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THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS REFERENCE FAILURE[1]

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Abstract

I argue that the idea of reference failure which is frequently mentioned and occasionally argued for in the recent philosophy of language literature is a misnomer at best and incoherent when taken seriously. In the first place, there is no such thing as an empty name or name that fails to name anything, where names are understood as not replaceable by descriptions. In the case of demonstrative reference, because the speaker's perception fixes the referent and the speaker's referential intention is not formed prior to the fixation of the referent, reference is guaranteed. My argument is based on an analysis of the alleged cases of reference failure.

I. Proper Names and Reference Failure

One of the things and perhaps the most important thing we do with language is to use it to talk about the world. We can do so because some words we use are able to be used in such a way that they, as Marga Reimer picturesquely describes, somehow "hook on to things in the world" or "attach to bits of reality" (Reimer 2010). Proper names such as "Marcus Tullius Cicero" and "Barack Obama" are such words; they are often believed to be paradigmatic referring expressions, as they refer to particular objects or individuals in the world.[2]

[1] I wish to thank an anonymous referee for his/her time and consideration and for his/her valid and pertinent comments and suggestions that I examined with great care and that have lead to an improvement in the paper.

[2] I subscribe to Strawson's view that referring is not something an expression does, but something that someone can use an expression to do. (Strawson 1950: 320.) Thus it is the speaker who uses certain expressions, rather than expressions themselves, that refer. That is, it is the language user that "hooks words on to things in the world" or "attaches them to bits of reality". "Marcus Tullius Cicero" and "Barack Obama" are called referring expressions because they are used to refer, not because they themselves refer. But I will continue to speak of "expressions that refer" as a shorthand for "expressions that are used to refer".

But other words like "Pegasus" and "Zeus" are also deemed proper names, hence referring expressions, because they at least purport to refer, although there is nothing in the world to which they actually refer. What "reference failure" describes is presumably this kind of situation: Referring expressions such as "Pegasus" and "Zeus" *fail* to refer to anything. Of course, not all philosophers consider uses of "Pegasus" and "Zeus" as cases of reference failure. Some think that such expressions have bearers which really exist, albeit as abstract objects (van Inwagen 1979: 299-308, Zalta 1983: 277-319). Others also hold that they have bearers, but deny that the bearers of such expressions exist (Reimer, 2001: 491-506). Now if reference is understood so broadly, as it is often suggested in ordinary discourse[3], then there is no such thing as reference failure, for any expression that has meaning or a semantic value refers, that is, refers to whatever the expression means.[4] So in order for the idea of reference failure makes any good sense at all, reference has to be defined as only to things that exist in space and time. It is precisely in this restricted sense of reference that "Pegasus" and "Zeus" may be thought as cases of reference failure, as such words do not "hook on to things in the world" or "attach to bits of reality" in the way "Marcus Tullius Cicero" and "Barack Obama" do.

The concept of reference failure is a teleological one; it contains the sense of a discrepancy between the purpose of a speech act to refer to something and its outcome. "Pegasus" and "Zeus" can perhaps be said to fail to refer, because they are referring expressions, not in the sense of actually referring to some particular objects or individuals, but in virtue of purporting or being intended to refer. It is tempting to think of a referring expression as analogous to an arrow which purports or is intended to hit a certain target,

[3] For instance, one can say that *Sola Fide* refers to the doctrine of justification by faith alone or the term butterfly effect refers to the concept of sensitive dependence on initial conditions in chaos theory.

[4] Kent Bach (2008: 16, note 2) summarizes the view thus, "there is a broad sense in which every expression refers (or at least every expression that has a semantic value that contributes to the propositional content of sentences in which it occurs)."

and which may or may not succeed in doing so. It seems clear that for any meaningful talk of the arrow's success or failure, there must be a target, i.e., something the arrow is aimed at in the first place. One cannot assert with any good sense that the arrow fails to hit anything, just because there is nothing to hit. The arrow's failure to hit its target is a discrepancy between the purpose for the act of shooting the arrow and the outcome of that act. If the analogy holds, it would appear that any meaningful talk of the success or failure of a use of referring expression presupposes the existence of the expression's "target", namely, the referent, which, however, contradicts the above characterization of reference failure: It is the absence of referents that uses of expressions such as "Pegasus" and "Zeus" are said to fail to refer. There is indeed a sense that unlike the well perceived dichotomy of the arrow's hitting a target and its purporting to hit it, an expression's referring to something and its purporting to refer to it collapse into one. In other words, an expression cannot fail to refer to its referent if it has a referent at all; to have a referent is precisely to refer to it.

