

## On the plurality of words

In a 2011 article, John Hawthorne & Ernest Lepore argue that David Kaplan's (1990) category of *Common Currency names* is empty. They argue this both on the grounds of ordinary language data, and on theoretical semantic grounds. In this presentation, I defend the category of common currency names, first, from the viewpoint of ordinary usage, and, second, on theoretical semantic grounds. In the second part of the presentation, I discuss how Common Currency names are to be individuated. This abstract sketches the first part of the paper only.

Kaplan holds that we need to acknowledge a use of 'name' according to which several people who are named 'David' in fact have distinct names, although they do share what he calls a 'Generic Name'. A difference between Generic Names and Common Currency Names (hereafter "CC-names") is that only the second kind of name has the semantic function of *naming someone*, while the first does not. This semantic function is that of *reference*; it is clear that the Generic Name 'Stephen' does not refer to anyone or anything, while the CC-name 'Stephen (King)' does refer to the fiction author. Further, Kaplan suggest that CC-names are also characterized by facts about their causal histories of introduction and use:

[...] I encourage the idea that in addition to the common currency names-these distinct, fairly recent names, David Israel's and mine for example, which were created at different points, and which have had distinct life histories-in addition to the common currency names, there is also another kind of word which we call a 'generic name'. (Kaplan 1990: 112)

This suggests that Kaplan thinks of CC-Names as individuated by causal-communicative historical chains, such that names '*x*' and '*y*' are identical iff they are baptized and propagated through the same causal-historical chain. This means that, in the CC-sense of 'name', Bill Clinton and Bill Gates have different first names, as their first names were introduced and subsequently used as part of distinct causal-communicative historical chains.

Hawthorne & Lepore express scepticism that the category of CC-names is to be found in ordinary usage.

[...] if we take ordinary language data at face value, we automatically ought to be suspicious of common currency first names. We invariably speak of John Donne and John Travolta as sharing a first name, and it is rather difficult to access a reading of 'John Donne and John Travolta have different first names' under which it comes out true. (Hawthorne & Lepore 2011: 21).

In my opinion, there does exist ordinary language data that suggests that, if we take it at face value, we in certain cases individuate names more finely than this, and that we do operate with something like a category of CC-names. Take the following case:

### Case 1

A primary school teacher asks all the pupils in the class to write their names on the blackboard as a writing exercise. There are two pupils named «Paul» in the class. All of the pupils except for one of the Pauls write their names on the blackboard. The teacher now asks «Are everyone's names now up on the blackboard?». The students all say «Yes, teacher!». The teacher abruptly responds: «But there are only fourteen names on the blackboard, and there are fifteen of you!?!», to which the pupil named Paul who has not written his name says «Yes, my name is up there, the other Paul wrote *our* name up, so I didn't have to».

If it were literally true that the two Pauls had the same name, the pupil's utterance would speak of the name that they *share*: the Generic Name 'Paul', and say that *that* is what is on the blackboard. If taken in this sense, the utterance would be true. But, intuitively, and from the viewpoint of ordinary language, what the pupil said is, in another sense, *false*, and at best a silly joke: in this sense, it is just not the case that a (token of) his name is on the blackboard, even though a token of the *Generic name* 'Paul' clearly is. But if the proposition expressed by the pupil's utterance, "Yes, my name is up there!" is false, there has to be a sense in which the two Pauls do *not* have the same first name, in addition to the sense in which they do have the same first name.

Take another case.

### Case 2

A nurse in a hospital waiting room calls out a patient with the name 'George Clarkson'. As it happens, there are two patients by that name in the waiting room. They both stand up and walk toward the registration desk. Upon arrival, one of them is told to go and sit down, and that it was the other George Clarkson they had intended for to present himself at the desk. He then responds, irritatedly, "but you called my name!".

Again, from the viewpoint of ordinary language, there is a sense in which the proposition expressed by this response is *false*, and that only *one* of the patient's names was called; that is

only one of the patient's names was tokened. But if the proposition expressed was false, there has to be a sense in which the two George Clarksons do not have the same name; otherwise it would be *true* to say that the name they shared was called. Of course, as before, this is not to deny that the generic name 'George' was called.

To put the point generally: If 'x' and 'y' are the same name, plausibly, a tokening of 'x' is a tokening of 'y'. Thus, it seems plausible to say that two people have the same name if and only if a tokening of one of their names is a tokening of the other's name as well. Yet, if my cases are convincing, they may show that one can token one e.g. of the Pauls' names without tokening that of the other. Thus, they have to be different names, *in one sense of 'name'*.