

## COMMENTS AND CRITICISM

## WORDS ON WORDS\*

**H**awthorne and Lepore's paper begins thus:

In his *seminal* paper "Words," David Kaplan addresses a pair of questions that have been largely neglected by the philosophical community:

- (i) Under what conditions are two utterances utterances of the same word?
- (ii) What *are* words?

That these questions have not received much attention is rather surprising: after all, philosophers and linguists frequently appeal to considerations about word and sentence identity in connection with a variety of puzzles and problems that are foundational to the very subject matter of philosophy of language and linguistics. Kaplan's attention to words is thus to be applauded. And there is *no doubt* that his discussion contains many useful *insights*.<sup>1</sup> [Emphasis missing in the original.]

As we say in the Passover service, *Dayenu*. That alone would have been sufficient. Unfortunately, as I have discovered to my sorrow, papers that begin like this always continue, at length, in a different vein. In fact, the very next word in their introduction is "Nevertheless."

I will respond to some of their criticisms, but I want to say at the outset that in my view, when you publish something, you put it out there for all eyes to see from their own perspective. And so, I believe

\*This article is an attempt to reconstruct a paper delivered to a symposium at the American Philosophical Association meeting in San Francisco on April 3, 2010. It specifically aims to do no more than that. In order to avoid an endless back and forth, we all agreed to publish what was presented, rather than second thoughts based on what the others had presented. This was our deal. Hawthorne and Lepore stuck to it (noting exceptions in footnotes), and so have I, as best I can. Some undelivered comments on their Part Four were reconstructed from my notes on their original manuscript. In my own case, the mostly handwritten paper was well received, but the manuscript was lost during mutual congratulations in a bar after the symposium. I did not realize that the paper had been lost until a few months later, and by that time its contents had largely drained from my always sieve-like memory. Confirmation that it was indeed irretrievable left me in grief. Finally I understood what one of my heroes must have felt when he wrote, "Hardly anything more unwelcome can befall a scientific writer" (Frege, reacting to a difficulty raised by Russell). Perhaps I overreacted.

<sup>1</sup>John Hawthorne and Ernest Lepore, "On Words," this JOURNAL, CVIII, 9 (September 2011): 447–85, at pp. 447–48.

that all criticisms are fair. Not all are correct. But all are fair. We live in a *Rashomon* world. It even *might* be the case that *all* of their criticisms are correct. (To be more precise, there is a possible world in which all of their criticisms *are* correct. In the actual world, the actual criticisms are mostly wrong, but that does not vitiate the modal point.)

“Words” is the second in a series of three Gilbert Ryle Lectures that I gave at beautiful Trent University in Peterborough, Canada, back in 1986.<sup>2</sup> I was facing a problem in direct reference theory and urging that the solution depended on taking account of the differences among distinct lexical items, all directly referential and all referring to the same individual.<sup>3</sup> The idea of the first lecture was that because of the presumed lexical difference between names of the forms ‘A’ and ‘B’, there was already an apparent syntactical, or syntactical/lexical, difference between ‘A=A’ and ‘A=B’. And although the semantic value of the whole needs to be calculated from the semantic value of the parts, it certainly depends on how the parts are put together, that is, the syntactical/lexical structure of the sentence in question. Truths of logic depend heavily on whether the same nonlogical constant is repeated or whether a new word appears in the second occurrence. ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’ are different words. In ‘Hesperus is Hesperus’ both places are occupied by the same lexical item, whereas in ‘Hesperus is Phosphorus’ the second place is occupied by a distinct lexical item. Such differences make a difference in form. I was aiming at a syntactical/lexical version of what Kit Fine has, more recently, called *coordination*.<sup>4</sup>

This, in a natural way, led me to consider what words are and how they are individuated, Hawthorne and Lepore’s questions (i) and (ii). But there were several other motivations that led me to write “Words.”

I had long been troubled by the use of what are called *quotation-names*, like

‘Boston’

and

‘color’.

<sup>2</sup> It was later published as David Kaplan, “Words,” *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, LXIV (1990): 93–119.

<sup>3</sup> The first lecture, never published, was called “A Problem about Direct Reference.” Kit Fine’s *Semantic Relationism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007) develops a somewhat similar idea but at the semantic rather than syntactical/lexical level. The third lecture, “Thoughts,” was never completely written but developed the anti-Fregean thesis that sameness of meaning is more dependent on sameness of words than on sameness of a prior notion of thought. It also argued that, as followed from my “Words” lecture, Kripke’s Peter had made a “linguistic error” and thus had not satisfied the requirement for disquotation.

<sup>4</sup> Fine, *op. cit.*

What do they name? Quine had famously contrasted Boston, which he claimed contained some 800,000 people, with 'Boston', which he claimed contains only six letters.<sup>5</sup> (He meant six *occurrences* of letters, since there are really only five letters, one of them repeated. As you can see, I keep the notion of repetition salient.) Presumably, he would have said that 'color' contains only five (occurrences of) letters. But Canadians spell the same word with a 'u', 'colour'. This worried me. How many letters *are* there in the word *color*?

As a frequent, though inadvertent, practitioner of deviant spellings, I felt confident that there were particular words of English that I was misspelling, just as there are particular words of English that Canadians mispronounce, for example, the word 'about'. Wait a minute! That's not a mispronunciation; that's a mere difference in dialect.

So it isn't wrong if enough people do it. (This is a lesson I'm trying to protect my grandchildren from learning.) The problem with my misspellings is that they are idiosyncratic—not enough people do it. (Here we see the tyranny of the majority in one of its ugliest forms. Why aren't the Libertarians doing something to protect me from the heavy hand of literary orthodoxy?) It is interesting how tolerant we are of deviant pronunciations and how intolerant we are of deviant spellings, especially since spelling, a relatively recent invention, is only a way of transcribing pronunciation. (I don't mean to whine, but this has been a heavy burden on me.)

All this led me to think that words could not be identified with either spellings, that is, with strings of letters, or pronunciations. Strings of letters and pronunciations are the shape-like features of words against which we measure perceived inscriptions and utterances in order to make out what words are presented. But shapes could not be what words *are*; they must be something more abstract, something that *has* spellings and pronunciations.

Another important motivation for me was that I was interested in how to think about contingently existing, seemingly abstract objects. These are objects that are natural, that were *created in nature*, by a (perhaps) human creator, at a time, in a place, and that live their lives in nature and can change over time—as we do, though we are not abstract objects—and that can, under certain natural conditions, cease to exist. Some artistic creations are material: sculptures, paintings, rugs, but some are seemingly abstract: stories, songs,

<sup>5</sup> W. V. Quine, *Mathematical Logic*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard, 1951), p. 24. According to the 2010 United States Census, the population of Boston is now about 600,000, though the great geographer's estimate is correct for 1950.

ballets.<sup>6</sup> Where do these objects belong? The conception of a world of the eternal—unchanging and occupied by abstract objects—and a world of nature—in constant flux, occupied by material objects that *resemble* their abstract counterparts—seemed too disjoint, even given the fact that we have cognitive access to the abstract world. Words seemed the perfect vehicle to shatter this conception. Any-one who has traveled the British Isles quickly learns that what makes two utterances utterances of the same word is *not* that they resemble one another.

So that's the background.

