Proper Names and Semantic Knowledge

1. Introduction: Two Pictures of Names and Naming

In his *Naming and Necessity* Kripke has presented an influential ‘picture’ of proper name reference and use. This picture is animated by an intuition already articulated by W. E. Johnson. In court we justify our application of a name to a man on the grounds of ‘the presumed identity of the man before us with the man to whom his god-parents have given the name’ (Johnson 1921, 85) This observation suggests that an expression $N$ is a name of an object $x$ if, and only if, $N$ has been given to $x$ in a baptism or dubbing.\(^1\) One way to think about dubbings is to take them to create what Kaplan calls ‘common currency names’, a name that refers to a particular object.\(^2\) In communication, such a name is passed on from one speaker to another.\(^3\) If the name ‘consuming’ speakers have the right intentions, the name will refer in their mouth to the object it refers to in the mouth of the name ‘producing’ speakers.\(^4\)

The Johnson-Kripke picture is compatible with significantly different semantic proposals. Kripke himself takes it sustain the view that proper names have no sense and are Millian tags. Causal Descriptivists disagree; they take the core of the picture and turn it into a proposal for the sense of a proper name: The sense of ‘John F. Kennedy’ on a particular occasion of use is given by the definite description ‘the individual dubbed in

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\(^1\) See Kaplan 1973, 502.

\(^2\) See Kaplan 1990, 111.

\(^3\) I will use `$N$` as special variable ranging over expressions.

\(^4\) See Kripke 1980, 96. For further exploration, see Sainsbury 2005, 3.5-3.6.
the ceremony connected by a causal-historical chain to this very token ‘John F. Kennedy’.

Other forms of Descriptivism hold that a name ‘N’ is semantically equivalent with a meta-linguistic description ‘The bearer of ‘N’’. Something becomes bearer of a proper name if it acquires the name in an act of dubbing. Views that assimilate proper names to indexicals take dubbings to be context-parameters and proper names to be *sui generis* indexicals that refer relative to a dubbing ‘in force’. Finally, consider the view that proper names are devices of anaphoric reference. This view takes proper names to be pronouns and a dubbing to be ‘an act that introduces a *special duty* pronoun’. (Sommers 1982, 230) All these different semantic proposals take the core of Kripke’s picture for granted. However, Kripke’s picture faces competition.

The Practice View, developed by Evans and others, holds ‘that what matters is not that the name has been *assigned* to the thing but that it is used for the thing.’ (Evans 1982, 380, Fn.). If there is a group of people whose members are acquainted with $x$ and regularly refer with $N$ to $x$ and this regularity is perpetuated because its existence makes it rational to perpetuate it, $N$ is the name of $x$ in this group.

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5 The formulation is taken from Cummings 2008, the idea goes back to Lewis 1987, Fn. 22 and Kroon 1987.

6 See Katz 1994, 5ff.


8 The practice may contain more kinds of uses of proper names than referential use. See section 2. Speaker reference does not require that a sign used to refer has already meaning and reference. A *speaker* refers to $a$ if, and only if, she gets across or communicates that $Fa$ for some substitution of $F$. (Evans 1973, 14)
the existence of such a name-using practice makes an expression a name. Consequently he gives the following definition:⁹

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‘NN’ is a proper name of an object 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)
2. the success in reference in any particular case being intended to rely on common knowledge between speaker and hearer that ‘NN’ has been used to refer to x by members of C and not upon common knowledge of the satisfaction of x of some predicate embedded in ‘NN’. (Evans 1973, 18)
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Evans intends this to be a definition, but there is no ‘if, and only if,’ because he does not discuss institutionally approved but unused names.

According to the Practice View, whether x has been given the name or not is not decisive for x bearing the name. Even if x has been dubbed with N, the expression does not become a name for x unless it ‘has a certain currency among those who know x’.

(Evans 1982, 376.) In contrast, the Dubbing View takes a singular event, the dubbing, to

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⁹ See also Schiffer 1978, 199 who dispenses with common knowledge of the practice. For recent work see Sainsbury 2005, 106-125. McKinsey has developed a view in which the practice the stable propensity of an individual speaker (in certain circumstances) to refer to x with tokens of N. (McKinsey 1978, 194). In this paper I will focus on social practices. But the main points apply to individual practices.
bestow a name on an object, *whether a name-using practice is initiated or not*. Which view is right?

In this paper I will argue that that neither view is right. We must look for a common factor that is involved in both views. The rough idea, elaborated and defended in section 5 to 7, is that the Dubbing and Practice Views spell out different ways in which one can come to acquire and/or manifest the knowledge that for every thing x, \( N \) refers to \( x \) iff \( x = N \).\(^{10}\) An expression \( N \) is a proper name if, and only if, possessing this knowledge is sufficient to understand utterances of it. The Dubbing and Practice view (and likely any other view that ties being a proper name to a specific way of introduction or use) are over-specific. Only the ‘thin’ characterisation of being a proper name in terms of knowledge is general enough. Or so I will argue in this paper.

The plan of the paper is as follows: First things first. Proponents of the Dubbing View usually don’t explain in sufficient detail what a dubbing is. But in view of *prima facie* counter-examples we need to know more about dubbings to assess and/or defend the view. Moreover, there is only a sharp opposition between the Dubbing and the Practice View if the notion of a dubbing does not conceptually depend on the existence of a name-using practice. In section 2 I will argue that there is a conception of dubbing that makes dubbings independent of the existence of a proper name-using practice: dubbing is an illocutionary act. In section 3 I will defend the thesis that the performance of such an act is sufficient to create a (common currency) proper name against Evans’ arguments to the contrary. But while sufficient, dubbings are not necessary to create names for objects

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\(^{10}\) The core idea goes back to McDowell’s austere conception of proper name sense in his 1977. It is modified in Segal 2001 and Sainsbury 2005, chapt. 1 and 3.5. This paper uses the core idea to say under which conditions an expression is a proper name.
(section 4). In turn, the Practice View easily accommodates counter-examples to the Dubbing View. The result of section 2 to 4 is that the Practice View and the Dubbing View provide sufficient, but not necessary conditions for \( N \) being a name of something. In section 5 I will argue that the unifying factor is epistemic: initiation into a name-using practice and dubbing an object are two different, mutually irreducible forms to come to know under which conditions an expression refers to something. This proposal will be explored further in section 6 and in section 7 I will define ‘\( N \) is a proper name’ in terms of the semantic knowledge that is the common factor in dubbing etc.

