Causal theory of reference of Gareth Evans

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06.09.2019

Gareth Evans, in *The Causal Theory of Names*, states that the causal theory of reference needs to be expanded to include what he calls multiple "bases". After the initial baptism, the use of the name in the presence of the person can, under the right circumstances, be considered as reinforcing the name in its referent. For those who are in direct contact with the person, the reference for the expression of the name is solved by means of a causal chain that includes people who knew him during the "baptism", or by indexing the person to the name at the time of communication. The causal chain can continue through a series of referential uses of the name throughout the person's life. If confusion occurs, the referent switching of a name may occur. (Evans and Altham 1973)

According to Evans, causal theory in its initial variant allows that no matter how distant or obscure the causal link between the use of a proper name and the object originally referred to, the

reference is retained. The theory thus ignores the context by resorting to "magic tricks", and therefore cannot explain the changes of reference.

Evans agrees with Kripke in rejecting the descriptive theory of reference, arguing that a subject may think of a particular object by virtue of the existence of a contextual relationship with it; but it challenges the cryptic image by accepting the idea that a name may change its reference over time and arguing that a mere causal link is not enough to refer.

Subsequently, in *The Varieties of Reference*, assumes Frege's principle "no reference, no thought" (a sentence containing a name without a reference has no value of truth and does not express a thought); thus the semantic function of a name is to refer to an object, excluding the name with sense but non-referential. (Evans 1982) But, unlike Frege, he appeals to Frege's assimilation of the use of empty names with the fictional uses of language that express the pretended senses or pretended thoughts. (Borchert 2006)

For Evans, the singular terms (including those that include demonstrative pronouns) conform to the principle "no reference, no thought", calling them "Russellians".

Evans rejects the solid thesis (that the theoretical conditions of the description are sufficient) by accepting the weaker thesis that a descriptive identification is required for the name. He thus sees the theory of undifferentiated description as an expression of two ideas.

"(a) the denotation of a name is determined by what speakers intend to refer to by using the name

"(b) the object a speaker intends to refer to by his use of a name is that which satisfies or fits the majority of descriptions which make up the cluster of information which the speaker has associated with the name." (Evans and Altham 1973)

With (a) there are problems when interpreted at the micro level, but in names, as for other expressions in the language, "what they signify depends upon what we use them to signify". (b) is the real problem: the intended referent of a common use of a name by a speaker cannot be an element causal isolated to the user's community and culture; but " the important causal relation lies between

that item's states and doings and the speaker's body of information—not between the item's being dubbed with a name and the speaker's contemporary use of it." (Evans and Altham 1973) Denoting a name in the community will depend in a complex way of what those who use this term intend to refer to (the "intended referent").

Evans tries to eliminate the problem of ambiguity by using an indefinite notion of speaker reference through borrowing from communication theory. We gain our knowledge and form our beliefs in the process of collecting information through a causal interaction with a particular object that is part of a long causal chain. Legends and imagination can add new elements. Incorrect identification can differentiate the considered source of information from the real one. It turns out that a set of information may contain elements from different sources, being able to reach a dominant element belonging to a source different from the original one. A speaker usually refers to the dominant element in the associated set of information.

In this context, Evans offers the following definition proposal:

""NN" is a name of x if there is a community C—

"1. in which it is common knowledge that members of C have in their repertoire the procedure of using "NN" to refer to x (with the intention of referring to x);

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 by x of some predicate embedded in "NN""

Thus, Evans distinguishes between using on the basis of what we know and using on other bases, thus distinguishing between the referential functioning of names, which can be grammatical descriptions, from those of descriptions. (Evans and Altham 1973) The intentions alone are not sufficient for a name to obtain a denotation, but without clear intentions there may be no common knowledge required for practice.

Evans's conditions are stricter than Kripke's, eliminating his "magic."

In order to allow the name to be able to change its denotation, Evans proposes a supplement to the above definition with a new, *deferential* term (regarding individuals or groups of people who extend the use of expressions in a community).

