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

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**1.**

With admirable clarity and his superb mastery of the Austro-German philosophical literature, Kevin Mulligan has presented, and developed, the view that perception and behaviour are part of language – a view that he traces back to that tradition. He has also shown how close this view comes to Kripke's account of reference.[1]

The view is articulated in a number of theses. One concerns the acquisition of language. In Bühler's words, "Every speaker has gathered the meaning of all naming words from things and states of affairs pointed out directly or indirectly and then retained it in practice."[2]

Another bold thesis, which runs against the received dogma that only in the context of a sentence can names function as names, says that the genesis of reference is rooted in two basic, neglected types of names that are used outside any sentential context: tags, which involve perception of a bearer, and signals, which involve both perception and behaviour. Even in the case of names introduced by non-referential definite descriptions, a speaker could not understand them unless he possessed the ability to use tags, rooted in his perception of what they name.

[1] See particularly Mulligan (1997).
[2] Bühler (1990).

I shall concentrate on the main thesis, defended by Kevin and rejected by Husserl and Frege, among others, according to which not only is perception involved in all the main types of direct singular reference, but it plays a more than incidental role: it fixes reference. Reference is parasitic on perception to such an extent that names and other devices of direct reference are object-dependent. I cannot here go into the details of the subtle arguments offered by Kevin.

What does this object-dependence consist in? Husserl, quoted by Kevin, takes the notion as follows: "the proposition that an expression, in so far as it has meaning, relates to an object, can be interpreted in a proper or authentic sense in which it includes the object's existence. Then an expression has meaning if an object corresponding to it exists, and is meaningless if such an object does not exist".[3] It is not clear – Kevin comments – whether he intends "includes" to be used in the strong modal sense, which he rejects in any case. The strong modal sense endorsed by Kevin is (if I understand him correctly) that a directly referring singular term would not exist, or would not be the same term, if its referent were not there.[4] It is advisable, I think, to add that if the term, at its creation, referred to a given object, it cannot undergo a change in referent over time.

Kevin has offered an "unfamiliar route" for defending the view that directly referring terms are object-dependent in the strong sense. It involves establishing whether or not the correct account of perceptual content is disjunctivism, i.e., the view that there is no lowest type of perceptual content such that some of its tokens are veridical contents and others non-veridical. "If object-dependent perceptual content completes the use of a demonstrative term then the latter inherits object-dependence from the [former]. If the completor is a perceptual illusion then there is no singular reference, the expression employed merely appears to be a singular term, just as the subject only appears to enjoy veridical perception. Thus we arrive at a view of referring expressions that resembles Kripke's account of rigid designators." (Mulligan, 1997: 8).

In this paper I will explore a different route to reach the conclusion that proper names (not any kind of directly referring terms) are object-dependent. The first step to take is to note that object-dependence is not the same as rigidity. As the notion was introduced by Kripke, a designator rigidly designates a certain object if it designates that object wherever the objects exists, i.e.,

[3] Husserl (1970, I, § 15).

[4] For a systematic treatment of the notion of modal dependence, see Mulligan, K. and Smith, B. (1986).

designates the same object in every possible world in which that object exists and designates nothing elsewhere. Proper names like 'Nixon', Kripke maintains, are rigid designators. Of course we don't require that the objects named exist in all possible worlds. If the object designated is a necessary existent, the name is strongly rigid. Clearly, 'Nixon' is not strongly rigid. There is an important, and subtle, controversy concerning the idea that a proper name would designate nothing if the bearer of the name were not to exist.[5] This, however, has little to do with the issue of object-dependence, which is an ontological question about the essence of names. To ask whether, e.g., if Nixon had not existed, the name 'Nixon' would not have existed or whether the same name could have undergone a change in referent, is to ask whether it is a mere accident that the name 'Nixon' as we have it now names Nixon. Of course, Nixon might never have been called 'Nixon' (he might never have been named at all) and someone else might have been so named. This is obvious. But could *our* name 'Nixon' have named, say, David Kaplan, either because it was originally given to him or because, at a certain stage, it changed its referent? This is what the issue of object-dependence, as I understand it, amounts to. The assumption that names are rigid is clearly insufficient to answer it one way or the other.

