

## REFERENCE AND PROPER NAMES

[Parma, February, 16<sup>th</sup> 2012]

*Pietro Angelo Casati, Giorgio Sbardolini*

The conference *Reference and Proper Names* took place in Parma, on the 16th of February 2012. Invited speakers were Genoveva Martí (ICREA and Universitat de Barcelona), Andrea Bianchi (Università degli Studi di Parma), Michael Devitt (CUNY) and Marco Santambrogio (Università degli Studi di Parma).

The conference focused on the *causal theory of reference*. At first, let us introduce this theory and some examples through which it has been discussed. Secondly, we report the talks and the discussions which follow them.

Proper names are expressions such as ‘Aristotle’ and ‘the Golden Gate Bridge’. The semantics of proper names is still an open issue in the philosophy of language.

Descriptivism on proper names holds that proper names are short forms for definite descriptions, e.g. ‘the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic’ stands for ‘Kurt Gödel’. Thus, both ‘Kurt Gödel’ and the associated description refer to the famous logician. Since, according to Frege, the sense of an expression determines its reference, it follows that the sense of ‘the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic’ determines that ‘Kurt Gödel’ refers to Gödel.

Kripke (1980) identifies some problems for descriptivism, according to which the sentence “Kurt Gödel discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic” is trivially true. Indeed, it is possible that an unbeknownst mathematician, Schmidt, discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic instead of Gödel. Thereby, the description ‘the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic’ refers to Schmidt, and the given sentence turns out to be false. This is known as Kripke’s *error argument*, and it shows that descriptions associated with names are not sufficient for the correct use of them.

Examples of this kind are not unusual. For instance, people used to think that the whales were fishes and not mammals. It seems, however, that we are referring to the same animals as our ancestors, although the associated description has changed. More precisely, the beliefs on the animals comprised in the reference of the name ‘whale’ have changed.

Moreover, Donnellan (1972) argues that speakers may be successful in referring using names, and may not possess uniquely identifying descriptions associated to them. Thus, descriptions are also not necessary.

In order to cope with such arguments, Kripke (1980); Putnam (1975); Donnellan (1972) insist that there is a direct causal connection between names and the objects to which they refer. In particular, Kripke claims that the reference of a name is determined by an act of “baptism”. Thanks to this act, a name is originally associated to the thing to which it refers, and every correct use of the name is linked to this act by a causal-historical chain. This account of name and reference is labelled *causal theory of reference*.

For example, the day Giorgio Napolitano was born, their parents went to the register of births, and dubbed the child with the name ‘Giorgio Napolitano’. This act legitimates any use of the name ‘Giorgio Napolitano’ made by someone who attended the baptisms, or by someone who acquired this use from someone who attended the baptism, and so on and so forth. This means that an utterance of the name ‘Giorgio Napolitano’ refers to Giorgio Napolitano, no matter what the speaker thinks that is true of Giorgio Napolitano.

It may be that it is the mere *repetition* of a name that in virtue of which a speaker borrows a name and start to use it to make successful acts of reference. In favour of this, Kaplan (1990, pp. 102-104) proposes the following thought experiment:

I say the name of an individual, possibly a name known to the person to whom I am speaking. The subject has to wait for a count of five, and then repeat the name. I say a name, then the subject says the name. I say the next name, then the subject says the next name. So, if I say “Rudolf”, the person says “Rudolf”; “Alonzo” - “Alonzo”; “Bertrand” - “Bertrand”, and so on. [...] we are strongly inclined to say that when this person speaks, he is repeating the very name that he heard. [...] Contrast this with a wealthy mischievous subject who has decided that he’s going to play a trick on us and instead of repeating the names as he hears them, ignores the input and just utters names at random (or, he may have prepared his own list ahead of time which he recites in order). Even if, by happenstance, the sounds that come out in these two cases equally resemble the sounds that went in, the first case is a case of repetition and the second is not.

However, this account needs further qualification, in order to cope with the alleged counterexample given by the term ‘Madagascar’. Evans (1973, p. 11) states that:

Change of denotation is [...] decisive against the Causal Theory of Names. Not only are changes of denotation imaginable, but it appears that they actually occur. We learn from Isaac Taylor’s *Names and their History* (1898):

In the case of ‘Madagascar’ a hearsay report of Malay or Arab sailors misunderstood by Marco Polo [...] has had the effect of transferring a corrupt form of the name of a portion of the African mainland to the great African island.

A simple imaginary case would be this: two babies are born, and their mothers bestow names upon them. A nurse inadvertently switches them and the error is never discovered. It will henceforth undeniably be the case that the man universally known as ‘Jack’ is so called because a woman dubbed some other baby with the name.

Here it seems that a causal chain of repetitions connects our actual use of the name ‘Madagascar’ (referring to the island), with the former use (referring to the mainland). Thus reference has shifted and the causal theory mistakenly predicts that the proper reference of ‘Madagascar’ is not the island.