Returning to Hawthorne and Lepore's paper, I want to say how much I welcome their very scholarly and thoughtful investigation of the topic I wanted to get people to think about. They know vastly more linguistics and bring vastly more scholarship to bear than I could ever muster. I learned a great deal from their paper, which is rich with erudition, argument, and counterargument. Their paper has the tone of disagreement, but when I think about what they are saying, I feel that for the most part it is quite supportive.

Here is an example from early in their paper:

The first critical point we wish to emphasize is that we quite agree with Kaplan that a philosophically satisfying theory of words cannot proceed entirely within a shape- or form-theoretic framework.

I recognize that they regard it as a “critical” point, but somehow I don't feel criticized.<sup>7</sup> Be that as it may, I really enjoyed reading their paper, and rereading it, and I hope I can raise a few issues that may be fruitful for further discussion. My comments are confined mainly, but not entirely, to the few points of disagreement.

As they say in their introduction, their discussion divides into four parts. In Part One, they take up my argument against the *token-type* conception and in favor of what I, probably misleadingly, call the *stage-continuant* conception of what a word is. In Part Two, they discuss further elements and themes of my theory, including the role of repetition and my view about what they call *the constitutive authority*

<sup>6</sup> Russell seems to have regarded properties and relations as existing only contingently. He writes in his introduction to the second edition of *Principia Mathematica* (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 1927), “Logic does not know whether there are in fact *n*-adic relations (in intension); this is an empirical question.” I might have called the objects I am interested in *empirical abstract objects*, but some of the characteristic features I find in my created objects do not seem to apply to properties and relations in general.

<sup>7</sup> Hawthorne and Lepore, *op. cit.*, p. 451. I note that the published version of the article replaces “critical point” with “point we wish to emphasize,” thus cutting the ground out from under a perfectly good joke for nothing more than clarity.

*of intentions.* We have a real disagreement about the constitutive authority of intentions, but aside from that I am pretty much in agreement with what is said in these two parts. In Part Three, they either suggest that there are no such things as what I call *common currency names*, or else they claim that they are badly described and should be thought of merely as uses of what I call *generic names*. I am not very invested in the terminology, though I continue to think that mine is better for reasons that I will mention. When they say in their discussion of common currency names that my advocacy for such entities, however “thought of” and whatever called, “[raises] a suspicion that he may be in pursuit of a chimera,” it sounds as if they mean to doubt the very existence of these things.<sup>8</sup> Finally, in Part Four, they discuss criteria for word identity. Put in terms of “criteria,” this sounds technically challenging. But Frege’s worry about the difference between ‘A=A’ and ‘A=B’ presupposes the distinction between using the same name twice and using two different names. This is not to say that there are no hard cases, only that it is an important distinction, with or without criteria.

I will respond to each of the four parts separately.

#### PART ONE: TOKEN-TYPE VERSUS STAGE-CONTINUANT

I thank Hawthorne and Lepore for documenting the prevalence of authors who take orthographic and/or phonetic shape or form as the criterion for word identity. They establish that I was not going after a straw man. (Whew!)

I was surprised that they read my stage-continuant terminology as “using a framework that is standard to four-dimensionalist metaphysics.”<sup>9</sup> I am not exactly sure what that framework is, though I think it has to do with things being space-time worms, or perhaps regions of space-time, or perhaps fusions of parts—at any rate, things that do not change but only have temporal parts in the way those of us that do change (alas) have spatial parts. This was certainly not what I had in mind. In fact, my paper emphasizes the notion of change for words, especially changes in spelling and pronunciation. I think that because they know so much more metaphysics than I do, my terminology caused them to think that I am deeper than I am. But I am not.

My talk about a continuant was partly to affirm my creationism; words are worldly *created* objects, not denizens of a timeless eternal place. Talk of a continuant also helps to emphasize that the life of a word has *continuity* through time. There may be temporal gaps

<sup>8</sup>These suspicions arise immediately following their initial, deflating “Nevertheless.”

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 450.

between its utterances, but if so, it has been stored somewhere, as a physical token in a manuscript or possibly in a mental lexicon. It is this continuity of earthly embodiment that makes two utterances utterances of the same word, not some form of phonological or orthographic resemblance to an ideal form. Related to my creationism is the fact that the words I was aiming at all along were names, in particular *given* names, like 'Hesperus', 'Phosphorous', 'Londres', 'London', 'David', and perhaps even 'Paderewski', though that is an inherited name, not a given name, properly so called (his given names were 'Ignacy' and 'Jan').

I have now concluded that the token-type terminology is too powerful and too useful metaphorically to make it the focus of attack. I never meant to attack the abstract notion of a kind versus an instance of that kind. This is a useful idea, although there is an interesting literature on whether *types* should be thought of as *kinds*. What I wanted to attack was the idea that the type was an ideal, Platonic form living in an eternal, unchanging world and that what made a token a token of that type was that it *resembled* it. So what makes two utterances utterances of the *same* word is that they have the same phonetic form, or at least resemble one another closely enough in phonetic form, and what makes two inscriptions inscriptions of the same word is that they have the same orthographic form, or at least resemble one another closely enough in orthographic form. Sounds and shapes are kinds that have instances which must resemble one another in critical ways. I call your attention to the fact that Charles Sanders Pierce, who introduced the token-type terminology, also referred to tokens as *replicas*. So he seems to have had the resemblance model in mind. But words are not that kind of kind. Words are more like the Kaplan family. We are a disparate bunch; we don't look or sound much alike. But we are all members of a single family, a single kind, if you will. What connects us are certain relations, but they are historical in nature and not apparent to perception.

I have a very naturalistic conception of words. Words are earthly, created things. What makes two utterances utterances of the same word is that they descend from a common ancestor. This no more requires them to resemble or *replicate* that ancestor than my children are required to resemble or replicate their parents in order to be members of my family.

I think that Hawthorne and Lepore agree with me on this, my most important point. My reference to Pierce indicates that what I was attacking is not a straw man, and Hawthorne and Lepore powerfully document this fact in the opening pages of their essay. However, by the time we get to the end of their paper, they are worrying, with

some justification, about my creationism. They have a number of worries, including whether a word need be created in a single earthly event. My basic idea was that a word, a certain lexical item, something like what they end up calling a *lexeme*, is created in the course of some event, for example, a name-giving. The word then makes its way in the world by being passed from person to person through utterances and inscriptions—*perceivable*, though not necessarily *material* entities—and when not being slung around, it is stored away in a *mental lexicon*, ready and waiting to be uttered or recognized in the utterance of another.<sup>10</sup> In the course of a word's travels through the world, its sound may change and its inscriptional shape may change, but its identity is maintained by its utterances and inscriptions being, as it were, nodes on a single, continuous tree of utterances, inscriptions, and quiescent storage. It is this sort of fanciful imagery that led me to think of individual utterances and inscriptions as stages in this metaphorical tree. The growing, ever changing tree itself I thought of as the continuant, that which maintains its identity throughout these changes.