One of the leading direct reference theorists, David Kaplan, who upholds a strong view of rigidity, i.e, that names have the same designation in *all* possible worlds, takes what we have called object-dependence to be an open problem. 'The question, "Is it possible that a name which in fact names a given individual, might have named a different individual?" is, for me, a substantial metaphysical question about the essence of a common currency name. … [T]here is not, I believe, an *obviously* correct answer." (Kaplan, 1990:118-119). This clearly confirms, if any such confirmation were needed, that the issue of object-dependence is utterly distinct from that of the rigidity of names.

The former issue is also independent from descriptivism, which is the view that senses or any kind of descriptive contents that are semantically relevant are invariably associated with names and other singular terms. As Kevin points out, Frege himself gave an elegant account of the way indexical expressions refer that, at least from the interpretation presented by Wolfgang Künne, involves a strong form of object-dependence, even in the case of clearly descriptive indexical expressions such as 'that table'. Künne calls this type of proper names introduced by Frege, *hybrid proper names*. They contain a verbal and a non-verbal part. Even though Frege does not explicitly

[5] It is well known that some direct reference theorists, Kaplan for one, think that Kripke has misdescribed his own concept. See (Kaplan, 1989a: 493).

claim that the non-verbal parts of such names are or contain their referents, "this – says Kevin – does seem to be suggested". If a name contains its referent as its part, then it is hard to see how it could exist if the referent did not exist (and how it could stay the same if the referent changed).

In what follows I will not take up the whole issue of object-dependence, but confine myself to the question of whether a name can undergo a change in referent. This addresses only one half of the problem, the other half being whether a name such as 'Nixon', at its creation, could have named, say, David Kaplan. Although they are related, the two questions are not to be confused.[6]

A familiar case of apparent change is that of the name *Madagascar*, first brought to our attention by Gareth Evans (Evans 1973), and then briefly discussed by Saul Kripke in *Naming and Necessity*. Was it a real change in referent or was a new name created? I claim that the latter is the case. The paper is mainly intended to clarify the *Madagascar* example, without drawing any general conclusion. But the issue has some obvious bearing on a number of well-known problems, including Kripke's puzzles about belief. Linguistic consumerism – i.e., the idea that "[i]n our culture the role of language creators is largely reserved to parents, scientists, and headline writers for *Variety*; it is by no means the typical use of language "[7] – is also at stake.

## 2.

The problem of whether a name can undergo a change in referent was first raised by David Kaplan (as far as I know) in the last but one paragraph of "Words" (Kaplan, 1990).

> can a common currency name undergo a change in referent? There is no prima facie reason against it. I re-emphasize: The identity of a common currency word lies in its continuity, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, as has been discussed. It is a matter for further analysis to say whether such an entity could change meaning (or reference). It is certainly no part of my conception that it cannot. The matter does, however, call for careful thought. One might consider two kinds of polar cases: In one case you

[6] The distinction is clearly made by Kripke (1980), p. 114, n. 57.
[7] Kaplan (1989b: 602).

> intend to use (to repeat) a given common currency name with whatever referent it may have. ("What is Hesperus?" you ask, overhearing a conversation in which the name is used.) In the antipodal case, you intend to dub a particular thing using an apt generic name. In the former case there is continuity, in the latter, creativity, a new name is created. But there are those troubling cases (first thrust upon our consciousness by Keith Donnellan, and then Gricefully reconceptualized by Saul Kripke) that seem to lie in between: the man with the Martini, the false introduction, and their ilk.[8]

Before considering the "troubling cases", it is appropriate to clarify some simpler ones, in which there seems to be no denying that a new name is created. What are the prototypical cases of creation of a new name? Surely, the baptism of the Evening Star by some Babylonian is a case in point. Kaplan imagines the following story: "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 ---", and then he introduced the name. What he did was to create a word."[9] Let us suppose that nothing was called '---' before.

Now consider a slightly different case. Someone dubs his pet aardvark *Napoleon*. Clearly, this is *not* a case where the name of the French emperor is merely *repeated* – which is "the first kind of polar cases" – as happens when, e.g., a schoolboy hears his teacher saying that Napoleon did this and that, and then repeats "Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo". However, once it is admitted that no mere repetition is involved in the aardvark case, how do we know that, instead of Bonaparte's name undergoing a change in referent, a new name has in fact been created?

