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Speaker's reference, semantic reference, and the Gricean project. Some notes from a non-believer

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Abstract: In this paper, I focus on the alleged distinction between speaker's reference and semantic reference. I begin by discussing Saul Kripke's notion of speaker's reference and the theoretical roles it is supposed to play, arguing that they do not justify the claim that reference comes in two different sorts and highlighting that Kripke's own definition makes the notion incompatible with the nowadays widely endorsed *Gricean project*, which aims at explaining semantic reference in terms of speaker's reference. I then examine an alternative account of speaker's reference offered by Michael Devitt within his causal theory and express some doubts about its suitability for explaining proper name semantic reference. From all this, I conclude that there is at least some tension between Kripke's chain of communication picture and the attempt to explain (Griceanly, so to say) semantic properties in terms of speakers' mental states.

Keywords: Speaker's reference, Semantic reference, Kripke's distinction, Speaker's meaning, Grice's program, Devitt's causal theory of proper names.

1. Introduction

Does the mind of the speaker play any role in determining the reference of the proper name tokens he or she produces?[1] For most of the philosophers who subscribe to what Keith Donnellan (1970) called "the principle of identifying descriptions," it does.[2]

[1] I first raised this question in Bianchi 2012, to contrast two ways of being referentialist, and more generally two models of the functioning of language, which I then called the *psychological model* and the *social model*. (I now prefer to call the latter the *linguistic model*, since it is based on highlighting the (semantic) *autonomy* of language from users, which is something that may in principle obtain, *pace* Wittgenstein, even if there is a single user and no social relation at work.)

[2] Actually, aiming at generality, Donnellan formulated the principle so as to "leave it open … whether the set of identifying descriptions is to be formed from what *each* speaker can supply or from what speakers collectively supply" (339), and the second alternative seems to allow for a negative answer to the question in the text. Indeed, as I noted in Bianchi 2012: 84, the position combining descriptivism and

According to them, in fact, in order to refer with a proper name, the speaker must attach (in his or her mind, so to say) a set of identifying descriptions to it, and the referent of the token he or she produces, if there is one, is "that object that uniquely fits a 'sufficient' number of the descriptions in the set" (Donnellan 1970: 339). If the speaker attached a different set of identifying descriptions to the name, the produced token might refer to something else. Therefore, the reference of the token does crucially depend on the mental state of its producer, in this view. Basically, by using a proper name the speaker would be referring to something *because* he or she would be *thinking* of it through a set of identifying descriptions.

However, the principle of identifying descriptions is not very fashionable nowadays, and for quite good reasons. In fact, devastating criticisms to any approach to proper names based on it were offered around 1970 by Donnellan himself as well as, of course, Saul Kripke. As a consequence, various philosophers of language, developing suggestions from the work of both Kripke and Donnellan, began to advocate *historical*, if not altogether *causal*, accounts of proper name reference. Since these accounts highlight the crucial role played in determining reference by worldly historical facts that may be unknown to the speaker (as David Kaplan wrote, "[t]he notion of a historical chain … [offers] an alternative explanation of how a name in local use can be connected with a remote referent, an explanation that does not require that the mechanism of reference is already in the head of the local user in the form of a self-assigned description" (1989: 602-3)), one may be led to believe that the answer to our initial question must be negative: the mind of the speaker does not play any role in determining the reference of the proper name tokens he or she produces. Indeed, Kaplan himself seems to have been at least tempted by this idea, when, in contrasting "the subjectivist views of Frege and Russell" (603) with "the view that we are, for the most part, language *consumers*" (602) – in his terms, *subjectivist semantics* with *consumerist semantics* – he urged us to "see language, and in particular semantics, as more autonomous, more independent of the thought of individual users" (603-4). Some other philosophers followed suit.[3] And I should add that my own attempt to use Kaplan's

(semantic) anti-subjectivism is not inconsistent. But it is indisputable, I believe, that what drives most of the descriptivists is the idea that the speaker must have *epistemic* control on what he or she refers to.

[3] See especially Wettstein 2004, Hinchliff 2012, and Martí 2015.

(1990) notion of repetition to develop Kripke's chain of communication picture into a full-blown theory of proper name reference (Bianchi 2015) also goes in this direction.

Thus, I certainly do not believe that the mind of the speaker plays any role in determining the reference of the proper name tokens he or she produces. But, unfortunately, things are not as clear as it may appear, even if one takes the road opened up by the revolutionary work of Kripke and Donnellan. On the one hand, Donnellan himself seems to have thought otherwise, since he made reference crucially depend on *having in mind*. As a matter of fact, for a long time Donnellan's "historical explanation theory" was obscured by Kripke's chain of communication picture, to which it was wrongly assimilated.[4] As of recently, however, a group of philosophers, related in one way or another with UCLA, where Donnellan taught for many years, have rediscovered, developed, and radicalized his ideas on reference, determining something like a Donnellan *Renaissance* in the field.[5] On the other hand, a number of other philosophers have found a different, subtler, way to find a place for the speaker's mind in the theory of reference, by appealing instead to the distinction between *speaker's reference* and *semantic reference* introduced in the debate by Kripke to argue against Donnellan's account of definite descriptions, and interpreting it so as to endorse what I shall call the *Gricean project*.

I have dealt with Donnellan's and the neo-Donnellanians' account of reference elsewhere and shall not say any more about it here.[6] My aim in this paper is instead to examine and criticize the second approach. In particular, I shall focus on Michael Devitt's version of it. In so doing, I shall continue an ongoing debate with Devitt himself, on his causal theory of proper names and the nature of reference (see Devitt 2015, Bianchi forthcoming, and Devitt forthcoming *a* for the previous stages). I shall proceed as follows. I shall present and discuss Kripke's distinction and the particular interpretation of it that amounts to endorsing the Gricean project in Sections 2 and 3. In Section 4, I shall examine Devitt's causal theory of proper names, paying special attention to its relation to the project. Finally, I shall draw some general conclusions in Section 5.

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[4] See Bianchi and Bonanini 2014 for a detailed reconstruction of Donnellan's historical explanation theory of proper name reference that contrasts it with Kripke's picture.
[5] See in particular Almog 2012 and 2014: chap. 3, Capuano 2012 and 2018, Pepp 2012 and 2019, Almog, Nichols and Pepp 2015, and Wulfemeyer 2017.
[6] See my "Reference and Language," forthcoming.