Kripke is well aware of this kind of difficulty, as he presents the following example:

Two people see Smith in the distance and mistake him for Jones. They have a brief colloquy: “What is Jones doing?” “Raking the leaves” (Kripke, 1977, p. 233)

This case of misidentification is similar to Marco Polo’s misunderstanding. Both Marco Polo and the two people use a name (‘Madagascar’ and ‘Jones’) to refer to things to which those names don’t refer (the african island and Smith). According to the causal theory, their use of those names is legitimated by a chain that does not go back to the things to which they refer. However, while it seems reasonable that the two people *fail* to refer to Jones, the use of ‘Madagascar’ succeed in designating the island. Thus, here we have a designation change, and a new convention for the use of the name ‘Madagascar’ has been established after Marco Polo.

There are at least two issues to be settled: we need an account of how the ability to refer is forwarded through repetition and we need an explanation of how conventions are established. These points are involved also in the following example, from (Kripke, 1980, p. 96): let us suppose that someone dubs his pet aardvark ‘Napoleon’. Clearly, she is not joining the causal chain that goes back to the emperor of French, but we do know that there’s neither change in reference (as in the Madagascar case) nor perceptual mistake (as in Jones case).

These complete the preliminary remarks we would like to state as an introduction to this report. We have also stated part of the relevant literature, and more can be find in the entry on Names of SEP (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/names/>).

In what follows, we introduce the talks given in Parma, that were all focusing on the cluster of problems associated with the preceding examples. As far as it is possible, we would like to report the debate that has taken place at the conference, giving to the reader a clear account of the questions involved. Finally, Andrea Bianchi deserves a special thank for his willingness and helpfulness.

# 1 *Reference Without Cognition*

## Genoveva Martí (ICREA and Universitat de Barcelona)

Discussant: *Andrea Marino* (Università degli Studi di Bologna)

The causal theory of names is often associated with the direct reference theory. There are two main points held by direct reference theorists: (1) some expressions refer without being associated with semantic devices that identify the referent. In particular, names do not refer *via* descriptions. (2) Referring with a directly referential expression does not require a particular cognitive condition in the mind of the speaker, i.e. speakers do not need a special access to things to refer to them. As Martí calls it, following Wettstein (1988), referring does not require “a cognitive fix”.

Thus, descriptivism on proper names seems not to go hand in hand with direct referentialism on proper names. On the contrary, the causal theory provides an explanation of reference that does not involve a grasp of reference-fixing mechanisms, simply because these mechanism (such as descriptions) are not presupposed. As Martí points out, however, it does not follow that the causal theory implies direct referentialism, or *vice versa*.

As a matter of fact, proponents of a kripkean account of proper names, such as David Kaplan, restored the idea that a cognitive fix is required to refer<sup>1</sup>. Although this picture has not been developed in details, it seems quite different from the descriptivist idea of cognitive fix, since it no longer consists in a grasp of a description. Rather, the cognitive fix consists in having in mind the object to which referring is directed. Thus, it seems, referring is successful, provided that the speaker has in mind the thing to which she refers, antecedently to any referential device.

Martí claims that this clashes with the strong externalist commitment to which the causal theory of names leads, and, indeed, that having in mind is neither necessary nor sufficient for a referential use of a name.

Let us suppose that John hears a conversation, and become convinced that the conversation is about *A*. The participants to the conversation use the name ‘Paul’, and then John joins the conversation starting to use ‘Paul’, with the intention to refer to *A*. Hence, it seems that John has *A* in mind. Yet, according to the linguistic practice to which he adheres by joining the conversation, ‘Paul’ refers to *B* and so the actual bearer of ‘Paul’ is *B*. Thereby, John’s utterance that “Paul is bald” refers to *B*, although he has *A* in mind and he intends to communicate something about *A*. Thus, John refers to *B* in spite of having *A* in mind. It follows that having in mind is neither necessary nor sufficient. It is not necessary, because John does succeed in referring, since he refers to *B*, although he has not *B* in mind. That he is confused about the reference of ‘Paul’ does not mean that he does not communicate something about the reference of ‘Paul’ (pragmatic reasons may be added to support this point, as Martí suggests). It is also not sufficient, since John has in mind *A* and fails to refer to *A*.

Marino raises a question against this argument, during his discussion of Martí’s talk. According to him, this argument does not prove that having in mind is not necessary for reference, since it seems possible to think that John has in mind both *A* (because of his mistake) and *B* (because of his access to the chain of uses of ‘Paul’ - which, arguably, brings in his mind the bearer of ‘Paul’). Also Devitt asserts not to be convinced by this example:

<sup>1</sup>As Martí reports, Kaplan made this point in a lecture at the 13<sup>th</sup> INCP Conference at the University of Idaho, on May 2010.

according to him, it is natural to think that joining the chain of communication, the speaker acquires the ability to have the object in mind.

As Martí further notices, her example is similar to Kaplan (1989)'s Carnap/Spiro Agnew example, and this helps to clarify the matter. Suppose that John points at a picture behind his back, and utters "That is a picture of one of the greatest philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century". Unbeknownst to him, he is pointing at a picture of Spiro Agnew (an American politician). This example is meant to show that speakers refer by means of demonstratives, even though they do not intend to do so. Martí suggests that John has not Spiro Agnew in mind. He has Carnap in mind. The case with the name 'Paul' is perfectly analogous.

