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Hugo Heagren

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Hugo Heagren 🆔

King's College London, London, UK

ABSTRACT
Suppose a causal theory of reference for utterances of proper names is correct. For an utterance of a name to refer to an object: (1) there must be a 'baptism', an event where the name is bestowed on the object; (2) the utterance must be suitably causally related to the baptism. The latter condition has seen significant research, but the act and conditions of baptising are surprisingly under-explored. I offer an account of baptisms. Most previous work has assumed one of two simple pictures: that baptisms are explicit ceremonies or that they are uses of a name with certain relational properties, each motivated by certain paradigmatic cases. In the first two sections of this essay I describe both pictures and explain how they fail. The paradigm cases are telling though, and in the third section I develop an account of baptisms which explains all the cases so far considered. On my account, a baptism of an object with a name is an act of instituting a rule to the effect that later uses of that name will refer to that object.

Suppose a causal theory of reference for utterances of proper names is true. According to such theories, there are two important parts of the reference mechanism: *baptisms*, in which a name is bestowed upon an object, enabling later reference, and *borrowing* or *inheritance*, where later tokens of the same name refer to that object because they are appropriately related to the baptism.

A great deal of work has been done on how the later tokens must relate to the baptism – much of it to accommodate Evans' (1973) 'switching' case. Surprisingly, very little work has been done on the nature of baptisms themselves, or even to describe desiderata for what a good theory of baptisms would be like. Kripke (1980), generally taken to have originated the causal theory, gives examples but offers no account. Noonan's (2012) guidebook

to Kripke's work discusses causal theories at length, but never defines baptisms, and Soames' earlier (and otherwise very thorough!) *Beyond Rigidity* (2002) does not discuss the subject at all. There has been some work on unintentional baptisms, by deRosset (2020), Michaelson (2023), and Sainsbury (2003, 2005), though without any extension to intentional baptisms. I will offer an account of all baptisms.

My first goal is to make explicit what an account of baptisms must do. In §§1 and 2 I discuss two rough pictures of baptisms assumed in the existing literature, and show where each falls short. The first (typified by Kripke) takes all baptisms to be explicitly articulated acts of dubbing. This accounts for some paradigmatic examples, but fails for Evans' 'switching' objection, which demonstrates that there are unintentional baptisms. The second picture takes baptisms to be certain uses of a name, without any explicit ceremony. I consider two versions of this view. The first is supposed to account for unintentional baptisms like those in Evans' case, but I argue that in just those cases it is poorly underdetermined or arbitrary *which* use is the baptism. The second is supposed to cover intentional baptisms, but I describe an intentional baptism which cannot be analysed this way.

So there are three desiderata: to account for the intentional baptisms (both the paradigmatic examples and the case I offer later), to account for unintentional baptisms, as in Evans' case, and to do so in a non-arbitrary way.

My second goal is to develop an account of baptisms that fulfils these. In §3 I claim a baptism is an act which institutes a constitutive rule to the effect that later utterances of a certain name refer to a certain person or object. This view includes both the intentional cases motivating the first picture and the unintentional cases motivating the second. These latter cases are 'divided' acts, constituted by many smaller actions; this avoids my worry about arbitrariness.

1. Baptisms as ceremonies

Across the literature, there are two pictures of baptisms. Neither is a well-developed *theory*, but they are the two ways philosophers of language tend to talk about these things. According to the first picture, baptisms are explicit ceremonies or acts of bestowing a name upon an object. We see this most clearly in Kripke's (1980) paradigmatic cases.[1] One can baptise an object by ostension:

> **Ostension.** I point at a person or object before me and say 'I name this[/you] 'Alice'. 'Alice' can be subsequently uttered by those appropriately related to this baptism in order to refer to the object.

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[1]Austin (1962, 5) also takes cases like these to be paradigms of naming, though his interest is in their status as linguistic actions, not especially in names.

Or by description:

> **Description.** I pick out an object by description and name it: 'Let us call the nearest asteroid to the earth 'Ares'.

These cases resemble acts of promising, whereby saying what they are doing, the speaker does that very thing ('I promise to … '). Both are clearly baptisms. That is, if followed by utterances of the relevant name, with the appropriate causal relationship (whatever it turns out to be), those utterances would refer to the person/asteroid, in virtue of their relationship with the acts in Ostension or Description. Any good theory of baptisms must make room for such cases (even for those who hold the second picture). Proponents of the first picture go further and claim that all baptisms are of this explicit-ceremonial form: a baptism is just a ceremony of this kind, bestowing a name.