There are both differences and similarities between the two cases concerning *Napoleon*. For one thing, the aardvark's owner, unlike the student, has the *intention of not using* the name *Napoleon* with the same reference as the man from whom he heard it (whether or not he also intended so to use it when he first mastered the emperor's name).[10] For another, he

[8] Kaplan, (1990: 117-8).
[9] Kaplan, (1990:100).
[10] It is doubtful that every time a name is repeated, the speaker must have the intention to use it with the same reference as the man from whom he heard it. Michael Devitt (1981) pointed out that Kripke requires this intention to be contemporary with *learning* the name, but he does not require later uses of the name to be governed by an intention looking backward to the acquisition of the name. In any case, even if a speaker has the intention of preserving the reference of a name when learning it, this hardly prevents his subsequent using it to dub another individual. Note that, if it can be shown – as I intend to – that a name cannot change its referent, which is thus inseparable from it, the intention to use an extant name is *ipso facto* the intention to use it with the referent it in fact has. Whenever a change in referent occurs, the speaker is either helping herself to a different name or creating a new

clearly intends to *dub* his aardvark.

The similarity lies in the fact that the name *Napoleon* was already in use, before the dubbing occurred (unlike the *Hesperus* case, as we imagined). So, it must at least be argued that the owner is using an apt *generic* name and creating a new *common currency name*, instead of merely changing the referent of an extant common currency name. Kaplan claims that "[t]he identity of a common currency word lies in its continuity, both interpersonal and intrapersonal". But it can be supposed that there *is* continuity between the aardvark's and Bonaparte's names: possibly, the aardvark was dubbed *in honor* of Bonaparte and it is unlikely that the latter's name was unknown to the owner.

However, it is far preferable to say that a new name is created, instead of supposing that one and the same common currency name has undergone a change in referent, the reason being that the two names co-exist and can be used together, even by the aardvark's owner himself, as in, e.g., "Napoleon is not such a good strategist as Napoleon, but it occasionally catches a mouse" or, more simply, "Napoleon is not Napoleon". It would be bizarre to suppose that there is only one common currency name undergoing a change in referent in the middle of an utterance.

**3.**

I now consider some cases where, without any proper ceremony of baptism taking place, a new name is created. These cases depend on the dynamics of the evolution of language and the interaction between individual speakers and the community at large.

There is no denying that Kripke's notion of causal chain amounts to a *social* view of the functioning of language. Whenever a speaker uses an extant name, the reference of the name in his or her utterance is fixed by the causal chain to which it belongs. The individual speaker can rely on the community, in which the name already has its semantic value, i.e., its reference, provided that he or she intends to use the name without substantially altering it.

one. Later on, I shall point that, in some cases, it might not be entirely transparent to the speaker which name she is in fact using.

Causal chains reach back to objects in the past but the view of language emerging from Kripke's work is still generally static, in so far as it does not consider how uses of a name within a community and by individual speakers can change over time, and how individual uses can dramatically affect conventions in the whole community. The cases I intend to consider, in which a name is created without individual speakers being aware of what is happening, are typically those where someone makes a mistake as to the correct use of a name, and then the mistake catches on and spreads to the community. Such cases, in which "what was originally a mere speaker's reference may, if it becomes habitual in a community, evolve into a semantic reference", were clearly envisaged by Kripke.[11] In them, a new name, a phonograph of the old one, is created. The study of such cases belongs to the "dynamic account of the evolution of language".

Strictly speaking, even clear cases of a creation of a new name by means of an explicit baptism involve some interaction between the author of the baptism and the community, even though it appears that it all depends on the intentions of the former. The interaction may be minimal and very rudimentary. For instance, when the aardvark's owner dubs her pet 'Napoleon', before the new name comes into existence someone else must come to know of her dubbing. Otherwise, if the owner keeps her decision entirely to herself, no one, not even the owner herself, could possibly use the name properly in order to make herself understood. At the very least, it has to be known that the name is a name, not a meaningless sound. Unless it is circulated in the community, the name has speaker's reference, if it has any at all, not yet semantic reference.