Against this, Santambrogio points out that if John asserts "Paul is bald", then he believes that Paul is bald (assuming honesty, cooperativeness, etc). However, John believes that 'Paul' refers to *A*. Thus he has a belief about *A*, and it seems hard to deny that he has *A* in mind. Thus, it seems that if in the case of pointing at a picture having in mind is not necessary, in the case of referring it is.

Be that as it may, both in the case of the name 'Paul' and in the Carnap/Spiro Agnew case, referring depends on the practice to which John conforms, i.e. the use of demonstratives and the use of the name 'Paul' which he acquired by joining the conversation. Thus, Martí claims that the semantic work of referring is made by the practice of use, and not by the speaker's intentions.

On the contrary, it may be argued that this practice must have been grounded somehow, and we may suppose that the causal chain of uses of a name has been introduced by someone who had in mind the thing to which she intends to refer.

This, however, does not prove that having in mind is required to refer. Similarly, a descriptivist may insist that although the use of names is explained by the causal chain, the original dubbing must have been performed through a definite description. For instance, Amerigo Vespucci must have said something as "Let us call 'America' the recently discovered land on the other side of Atlantic Ocean with respect to Europe". But this does not imply that referring *via* names needs the parallel semantic work of descriptions.

Therefore, referring is a matter of practice. Martí underlines that, in the Madagascar case, the use of 'Madagascar' to refer to the island is explained by plainly practical considerations, such as: the explorers had political power, drew maps, had more sophisticated ways to spread their use of the name. Thus, even though they were mistaken, the correct use of 'Madagascar' is now their use, and not the preceding one.

This is intended to stress the idea that bestowing a name is a process, and it should not be considered as a single act. 'Madagascar' *became* the name of the island at no precise point in time. Moreover, the fact that 'Madagascar' has been multiply grounded (as Devitt (1981) explains the phenomenon of change of reference) is based on external factors that contributed to the establishment of the new convention. For instance, it is possible that Marco Polo would have decided to correct his use of 'Madagascar', if he had been told about his mistake. The success or failure of establishing a convention depends on many factors. Among them, having in mind, intentions and descriptions, certainly play an important role. They contribute to the fact that a particular name gets used to refer to a particular object in a community of speakers. Yet they are dispensable, since they do not determine what is named.

Marino asks whether this view is too strong: it seems more natural to think that all these factors are individually dispensable, but that at least one of them must be in place, in order to begin a chain of communication.

There are two more questions about the role of conventions in Martí's account: at first,

Marino challenges the minor role that Martí concedes to the speaker's intentions in referring to an object. It seems that conventions are not enough to explain how reference is determined by a chain of uses: in the case of ambiguous names, it seems that a chain is "selected" by the speaker's intentions. Thus, having the intention to refer to one of the two or more bearer of an ambiguous name is necessary in determining the referent of a name.

Secondly, the explanation Martí defends, admittedly, is subject to the "magic" objection: it seems that nothing, so to speak, but magic, grounds the correct use of a name. In a sense, Martí concedes this point and suggests an evolutionary explanation. Analogously, there is nothing intrinsic in the act of pointing at an object, that ensures that the attention of the onlookers will be direct to the object, and thus that the intention to communicate something of the object is successful. An evolutionary explanation tells us that cave dwellers who were able to recognize what the pointing was direct to had better chance to survive, and they passed this ability to their descendants. The success of dubbing objects with names should be explained along similar lines.

As a conclusive remark, Martí claims that even though the causal theory of names correctly describes the mastery of a linguistic ability, such as referring, as grounded in communication, it is not entirely correct to identify the social aspect of this practice as its essential feature. For instance, let us suppose that Robinson Crusoe dubs his pet iguana 'Charlie'. Then, he establishes the practice to refer to the iguana by the name 'Charlie', although he is not part of a community of speakers. His uses of 'Charlie', so to speak, coincide with the entire chain of uses of 'Charlie'. Thus, the chain is better described as a chain of uses, and not of users. Hence, practices are not necessarily social, but necessarily they can be, since Robinson's uses are such that any other speaker can acquire the ability to refer to the iguana by uttering 'Charlie'. Otherwise Robinson would dub the iguana for the first time any time he uses its name.

If this is correct, then it seems that Robinson does not need to use the name 'Charlie' more than once. His first single use is sufficient to refer, and he can then remember that the name of the iguana is 'Charlie', being able to refer to it at any time. However, Marino argues, if repeated uses are not necessary for referring, then we are left with no condition at all for referring. Although this point is surely interesting, time left no occasion for further development. Martí's suggested answer to Marino's remark, is that a single use is enough to refer, although it does not seem enough to make a name out of a noise.

For further readings, papers cited by the author are (Martí, 1995, 2003, 2008).