However, as I said, I think I may have made some bad terminological choices. So let's return to the token-type terminology but this time throw away the associated ideology of ideal forms and resemblance. Here I endorse what Hawthorne and Lepore call their “second—more critical—point”:

One can favor the type-token conception in thinking of a word as an abstract object without taking on board any commitment to a shape- or form-theoretic conception of words.<sup>11</sup>

Reverting to this terminology also allows us to get a better grip on the notion of an *occurrence* of a word. In my view, word *types* are earthly created objects. In my original paper I put it this way:

One might think of them as trees. Stemming out from their creation, with physical and mental segments; the mental segments able to produce many physical branches and able to merge many physical branches, and the physical segments each stemming from [their own] mental segment and able to produce many mental branches....they are objects of the created realm, created by language makers. The world is not brimming with unspoken words. Words never actually created are not.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> On inscriptions being perceivable though nonmaterial, note that when we inscribe letters in stone—“It is written in stone!”—it is the space that we perceive, not the hunk of stone. For the latter, it would be necessary to out-scribe the letters.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 452.

<sup>12</sup> Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

This harsh ontological banishment from the world of ideals does not apply to compounds built from word types and other linguistic types such as prefixes, and so on. These I take to be abstract structures containing words as constituents. My creationism about words does not extend to sentences. The world in which sentences and other compounds live *is* brimming with untokened types. Put roughly, the basic elements of the language are earthly creations, but the compounds generated by syntactical rules (the rules also being earthly creations and thus subject to change) are structures—*types*—which may or may not have tokens.

Thus the sentence type ‘Help, help, my hair is on fire’, which may have had its first token when I wrote my notes, contains two occurrences of the word type ‘help’. Since I believe that when we talk about words and sentences it is mostly word types and sentence types that we refer to, I would just say that the sentence has two occurrences of the same word. My utterance, which was a token of the sentence, contained two tokens of the word. I would also be inclined to say that the token sentence contained two occurrences of the word, each occurrence being a distinct token. (I suppose we could use a single token for two occurrences of a word if a discourse were slowly scrolling across a screen and people behind the screen removed word tokens from one end and queued them up again at the other. This actually opens a rather complex subject that I have written about elsewhere but do not want to get into here.<sup>13</sup>)

Back to Hawthorne and Lepore’s first critical point, quoted above, that they agree that a philosophically satisfying theory of words cannot proceed entirely within a shape- or form-theoretic framework. They expand on the point in a learned and gratifying way. It turns out that the word ‘color’ has no fewer than 20 (!) different spellings, including 18 that are now out of fashion.<sup>14</sup> This was huge for me. I had worked hard to make this argument. If we agree on this, I feel that my main battle is won. Generally speaking, here included, Hawthorne and Lepore worked scrupulously to explore arguments counter to mine. That is part of the reason I was so gratified that they accepted this claim as manifestly correct. (There are other arguments for a resemblance-based theory that they did not explore; for example, what makes it possible to recognize new tokens of a word that one already has in one’s lexicon?)

<sup>13</sup> Kaplan, “Reichenbach’s *Grundzüge der symbolischen Logik*,” in Hans Reichenbach, *Gesammelte Werke in 9 Bänden: Band 6: Grundzüge der symbolischen Logik*, ed. Maria Reichenbach and Andreas Kamlah (Wiesbaden, Germany: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, 1999), pp. xi–xxii.

<sup>14</sup> Among the literary orthodoxy.

Their second critical point—that the use of the token-type language does not commit one to a shape- or form-theoretic conception of words—leads to an extended discussion of what they take to be my four-dimensionalism. As indicated above, that is nothing like what I intended. (Again, I am not contending that the reading is unfair. I can sort of see how one who is versed in deep metaphysics might have come to think that. On the other hand, there are explicit counter-indications in my paper, including the fact that the entire final section is devoted to the modal properties of words. Hawthorne and Lepore “anticipate that insofar as one pursues a continuant model of words, one will likely be drawn into [a counterpart-theoretic] account of attributing modal ascriptions to words.”<sup>15</sup> But I was not. I have long forsown counterpart theory.<sup>16</sup>)

They contrast my *stage-continuant model* with what they called the *abstracta-articulations model*, which treats “a word as a nonconcrete object which is articulated by various concrete events or objects.”<sup>17</sup> I am not absolutely sure how to read this, but it sounds plausible to me. You can see from my talk about trees that I am a little ambivalent about whether to regard words as abstract objects at all. They are not material objects; not even their tokens are necessarily material objects, as the cases of words incised into stone and stencils show. So maybe *abstracta* is good. I take it that in gracious deference to my token-type phobia, they use ‘articulation’ rather than ‘token’.

But there is one thing that this model seems to miss: my concern about *continuity* for the existence of a word. Russell once said that if no one thought about Hamlet, that would be the end of him. (He was contrasting Hamlet with Napoleon, who would have soon seen to it that someone *did* think about him.)<sup>18</sup> I think Russell is right about this (if we expand the cessation of thought about Hamlet to the destruction of all written and recorded references to Hamlet, and we understand *ceasing to think about* as forgetting in the sense of losing the *power* to think about Hamlet). I believe that Russell’s picture of what maintains such an object’s existence, along with some version of my creationism, is characteristic of the kind of worldly abstract entity I was trying to write about.<sup>19</sup> The

<sup>15</sup> Hawthorne and Lepore, *op. cit.*, p. 454.

<sup>16</sup> Forsown shortly after writing “Transworld Heir Lines” in 1967. The paper later appeared in Michael J. Loux, ed., *The Possible and the Actual: Readings in the Metaphysics of Modality* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1979), pp. 88–109.

<sup>17</sup> Hawthorne and Lepore, *op. cit.*, p. 453.

<sup>18</sup> In the “Descriptions” chapter of Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1919).

<sup>19</sup> I would not adopt the same view about numbers. If everyone ceased to think and talk about prime numbers, that would not be the end of them. They would wait—passively (unlike Napoleon)—to be thought about and talked about again.

“end” of Hamlet comes about when there can no longer be a continuous path from Hamlet’s creation to a new thought about him or a new use of his name. If, after the end of Hamlet in Russell’s sense, a million monkeys working at typewriters should produce a play that is orthographically identical to the play *Hamlet*, I would regard it as a *new* work of fiction (“Created by monkeys!”) containing a new common currency name for a new fictional prince. In the realm of created objects, look to continuity, not resemblance, to determine identity.

Continuity is a part of my naturalism. When mankind becomes extinct and our records turn to dust, the words will go with us. They will not remain in some prolix realm waiting for a new species to perform them.

Do things like Hamlet and ‘Hamlet’ have a continuous existence?<sup>20</sup> We do continue to think and talk about Hamlet, but not continuously. We pause, sleep, eat, talk about other things, and perhaps later return to Hamlet. How do we manage to return to Hamlet after a gap? Storage! This is why I insist on including the quiescent periods of storage of a word—inscribed, recorded, or stowed away in a mental lexicon—as among the stages of the word. There are performances of a word (events when a word is *in performance*, when it is on the move): utterings, auditions, inscribings, readings, and then there are quiescent stages of a word as it lies unread in a dusty manuscript in a dark archive. If the word ‘Hamlet’ were “ended” by our not only ceasing to perform it but by destroying these stages of storage, I do not see how that very word could be rediscovered. The “end” of ‘Hamlet’ comes about when there can no longer be a continuous path from the name’s creation to a performance of it. And I think the same for Hamlet. In fact, I also think the same about Napoleon. Note that by the time Russell wrote, if we ceased thinking and talking about Napoleon, he no longer had the power to see to it that we began again. But we have not ceased thinking and talking about him; we still have the ability to do so. (And not “by description,” as Russell would have it, but directly.) Again, I think that a continuous path from Napoleon to our thought is required.<sup>21</sup> In my old paper “Quantifying In,” I thought that this path involved a causal

<sup>20</sup> Words (and not just ambiguous words) are Hamlet-like. Both have physical embodiments from time to time, and both are dependent on thought and memory (including external memory) for their continued existence.