These ceremonies are baptisms, but not all baptisms are ceremonies. Evans (1973) describes how a series of utterances of 'Madagascar' coordinated on an area of the African mainland indirectly caused a later series of utterances of the same name coordinated on the island now called 'Madagascar'. Thus, as the case is relevant here:

> **Systematic Mistake.** Some sailors travel to southern Africa, where they encounter a large island off the east coast (now called 'Madagascar') as well locals who use the name 'Madagascar' for an area of the mainland. Wrongly taking the locals to be referring to the island, the sailors begin using the name 'Madagascar' as if to refer to the island. Travelling in Asia, Marco Polo meets the sailors, learns of the island, and continues the sailors' practice of calling it 'Madagascar'. Polo writes a book, which leads eventually to present day utterances of 'Madagascar' as if to refer to the island.[2]

It is generally accepted that the sailors' initial utterances are mistaken; their first uses of 'Madagascar' refer to the mainland, not the island, though they believe the opposite. Conversely, our modern utterances really do refer to the island. But since our modern utterances are directly caused by the sailors', they should co-refer, since reference is inherited along causal lines.[3]

The standard analysis, which I will assume here, is that at some point between the original local utterances and our modern ones, the sailors *unintentionally* baptised the island 'Madagascar', and the later utterances refer to

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[2]This is a simplification. In fact the real story is much more complex, and would itself present an interesting challenge for a theory of reference (see Burgess 2014, from which the bones of my version are taken). But simple versions like this have been a standard test case in philosophy of language for years, so we won't be too concerned with the details here. In other versions, Polo himself makes the initial mistake.

[3]Scenarios of this kind are often called 'reference switching' cases, because the reference of the name 'Madagascar' 'switches' between the earlier and later uses. Writing this way only makes sense if one takes names to be the things which refer to objects. The causal theory is not concerned with names, but with utterances *of* names, and I find talk of the 'reference of a name' muddies the waters. My discussion will be in terms of utterances and their referents.

it because of their relation to this baptism (see e.g. deRosset 2020; Michaelson 2023; Sainsbury 2003, 2005; Evans himself did not give this analysis).

Clearly the sailors' baptism of Madagascar was not an explicit ceremony. So at least some baptisms are not explicit ceremonies, and the first picture is not sufficient.

2. Baptisms as uses

The standard reaction to this problem is a picture of baptisms as certain *uses* of a name. The sailors made no metalinguistic declarations, or explicit baptismal ceremonies – they just used the name, wrongly believing they continued the original practice. Several authors have thus suggested that the baptism is one of these uses.[4] This is the second common picture of the nature of baptisms.

In this section, I discuss two more specific versions of this view. The first (§2.1) is held by Sainsbury, deRosset and Michaelson and concerns only unintentional baptisms. They claim that an unintentional baptism is a use of a name as if to refer to an object, which, in fact, leads to a systematic practice of using that name for that object. I argue that, in the very cases they were designed to accommodate, such views make it problematically arbitrary which use in a causal chain is the baptism.

The second view (§2.2) is not held in print by anyone. However, it has been suggested to me as a possible account on nearly every occasion on which I have discussed these issues in person, after presenting the earlier view and their problems, as well as by several friends commenting on this paper. It is a development of the ideas driving the views held by Michaelson, Sainsbury and deRosset, though applied to intentional baptisms, and is plausible enough that I think it worth describing why I have not adopted it. This view says that an intentional baptism is the first use of a name which in fact leads to a later practice. I describe a counterexample in which a baptism leads to a single use.

2.1. Unintentional practice foundation and problems of arbitrariness

It is a common intuition that cases like Systematic Mistake only include a baptism if the use of 'Madagascar' for the island is *persistent* – a single mistake is not sufficient (See e.g. the contrast between Sainsbury's (2005, 114) *Ammag 1* and *Ammag 2* cases).

This has led to a common way of cashing out the picture of baptisms as uses, at least for unintentional baptisms. Sainsbury (2003, 2005), deRosset

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[4]If Noonan holds any view of baptisms, it is something like this, though it is never made explicit. On page 117, he runs together a baptism and 'the first use of the name by the first user of the name', though his discussion of cases like Systematic Mistake comes later, and this suggestion is not explicitly developed any further.

(2020), and Michaelson (2023) all believe that if a name is used as if to refer to a certain object, and that token use leads to a persistent *practice* of using the name for that object, then that use is an unintentional baptism of that object with that name (the theories differ in various details, but this rough picture is shared).

These views are offered only as an analysis of unintentional baptisms.[5] To cover intentional, ceremonial baptisms like Ostension and Description, it would have to be extended or coupled with a separate account to form a disjunctive view.

But even in the cases they are designed to cover, views like this do not deliver a well-determined answer to *which* use in a causal chain counts as the baptism. On different interpretations of the view, the answer is problematically overdetermined (too many baptisms), underdetermined (no baptism in particular) or arbitrary (one determinate but unmotivated answer). I take these in turn.

Consider a simple version of the use view: any use of a name counts as a baptism if it is made as if to refer to a certain object, and leads eventually to a persistent or systematic practice of using that name as if to refer to that object. Now consider the sailors: they meet the locals, hear the name, and make various utterances U1, U2, U3, etc. of the name, as if to refer to the island. Eventually this leads to our modern utterances. Which of the sailors' utterances is the baptism?

Taking the simple use-picture at face value, the answer is overdetermined. U1 leads eventually to a systematic practice, but so does U2, as do U3, U4, U5, and so on. Perhaps much later utterances such as U1000 are only *part* of the practice without having *led* to it, but this still leaves a large group of initial utterances which all count as leading to the practice, and thus all count as baptisms.