Thus the very idea of reference failure may just be one of self-contradiction. This is perhaps what Russell meant when he said, "If it [an expression] were really a name the question of existence could not arise, because a name has got to name something or it is not a name, …" (Russell 1956: 243). Calling an expression that refers to nothing but only purports to refer to something (or an expression that names nothing but only purports to name something) a referring expression (or a name) is nothing more than calling a fake passport a passport or a snowman a man. The apparent self-contradiction is really a result of some metaphoric use of the words or a sheer confusion of the different meanings of the words.

However if it makes sense to say that a fake passport fails to be a (genuine) passport, one should also be allowed to say that a non-referring expression such as "Pegasus" or "Zeus" fails to be a "genuine" referring expression, that is, fails to refer. After all,

"Pegasus" or "Zeus", unlike "but", "therefore" or "since", at least seems to purport (or be intended) to refer, despite the fact that it does not actually. One can use a non-referring expression as a referring one, mistakenly of course.[5] Now it should be kept in mind that the idea of reference failure induced by the use of expressions such as "Pegasus" and "Zeus", namely expressions with the appearance of proper names, assumes a direct theory of reference, which holds that a proper name refers to whatever is linked to it in a way that does not require speakers to associate any identifying descriptive content with the name. According to Kripke's version of direct reference theory, reference is initially fixed at a dubbing, after which, the name is passed on from speaker to speaker through communicative exchanges. Subsequent speakers are said to succeed in referring by using a proper name, if they simply "borrow" its reference from the speaker who performed the dubbing, that is, with the intention to use the name to refer to whatever the initial speaker used it to refer to, without having to identify it.[6] Presumably reference failure occurs when a speaker who has "borrowed" an expression intends to use it to refer to whatever it was initially used to refer to, whereas, unbeknownst to her, it was never used by anyone to refer to anything.

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[5] One can also intend to use an expression to refer deceitfully, that is, to try to deceive others into believing that one is referring. But in order to do that, one must not intend to use that expression to refer.

[6] Kripke (1977) also distinguishes between semantic reference and the speaker's reference. The speaker's reference of an expression is a property of a dated, particular use of the expression, whereas the semantic reference is not tied to a particular use. If reference is understood not as something an expression does, but as something someone does by using an expression, even semantic reference is not independent of its use by speakers, although unlike the speaker's reference, it is independent of particular uses. Michael Luntley (1999: 53) suggests that semantic reference is a property of an expression as *standardly* used to make a judgement, whereas the speaker's reference is a property of an expression as used on particular occasions where the speaker's intention override standard use. The distinction was largely made to solve the problems involving descriptions. Now if the direct reference theory holds, such a distinction does not apply to names, because any particular use of a name is a standard use and the initial dubbing is when the standard is set. To "borrow" an expression is simply to "borrow" the standard of using the expression and one can standardly use a name one "borrows" without having to know what the standard is. Of course I may name my dog "Nietzsche", but that is not a particular use of this expression that overrides its standard use (referring to a certain philosopher). My first use of the expression to refer to the dog sets an entirely different standard.

To be sure, this is not how we usually take such non-referring expressions or "empty names" to be. When we use "Pegasus", "Zeus", "Santa Clause" and "Hamlet", we know or at least suppose that they do not refer to anything. It would be utterly irrational for someone to intend to use "Pegasus" to refer, while at the same time believing that "Pegasus" does not refer. Now if we do not intend to use such expressions to refer in the first place, how would there be reference failure, which requires the speaker believing the existence of Pegasus in order to form an intension to refer to it? Of course there are cases which do seem to fit the above description of reference failure. Suppose that someone, not knowing that "Vulcan" is empty, intends to use it to refer to something. It would seem that there is indeed a discrepancy between the intention to use the expression and the undesired outcome, hence a reference failure. However, to construe the use of such expressions in this way misses the essence of the intention involved. The speaker's intention to use the expression to refer to whatever it was used to refer to by the initial user is part of her intention to use the expression in whatever way it was initially used. If the expression was never used to refer, then the current use of it does not refer either, as the speaker's intention cannot override the reference of an expression which she "borrows". Consider the name "Lao-tzu" which had long been believed to be the name of an ancient Chinese philosopher until the mid-twentieth century when doubt emerged as to whether there was ever a person bearing the name. Suppose that the historicity of Lao-tzu can never be proven. What happens to my use of the expression "Lao-tzu"? Surely it refers if there was indeed a person by that name, or it does not if otherwise. I can always defer my decision as to whether it is a referring expression or not to the future when some conclusive evidence is available. But that decision is no part of my current intention to use the expression.

