

## **A defence of common currency names**

Hawthorne and Lepore (forthcoming) defend a sceptical attitude towards what Kaplan (1990) called common currency names (from now on, cc-names). If they are correct, the belief that there are such entities is ungrounded. I argue instead that they provide no reason to contend the existence of cc-names.

A name (whether cc-name or not) may have many occurrences and all its possible occurrences should have something in common in order to belong to the same name. Now let us apply this simple consideration to cc-names and we may derive the following conditional:

**(A)** If a cc-name exists, then its possible occurrences have something in common in order to belong to the same cc-name.

It is evident that if we have reason to suspect – as Hawthorne and Lepore suggest - that:

**(B)** name occurrences do not have something in common in order to belong to the same cc-name we have reason to suppose (applying *modus tollens* to (A) and (B)) that

**(C)** cc-names do not exist.

Hawthorne and Lepore's argument may be seen as a challenge: a challenge to demonstrate that (B) is false, i.e. that there is something shared by name occurrences in order to belong to a single cc-name. They consider different ways to argue for (B)'s falsity and they claim that they are all untenable. They conclude that, until (B)'s falsity has been convincingly demonstrated, it is worth being sceptical about the existence of cc-names.

I will argue instead that they have not produced a good argument against the kripkian characterization of cc-names. So, contrary to what they argue, there is at least one good reason to assume that (B) is false and, as a consequence, there is no reason to believe that cc-names do not exist (i.e. there is no reason to believe (C)).

Following Kripke (1980), I claim that all name occurrences belonging to a single cc-name share a common intention: the intention to refer to whatever was referred to when the cc-name was introduced. The idea is that a cc-name is originated by a 'baptism' (either an ostensive definition or a descriptive definition), then spread through the linguistic community and all its occurrences are performed with the intention to refer to whatever is referred to at the 'baptism'.

Hawthorne and Lepore considered this image of cc-name and rejected it, they argue that each name occurrence may have a reference even though it does not share a common intention with the other occurrences of an alleged cc-name. According to them, all name occurrences may be performed with different intentions, i.e. each may be performed with the intention to refer to *whatever was the reference* of the occurrence through which the cc-name was picked up. Suppose for example that the cc-name 'Kripke' was performed by Paul, who passed it to Laura, who passed

it to John, who passed it to someone else. If Hawthorne and Lepore are correct, Laura's and John's performances do not share a common intention: Laura's performance is made with the intention to refer to whatever was the reference of Paul's performance and John's performance is made with the intention to refer to whatever was the reference of Laura's performance.

I argue that Hawthorne and Lepore's alternative view cannot be maintained. It does not account for cases in which we pick up cc-names through non-intentional performances. For example, it is possible for a parrot to repeat a name without the intention to refer with it (suppose the parrot says "John is the murderer") and that someone listening to the parrot may have the intention to use the cc-name to refer, she will obviously intend to refer to whatever was the reference of the previous referential performance in the causal chain. This example shows that whenever we use a cc-name in order to refer we direct our intention to *whatever was referred to by the previous intentional occurrence* in the causal chain through which we picked up the cc-name.

Now, once the amendment is accepted, the kripkian characterization is inescapable. In order to realize it, suppose that the cc-name 'Kripke' was performed by Paul, who passed it accidentally to a parrot, who passed it to Laura, who passed it to John, who passed it to someone else. Let us now compare Laura's and John's performances. Laura's performance is made with the intention to refer to whatever was intended by Paul, while John's performance is made with the intention to refer to whatever was intended by Laura. Let us ask: what was intended by Laura? Laura intended to refer to whatever was intended by Paul. By transitivity, we may conclude that John intended to refer to whatever was intended by Paul. So, Laura's and John's performances have something in common: they are both performed with the intention to refer to whatever was intended by Paul.

If we now consider a highly ramified chain which starts with a 'baptism', and we assume that any performance of a cc-name is made with the intention to refer to whatever was referred to by the previous intentional occurrence in the causal chain, we may infer, by transitivity, that all performances have something in common: they are all performed with the intention to refer to whatever was intended at the 'baptism'. So, I conclude that, contrary to what has been assumed by Hawthorne and Lepore, there is no reason to contend the existence of cc-names as long as all their occurrences are performed with a common intention.

## References

- Hawthorne J. and Lepore E. (forthcoming), "On Words", (forthcoming in *The Journal of Philosophy*, available online: <http://rucss.rutgers.edu/faculty/lepore/OnWords.pdf>)
- Kaplan D. (1990), "Words", in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 64, pp. 93-119
- Kripke S. (1980), *Naming and Necessity*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press