## 2 *Repetition and Reference*

**Andrea Bianchi (Università degli Studi di Parma)**

Discussant: *Giuseppe Spolaore* (Università degli Studi di Verona)

The second presentation is the one by Andrea Bianchi, which aims at clarifying how proper names can *refer* to something or someone. In particular, after repeating the famous section of (Kripke, 1980) on the causal theory of reference, Bianchi recalls that Kripke himself admits that he didn't explicitly construct a rigorous theory, but simply a *better picture*.

Let us quote Saul Kripke's quite convincing picture:

Someone, let's say, a baby, is born; his parents call him by a certain name. They talk about him to their friends. Other people meet him. Through various sorts of talk the name is spread from link to link as if by a chain. A speaker who is on the far end of this chain, who has heard about, say Richard Feynman, in the market place or elsewhere, may be referring to Richard Feynman even though he can't remember from whom he first heard of Feynman or from whom he ever heard of Feynman. He knows that Feynman is a famous physicist. A certain passage of communication reaching ultimately to the man himself does reach the speaker. He then is referring to Feynman even though he can't identify him uniquely. He doesn't know what a Feynman diagram is, he doesn't know what he Feynman theory of pair production and annihilation is. Not only that: he'd have trouble distinguishing between Gell-Mann and Feynman. So he doesn't have to know these things, but, instead, a chain of communication going back to Feynman himself has been established, by virtue of his membership in a community which passed the name on from link to link, not by a ceremony that he makes in private in his study: 'By "Feynman" I shall mean the man who did such and such and such.' (Kripke, 1980, pp. 91-92)

The purpose of Bianchi's talk is just to take some steps towards building a full blown theory, as it's been forty years since Kripke presented his picture that no one but Devitt (see (Devitt, 1974) and especially (Devitt, 1981, chs. 2 and 5)) seriously tried to give more exact conditions for reference to take place, even though Bianchi considers Devitt's proposal a bit unsatisfactory in some respect. In particular, he believes that the technical notion of a *d-chain* has not been sufficiently developed yet and he quotes Devitt: "We rather doubt that the sort of pure-causal theory we have presented so far can supply the ultimate explanation of reference that we need" (Devitt and Sterelny, 1999, p. 93).

There are several reasons why Kripke abstained from refining his picture:

- He was "sort of too lazy at the moment" (Kripke, 1980, p. 93);
- He found a problem that he didn't know how to solve without avoiding some circularity;
- He believed that "one might never reach a set of necessary and sufficient conditions" (Kripke, 1980, p. 94);
- He thought that analyzing philosophical concepts like reference, without mentioning reference itself, is an attempt very prone to failure.

According to Bianchi, although the concept of reference could actually be primitive (and thus unanalyzable), the relation of reference, a worldly relation between worldly entities, *must* be accountable in terms of something else. Bianchi believes that it should be possible, at least in principle, to spell out in a non-circular way what reference is, and hence to offer exact conditions for reference to take place.

First Bianchi discusses a *desideratum* connected with his particular point of view on the relationship between language and thought:

- A theory of reference must not appeal to the intentional properties of mental states in a non-eliminable way.

In any case explaining reference in terms of intentions is explaining *obscura per obscuriora*, since nobody has a clear idea whatsoever about what intentions are. From Bianchi's point of view, intentional properties of mental states are to be explained in terms of the semantic properties of linguistic expressions, not *vice versa*. Bianchi believes that a mistake on this point is strictly connected with the circularity identified by Kripke (perhaps the main reason why Kripke didn't refine his theory).

Here is Bianchi's theory, whose formulation takes one single line:

- $\forall x \forall y (x \text{ refers to } y \leftrightarrow \exists z (x \text{ is a repetition of } z \wedge z \text{ was introduced for } y))$ .

Apart from its elegance and simplicity, the theory certainly has the advantage of approaching common sense avoiding obscure notions.

It's very important to emphasize that Bianchi is concerned here not with the *speaker's reference* but with the *semantic reference*; as David Kaplan said, "not with the vagaries of actions, but with the verities of meanings" (Kaplan, 1989, p. 585).

Two fundamental concepts are involved:

1. *Introduction for*, i.e. how people were first able to use a particular noise to designate a certain individual (reference fixing);
2. *Repetition*, i.e. how to transmit a name within the linguistic community (reference borrowing).

Bianchi hasn't much to say about introduction or dubbing; according to him, the central point to be resolved is the same that drove Kripke to search for some refinements of his initial picture: the fact that "of course not every sort of causal chains reaching from me to a certain man will do for me to make a reference" (Kripke, 1980, p. 93). Bianchi suggests that this problem can be solved by appealing to the notion of repetition (taken from (Kaplan, 1990)), rather than intention. In this way, repetition, that is a *causal* relation (in Kaplan's conception, this relation is explainable in psycho-physical terms), may explain the phenomenon of transmission of a name within the linguistic community. This is precisely the transitive relation that we were searching for, among the many causal chains reaching from speaker's use of a name to objects. Furthermore, Kaplan's account of repetition doesn't appeal to any intentional property of mental states. If even a characterization of the introduction can be found without appealing to them, the resulting theory will satisfy the *desideratum*.