2. What is a Baptism (Naming, Dubbing)?

In order to turn the Dubbing Thesis into a substantial proposal we need first to say more about the notion of dubbing, baptism or naming. What must dubbings be for the view proposed to be fruitful and interesting? And: Are there such dubbings? In this section I want to answer these questions. I will look at three different explanations of what a baptism is and find all three wanting. I will conclude the section by arguing that baptism is a distinctive kind of illocutionary act.

Both Evans and Kripke assume that a baptism can, but need not, initiate a name-using practice. But Kripke holds that the baptism is crucial and determines the reference of the name, while Evans argues that the existence of the practice is the crucial factor. Hence, according to Kripke, a name can refer to something even if the baptism does not lead to a practice. If one sets up the discussion in these terms, a plausible explanation of dubbing must allow for dubbings that do not bring about proper name-using practices. Explanations that take there to be a conceptual or metaphysical connection between a
dubbing and a name-using practice make this constraint difficult to satisfy. Take Sainsbury’s explanation of baptism

as an event in which a name is bestowed and which originates a practice \(\text{(in the limiting case, it is the only use in the practice)}\). (Sainsbury 2005, 148. My emphasis. See also Sainsbury 2005, 106)

Imagine that my dubbing my son with ‘Beelzebub’ does, for understandable reasons, not result in a practice of referring to him with ‘Beelzebub’. Nonetheless I still have given him the name; I haven’t just gone through the motions of doing so. Sainsbury accommodates this observation by arguing that, contrary to the description just given, the name-giving event has originated a name-using practice with my use of ‘Beelzebub’ as the only use in the practice.

However, to say that a use of a name in an act of baptism is a limiting case of a use in a proper name-using practice is like saying that buying a car is a limiting case in the practice of driving it. The proper name-using practice is one in which the name is used to refer, while in most baptisms the name is mentioned, not used to refer. Moreover, I can name something without even mentioning the name or using it in any other way. I could name my son by saying ‘Thy name shall be the ancient Hebrew name for the fallen angel’. Hence, baptism is one thing, an event which start a proper name-using practice another.

Evans offers us a different notion of a baptism that also links baptism and name-using practice, but avoids the problem just discussed:
We might envisage the convention which governs an ordinary proper name as explicitly expressed in a practice-initiating stipulation: ‘Let us use “NN” to refer to this man’. (Evans 1982, 378. See also ibid., 385)

Saying ‘Let us use “NN” to refer to this man’ is a manifest resolution to refer with ‘NN’ to that man in the future. If the people that have manifestly resolved to refer with ‘NN’ to $x$ do as they resolved to do, there will be a practice of speaker reference with ‘NN’ to $x$. Compare: An utterance of ‘Let’s meet regularly Sundays in the park for a 5-a-side game’ can be a manifest resolution. If we do as we have resolved to do, there will be a practice of playing 5-a-side games on Sundays; if further factors intervene, the practice will not get started.

If a baptism is a manifest resolution to use a proper name in acts of reference to an object one knows about, there can be baptisms that don’t lead to the existence of name-using practices. The non-existence of a practice certainly does not entail that one has not resolved to initiate it. One may, for example, be too weak willed to do as one resolved.

There are two main problems for Evans’ proposal as a general explanation of dubbing.

First, a resolution is the formation of an intention; in the case under discussion the formation of an intention to refer in a particular way to something. But one can name something with a proper name ‘NN’ without intending to refer to it with ‘NN’. For instance, there are companies specialising in inventing names for new products. The
company Master-McNeil are specialists in naming (this includes getting the names protected etc. See their webpage). But an employee of Master-McNeil may name a product, yet abhor the name he bestowed on it (they are only in the naming business for the money). He dislikes the name so much that he even resolves never to refer to it by the name he introduced. Professional baptists are only required to have naming intentions, not referring intentions. Practice-initiating stipulations are one thing, baptisms another.

Second, I take it to be a platitude about dubbing that if someone with the required authority dubs something in the right circumstances with a name, the object bears that name. Evans’ proposal makes it difficult to see how this could be a platitude. Merely publicly resolving to use an expression from now on in a certain way does not constitute using it in this way. Hence, according to the Practice View, making the practice-initiating stipulation that ‘NN’ be used to refer to \( x \) alone does not make the expression into a name. Resolving to do something alone does not yield the intended action; one must actually do as one has resolved to do. Evans draws from this the conclusion that the existence of a proper name-using practice is necessary and sufficient for the existence of a (common currency) proper name; the dubbing is not even sufficient. Hence, he is forced to reject the platitude mentioned above. In the next section I will criticise his arguments intended to show the platitude to be a falsehood. If the platitude is a platitude, dubblings are sufficient to introduce proper names, they are not resolutions to refer.