<sup>21</sup> As an historical aside, Russell’s actual point was that Napoleon had a robust form of reality, like that of the moon, entirely independent of thought and talk about him; whereas Hamlet would never have had *any* form of reality, not even an enfeebled one, had there never been thought or talk. By this measure, the word ‘Hamlet’ has no more reality than Hamlet; nor does any other word. But I doubt that Russell would have been happy with this result.

connection, being *en rapport*. But in “Words,” I abandoned the view that the continuous path I insisted upon for word identity required causality. This was because the continuity involves mental activities that I am methodologically reluctant to characterize as causally determined. The continuity comes about (in part) from links between storage in a mental lexicon and utterances that draw upon that very stored lexical item. The question of whether the words we store and the words we utter are causally determined or freely chosen seemed irrelevant to the theory of words I aimed to promote. The important thing is that there *be* a link, not that it is causally determined. So, a chain? Yes. A continuous chain with active and inactive links? Yes. A causal chain? Who knows!

This continuity feature of the worldliness of words is an important part of my ambivalence about whether to say that words are abstract objects. However, my *continuant*, the tree of what I unfortunately called “stages,” is itself probably best thought of as an abstract object, a structure, a network, whose constituents are utterances, inscriptions, and so on, and what I called the “more mysterious intrapersonal stages”<sup>22</sup> (by which I was referring to storage in the mental lexicon). There should be agreement among us that words have modal properties. Certainly, particular words of English might never have been created, might have had a wider distribution earlier in time, might have gone through dialectal changes in ways other than they did, and so on. And some have worried whether abstract structures in and of themselves, that is, not “under a description,” have modal properties.<sup>23</sup> So one way to think of words is as abstract objects that are *sui generis* but *associated* with trees of their tokens (if it is correct to describe a word’s mental stages as “tokens,” which seems questionable), where the tree satisfies the continuity condition, and the words, though they are abstract objects, live and die with their associated trees. In an interesting footnote, Hawthorne and Lepore attribute to Mark Johnston the suggestion that “words (and species) are higher-order persisting objects that are concrete; that are to be sharply distinguished from their realizations in utterances, inscriptions, and so on; and that...are best thought of within the framework of three-dimensionalism.”<sup>24</sup> That sounds a lot like my stage-continuant model, in which the continuant is what persists and the “concrete” part accounts for their living and dying with the associated tree. Maybe that’s what

<sup>22</sup> Kaplan, “Words,” p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> To my ear, it is acceptable to say that a tree, whether abstract or material, might have branched earlier.

<sup>24</sup> Hawthorne and Lepore, *op. cit.*, p. 453n20.

my nuclear family is, also. I like the idea that my nuclear family is a persisting object and that it is of a higher order. In the end, as Hawthorne and Lepore claim, my ambivalence about calling words abstract objects is probably due to a poorly thought-through metaphysics. And I am not confident that I have done better here.

This leaves open the question of whether Hawthorne and Lepore's abstracta-articulations model takes account of storage in the mental lexicon. It probably does, because they speak about mental symbols in the language of thought. So perhaps they regard these mental symbols as "articulations" of the word. Finally, returning to my main point about continuity, my use of 'continuant' emphasizes the importance of continuity to the existence of this whole realm of worldly, created, abstract objects, and I am not sure that the abstracta-articulations model captures this requirement.

I believe I have already responded to Hawthorne and Lepore's second concern. It is my claim that "the world is not brimming with unspoken words."<sup>25</sup> They cite compound words such as 'unhappy' as a counterinstance. They anticipate my reply that compounds are not earthly creations, and even seem to acknowledge that the restriction of my view to the kind of linguistic entity to which it was intended to apply will handle all of their concerns but one.<sup>26</sup> Their unanswered concern is about words introduced descriptively. Since, as noted, my primary concern was with given names, let me use a variant of their example, one that involves such a name. Suppose I say to my wife, "Let's call our first child, if it is a boy, by the name whose first syllable is the first syllable of *my* paternal grandfather's paternal grandfather's name and whose second syllable is the first syllable of *your* paternal grandfather's paternal grandfather's name, and, if it is a girl, by the name whose first syllable is the first syllable of *your* maternal grandmother's maternal grandmother's name and whose second syllable is the first syllable of *my* maternal grandmother's maternal grandmother's name." Now suppose that our firstborn arrives, but before we get around to using this name, let alone figuring out what the name actually is, the world blows up. Hawthorne and Lepore claim, "It is intuitively clear that [such] speech serves to *introduce* [a word] into the language."<sup>27</sup> Does it? Is it *intuitively clear*? To be accurate, although they speak of introducing words "descriptively," their examples are all such that a token of the word immediately pops into one's mind, examples like: let the first syllable be 'un' and the second syllable be 'voke'.

<sup>25</sup> Kaplan, "Words," p. 117.

<sup>26</sup> Hawthorne and Lepore, *op. cit.*, p. 457, second full paragraph.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456.

Once we store ‘unvoke’ in our mental lexicon, that is good enough for me, even if we never utter or write it. So I think I can account for their cases, and I think that my own case—a paradigm of what Russell once called “knowledge by description without acquaintance”—is such that it is just hard to decide whether it succeeded in introducing a new, but never used, word into the language or not. I am inclined to think not.

#### ON TO PART TWO

In Part Two Hawthorne and Lepore take “a number of themes that shape” my discussion and adopt them as “framing principles” for their own discussion. But they also take up two of my central ideas that strike them as “seriously problematic.”

The first of my themes that they adopt is what they call the *Evolutionary Constraint*. (As an aside, I would not call these *constraints*; I see them as ridding us from the yoke of *formal resemblance*.) Here is the evolutionary constraint:

One of Kaplan’s guiding insights concerns the evolution of words: over time there may be considerable variation in how a word is written or pronounced. As it is transmitted from one epoch to another, it can change not only its phonological and orthographic contours, but its semantic and grammatical ones as well.<sup>28</sup>

As noted, I am delighted that we agree on this. In “Words,” my own thinking was more along the nature of idiolectal variation due to damage to, or a disability of, a person’s auditory or articulatory systems, rather than the kind of dialectal variation that they seem to have in mind, but we will come to that.

The second theme that they adopt is what they call the *Multiplicity Constraint*.

[A] word can be articulated in untold different systems. One and the same word can be written on a pad with a pen, typed on a sheet of paper, projected on a screen, spoken out loud, signed with a gesture, and Brailled on a plaque. Different media can be used to express the same message.

Only our imaginations limit how we go about articulating words.<sup>29</sup>

I trust that these “articulations” include presence in a mental lexicon, since that notion is fundamental to my conception. The word ‘articulation’ can refer to an act or to what is produced by the act, to an uttering or to the utterance, to an inscribing or to the inscription.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 459.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Later on the same page, they speak of a *performance* of a word, which is subject to the same ambiguity. Does the written word, stored in a dusty manuscript in a vault, continue to be a performance?