Now, Bianchi mentions a couple of cases which may seem problematic, but that can be easily accommodated by his theory.



First there is the case of proper names that are not introduced due to a stipulation, but through their use. This case leads Bianchi to change the open formula, introducing a disjunction:

- $\forall x \forall y (x \text{ refers to } y \leftrightarrow (x \text{ is introduced for } y \vee \exists z (x \text{ is a repetition of } z \wedge z \text{ was introduced for } y)))$ .

Another problematic case concerns those linguistic particulars that seem to be repetitions, but that seem not to co-refer with what they seem to repeat. Bianchi has in mind the previously quoted aardvark Napoleon example. Bianchi puts it in Kaplan (1989, p. 602)'s terms, arguing that we can play the role of "language consumers" or "language creators", but we cannot play both at once. A linguistic particular does not count as a repetition of another linguistic particular if it counts as an introduction. It's not necessary to invoke the notion of intention.

Finally, Bianchi shows the major problem for a theory such as the one he has offered: change of denotation. Bianchi thinks about the famous "Madagascar case". According to Bianchi, we should probably count one of the tokens produced by Marco Polo as an introduction. In every case, we must appeal again to the aforementioned principle: a linguistic particular does not count as a repetition of another linguistic particular if it counts as an introduction. But this case is very different from that of "Napoleon", in fact here Marco Polo takes himself to be just repeating what he received.

Bianchi's conclusive remark is that we should probably build an understanding of introduction that is deeply different from the quite naïve understanding that we have had till now. It's probably time to work seriously on it.

Giuseppe Spolaore takes Bianchi's invitation to work seriously on introductions. According to Spolaore, when we dub an individual, we introduce something for that individual, but it's not really interesting to be told that we introduced *linguistic particulars*. Indeed every linguistic particular is introduced (is created from scratch). The dubbing is a relation between a name (not a token of a name) and an individual. According to this distinction, in most cases, when we dub something we actually don't use (and so we don't introduce) a linguistic particular for that thing. Spolaore considers the following statement:

Let 'Napoleon' be the name of this pet aardvark.

Here we don't introduce a linguistic particular for the aardvark, indeed 'Napoleon' stands for a name, not for the pet. Conversely, there are cases of introduction (in the sense relevant for Bianchi's theory) that are not cases of dubbing (in any ordinary cases). Finally, an overall clarification about the concept of introduction is certainly more complex than might appear.

For further readings, papers cited by the author are Bianchi (2007, 2011, 2012).

### 3 *Should Proper Names Still Seem So Problematic?*

**Michael Devitt (City University of New York)**

Discussant: *Massimiliano Vignolo* (Università degli Studi di Genova)

The talk of Michael Devitt is strictly connected to the one of Bianchi. Indeed Devitt's theory is a possible solution of the problem raised by Bianchi (see Devitt, 1972, 1974, 1981).

Proper names typically have more than one bearer. Intuitively, we can say that a token designates one rather than another thing, in virtue of what the speaker intends to designate. Devitt believes that this picture is too intellectualized, because it uses the notion of intention. To begin with, he believes that the proper question is the following: in virtue of what does the speaker intend to designate *x*? Without an answer to this question, the problem has simply been moved a short distance from the utterance to the intention. His answer is the following: the speaker intends to designate *x* in virtue of the token, that is immediately produced by the ability to designate *x* with the name. Basically, the token designates the object because "underlying" the token there is a designating-chain grounded in the object.

The initial biconditional in (Devitt, 1981, p. 64) was:

A name token designates an object if and only if underlying the name is a designating-chain grounded in the object. Designating-chain consist of three different kinds of link: groundings which link the chain to an object, abilities to designate, and communication situations in which abilities are passed on or reinforced (reference borrowing).

According to Devitt 'ability to designate' is the ability to *translate* back and forth between mental *sentences* to the sounds of the language. A mental representation is a representation of a particular object because it was directly caused by groundings in that object or indirectly caused by it via reference borrowings. So the causal theory explains the ability to designate *an object in particular with a name in particular*. Finally, linguistic competence consists of syntactic competence and lexical competence. Now, we cannot expect to be able to explain it better than here, but we must look to psycholinguistics.

Regarding how the reference fixed, it is necessary to distinguish:

- The reference fixing of *non-paradigm* "descriptive" names like 'Jack the Ripper' is explainable adopting a "description theory", according to which a person fixes the reference in an object by a description of the object in a dubbing.
- The reference of *paradigm* names like 'Aristotle' is fixed by something like ostension. In this case, the reference is fixed in the object by the causal link between a person and the object when a person is perceiving the object (a "grounding").

There are different kinds of direct groundings in the object: (a) formal dubbing, (b) informal dubbing, (c) implicit dubbing, (d) automatic bestowing. These four possibilities are united by the causal-perceptual link between the first uses of the name and the object named. Devitt made only a little attempt to describe groundings, but again we must look to psycholinguistics and psychology to say more (about causal-perceptual links, for example).