There is third way to explain baptism that takes the notion of proper name-using practice as basic. Jackson conceives of proper name-using practices as not only containing referential uses of names. It is common knowledge that there is a distinctive pattern of causal interaction between persons and their names that is established by
baptismal ceremonies. These interactions include answering with the name when asked what one’s name is, signing with the name when this is required etc. A baptism is, suggests Jackson, a ceremony designed to establish such a distinctive interaction pattern between a word and a person. In which sense is a baptism designed? If baptisms had not brought about the distinctive interaction patterns between people and certain expression in a sufficient number of cases, they would no longer be performed. One bears a name when the baptism has brought about the distinctive pattern of causal interaction between oneself and an expression.11

Does this conception of baptism have room for dubbings that do not fulfil their proper function and yet introduce a proper name for an object? Prima facie, not. If a baptism has failed to achieve its proper function, how can it have introduced a proper name? Yet, even if Rumpelstiltskin prevents his dubbing with this name to satisfy its design aim by never using it in the appropriate way and preventing others from doing so, he still bears the name.

Jackson agrees and tries to make room for this fact. Rumpelstiltskin and people like him count as having the name because they underwent a process designed by society to establish the interaction pattern and never underwent subsequently one of the processes designed to remove the interaction pattern. (Jackson 2005, 267)

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11 See Jackson 2005, sec. 5.
This does answer the question how someone can bear a name although the distinctive interaction pattern has not been established. Assume that there is a property F that one possesses if one displays a distinctive behaviour and there is a process designed to bring about the disposition to display such behaviour. Now if one undergoes a process that is designed to establish the F-pattern and yet this pattern is not established, one usually does not count as an F. (Compare: If I bring my car to the car wash to have it washed in the tunnel wash, it will undergo a process designed to clean cars. It may undergo the process without being in the state the process is designed to bring about (the dirt is especially resistant). To say that the car *counts as clean* seems frivolous) Hence, even if one assumes for the sake of the argument that dubbings have the proper function to bring about a name-using practice, a dubbing that fails to fulfil its proper function, can still introduce a proper name of an object.

In view of the previous problems it seems plausible to turn the direction of explanation between a baptism and a name-using practice around. A dubbing contributes to the creation of the practice the fact that the object bears the proper name. The obtaining of this fact makes acts of speaker reference with the name to the object correct:

[My uttering in the right circumstances] “I name this ship the *Queen Elisabeth*” has the effect of naming and christening the ship; then certain subsequent acts such as referring to it as the *Generalissimo Stalin* will be out of order. (Austin 1975, 117)
How can a baptism introduce a proper name independently of a proper name-using practice or other effects it may (or may not) be designed for? A baptism can introduce a name because it is what common sense takes it to be: Dubbing or baptising is a speech-act, more precisely, an illocutionary act. We have a designated explicit performative sentence-type to perform a dubbing ‘I hereby name x N’. If this sentence is uttered in the right circumstances (the speaker has the right kind of authority, is honest, the object does not bear the name beforehand), the speaker brings it about by means of his utterance alone that the object begins to bear the name. Tokens of the sentence-type ‘I hereby name x N’ can be verified by their correct use in appropriate circumstances and are of the same kind as ‘I hereby promise you to do …’. The sentence is true on any occasion of its felicitous utterance. Whether the name introduced in an illocutionary act is ever used again in acts of reference or not is irrelevant.

The object x bears the name N if the sentence ‘I hereby name x N’ has been felicitously uttered. To see this imagine that the baptism is part of an inauguration ceremony into a secret society. Every society member must have a secret name that is then never again used to refer to him or her, neither in thought nor in speech. One can name an object without intending to use the name introduced for it in the future. There are baptisms that cannot be construed as resolutions to refer in the future to an object with a name or commands to do so in the future. The act of baptism manifests the intention to introduce a name, not the intention to refer in the future with the introduced expression.

Is the illocutionary act of naming a limiting case of a proper name-using practice? In order for a proper name utterance to be a use in a practice referential intentions or

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intentions to conform to previous acts of reference (to do as others have done before) must be present. But these are not required in order to make a dubbing. Moreover, we have already seen that one can name something without using the relevant name or even mentioning it. I can name a ship with the name ‘Generalissimo Stalin’ by saying in the right circumstances: ‘I name this ship with the name of the infamous Russian dictator’. (‘I name this ship with his name’.)

Dubbings are illocutionary acts the felicitous performance of which, in the right circumstances, suffices to bring a name of an object into existence. The speech-act notion of dubbing completes the Dubbing Thesis to an interesting view that differs from the Practice View. So far we have argued for the following thesis:

(D) $N$ is a (common currency) proper name of $x$ if there has been a dubbing of $x$ with the generic name $N$.

The Dubbing View has now to answer two questions: Can (D) be defended against criticism intended to show that dubbing is not sufficient to introduce a name? Is the sufficient condition also necessary? In the next section I will argue that the answer to the first question is YES, in the following section that the answer to the second question is NO.

3. Defending the Dubbing Thesis

Evans has given two arguments intended to show that (D) is false.
If a baptism does not originate a name-using practice, no name is introduced:

[For] Kripke an expression becomes a name just so long as someone has dubbed something with it and thereby caused it to be in common usage. This seems little short of magical. Suppose one of a group of villagers dubbed a little girl on holiday in the vicinity “Goldilocks” and the name caught on. However suppose that there were two identical twins the villagers totally fail to distinguish. I should deny that “Goldilocks” is the name of either—even if by some miracle each villager used the name consistently but in no sense did they fall into two coherent sub-communities. (The name might denote the girl first dubbed if for some peculiar reason the villagers were deferential to the introducer of the name […]). (Evans 1973, 19)

In order to make his point Evans must assume (i) that there is a baptism of one of the girls, let us call the twins Jennifer and Jessica, with the name ‘Goldilocks’ by the name-producer V₁ and (ii) that nonetheless neither Jennifer nor Jessica bears the name ‘Goldilocks’.¹³ For (i) to be true the name-producing villagers must be able to name Jennifer ‘Goldilocks’, although they are unable to distinguish between Jennifer and Jessica. It seems indeed independently plausible to hold that if Jennifer is involved in the right way into a dubbing, the name is bestowed on her. However, if there is a baptism of Jessica with ‘Goldilocks’, how can one deny that ‘Goldilocks’ is her name?

