptually possible that ‘water is not H<sub>2</sub>O’. In these circumstances the textbook Kripkean is forced to provide a theory about why the appearance of possibility emerges. Most cite obfuscating facts. These obfuscations cloud our judgement and make it appear as if the conceptual necessity is false.

In his paper, Yablo cites three kinds of obfuscation related to three kinds of textbook Kripkeanism: First, E\*, which is the presentation of the propositional content of E in thought, which is part of the generic textbook Kripkeanism Yablo starts his paper off with; Second; E<sub>m</sub>, which is a ‘meaning function’, by which one grasps the meaning of E, in Frank Jackson’s 2-dimensional semantics,

<sup>8</sup> In this paper, ‘ $\Box^M$ ’ abbreviates metaphysically necessary; ‘ $\Box^C$ ’ abbreviates conceptually necessary; ‘ $\Diamond^M$ ’, metaphysically possible; ‘ $\Diamond^C$ ’, conceptually possible; ‘E’ stands in for a generic sentence; ‘P’ for a specific sentence; and all other logical connectives are to be read as they are usually read.

<sup>9</sup> It could not be established before 1750 that water was H<sub>2</sub>O.

<sup>10</sup> We learn the how to use the noun “water” as children without learning that it is H<sub>2</sub>O.

considered by Yablo to be a semantic form of textbook Kripkeanism;<sup>11</sup> Third,  $|E|_1$ , which is the ‘primary intension’ of E in the 2-dimensional semantics of David Chalmers, considered by Yablo to be one of Chalmers’s outlines of a textbook Kripkean position.<sup>12</sup> In each case, the presentation, function or intension provides us with a possibility. The possibility is the possibility that the related sentence E could be used to say *something* true rather than the possibility associated with the truth that E *actually* does express. And it is this that leads us to believe that, for example, the negation of P could be true when in fact it could not. But under ideal conditions, and these basically come down to *knowing* what the *actual* facts are, the obfuscations are seen for what they are and true harmony is found to exist between the conceptual modality and the metaphysical modality in some kind of ultimate Hegelian-like synthesis between the conceptual and the actual.

By way of introduction to another obfuscating factor, the one that Kripke actually talks about, consider the following two premises: If one can imagine that E is true, then E is conceivable. But E is conceivable only if E is conceptually possible. It, then, follows that:

$$(6) \neg\Diamond^ME \rightarrow \neg\Diamond^I E$$

That follows because, given the two premises, from what one can imagine, one can infer a conceptual possibility, but that means, contra-positive, if the negation of the conceptual possibility is true, that the negation cannot really be imagined. Ultimately, since metaphysical necessity is equivalent to conceptual necessity, we can conclude that the relevant metaphysical impossibility cannot be imagined (i.e. (6)). This is a claim that actually seems to appear several times in Kripke’s lectures.<sup>13</sup> But, again, it appears on the face of it dubious. Consider P, this time abbreviating ‘water is not H<sub>2</sub>O’:

$$(7) \neg\Diamond^M P \rightarrow \neg\Diamond^I P$$

This says that if it is metaphysically impossible that ‘water is not H<sub>2</sub>O’ that one cannot imagine it to be so. But it certainly does seem like one can imagine P even if it is metaphysically necessary that it is false. So if one accepts the line of reasoning from the imagination to conceptual possibility and one is a Kripkean of the textbook kind, one needs to provide a theory of the imagination that can accommodate the relevant claims, (6) and (7). I provide just that theory here and in the process defend the central claim that Kripkeans of the textbook kind make from falsification by imagination and conceivability based counterexamples. I take the need to be present because not many, if any, have provided a theory of the imagination that defends textbook Kripkeanism; though some have provided theories to the contrary.<sup>14</sup>

The theory offered is not a 2-dimensional semantic based defence of textbook Kripkeanism, as provided by Frank Jackson and David Chalmers, respectively; though it isn’t a rejection of that

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<sup>11</sup> Jackson, F. (1994).