The notions of *speaker's referent* and *semantic referent* are used here as Kripke introduced them in his 1977 article "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference". I quote: "The speaker's referent is the thing the speaker referred to by the designator, though it may not be the referent of the designator, in his idiolect." (Kripke, 1977: 264). As to semantic reference: "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" (Kripke, 1977: 262).

[11] Kripke (1977: 271).

Let us consider some cases in which a speaker makes a particular kind of mistake in using a name. The first case is almost the same as one envisaged by Kripke. Two people, A and B, see Smith in the distance. Mistaking him for Jones, A says "Jones is raking the leaves".[12] As Kripke has Gricefully reconceptualized the case, A has a *specific* intention to refer to the man in the distance, who is in fact Smith, a false belief that the person fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent of the name she uses, and also a *general* intention to refer to the semantic referent of the name. Due to the fact that A has more than one intention concerning the use of the name *Jones*, the case is *complex* and A's use is *referential*. Even though A has said something *of* Smith, the name *Jones* still has Jones as semantic referent. Smith is but the speaker's referent. This does not affect the language community and, in particular, the name's semantic referent.

Now suppose that A's utterance is part of a conversation with B. Under certain conditions, now to be investigated, it is possible that A may affect the community's usage, in so far as the speaker's referent of the name *Jones* evolves into its semantic referent within the restricted community formed by A and B alone. It can then be claimed that a new name is created.

How can B react to A's utterance? Various possibilities come to mind. First, B might realize that A has made a mistake and say, e.g., "Look, the man raking the leaves isn't Jones. Jones is at home watching TV". Here B is using the name *Jones* with the semantic referent it has within the community to which both he and A belong. What he intends to point out is that the speaker's referent and the semantic referent are distinct.

Second, *even thought he realizes A's mistake*, B decides to follow suit and says, e.g., "Jones looks tired. He has been working hard." Here B uses the name just as A does, even though he himself makes no error of misidentification.

Third, B mistakes Smith for Jones, just as A is doing, and the conversation continues with both A and B using *Jones* when they want to say something about Smith. (This case is similar to the original one considered by Kripke.)

[12] The original example is as follows: "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: 263) In my version, it is, crucially, only A who mistakes Smith for Jones.

In all cases, B's reactions are perfectly natural and appropriate to the circumstances. In the first and the third cases nothing happens concerning the reference (either the speaker's or semantic) of the name *Jones*. Let us consider more closely the second case. B realizes A's mistake but, for some reason (he might be too lazy to correct A or just not interested, or he might have other motivations[13]) he follows suit. Suppose that no one, besides A and B, is present. Then B must intend to make himself understood by A, since there would be no point in fooling A by saying what she cannot understand. Clearly, B's intention, in using the name *Jones*, is to refer to the same person as A. But A had two distinct intentions: her speaker's referent was Smith, whereas the semantic referent was Jones. Which one does B intend to refer to? For sure, B intends to refer to Smith since, otherwise, he wouldn't have uttered what he did. The assumption that he intended to make himself understood by A is crucial here.

Now, what are, respectively, the speaker's referent and the semantic referent of the name *Jones*, as used by B? B is in a very different position to A. Like A, he has a *specific* intention to refer to Smith, but he knows that Smith does *not* fulfill the conditions for being the semantic referent of *Jones*, and he does not have the *general* intention to refer to the semantic referent of the name as it is used in the community at large. Still, it is not yet clear that *Jones*, as used by B, does not have the same speaker's referent and the same semantic referent as it has when used by A.

I now give two arguments to show that this is not so. To repeat, this is what semantic reference amounts to:

> If a speaker has a designator in his idiolect, certain conventions in his idiolect (given various facts about the world) determine the referent in the idiolect: that I call the *semantic referent* of the designator. (Kripke, 1977: 263)

The term *idiolect* is used here somewhat loosely, if only because it is unclear what a convention might amount to in an idiolect proper. In a footnote, Kripke adds: "…the conventions regarding names in an idiolect usually involve the fact that the idiolect is no

[13] As in the example, considered by Donnellan (1966: 290), of the usurper whom everyone call "the king".

mere idiolect, but part of a common language, in which reference may be passed from link to link" (Kripke, 1977: 273, n.20).