Evans offers various arguments to show that Kripke's theory does not fit our practice of using names: contextual determination of who it is important except for causal theory, (Bhowmick 2015, 194) one can use the name without be necessarily causal connected with other users of the name, there is the possibility of a unified approach for all the ways of eliminating the ambiguity of the discourse, the *change of reference* is not taken into account by the causal theory of the reference.

In conclusion Evans does not claim that causal theory is wrong; he is just trying to adapt it to the use of people's names under ordinary circumstances.

Gareth Evans states that there may be wide variations between understanding "producers" (people associating names with person recognition) and "consumers" (who, according to Evans, are not able to inject new information into practice, but must use the collection of information from producers. (Evans 1982)) of proper name statements. According to Sikander Iamil, "acceptors" are true players in using proper names, using the name of a specific referent based on information received from other speakers. But there is a possibility of distortion of the received information, since the proper names strengthened, after their appointment, only by their use by the acceptors: "The meaning of proper name is provided by its immediate correspondence with a particular object. That's why a proper name and referent should go together; thinking one will lead the other. We may also assert that any speaker may use a certain name even without having an understanding of it, which means simply the understanding of the corresponding object i.e. its referent. But one may claim that any misinformation may contaminate thinking of ' the speaker regarding the referent of name." (Jamil 2011) Evans argues that "Full understanding of a use of a name requires that the referent of the name

be an object of the subject's thought." (Evans 1982) Thus, the proper name depends on the users' faith, thoughts and intentions.

Only one producer presents sound arguments because of his initial knowledge of the name. The consumer knows the referent only according to the information provided by the producer.

The more often a name is used by speakers, the more it strengthens in the minds of the speakers, making it more and more authentic. If a name with different referents in two distinct communication networks, additional information is required for correct identification when the information passes from one network to the other.

A special problem arises in the case of a community that functions as a closed but permeable information system. In such a closed system a name can be distorted (intentionally or not), resulting in several proper names for the same referent that can operate in parallel, sometimes overlapping in the communication between different networks. This distortion can take the form of spreading *fake news*, or it can be intentionally used in the processes of slandering a person or a group of people, or even within state propaganda. In such a case, the framework for stipulating the reference by name proposed by Kripke through the initial baptism no longer applies. This distortion will not occur when the recursive principle proposed by Saul Kripke is applied, (Kripke 1980) whereby the one who established the reference to the initial baptism stipulates practices in the use of their own names, and the consumers will use the name in this respect, calling for a specific use identical to the one proposed by the one who named it.

Reference change is not possible according to descriptive theories. Initial causal theories do not pose the problem of reference change. Gareth Evans considers the significance of the change of reference, possible even from the initial baptism, although changing the reference to one's own name is much more difficult than in the case of natural terms, setting the Madagascar case as an example. (Evans and Altham 1973)

Evans argued that the bearer of a proper name, used by a community of speakers, is the main source of causality of the information that members of the community associate with the name. Imogen Dickie sees Evans' suggestion as a major breakthrough, but it raises some issues. (Dickie 2011) Dickie takes "proper name" as a standard or default semantic type natural term, for which no additional settings are required. This assertion allows proper names to be used in other ways (e.g., to communicate about objects other than their bearers) depending on the scenarios.

Dickie concludes that Evans is right that proper name has an essentially asymmetrical structure, assigning a privileged role to a core group of speakers. But Evans is wrong in stating that producers are important in establishing a name-based practice, suggesting that the role of producers is to ensure dominance, but that does not imply the exact transmission of information. The consumers are the active participants.

According to Evans, the mental state of the speaker matters in determining the reference. For him, the causal origin of a name is not important in the reference; an object derives a name by virtue of the fact that it is the main source of causality of the information associated with a name. (Bhowmick 2015, 195) But, by eliminating the need for initial baptism, Evans's theory raises two objections: the qua problem and the problem of incorrect causal source.

The qua problem is considering the example of the cat "Trump" who was actually a flowerpot. From an intuitive point of view, it seems that the use of this name does not refer to anything, it is an empty name. It follows that successful referencing requires that the individual initiating the use of a name has at least a correct notion of the object it refers to.

The problem of the incorrect causal source arises when the referent is no longer related to a name by individuals who were in the presence of the object.

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