I did not use ‘articulation’ in my original paper; instead, I spoke of *tokens*, and then, after my animadversions on type-token theories of words, I called them *stages*. I was speaking of the product of the act, not the action. This is important to me since my continuity claim for the existence of a word would plainly be false if the stages consisted of acts of production and reception. In that case there would be gaps in the life of a word as it lay quiescent in a manuscript or a mental lexicon. The fact that Hawthorne and Lepore speak of the “archipelago” of the utterances of a word and describe my notion of a continuant as the “fusion” of such utterances and inscriptions causes a worry that they have not caught my drift, since an archipelago is, by definition, discontinuous.

There are some interestingly hard cases in the category of articulations. It seems natural to include a score as an articulation (token) of a song, since many people can sight-read a score and hear the song. I am more worried about words recorded in digital media, as they are in our computer storage devices and in digital audio recorders. I do not know anyone who can sight-read a DVD. But perhaps the fact that we need transcriptional assistance from an artifact should not be decisive. After all, we need lemon juice and heat or ultraviolet light to write and read invisible writing, and who would deny that invisible writing contains tokens of words?

The third theme that they adopt, and one that is of great importance to me, they call the *Coincidence Constraint*.

[T]wo utterances or inscriptions, even within a particular community, may in an important sense of the word ‘word’ count as utterances or inscriptions of different words even though they are exactly alike in how they sound (in the case of two utterances) or in how they are written (in the case of inscriptions).<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, they resist one of my central claims, that my first name and Hume’s first name are different words. In fact, they seem to resist the claim that my first name and Hume’s first name are importantly different lexical items of any kind. I will return to this when I discuss their Part Three.

The first of the two themes they criticize in Part Two involves a claim that I do not think of myself as having made. It is that when one utters a word that one is not in the process of creating, it should be conceptualized as a case of repetition. They interpret this as if I were saying that every time one uttered a word, one had in mind the source from which one first heard that word. It’s hard for me to

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

believe that I said this; it is so manifestly false. I don't recall ever thinking it. If I did say it, I didn't mean it. Words that we haven't created we learn from someone else. So my picture is: we hear (or read) the word from someone else, store it in our mental lexicon, and on a later occasion draw it from the lexicon and use it (or, use the mental lexicon to recognize another instance of that same word). This is fundamental to characterizing the tree whereby words are transmitted. One *could* say, very roughly, that the word uttered repeats the word as first heard and stored, but this would be without any suggestion that storage of the lexical item includes storage of the details of the event of first hearing the word. We may see and/or read multiple instances of the word before using it.

The second theme they reject also involves the notion of repetition and my claim that a sincere subject, intending to repeat a word that has been uttered by an examiner, will, indeed, utter that word. Here is what I say (including some of the surrounding material of the passages they cite).

[I]ndividual differences in the physiological processing at these psycho-physical transition points [the ear and the organs that produce sound: the mouth, tongue, lips, vocal cords, and so on] may make it that what comes out is not going to *resemble* what went in. However, and this is what is important for this thought experiment, the exact functioning of the psycho-physical transition mechanisms is irrelevant to our characterization, our intentional characterization, of the case as one of '*repeating* the word he heard'. He may not do it well, from the external point of view. But it *is* what he is doing. We don't question that the connection has been made in the black box. No matter how poor the subject's *imitative* ability (his ability to make his output resemble his input), we can imagine circumstances in which we would say, "Yes, he is repeating that name; he is saying it in the best way that he can."<sup>32</sup>

[I]t is beyond doubt that the utterance or inscription transmitted *could* be an utterance or inscription of the same word as that received, although...the difference in sound or shape or spelling, can be just about as great as you would like it to be.<sup>33</sup>

Against these claims they make two interesting counterclaims, one a needed correction that I wish I had thought of and the other a claim I will dispute.

The needed correction is this: suppose someone has had a terrible accident. We ask him for his name and telephone number. He has the name and telephone number in mind and strives to speak it; he

<sup>32</sup> Kaplan, "Words," pp. 103–04.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

*intends* to be uttering his name and telephone number. But all that comes out is a monosyllabic grunt that sounds a bit like the word ‘row’. Does my view that intention makes it so imply that the grunt is, in fact, an utterance of the name and telephone number? It need not, because we can take advantage of Hawthorne and Lepore’s excellent suggestion that the right thing to say in this case is that the injured person cannot speak. He didn’t say ‘row’, and he didn’t say what he was intending to say, namely, his name and telephone number, he didn’t say anything at all. *He cannot speak.* Suppose your dentist injects so much Novocain into your mouth that you can only produce inarticulate grunts when you attempt to ask me to “Please pass the beets.” Must I say “Yes, you are saying ‘Please pass the beets’; you are saying it in the best way that you can”? No! The more plausible response may be Hawthorne and Lepore’s, you didn’t say “Please pass the beets.” You didn’t say anything at all. You cannot speak.

The point I wish to dispute is their doctrine in connection with mispronunciation that *toleration has its limits*. (Shouldn’t any doctrine so called be regarded with suspicion?) They elaborate this idea by referring to the standards of the *local* community. Then they correct this by saying it is the standards of the *relevant* community, citing the case of someone who gives a performance in which she attempts to simulate a fourteenth-century English speaker, an exotic case in which widespread intelligibility is not the primary aim.

*Tolerance:* Performance  $p$  is of a word  $w$  only if [ $p$ ] meets relevant [local]  
<sup>34</sup> performance standards.

Aside from the 1984-style use of the word ‘tolerance’, this claim seems to me just to ignore a raft of counterinstances. The doctrine asserts that if the performance standards of the local community have not been met, no words have been said.

Suppose, as they agree can happen, pronunciation evolves in radically different ways in two isolated communities. We do not question that the same words are being said in both communities, but dialectal differences are very great. Then globalization strikes, and a member of one community wanders into the other. He will not meet local standards, if meeting local standards means being locally intelligible.<sup>35</sup> It is communication with the local community that is his primary aim; he is not aiming to show off his exotic dialect. Surely he is

<sup>34</sup> Hawthorne and Lepore, *op. cit.*, p. 463.

<sup>35</sup> As globalization increases and a sufficient number of members of the traveler’s community arrive, the locals will attune their hearing to the traveler’s dialect and it will become locally intelligible. But this need not happen immediately.

saying words. Or consider the case of the person with extremely illegible handwriting. Everyone agrees that the note Philippa Foot sent me was filled with written words, words of English, words in our dialect of English. But few of these words are recognizable. According to Hawthorne and Lepore, this familiar situation is impossible, a contradiction. In these cases, their clever way out in the case of the accident victim or the Novocain-loaded speaker is not available. We would not say that Foot was not capable of handwriting. She wrote a lot. She just wrote so idiosyncratically that most of what she handwrote is unintelligible. In all of these cases, I stick with my view of the authority of the writer. She knew what words she was writing at the time, and she did write those words. And she was writing words of English—British English, but English all the same. She was not writing in a foreign language or using a secret cipher. Perhaps she could always read her own writing (I can't always read mine), but of course she wrote many messages to other people. It seems fantastic to me for those other people, the people of the local community, to insist that because they cannot *read* the words she wrote, she did not actually *write* any words. Talk about the tyranny of the majority! Philippa might have apologized for her bad handwriting, but she certainly should not have apologized for failing to include words in her letters.