The term *convention* is also in need of some clarification. For a convention to exist, it seems to be required that all the competent speakers, or at least most of them, know something of each other and at least some reciprocity is in place. Now, the image drawn by Kripke in *Naming and Necessity* does not involve any reciprocity at all. Someone, let's say, a baby, is born; his parents call him by a certain name, and the name is spread from link to link as if by a chain. But it is quite possible that each user acquiring the name is only aware of the speaker from whom he got it and is completely in the dark concerning all other previous, and subsequent, speakers. This seems to be clearly insufficient for a convention to be established. Since Kripke is explicit that everything in the paper is meant to be compatible with *any* view of proper names, in particular his own, and the image drawn in *Naming and Necessity* does not support the idea of a convention existing among the users of a name, I conclude that the term *convention* is used somewhat loosely here.

For a name to semantically refer, it would certainly be too much to require, as Evans did, that

> 'NN' is a name of x if there is a community C
>
> 1. in which it is common knowledge that members of C have in their repertoire the procedure of using 'NN' to refer to x (with the intention of referring to x). (Evans, 1973: 18)

It is entirely possible that very few members of the intended community know anything about the reference of a name for sure. Reference is compatible with all sorts of errors being common in the community. Common knowledge of the sort envisaged by Evans can hardly obtain. Still, someone at least must be in the know. Would it be possible for *everyone* to have mistaken beliefs as to the referent of a name? Suppose a pair of identical twins exists, Peter and Paul, who were so baptized at birth and then exchanged in their cribs, without anyone being aware of it, all memory having been wiped out of the order in which the two baptisms took place, so that everyone believes that Peter is the one who was in fact baptized *Paul* and vice versa, and calls them accordingly. Would we say that the semantic referent of either name, unbeknownst to the whole community, is the "wrong" twin? It seems to me that we would not. Even though it is possible for a large majority of the speakers in a community, or

even nearly all of them, to be mistaken as to the semantic referent of a name, someone must know. Should no one be left who has the appropriate sort of knowledge, for any name in use it must still be possible, at least in principle, to discover what its referent is.

Now, what do A and B, in our example, believe as to the referent of *Jones,* as they have used it? A mistakenly believes that *Jones'* semantic referent is Smith and, from B's utterance, infers that B believes the same and also believes that he, A, believes it. B, on the other hand, knows that, not only does A use *Jones* to refer to Smith, but A also believes that he, B, does the same and believes that A so believes, etc. Even though it is not common *knowledge* that *Jones* refers to Smith, since A's beliefs fall far short of amounting to knowledge, there is at least a common belief that it is so. Moreover, B *knows* how things really are. This seems to be sufficient to conclude that Smith is the semantic referent of *Jones,* as used within the restricted community formed by A and B alone.

Another reason to claim that, for the community formed by A and B alone, *Jones* semantically refers to Smith is as follows. Suppose that A and B go on at great length exchanging their views about Smith raking the leaves, always using the name *Jones* for him, even after A realizes his initial mistake. Clearly, after a while, *Jones* has become a name of Smith or at least a nickname of him. Nicknames are supposed not to require explicit dubbing and to stick to their referent by a more gradual process. But has anything relevant happened after the first two utterances by A and B?

Michael Devitt[14] has claimed that *multiple grounding* is required for a name to refer semantically to its referent. Clearly, if A and B go on at great length talking about Smith and calling him *Jones*, the name *is* in fact multiply grounded. But what is the use of multiple grounding? On the face of it, it is only necessary in order to spread a name from the restricted community in which a name has originated to a wider one, since the number of those in the know as to the referent of a name must be proportional to the size of the community. It does nothing to secure the referent to the name. In the community formed by A and B only, the grounding seems to be completed after the first two utterances.

[14] Devitt (1981).

It might be supposed that it is crucial for A to come to realize his initial mistake. But this goes against the fact, noted above, that names are secured to their semantic referents, even if all sort of mistaken beliefs are widespread within the relevant community. I conclude that Smith, who was the mere speaker's referent of *Jones*, as used by A, has evolved into its semantic referent, after B's utterance, within the community formed by A and B alone.