Since the speaker who uses a "borrowed" expression, name or otherwise, cannot form an intention relevant to the reference of expression, for whether or not it refers is

determined by its initial use, there is no question of whether there is a discrepancy between the speaker's intention to use an expression and the outcome of such a use, and the initial use, therefore, is the only place where reference failure can possibly occur. According to Kripke, reference is initially fixed at a dubbing either by perception or by description. Reference-fixing by perception is, for instance, when a speaker says of a perceived object, "this is to be called 'Lao-tzu'", whereas reference-fixing by description is when a speaker stipulates, "whoever as a single person wrote *Tao Te Ching*" is to be called 'Lao-tzu'", should there existed such a person.[7] If no reference was ever fixed by using "Lao-tzu" either by perception or by description, "Lao-tzu" can only be thought to have been initially associated with a description or a set of descriptions, which identify nothing.

We are often told that one of the major problems for the direct reference theory is how to account for the fact that sentences containing empty names such as "Pegasus" and "Zeus" seem to be meaningful, if the meaning of a declarative sentence is determined by the meaning of its constituents of which such an expression is one, whose meaning is exclusively its referent. Now if it is true that such expressions were only associated with descriptions, the Fregean-Russellian descriptive analysis provides not only the neatest, but also the most reasonable explanation for the meaningfulness and truth valuability of sentences that contain such expressions. According to Russell's theory of descriptions, "Pegasus" is a disguised description and hence replaceable by something like "the winged horse". Under the descriptive analysis, expressions such as "Pegasus" and "Zeus" cause no reference failure, as they have nothing to do with reference, which is exactly how they were created, and the

[7] The idea that the reference of a name is fixed by description is not equivalent to the idea that the reference of a name is mediated by a description.

sentences that contain such expressions express only some general propositions.[8] The term "empty names" is really a misnomer, as the so-called empty names are not names at all.

II. Can There Be Demonstrative Reference Failure?

Reference fixing of a name by perception involves the use of a demonstrative. A person may say to others "let's call this 'Fido'", pointing at a dog in front of her whom she and her audience both perceive. Should there be no dog or anything, why would the person ever use a demonstrative to refer? If no attempt to refer is made, how can there be reference failure? When Russell says that if an expression were really a name the question of existence could not arise, what he calls "name" is a shorthand for his "logically proper name". A "logically proper name" is really a demonstrative, which refers to an object of perception or object of immediate acquaintance. Contrary to Russell whose above remarks may well be taken as a categorical denial of reference failure, contemporary direct reference theorists readily acknowledge its possibility. David Kaplan, for one, claims that there can be empty or vacuous demonstratives (Kaplan 1989a: 490). Although Kaplan maintains that "pure indexicals" (e.g., "I", "here" and "now") are immune to reference failure, such that "I am here now" is true *a priori*, he allows reference failure involving the use of demonstratives (e.g., "this", "that" and "he"). Kaplan defines reference failure in terms of the difference between an expression's character and its content. According to him, all expressions must have two sorts of meaning: character and content. The character of an expression is its linguistic meaning or the rules that govern the use of the expression, and its content is the proposition or propositional component such

[8] Contemporary direct reference theorists or Millianists have proposed ingenious solutions to the problem. While the solutions may well be feasible alternatives to the Fregean-Russellian descriptive account of such expressions, they seem to insist, needlessly, on the coherence of the idea of reference failure: such expressions are referring expressions, albeit of a special kind. See David Braun (1993), Nathan Salmon (1998), etc. However, if they are not referring expressions, which they certainly are not, given the fact that they originate from an association with some descriptions, and are therefore replaceable by them, they do not pose any problem for the direct reference theory.

as a referent expressed by an expression in a context. While for non-indexicals content and character are identical, for indexicals they are not, as the character of indexicals are constant, but their content varies from context to context. Thus, the character of "this" may be defined tentatively as "the object the user of the word is currently pointing at", which is always the same, but its content, the object, may be different, as the same expression can be used in different contexts, such as the time, location, the gesture of the speaker and her intentions. It is Kaplan's contention that unlike pure indexicals, which, whenever used, always have content, demonstratives may be empty or vacuous, that is, without content, if they are used in certain contexts.

What exactly are the contexts in which demonstratives are empty or vacuous, that is, the use of demonstratives fail to refer? In his early piece "Demonstratives", Kaplan mentions three kinds of using an empty or vacuous demonstrative: (1) hallucination; (2) wrong demonstratum (referent of a demonstrative), which is, for instance, when the speaker is pointing to a flower and saying "he" in the belief that one is pointing at a man disguised as a flower; (3) too many "demonstrata", as in the case where the subject is pointing to two intertwined vines and saying "that vine." (Kaplan 1989a: 490-491) It is well known that for the early Kaplan, what distinguishes demonstratives from pure indexicals, in addition to the former being possibly empty, is that a use of the former is accompanied by demonstration, which is "typically, though not invariably, a (visual) presentation of a local object discriminated by a pointing" (Kaplan 1989a: 491), whereas the character or linguistic rules of the latter which govern their use fully determine the referent for each context. Therefore, "A demonstrative without an associated demonstration is incomplete. The linguistic rules which govern the use of the true demonstratives 'that', 'he', etc., are not sufficient to determine their referent in all contexts of use. Something else—an associated demonstration—must be provided" (Kaplan 1989a: 490). An incomplete demonstrative is

not vacuous much as an incomplete definite description ("the prime minister") is not vacuous. A demonstrative is vacuous when the associated demonstration is vacuous.[9]