2. Kripke's distinction

As far as I know, the distinction between *speaker's reference* and *semantic reference* makes its first appearance in the literature, quite incidentally, near the beginning of "Naming and Necessity."[7] Before elaborating on "the relation between names and descriptions," Kripke says the following:

> It is a point, made by Donnellan, that under certain circumstances a particular speaker may use a definite description to refer, not to the proper referent … of that description, but to something else which he wants to single out and which he thinks is the proper referent of the description, but which in fact isn't. So, you may say "The man over there with the champagne in his glass is happy", though he actually only has water in his glass. Now, even though there is no champagne in his glass, and there may be another man in the room who does have champagne in his glass, the speaker *intended* to refer, or maybe, in some sense of 'refer', *did* refer, to the man he thought had the champagne in his glass. Nevertheless I'm just going to use the term 'referent of the description' to mean the object uniquely satisfying the conditions in the definite description. (1972: 254 (1980: 25-6))

Kripke is pausing here on a common phenomenon: *sometimes we intend to refer to something to which we do not actually refer*.[8] As in many other cases (think of the intention to help, or kill, or email, someone, for example), not always are our intentions successful – perhaps we do not choose the right means, or the environment does not 'cooperate,' or … That's life, one would say. But then, Kripke makes a surprising move and states, although cautiously (notice the "maybe"), that there is a sense of "refer" according to which even in this case we may say that we referred to what we did not actually refer to, in the first, primary, sense. This is strange. Take the case of emailing and intending to email, and assume, to make it even more similar to the one under discussion, that *a* intends to email *b* but fails and ends up emailing *c* instead. Here, certainly we are not inclined to say that although *a* emailed *c* in the first, primary, sense of "email," *b* was also seduced by *a*, in another sense of "email" – "emailing" does not

[7] See however Geach 1962: 31-2 for an earlier hint at the distinction.
[8] Although I am uncomfortable with saying that a definite description *refers* to its *denotatum*, I shall follow Kripke's usage here.

seem to be ambiguous. Thus, why should we instead take "referring" as ambiguous? I shall come back to this in the next Section. As for now, let me only note that, ironically, it is Kripke himself, and furthermore in the same article where he elaborates on the distinction between speaker's reference and semantic reference, who provides us with reasons for being suspicious:

> It is very much the lazy man's approach in philosophy to posit ambiguities when in trouble. If we face a putative counterexample to our favourite philosophical thesis, it is always open to us to protest that some key term is being used in a special sense, different from its use in the thesis. We may be right, but the ease of the move should counsel a policy of caution: Do not posit an ambiguity unless you are really forced to, unless there are really compelling theoretical or intuitive grounds to suppose that an ambiguity really is present. (1977: 268)

As we have just seen, in "Naming and Necessity" Kripke introduces the distinction between speaker's reference and semantic reference with an example involving a definite description, and definite descriptions are not the topic of this paper. However, in a footnote appended to the above passage, Kripke adds:

> Donnellan's distinction seems applicable to names as well as to descriptions. Two men glimpse someone at a distance and think they recognize him as Jones. 'What is Jones doing?' 'Raking the leaves'. If the distant leaf-raker is actually Smith, then in some sense they are *referring* to Smith, even though they both use 'Jones' *as a name of* Jones.... I speak of the 'referent' of a name to mean the thing named by the name – e.g., Jones, not Smith – even though a speaker may sometimes properly be said to use the name to refer to someone else…. I am tentatively inclined to believe, in opposition to Donnellan, that his remarks about reference have little to do with semantics or truth-conditions, though they may be relevant to a theory of speech-acts. Space limitations do not permit me to explain what I mean by this, much less defend the view, except for a brief remark: Call the referent of a name or description in my sense the 'semantic referent'; for a name, this is the thing named, for a description, the thing uniquely satisfying the description.
>
> Then the speaker may *refer* to something other than the semantic referent if he has appropriate false beliefs. I think this is what happens in the naming (Smith-Jones) cases and also in the Donnellan 'champagne' case; the one requires no theory that names are ambiguous, and the other requires no modification of Russell's theory of descriptions" (1972: 343 n. 3 (1980: 25n)).

After these brief and incidental remarks, there is no more mention of speaker's reference in "Naming and Necessity." In fact, for our purposes here it is important to keep in mind that the chain of communication picture offered by Kripke in his second lecture concerns (proper name) *semantic* reference, not at all speaker's reference.

As is well known, in his 1977 article Kripke develops these remarks and makes the distinction between speaker's reference and semantic reference his main weapon for arguing against the semantic significance of Donnellan's (1966) distinction between attributive and referential uses of definite descriptions. In fact, according to Kripke, Donnellan confused what a speaker refers to, by using a definite description, with what the description he or she uses refers to, on that occasion. Consider Leonard Linsky's famous example. While it is certain that the speaker who utters "Her husband is kind to her" after observing the attitude of a man towards a woman refers to the man, who, however, is not her husband but, let us suppose, her lover, one may (and should, as Kripke then argues on methodological grounds) doubt that the description he uses semantically refers, on that occasion, to that person rather than to nobody (as in Linsky's original case, where the woman is a spinster) or to her husband (as in Kripke's modified version, where she is married to a cruel man). In fact, Kripke goes on, the distinction Donnellan seems to have overlooked applies to other referential terms as well – arguably to all, although Kripke does not mention indexicals and demonstratives. In particular, Kripke discusses the case we have already encountered in the footnote from "Naming and Necessity":

> Two people see Smith in the distance and mistake him for Jones. They have a brief colloquy: "What is Jones doing?" "Raking the leaves." "Jones," in the common language of both, is a name of Jones; it *never* names Smith. Yet, in some sense, on this occasion, clearly both participants in the dialogue have referred to Smith. (1977: 263)

Here, according to Kripke, one may agree that, by using "Jones," the two people refer to Smith.[9] But it is certainly beyond dispute that what the name they use refers to on that occasion is Jones (in their common language, it is a name *of* him!). All in all, then, it

[9] Note, however, that, as Devitt remarked a long time ago (1981*a*: 514-5), concerning this case intuitions are much less clear than concerning Linsky's. Perhaps, following Devitt, one should rather say that by that use the two people refer partially to Jones and partially to Smith. I shall not take a stand on this here. (On this issue, see also footnote 13 and Section 4 below.)

seems as if for every use of a (non-empty) proper name or a (proper) definite description, i.e., for every *token* of them, we need to distinguish two important relations it bears to individuals, *speaker's reference* and *semantic reference*, and in some cases the individual a token is related to by the first relation differs from the individual that very token is related to by the second.[10]

Unlike in "Naming and Necessity," in the 1977 article the distinction between speaker's reference and semantic reference is introduced by means of theoretical considerations, and as part of a "general apparatus." In fact, Kripke's alleged starting point is now Paul Grice's approach to meaning: "[f]irst, let us distinguish, following Grice, between what *the speaker's words meant*, on a given occasion, and what *he meant*, in saying these words, on that occasion" (262). After discussing some examples, he sums up:

> The notion of what words can mean, in the language, is semantical: it is given by the conventions of our language. What they mean, on a given occasion, is determined, on a given occasion, by these conventions, together with the intentions of the speaker and various contextual features. Finally what the speaker meant, on a given occasion, in saying certain words, derives from various further special intentions of the speaker, together with various general principles, applicable to all human languages regardless of their special conventions. (Cf. Grice's "conversational maxims.") (263)

Only at this point does Kripke introduce his distinction. According to him, in fact, speaker's reference and semantic reference "are special cases of [these] Gricean notions" (*ibid*.). I shall postpone the discussion of this claim to the next Section.

Concerning semantic reference, in the article Kripke does not say much. His characterization of it is the following:

> If a speaker has a designator in his idiolect, certain conventions of his idiolect (given various facts about the world) determine the referent in the idiolect: that I call the *semantic referent* of the designator. (If the designator is ambiguous, or contains indexicals, demonstratives, or the like, we must speak of the semantic referent on a given occasion. The referent will be determined

[10] As a matter of fact, Kripke's speaker's reference is not a binary relation between a token and an object but a ternary relation between a speaker, a use of a designator and an object. However, from it a binary relation may easily be defined along the following lines: a token of a designator *speaker-refers* to an object if and only if the speaker who produces the former refers to the latter by using the designator on that occasion.

by the conventions of the language plus the speaker's intentions and various contextual features.) (*ibid*.)