Hawthorne and Lepore directly address the case of the Reverend Spooner, who is unreliably reported to have said, "God is a shoving leopard." This is a seemingly intelligible, if blasphemous, claim by the good Reverend. But of course those were not the words he was saying. The words he was saying were, "God is a loving shepherd," but because of his eponymous speech defect, they came out badly. Hawthorne and Lepore do not recognize this as a bad performance; they claim that he has said nothing at all. My goodness! The guy has a speech disability. Show a little tolerance.

It is one thing to say of the injured person or the person full of Novocain, speakers whose own performance standards match those of the community, that they are unable to speak. They might well agree. But it is quite another to say of someone with a speech disability, a strong foreign accent, or an unfamiliar dialect that *they* are not speaking words. They would never agree. This is an alternative to Hawthorne and Lepore's "prevailing community standards" test for failure to speak words. Ask what the speaker would say of his or her own performance.

One might think that it makes no difference whether we say that Philippa *wrote* such-and-such words or that Philippa wrote nothing, though she *intended to write* such-and-such words, whether we say that the Reverend Spooner *said* that God is a loving shepherd or that he said nothing, though he *intended to say* that God is a loving shepherd.

But the line between *saying* and *intending to say* should not be drawn carelessly. A doctrine that encourages us to apply prevailing community standards before examining intention is bad social policy. It is stultifying. It self-righteously shifts the blame for failures of communication to the outsider and reduces *our* responsibility to attune ourselves to nonstandard speech. I see it as an evil form of nativism. If philosophical theories could be dangerous, I would worry about this one. (When they say that their principle “is anathema to Kaplan,”<sup>36</sup> they certainly hit the nail on the head.)

Now, I know John and Ernie well enough to know that if a non-native speaker or a speaker with a speech disability were to ask them for help, they would patiently struggle to understand his words so long as they could tell that he was attempting to say words of English. They certainly would not abandon the attempt to understand him simply because he was not meeting prevailing community standards.

So I think that Hawthorne and Lepore are wrong here in a fundamental way. Once we pass the very low threshold of whether the person is able to speak or write at all,<sup>37</sup> that is, *whether* words are used, the standard for *which* words are used is not *local intelligibility* but *speaker intention*.

### PART THREE

In Part Three, Hawthorne and Lepore express skepticism about my notion of a *common currency name*. I hardly know what to say about their objections, which seem to me to range far afield. (Perhaps this is the price of erudition—or my lack of it.) I basically recognize two kinds of names: *generic names* and names given to particular individuals. The former, generic names, are those found in the lists of names in books titled *What to Name the Baby* and in the Social Security Administration’s list of the most popular names given each year. The latter are singular terms, *proper nouns*; each refers to (or purports to refer to) a particular individual. In paradigmatic cases they refer to the individual to whom they were given. The generic names are not singular terms; they do not name anything. Because it is the latter kind of name, the singular terms, that we *use*, I adopt a phrase of Kripke’s and call them “common currency” names. Mark Johnston might describe the generic names as *higher-order* names, a word type of word types. When I say “John and Ernie wrote a valuable paper,” I am using the utterances ‘John’ and ‘Ernie’ as singular terms, to refer to

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> I acknowledge that this threshold is vague, but would urge that it not be measured against prevailing community standards of intelligibility but rather against something closer to the speaker’s own standards. Judgments of nonperformance (as contrasted with bad performance) should presuppose some form of buy-in from the speaker.

particular individuals, presumably in virtue of their having been given these names, probably by their parents or, in the case of 'Ernie', having been given a name for which this name is a standardized brief form (a topic I take up at some length in my original paper).

The names we *use* are the singular terms, what I call *common currency* names. (This is why I wrote, and they quote me on this, "for serious semantics...it is my common currency conception that would be important."<sup>38</sup>) We do not *use* generic names, because they do not name anything. We talk *about* generic names. Hume and I have the same first name. Our common first name is the *generic* name 'David'. Since common currency names are singular terms and Hume's first name names him and my first name names me, they could not be the same *singular* term. So I conclude that Hume and I share a generic name but have distinct common currency names.

We could create a little puzzle here. Hume and I have the same first name. But Hume's first name names him and not me, whereas my first name names me and not him. How could this be? Call Leibniz! Paradox! The solution *two kinds of names* suggests itself. The analogy to the type-token distinction, used metaphorically as of the relation of kind to instance, is almost irresistible.

My creationist, worldly metaphysics of words also brings to the fore the many nonsemantic differences between Hume's common currency name and mine. His common currency name is in the lexicon of a vast number of people worldwide; mine is in the lexicon of a relatively tiny number of people mostly located in Southern California. My common currency name was created in an event around the time of my birth, when I was named, and Hume's common currency name was created much, much earlier, when he was named. His came into existence earlier than mine and will no doubt live longer than mine. There is every reason to think of these two names as different words. Our common generic name has a very long history stretching back to biblical times and beyond (if there is a beyond). It was evolving in pronunciation and spreading long before either Hume's or my common currency names were created.

Many of these ideas seem so commonsensical to me that it is hard for me to get a grip on the objections.

Here is a thought experiment. Suppose that our naming practices did not allow us to reuse an old name—no naming one person in honor of another, and so on. Each thing that was given a name had to be given a name distinct from all other names, the way in which the Social Security Administration tries to give each of us a distinct

<sup>38</sup> Kaplan, "Words," p. 111.

numerical index. What would we say about these names, about their creation and their use, about their semantics? Wouldn't they be exactly my common currency names? Generic names are exotic birds; we have them to thank for the Paderewski puzzle.<sup>39</sup> But the real action, in thought and in speech, is with the common currency names.

At one point, if I understand them correctly, Hawthorne and Lepore suggest that we can "eliminate the need for an ontology of common currency names" by speaking instead of *uses* of a (generic) name.<sup>40</sup> This is the sense of the word 'use' in which one might say there are two uses of the word 'bank'. So there is one *use* of the generic name 'David' to refer to Hume, and there is another *use* of the generic name 'David' to refer to me. These *uses* of the generic name are singular terms. The singular terms that we all use are not common currency names—that ontology has been eliminated—they are *uses of generic names*. But don't kid yourself that we have eliminated an ontology. We have simply traded an ontology of common currency names for an ontology of *uses* of the generic names. The same number of items will occupy each ontology. The same principles of individuation will apply to each ontology.

The new terminology seems awkward to me. Instead of saying, as I do, that we use names to refer to individuals, we must now say that we use *uses of names* to refer to individuals. 'Hesperus is Hesperus' involves two uses of one use of one name; whereas 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' involves one use of one use of one name and another use of another use of another name. Names do not, as we have been taught, name anything. It is only uses of names that name things. Isn't it natural to regard these uses of names as *words* in their own right? Aren't the different uses of the generic name 'David' naturally thought of as different words? At any rate, I just do not see how anything is gained by the switch in terminology. Their argument for the terminological switch has the dismissive quality of *mereness* toward such uses, an attitude that is reflected in their claim to eliminate the need for an ontology. However, as I have argued, it is the common currency names that are central for semantics and the generic names that are merely unused abstractions. But for those who are more comfortable with the terminological switch, be my guest.