<sup>12</sup> Chalmers, D. (1996), (2002).

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 16.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Kung, P. (2010).

framework.<sup>15</sup> Rather, as we shall see, it somewhat fits the generic form of textbook Kripkeanism outlined by Yablo, whilst avoiding its problems.

In order to undertake the aforementioned task, I will draw on Nelson Goodman's theory of art and representation. As said, it has generally been the case that theorists of art appropriate an often taken-for-granted understanding of the imagination in order to make sense of our relationship to art and artworks; in this case, I will harness the power of a theory of art and representation to explain the nature of the imagination in a way that accommodates a textbook Kripkean view of the imagination and the equivalence between conceptual and metaphysical modality in general.

### **Procedure**

This essay will proceed in the following manner: First, I shall restate the thesis to be defended and I shall show the thesis to be defended is found in Kripke's work. Second, I will say what I mean by the verb "imagine". Third, I will say something about the vehicle of imaginative content. Fourth, I shall introduce the theory of art and representation I will use to explain how the imagination works. Fifth, I shall provide a theory of the imagination that accommodates the thesis in question. Sixth, I will show how the theory accommodates the thesis in question. And, last, I will conclude by connecting the theory offered to the generic form of textbook Kripkeanism outlined by Yablo.

### **Statement of Thesis and Kripke on the Imagination**

The primary thesis to be defended is:

*If E is metaphysically necessary one cannot imagine the negation of E.*

In the case of, for example, the proposition 'water is H<sub>2</sub>O', one cannot imagine its negation (which we've already noted may look suspect). This thesis is found in Kripke's work. Consider the following passage:

What I am saying is, given that it [the lectern] is in fact not made of ice, in fact is made of wood, one cannot imagine that under certain circumstances it could have been made of ice. So we have to say that though we cannot know a priori whether this [lectern] was made of ice, it is necessarily not made of ice. In other words, if P is the statement that the lectern is not made of ice, one knows by a priori philosophical analysis, some conditional of the form "if P, then necessarily P."<sup>16</sup>

That looks like he is saying three things, here P abbreviates 'Kripke's lectern is made of wood': (a) we know a priori that if P is true, it is necessarily true; (b) it is the facts that get to decide if P is true or not; and (c) if P is necessarily true, then one cannot imagine that it is false. So the enterprise we

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Chalmers, D. (2002).

<sup>16</sup> Kripke, S. (1971): 153.

have set off upon seems to be required by accepting this kind of Kripkean passage. Others abound.<sup>17</sup>

### The Verb “Imagine”

The verb “imagine” suffers polysemy. That means it has several related but distinct meanings leading many to think that the verb is too difficult to properly define.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, we can do a little to differentiate the primary sense of the verb here from other senses of the verb. For example, the verb “imagine” can mean *expect* or *suppose*. These two terms are semantically distinct. They are, also, grammatically distinct. The former is not always stative, and when it is it is not suited to an imperative. The latter is always stative, and readily takes on an imperative form. What’s more there are pragmatic differences. For example, if one knows that P is true, then one ordinarily doesn’t *suppose* that P is true, but may *suppose* it to be false. On the other hand, if one knows that P is true, one does not rationally *expect* that it is false, but actually true. The task here is to defend the claim that it is actually not possible to imagine the metaphysically impossible. But we cannot mean *suppose*, here, for we would be making an obviously *false* claim. On the other hand, we can’t mean *expect* because metaphysical necessity does not constrain expectation (although knowledge of it may). So we can rule out two irrelevant senses of the verb. We can also rule out delusional senses and pretence senses of the verb because these wouldn’t help make much sense of our thesis either. But can’t something more positive be said? Yes.