¹³ See also Evans 1982, 374 and 386.
Evans’ reason to take ‘Goldilocks’ to be empty is that although it seems to the villagers that they participate in the practice of referring with ‘Goldilocks’ to Jennifer, they don’t. There are various acts of speaker-reference with ‘Goldilocks’ but no proper name-using practice. However, if one is not already convinced of the Practice View one will not be swayed by this reason.

Quite the opposite. To strengthen the intuition that ‘Goldilocks’ is Jennifer’s name, assume that the mix-up of Jessica and Jennifer’s is part of a scheme to betray the villagers. After a while the girls are found out, brought to court and tried. In court the question arises who of them is Goldilocks. The court will decide this question by establishing which of both girls had been given the name by V₁. It seems intuitively clear that ‘Jennifer’ is Goldilocks, whatever confusion may have ensued. This point, brought out by Johnson, makes it plausible that the dubbing has established the fact that ‘Goldilocks’ semantically refers to Jennifer. (see sect. 1) The dubbing determines the reference of ‘Goldilocks’.

Evans concedes as much when he adds that ‘Goldilock’ might denote Jennifer if the villagers were ‘for some peculiar’ reason deferential to the name introducer. (Evans 1973, 21) The peculiar reason is not peculiar at all. Without such deference to the name introducer we could not speak of the use of the same name over a period of time.

Evans tries to disarm this point of criticism, but in effect enforces it when he says:

If we use a name of a man we expect that it originated in the standard manner and this expectation may condition our use of it. But consider names for people which are obviously nicknames, or names for places or pieces of music. Since there is no
Let us start with Evans’ ‘If’. If we use a proper name, we expect it to have originated in the standard manner, namely in an act of naming. If we can’t trace back our use of the name to this particular act, we have a motive for correction our use of the name or withdrawing it. For instance, the villager will have referred sometimes to Jessica with ‘Goldilocks’ in the mix-up. But these uses of the name were mistakes and the villagers will concede as much if they are appraised of the facts. The importance of the standard-introduction is brought out by appealing again to the justification of the name in the courtroom, that is, the application of the name when something depends on the correct application. For example, when the girls are summoned to court and the question which of them is Goldilocks arises, the correct application of the name is decided on the basis of the fact which girl had been given the name. Jennifer is Goldilocks because she has been given the name in the right way. Causal-chains theories of reference are fuelled by the intuition the courtroom situation brings out.

Now to Evans’ ‘But’. There are names that are not introduced in the standard manner. Imagine that ‘Goldilocks’ is supposed to be a nickname for one girl. (It seems to be no accident that Evans has chosen ‘Goldilocks’ and not say ‘Stevie Nicks’ to make his point) The villagers believe there to be one girl and start to use ‘Goldilocks’ for her
because of her golden locks. But if there are indeed two indistinguishable girls to both of whom the villagers refer with ‘Goldilocks’, none of them seems to bear the name. There is no fact of the matter which of them is Goldilocks. For example, when one tries to establish which girl is Goldilocks, one cannot appeal to facts about who has been given the name. For no one has been given the name. The standard procedure cannot be invoked.

Fair enough. If ‘Goldilocks’ were not introduced in a baptism, Evans would have made his point. But the view under consideration is that the name is introduced in the standard manner, a baptism, and the villagers are entitled to take this for granted and can justifiably to defer to the original name introducer. Evans has given us no reason to say that a dubbing does not suffice to introduce a name, he has only given us a reason that some names don’t originate in dubbings and that for the existence of these names the existence of certain practice is required. (For why should one treat nicknames in all respects like personal proper names?) This conclusion is compatible with the thesis that the performance of a dubbing is sufficient for an expression to be a name. Evans’ first argument has not refuted the Dubbing Thesis (D).

14 Even if ‘Goldilocks’ is supposed to be a nickname, it is not clear that it does not refer in the situation Evans describes. If the villagers utter the sentence ‘Goldilocks is blond’, they seem to say something true. One can make this come out right if one takes ‘Goldilocks’ to be a name that indeterminately refers to either girl; on some sharpenings it refers to Jessica, on others to Jennifer, on all sharpenings the girls referred to is blonde.

15 Evans’ denial that either Jennifer or Jessica bears the name ‘Goldilocks’ may rest on an unstated assumption about dubbing. He takes dubbing to be a practice-initiating stipulation (see section 2). If V₁’s dubbing was the manifest resolution to refer to Jennifer with ‘Goldilocks’,
If ‘Golidlocks’ refers to Jennifer, what is then the semantic effect of the indistinguishability of the twins for the villagers? Evans says that utterances involving the name are flawed because of the confusion.\(^\text{16}\) One can agree with there being a flaw, but the flaw is not that the villagers use an empty name. Here is a (simplified and idealised) piece of reasoning that leads to an act of reference with ‘Golidlocks’ under normal circumstances:

X sees Jennifer and acquires the belief that she is blond.
X knows that ‘Golidlocks’ is a name of Jennifer and he knows that the others know that ‘Golidlocks’ is the name of Jennifer.
He desires to communicate that Jennifer is blond.
Therefore X uses ‘Golidlocks’ to make an identifying reference to \(x\) and predicates of her blondness.