This seems wrong. The characteristic effect of a baptism is to make it newly possible (within the relevant context) to refer to a certain object with a certain name. It would make little sense for me to announce to my friend Ed that 'from now on, you are to be called "Ed"'. My action might have some effect, but I think it would be wrong to say I had *baptised* him 'Ed' since he was already called this. This is why proponents of the causal theory often take a baptism to be whatever stands at the beginning of the causal chain – my speech act doesn't count as a baptism because it doesn't begin a new causal chain, it is part of an existing one.

But on the proposed view, many events will be counted as baptisms (because they lead to an eventual practice) though they do not have this

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[5]Michaelson has no commitments about intentional baptisms; Sainsbury gives several examples (2005, §3.5) but no theory unifying either the intentional baptisms with each other or the intentional with the unintentional; deRosset doesn't discuss the difference between intentional and unintentional baptisms, but his discussion focuses entirely on unintentional cases like Systematic Mistake.

effect (because they follow after an earlier similar baptism). They are exactly like the 'baptism' of my friend Ed with 'Ed' in that they are *not* at the beginning of the causal chain. If U1 does make it newly possible to refer to the island with the name 'Madagascar' then U2, U3, U4, and the rest do not make anything newly possible. These utterances all come after U1, and since U1 has already made it possible to refer to the island with the name, even if U2, U3, U4 etc. do lead to a practice of using the name, they do not have the effects characteristic of a baptism, so the view is wrong to count them as such.

This is not to say that U2, U3, U4, etc. have no semantic effects. They might help establish or sustain the practice that U1 begins or make more speakers able to use the name. It might even be true that without the later uses, U1 would not have the characteristics it does; in virtue of which it plausibly *is* a baptism (Michaelson 2023 says exactly this). And on the view I defend below, many separate uses can be *constituents* of a baptism. The point here is that they do not have the particular semantic characteristics that make something a baptism, but the view counts each one as such.[6]

Of course, there certainly are everyday cases of a person or place being baptised twice with the same name, but this is unlike those cases. Suppose Robert is nicknamed 'Bob' at work, and then separately nicknamed 'Bob' by friends at the bridge club (and suppose the groups share no members). There are two baptisms with the same name, but each baptism makes something possible which wasn't before: the first makes it possible for the workers to refer to Robert with 'Bob' (which they could not before), and the second for the bridge players to do the same (which *they* could not before, even if the workers could). But on the picture under consideration, the uses U2, U3, U4 etc. do not make anything possible which was not possible before. If U1 is a baptism, it enables the sailors to refer to the island with 'Madagascar'. But if so, then the uses which follow don't have this effect, so a view which counts them all as baptisms is mistaken.

Not only this, but the number of events that are wrongly counted as baptisms will far outweigh the number of more plausible candidates. In Systematic Mistake, the view counts U1 as a baptism, which is plausible by the lights of my discussion so far. It also counts U2, U3, U4, and many other later uses as baptisms, none of which are. So in any case of the same structure as Systematic Mistake, the view will generate far more false positives than plausibly true positives. Surely this is the wrong result.

Alternatively, we might stipulate that one of these uses must be the unique baptism, though without giving criteria for *which* one. All of the uses similarly lead to the eventual practice, so each has an equal claim to being the baptism; on this interpretation the answer is *underdetermined*. It

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is at once true that one of the uses is a baptism, and that no use is such that *it* is uniquely the baptism. Surely this is not the case.[7]

Both versions of the determinacy problem can be avoided by adding further conditions to the theory which select exactly one of the sailors' uses as the baptism. But any such addition will make it problematically *arbitrary* which use this is.

To see this, take the uses view above, supplemented with a property P, which at most one utterance can have, such that that utterance is the baptism. For example, P might be *being the first utterance to lead to the practice* (so U1 is the baptism, but not U2 or U3, etc.). Or near-equivalently, P might be *being the first utterance which ultimately leads to semantic changes*, following my concerns above. In general, any well-motivated property can be chosen; my argument only requires that P is a property had by exactly one of the utterances which leads to the eventual practice of using the name.

On this view, it is neither overdetermined nor underdetermined which use is the baptism, because there is exactly one use that fulfils the conditions – whichever use leads to the practice and has P. Let us call this baptismal use 'B'.

Now compare Systematic Mistake with Systematic Mistake'. Systematic Mistake' is a counterfactual case where things go exactly as they do in Systematic Mistake, except that B doesn't occur. In particular, Systematic Mistake' includes the same overall pattern of persistence, using the same name as if to refer to the same island. It includes very nearly all the same utterances as Systematic Mistake (and no further utterances), only differing with respect to B. The same metasemantic effects result, in that modern utterances in Systematic Mistake' refer to the island because of their relation to the sailors' uses. So it would seem that the same baptism occurs in the two cases. This is just like any other case of counterfactual identity: since everything else is the same – especially the persistence condition and the baptism's effects – the presence or absence of a single utterance does not distinguish the baptisms in Systematic Mistake and Systematic Mistake' (just as a marathon would have been the same race if the winner had won by an extra half-second). But by the lights of the view supplemented with P, the baptism in Systematic Mistake does not occur in Systematic Mistake'; that baptism is a particular utterance B, and *ex hypothesi* B is not present in the counterfactual case.

Of course, in Systematic Mistake', there will be a different utterance, B', which satisfies P in the counterfactual case and leads to a practice of using the name. But this is a numerically different event (not just the same event, but with slightly different properties in an alternative world).