Now if there are limits to what even the best of intentions can do and it is demonstration that ultimately fixes the referent, as the early Kaplan suggests, an appropriate analogy for demonstrative reference would be a gambler throwing a dice, rather than an archer shooting an arrow. The gambler can be said to succeed in the game insofar as there is always a number turning out after each throw, where success is defined as having a number, any number, not as having the particular number the gambler wishes for. He fails only when, for instance, the dice rolls away and disappears, that is, no number turns out. A classic illustration of this "dice throw" theory of demonstrative reference is provided by Kaplan in another early piece of his, "Dthat", where he imagines a scenario in which he, without turning and looking, points at a picture of Spiro Agnew, which is hanging on a wall behind him, where there used to be a picture of Rudolf Carnap, and says, "dthat is a picture of one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century." (Kaplan 1979)[10] By the aforementioned arrow shooting analogy, the Carnap-Agnew example should be read as an instance of reference failure, as the speaker's act of demonstration does not "hit" the intended "target", namely, the picture of Carnap. On the early Kaplan's

[9] It is not obvious that (2) is an instance of reference failure even on the early Kaplan's criterion. It is an instance of reference failure only if the demonstrative "he" is defined as primitive and irreducible to other demonstrative, which Kaplan seems to hold, but is not convincing. For one thing, since "he" has some descriptive content (indicating the object being human and male), it may be said that the speaker fails not in referring, but in describing or predicating. Calling a flower "he" is simply another way of saying "that *man*" or "that which *is a man*". There is no significant difference between referring to a flower as "he" and referring to a cross dressing man as "she", the latter of which, many would acknowledge, is clearly a case of misidentification. As Donnellan has shown, even descriptions can be used referentially such that the sense of descriptions may sometimes be overridden. If "he" is treated as replaceable by a complex demonstrative "that man", the sense of the descriptive component "man" may as well be overridden by the referent of the demonstrative "that". By calling a flower "he", the speaker fails to correctly predicate of the object she is pointing at, but she does not fail to refer to it, because the expression "he" she uses does single out an object, a flower, which she merely wrongly thinks of as a man disguised as a flower.

[10] "Dthat" is a term invented by Kaplan for the demonstrative use of "that".

view, however, since it is the demonstration, and not intention, that fixes the referent, and in this case, the demonstration does single something out, the speaker succeeds in referring.

Despite vigorous defenses by philosophers such as Reimer (Reimer 1991b) and Wettstein (Wettstein 1984), this "dice throw" theory of demonstrative reference, as it stands, seems to encounter the difficulty of reconciling its elimination or minimization of the teleological elements (intentions) in reference with the idea of reference success or failure which presupposes intentions. If the referent of the use of a demonstrative is not what the speaker intends, but only what the demonstration demonstrates, which is not intentional, how can we consider such a reference success without contradicting the basic notion about a successful act that it is the fulfillment of an intention? This difficulty might have been a reason for Kaplan to change his mind.[11] In his "Afterthoughts", Kaplan abandons the "dice throw" theory altogether and argues instead that the demonstration has no bearing on the determination of the referent, which is fixed by what he calls the "directing intention" of the speaker, the speaker's intention to demonstrate a perceived object on which his attention has focused. This move, however, leaves the Carnap-Agnew case largely unexplained—the later Kaplan seems to avoid it on the grounds of its being complex and atypical (Kaplan, 1989b: 582, no. 34). It is at least in part because of the later Kaplan's reticence on the case that his newly adopted intentionism became the target of the early Kaplan's followers such as Reimer and Wettstein, who insist that demonstration plays an essential semantic role and that the speaker's intention is marginal at best.

III. Bach's Solution

From the later Kaplan's point of view, one may think it natural to construe the Carnap-Agnew case as an instance of reference failure, as the speaker's intention to refer to

[11] As Reimer observes and others agree, Kaplan never gives reasons for his newly adopted view.