If only Jennifer lived in the village, the utterance of ‘Golidlocks is blond’ would be a reliable way for X to transmit his knowledge that Jennifer is blond. But when Jessica and Jennifer both start to visit the village, uttering ‘Golidlocks is blond’ with assertoric force ceases to transmit knowledge about Goldilocks aka Jennifer. For utterances of ‘Golidlocks is blond’ will now be made \textit{whether Jennifer is blond or not}. The name

\[\text{neither } V_1 \text{ nor the other villagers who accept his resolution can reliably do as they have resolved to do. The proponent of the Dubbing Thesis can argue that Evans’ has given a counter-example to the thesis that dubbings are resolutions to refer. (D) still stands.}\]

\(^{16}\) See Evans 1982, 374.
‘Goldilocks’ ceases to be useful in referential communication about Jennifer. Hence, Evans is right to hold that utterances of the form ‘Goldilocks …’ are flawed. But to say that ‘Goldilocks’ is therefore no longer a name of Jennifer begs the question against the Dubbing Thesis. It is plausible to say that the villagers can’t use the name ‘Goldilocks’ correctly, but that does not make ‘Goldilocks’ an empty name in their usage.

2. The baptism of x with N makes N only a proper name of x if it originates a practice of referring to x with N and not one of referring to y with N. (Evans 1982, 388) A part of the African mainland, let us call it A, is dubbed ‘Madagascar’, but the practice that develops at some point from the dubbing is a practice of referring to the island I. According to Evans, semantic reference will shift with practice, not stay fixed with the dubbing. ‘Madagascar’ will become a name of I. Hence, the name-using practice, not the dubbing fixes the semantic properties of proper names.

Evans’ description of the example presupposes that one and the same name changes its reference. But this description is not the only one that fits the case. Marco Polo’s mistake will result in a new proper name-using practice. But why should one not say that Marco Polo’s mistake has thereby brought a second co-spelled name into existence?17

There is a good reason to assume that if the initial mistake catches on, a new name comes into existence. The new proper name-using practice can get going alongside the old one. For example, the people on the mainland of Africa will persist in their use of ‘Madagascar’ as a name for a part of the mainland. Imagine that you have been induced

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into the ‘Madagascar’-using practice started by Marco Polo. Now you travel for the first time to the African mainland. You ask a native what the country you are visiting is called, the native answers that this is Madagascar. Even in view of all the facts of the history of the name ‘Madagascar’, one cannot rationally dispute that Madagascar is on the mainland (the natives don’t get things wrong when they say that they live in Madagascar) nor dispute that Madagascar is an island (you don’t get things wrong). You and the natives both make true assertions because you and they use different names to say different things. If you respond to the native by saying ‘Oh, I know another country of the same name’, ‘same name’ means ‘same generic name’, but not ‘same common currency name’. Hence, Evans’ example seems best described as a case of fission in which one practice splits into two new practices with co-spelled names. This description is consistent with the thesis that dubbing is one ‘method’ to introduce proper names. The example is one in which two co-spelled proper names are introduced by two different methods, baptism and introduction by use, not one, in which one proper name is introduced by one method.

4. Proper Names without Baptisms

Evans has failed to refute (D). But he has given us a good reason to hold that the existence of a dubbing is not a necessary condition for an expression being a name of something. Let us illustrate the cases Evans’ has in mind further. Often proper names are not introduced in an illocutionary act at all. Ziff gives an example of a name-introduction by referential use:
A hungry long white whiskered kitten wanders into my garden. I say to one of my family “Let’s feed that thing”. We do so. The next day I ask “Where’s the cat?” and my son replies “Whiskers is in the kitchen”: no baptismal act, no act of ostension and yet the cat has acquired the name “Whiskers”. (Ziff 1977, 321)

Donnellan tells us how he acquired a new name by mistake:

I discovered that my colleagues were pronouncing my last name differently than my parents do — so, orally they referred to me by a different name — and I let it stand. *But I never was dubbed by that name.* I am sure that the first use of it was either a question, assertion or whatever about me and not a kind of baptism. (Donnellan 1974, 19, Fn. 13. My emphasis)

In both cases there is a proper name introduced, but the event in which it is introduced is no dubbing in the sense that underpins the Dubbing Thesis. Rather the introductory event is the introduction of a proper name because it starts the practice of using a name for a particular individual.\(^1\) One can hardly deny that if \(x\) is regularly and consistently called \(N\), \(N\) is one of the names of \(x\).

Should we then accept the Practice-View? No, for conversely there are proper names that refer to something although there is no practice of referring to it by this name. Even if no one ever will refer to Rumpelstiltskin by his name (he himself included), ‘Rumpelstiltskin’ is his name because has been given it in a dubbing. If Rumpelstiltskin

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\(^1\) See Sainsbury 2001, 222.
keeps his name secret, there is no common knowledge that speakers have the procedure in their repertoire to refer to Rumpelstiltskin with this name. But even if he forgets his own name, he still bears it.

These observations suggest that the existence of a practice to use $N$ to refer to $x$ and a dubbing of $x$ with $N$ are both sufficient to make $N$ a name of $x$, but neither is necessary. Both are ‘mechanisms’ that ensure that the linguistic symbols either introduced by or used in accordance with them satisfy the distinctive role of proper names to make context-independent identifying reference possible. We are, then, in the unhappy situation that we have two separate sufficient conditions for being a name of something, but nothing that unifies them.

But perhaps there is simply no unifying factor. Why should one expect that such a unification is possible? Take a (common currency) name in use, say ‘Peter Smith’, the name of my bank manager. As a matter of fact, Peter has been given the name in a baptism, but this is a contingent fact. He could have acquired the same name because people thought he had the typical Peter-Smith-look and started to use the name to refer to him. We have rational expectations about how names have originated that control aspects of our use of them. If, for example, we found out ‘Peter Smith’ had not originated in the standard way, the discovery would affect under which circumstances we would withdraw it from use. However, this does not affect the sense and reference of ‘Peter Smith’, it is semantically speaking the same name that would be withdrawn under certain circumstances. Consider alternatively a nickname like ‘Golden Boy’. As a matter of fact, the name did not originate in a dubbing, but again this a matter of contingent fact. It could have so originated and still be the same name with the same reference. Think here
of all the eccentric and exotic names people nowadays give their children. This point suggests that Evans’ attempt to define what it takes for an expression to be a name in terms of common knowledge of a name-using practice fails. The same goes for attempts to define this notion in terms of a dubbing. Both Dubbing and Practice View go wrong when they turn contingent facts about names into essential ones.