Coming from Kripke, this appeal to *idiolects* is somewhat surprising, but it is probably due to his willingness to remain neutral about semantic matters when outlining the distinction between semantic reference and speaker's reference – one has to acknowledge the distinction, whatever his or her semantic theory. In fact, in a footnote appended to the passage, Kripke adds: "If the views about proper names I have advocated in 'Naming and Necessity' are correct ... the conventions regarding names in an idiolect usually involve the fact that the idiolect is no mere idiolect, but part of a common language, in which reference may be passed from link to link" (273 n. 20). Indeed, if those views are correct, as I shall assume throughout the paper, semantic reference, at least as far as proper names are concerned, is a *historical* matter. As I have already mentioned, I have tried to develop Kripke's chain of communication picture into a full-blown theory elsewhere, and I shall not say anything more about semantic reference here except for this brief remark: in the above characterization, Kripke explicitly mentions *speaker's intentions* but *only* to deal with ambiguity and indexicality. As a matter of fact, I believe Kripke is wrong in claiming that to deal with these linguistic phenomena we need to appeal to intentions, but I shall not argue in favor of this here. However, what I would like to be noticed is that, except when ambiguity or indexicality is involved, Kripke himself does not seem to think that speaker's intentions play any role in determining semantic reference (unless the notion of convention invoked in his characterization needs to be explained in terms of them, which I do not think is the case if the chain of communication picture is on the right track).[11]

Let us now move on to speaker's reference. Kripke begins with some words of caution, stating that "[s]peaker's reference is a more difficult notion" (263). This is already interesting, given that it contrasts with a certain attitude some philosophers have towards the notion (as if, contrary perhaps to semantic reference, speaker's reference

[11] Actually, this is not completely true, since a few lines after characterizing semantic reference Kripke writes that "[i]n a given idiolect, the semantic referent of a designator (without indexicals) is given by a *general* intention of the speaker to refer to a certain object whenever the designator is used" (264). However, I think that this appeal to general intentions may easily be dispensed with.

were easy to characterize). Then, he presents the Smith-Jones case we have already encountered and asks how we can account for it. Here is his answer:

> Suppose a speaker takes it that a certain object *a* fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent of a designator, "*d*." Then, wishing to say something about *a*, he uses "*d*" to speak about *a*; say, he says "*ϕ(d)*." Then, he said, of *a*, on that occasion, that it *ϕ*'d; in the appropriate Gricean sense ..., he *meant* that *a ϕ*'d. This is true even if *a* is not really the semantic referent of "d." If it is not, then *that a ϕ's* is included in what he meant (on that occasion), but not in the meaning of his words (on that occasion). (263-4)

From this, Kripke arrives at his definition of *speaker's reference*:

> we may tentatively define the speaker's referent of a designator to be that object which the speaker wishes to talk about, on a given occasion, and believes fulfills the conditions for being the semantic referent of the designator. He uses the designator with the intention of making an assertion about the object in question (which may not really be the semantic referent, if the speaker's belief that it fulfills the appropriate semantic conditions is in error). 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. (264)

So, it seems that, for there to be speaker's reference, there has to be, (1), a speaker's use of a designator to assert something (but, I assume, any other illocutionary act would do as well), backed by, (2), his or her wish to talk about a particular object, and, (3), his or her belief about that particular object that it is the semantic referent of the designator.[12] More precisely, a speaker *a* refers to an individual *b* by using a designator *c* if and only if, (1), *a* wishes to talk about *b*, and, (2), *a* believes of *b* that it is the semantic referent of *c*, and, (3), *a* produces a token of *c* in the course of accomplishing an illocutionary act.[13]

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[12] As a matter of fact, Kripke is aware that some of the cases discussed by Donnellan (for example, that of "the king" used to refer to someone known to be the usurper) do not involve such a belief. He takes them to be "of a somewhat exceptional kind" and writes: "Largely for the sake of simplicity of exposition, I have excluded such ... from the notion of speaker's reference .... I do not think that the situation would be materially altered if [the notion] were revised so as to admit these cases, in a more refined analysis" (273 n. 22). I shall go along with Kripke's assumption here. Probably, to deal with these cases, the analysis would have to invoke even more sophisticated beliefs.

[13] By the way, let me note that, according to Kripke's definition, we should say that in the Smith-Jones case by using "Jones" the two speakers refer not only to Smith but also to Jones (see footnote 9 above). In fact, they certainly wish to talk about Jones (if not, why would they use "Jones"?) and of course believe

Is this a good definition? I have some qualms concerning the first clause, because it is not clear to me what *wishing to talk about* consists in exactly. However, for the sake of the argument I shall simply assume that a broadly causal account will work here: what someone wishes to talk about when he or she accomplishes an illocutionary act is whatever object prompts his or her act – though, obviously, much more than this would need to be said. The third clause is trivial. We shall pause on the second clause, which makes *a*'s referring to *b* by using *c* depend on *a*'s believing of *b* that it is the semantic referent of *c*, in the next Section. However, there is no doubt that it is intelligible. So, if we ignore the qualms concerning *wishing to talk about*, we may conclude that Kripke's notion of speaker's reference is well defined: we know what has to be the case for there to be what he calls "speaker's reference."

3. The Gricean project

At the beginning of his article, Kripke writes that he believes that the "contrast" between speaker's reference and semantic reference "is of considerable constructive as well as critical importance to the philosophy of language" (255). At the very end of the article, the claim is reiterated in more or less the same words.

Actually, Kripke's distinction has been enormously successful. Nowadays, talk of speaker's reference beyond semantic reference is widespread among philosophers of language. In fact, almost all of them are now convinced that reference comes in two different sorts:[14] there is semantic reference, which contributes to determine the semantic properties of the linguistic expressions we use, and speaker's reference, which contributes to determine other, *pragmatic*, properties of them and which a theory of speech acts should pay attention to.

Notice that this already muddies the waters concerning our initial question, which, if Kripke is right, turns out to be ambiguous: it can concern the determination either of the semantic reference or of the speaker's reference of a proper name token. And, if it

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of him that he is the semantic referent of "Jones." Actually, Kripke himself seems to acknowledge this (274-5 n. 28).

[14] A notable exception is constituted by the neo-Donnellanians (see the works mentioned in footnote 5 above). Although I strongly disagree with their account of reference, I am sympathetic to their 'unitary' approach to it.

concerns the determination of the latter, the answer cannot but be positive: given how speaker's reference depends on the speaker's wishes and beliefs, of course the mind of the speaker does play a substantial role in determining the speaker's reference of the proper name tokens he or she produces. But things can become even worse, since if Kripke's distinction is interpreted so as to endorse the Gricean project, a move we are about to discuss, even semantic reference ends up being 'mind-contaminated,' contrary to what I take to be one of the main lessons of Kripke's chain of communication picture.

But, are we really forced to assume that reference comes in two different sorts?