Therefore Devitt faces the problem of how abilities to designate are passed on or reinforced in communication situations. What Kripke expressed about reference borrowing is summarizable in two points:

1. a person in borrowing a name “must, I think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference” (Kripke, 1980, p. 96);
2. the notion of reference is hardly eliminated, because we take the notion of “intending to use the name with the same reference” as given<sup>2</sup>.

Devitt clarifies the problem as follow. A speaker who already has an ability to designate a particular object with a particular name can pass on that ability by using the name in conversation. Someone who correctly perceives this use thereby gains the ability herself. This acquisition is a causal process.

About the second point, Devitt believes it necessary to characterize reference borrowing in a much less intellectualized way. Borrowing is an *intentional act*, but no need to talk of intentions to refer. Enough that the borrower processes the input supplied by the situation in whatever way is appropriate for gaining an ability to use the name to designate its referent. The borrower must intentionally set in motion his particular sort of mental processing even though largely unaware of its nature and perhaps not conscious of doing so.

Although Devitt thinks that the way to fix reference for descriptive names is different from paradigm names, he claims that the reference borrowing is the same.

Again, this account leaves much unexplained, of course; again, we must look to psycholinguistics to throw more light on it.

At this point Devitt takes account of various complications before revisiting the theory’s biconditional, beginning with taking into account the famous Kripke’s example that we quoted in our introduction. Devitt supposes that the respondent was Ralph, which seems to refer to Smith, uttering ‘Jones’.

Here Kripke introduced an important Gricean distinction, that Devitt reproduced in his terminology:

- *Speaker-designation*, i.e. designation of the object that the speaker has in mind in using the name;
- *Conventionally-designation*, i.e. designation in virtue of a convention established by explicit agreement or arise from regular practices, as David Lewis demonstrated in his classic discussion (1969). The members of a community are disposed to use an expression with a certain meaning *because other members are disposed to do so*.

Kripke thinks that Ralph, using the token ‘Jones’, conventionally-designate Jones, but speaker-designate Smith. Instead, Devitt thinks that underlying Ralph’s ‘Jones’ there is a causal-perceptual link to Smith of just the sort that constitutes a grounding in Smith, but also a designating-chain grounded in Jones. Borrowing an idea from Field (1973), Devitt claims that Ralph *partially* speaker-designated both.

So Devitt refines his initial biconditional:

A designational name token speaker-designate an object if and only if *all* the designating-chains underlying the token are grounded in the object.

---

<sup>2</sup>Kripke’s claim is supported by the pet aarvardk example.

But this solution is too demanding, so it becomes:

A designational name token speaker-designate an object if and only if *nearly all* the designating-chains underlying the token are grounded in the object.

At this point, Devitt quotes Evans (1973, p. 195), who claims that examples of the reference change are “decisive against the Causal Theory of Names”. According to Devitt, such examples confirm the causal theory that he proposed. Yet Devitt (1981) concludes that multiple groundings suffice to explain the gradual transition from a convention to another: Marco Polo’s use of ‘Madagascar’ is analogous to Ralph’s use of ‘Jones’. On the one hand, Marco Polo borrows the reference of ‘Madagascar’ which is grounded in the portion of the mainland, which was ever so called. On the other hand, he had causal-perceptual links to the island in virtue of which he grounded the name in that. Initially Marco Polo conventionally-designates the portion of the mainland and partially speaker-designates both the mainland and the island. The difference is the following: Ralph’s mistake would be unlikely to lead to designation change.

How did a designation change happen? There are three important stages in the history of ‘Madagascar’:

1. Before Marco Polo, ‘Madagascar’ conventionally-designated and (typically) speaker-designated a portion of the mainland;
2. Period of confusion: Marco Polo *et al* (influenced by him) partially designate both (the island and the portion of the mainland);
3. The pattern of groundings in the designating-chain underlying our ancestors’ uses of ‘Madagascar’ were in the island. A new convention with the name had been born.

Devitt believes that this explanation is a direct corollary of his casual theory:

- Causal-perceptual account of groundings  $\implies$  Likelihood of multiple groundings;
- Multiple groundings  $\implies$  Possibility of confusion through misidentification;
- Theory of reference borrowing  $\implies$  Possibility of confusion through misunderstanding;
- Confusion  $\implies$  Possibility of designation change through change in the pattern of groundings underlying a name.

So, the biconditional becomes:

A designational name token speaker-designates an object if and only if underlying the token are designating-chains including groundings, the most recent of which constitute a pattern of groundings in that object.

Taking into account the previous Kripke’s example, Devitt refines his biconditional as follows:

- A designational name token speaker-designates an object if and only if, (a), underlying the token are designating-chains including groundings, the most recent of which constitute a pattern of groundings in that object; and, (b), should the speaker, in producing that token, be grounding the name, the grounding is in that object.

Devitt admits that his biconditional should be adjusted for some special cases (like slips of the tongue, irony, etc.), but enough is enough. Ultimately, he thinks that there would be no end to tinkering to achieve a strictly true biconditional; maybe social reality is too messy and complicated for that.