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[7]Thanks to Felix Porée for inspiration on this point.

Here is a stark way of putting the problem. The view under consideration says the baptism in the actual world is a certain use B. The baptism in the actual world is identical with the baptism in the alternative world of Systematic Mistake′. The baptism in the alternative world is identical with a certain use B′. Therefore, B is identical with B′. But in fact B is not B′. Contradiction.

This comparison demonstrates the more general problem: the existence of the baptism in Systematic Mistake relies upon the persistence or systematicity of the sailors' uses. This persistence, and thus the baptism itself, is modally robust. The presence or absence of any one or two uses does not affect the persistence, or the baptism, and so both exist in the alternative case Systematic Mistake′. But each use is modally fragile: close possible worlds might include the persistence and the baptism, but lack that use (so long as they include the other uses), just as in the comparison. Systematic Mistake′ includes the same baptism as Systematic Mistake, but does not include B; so B cannot be the baptism. In general, picking any one use as the baptism is somewhat arbitrary, since the events which are really important for the baptism's existence could have gone on anyway, in virtue of all the *other* uses.

Really, these three concerns are the same problem put three different ways: what makes the baptism happen or not is not any one utterance or its effects, but a pattern or systematicity of uses and effects holding between many uses, sustained over time. Insisting that the baptism must be one of these uses, however it is selected, is to miss the point. A good theory of baptisms will have none of these consequences: baptisms must be specific events (not overdetermined or underdetermined), but without it being arbitrary *which* events are baptisms.

2.2. First uses and single uses

Now, the second version of the view of baptisms as uses. The views covered in the last section were proposed as analyses of unintentional baptisms; they said an unintentional baptism is just a use that has certain eventual consequences. The view of this section takes a similar line on intentional baptisms; it claims explicit ceremonies like Ostension or Description are not really baptisms at all, and that in such cases, the baptism proper is the use that occurs immediately after the ceremony. If I say 'you will be called 'Jack', then immediately afterward people will go around *using* that name as if to refer to the person I indicate, and these uses generally lead to systematic practices of yet further use. Perhaps one of these uses – probably the first one – is the baptism. Though the ceremony of naming does have obvious significance, it could be explained in purely phatic or social terms.

This view is offered as an analysis of explicit cases like Ostension and Description. It could perhaps be extended to accommodate cases like

Systematic Mistake as well, or it could serve as the other component in a dis-junctive view alongside one of the accounts from the previous section. It has the advantage that it identifies exactly one use as the baptism in a well-motiv-ated way, so concerns of over- and under-determination will not arise. It might also avoid concerns of arbitrariness, since a counterfactual case in which a different utterance is the baptism could plausibly be said to be a *different* baptism of the same object with the same name.

The view has not been defended in print, but has been suggested to me on several occasions as a counterpart or extension to the previous section's views, when presenting this material at workshops and conferences. Part of its appeal is that if one of the views of the previous section were altered to accommodate my objections, then together the two would form a compre-hensive account of all baptisms as certain uses. I consider it here because it is an independently plausible account of cases like Ostension and Description (plausible enough to have been independently suggested several times), because though plausible it still fails, and because the case I consider in describing this failure provides a further desideratum for my own view below.

It fails because there are cases of explicit naming ceremonies followed by exactly one use, which successfully refers, where it is clear that the use itself is not the baptism. In these cases, the view under consideration will wrongly count the use as the baptism, instead of the ceremony. Here is one such case:

> **Codenames.** Some secret service operatives prepare for a mission. The captain gives each a code name: 'you will be 'Spinach', you can be 'Broccoli', 'Cabbage' and 'Sprout' pointing to each in turn [call this ceremony C]. Each agent operates alone and since the mission is highly dangerous, communication is kept to a minimum; the names are only for emergencies. Most of the mission goes well, and nobody has cause to use the code name 'Sprout' for the agent so-named (though the stakes are so high that everyone remembers who received which name). The agents are nearly rumbled, but just make it out alive. Realis-ing that the near miss could only be the result of a mole, and that only the agent named 'Sprout' could have done it, the agent named 'Broccoli' radios the captain and says 'Sprout is a mole' [call this utterance of 'sprout' U]. The captain then acts on the information thus imparted. It is secret service policy that on discovering a mole, the team be disbanded, operations cancelled, and any mission-specific procedures ended, including the assignation of code names (in the ensuing investigation a long-standing internal identifier is used for the mole agent). As a result, the name is never used again.

Agent Broccoli's utterance U is the first and last use of the name 'Sprout' (in ceremony C, the captain only mentions the name), so according to the view of this section, U is the baptism. But surely this is wrong; C is the baptism. In this case, the utterance U refers to the mole, because the mole has been bap-tised with the name uttered in U, and U is appropriately related to that baptism. Now suppose the case went just as described except that C did not occur, and the agent radioed, saying 'Sprout is a mole'. If U is the

baptism, then in this alternative case, the baptism still occurs, and U still refers to the mole. But in fact it would not – it is clear that in the alternative case U doesn't refer to anything. What makes U refer in the real case is U's relation to C; therefore, C must be the baptism. Thus, the view of intentional baptisms as uses fails too.