the picture of Carnap is not fulfilled by his pointing gesture, which instead demonstrates an unintended object, the picture of Agnew. But according to the later Kaplan, the speaker's intention to refer is specifically an intention to "to point at a perceived individual on whom he has focused" (Kaplan, 1989b: 582). Since, as Reimer points out, there is no "perceived" object or individual on whom the speaker has "focused," and therefore, nothing can count as an intention to refer to the picture of Carnap, the Carnap-Agnew case is not an instance of reference failure. Between the "dice throw" theory which is vulnerable to the charge of contradicting the teleological conception of reference and the later Kaplan's inability to handle this "complex" and "atypical" case, Kent Bach proposes a "middle way" to the effect that the speaker intends to demonstrate and actually demonstrates the picture of Agnew (Bach 1992: 297b). Bach contends that demonstration itself is intentional or that what the demonstration demonstrates is always what the speaker intends, although what he intends may not be what he demonstrates. In essence, the intention of the speaker can include the intention to refer to what one is demonstrating (Bach 1992a: 140). To modify the "dice throw" analogy, one can say that the gambler may wish for a particular number, but by committing himself to chance, he also intends whatever comes out of the dice throw. The speaker in the Carnap-Agnew case may have the picture of Carnap in mind when he uses "dthat" to refer. But given his commitment to the rules of communication, he also intends to refer to the picture of Agnew which he is pointing to behind him. The Carnap-Agnew case is an instance of reference success, not because the speaker's act of demonstration accidentally singles something out, but because his intention to refer to something he is demonstrating is fulfilled by the fact that he is actually demonstrating it.

Since demonstration itself is intentional, the use of a demonstrative unaccompanied by a demonstration will then be construed as a misuse of such an expression for its lack of referential intention. In an example provided by Reimer, a speaker, intending to refer to

Fido, says to someone nearby, "that dog is Fido," but fails to accompany her utterance with any sort of ostensive gesture (pointing, nodding, glancing, etc.), due to some sort of sudden, momentary, paralysis (Reimer 1991b: 194). According to Reimer, since no demonstration is made, no referent is fixed. There is a reference failure, simply because nothing is demonstrated. On Bach's account, however, the intention relevant to reference success or failure is not the speaker's intention to refer to Fido, but her intention to refer to the dog she is pointing at (Bach 1992b: 297). Since she failed to point at Fido, the relevant intention is empty. Since the intention is empty, there is no question of whether or not it is fulfilled. This case is similar to Kaplan's intertwined vines example, which on Bach's account, would no longer be an instance of reference failure as well, as it too involves no relevant referential intention: the speaker is unable to distinguish one vine from the other by means of his demonstration.

But how to account for cases in which the speaker intends to demonstrate and refer to an object which he perceives, but ends up demonstrating another? The following is an example also provided by Reimer. Suppose that two dogs, Spot and Fido, have been racing about. "The speaker, focusing on Fido, comes out with an utterance of 'That dog is Fido'. But because the dogs are moving about so quickly, the gesture which accompanies the speaker's utterance, ends up discriminating Spot—rather than the intended Fido, who is by now just out of the range of the speaker's pointing finger." (Reimer 1991a: 181) Instead of intending to refer to something the speaker does not perceive as in the Carnap-Agnew case, the speaker in Reimer's Fido-Spot example intends to refer to and demonstrate what she clearly sees, Fido, which, however, is not what she actually demonstrates. This may appear *prima facie* an instance of reference failure, as the speaker's intention to refer to Fido is not fulfilled. Both Reimer and Bach, however, predict that it is a reference success, yet for different reasons. For Reimer, it is an instance of reference success, because the speaker's

act of demonstration actually picks something out regardless of his intention. For Bach, the speaker can be said to have both failed and succeeded to refer to the dog she intended to refer to, in the sense that she failed with regard to her intention to refer to and demonstrate Fido, as Fido is the dog she intended to refer to, and succeeded with regard to her intention to refer to the dog she is demonstrating. Because only the latter, not the former intention, according to Bach, is the specifically referential intention, the speaker succeeded in referring (Bach 1992a:143).

A specifically referential intention is one which the speaker intends and expects her audience to recognize and rely on in order to identify a certain dog as the referent (Bach 1992a:143). "Such an intention is not fulfilled if the audience fails to identify the right individual in the right way, that is, the one intended in the way intended" (Bach 1992b: 296). So Bach's notion of referential intention, as he himself acknowledges, is not exactly the same as that of later Kaplan (Bach 1992b: 296), which does not take the audience's successful identification of the object intended by the speaker as the determinant of reference success. Demonstrative reference, according to Bach, is speaker's reference, which, as opposed to semantic reference, should be understood in terms of a four-place relation, between a speaker, an expression, an audience, and a referent: A speaker uses an expression to refer his audience to an individual, because "communication is essentially interpersonal affair, and reference by a speaker is part and parcel of an act of communication" (Bach 2008: 16). A demonstrative reference failure is the speaker's failure to demonstrate anything, and the speaker's failure to demonstrate anything is specifically the audience's failure to identify or recognize what the speaker intends them to identify or recognize by means of his demonstration.