Here is a query based on the hypothesis that there is more than a mere terminological difference involved here. I believe that we store names of distinct individuals as distinct lexical items. This accords with my notion of a common currency name. If it is preferable to conceive

<sup>39</sup> Saul Kripke, "A Puzzle about Belief," in Avishai Margalit, ed., *Meaning and Use* (Boston: D. Reidel, 1979), pp. 239–83.

<sup>40</sup> Hawthorne and Lepore, *op. cit.*, p. 470.

of these items as uses of generic names, then it is only the generic names that should be stored in the lexicon, and there should be distinct pointers from each of the mental items that represent the individuals to a generic name in the lexicon. This is close enough to an empirical question that a really clever cognitive scientist ought to be able to find a way to run a test that will provide evidence for one view or the other.

I am no cognitive scientist, but let me tell you a story about my mother's two Doctor Shapiros. (I know, 'Doctor Shapiro' is not a given name, but let it pass—it's an actual case.) My mother's primary care physician was Dr. Shapiro. He referred her to a specialist, another Dr. Shapiro as it happened. My mother reported her gratitude to Dr. Shapiro for sending her to Dr. Shapiro and compared Dr. Shapiro's virtues to those of Dr. Shapiro in a blithe piece of discourse, clearly oblivious to the homonymy. I was racing to keep up (which I was mostly able to do). But from her point of view, she was quite properly using two different words to refer to two different people. Why should there be a problem?

I have always taken it that the unselfconscious way in which my mother spoke of the two Doctor Shapiros was evidence in favor of the idea that there were two items stored in her lexicon. But I am no cognitive scientist.

It seems to me that a Hawthorne and Lepore-style theory of *uses* finds its proper home not in the realm of *names*, but rather in the realm of *indexicals and demonstratives*. There Hawthorne and Lepore are right: one word, many uses.<sup>41</sup> But as I have argued elsewhere, proper names are not indexicals.<sup>42</sup>

For completeness, I should also mention what I myself regard as *uses* of generic names: *common nouns*<sup>43</sup> (as opposed to the *proper* nouns that Hawthorne and Lepore regard as *uses* of generic names). This is the grammatical form that takes determiners and plurals. "Is she the Alice who sits in the front row?" "There are three Alices in the class." "There are many people named 'Alice Rivlin', but she is *the* Alice Rivlin." (To be *the* Alice Rivlin is to be the first person listed when you google the name 'Alice Rivlin'. Our co-symposiast is *the* Sylvain Bromberger.)

<sup>41</sup> One might, by analogy to proper names, claim that there are generic words: 'that', 'today', and so on, plus an unlimited number of distinct "common currency" words for each time the demonstrative or indexical is used. I see the analogy: only the "common currency" words actually refer, but I am not even slightly drawn to such an analysis.

<sup>42</sup> Kaplan, "Demonstratives," in Joseph Almog, John Perry, and Howard Wettstein, eds., *Themes from Kaplan* (New York: Oxford, 1989), pp. 481–563.

<sup>43</sup> Mill claimed that the proper name 'God' is simply a monotheistic use of the common noun 'god'.

At one point, Hawthorne and Lepore suggest that context resolves the question of which *use* of a generic name is in play. If they mean to include speaker intentions in contexts, then I agree. (Though I do not think they do.) But if they mean to include only what is available to a standard auditor, what is common knowledge, then there seem to be obvious counterinstances. I did pretty well with my mother's two Doctor Shapiros, but not perfectly. And I was a *much* better than standard auditor of *her* speech and loaded with knowledge of the context. When I once said, "While on vacation, I found it difficult to swim to the bank," everyone assumed they knew what use I was making of the ambiguous word 'bank'. They did not know that in Hawaii they have poolside banking.

In the course of Hawthorne and Lepore's discussion of common currency names, they take up Kripke's Paderewski case. This is quite an interesting problem. I do mention it in "Words," but I do not think it will ultimately tell us whether there are common currency words or only uses of generic words.

Part Three is long and I have more to say about it, but this is not the place.

#### AND NOW TO PART FOUR

This section focuses on the criteria of identity for words, and more exactly, on the question of when two tokens are tokens of the same word. I wasn't really after exact criteria of identity. (I have some of the same skepticism that Hawthorne and Lepore express about such criteria. We haven't solved the problem for persons; why should words be that much easier?) I was after the *big picture* of what words *are*, and in particular, how the nature of *names* played into Frege's puzzle from the point of view of a direct reference semantics. Frege begins by assuming that 'A' and 'B' are different names, and arguing that if 'A' and 'B' had only *Bedeutung* and no *Sinn*, there would be no cognitive difference between 'A=A' and 'A=B', when 'A=B' is true.<sup>44</sup> As noted earlier, this seemed wrong to me, semantics aside, because if 'A' and 'B' *are* different names, the (linguistic) representations are different even if what they represent is the same, and *this* difference, the difference or sameness in words, is certainly a part of what is present in cognition.<sup>45</sup> It was this idea that I was trying to work out in my first two Ryle lectures.

In considering criteria of identity, Hawthorne and Lepore reject looking to origins (obviously *my* favorite in view of my creationism)

<sup>44</sup> Gottlob Frege, "Über Sinn und Bedeutung," *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik*, c. (1892): 25–50; translated almost everywhere.

<sup>45</sup> It is this claim that is challenged by Kripke's Paderewski cases.

because they think they have established the fact that there are unarticulated words.<sup>46</sup> First, this is far from clear to me. It presumably has to do with words introduced by description and never “performed,” that is, words with no tokens. I responded to the case of words introduced by description in my discussion of Part One. Second, even if there are such words they would have origins, creators, and creating events (as I would put it). Third, even if there were unperformed, uncreated words that slithered into the language all on their own or propelled by systemic forces independent of any creator (remember we are talking about lexemes here, not compounds), wouldn’t it be methodologically reasonable to regard them as exceptions, or belonging to a special category to be accounted for by an epicycle on the theory?<sup>47</sup>

In their discussion of a criterion they call *Connection*,<sup>48</sup> Hawthorne and Lepore seem to have dropped commitment to lexemes and reverted to compounds. The same compound could obviously have many first tokens. It is not a created word.<sup>49</sup> However, they do accept a principle, *Isolation*,<sup>50</sup> that I see (perhaps wrongly) as tightly connected to my creationism and its attendant continuity requirement, namely, that the same word cannot occur in causally isolated linguistic communities. This is a big step forward that I welcome. It tells us that even if the rivers and lakes of Twin Earth were filled with H<sub>2</sub>O, their word ‘water’ would not be our word ‘water’. Wow! But good!

They analogize words to songs and dances, which I was thinking about, too, when I wrote “Words.” This, obviously, I like. More *created* things. They worry about evolutionary vagueness: when is a dance “inspired by” another but new, and when is it a mere variation? This worry applies also to generic names.

The notion of a variation on a theme is quite familiar in music. Many songs have the same chord progression. Almost all blues melodies do. So when a jazz player improvises on a theme, what makes it a variation on one song rather than another? I take it that the natural answer is intentionalist: it is the song that the player has in mind

<sup>46</sup> They also implicitly reject the idea that two words can be performed at once. But this actually happens in puns.