It is intuitively obvious that the notion of semantic reference is relative to some linguistic community or other. This does not tend to show, however, that some kind of relativism is in the offing, in the sense that the same utterance might be true when it is taken by the lights of one linguistic community and, at the same time, false by the lights of another. The circumstances relative to which an utterance is to be evaluated are always those of the context where it occurs – the linguistic community involved being one of the context's components. In particular, A's utterance above is false in its own context and it does not become true simply because the name *Jones* occurring in it acquires a new referent relative to the {A,B}-community, which comes into existence, so to speak, only after B's utterance. A rather intuitive way of characterizing what has happened is as follows. Think of the name *Jones* in A's utterance as an arrow. The arrow misses its target and, as a consequence, the whole utterance does as well and is therefore false. Then B draws a new target around the spot where the arrow has fallen, so that it appears that the arrow has hit the target right in the center. But, of course, it matters a great deal whether the target was set in place before or after the shot.

Has the name *Jones* acquired a new referent within the {A,B}-community? Or has a new name, a phonograph, been created? Even though Smith is now named, or nicknamed, *Jones*, Jones himself has not been forgotten by A and B and, of course, has kept his name. There is nothing unusual in the fact that more than one person is called *Jones*. Their common currency names are available to be simultaneously used in the same utterance as, e.g., in "Of course Jones, over there, is not Jones, who is comfortably watching TV at home". Since it would be preposterous to say that a name changes its referent in the middle of an utterance, as we saw above, we must conclude that in the utterance two distinct names occur, one of which must therefore have been created.

As a matter of fact, this conclusion should not be surprising in the least, as it could have been reached immediately by pointing out that B, when he realized that A was making a mistake and decided to go on calling Smith *Jones* nonetheless, was in the same position as the owner of the pet aardvark, who gave it the name *Napoleon,* even though he knew that the name was already taken by the emperor. It might be objected that even for the baptism of an aardvark some measure of solemnity is appropriate, which is entirely missing in B's sudden compliance with A's example and calling Smith *Jones*. But the answer simply is that no formal public ceremony is needed. As Kaplan pointed out in "Demonstratives", "a fleeting "Hi-ya Beautiful" incorporates all the intentional elements required for [him] to say that a dubbing has taken place".[15] In any case, the more roundabout path we followed to reach the conclusion that a new name was created, was not entirely useless, as we shall now see.

**4.**

The first example that comes to mind of a name that *would* have changed reference *if* it had stayed the same name, is that of *Madagascar*. According to Evans, the name was originally used in West Africa to refer to a region on the continent:

> 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. (Isaac Taylor, *Names and their History,* 1898).[16]

We can assume that for a long time after Marco Polo no other European visited either the great African island or the region on the mainland. No one in Europe had any further contact with either the African natives or the Malay and Arab sailors. Everyone in Europe entirely relied on Polo and used the name *deferentially* with respect to him – i.e. with the overriding intention to conform to his use of it (Evans, 1973: 21). The island, however, appeared on the maps more or less in its proper location, due to Polo's accurate descriptions in his book *The Million*. A few centuries later, Europeans began to have a number of contacts, both direct and indirect, with the

[15] Kaplan (1989a: 560). I find it hard to reconcile this remark of Kaplan's with his characterization of consumerism quoted above, from "Afterthoughts".
[16] Evans (1973: 11).

island. No doubt, the name *Madagascar*, as we now use it, semantically refers to it.

Thus, *a* name *Madagascar* was used by the natives on the continent with one semantic referent and *a* name *Madagascar*, somehow causally connected with the former, is used by us, with a quite different semantic referent. Are the two names one and the same? Let it be noted that very few Europeans have realized, as Isaac Taylor did, that a change in referent (and possibly also in the name) occurred. The thing could have escaped notice altogether. For sure, Marco Polo did not realize that he had misunderstood his informers.