When we use the verb “imagine” we often use it to say that we are thinking of something or to invite someone to think of something and we often use the verb to say that what is being thought of is being thought of relative to a sensory modality or to invite someone to think of something relative to that kind of modality. Thinking of something in these terms is to think of something under a description that includes predicates that apply to sensed qualities. For example, if I ask you to imagine the smell of coffee, I expect you to think of coffee under a description that delivers predicates associated with its aroma. And if I ask you to picture a unicorn, I expect you to think of something that might *look* like it is a beautiful white horse with a single horn tacked on to its forehead i.e. to think of the object under a description that delivers predicates associated with the way it looks. This will, as we shall see, be consistent with our thesis and theory and, just as importantly, is entirely consistent with Kripke’s writings when talking about the relationship between the imagination and modality. For Kripke asks us to imagine: animals that *appear* or *look* a certain way;<sup>19</sup> situations in which a certain person *appears* to *resemble* another person;<sup>20</sup> objects *resembling* other objects;<sup>21</sup> etc. And we are encouraged to imagine: situations in which *one colour is confused for another*;<sup>22</sup> situations which are *qualitatively* indistinct from others;<sup>23</sup> situations which provide us with the very

<sup>17</sup> Kripke, S. (1980): 46, 47, 112, 113, 114, 126, 127, 129-30, 131.

<sup>18</sup> Strawson, P. F. (1982); Walton, K. (1990).

<sup>19</sup> Kripke, S. (1980): 121.

<sup>20</sup> Kripke, S. (1980): 112.

<sup>21</sup> Kripke, S. (1980): 114.

<sup>22</sup> Kripke, S. (1980): 118.

<sup>23</sup> Kripke, S. (1980): 142.

same *sensory evidence* as others;<sup>24</sup> substances that *resemble* others;<sup>25</sup> *sensations* that are confused for other things<sup>26</sup>, etc. So it seems that Kripke is asking us to think about certain objects and situations under descriptions that include predicates that apply to sensed qualities. I will, therefore, assume that it is this sense of thinking of something relative to sensed qualities that the verb “imagine” takes in Kripke and should, therefore, take here.

I’ll note, this does not necessarily mean all other senses of imagining are excluded. For example, thinking of something relative to a sensory modality may well be a creative act and involve other senses of imagining e.g. supposition, expectation, etc. even delusion.

### **Mental images**

It is assumed that when we imagine that something is true, in the relevant sense, we form a mental image or a set of mental images that represent a situation in which that thing is true. Philosophers and psychologists argue over whether these representations can be thought of as descriptions or as depictions.<sup>27</sup> I only assume that mental images are representations. Since both descriptions and depictions are representational, and the theory of representation below applies to both, whatever mental images turn out to be shouldn’t negatively affect the theory proposed below. I further assume that these images allow the thinker to think of an object or situation in a way that mirrors what it would be like to experience that object or have an experience in that situation i.e. to think of something under descriptions that include predicates of sense, as per the notion of the imagination we have in mind. Also, it is assumed that such mental representations may be harnessed and used in patterns of inference in the same way that other mental processes are.

### **Nelson Goodman’s Theory of Art and Representation**

Representation, according to Nelson Goodman, has certain properties. For example, a representation may refer to two essentially distinct things at one and the same time or represent something as another essentially distinct thing. Pictorial representations may represent Darwin as ape, Churchill as bulldog, bankers as pigs, etc. A film may represent a revered historical figure as a malevolent source of evil, etc. A book may represent itself as the word of God, of the prophet, or of a fictitious character, etc. And so on. Of particular importance, here, are the concepts of *denotation* and *exemplification*. Representation is explained through denotation. For example, of depiction, Goodman says, “A picture that represents a man denotes him”.<sup>28</sup> Representations, in this sense, are labels, in the same way that some kinds of words are linguistic labels. Indeed, they seem to act much as proper names. Consider the following:

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<sup>24</sup> Kripke, S. (1980): 142.

<sup>25</sup> Kripke, S. (1980): 128.

<sup>26</sup> Kripke, S. (1980): 150.