Conclusion: What makes something a name of something cannot depend on the contingent way it has been introduced or is currently used. Let us see whether we can find a view that sustains and explains our conclusion.

5. Unification by Liberation

Let us start by going back to the quotation in which Evans’ sets out his criticism of the Dubbing View:

The practice of using the name may originate in a baptism, or in a situation where a speaker manifestly uses an expression which is not x’s given name as if it were x’s name, whether knowingly (a nickname) or unknowingly (a mistake). But the expression does not become a name for x unless it has a certain currency among those who know x—only then can we say x is known as N. (Evans 1982, 376. My emphasis)

We need to disentangle two claims Evans’ makes:

(1) An expression $N$ is a name for $x$ in a group $G$ iff $x$ is known as $N$ in $G$. 
(2) Only if there is a practice of using $N$ in $G$ to refer to $x$, $x$ is known as $N$ in $G$.

(1) seems right, (2) not. (1) is a thesis about what makes an expression a name of something in a group: $x$ being known as $N$. (2) says that one possesses this knowledge only if one is party to the practice of using $N$ to refer to $x$. Sainsbury even endorses the stronger thesis that the knowledge consists in being party to such a practice.\(^{19}\) (2) seems right because one does not want to say that knowledge of reference, in general, can consist in knowledge of descriptive conditions an object must satisfy to be the bearer of a name.

If we put (1) and (2) together, we arrive at Evans’s view that excludes the Dubbing View. It is (2) which prevents dubbings (or indeed anything else) from qualifying as events that make an expression into a name, independently of the existence of the corresponding name-using practice.

Now the previous sections have already cast doubt on the disqualification of dubbings as name-introducing events and it has thereby indirectly raised doubts about (2). Our doubts will deepen if one considers the following case. The use of a name $N$ for a person might be forbidden. In this case there will be no proper name-using practice. When the ban is lifted the practice will get going again, but the name did not cease to be a

\(^{19}\) See also Sainsbury 2002, 16. Sainsbury 2006 seems to backtrack from this view.
name of $x$ for some time and then regain its reference. Why? The name is with respect to every time a name for $x$ because $x$ was still known as $N$, but not referred to with $N$.

(2) is not only implausible, it is also unmotivated. Why should possession of a certain piece of knowledge require a possession of a disposition to make speech-acts? Evans has famously argued that one can only think of an object if one possesses discriminating knowledge of it. For instance, one cannot think now about a ball one has once seen if one cannot presently distinguish it from other balls that look exactly like it:

There is no question of his recognizing the ball: and there is nothing else he can do which will show that his thought is really about one of the two steel balls (about that ball), rather than about the other. (Evans 1982, 226)

Consequently, one only knows $x$ as $N$, Evans will argue, if one can do something that shows that one thinks about $x$ and not $y$ as $N$. One shows that one knows $x$ as $N$ if, and only if, one refers to $x$, demonstrates $x$ and asserts that the demonstrated object is $N$ etc.

The general principle underlying this rationale for (2) seems, however, too demanding. Do I need to be able to show that my thought is about this rather than that ball? Isn’t it sufficient that my thought is about this and not the other ball?

I recommend for these reasons that we reject (2) and stick with the plausible core of (1). When we say that something is a name we commit ourselves to there being a particular kind of knowledge, but not to what this knowledge consists in. Knowledge can fulfil the role of the common factor in dubbing and being party to a proper name-using practice because it is a mental state that can be acquired and/or manifested in many
different ways, but it is not constitutively tied to any one of these ways. For instance, I can come to know that $5 + 7 = 12$ in many different ways: you testify to me that $5 + 7 = 12$, I may calculate it, prove it from first axioms, may have a rational insight, … . In all cases the knowledge acquired is the same, the acquisition and manifestation different. Because the knowledge specified in (1) can be acquired and manifested in different ways it can be the unifying factor in the theory of proper name reference. In the next section I will put apply this idea to the semantic case.

6. Epistemic Unification

One can introduce the same name in different ways. I order to get clear about the common factor in all these ways I will now work through each one.

Before we can start a general remark. In theorising about names and naming philosophers standardly take for granted that one can only introduce a proper name for an object if one is, *independently of and prior to mastering the name*, acquainted with it.\(^{20}\) Soames is a representative example:

[One becomes a competent user of an ordinary, linguistically simple name for $o$] by *being independently acquainted with $o$* and resolving to use $n$ to refer to $o$.

(Soames 2002, 101. My emphasis)

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\(^{20}\) See also Evans 1982, 376. See also Sommers 1980, 258f about the weaker notion of a background for a name.
In order to set up the discussion I will play along and assume that the introduction of a name requires name-independent acquaintance with an object, conceived of as the ability to distinguish this object from all others. In the next section I will argue that we better do without this assumption.

Soames has already pointed us to the first ‘mechanism’ that can make something a name:

(N1) \( N \) is a name of \( x \) if

There is someone who is acquainted with \( x \) and who has manifestly resolved to refer with \( N \) to \( x \).

(N1) and the other theses I will discuss are only plausible if different things that have the same generic name bear different common currency names. If John Smith from Birmingham and John Smith from East London are different people, they have different common currency names. I cannot defend this thesis in detail in this paper but I take it to be defensible and widely accepted. In communication we are aware of various clues that help us to establish which name a speaker uses. An example is the use of appositions: ‘Aristotle, the Greek philosophers, was borne in Stagira’. The apposition disambiguates the proper name and points us to the common currency name used. Names thus distinguished figure in (N1).