The biconditional for conventional-designation is relatively easy to come by:

- A designational name token conventionally-designates an object if and only if the speaker, in producing the token, is participating in a convention of speaker-designating that object, and not another object, with name tokens of that type.

The theory that Devitt has presented is a relatively straightforward development of Kripke's idea within a naturalistic framework. The author thinks that going further to meet Bianchi's challenge might be too onerous, because, perhaps, there would be no end to tinkering to achieve a strictly true biconditional.

Massimiliano Vignolo's discussion really concerns the fullness of Devitt's theory. In particular, he claims that, joining the last two biconditional, the explanatory power is not sufficient. He takes Evans "Turnip" example: a man named 'Turnip' leaves his home village and never returns. Fifty years later, however, a man thought to be Turnip enters the village and is referred to, mistakenly, as 'Turnip' by the townsfolk (Evans, 1973, pp. 225-226). This intervention has raised a pretty heated debate, that is difficult to report here, for reasons of space.

## **4 *Did Madagascar undergo a change in referent?***

### **Marco Santambrogio (Università degli Studi di Parma)**

Discussant: *Elisa Paganini* (Università degli Studi di Milano)

Santambrogio faces the Madagascar case, arguing that it is not, as it may seem, a case in which the name 'Madagascar' has changed its referent, but rather a case in which a new name has been created.

To begin with, let us consider two cases. The first is an uncontroversial case of 'name creation':

I imagine that at some point some Babylonian looked up in the sky one evening and said (in Babylonian): «Oh, there's a beauty. Let us call it '—'»<sup>3</sup>, and then he introduced the name. What he did was to create a word. (Kaplan, 1990, p. 100)

The second case is given by a child who dubs his pet aardvark 'Napoleon'. The child has heard the name of the emperor at school, and he decides to dub his pet with it. Although he has repeated the name 'Napoleon', it seems far better to explain this dubbing as a case of name creation, instead of a case of change in reference, for the new name and the name of the emperor can still be used together, as in "Napoleon is not such a good strategist as Napoleon, but it occasionally catches a mouse". However, the child is not mistakingly using the name of the emperor of French, as Marco Polo did: he has the intention to create a new name.

To cope with such examples, Kripke (1977) distinguishes between *speaker's referent* and *semantic referent*. The former "is the thing the speaker referred to by the designator, though it may not be the referent of the designator, in his idiolect" (p. 264). The latter is defined as follows: "If a speaker has a designator in his idiolect, certain conventions of his idiolect, (given various facts about the world) determine the reference in the idiolect: that I call the semantic referent of the designator" (p. 262). For instance, in the case of *A* and *B* mistaking Jones for Smith, when *A* says "Jones is raking the leaves", the speaker's referent is Smith, and the semantic referent is Jones, since the two people refer to Smith, and the name 'Jones' refers to Jones in the community to which they belong. Semantic referents grant that the use of a name is constant within a community of speakers. Even if they can make mistakes about the bearers of the names they use, the semantic referent remains fixed.

Now suppose that *B* realizes the mistake. Nevertheless, he decides to follow suit and to use the name 'Jones' as *A*, uttering "Jones looks tired. He has been working hard". We can add that *B* is too lazy to correct *A*, or simply not interested. Be that as it may, this reaction seems natural. From now on, 'Jones' becomes a sort of nickname for Smith, in the dialogue between *A* and *B*. Nicknames, as proper names, seem to be attached to their referent by a dubbing, at the first occasion of use. Moreover, both *A* and *B* believe that the semantic referent of 'Jones' is Smith, and they believe to share such a belief. This seems enough to conclude that Smith is the semantic referent of 'Jones' in the restricted linguistic community formed by *A* and *B*. Hence, *B* creates a new name, that is not a mere repetition of *A*'s utterance.

According to Paganini, this is not quite obvious. For, the distinction between speaker's referent and semantic referent is a special case of Grice's distinction between "what the speaker means by the words" and "what the words mean by convention". Since *B* does not say that

<sup>3</sup>We can suppose that nothing was called '—' before the Babylonian's dubbing of the evening star.

what *A* believes (that Jones is raking the leaves) is false, and is not as informative as is required (he clearly hides the information that the person they see is not Jones), he violates the maxims of quality and of quantity. Thus, an utterance of *B* (like “Jones looks tired”) is not regulated by the cooperation principle, and there is no reason to suppose that *B* would become cooperative, as it seems required if a new convention on the use of ‘Jones’ is established, at some point in time.

Notwithstanding this, there is a close resemblance between *B*, who decided to refer to Smith calling him ‘Jones’, although he knew of *A*’s mistake, and the child who decided to refer to his pet calling it ‘Napoleon’, although he knew that Napoleon is the emperor of French.

Evans (1973)’s Madagascar example is usually considered as a case in which the reference has changed. Although, of course, the semantic referent of our actual use of ‘Madagascar’ is the island, Santambrogio points out that there is no reason to claim that our use of ‘Madagascar’ and the original use of ‘Madagascar’ are uses of the same name, even though they seem somewhat causally connected.