<sup>27</sup> See Block, N. (1983); Kosslyn, S. (2006); Pylyshyn, Z. (1981), (2003); Tye, M. (1991).

<sup>28</sup> Goodman, N. (1976): 27.

If a picture represents *k* as (or the) soandso, then it denotes *k* and is a soandso picture. If *k* is identical to *h*, the picture also denotes *h*... To represent the first Duke of Wellington is to represent Arthur Wellesley...<sup>29</sup>

In fact, for Goodman names, predicates, descriptions, pictures, etc. are all denoting kinds of a kind.<sup>30</sup> And they all work in a similar way. Catherine Elgin, following in Goodman's steps, sums it up nicely in the following passage:

Denotation is a two-place semantic relation between a symbol and the objects to which it applies. A symbol denotes whatever complies with, or satisfies, or is an instance of it. Thus, a name denotes its bearers; a variable, its values; and a portrait, its subject. A predicate denotes severally the objects in its extension.<sup>31</sup>

So portraits, names, predicates, etc. are all denoting kinds and this is the sense in which they refer to Dukes, monuments, groups, etc. Representations, like pictures or predicates (and, thus descriptions), then, are no exception to the rule: they also refer by denoting. Representation-as, however, is explained in terms of exemplification:

Description-as and representation-as, though pertaining to labels [i.e. denoting kinds], are... matters of exemplification rather than of denotation.<sup>32</sup>

A representation represents something because it denotes that thing. We can let anything represent anything. Exemplification, on the other hand, is defined in terms of reference *and* classification (or reference and predication since predicates are classifiers in Goodman as clearly laid out by Elgin in her work on him<sup>33</sup>). What this means is that a representation exemplifies something by both referring to certain predicates *and* by having those predicates then refer to the representation or some part of the representation in some way. We can't just let anything exemplify anything. The representation must not only refer to a predicate but that predicate must also refer to the representation in question.

The difference amounts to this: for a word, say, to denote red things requires nothing more than letting it refer to them; but for my green sweater to exemplify a predicate, letting the sweater refer to that predicate is not enough. The sweater must also be denoted by that predicate; that is, I must also let the predicate refer to the sweater. The constraint upon exemplification as compared with denotation derives from the status of exemplification as a subrelation of the converse of denotation, from the fact that denotation implies reference between two elements in one direction while

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<sup>29</sup> Goodman, N. (1976): 30.

<sup>30</sup> Goodman, N. (1976): 31.

<sup>31</sup> Elgin, C. (1983): 19.

<sup>32</sup> Goodman, (1976): 66.

<sup>33</sup> Elgin, C. (1983): 29.

exemplification implies reference between the two in both directions.<sup>34</sup>

Elgin explains it like this:

Denotational reference goes from a label to the objects to which that label applies. Exemplificational reference goes from an object to labels that apply to it. If ‘green’ denotes grass, then ‘green’ refers to grass; if grass exemplifies ‘green’, then grass refers to ‘green’ [which must also, of course, apply to grass].<sup>35</sup>

A representation, then, does not just denote what it represents, but refers to predicates that are used to label the representation in question in some part or some way. One might say, denotation allows a representation to represent something; exemplification allows us to talk about the representation itself. We may talk about the kind of representation it is (e.g. a character of hiragana); what colour it is (e.g. its greyness); what it expresses (e.g. sadness); what it represents an object as (e.g. as false), etc.

Importantly, the interplay of denotation and exemplification allows us to make sense of how one thing can be represented as a completely different thing. Here is an example of how this can be made sense of by exploiting the aforementioned distinction. Assume, first, that water is denoted by our representation. Next, that the predicate that is exemplified is ‘is watery and lacks H<sub>2</sub>O’, and that this predicate classifies the way the representation represents the object denoted. In such a case, it is water that is represented and it is represented as something that belongs to the class of things that is watery but lacks H<sub>2</sub>O. Since water does not belong to the class of things that are watery but lack H<sub>2</sub>O, it is just not *represented as* water.