Knowledge is indirectly involved in (N1). In some case knowing the meaning of an expression is knowing how to use it correctly. If someone with the right authority has manifestly resolved to refer with \( N \) to \( x \), he has thereby acquired the knowledge how to
apply $N$ it correctly. If I make the rules for correct use, knowing what I will to be the rule, is knowing what the rule is. Hence, if someone is acquainted with $x$ and has manifestly resolved to refer with $N$ to $x$, she knows that $N$ refers to $x$.

Now take that the dubbing-case:

(N2) $N$ is a name of $x$ if

Someone who is acquainted with $x$ has dubbed $x$ with $N$.

People who participate in a dubbing with understanding will, in the right circumstances, thereby come to know that $N$ refers to $x$. Why? Take Austin’s example of naming a ship Queen Elisabeth. Provided no further baptismal acts are performed, the baptism will bring it about ‘Queen Elisabeth’ applies to the ship and that subsequent acts of referring to something $x$ with ‘Queen Elisabeth’ (individuated in the way discussed before) are in order if, and only if, $x$ is Queen Elisabeth. A speaker who can participate in dubbings and realises what is done or what she herself does will be aware of the facts established in the dubbing and thereby come to know that ‘Queen Elisabeth’ refers to the ship he is acquainted with.

Onto initiation and participation in a proper name-using practice:

(N3) $N$ is a name of $x$ if

there is group some members of which are acquainted with $x$ and all members of which have the stable propensity refer to $x$ with $N$
The proponents of the Practice View hold that possessing the semantic knowledge required to use an expression as a proper name consists in being party to the practice of using $N$ for $x$. This is too strong. But a weaker thesis is plausible: If I am sufficiently inducted into a practice of using $N$ for $x$, I thereby know that $N$ refers to $x$. Why? In some case knowing the meaning of an expression is the same as knowing how to use it correctly. If one is inducted in a name-using practice, one comes thereby to know how to use the name correctly and one acquires knowledge of the meaning of the name. The knowledge one acquires can persist even if it is no longer manifested in the use of the name. The Practice View is plausible because being party to a proper name-using practice is one way of possessing the semantic knowledge that make an expression a proper name. Possessing this knowledge enables one to understand uses of the name.

To make this plausible, consider Evans’ ‘Goldilocks’ case. The people who originated in the practice were acquainted with Jennifer and their participation in the practice constituted knowing that ‘Goldilocks’ refers to Jennifer. If they cease to identify Jennifer reliably as Goldilocks because her twins starts to visit the village, their uses of the name cease to refer provided they are not linked to an initial baptism. Why? If being a proper name of $x$ is tied to the possession of the knowledge specified above, loss of the required knowledge has the consequence that the expression used in the practice is no longer a proper name of $x$. Hence, if participation in the practice no longer preserve the required knowledge the name goes out of existence. This is what happens in Evans’ ‘Goldilocks’ example if it is construed as an example of nickname that has not originated in the standard manner.
Resolving to refer, performing or participating with understanding in a dubbing initiating a name-using practice are three representative ways to gain the knowledge that an expression $N$ refers to an object $x$ with which one is acquainted. These ways are representative because they are efficient and easy ways to acquire and disseminate to acquire and disseminate knowledge that $N$ refers to $x$. For instance, a proper name using-practice is often very easily originated. Under normal circumstances, a practice-initiating stipulation will have the intended consequence that we refer to you with ‘slugger’. Jointly making up our mind can therefore, under the right circumstances (everyone is cooperative and motivated, no one weak willed) bring about the fact that ‘slugger’ is one of your names. At the same time, making the resolution is, under favourable circumstances, all it takes to be initiated into the practice. Imagine that I say ‘Let us call her ‘Goldilocks’’ pointing out Jennifer to a group of people. If everyone is cooperative etc., this is sufficient for those that comply with the resolution and are cooperative (and have no reason to assume that other don’t comply and are uncooperative) to be able to participate in the name-using practice. I can go on in the next breath to say: ‘Goldilocks will be in town again tomorrow’. Hence, the resolution can be (and often is) sufficient to initiate a name-using practice. If the practice is initiated people party to the practice, will possess the required semantic knowledge.

Similar things hold for dubbings. The illocutionary act of dubbing creates, under favourable circumstances, the fact that $N$ refers to $x$. A reflective Baptist will come to know that $N$ refers to $x$ by baptising an object.

So far we have made plausible that three representative methods to introduce a (common currency) proper name are ways to acquire a particular kind of knowledge. This
knowledge seems then to be the unifying factor we were looking for. Let us try now to say what they all have in common.

7. An Epistemic Definition that does not require Acquaintance

We are now in a position to replace Evans’s controversial definition of ‘$N$ is a proper name of $x$ in a group $G$’ with a theoretically neutral and more general definition of ‘$N$ is a proper name’. In order to do so I want to first relax the commonly made assumption that the introduction and use of a proper name requires acquaintance with its bearer. Here is why:

First, I take it to be an uncontroversial fact that there are empty proper names. Hence, we must be able to introduce and use names although there is no proper name bearer that we are acquainted with. We might discover, for example, that there was never such a person as Shakespeare. To say that such a discovery shows that there was never the name ‘Shakespeare’ in a particular use is highly counter-intuitive. The conclusion is that one should try to say under which conditions a sign $N$ is a name. The conditions under which $N$ is a name of an object $x$ should be derivable from the more general conditions for $N$ being a name and certain empirical facts.