3. My theory

My first goal was to describe what a good account of baptisms must do for us. In the first two sections we have arrived at three desiderata. First, explicit ceremonial cases like Ostension, Description and the ceremony C must be counted as baptisms. Second, cases like Systematic Mistake must also be counted as baptisms (though not at the expense of the earlier cases), ideally in a way which explains what they have in common with the explicit cases. Third, in cases of the latter kind, the theory must deliver a determinate and non-arbitrary account of exactly what the baptism is.

I take these criteria in reverse order. §3.1 claims that baptisms in cases like Systematic Mistake are 'divided acts'; complex actions made up of many smaller disjoint acts. This delivers a determinate and well-motivated account of exactly what the baptism is in such cases. The problem then is to say what such acts have in common with explicit ceremonies like Ostension and Description. In §3.2 I argue that all baptisms are acts which institute rules. Explicit ceremonies and divided acts both institute social rules to the effect that later utterances of the relevant name will refer to the relevant object. Thus both kinds of case are correctly counted as baptisms.

3.1. Divided acts

The problem of §2.1 was this: the conditions for whether a particular baptism occurs or not must not differ from the conditions for whether the event identical with that baptism occurs or not. But on the view considered there, they did differ in cases like Systematic Mistake. What grounds the baptism's occurrence is the pattern or systematicity of uses of the name as if to refer to the island, and this pattern occurs regardless of whether any one use occurs, so no one use can be the baptism.

It is not a great leap then to suppose that the baptism in such cases *is* the establishment of this pattern of use – not any one of the uses.

To make this idea more precise, I claim that baptisms in cases like Systematic Mistake are what I call 'divided actions'.[8] A divided action is an action composed of many minor actions, each of which is discontinuous with the rest. Writing a book is a divided action: one must read for research, make notes,

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[8]My terminology is inspired by Quine's (1960) 'divided reference'.

write up different sections, etc., but these actions are broken up by sleeping, eating and other activities. Each subsidiary action is temporally extended and continuous, but they are discontinuous from each other. So there are many actions, and there is also a further action constituted or composed by them, which is temporally extended over their combined duration (writing the book takes years, even though no single, continuous subsidiary act took more than a few hours).

Divided actions are a kind of 'composite' (Chant 2004) or 'extended' (Dalton 1995) action, as these authors use the terms. A composite or extended action is any action that is composed of other actions. Running a marathon is a composite or extended action; each stride is itself a brief action, ending just as the next begins, and together they form a longer whole. But running a marathon is not a divided action, since the minor actions together are temporally continuous; there are no 'gaps'.

Among the composite actions, Chant distinguishes 'aggregate' actions, in which one agent performs all the subsidiary acts, and 'collective' actions, where at least two are performed by different people. Clearly divided actions come in both varieties. I take two actions by different agents to be discontinuous in the relevant sense, so all collective actions are divided actions. I mention this for completeness; the distinction is of little concern in what follows.

Taking the baptism in Systematic Mistake to be a divided action constituted by the sailors' uses avoids the problems of determination and arbitrariness from above.

The baptism is the act of establishing a pattern of using the name as if to refer to the island, and this act is constituted by some large number of the sailors' early uses (however many are jointly required to establish a pattern). Exactly one pattern is established, so there is only one act of establishing, and it is the baptism. Since there is only one candidate act, there are no concerns of overdetermination or underdetermination; these worries will simply not arise. When I formulated my concerns above, the candidates for being the baptism were all the sailors' uses, but on the view I now present, *none* of these uses is the baptism (though they are all constituents of it).

The baptism will also be modally robust: the act of establishing a pattern is constituted by many uses, but no one (or two or three) of these uses is essential to it – the same pattern could have been established, and by the same act of establishing, had one or two of the uses not occurred. To see this, consider another case of establishing a pattern: a serial killer who only targets men in trench coats. Such coats are common enough that one or two killings won't be enough to make the link obvious, but after five or six male bodies are found in trench coats, the police will notice. Say there have been eight killings by today, and the police correctly predict that the next victim – if any – will be a man in a trench coat. These eight killings together establish a pattern, but

had the fourth killing not occurred the same pattern would have been established, and the police would still have noticed. Of course, there is nothing special about the fourth killing – the general point is that no one or two killings are necessary for the pattern. Acts of pattern-establishment, the killer's and the sailors', do not have any of their elements essentially.

So there is no concern of arbitrariness either: in a counterfactual scenario where most of the same uses occur, and similarly establish a pattern, the same baptism will occur, because those uses together will (in that scenario) constitute an act of establishing that pattern (the same act as in the actual scenario).

So my third desideratum is satisfied – on my account, baptisms in cases like Systematic Mistake are non-arbitrary, determinate events. The acts in cases like Ostension and Description are also baptisms, though they are not divided actions (and the concerns about determination and arbitrariness do not arise).

The rest of my theory comes in §3.2, and covers the first and second desiderata. In the rest of this section, I cover a few clarifications to my model of divided baptisms.