To begin with, let me note that the fact that the notion of speaker's reference introduced by Kripke is well defined does not settle the issue yet. To see this, consider the following case. Micky wishes to go to Bologna and believes that train 2286 goes there. Hence, she takes that train. Unfortunately, her belief is false: train 2286 goes in the opposite direction, to Milan. This can happen, especially to a person as inattentive as Micky. We know how to describe the situation: Micky intended to go to Bologna but, because of her inattention (and, more specifically, of her false belief about train 2286), she chose the wrong means and ended up going to Milan. But now, suppose that someone introduces the notion of, say, *traveler's going*, defining it in the following way: a traveler *a* goes to a place *b* by taking a train *c* if and only if, (1), *a* wishes to go to *b*, and, (2), *a* believes of *b* that it is where *c* goes, and, (3), *a* takes *c* for his or her journey. Undoubtedly, the notion is well defined: we know what has to be case for there to be what our introducer calls "traveler's going." In particular, according to it we may say that by taking train 2286 Micky *went* to Bologna, although of course according to another, perhaps primary and certainly more standard, sense of "going," by taking that train she *went* to Milan, because Milan is where the train *went*. It is even possible that the notion thus defined helps explain some of the traveler's (e.g., Micky's) actions. But I assume that everyone would regard it as absurd to conclude from this that going (to a place) comes in two different sorts: intending to go somewhere and failing to do so does not amount to going there according to some other sense of "going." By parity of reasoning, we should not be too hasty to conclude that reference comes in two different sorts only because Kripke's notion of speaker's reference is well defined, since the notion of traveler's going is also well defined, and along similar lines.

To establish whether reference really comes in two different sorts, then, we need to go beyond Kripke's definition. The only reasonable strategy, it seems to me, is to consider the theoretical roles the notion so defined is supposed to play, to see, (1), whether it can really play these roles, and, (2), if indeed it can play them, whether the fact that it can justifies the claim that speaker's reference is some sort of reference (in contrast, to repeat, to traveler's going, which no one would take to be any sort of going).

Well, what are the theoretical roles that Kripke's notion is supposed to play? From what Kripke writes at the beginning of his article (see above) we may infer that he takes the notion to have both a *critical* and a *constructive* use. We need, then, to consider the two of them.

Kripke's article is almost entirely devoted to the critical use of the notion of speaker's reference and of the ensuing distinction. As Kripke makes explicit in the last paragraph of it, in fact, the latter can play an important role "as a critical tool to block postulation of unwarranted ambiguities" (271). We have already seen in the preceding Section how this tool basically works. Consider the Smith-Jones example again, and suppose that, impressed by the two speakers' dialogue, some theorists claim that, in both speakers' idiolect, the name "Jones," which they are using, is semantically ambiguous: it habitually refers to Jones, but in the context of the dialogue to Smith.[15] Against them, it can be objected that they are confusing what the speakers are referring to, on that occasion, with what the name the speakers use refers to, on that and other occasions: the claim that "Jones" is semantically ambiguous (in the sense just specified) seems to be unwarranted. Of course, the case of definite descriptions is the one Kripke is mostly interested in. Consider Linsky's example again. It is reasonable to interpret Donnellan (1966) as claiming that the description "her husband," which the speaker uses, is semantically ambiguous: it often refers to someone who is the husband of the contextually salient woman, but in the context depicted by Linsky to a man who is not in fact her husband. Against Donnellan, Kripke objects that he confuses what the speaker refers to, on that occasion, with what the description the speaker uses refers to, on that occasion, who is, as for any other use of it, the husband of the contextually

[15] By the way, let me note that the neo-Donnellanians tend to make similar claims (see e.g. Almog, Nichols and Pepp 2015: 368-74 and Capuano 2018). Of course, they know well about Kripke's "critical tool," but they are unimpressed by it.

salient woman (if there is any): the claim that "her husband" is semantically ambiguous (in the sense just specified), Kripke concludes, is unwarranted.

As I have already made clear, definite descriptions are not the topic of this paper, and this is certainly not the place to evaluate Kripke's argument. Thus, concerning this I limit myself to saying that I believe Kripke's considerations indeed have some bite against Donnellan's views, although by themselves they do not suffice to settle the issue concerning the semantics of definite descriptions (as, I hasten to add, Kripke himself is ready to admit).[16] What is important to notice for our purposes, however, is that even if the argument succeeds, its success does not essentially depend on there being another sort of reference beyond semantic reference. To block postulation of unwarranted ambiguities, in fact, we do not need the critical tool Kripke introduced, although its introduction may have been helpful from a rhetorical point of view. We can get exactly the same results by arguing that in the critical cases, be they the Smith-Jones one or Linsky's, the postulator confuses what the speaker *intended to refer to*, on that occasion, with what the speaker *actually referred to*, on that occasion (which is determined by the semantic properties of the designator the speaker uses). The distinction we need is the simple and commonsensical one between *intending to do something* and *doing something*, as applied to reference. The notion of speaker's reference is, then, an idle wheel here. Worse than that, it can mislead, and has actually misled, people, since it invites one to obliterate the obvious and important difference between successful and unsuccessful intentions, namely that when our intention is successful, we end up doing what we intended; when it isn't, we fail to do what we intended. Let me emphasize the point: *failed reference to something is no reference to it*.

Well, but what about the constructive use of the notion of speaker's reference and of the ensuing distinction? Doesn't it vindicate the claim that reference comes in two different sorts? Unfortunately, concerning it Kripke says almost nothing. In fact, he limits himself to touching on the issue in the very final passage of his article, which is now finally time to quote in its entirety:

> I think that the distinction between semantic reference and speaker's reference will be of importance not only (as in the present paper) as a critical tool to block postulation of

[16] For some criticisms of Kripke's argument, see for example Devitt 1981*a* and Devitt 2004.

> unwarranted ambiguities, but also will be of considerable constructive importance for a theory of language. In particular, I find it plausible that a diachronic account of the evolution of language is likely to suggest that what was originally a mere speaker's reference may, if it becomes habitual in a community, evolve into a semantic reference. And this consideration may be *one* of the factors needed to clear up some puzzles in the theory of reference. (1977: 271)

Thus, Kripke thinks that to explain the evolution of language, and more specifically the establishment of a semantic relation of reference between a designator and an object, we can profitably use the notion of speaker's reference.

The claim seems to me to be open to two interpretations, one moderate, the other radical. The moderate one, which, for reasons that will become clear at the end of this Section, I assume to be the one Kripke had in mind, sees speaker's reference as being involved in the puzzling phenomenon of (semantic) *reference change*, on which Gareth Evans (1973: 11) famously put his finger when arguing against what he called "the Causal Theory of Names." Kripke himself, in fact, mentions Evans' Madagascar case in a footnote appended to the last sentence of the passage just quoted. And Kripke's idea that we can profitably use the notion of speaker's reference to clear up the puzzle has actually been exploited and developed by Devitt (1981*b*: 150-1; 2015: 121-4), who argues that reference change is explained by "*change in the pattern of groundings*" (2015: 122). Now, I actually have some qualms about Kripke's idea and Devitt's development – I still find the puzzle puzzling (see Bianchi 2015: 104-6) –, but even if we concede that the solution works, it does not seem to me that this provides good enough reasons to claim that reference comes in two different sorts. Exactly the same kind of explanation, in fact, can be obtained by appealing to massive reference failure (reference failure that "becomes habitual in a community", to use Kripke's phrase), which somehow determines the establishment of a new semantic relation.[17] Speaker's reference is an idle wheel here as well, in my opinion.