Second, more often than not we learn the name of an object before we become acquainted with it in another way, and learning the name may help us to become acquainted with it in the first place. The name helps us to organise information we receive about the object and enables us to have intentions about it.\footnote{This point is made in Schiffer 1978, 198 although he takes these cases to be the exceptions, not the rule. See also Soames 1989, 586.} The intention that
controls my referential use of ‘Richard Feynman’ is the intention to use ‘Richard Feynman’ to name Richard Feynman and it cannot be specified correctly in any other way. Consequently, we should abandon the view that proper name introduction or being party to a proper name-using practice requires acquaintance with the proper name bearer.22

Third, after inspecting the evidence in a murder case Holmes can sum up his findings in the following way:

The murder was committed by two individuals, call them X and Y. First note that, since there is no sign of a struggle, both X and Y were known to the victim. (See Cumming 2008 who credits Dever 1998 with the example)

It seems to me hard to deny that we have here two names ‘X’ and ‘Y’, introduced in use without baptism. After all, ‘X’ and Y’ can have the same use other proper names. Holmes and Watson may from now one discuss the methods of X and Y on numerous occasions, introduce others to the use of ‘X’ and ‘Y’ etc. But it seems difficult to maintain that Holmes is acquainted with the name bearer. Assume for the sake of the argument that it turns out that the murder was committed by Smith and Jones. Under this assumption, ‘X’ refers either to Smith or Jones and ‘Y’ refers either to Smith or Jones. But the name introducer cannot tell to which person ‘X’ (‘Y’) refers. Perhaps he indeed is acquainted

22 Sainsbury 2002, 15 argues convincingly that we should draw this conclusion. I agree that this is the right conclusion, but reject his restrictive view wherein this knowledge consists.
with Smith or Jones (he knows them from other occasions), but his acquaintance plays no role in the introduction of the names and it is not required to understand or use them.

Now take a speaker $A$ who is, independently of mastering the name ‘NN’, acquainted with its bearer and introduces the name on the basis of this acquaintance and a speaker $B$ who lacks this independent acquaintance. Both $A$ and $B$ know the following proposition:

$$(N) \ (\forall x) \ (‘NN’ \text{ refers to } x \text{ if, and only if, } x = NN.)$$

If we assume a negative free logic according to which all atomic sentences with empty names are false, $(N)$ comes out true even if ‘NN’ is empty, since the left- and right-hand side of the bi-conditional have the same truth-value.\(^{23}\) Hence, $(N)$ can be what $A$ and $B$ know even when ‘NN’ is empty.

How can $B$ know $(N)$, although he is not acquainted with the bearer of $N$? After all he must at least be able to entertain $(N)$ and this requires that he is able to use the name. The answer is implicit in the second motivation for dropping the acquaintance requirement given above. I can be inducted into a particular practice of using the name $N$ without being already acquainted with the bearer of $N$. The induction into the practice of using a proper name can take various forms. More often than not, someone simply starts to use the name in assertions. The ‘novice’ plays along and after a while he will use the name with understanding. If the novice has achieved understanding he knows $(N)$. If we

\(^{23}\) See Sainsbury 2005, 64ff.
want, we can add that she has thereby also come to know who the bearer is. But the important point is that one can come to know (N) without already being independently acquainted with the bearer of the name.

Other than B, A knows in addition to (N) that NN exists and who NN is independently of mastering the name. Since B understands the name ‘NN’, although she does not possess the knowledge possessed by B, mastering ‘NN’ does require acquaintance with its bearer. A name whose bearer I know may be more useful than a name whose bearer I don’t know, yet the latter is still a name.

Knowing (N) suffices for understanding (utterances of) ‘NN’. ‘Understanding utterances of N’ needs to be glossed as ‘knows what an utterance of N contributes to what is said with an utterance that is composed of this utterance and other words’. Since the very name mentioned on the left-hand side of this bi-conditional is used on the right-hand side, knowledge of (N) cannot be prior to understanding the name. For instance, (N) cannot be used to teach someone the correct use of ‘NN’. This does not bar us from saying that if someone has achieved understanding of ‘NN’ what he knows is (N). If, for example, I have been taught the name ‘NN’ by being given a definite description ‘the F’ of its bearer, I also need to realise that NN might not have been the F in order to understand ‘NN’ properly, that is, come to see that it is a name.

Now we can draw on (N) in order to say under which conditions an expression is a proper name:


(DF. N) \( N \) is a proper name if, and only if,

knowledge that \( N \) refers to \( x \) if, and only if, \( x = N \) suffices to understand utterances of \( N \).

Let us first apply (Df. N) to see how it works. I know that ‘my best mate’ refers to \( x \), if and only if, \( x \) is the same person as my best mate. But knowledge that ‘my best mate’ refers to an object \( x \) if, and only if, \( x \) is my best mate does not suffice to understand your utterances of ‘my best mate’. Your utterance of ‘my best mate’ mentions another person. If it did suffice, we would have good reason to say that ‘my best mate’ is a proper name. The same point distinguishes proper names from other context-dependent expressions like demonstratives.

(Df. N) allows one to say that nicknames (‘slugger’) and some expressions that look like definite descriptions (‘the holy Roman empire’) are names. If ‘slugger’ is a nickname, I know that every utterance of ‘slugger’ refers to someone \( x \) if, and only if, \( x \) is no one other than slugger. Again we must assume that we use on the right the expression mentioned on the left.

According to (Df. N), an expression is a name if, and only if, a particular kind of knowledge is sufficient to understand utterances of it. (Df. N) is non-reductive in that it does not say in non-epistemic terms in what the required knowledge consists in. By contrast, the Dubbing View and the Practice View propose different reductive explanations of the conditions under which an expression is a name for something. These reductive explanations involve specific mechanisms of name-use or introduction.
Specificity turns out to be a vice in this case, for it results in a loss of generality. The Dubbing View tries to privilege one specific way to acquire semantic knowledge and exercise it; the Practice View tries to privilege another way. None is successful because each one is too specific, while (Df. N) is general enough.

I conclude that it is not the specific method by which we arrive at the semantic knowledge, but the semantic knowledge itself that makes something a name. (Df. N) articulates this idea.

References


— See Williamson 2000, 82.