First: when does the baptism end? I claim that some baptisms are acts of establishing a pattern of use, and that these acts are constituted by several such uses. But not every utterance of a name is part of the act of establishing the pattern; if it were, the baptism of Madagascar would still be ongoing, which surely it is not. So which uses are part of the baptism, and which are merely part of the practice which follows? A related question is how many uses are *required* for a baptism. If the sailors had made only one or two mistakes (and then been corrected, or forgotten the name), they would not have baptised the island; how many uses are needed to count as establishing a pattern?

Neither question can be answered satisfactorily with a mere number. Many uses are required to establish a pattern, and after a sufficient number of uses, more will not *further* establish it, but neither effect is only a consequence of how many uses there are. The uses must be related in a pattern, practice or sequence, which can then be learned and carried on by others. How exactly this works is far beyond the scope of this paper, but there is a rich literature on these questions elsewhere (see e.g. Brandom 1998; Cetina, Schatzki, and von Savigny 2005; Rouse 2007; Tanesini 2014).

Nonetheless, if we suppose all these conditions are met, we might still ask how many uses are necessary for a baptism, and how many are sufficient for the next use to be merely part of the practice. The answers to both questions are vague. Some substantial number of uses are necessary to establish a pattern, and for any such number, adding or removing a few uses will not affect whether a baptism results. Similarly, any very large number of uses will include a baptism, and some further uses that are not part of the

baptism, and any slight variation in the number will not affect this structure. I don't know what to say about vagueness in general, but I am confident that whatever the correct analysis is, it will apply here.

This is not entirely surprising. I have claimed that baptisms are a kind of event, and many kinds of events are such that there is no bright line where they begin or end. Consider an economic event, such as the Great Depression, or a demographic one such as the post-war baby boom. These events definitely began and definitely ended, but there is no fact of the matter about *exactly when* they did. Of course, one might claim that the baby boom began when the birth rate rose, and ended when it fell again, but this just shifts the question: how much variation is required for a 'rise', and how sustained must it be to begin a boom event? The answers to these questions are vague too. Further, I claimed that some baptisms are events constituted by series of other events, each of the same kind (each a use of the name). Many other things composed in this way also have vague boundaries. Consider a cloud, made of water droplets. For any aggregate of droplets which might be identified with the cloud, an aggregate identical but for one or two droplets will have just as good a claim. Again there is no fact of the matter about where exactly the cloud ends. Baptisms are events composed of other events, so like many other events and composites, some baptisms are vaguely-bounded. None of this is problematic though; the Great Depression, the baby boom, the cloud and the baptism are no less philosophically respectable for being fuzzy at the edges.

Second, do the sailors' initial uses of 'Madagascar' inherit their reference from the baptism which they jointly constitute? On the causal theory, a use of a name refers to the object baptised in the baptism which is causally related to that use. If the sailors' uses together form a baptism, is *that* the baptism from which their uses inherit?

Nothing in the theory I present entails an answer to this question. In particular, there is no reason to think that a use must inherit its reference from the baptism (if any) which it partly constitutes. For independent reasons, however, the answer is 'no': the sailors' first uses, which jointly constitute a baptism of the island, do not semantically refer to that island. All will agree that the sailors' initial uses are systematically mistaken; they believe they refer to the island, but in fact they refer to the mainland. For the causal theory to admit this analysis, it must be that these uses inherit *their* reference from an earlier baptism: the local African baptism of part of the mainland with 'Madagascar'. So it is at once true that the sailors' early uses are each severally mistaken, and that they jointly constitute a whole that justifies later, similar uses as correct (modern utterances which really do refer to the island).

Third, every non-linguistic example so far given of a divided action has been an intentional act by a single agent, but the sailors' baptism is

performed by a group of agents and is surely unintentional.[9] This could form the basis of an objection: perhaps what unites several disjoint actions in one divided action is that they are done with a common intention, perhaps always by a single agent. If so, then baptisms like Systematic Mistake cannot be divided actions, and my theory is wrong.

Not so. Chant (2007) argues decisively that there are unintentional, collective acts. Here is a brief sketch: first take the case of a shepherd grazing their sheep on a field too small for the flock, though unknown to them, this will irrevocably ruin the grass. The shepherd ruins the land, though they don't intend to, so this is a clear case of unintentional action. Now take a version of the case spread over two subordinate acts: the shepherd grazes their flock on some land on Monday, and again on the same land on Tuesday. The land could have survived one grazing, but two consecutively is enough to ruin it. If the shepherd unintentionally ruined the land in the first case, surely they unintentionally ruin it here too, so this is an unintentional divided act (Chant says 'extended act'). Finally, take a version where two different shepherds graze their flocks on a single piece of land on consecutive days. The land could have survived one grazing, but two consecutively is enough to ruin it, so the shepherds together perform an unintentional divided act over the two days. (Chant considers several objections and further refinements, which I don't cover here). This is exactly what happens in the sailors' baptism of the island with 'Madagascar' on my analysis. Chant's case is shorter, with fewer agents and subordinate acts, but is identically structured.