[17] To avoid misunderstanding, let me make it clear that I am using "reference failure" here to talk not, as is more common, of cases where no reference is in fact made, but of cases where reference is made to something that is not what the speaker intended to refer to. In these cases, the speaker intends to refer to something (e.g., Smith, or the great African island) but *fails* and refers to something else instead (respectively, Jones and a portion of the African mainland).

However, as I have said there is a more radical interpretation of Kripke's claim. According to this, the notion of speaker's reference is useful for explaining not only (semantic) reference change, but semantic reference *tout court*. In a nutshell: *there could not be semantic reference if there were not speaker's reference*. This interpretation of Kripke's claim, and more generally of his distinction, amounts to endorsing what I have called the Gricean project, by seeing speaker's reference as *explanatorily basic* with respect to semantic reference.

We have seen in Section 2 that, to introduce his distinction, in his 1977 article Kripke appeals to Grice's work on meaning. In particular, Kripke mentions Grice's distinction "between *what the speaker's words meant,* on a given occasion, and what *he meant*, in saying these words, on that occasion" and claims that the notions of semantic reference and speaker's reference are just "special cases" of Grice's ones. The fact is, however, that one stage in Grice's general program concerning meaning was the explanation of *word* (and sentence) *meaning* in terms of *utterer's meaning*, the other stage being of course that of explaining the latter in terms of *intentions*.[18] As is often the case, the details of Grice's proposal varied over the years, but fortunately we do not need to pause on them for our purposes. On the explanatory priority of utterer's meaning over word and sentence meaning, however, Grice was always crystal clear. In his very first article on the topic, for example, he concludes his criticism of a causal account of meaning, which he attributes to C. L. Stevenson (not to be confused with Devitt's later and quite different causal theory of proper names that we shall examine in the next Section) by saying that "the causal theory ignores the fact that the meaning (in general) of a sign needs to be explained in terms of what users of the sign do (or should) mean by it on particular occasions; and so the latter notion, which is unexplained by the causal theory, is in fact the fundamental one" (1957: 217). And twenty-five years later, in his late revisiting of these issues, he writes:

[18] The first stage, which is the one I am interested in here, is discussed at length in Grice 1968. Summing up that article in a following one devoted to the second stage instead, Grice writes: "Starting with the assumption that the notion of an utterer's occasion-meaning can be explicated, in a certain way, in terms of an utterer's intentions, I argue in support of the thesis that timeless meaning and applied timeless meaning can be explicated in terms of the notion of utterer's occasion-meaning (together with other notions), and so ultimately in terms of the notion of intention" (1969: 150).

> It seems plausible to suppose that to say that a sentence (word, expression) means something (to say that "John is a bachelor" means that John is an unmarried male, or whatever it is) is to be somehow understood in terms of what particular users of that sentence (word, expression) mean on particular occasions. The first possible construal of this is rather crude: namely, that usually people do use this sentence, etc., in this way. A construal which seems to me rather better is that it is conventional to use this sentence in this way; and there are many others. (1982: 298)[19]

It is certainly not within the scope of this paper to evaluate Grice's claim concerning the explanatory priority of utterer's meaning over word or sentence meaning, even less his entire program concerning meaning, although what I am saying may have some bearing on it.[20] My focus here is rather what I have called the Gricean project, the related claim that speaker's reference is explanatorily prior to semantic reference, a claim that we have seen emerge from a radical interpretation of Kripke's passage about the "constructive" use of his distinction. This, in fact, has an obvious impact on the issues we are interested in. First, if the claim were true, semantic reference would depend on a more basic relation, which it would be difficult not to consider as a form of reference, hence we would be almost forced to finally acknowledge that reference comes in two different sorts. Second, since, as we have seen, speaker's reference in turn depends on wishes and beliefs, we would have to give a positive answer to our initial question (and, more generally, adopt a psychological model of the functioning of language): the mind of the speaker would play a role in determining both the speaker's reference (directly, so to say) and the semantic reference (more indirectly, via the explanatory dependence of semantic reference on speaker's reference) of the proper name tokens he or she produces.

Now, many philosophers of language who would describe themselves as having a broadly speaking Kripkean approach to reference do indeed endorse, either explicitly or

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[19] Interestingly, in the immediately following paragraph Grice adds: "I do not think that [sentence (word, expression)] meaning is essentially connected with convention. What it is essentially connected with is some way of fixing what sentences mean: convention is indeed one of these ways, but it is not the only one. I can invent a language, call it Deutero-Esperanto, which nobody ever speaks. That makes me the authority, and I can lay down what is proper" (298-9). Thus, *contra* Devitt (see the next Section), Grice believes that there can be word meaning (i.e, a word can have *semantic* properties) even in the absence of conventions.

[20] For some early criticism of Grice's claim, see Black 1973, Biro 1979, and Yu 1979. For a defence of it, Suppes 1986.

implicitly, the Gricean project. In the next Section, I shall discuss Devitt's case, whose causal theory constitutes a detailed account of speaker's reference, semantic reference, and the explanatory dependence of the latter on the former. To give only one further example, in a recent article Mark Sainsbury defended the claim that "[a]lthough reference is often transmitted causally, what determines semantic reference is conventionalized speaker-reference" (2015: 195), in the following way:

> The "semantic reference" of a name, as used in a community, is its conventionalized, stabilized or normalized speaker-reference in the community. "London" refers to London among many speakers who live in England (and elsewhere) because it's a conventional or stabilized or normal fact about these speakers that they use the specific name "London" … only if they intend thereby to refer to London. The notion of semantic reference is a theoretical one, and one that needs to be constructed to suit theoretical purposes. … [W]e need a conception of semantic reference that will supervene on use and help explain features of usage (for example, agreement, disagreement, correction). Basing semantic reference on speaker-reference is the most straightforward, and perhaps the only, way to achieve this. Speaker-reference can be theoretically described without any theoretical commitment to semantic reference, so the supervenience relation has a reductive character. Much work has been done, and much remains to be done, to sort out what the supervenience relation should be based on. Here I give a trio of possibilities (convention, stability, normalization); a determinate thesis would need to choose from among them, and also clarify the preferred option. (209)

But, let us finally ask, is the Gricean project really something that should be pursued? More specifically, can Kripke's speaker's reference be used to explain semantic reference? On the face of it, the answer to the latter question should be a round "No." As we saw in the preceding Section, in fact, according to Kripke's definition a speaker cannot refer to *b* by using a designator *c* if he or she does not believe of *b* that it is the semantic referent of *c*. But, in order to believe of something that it is the semantic referent of something else, of course the speaker needs to have the concept of semantic reference. Since it is scarcely imaginable that one has this concept without there being semantic reference, we must then conclude that speaker's reference presupposes semantic reference: the second clause in Kripke's definition rules out the possibility of explaining the latter in terms of the former (and this, let me add, renders Kripke's

distinction much less Gricean than he himself alleged it was).[21] In a nutshell: according to Kripke's definition *there could not be speaker's reference if there were not semantic reference*.