It should be noted, water does not belong to the class of things that are watery but lack H<sub>2</sub>O because in actual fact it is impossible for water to lack molecules of H<sub>2</sub>O. We don’t need to know anything about any object whatsoever *except water* to draw this conclusion.<sup>36</sup> And it is correct to say that water is represented as something that is, in actual fact, essentially not water without knowing if there is any substance that is, in actual fact, watery but lacking in H<sub>2</sub>O molecules (or even if that is possible at all).

The analysis, for our purposes, need only apply to scenarios in which one wants to represent an object and wants to represent that object as it is as by drawing on predicates that are either related to one’s understanding or experiences of it, or one wants to represent it as it is not by drawing on predicates that are related to one’s understanding or experience of it and some distinct thing. In order to do either, one must draw upon those and only those predicates that one can call upon from one’s understanding and experience of the relevant object(s).

What has been said thus far can be used to identify and explicate a confusion. This is exactly the kind of confusion that adherents of textbook Kripkeanism identify and try to explicate in order to explain why one can think one can imagine the impossible when, in fact, one does no such thing. The

<sup>34</sup> Goodman, N. (1976): 59.

<sup>35</sup> Elgin, C. (1983): 73.

<sup>36</sup> Or, perhaps, not even fundamentally water, but a paradigm by which we can deduce the necessary truth.



possibility of confusion should already be clear.

It is the kind of case mentioned above that is the kind of case that is apt to cause confusion. On one view, a representation of water that is *represented as* something that is watery and lacking H<sub>2</sub>O molecules may be understood as a representation of water *that* lacks H<sub>2</sub>O molecules. This representation, then, may be taken to ground the inference that water could have existed without having the molecular make-up that it does actually have. And, even, that there are possible worlds in which water lacks its constitutive identity. Even worse that the associated negation is possible and, then, that it is necessarily false. This process of reasoning, given the way things have been described, would be incorrect. There is a gap between representing water *as* something that lacks H<sub>2</sub>O and representing water *that* lacks H<sub>2</sub>O. In the case above water is represented, but it has been *represented as* something that is watery and lacks H<sub>2</sub>O; based on the actual facts and nothing else (not even the possibility of another possibility), it has not been represented as something that it actually is or could possibly be or have been.

So why exactly does this confusion occur? One of the reasons is just not knowing that water has the molecular structure it has. If I do not know that water is in actual *fact* necessarily composed of H<sub>2</sub>O molecules, then I may, based on the kind of representation in question, draw the conclusion that what is represented is represented as it is i.e. that the exemplified predicates classify the object in question just as it actually is. Another is not knowing that objects, like water, are identical to or essentially related to their molecular structure rather than their phenomenal or iconic features. Not distinguishing the chasm between the represented and what it is represented as is the more fundamental mistake for if one does not see that, and the causes of confusion lately noted are possible ways to fail to notice that, one will be apt to fall into the confusion noted.

### **A Textbook Kripkean Account of Imagining**

I have assumed that imagining is thinking of something under a description that delivers predicates of sense and that in order to do this one presents oneself with a mental image. The important thing is that the mental image is to be construed as a representation. Given this, Goodman's theory of art and representation can be applied to the imagination.

Again, the kinds of cases that are important to us are those in which familiar items are imagined in a more or less a familiar way, whether they are imagined as they are or as they are not. When one imagines something familiar and tries to represent one's experience of it in a familiar way, one thinks of it, I assume, under a description that delivers predicates of sense that refer to the ordinary sensible qualities associated with the object in question. One may, for example, imagine water and try to represent it in as familiar a way as possible by drawing upon a mental image that delivers a description that delivers a set of predicates that are related to one's workaday understanding and experience of *it*. If so, the associated images or set of images exemplify predicates that are associated with the class of things that are experienced as watery. This set of predicates may, unintentionally or intentionally, occlude water's actual molecular structure. If so, as in the example above, the image exemplifies the predicate 'is watery and does not possess H<sub>2</sub>O molecules'. And the imagined object, the object of one's mental representation, is understood to be represented as something that is watery and does not