Finally, conversely with the third concern, the only case of divided baptism I have so far considered is an unintentional one in Systematic Mistake. For completeness, it may be worth illustrating that the same effect can occur intentionally. Here is an example:

> **Nasty Nickname.** Pupils A, B and C wish to humiliate pupil D, but they carry far less social capital than D and don't want to risk a public confrontation. Instead, A, B and C decide to 'seed' a nasty nickname N for D, which will slowly diminish D's standing. Since the group have little clout, they can't just tell other pupils to begin using the name. Instead, they start using N in situations where it is clear they are talking about D, hoping others will take up the practice. The group rightly predict that other pupils will assume the name is already widely used, precisely because A, B and C have low standing – the other pupils simply won't consider that they would engage in such a significant social move. No pupil wants to be out of the loop, so they all begin using N as if to refer to D and over time the name catches on. It sticks to the extent that D's adult friends take it up from D's classmates, and years later N can be used to refer to D, even by those who had nothing to do with the school.

In this case, A, B and C have intentionally baptised D with the name N, though not by engaging in an explicit ceremony. A very similar case could also be constructed involving a single baptiser.

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[9]Indeed, most authors take this, and not its repetitive-use form, to be its most interesting property.

This concludes my analysis of cases like Systematic Mistake. Let us turn to what unites divided baptisms with explicit ceremonial ones.

3.2. Baptisms institute rules

I claim that all baptisms are acts which institute constitutive rules. Some of these will be divided acts (Systematic Mistake, Nasty Nickname), and others briefer, simple acts (Ostension, Description). In particular, a baptism is any act which, for a name and object, institutes a constitutive rule to the effect that utterances of that name, following the baptism, will refer to that object. First I'll describe why we should think baptisms institute rules (and how the divided/simple act structure fits this claim), then what kind of rules these are and finally how this avoids the problems of the earlier views. Like §3.1, this section ends with some minor clarifications.

The cases considered so far include two ways of baptising. First, by explicitly announcing that one is doing so (Ostension, Description), and second, by behaving as if the baptism has already occurred, even though it has not (intentionally in Nasty Nickname, unintentionally in Systematic Mistake).

This division is familiar from the study of rules. There are two ways to introduce a rule. One can explicitly stipulate, for example: 'from now on, everyone must wear a hat every Sunday', and provided the speaker has the relevant authority, it will immediately be required that everyone wear a hat on Sundays. In this case, the act of introducing the rule is a simple action. Alternatively, one can behave as if the rule is already in force: punishing those who do not wear hats on Sundays, and rewarding or encouraging (or just not punishing) those who do. Initially these rewards and sanctions will be unjustified, because initially there is no such rule. But if, after enough concerted punishment and reward, the community begins to behave in accord, then the rule really does exist, and has been instituted simply by behaving as if it already did.[10] Further punishment and reward *is* justified, because now the rule is in force. In this case, the act of instituting the rule is a divided action, composed of the initial acts of punishment and reward which together bring it about that the rule obtains.

So baptisms and acts of rule-institution can both be simple or divided acts. The similarity is telling. To baptise *is* to institute a rule.

At first blush, this should make a rough kind of sense: the reference of different utterances is determined by linguistic rules, so to affect their reference we must change the rules. In this case, I claim, we must *create* rules. But an utterance's reference is also determined by which baptism (if any) it is related to. My claim is that these are just the same thing. To baptise is to

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[10]This very compressed account follows the broad strokes of Brandom (1998, ch.1), though what is paraphrased here are (I hope) only his relatively uncontroversial observations on normativity and not his own analysis of them.

change the linguistic rules – in particular, to institute a new rule. Baptisms like Ostension and Description are simple acts of rule-institution by stipulation (like the first case), while baptisms like Systematic Mistake and Nasty Nick-name are divided acts of rule-institution by behaving as if the rule is already in force.

The former case is the more straightforward one. Baptisms like Ostension are explicit ceremonies of stipulation, and clearly resemble acts of stipulating rules.

In the latter case, the behaviour as if the rule exists doesn't include punish-ment and reward, but uses of a name as if to refer to an object. The sailors all use the name 'Madagascar' as if it refers to the island. That is, they use it as if there is already a rule to the effect that their uses will refer to the island, or as if the island has already been baptised. In Nasty Nickname A, B and C all use N *as if* these uses are justified by an existing rule, or relate to an existing baptism, and in so doing they make this so.

So all baptisms are acts which institute new rules, some simple and some divided. But of course not all acts of rule-institution are baptisms. What dis-tinguishes the baptisms from the rest?

Searle (1969, §2.5) distinguishes *constitutive* from *regulative* rules. Regula-tive rules mandate which way, out of several available ways, one should behave in a certain situation. Examples include 'don't chew with your mouth open' and 'say "bless you" when someone sneezes'. Regulative rules can be broken: when the situation arises, the agent can choose to chew with mouth open or closed, and thus to abide or transgress. Under a regula-tive rule, no course of behaviour is made necessary or impossible, but one is marked as *correct*.

Constitutive rules confer a new social status on existing kinds of behaviour (often in a restricted context). Examples include 'a checkmate is made when the king is attacked in such a way that no move will leave it unattacked' and 'a goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between goalposts and under the crossbar' (International Football Association Board 2024, law 10.1). Constitutive rules cannot be broken: when the ball crosses the line, or the king is threatened however he moves, the agent cannot choose whether or not a goal or checkmate is made. Under a constitutive rule then, a new kind of behaviour is made generally possible (scoring, check-mate), and is made *necessary* when the original kind of behaviour occurs (i.e. when the king is immobilised, that is a checkmate, whether the agent wants it or not).