<sup>47</sup> This is how I regarded answering machine messages and aphorisms in “Demonstratives.”

<sup>48</sup> Hawthorne and Lepore, *op. cit.*, p. 478.

<sup>49</sup> Perhaps they are thinking about words like ‘smog’ and ‘brunch’, compounds used to describe compounds. I suspect that these words retain a compound meaning in the following sense. If we were to discover that what we had called ‘smog’ never did contain smoke and fog, I think we would not conclude that we had discovered that smog contains neither smoke nor fog; rather, we would conclude that what we have called ‘smog’ was not smog.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

and takes himself to be improvising on. I am not sure whether to be somewhat less intentionalist about songs and dances and games than about words, but I am still pretty intentionalist. In a footnote they comment, "It is sometimes said that all that holds various games from different locales and epochs together is their name."<sup>51</sup> Probably they mean this just as a joke, but the use of the same name shows that the innovators *intended* the changes they introduced to be *variations* on the named game.

Whenever we look up the etymology of a word, including that of a generic name, we are faced with evolutionary vagueness.<sup>52</sup> However, although the elements of form—pronunciation and spelling—may change for a common currency name as it travels through different linguistic communities, we do not think of common currency names as having an etymology. The strongest case for my creationism is in connection with common currency names, and there we see variation (a child named in honor of a relative with a related generic name) in comfortable accord with the creation of something absolutely new (a name for this child).

Hawthorne and Lepore conclude on a metaphysical note: that there are natural-kind optimists—looking for joints, hoping for future research to help; and then there are gruesome pessimists—proclaiming that we live in a world of vagueness and uncertainty. These are large methodological issues. Interesting ones, but ones I do not wish to dip into (especially since I am an optimist residing happily in a world of indecision). But I wish to remind the pessimist that there is more to do than find exact criteria of identity for the elements of our ontologies. We can still correct misconceptions and make illuminating remarks about what a word is. A correct picture of what a word is can resolve many questions about word identities even if it does not resolve identity questions in every hard case.<sup>53</sup> The question of whether Philippa Foot's unintelligible handwriting contained words bears directly on the question of what tokens are tokens of the same word, as does the rejection of spelling as a criterion. Hawthorne and Lepore mark agreement with this sentiment when they say, "The good news is that the elusiveness

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 480n68.

<sup>52</sup> I recently heard a noted evolutionary biologist explain on NPR that though parents and their immediate offspring always belong to the same species, over a longer period of time, ancestors and their ultimate descendants may belong to different species. He was calmer in the face of this astounding fact than Eubulides had been 2,500 years ago.

<sup>53</sup> Recall Kripke in *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1980), when he says that although he is not confident that he can resolve the problems that the Frege-Russell theory of names is thought to resolve, he is confident that he can show that the Frege-Russell theory of names is incorrect. We make progress bit by bit.

of questions of word individuation need not indict our practice of positing words.”<sup>54</sup> Good. We also posit persons even though there are hard cases, or at least hard *possible* cases, there too.

After giving us the good news, they give us the bad: “The bad news is that the accessible facts about words run so shallow that there is little philosophical payoff to ruminations about word identity.” Uh oh, I think it’s me, a notorious ruminator, that they are talking about. They continue, “Those who pursue questions of word individuation and hope for systematic answers are almost invariably in the grip of a faulty picture of the semantic mechanisms that underlie thought and talk about words.”<sup>55</sup> This is a bold statement that hurt my feelings. It also confused me, coming as it does at the end of almost 40 pages of rumination about words and their individuation.

At the end, they despair of finding a criterion of word matching between performances. “Having eschewed superficial criteria, this challenge takes on a forbidding character, since there is no obvious surrogate that can provide a criterion once the form-theoretic ones have been dispensed with.”<sup>56</sup> It was with pleasure that I wiped the blood of the form-theoretic criteria of word matching off my incisive arguments.<sup>57</sup> And they close with a sentiment that I guardedly endorse: “Rather than expect that such criteria will be forthcoming, we must take seriously a conception of our practice which guardedly endorses an ontology of words while despairing of such criteria.”<sup>58</sup> My caution stems from my belief that many of their concerns about hard cases are more manageable when we limit ourselves to common currency names.

I have a final concern that the sort of criteria that Hawthorne and Lepore examine may not be the most important ones. In investigating word identity, I would focus more attention on the links in the *passage* of a word. The issue of whether first performances are the same seems to me less important than the issue of what makes the links hold. What makes my utterance of a word an utterance of the word I first heard from you? Here is where my example involving repetition is meant to provide an intuitive example of an output properly linked to an input. That link arises from perception and storage in the lexicon

<sup>54</sup> Hawthorne and Lepore, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 484.

<sup>57</sup> I should note a case where the formal criteria still seem to survive. The requirement (and threat) not to take the Lord’s name in vain (see the Third Commandment) presumably forbids uttering the curse ‘God damn it’. But it does not seem to forbid the use of the spooneristic mispronunciation ‘Dad Gummit’. Taboos seem to attach to phonological types, not words. Witness the relative acceptability of ‘freaking’.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

and later drawing from that lexicon. The continuity of the item in the lexicon, how it is stored in and retrieved from the “black box” are all processes that I assume. I do not see how any useful discussion of the identity of words can ignore the fact (or, less stridently, can fail to postulate) that the black box stores, and thus provides continuity to, the existence of a word. Perhaps the black box can so twist and distort a word that it loses its identity and is no longer the word it was. This might happen through the mixing of two or more different words, or it might happen in other ways. (This is a separate issue from whether the physiological apparatus of speech and hearing allows one to perform the word in a way that is locally recognizable.) But I do not see how the black box could just conjure a word out of thin air. So the links arise when I perceive the performance of a word and either take it that I recognize the word and so associate it with an item already in my lexicon, or I take it that I do not recognize it and so (perhaps) add it to my lexicon as a new word. This passage of a word from you to me is a complex operation because it turns on our fallible powers of recognition, and thus is open to the familiar perceptual errors of taking distinct perceived things to be one and taking a single thing perceived on two occasions to be two (Peter’s error).

There remain important and interesting issues concerning common currency names, for example, how a common currency name can change its referent. I have views about this. I think it is the power of *acquaintance*, manifesting itself in what Kripke calls “speaker’s reference,” over the power of what convention has set to be correct usage. Interaction with the individual referred to puts us in more of a “That’s how *I* use [the name]” mood, and inclines us to stick with it rather than worry about historical origins. This is especially so when the named (or misnamed) one is uncomplaining (as was Madagascar). But this is not the place to pursue this matter.

Another important matter I have said only a little about is Paderewski cases. So I will close with a final remark about word identity. If ‘Londres’ and ‘London’ are merely dialectal variants of the same name, as I suspect they are, then we have a Paderewski case before we even get to Paderewski. I have it on good authority that ‘Peking’ and ‘Beijing’ *are* the same name. I never knew that. I thought they moved the capital.

Oh my God! I am Peter.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Thanks to Sam Cumming, Eliot Michaelson, and Tamar Weber for reassuring me that these inscriptions resemble the utterances of April 2010.