



# The Pragmatics and Cognition of Naming

EROS CORAZZA

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By

Eros Corazza

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To the memory of Curzio Chiesa;  
teacher, friend, and constant inspiration.

*Sine nomine persona non est.*  
(Roman proverb)

*What's in a name?* A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.  
(Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*)

Languages do not seem to have a category of pure names, in the logician's sense. Rather there are personal names, place names, color names, and so on.  
(Noam Chomsky, *Reflections on Language*)

I do not blame him cause he run and hid. But the meanest thing that he ever did was before he left, he went and named me 'Sue'. [...]  
I tell ya, life ain't easy for a boy named 'Sue'.  
(Johnny Cash, "A Boy Named 'Sue'")

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## PREFACE

On November 20 1989, the General Assembly of the United Nations recognized that, among the rights of a child, is the right to have a name: “The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name” (Article 7-1). Why is it a right to have a name? The Roman dictum *Sine nomine persona non est* [without a name a person is not] may give us some hints. To have a name is to be bestowed with *individuality* and *recognition*. It is to enter humankind as a member, to become *one of us*. A child is not a commodity one can sell or buy as one can so easily do when trading second-hand goods or animals. To bestow a name on someone plays a role in that. If language is also understood as a tool that enhances our social connections, these features of a name must be taken into consideration.

Another interpretation of the right to have a name is that a name gives us a way to keep track of and possibly to monitor in some way, if not explicitly control, our conspecifics. In that respect being *proper* seems to be an important feature of names. We also use names for many other things: pets, towns, rivers, books, paintings, planets, buildings, boats, etc. Geographical names, for instance, help us to individuate and distinguish various places, regions, mountains, countries, etc. How could we design a map, plan a vacation, without using names for cities, streets, rivers, mountain, countries, and so on? Names play an important role in the building of various recognition maps of the world and the universe. As such, names are instrumental in the fulfillment of various aims and plans.

From a psychological and sociological perspective names are among the most important public and social tools that we have. They enter birth and death certificates, passports and driving licenses, legal agreements, telephone books, signposts, etc. How could the postal service sort letters and packages if they did not have names of people, streets, and cities to guide their actions? To be a useful tool a proper name must single out its bearer. The way a name relates to its bearer is not an easy question and a lot has been said, mainly by philosophers of language, on this specific issue. To be useful a proper name must also be a *stable* label. It cannot change its designation on a daily basis. How could a name be a useful instrument in social and cognitive maps if it did not have a fixed, unchanging designation? How could we plan a simple trip and buy a train or airplane ticket if the names of the stations or airports were constantly changing? *Qua* useful tools, names must also help us to cumulate, organize, store, and pass along information on *specific* individuals. They must have an individuating power. This is far from an easy question as well. Cognitive scientists and psychologists, among others, have produced many interesting studies on these aspects.

It seems, therefore, that a study on naming must take into consideration variegated aspects surrounding the importance of names both in our social interactions and in our cognitive life.

The production of a fully satisfactory picture concerning all the variegated aspects and features of proper names and naming in general is outside the scope of this book. I hope, though, to be able to highlight a few aspects surrounding the way we exploit and use proper names. If nothing else, I hope to show and stress their multi-faceted traits and illustrate how they can be exploited in what Wittgenstein characterized as language games. Thus, although the main perspective I adopt in my inquiry pertains

to the philosophy of language and mind, I will free myself to take quite a few detours. Studies from various disciplines will come into the forum to illuminate the way proper names work in our communicative, social, intentional, and cognitive life.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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An early version of the monograph was presented and discussed in a graduate seminar at Carleton University in the winter semester of 2013-14. It benefited from comments, criticisms and lively discussions by students.

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All the remaining mistakes and misunderstandings are, as usual, down to me.

A shortened version of chapter 3 was published in the volume *Reference and Representation in Thought and Language* (for which a full reference is available in the Bibliography). I am grateful for the permission to reproduce that material here.

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# INTRODUCTION

This book deals with proper names, their importance, their use, how they designate, the way they are cognized, and other related issues. Under the category of ‘names’ I will subsume what sometimes have been characterized as proper names, proper nouns, and complex names, among other things. When I use the label ‘name’ it should read as ‘proper name’.

The online *Oxford English Dictionary*<sup>1</sup> states that ‘name’ *qua* noun is: “A word or set of words by which a person or thing is known, addressed, or referred to”. In its attributive use, ‘proper’ means: “Denoting something that is truly what it is said or regarded to be; genuine”. ‘Proper to’, however, means: “Belonging or relating exclusively or distinctively to; particular to”. The origins of ‘proper’ come from “Middle English: from Old French ‘propre’, from Latin ‘proprius’ (‘one’s own, special’)”. These definitions come close to the view of proper names I assume in this essay.