Constitutive rules are created by acts of instituting. Long ago, someone decided what was to count as a checkmate and this decision made it so. I claim that baptisms are such acts of constitutive-rule-institution. Each baptism of an object with a name institutes a rule that utterances of the name which are caused by the baptism will refer to the object. This reflects

the structure of Searle's examples: with or without the rule, the original kind of behaviour would still be possible (immobilising the king or uttering the name), but once the rule is in place, all instances of that behaviour have a significance which they would not otherwise (checkmate, reference to the object).

This settles my first and second desiderata: a baptism is any act which institutes a constitutive rule to the effect that utterances of a certain name will refer to a certain object. This feature unites all baptisms, and excludes everything else. We have seen that rules can be founded in two different ways, by explicit stipulation and repeated behaviour, so it is no surprise that some such acts are divided and some are not. Ostension, Description and ceremony C in Code-names are all simple-act stipulative baptisms. Systematic Mistake and Nasty Nickname are divided baptisms. Thus my theory explains all the cases so far.

The constitutive rules and acts of institution I discuss differ slightly from Searle's examples. The rest of this section discusses two such divergences, which may help clarify some details of my account.

First, in Searle's checkmate case, and the football goal rule, an entirely new kind of behaviour is created. Before the rule was instituted, there was no such thing as a checkmate, and there was no other way to win a chess game.[11] Afterwards, there was.

I claim baptisms make it possible to refer with names, but reference with names is already widely possible, so unlike Searle's case, baptisms don't create an entirely new kind of behaviour. Instead, *each* baptism makes it possible to refer to a particular object with a particular name. This very specific kind of behaviour – reference to *that* object with *that* name – is newly made possible, though name-reference in general is not.

A better comparison, outside semantics but still clearly a constitutive rule, is the addition of new moves to the gymnastic code of points. Competitive gymnastics is governed by a set of general rules, and alongside this a 'code of points' which describes all the moves an athlete can perform in competition and how many points each is worth (see e.g. International Gymnastics Federation 2024). Each allowed move is described by a clause in the code, and each clause is of the same form: that performing such-and-such actions will accrue so many points for the athlete. New clauses are added fairly regularly as new moves are developed. In one sense, the addition of each new clause does not make any new behaviour possible: before and after, it is possible to perform gymnastics and accrue points. But *each* new clause makes it possible to accrue points by performing a certain move. This very specific kind of behaviour – gaining *that many* points for performing

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[11]This is of course not true. This history of chess (and of football) is long and complex. But this is how Searle treats cases like this, and this simplification serves to illustrate the very real contrast with baptisms.

that move – is newly made possible, though gymnastic performance in general is not.

I take it that adding a new clause is the institution of a new rule in competitive gymnastics, and that these rules are constitutive. Just like the chess and football cases, if the athlete performs the move, they *will* accrue the relevant number of points. Baptisms are more closely analogous to the acts of introducing these rules than those in football or chess.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, every constitutive rule Searle considers is instituted by an explicit ceremony or declaration, as are all those I cite from rule books above. On my account, some baptisms are such explicit ceremonies, but in others, a rule is founded by behaving as if it is already in force. All straightforward examples of this latter mechanism are cases of regulative rules (such as my hats-on-Sundays case above). One might object then: is it really possible to found a constitutive rule merely by behaving as if that rule were already in force? If not, then my account of baptisms can't be right because Systematic Mistake clearly includes a baptism but no explicit ceremony. In fact, it is possible. An illustrative example:

> **Confused Players.** A group of friends take a holiday. While drinking in the pub, a local teaches them a card game and though inebriated they play enough to grasp the rules, including the victory condition V1 that a player wins just if they have discarded all their 'pip cards' (cards other than Kings, Queens and Jacks). On returning home, they play again. Affected by time, drink and change of setting, they all misremember and play as if according to a rule V2, that a player wins just if they have discarded all their cards (including face cards), though they all believe they are correctly following the rule V1. At this point the friends are simply mistaken: the game is won by discarding all pip cards, and their play is wrong. Over time however, their play systematically follows V2 to such an extent that eventually it really is the victory condition of the game as they play it.

By systematically behaving as if victory is achieved by discarding all cards, the players have made it so. They have founded a constitutive rule by persistent practice, not explicit declaration. Indeed, the case of the confused players is very similar to Systematic Mistake. Not only do they institute a constitutive rule by practice; they do so while mistakenly believing that they follow the original rule.

So although Searle only considers constitutive rules founded by declaration (and although these are undeniably more common), it certainly is possible to found such rules by practice, as I claim in Systematic Mistake.

4. Conclusion

This concludes my discussion of baptisms. I have demonstrated the need for a more detailed theory and desiderata against which to test it, and have tried to provide both. My theory probably falls short in various ways and could certainly be further developed. Nevertheless, at the very least I hope I have

provided a broad enough stock of examples and a substantive enough view for other work to fruitfully engage with.

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Disclosure statement

ORCID

Hugo Heagren 🄳 http://orcid.org/0009-0005-6052-3369

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