At least four different categories of users of *Madagascar* exist: the natives on the continent, Marco Polo, the Europeans who read *The Million* shortly after it was published, and us, a few centuries later. The first thing to establish is, When exactly did the change in reference occur? We can be assured that Marco Polo, in using the name *Madagascar* in *The Million*, had the general intention to refer to the semantic referent of it, as it was used by his informants, since the book aims at giving an entirely faithful report of the countries he had visited. There is no fiction in the book, nor are there inaccuracies that could be avoided. Of course, all the names used in it are likely to be twisted, as they were translated from their original languages into thirteenth-century Italian, but that is all. Polo also harbored a false belief that the great African island fulfilled the conditions for being the semantic referent of the name, and a specific intention to refer to the island. Like speaker A, in the Smith-Jones example, he thus had two distinct referential intentions.

As a rule, when one picks up a name from someone else, one intends to make use of it with its semantic, not with its speaker's, referent, if only because he may be addressing other speakers in the community and it would be unwise to let the informant's possible misunderstanding affect one's usage. However, there are exceptions. The first readers of *The Million* are likely to be exceptions to that rule. They were using the name deferentially with respect to Marco Polo and had no chance of finding themselves addressing a member of the community where the name had originated. They had no reason to think that Marco Polo was mistaken concerning the name and, even if he was, there was no point for them in trying to straighten things out and no chance of succeeding. They were entirely dependent on Marco Polo. Thus, somehow, they were in the same position as speaker B in the previous example, in that they did not care about any possible divergence between the semantic and the speaker's referent (which they did not, unlike B, know

anyway). Perhaps, speaker B is an exception to the rule above, too, since he was using *Jones* to refer to Smith and there is a sense in which he had picked up the name from A.

Since, in the restricted community formed by Marco Polo and the first readers of his book – the African natives being conspicuously absent from it – Marco Polo was the only authority entitled to give a final answer to the question "Where is Madagascar?", it can be concluded that the semantic referent of the name was what Polo took it to be. There is a close similarity between that community and the one formed by speakers A and B alone, in the previous example. The main difference between the two is that no-one belonging to the former community was aware that *Madagascar* had undergone a change in referent or had been substituted with a newly created name.

If the multiple grounding does nothing to secure a referent to a name and is only needed to spread the name, with its referent, to a wider community, then we might have another argument to the same conclusion. There is no denying that we now use *Madagascar* to semantically refer to the island. We too are depending on *The Million* concerning the referent of the name. But nothing relevant has happened concerning the name, except multiple grounding, since the book was first published and read. Thus, already in the restricted community formed by Marco Polo and his first readers, the island was the semantic referent of it.

It is not unlikely that also the case imagined by Evans[17] of the name *Ibn Kahn* is to be understood along the same lines. Evans imagines that a mathematical manuscript was discovered in the vicinity of the Dead Sea, in which the name *Ibn Kahn* occurs, which is generally taken to name the author of it. Mathematicians often refer to some theorem of Ibn Kahn's. Suppose that, as a matter of fact, Ibn Kahn was the scribe (or an impostor). If, in discussing the import of that theorem, a mathematician states "Here Ibn Kahn uses *reductio ad absurdum*", is he saying something true of the author of the manuscript or something false of the scribe? The former seems to be the correct thing to say. Within the mathematical community the name *Ibn Kahn* appears to have the author as its semantic referent.[18]

[17] And discussed by Devitt (Devitt, 1981).

[18] The case bears some similarity to one all too briefly discussed by Kripke in *Naming and Necessity*: "More exact conditions [for reference to take place] are very complicated to give. They seem in a way somehow different in the case of a famous man and one who isn't so famous…. If … the teacher uses the name 'George Smith' – a man by that name is actually his next door neighbor – and says that George Smith first squared the circle, does it follow from this

Let us return to *Madagascar*. Has the name changed its referent or has a new name been created, after Marco Polo? The old name is still available, with its referent, as shown by Isaac Taylor's book. An utterance such as "Madagascar is not the island of Madagascar" is perfectly intelligible and also true. As we saw above, this is a powerful argument to maintain that a new name has appeared, even though no one ever realized it until Taylor discovered what had happened.