The first readers of Marco Polo’s book had no reason to think that he was mistaken, and thus they use ‘Madagascar’ deferentially with respect to him, as *B* did in the previous example. Accordingly, the semantic referent of ‘Madagascar’ in their community is identified with what Marco Polo took it to be. Thus, “There’s plenty of lemures in Madagascar” is not false of the mainland, it is true of the island. However, the old name is still at hands, as in Isaac Taylor’s use, quoted by Evans. Hence, a new name has been created. Thus, it seems that an obstacle to the thesis that proper names do not change their referent has been removed.

Santambrogio’s conclusive remarks concern the obscurity surrounding the notion of intention and the role it plays in repeating a name. If we lay down that *B* has created a new name, ‘Jones’, with the same sound and the same referent as *A*’s use of ‘Jones’, what makes the difference are the speaker’s intentions. In line with this, Marco Polo’s readers has the intention to use ‘Madagascar’ as Marco Polo did. That makes the difference between the two ‘Madagascar’. Nonetheless, intentions do not have a constitutive role in determining proper names. Cappelen (1999) claims that intending to produce the same name one has heard, makes one producing the same name. But this seems false: let us suppose that some people within the same community use ‘Jones’ to refer to Smith, some other to refer to Brown. *A* is unaware of this, and thinks that ‘Jones’ refers to just one person, no matter which. Then he repeats ‘Jones’ overhearing a discourse, and having the intention to do so, but there seems to be no answer to the question whether he repeats the first name or the second. In any case, *A* fails to produce the name he intends to, since there is no such (single) name.

Finally, let us consider Kaplan (1990)’s thought experiment. Suppose that the subject hears from Kaplan the name ‘David’, uttered by Kaplan with the intention to refer to himself, David Kaplan. However, the subject thinks that this is the name of David Lewis, and repeats it with the intention to refer to David Lewis. It seems that the subject fails to repeat the name that has heard. This shows that the notion of *repetition* still needs qualification.

## References

- Bianchi, A. (2007). Speaking and thinking (or: A more kaplanian way to a unified account of language and thought). In C. P. M. Beaney and M. Vignolo (Eds.), *Explaining the Mental: Naturalist and Non-naturalist Approaches to Mental Acts and Processes*. Cambridge Scholar Publishing, Newcastle. 87
- Bianchi, A. (2011). Reference and descriptions. In J. O. O. M. Sbisà and J. Verschueren (Eds.), *Philosophical Perspectives for Pragmatics*. John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam. 87
- Bianchi, A. (2012). Two ways of being a (direct) referentialist. In J. Almog and P. Leonardi (Eds.), *Having in Mind: The Philosophy of Keith Donnellan*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. 87
- Cappelen, H. (1999). Intentions in words. *Nous* 33(1), 92–102. 93
- Devitt, M. (1972). *The Semantics of Proper Names: A Causal Theory*. Ph. D. thesis, Harvard University. 88
- Devitt, M. (1974). Singular terms. *Journal of Philosophy* 71, 183–205. 85, 88
- Devitt, M. (1981). *Designation*. Columbia University Press, New York. 83, 85, 88, 90
- Devitt, M. and K. Sterelny (1999). *Language and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language* (Second ed.). Blackwell, Oxford. 85
- Donnellan, K. (1972). Proper names and identifying descriptions. In D. Davidson and G. Harman (Eds.), *Semantics of Natural Language*, pp. 356–379. Reidel, Dordrecht. 79, 80
- Evans, G. (1973). A causal theory of names. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*(47), 187–208. 80, 90, 91, 93
- Field, H. (1973). Theory change and the indeterminacy of reference. *Journal of Philosophy* 70, 462–481. 89
- Kaplan, D. (1989). Demonstratives/afterthoughts. In J. P. J. Almog and H. Wettstein (Eds.), *Themes from Kaplan*, pp. 481–614. Oxford University Press, Oxford. 83, 86, 87
- Kaplan, D. (1990). Words. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*(64), 93–119. 80, 86, 92, 93
- Kripke, S. (1977). Speaker's reference and semantic reference. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy II*, 255–276. 81, 92
- Kripke, S. (1980). *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Trad. it. di M. Santambrogio, *Nome e Necessità*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 1999. 79, 80, 81, 85, 86, 89
- Martí, G. (1995). The essence of genuine reference. *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 24, 275–289. 84
- Martí, G. (2003). The question of rigidity in new theories of reference. *Nous* 37, 161–179. 84
- Martí, G. (2008). Direct reference and definite descriptions. *Dialectica* 62(1), 43–57. 84



Putnam, H. (1975). The meaning of 'meaning'. In K. Gunderson (Ed.), *Language, Mind and Knowledge. Minnesota studies in the Philosophy of Language*, pp. 131–193. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota. 80

Wettstein, H. (1988). Cognitive significance without cognitive content. *Mind* 97, 1–28. 82