4. Devitt's causal theory of proper names

We have reached the conclusion that Kripke's definition of speaker's reference rules out the interpretation of his distinction amounting to endorsing what I have called the Gricean project, which is the most promising, if not the only, way to use the distinction to claim that reference comes in two different sorts, and that as a consequence our initial question should be given a positive answer. However, there is still an option that we have to discuss. Those who for whatever reasons (for example, because they sympathize with Grice's general approach to language) believe that something like the Gricean project must be on the right track, might insist that Kripke was onto something important when he introduced the notion of speaker's reference, but that his definition of it was inadequate. They might even support the latter claim by voicing some independent doubts about the second clause of Kripke's definition, noting that it over-intellectualizes the speech act of referring. According to the definition, in fact, in order to refer to something one needs to have fairly sophisticated semantic beliefs. It is quite implausible that children have such beliefs, but it is no less implausible that they are not able to refer.[22] Moreover, this seems to be in stark contrast with the picture of reference Kripke himself offered in "Naming and Necessity" – referring is easy: to succeed in it we do not need to know, or even believe, anything about what we are referring to, but only to be connected with it by means of an appropriate chain of communication – and with the assumption he implicitly makes in the article in which he gives his definition

[21] I first noted that Kripke made speaker's reference "parasitic" on semantic reference in Bianchi 2011: 277. See also Bianchi and Bonanini 2014: 182, and Bianchi forthcoming. Peter Hanks has recently made exactly the same point. As he writes, Kripke "defines the notion of speaker reference partly in terms of the notion of semantic reference" (2019: 14). Therefore, "[i]f Kripke is right, and the concept of semantic reference figures crucially in the definition of speaker reference, then it cannot be that speaker reference is somehow prior to semantic reference" (*ibid.*). Much earlier, Rod Bertolet noted some tension between Grice's framework and Kripke's distinction ("There is … no easy assimilation of the example Kripke discusses to Grice's distinction between what a speaker's words mean and what he means by them or in saying them" (1981: 72)), but the reasons he offered are quite different.
[22] This objection is hinted at in Devitt 1981*a*: 513.

that every time one uses a designator to assert something he or she is referring (even though in the large majority of cases the speaker's referent coincides with the semantic referent of the designator).[23]

Although to my knowledge nobody has ever explicitly stated the option just outlined, I believe that, upon reflection, quite a lot of philosophers would be ready to subscribe to it. In the passage quoted in the preceding Section, for example, Sainsbury writes that "[s]peaker-reference can be theoretically described without any theoretical commitment to semantic reference," which is not something that anyone accepting Kripke's definition could say. In this Section, I shall focus on Devitt's causal theory of proper names, which may be taken as a way of articulating the option within a rich, naturalistic, framework. As we shall see, without discussing Kripke's, Devitt offers a different definition of speaker's reference (in his terms, *speaker-designation*), which does not appeal to (beliefs about) semantic reference.[24] Before starting my examination, however, I would like to highlight something that more or less follows from what I have said so far but could be missed by someone who approaches Devitt's theory without paying due attention to the details of Kripke's distinction. Devitt, like anyone else who pursues the Gricean project, puts the notion Kripke introduced to a novel use, a use that was not amongst those Kripke was thinking of. Because of this, to make the notion acceptable he *cannot* simply appeal to intuitions concerning cases such as the Smith-Jones one. In fact, these intuitions *at most* justify the introduction of a notion defined as Kripke did, where a belief about semantic reference plays a crucial role, and, as we saw, a notion so defined cannot play the explanatory role Devitt wished it to play. Thus, Devitt needs to vindicate *his* distinction between speaker's reference and semantic reference in a different way.

Devitt's causal theory of proper names makes its first appearance in print in "Singular Terms," an article that draws from his PhD dissertation and is published in 1974, after "Naming and Necessity," the avowed source of inspiration, but before the article where Kripke elaborates on the distinction between speaker's reference and

[23] Perhaps, Kripke might reply by noting that there is a sense according to which, for any designator "*a*" we have in our lexicon, we may be said to believe that *a* is the semantic referent of "*a*." Even if this were true, however, it would not allow him to account for cases involving children where the speaker's referent seemingly diverges from the semantic referent.

[24] For yet another definition, more Gricean in that, unlike Devitt's, it is couched in terms of intentions (it appeals to the notion of intending to direct someone's attention to something), see Bertolet 1987.

semantic reference. Interestingly, in "Singular Terms" Devitt does not draw any such distinction. On the contrary, he offers a unitary account of reference (in his terms, *designation*). As I have argued elsewhere, this account is more Donnellanian than Kripkean, in that it explains proper name reference in terms of *having in mind* ("We can say roughly … that a name token designates an object if and only if the speaker had the object in mind (meant the object) in uttering the token" (1974: 189)), where having an object in mind is explained not in terms of having (identifying) knowledge, as done by those philosophers who adopt the principle of identifying descriptions, but causally ("one has an object in mind in virtue of a causal connection between one's state of mind and the object" (188; see also Devitt 1976: 409-10). Note, incidentally, that this implies a straight positive answer to our initial question: as in Donnellan's historical explanation theory and in the neo-Donnellanians' accounts, according to the first formulation of Devitt's causal theory the mind of the speaker *directly* determines the reference of the proper name tokens he or she produces.[25]

Only in his book *Designation* does Devitt introduce into his framework a distinction similar, but, importantly, not identical, to Kripke's. After a first outline of his causal theory of designation, which resembles the one proposed in the 1974 article, Devitt embarks on a defence of the language of thought hypothesis, and relates it to "a Gricean distinction between speaker meaning and conventional meaning" (1981b: 80):

> Consider an utterance. In my view, *what the speaker means* by the token he utters is determined by the meaning of the thought that causally underlies his utterance. On the other hand, the *conventional meaning* of the token in a community is determined by what a member of that community using a token of that physical type would commonly mean and be taken to mean. What he would commonly mean and be taken to mean depends in some way on what people have commonly meant by words of that physical type and by sentences of that structure. (*ibid.*)

Like Kripke, then, Devitt starts from Grice's approach to meaning. Contrary to Kripke, however, he explicitly subscribes to Grice's claim that word and sentence meaning should be explained in terms of speaker meaning (although not to the further one that speaker meaning should be explained in terms of intentions): "I explain

[25] I elaborate on these issues in Bianchi forthcoming. See Devitt forthcoming *a* for some discussion.

conventional meaning in terms of speaker meaning and speaker meaning in terms of thought meaning" (*ibid*.).[26] Note, also, that in Devitt's hands, Grice's sentence (word, expression) meaning has become *conventional* meaning: the explanandum is now a *conventionally determined* property of linguistic tokens (compare footnote 19 above).

Unfortunately, I cannot examine Devitt's Gricean account of meaning in its full generality here and I shall have to limit myself to discussing and criticizing his causal theory of proper name reference, which rests against that background. I believe that if what I shall say about it is on the right track, something should be readjusted in the background as well – the relationships between mind and language are not that simple! –, but I shall not argue in favor of this here.

In a recent article – his latest revisiting of his causal theory of proper names –, Devitt offers the following definitions ("biconditionals") for (proper name) speaker's reference and semantic reference:

> *Speaker-Designation*: A designational name token speaker-designates an object if and only if all the designating-chains underlying the token are grounded in the object. (2015: 125)

> *Conventional-Designation*: 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 no other object, with name tokens of that type. (126)

Let us begin by noting that the definition of semantic reference appeals explicitly to speaker's reference. For a proper name token to refer, in fact, the speaker who produced it must be participating in a (pre-existing, I assume) convention of *speaker's referring* to something by using that name. Thus, there could not be semantic reference (conventional-designation) if there were not speaker's reference (speaker-designation): Devitt is clearly pursuing the Gricean project.