**5.**

None of the considerations above rested on the assumption that Kaplan's theory of common currency names holds true. The thesis that proper names do not change their referent is acceptable, it seems to me, no matter what theory of names one endorses. Kaplan, however, has additional reasons in favor of it. He distinguishes *common currency* from *generic* names. The former refer – each one to its own unique bearer. Generic names either have multiple referents or do not name anyone: "…the generic name doesn't name anyone (doesn't name any*one*, perhaps it names or is an unnatural kind). Furthermore, it doesn't pretend to name anyone (as certain common currency names do)" (Kaplan, 1990: 111). In any case, they are quite unlike proper names. The distinction seems to be reasonably clear. However, if a common currency name were allowed to undergo a change in referent, while still being available to be used with its old referent – as, e.g., in "Madagascar is not Madagascar" and "Jones is not Jones" – it would have multiple referents, or something of the sort, and the distinction would then be blurred.

From the thesis that names can be created unwittingly, within a restricted language community, some consequences can be drawn concerning Kaplan's theory. Some commentators (e.g., Cappelen (1999), Hawthorne and Lepore (forthcoming)) maintain that intentions have a constitutive role to play concerning common currency names: "If someone intends to produce the

that the students have a false belief about the teacher's neighbor? The teacher doesn't tell them that Smith is his neighbor, nor does he believe Smith first squared the circle. He isn't particularly trying to get any belief *about the neighbor* into the students' heads. He tries to inculcate the belief that there was a man who squared the circle, but not a belief about any particular man – he just pulls out the first name that occurs to him – as it happens, he uses his neighbor's name. It doesn't seem clear in that case that the students should have a false belief about the neighbor, even though there is a causal chain going back to the neighbor (Kripke 1980: 95-6)." The teacher seems to have created a new name, if only because he intended to discontinue using *George Smith* with its semantic referent, and the students defer to him.

same word w as that used in a particular performance, then whatever comes out of his mouth (or from his pen) is a performance of w" (Hawthorne and Lepore, forthcoming: 14)). *Intending it to be so makes it so*. They claim that the thesis – which they do not endorse anyway – is implicit in the Kaplanian notion of repetition. Let us review what we have found so far, that is relevant to the issue.

We have seen that speaker B, in using *Jones* to refer to Smith while realizing A's mistake, was in a position similar to that of the man who bestows the name *Napoleon* on his pet aardvark. Even though B may not be fully aware of it, he has created a new name, relative to the very restricted {A, B}-community. Since the name is new, B has *not* repeated the name he received from A. Note, however, that B's and A's names sound the same, and refer to the same referent. Also, B intends to use *Jones* with the same reference as A – that is, with the speaker's reference it had with A.

As to *Madagascar*, we have seen that the early readers of *The Million* were in the same position as B above, except that they could not be aware that a change in semantic referent had occurred with respect to a community from which the natives were absent. As before, their referent was the same as Polo's speaker's referent. However, when using *Madagascar*, they *intended to repeat* the name as used by Polo. Intending to repeat a name is no guarantee of success. Repeating a name is thus no straightforward matter. The identity of common currency names remains hard to determine.

In any case, the thesis above, that one cannot fail to produce the same name if one intends to do so, is false, as can be established by an independent argument. Suppose a speaker has heard several people refer to some Jones. As a matter of fact, some of those people were talking about one Jones, whereas others were talking about another. Our speaker misunderstood what they were saying and thought that only one Jones was mentioned. As there is no reason to suppose that one can only repeat names one has heard only once, he forms the intention to repeat "the" name. Can he succeed? Kaplan himself is adamant that, in cases such as this, "nothing whatsoever is being said. Is [a given black box] it transmitting the first word? Is it transmitting the second word? I think there is just no answer to that question" (Kaplan, 1990: 109). In any case, the speaker fails to produce *the* name he intends to, if only because there is no such a name. (I am assuming here the thesis above only applies to common currency names. It would not be so

difficult to repeat a generic name, but it would also be quite irrelevant "for serious semantics".)

Be that as it may, the notion of repetition is far from being clear. Kaplan proposes a thought experiment: "Consider this 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. … So, if I say "Rudolf", the person says "Rudolf"; "Alonzo" – "Alonzo"; "Bertrand" – "Bertrand", and so on" (Kaplan, 1990: 102). Now, suppose the subject hears from Kaplan the common currency name that is Kaplan's own, *David*, but thinks that he heard David Lewis's name. When he repeats *David*, has he succeeded in producing the same name he intended to? It is not obvious that a clear answer can be given. This throws some doubt on the notion of repetition itself.[19]

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