It is clear that Bach separates questions of reference success and failure from questions of reference fixing, which are treated by Kaplan and Reimer among others as

overlapping. For Bach, reference fixing concerns how the speaker picks out an object as his intended referent, whereas reference success and failure concerns whether the audience identifies or recognizes the referent the speaker has picked out. This "audience-oriented" conception of reference success and failure, however, is not without problems. For one thing, according to Bach, a reference failure is ultimately the audience's failure to identify or recognize the object the speaker intends them to identify or recognize by means of his demonstration. This, of course, presupposes the prior existence of the speaker's intention which may or may not be fulfilled by the forthcoming audience's effort to identify the intended referent. Since the relevant intention of the speaker is always the intention to refer to the object he is demonstrating, and therefore cannot be overridden by his act of demonstration, there is a sense that his demonstration which is intentional fixes the referent. But what counts as a demonstration that demonstrates an object? If, for instance, the speaker intends to refer to a dog, Spot, which he is said to be pointing at, for what reasons his pointing gesture qualifies as a demonstration of Spot, rather than Fido? Of course he thinks that he is pointing at him. But from the viewpoint of his audience, under some circumstances, he may well appear to be pointing at Fido. Which dog is he pointing at? Perhaps there are criteria based on which objective judgments can be made, criteria akin to those for an arrow's hitting a target. Given Bach's view that the speaker's intention is "audience-oriented", it is Fido that should be the demonstrated dog, because Fido is the one which the audience takes to be what the speaker is pointing at. The Carnap-Agnew case, as Bach construes it, can be read as suggesting that the audience ultimately determines the object of a demonstration. The speaker, not perceiving the picture behind him, is in no position to know by himself whether he is pointing at anything at all or what, if anything, he is pointing at. He takes the picture of Agnew as the one he is pointing at and forms the intention to refer to it, precisely because it is the picture that the audience takes to be what

he is pointing at. In short, if what is demonstrated by the speaker is determined by the audience, it is the audience's decision as to what is demonstrated that fixes the referent. At the end of the day, when a speaker refers demonstratively, he refers his audience to something which is in the mind of the audience. So understood, there can be no such thing as reference failure.

I agree with Bach that communication is essentially an interpersonal affair, and reference by a speaker is part and parcel of an act of communication. But this does entail that a successful demonstrative reference depends on a particular audience's successful identification of the referent, which as I have shown leads the conclusion that the audience is the ultimate authority in fixing the referent. When a speaker uses a demonstrative to refer to an object, he intends his audience to identify the object. It is quite possible that only some in the audience actually identify the object, but some others for some reason, say vision impairment or some particular viewpoint at which the audience is located, do not. It does not seem right to claim that the same reference made by the speaker both succeeds and fails. It is also possible that no one in the audience actually identifies the object, and the speaker's intention to refer to the audience to the object is therefore unfulfilled. However, it is conceivable that had those who did not identify the object normal vision or had been located differently, they would have identified it. The point is, even in the absence of successful identification by the audience, the use of a demonstrative is still an act of communication, and not part of a soliloquy.

So I do not think that Bach's revision of the later Kaplan's intentionism yields promising results. A demonstrative reference failure is not the audience's failure to identify the referent, instead it is the speaker's failure to fix the referent, or to use Kaplan's scheme, a demonstrative expression's lack of content when used in a particular context. The fact that the speaker fails to refer his audience to a certain object by using an expression in no

way implies that the expression itself is empty (lack of content). The expression obtains its content, when the speaker focuses his attention on a certain object which he perceives and to which he intends to refer by a forthcoming act of demonstration, which itself is a mere externalization of the inner directing intention.

IV. There Is No Such Thing as Demonstrative Reference Failure

Now if the speaker's referential intention fixes the referent, what exactly is involved in the speaker's having that intention? First of all, the speaker must perceive the object he intends to refer to, which I take as most obvious. The idea that a successful use of a demonstrative such as "this" can be determined solely by the demonstration gesture is not quite intelligible. Certainly one can point out distant objects with eyes shut and ears plugged, and blind people can point out the moon. But with such "demonstrations" the subject lacks the understanding or knowledge of the thing being "demonstrated", which is an integral part of his intention to refer (Evans 1982: 143). One of the reasons for treating the Carnap-Agnew case as complex and atypical by the later Kaplan is presumably that the speaker, when uttering the demonstrative, is perceiving neither the picture of Carnap nor that of Agnew, which does not fit the descriptions of the typical cases, or cases involving what he calls perceptual demonstratives, where the speaker is perceiving the object he intends to refer to or the speaker's directing intention is aimed at a perceived object (Kaplan 1989b: 583). On the other hand, the attempted reference in the Carnap-Agnew case is not entirely without perceptual basis. It is most likely that the speaker did previously see the picture of Carnap, and in this sense his intention to refer to it can be said to be perceptually based. But unlike "that" in "that was so bright" which is intended to refer to something in the past, say a flash of lightening that just burst through the clouds a second ago, the demonstrative used in the Carnap-Agnew case is intended to refer to an object that currently exists. The problem is