Given this, the first thing that we have to check is whether, unlike Kripke's, Devitt's notion of speaker's reference can indeed be used to define semantic reference in a non-

[26] See also Devitt 1981*a*: 519: "We seem to need notions of speaker meaning that enable us to explain conventional meaning. It seems that conventional meaning must be built up in some way from common speaker meanings." For a recent general defence of this approach, see Devitt forthcoming *b*: chap. 3.

circular way. The fact that the notion is defined in terms of "designating-chains" could lead one to believe that it cannot be so used, since the word "designating" in "designating-chain" might induce the suspicion that designating-chains involve (past) semantic reference (conventional-designation). Here, however, appearances are misleading.

Designating-chains are introduced by Devitt in *Designation* in the following way:

> "underlying" a name token is a "causal chain" "accessible to" the person who produced the token. That chain, like the ability that partly constitutes it, is "grounded in" the object the name designates…. I shall call such a causal chain a … "designating-chain." (1981*b*: 29)

They are thus characterized: "D[esignating]-chains 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 borrowings)" (1981*b*: 64; 2015: 110). What is important to note for our present purposes is that designating-chains underlying a proper name token do not necessarily originate in a baptism or something like that, and do not require what Devitt calls "reference borrowings." For example, in the Smith-Jones case, there is, according to Devitt, a designating-chain underlying the "Jones" tokens produced by the speakers in their colloquy originating in their perception of Smith, although there is another one originating in Jones' baptism.[27] Hence, some designating-chains do involve (past) semantic reference, but some do not, and this suffices to avoid circularity, as Devitt himself notes in *Designation*:

> Conventions are explained in terms of speaker meanings. Speaker meanings are explained in terms of thought meanings. Thought meanings are partly explained in terms of conventions. We seemed to have a circle. What we really have is more like a spiral, a spiral that starts from crude thought meanings. (1981*b*: 85)

[27] This is why, according to Devitt (see footnote 9 above), those tokens *partially* speaker-refer to Smith and *partially* speaker-refer to Jones.

Thus, we may conclude that unlike Kripke's, Devitt's notion of speaker's reference can indeed be used to explain semantic reference. The remaining, crucial, question is obviously whether the resulting explanation is a good one. To answer, we need to better examine the two definitions Devitt offers.

Devitt's account of speaker's reference is very similar to his "Singular Terms" account of reference *tout court*, hence to Donnellan's historical explanation theory and to the neo-Donnellanian accounts, as Devitt himself recognizes, although with some reservations concerning Donnellan (see Devitt forthcoming *a*). Basically, it is an account of the *state of mind* leading to the production of a proper name token, or, as Devitt also likes to say, of the *thought* the speaker is *expressing* by the token, as the following comment to an example clearly shows: "The token [speaker-]designated that person in virtue of being immediately caused by a thought that is grounded in that person by a designating-chain" (2015: 111). In fact, Devitt's causal theory of speaker's reference bears one of the extreme consequences of Donnellan's historical explanation theory: once one has a thought about an individual, he or she can express the former and (speaker-)refer to the latter by whatever name he or she wants.[28] The token he or she then produces (speaker)-refers to the individual the thought is about, no matter how that individual was baptized and what any preceding tokens of the same name referred to:

> A person can, of course, speaker-designate an object by a name without there being any convention of so doing. All that is required is that a token of the name have underlying it a designating-chain grounded in the object. So I could now speaker-designate Aristotle with any old name simply on the strength of the link to Aristotle that is constitutive of my ability to designate him by 'Aristotle.' (2015: 120)

The main difference between Devitt's view in *Designation* (and later articles) and his preceding (as well as Donnellan's and the neo-Donnellanians') view is that he does not claim any more that the state of mind leading to the production of a proper name token, or the thought the speaker expresses by the token, determines what the token *semantically* refers to. For a proper name token to semantically refer to something, in fact, the speaker producing it must be participating in a *convention* of speaker-referring

[28] For more elaboration on this, see Bianchi forthcoming.

to it with tokens of that type, as Devitt's definition of semantic reference (*Conventional-Designation*) states. No convention, no semantic reference.

What about Devitt's account of speaker's reference? I must confess I do not have much against it, except that I do not consider it an account of … *reference*, of any sort. As I said, it is an account of the *state of mind* leading to the production of a proper name token, or of the *thought* the speaker is *expressing* by the token. More specifically, it is a *causal* account of that state of mind's, or of that thought's, *aboutness*. Now, that aboutness is to be accounted for in causal terms is something I wholeheartedly agree with. I am also quite comfortable with the so-called *representational theory of mind*, and with the *language of thought hypothesis*, which provide the theoretical background to Devitt's causal account.[29] One minor perplexity I have concerns Devitt's apparent identification of the (complex) state of mind leading to the production of a proper name token with the thought the speaker expresses with the token. A consequence of this is Devitt's idea that there can be *partial* speaker's reference.[30] Consider the Smith-Jones case once again. As we have already seen, Devitt claims that "[b]ecause there are d-chains to both Jones and Smith, … neither was the speaker's referent but each was his *partial* referent" (1981*a*: 515). While I agree that the (complex) state of mind leading to the speaker's production of that token of "Jones" *concerned* both Jones and Smith, I find it more natural to say that the thought he expressed on that occasion was only *about* Jones, although it was brought about by a number of other thoughts of his, some of which were (fully) about Jones and some of which were (fully) about Smith. But this is perhaps only a verbal disagreement, and in any case it does not bear directly on the issues I am interested in here.

My main point, as I suggested, is simply that Devitt's speaker's reference does not seem to have much to do with reference. Devitt's is an account of the state of mind leading to the production of a proper name token, and as such can help explain language use. For example, it can help explain why, in the Smith-Jones case, the two speakers use

[29] For my endorsement of (a peculiar version of) the representational theory of mind and the language of thought hypothesis, see Bianchi 2005 and 2007. The version is peculiar in that it takes the language of thought to be the language we speak (cf. Field 1978 and 2001). In *Designation*, Devitt himself came very close to endorsing it (1981b: 75-9). My endorsement of it partly explains my resistance to the idea that thought aboutness explains semantic reference (it is the other way around!) However, my criticisms below of Devitt's account of proper name semantic reference (and, more generally, of the Gricean project) are independent of this.

[30] For an early criticism of Devitt's idea of partial reference, see McKinsey 1976.

the name "Jones" when they see Smith in the distance raking the leaves (note, however, that the explanation also needs to appeal to the fact that Jones is the semantic referent of "Jones"). But how does all this relate to proper name reference, if we assume, as Devitt does, that Kripke's chain of communication picture is on the right track?

Of course, we already know Devitt's answer. He is pursuing the Gricean project, hence he aims at explaining proper name semantic reference in terms of what he calls "speaker's reference." The specific form of this explanation is indicated in Devitt's definition of semantic reference (conventional-designation): a proper name token semantically refers to an object if and only if the speaker, in producing the token, is participating in a convention of speaker-referring to that object, and no other object, with name tokens of that type. Thus, according to Devitt *there could not be (proper name) semantic reference if there were not conventions of speaker-referring, in which the producers of proper name tokens participate*. But, is this really what we should say about proper name semantic reference, if we assume that Kripke's chain of communication picture is on the right track?

