

Did Madagascar undergo a change in referent?

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Kevin Mulligan has defended the view that perception is necessary for proper names to refer to spatio-temporal objects and, if the disjunctivist account of perceptual content is accepted, then the category of object-dependent singular terms must also be accepted, and proper names belong to it. I intend to take a different, more direct route to reach the conclusion that proper names are object-dependent. To ask whether, e.g., if Nixon had not existed, the name 'Nixon' would have existed or whether the same name could have undergone a change in referent, is to ask whether it is a mere accident that the name 'Nixon' as we have it now names Nixon. Could our name 'Nixon' have named, say, David Kaplan, either because it was originally given to him or because, at a certain stage, it changed its referent? This is what the issue of object-dependence, as I understand it, amounts to. Here I only address one half of the problem, namely the possibility of a change in referent. A familiar case of apparent change is that of the name Madagascar, first brought to our attention by Gareth Evans, and then briefly discussed by Saul Kripke in *Naming and Necessity*. Was it a real change in referent or was a new name created? I claim that the latter is the case. The paper is mainly intended to clarify the Madagascar example, without drawing any general conclusion. But the issue has some obvious bearing on a number of well-known problems, including Kripke's puzzles about belief and linguistic consumerism.