possess H<sub>2</sub>O molecules. However, since it is water that is represented, *it* is represented as something that is watery and does not possess H<sub>2</sub>O molecules. But water is not, in actual fact, something that could lack H<sub>2</sub>O molecules. Thus it is not a member of the class of things that the predicate classifies. And, thus, water is not represented as something it actually is, could be, or could have been, *even if it is what is represented and represented as it is commonly experienced or understood.*

As above, one may conclude that one has been able to imagine water *that* is not constituted by its actual molecular structure. This may lead one to infer that one has imagined a situation in which P is false (where P stands for ‘water is H<sub>2</sub>O’). And this may even lead to the conclusion that it is possible for P to be false and, eventually, the thought that conceptual modality is not equivalent to metaphysical modality. But, as above, this would be wrong. As said, there is a chasm between representing water *that* lacks H<sub>2</sub>O and representing it as something that is to all intents and purposes superficially identical to water but lacking in its essential molecular characteristics.

Another example is Kripke’s wooden lectern, mentioned above. We can say that one may imagine or represent it in thought such that the representation exemplifies nearly all the predicates associated with it when it stood in front of Kripke sometime in the 70s. Moreover, the predicate ‘is made of ice’ may as well be part of the set of exemplified predicates. Yet, again, it follows that Kripke’s wooden lectern is represented in the imagination but it is just not represented as it actually was or could have been. It does not follow, for the same reasons stated above, that one has represented a *wooden* lectern *that* is made of ice (how could it be?), for there is a necessary gap between representing a *wooden* lectern *that* is made of ice (which is impossible) and a wooden lectern *as* something that is made of ice (which is not impossible). To fail to distinguish this gap may be the cause of confusion in this case (again that may be because I don’t know what it’s made of or I wrongly identify objects with their appearances).

This explains two things: (a) why one can’t really imagine a situation in which, for example, water lacks H<sub>2</sub>O, and (b) why one can come to think that one can.

### **Statement of Results**

With the water case in mind: If one imagines water, then one imagines water and that means one imagines H<sub>2</sub>O, since the two are, in actual fact, identical. On the other hand, what is represented, if it is represented as something that lacks H<sub>2</sub>O molecules, just is not represented as it actually is or could be or could have been, since, again, in actual fact, water is necessarily not a member of the class of things that lacks H<sub>2</sub>O molecules. Therefore, whether we ask after the representational aspect of the mental image or the representational-aspect of the mental image, there seems to be no representational space in which one has imagined or could imagine the impossible. And, so, one has no reason to think that one can imagine the negation of the metaphysically necessary truth in question. The same argument can be made for other metaphysically necessary truths, for example, ‘Kripke’s wooden lectern is made of wood, etc.’ Thus, the theory of imagination outlined here accommodates the thesis in question. And insofar as it accommodates the thesis, it also accommodates the central claim of textbook Kripkeanism because there are no counterexamples from imagination-based-conceivability that challenges that claim.

Of the confusion in question: if one imagines water in an iconic or very familiar manner, but leaves out its molecular make-up, one may come to think one has imagined it as it is or possibly could be or could have been, when one has done no such thing, leading to the erroneous line of inferences highlighted above. Perhaps, as noted, one lacks the knowledge required to distinguish the actual facts from the phenomenal facts, or, perhaps, one actually thinks of objects as identical to their perceptible features. Neither position is entirely strange or difficult to understand. The first is a matter of mundane epistemic ignorance, the latter has sometimes been the matter of a full-blown philosophical thesis or method. However, as noted, the fundamental mistake is to fail to distinguish the denotative and exemplificational aspects of representation and the distance that exists between the two. The same kind of confusion can be identified with respect to thinking that Kripke's wooden lectern could have been made of ice, etc. On the basis that the imagination is representational, we have accommodated our thesis in a theory of the imagination that also explains just why we may think that we can imagine the negation of a metaphysically necessary truth, when we just can't. And this error of conceivability can be cited in cases where we think something is conceptually possible but not metaphysically possible immunizing the fundamental textbook Kripkean claim from falsification by way of imagination-based-conceivability.