precisely that the intention to refer to something in the "updated" surroundings is solely based on an "outdated" perception, which conveniently assumes that nothing has ever changed. Simply put, the speaker is in no position to form an intention to refer to the picture of Carnap in the first place. Nor, of course, is he in a position to form an intention to refer to the picture of Agnew, even though he manages to point to it, because he is not perceiving and perhaps has never perceived it. Given that the intention in question has no perceptual basis, it does not qualify as a referential intention and the question of reference success or failure, namely whether the intention is fulfilled, does not arise.

Perhaps the case most friendly to the defenders of the notion of reference failure is hallucination, where the speaker intends to refer to something which she perceives or at least thinks she perceives, but which does not exist. When Macbeth utters "this is a dagger", the demonstrative "this" he uses to refer fails to pick out anything—he does not merely mistake something which is really there for something else. Clearly Macbeth's intention to use the word "this" to refer is unfulfilled. However, it must be noted that even in hallucination, there is something that the speaker actually refers to, namely, a certain sense datum. According to Russell, demonstratives such as "this" and "that" are logically proper names and therefore are not subject to descriptive analysis, because they refer directly to sense data, which are objects of immediate acquaintance. Sense data are ontologically neutral in the sense that both ordinary common-sense objects and hallucination images may be constructed from them. Because reference involves only sense data, no reference failure can ever occur. This is precisely what Russell means, when he says that if an expression were really a name the question of existence could not arise. One cannot be mistaken about the existence of a sense datum, because that a sense datum appears to exist is no different from that it exists.

Now if we accept the sense data theory as an explanation for hallucination, “this” used in this context must be understood as referring to a sense datum, such that when Macbeth says “this is a dagger”, what Macbeth really states is either (1) “this represents a real dagger”, where “this” stands for a sense datum, or (2) “the object represented by this is a dagger”, where “this” stands for a sense datum and “the object represented by this”, a description or quasi-description (for the ineliminable “this” packed in the phrase), replaces the “this” in the original statement “this is a dagger”. Either way, the initial attempted reference to a physical object disappears, and as a result, reference failure in cases of hallucination is analyzed away.

A merit of introducing the sense data theory is that it accounts for the fact that in such a situation the speaker does perceive something, namely, a sense datum, and not sheer nothing, and he intends to use the expression to refer to it, despite the fact he does not know that what he perceives and intends to refer to is merely a sense datum. It may be objected, however, that such a stipulation of the character of demonstratives such as “this” (“expression used to refer to a sense datum the user perceives”) and the sense data theory generally seem too far away from how we understand such words of ordinary language, as it requires that whenever we use demonstratives to refer, we always end up with referring to some sense data, which is too much theory laden and counter-intuitive. A possible response to this objection is that the supposed reference failure in hallucination can be explained away in terms of sense data without invoking the sense data theory itself. In other words, that someone in hallucination uses “this” to refer to a sense datum need not entail that he does so in normal circumstances. It is perfectly coherent to take “this” to be an expression that is used to refer to a sense datum in hallucination, but to a physical object in normal

circumstances.[12] In essence, there is no need to retain the restriction required by the sense data theory on the character of the demonstratives. Perhaps an adequate formulation of "this" should be something like "expression used to refer to the thing, whatever it is, the user of the expression perceives and intends to refer to", as such a formulation does not commit the user to the type of things to which it applies and their ontological status.

It would appear that the demonstrative "this" is guaranteed to refer, as long as there is something going on within the perceptual field of the speaker, with or without external stimuli and the speaker intends to refer to it. The problem is, the referent of the use of a demonstrative in the case of hallucination is purely private. Linguists and philosophers generally distinguish the demonstrative use of "this" or "that" from its anaphoric use. While the use of "this" in hallucination is surely not anaphoric, it is not demonstrative either in the sense in which a demonstrative use is generally understood: When one uses a demonstrative to refer, one is able to demonstrate for others what one is referring to by an act of demonstration, whenever it is required. The intention to refer to a sense datum in hallucination, being an intention to refer to a private sensation, cannot be externalized by an act of demonstration serving as an aid to communication. I may say "this really hurts" referring to a pain I am experiencing. But there is no way I can demonstrate the pain for anyone else. All I can do is to indicate it indirectly through grimace or to describe it. Demonstrative reference in this sense must take place in a public space and the referent of a demonstrative must in principle be accessible perceptually to the audience, although they may not be able to successfully identify it in a given occasion.

The question is whether a speaker under hallucination can form an intention that qualifies as an intention to demonstratively refer to something external in the first place.