Consider the famous passage where Kripke introduces his picture in the second lecture of "Naming and Necessity":

> 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 was 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 the 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 and such'. (1972: 298-9 (1980: 91-2))

I take this to be a picture of how proper names *semantically* work (as we saw in Section 2, in "Naming and Necessity" Kripke also introduces his distinction, but he was certainly not aiming at providing a picture of speaker's reference in the second lecture). But note that in the picture, no mention is made either of speaker's reference or of conventions, even less, of course, of conventions of speaker-referring. Much more simply, a name come to be introduced by someone for something, after which it is spread around through use. And even if one wished to see in this spread the establishment of a convention, he or she should acknowledge that according to Kripke's picture proper name tokens already (semantically!) refer before the convention gets established. The fact is that semantic reference, at least as far as proper names are concerned, is basically a *historical* relation. Kripke himself summarizes the point in the following way:

> In general our reference depends not just on what we think ourselves, but on other people in the community, the history of how the name reached one, and things like that. It is by following such a history that one gets to the reference. (1972: 301 (1980: 95))

Let me note, by the way, that one almost immediate consequence of Kripke's picture is that the reference of a proper name is not determined or *fixed* anew every time a token of it is produced. On the contrary, any token of it, except for the first, *inherits* its reference from preceding ones, to which it is historically connected. Again, no speaker's reference, and no participation in a convention of speaker-referring, seem to be involved in this.

Now, as Kripke himself admits, his characterization is "far less specific than a real set of necessary and sufficient conditions for reference would be" (1972: 300 (1980: 93)). To develop his picture into a definition of proper name semantic reference, many details need to be filled in, and many problems settled.[31] Thus, Devitt might sensibly argue that it is when we try to fill in the details and settle the problems that we realize that we have to appeal to speaker's reference and conventions of speaker-referring. But is it really so?

[31] Notable among the latter is, of course, the one raised by Evans with the Madagascar case, which we mentioned in Section 3.

Consider the introduction of a name – in Devitt's terms, *reference fixing* – first. Devitt might argue that it requires what he calls "speaker-designation": to introduce a name for something, one must speaker-refer to it with the name. Which means, roughly, that the introduction must be "immediately caused by a thought that is grounded in [it] by a designating-chain" – the state of mind leading to the production of the 'introductory' token must be about the individual that gets named. Now, there is no doubt that standard name introductions involve a lot of mental goings-on in the introducer(s)'s minds, and I have no difficulty in conceding that very often the individual that gets named is the one speaker-referred to, in Devitt's sense. But is it always so? Reference fixing is a complex phenomenon, with various factors often playing a role.[32] I take it to be possible for a name to be introduced for something that is not speaker-referred to by the introducer(s), or for a name to be introduced without any speaker's reference being made, or even without any mental goings-on taking place – couldn't some sort of sophisticated machine mechanically and more or less randomly assign names? What is important in Kripke's picture of proper name semantic reference, I would like to say, is *that* a name is introduced – a relation between a name and an individual is established –, not *how* the name is introduced – *how* the relation is established.

Consider next the spread of a name after its introduction – in Devitt's terms, reference borrowing. Devitt might argue that it requires conventions of speaker-referring: to semantically refer to something with a token of an already introduced name for that something, one must participate in a convention of speaker-referring to it with name tokens of that type. Now, I have nothing against talking of conventions in this case, provided only that one admits 'infra-personal' conventions – conventions that do not involve other people.[33] But are they really conventions concerning speaker's reference (or, as Devitt also likes to say, conventions regarding the expression of thoughts)? And for a name token to semantically refer to something, is it really necessary that it be produced by someone who is participating in such a convention? According to Devitt, "[*p*]*articipating in a convention* [of such a kind] concerns the process of a speaker using the name because she has a disposition, dependent on the dispositions of others, to use it to express thoughts grounded in a certain object" (2015:

[32] See Martí 2015: 86-89 for some converging considerations.
[33] For the reasons of this proviso, see footnote 1, footnote 19, and especially Martí 2015: 89-91.

126). But, nowadays many semantically referring name tokens are literally produced by copying machines. Do these machines really have any disposition to express thoughts? Again, what is important in Kripke's picture is that most proper name tokens semantically refer in virtue of a certain historical connection they have with other tokens of the same name. It may be difficult to say exactly what this historical connection amounts to (for my attempt, which uses Kaplan's (1990) notion of *repetition*, see Bianchi 2015), but appealing to conventions of speaker-referring seems to me a false step.

Of course, much more than this needs to be said about both reference fixing and reference borrowing, but even these scattered considerations seem to me to cast a dark shadow on Devitt's explanation of proper name semantic reference in terms of speaker's reference. Those who believe that Kripke's chain of communication picture is on the right track, as Devitt and I certainly do, should rather abandon the Gricean project.

5. Conclusion

Let me recapitulate. In this paper, I have critically examined the distinction between speaker's reference and semantic reference, a distinction that was introduced in the philosophical debate by Kripke in the Seventies and is now taken for granted by most philosophers of language. I first focused on Kripke's definition of speaker's reference, and used the example of the structurally similar definition of traveler's going to argue that it does not justify the claim that reference comes in two different sorts. Then, I briefly considered the theoretical roles the notion of speaker's reference is supposed to play. According to Kripke, in fact, the notion has both a critical and a constructive use. From the critical point of view, it can serve as a "tool to block postulation of unwarranted ambiguities"; from the constructive one, it can help explain the puzzling phenomenon of reference change. But a quick look at how the notion would play these theoretical roles reinforced my doubts about the claim that reference comes in two different sorts. Finally, I took a closer look at another major role many philosophers assign to speaker's reference, that of contributing to the explanation of semantic

reference. Interpreting Kripke's distinction in this way amounts to endorsing what I have called, for obvious reasons, the Gricean project. The Gricean project is in fact the most promising, if not the only, way to use Kripke's distinction to claim that reference comes in two different sorts. Concerning this, however, I first noted that Kripke's definition of speaker's reference makes the notion incompatible with the project: since speaker's reference is defined in terms of semantic reference, it cannot be used to explain it. Then, I examined Devitt's causal theory of proper names, which offers a detailed account of both speaker's and semantic reference. Devitt explicitly pursues the Gricean project: unlike Kripke, he defines speaker's reference without appealing to semantic reference, and then explains the latter in terms of the former. However, I argued that there is at least some tension between this explanation and Kripke's chain of communication picture, a picture Devitt's causal theory was meant to develop.

My tentative conclusion is that those philosophers who believe Kripke's chain of communication picture is on the right track, as many do nowadays, should abandon the Gricean project, and with it the claim that reference comes in two different sorts. And perhaps, even the claim that the mind of the speaker plays a role in determining the reference of the proper name tokens he or she produces. If we stop distinguishing between speaker's reference and semantic reference, we may hope to make some progress in our understanding of reference.[34]

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[34] Parts of this article are taken from "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference: A Theoretically Useful Distinction?," an unpublished paper that I presented at the *First Parma Workshop on Semantics and Pragmatics* (September 2011) and the *Workshop on Reference and Frege Puzzles* (Umeå, November 2012). I am grateful to all those who intervened on those occasions. I would also like to thank Joseph Almog, Antonio Capuano, Michael Devitt, Dunja Jutronić, Paolo Leonardi, and Stephen P. Schwartz for their comments on an earlier draft (and Dunja for her patience as well!).

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