### **Yablo's Generic Version of Textbook Kripkeanism**

We saw above that textbook Kripkeans are supposed to hold that conceptual modality is equivalent to metaphysical modality. We saw that was a problem when truths like 'water is H<sub>2</sub>O' were considered. Obfuscations were said to obscure the equivalence in question. Thus it is, it was said, that we don't realise that the negation of the kind of truth in question is not really conceptually possible. E\*, a presentation of E in thought, was said by Yablo, to be the obfuscating factor in his outline of a generic form of textbook Kripkeanism. But, now, if we take E\* as a mental representation, and why not, since it is the presentation of E in thought, then exactly the same story as we told above can be told for Yablo's generic form of textbook Kripkeanism. Indeed, Yablo's E\* can just be thought of as a mental representation that both represents and represents what it represents as such and such, thus denoting an object and exemplifying predicates. What it exemplifies is a set of predicates of sense under which E is thought. That is, E\* is just the vehicle of imaginative thought as described above. If so, then the theory of imagination offered here is to all intents and purposes just Yablo's generic version of textbook Kripkeanism. However, we can also think of the predicates that E\* exemplifies as not necessarily of sense, but of understanding, since Yablo talks of conceivability rather than the imagination. This serves to broaden the scope of the theory being presented here and puts us in a position to deal with the problem Yablo presents for the generic version of textbook Kripkeanism.

The problem with that kind of textbook Kripkeanism, according to Yablo, is that it over-generates. For Kripkean sentences like 'water is H<sub>2</sub>O' are either metaphysically necessary or impossible. Charles Hartshorne identifies a similar kind of sentence with respect to the Christian idea of God: Either it is metaphysically necessary or impossible that P, where P abbreviates 'God exists'.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hartshorne, C. (1941).

The problem is that P is conceivable. And thus, given our acceptance that what is conceivable is conceptually possible, it is conceptually possible. But if it is conceptually possible, it is metaphysically possible (by the equivalence of the conceptual and metaphysical). And that means, given the original disjunction, that it is metaphysically necessary. But, on the other hand, it is conceivable that  $\neg P$  i.e. that it is false that 'God exists'. But that leads to the conclusion, following the same line of reasoning but just in an antithetical direction, that it is impossible that 'God exists'. Thus, textbook Kripkeanism, of the generic kind, entails that it is both metaphysically necessary and impossible that 'God exists'. Theism and atheism are both true on this account. Yablo rightly calls that a paradox. But he can find no way that the textbook Kripkeanism he outlines can get round the problem. So the paradox seems to turn into an out and out absurdity.<sup>38</sup> The question, then, is: is this a problem for the kind of generic textbook Kripkeanism outlined here?

It isn't. We have already acknowledged that there is some distance between what is represented and what it is represented as. That is why water can be represented but represented as it is not and could never be. It is also why confusion can emerge, when a necessary gap between what is represented and what it is represented as is not perceived. For example, when water is represented as something that resembles it to a very high degree. That confusion is cleared up when we know what water is and we see the way we have represented water does not exemplify predicates that water falls under or ever could fall under. And we can draw that conclusion without knowing if anything falls under the extension of that set of predicates or even if anything ever could fall under them. It is the same here. Of course, only this time, we don't know if what is represented exists or not (is something or nothing). From the fact that the representation exemplifies predicates that describe the theist's God, and these may as well include necessary existence plus other Godly attributes, it just does not follow (a) that what is represented is represented as it is, i.e. that that which necessarily exists is represented rather than nothing (we need more information about God, or the God-paradigm, to decide on that), nor (b) that anything at all falls under or ever could fall under the set of exemplified predicates i.e. 'has necessary existence plus other Godly attributes'. So the imagination/conceivability based version of Yablo's generic version of textbook Kripkeanism that has been produced here does not even generate the conclusion that it is conceptually true that God exists, even if, as is being held here, conceivability implies conceptual possibility; never mind the conclusion that it is metaphysically necessary that P. The same, I surmise, is true of 'his' impossibility. Thus, our version of textbook Kripkeanism does not over-generate.