[12] Some believe that the possibility of hallucinations shows that even normal perception always involves sense data (Robinson 1994: 151-62, Jackson 1977: 50ff.). But a sense data explanation of hallucination by no means entails a sense data explanation of perception in general.

The speaker may sincerely believe that he is perceiving something actually there in front of him, and may intend to use a demonstrative to refer to a real thing. What exactly is his intention? I made the point in the preceding that in order for the speaker to form an intention to refer to an object, he must perceive the object he intends to refer to. This means that if the speaker does not perceive the object, there is no basis for him to intend to refer to it. The perception I talked about is of course normal perception. With normal perception the speaker would surely not intend to refer to things he does not perceive. But when he is under hallucination, he does not know he is, and may therefore indeed intend to refer to a real thing. Now if the thesis that demonstrative referential intention is (normal) perception based holds, the intention formed by the speaker under hallucination cannot be a demonstrative referential intention. Normal perception is something that is presupposed by the intention to refer demonstratively. If the speaker's perception is abnormal as in the case of hallucination, that is, the presupposition is false, his intention (with regard to demonstrative reference) is empty or irrelevant. And if his intention is empty, there will be no reference failure, which requires a non-empty intention. It may be objected that a false presupposition does not boil down to an empty intention. Think of a description for example, one can use "the present king of France" with the non-empty intention of referring to someone even though the presupposition that there is a king of France is false. Now the question we should ask here is what exactly is presupposed by the intention to refer by using a description. If it is the existence of the present king of France, then the intention is surely not empty. However, what is presupposed by the intention to refer to something by using a description is not the existence of a present king of France, but the speaker's correct understanding of the phrase which constitutes the description he is using. If the speaker does not know the meaning of the phrase, his intention to refer has no basis, and is therefore empty. Having a normal perception for the speaker to form an intention to

refer demonstratively is like having an understanding of the phrase for him to form an intention to use a description to refer. If the speaker does not have normal perception, which is presupposed by his intention to demonstratively refer, his intention, if anything at all, is empty.

Finally let's consider another situation which may appear as a better candidate for reference failure: A speaker perceives a rapid succession of many different things, each of which lasts for a period of time short enough to not only disallow an utterance of "this" to complete, but also escape the perceptually focused attention of the speaker. Unlike in hallucination, the speaker in such a situation has normal perception and has things publicly displayed within her perceptual field. It does seem that a reference failure always obtains whenever an attempt is made to use a demonstrative "this" to refer to one of the things in rapid succession. Such a situation was in fact discussed quite extensively by Plato and was treated by him as a dramatization of what he took to be the phenomenal world. In a number of occasions (Plato *Timaeus* 49a6-c7, *Cratylus* 439d and *Theaetetus* 182c1-183b5), Plato describes it as one in which demonstratives such as "this" (*tode*) or "that" (*touto*) cannot be used to refer anything in flux. The constant incessant transformation between the phenomenal stuffs, fire, water, earth and air, makes it impossible to say that any one of them is really one thing (e.g., water) rather than some other. In a well-known passage in the *Timaeus*, Plato claims, "since none of these [fire, water, and etc.] appears ever to remain the same, which one of them can one categorically assert, without engrossment, to be some particular thing, *this* one, and not something else? One can't" (Plato *Timaeus*, 49c7-50a4). That is, in order for someone to use an expression such as "this" or "that" to refer to anything at all, whatever is intended to be referred to must have some sort of stability. Since nothing in flux is stable, it appears, any such reference always fails.

Russell once noted that anything referred to by "this" (which for him is a particular sense datum, not a physical object) should last for at least a minute or two, long enough for anyone who uses "this" to finish talking about it (Russell 1956: 203). Quite certainly, the time needed can be much shorter as far as the utterance of "this" is concerned, as there is no difficulty to utter "this" to demonstratively refer to a flash or a bang that lasts as briefly as only a second or two. However it is not so much the utterance of a demonstrative as the speaker's perception of the intended referent that requires the minimal stability of the intended referent. As I have argued in the foregoing, a successful demonstrative reference is such that the speaker must perceive what she intends to refer to. Nothing in flux can be demonstratively referred to precisely because first and foremost nothing in flux can last long enough to be perceived by the speaker or be focused on by the speaker's perceptual attention. Consider the static images projected successively on the movie screen at the speed of 24 frames per second. Now if the speaker cannot perceptually attend to any of the images, she would not form an intention to refer to it in the first place, and her utterance of "this" is little more than a noise. No reference failure can occur in this situation because of the absence of an intention.

Given that the speaker's perception fixes the referent and that the speaker's referential intention is not formed prior to the fixation of the referent, demonstrative reference is guaranteed. The alleged reference failure in the contexts of hallucination and flux can be analyzed away, when in each case the intention to refer is shown to be empty.

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