Perhaps, Yablo thinks that textbook Kripkeans *must* associate a possibility of *some* kind with the negation of a truth like E, just not the possibility associated with the truth of E, but the possibility associated with it saying *something* true, and that as a consequence that the presentation of E, E\*, must generate a truth. But what could that possibility be except the existence of God given E\* delivers the description that delivers the predicate 'has necessary existence plus other Godly attributes'. But, on our account, what is exemplified is a predicate that has in its extension something or nothing just as the predicate 'is watery but lacks H<sub>2</sub>O molecules' could have in its extension something or nothing

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<sup>38</sup> We could just say that the truth in question, that it is necessarily true that 'God exists' or it is impossible, is absurd rather than textbook Kripkeanism; but I'll not develop this kind of response to Yablo, here.

(just not water). Thus, even if this point is pressed, it isn't sufficient to show that our version of Yablo's version of textbook Kripkeanism falls at the final hurdle.

## Conclusion

In this essay, I introduced the central claim of textbook Kripkeanism: conceptual modality is equivalent to metaphysical modality. Next, a set of problems was identified. The problem I focused on was that if one accepted that the imagination generated conceivability and conceivability was possible only if a conceptual possibility existed that one could not imagine the negation of a metaphysical necessity. I tried to defend this claim. I took a theory of art and representation and built a theory of the imagination around it. When one imagines, one does so under a description that delivers predicates of sense. To do that one produces a mental image. The mental image is a representation. So it both represents (denotes) and represents as (exemplifies). What is exemplified is a set of predicates that classify what the represented object is represented as. It was said there is a gap between what is represented and what it is represented as. Not seeing the gap could lead one to think one has imagined the negation of a metaphysical necessity. But that would be false. Representing water, for example, is to represent water. Representing water as something watery that lacks H<sub>2</sub>O is not to represent water *that* lacks H<sub>2</sub>O, but to represent water *as* something lacking H<sub>2</sub>O. That means to represent water as it is not. We know that because water never falls and can't fall under the extension of the exemplified predicate 'is watery but lacks H<sub>2</sub>O'. Thus, no representational space (denotative or exemplificational) exists in which the negation of a metaphysical necessity can be imagined. The theory was shown to be a generic form of textbook Kripkeanism as outlined by Yablo. It was extended to cover conceivability in Yablo's specific explication of generic textbook Kripkeanism and its problems. However, it was shown that the theory avoids the problem Yablo cited for it. The theory does not over-generate, it was argued, precisely because representation does not entail existence nor does representation as, explained in terms of exemplifying predicates, entail that there is something, or even that there could be something, in the extension of the predicates in question rather than nothing. The theory provided here protects the central claim of textbook Kripkeanism, which is the equivalence of conceptual and metaphysical modality, from counterexamples that objectors may try to draw from what they think is imaginable or conceivable without over-generating truths. And that should be a significant coup for textbook Kripkeans. It seems to me it has, thus, been useful to build a metaphysical theory on the back of a theory of art. Goodman's and other theories of art and representation, I think, can help in making sense of other issues and problems in metaphysics, modality and epistemology and, thus, offer a rich source of possibilities for future research in these areas as, I think, does the theory of imagination (and conceivability) offered above.

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