Some of the questions we will face sound trivial. Which linguistic expressions count as proper names? Why do we need names to begin with? How do they work within natural languages? What role do they play within a linguistic community? How do they relate to their bearers? How do they combine with other linguistic categories in building well-formed sentences? How do they differ from other linguistic terms? How do we cognitively process them? The answer to some of these “basic” questions guides, I wish to show, which theory of proper names and naming one is

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>.



keen to subscribe to and bring into one's semantic, pragmatics and cognitive toolbox.

In the chapters to follow, I will address some of these questions and attempt to discuss various aspects concerning proper names. In particular, I will focus on the way we cognize proper names, on how they help us to entertain singular thoughts about specific individuals, and how they pragmatically convey relevant information. Thus, in my inquiry I will mainly focus on the *use* of names both in our thoughts (thus as devices that allow us to entertain singular or *de re* thoughts) and communicative interchanges (as tools we use to single out objects of discourse and convey information about them). This, I conjecture, should be the starting point for a story about proper names in particular, and a theory of communication in general. Thus, one of the main questions should be: how does a given vocable earn the right to be a proper name? And, once a vocable assumes this role, how does it behave in our thinking and communicative episodes?

Many philosophical studies often start from the premise that we have proper names and then go on to discuss their functioning in the language we use. Philosophers have often neglected the basic question concerning *what is* a proper name. Let's call it the *what* question. The guiding intuitive idea is that in its primary function or proper function (i.e. when it appears in argument position in the utterance of a simple sentence like 'Socrates' in "Socrates is snub-nosed") a proper name is a device used to pick up an individual while the predicate is used to say something about it. In uttering "Socrates is snub-nosed" one designates Socrates and attributes to him the property of being snub-nosed. What one says is true if Socrates instantiates that property. It is false otherwise.

Indexicals and proper names are, I assume, different tools of direct reference contributing the denoted individual into the proposition expressed,

roughly, into what is said. In short, I will defend the following ideas: in their paradigmatic uses indexicals and proper names are *distinct* tools we use to pick out objects of discourse and thoughts. They constitute different ways we can entertain and transmit singular or *de re* thoughts, *viz.* they are distinct tools we use to pass to our audience the individual we have in mind. They also play different roles in the organization of our mental life. As Kaplan aptly puts it: “proper name words are unique. They have the direct reference of indexicals, but they are not context sensitive. Proper name words are like indexicals that you can carry away from their original context without affecting their content” (Kaplan 1977: 562).

# CHAPTER 1

## THE DUAL FUNCTION OF NAMES

In this chapter I assume that names are tools of direct reference, i.e., devices used to pick up objects of discourse, *and* tools that allow us to entertain and express *de re* thoughts, i.e., thoughts focused on and representing the individuals the names stand for. In this respect a name is both a linguistic *and* a mental tool. In what follows I will mainly focus on how proper names can be characterized as tools of singular, object-dependent, *de re* thoughts. Before that, though, I shall sketch how names relate *via* a communicative and thinking network to their bearer.

### 1.1. The Name-Notion Network

The notion of having an individual in mind takes center stage when dealing with problems pertaining to cognitive significance, communication, explanation of behavior, etc.<sup>2</sup> Thus, a theory of meaning aiming to account for communication and understanding must be, to borrow Korta & Perry's (2011) terminology, utterance-bound and ought to

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of cognitive significance I have in mind is the one we inherited from Frege (1892) when he claimed that a statement of the forms  $a=a$  and  $a=b$  differ in cognitive significance. Hence, "Hesperus is Phosphorus" may help us to expand our knowledge, while a statement like "Hesperus is Hesperus" is trivial. The two statements differ in cognitive significance, as do the statements "Hesperus is a star" and "Phosphorus is a star".

consider the variegated ways a subject can have someone/thing in mind. Besides, there can be distinct ways one can have the very same object in mind even in the case of direct perception (acquaintance-based) relation to it (see, e.g., Kripke's 1979 well-known Peter-Paderewski case when he states a famous puzzle about beliefs).<sup>3</sup> The having in mind relation is, particularly in the case of perspectively driven perception, what anchors one's thought to the external world. Here we can follow Perry when he writes:

When I say 'I' I refer to myself without relying on a network. Even an amnesiac, who has forgotten her own name, can refer to herself with 'I'. But when I say, 'John Perry', I also refer to myself. In this case I exploit a name-network that began before I learned language; it existed mainly in the heads and conversations of my parents, brother and other relatives ... until I began to refer to myself, and in time, learned to exploit this network, and my own name, to learn things about myself. In all of these cases, my reference to a particular object, whether Aristotle or Descartes or Kepe, or myself, *depends on a role that object plays in my life*—a role even a long dead philosopher can play, in the case of the first two—at the time of utterance. (Perry 2014: 6; *italics mine*)

Perry's roles play a key part when we come to characterize an agent's cognitive life. Since the very same object can be apprehended (and thus

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<sup>3</sup> The puzzle runs as follows: Peter meets the same person named 'Paderewski' in two different circumstances without recognizing that the person he saw is the same one. He took Paderewski to be a politician and later on to be a musician without realizing that he is the very same individual. Peter took him to be two different fellows who happened to share the same name. Hence, Peter does not come to believe that Paderewski is both a politician *and* a musician.

represented) in different ways, the referent can affect the cognizer's mind in variegated ways. An agent can come to have the referent in mind in different ways. And it is *how* the agent comes to have an object in mind that helps in dealing with puzzles pertaining to cognitive significance. Roles are also what help in explaining someone's behavior, *viz.* what guides an agent's actions. Perry's roles are central in such an explanation and, in particular, when we come to classify what goes on in an agent's mind and guides her linguistic behavior:

A role, as I shall use the term, is a partial function whose value is an Object ... I argue that roles help us understand the nature of mental representation in perception, thought and action, and so the function of the concept of content. (Perry 2014: 6)

Perry distinguishes between “SO-roles”, i.e., Subject-Object roles, and “ES-roles”, i.e., roles that take the Episodes of speech or thought themselves as arguments, and deliver the Subject, as well as the time and the place of the Episode, as values. Furthermore, ES-roles help in classifying the representations involved. Different roles help to characterize different aspects and properties of the utterance. A role can put conditions on the subject matter, the proposition expressed (or Kaplanian content). A different role can put conditions on the utterance itself and the agent of it. It is this role that helps in classifying the speaker's cognitive life involved in her utterance of the sentence. It is, therefore, the latter that helps us in dealing with Frege-inspired problems pertaining to cognitive significance.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion on this, see Corazza 2018.

I would now like to focus on the notion of transmission of information and what Perry (2014) and Korta & Perry (2011) characterize as *the name-notion network*. On the one hand, Perry seems to subscribe to the view that his use of ‘Aristotle’ is linked to the Greek philosopher because, through a network of communication, it is causally related to the referent. To the best of my knowledge the first philosopher who proposed the so-called causal theory of reference (or causal chain) is Geach<sup>5</sup>:

I do indeed think that for the use of a word as a proper name there must in the first instance be someone acquainted with the object named. But language is an institution, a tradition; and the use of a given name for a given object, like other features of language, can be handed on from one generation to another; the acquaintance required for the use of a proper name may be mediate, not immediate. Plato knew Socrates, and Aristotle knew Plato, and Theophrastus knew Aristotle, and so on in apostolic succession down to our own times; that is why we can legitimately use ‘Socrates’ as a name the way we do. It is not our knowledge of this chain that validates our use, but the existence of such a chain; just as according to Catholic doctrine a man is a true bishop if there is in fact a chain of consecrations going back to the Apostles, not if we know that there is. (Geach 1969/72: 155)

On the other hand, Perry also emphasizes information transmission and how we come to have notions stored in our mind (see Perry’s conception

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<sup>5</sup> See also Donnellan (1970), Evans (1973), and Kripke (1980). As Devitt puts it: “[O]ur present uses of a name, say ‘Aristotle’, designate the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle, *not* in virtue of the various things we (rightly) believe true of him, but in virtue of a causal network stretching back from our uses to the first uses of the name to designate Aristotle” (Devitt 1981: 25).

of mental file; more on this in the next section and following chapters).<sup>6</sup> We thus think about Aristotle because we have a notion of him in our mind. One way to understand Perry here is that the SO (Subject-Object) role and the ES (Episode-Subject) role, being two sides of the same coin, cannot be severed. This amounts to saying that the name-network and the notion-network are both crucially important when we come to characterize *what* a speaker said and *how* she said it. The *what* and the *how* cannot be split. It is the latter, the ES role, that helps us deal with problems relating to cognitive significance. It is the latter that helps us to classify what goes on in a cognizer's mind that contributes in guiding her behavior. It is the latter that characterizes what Frege called modes of presentation, *viz.* the way the objects are given and apprehended.

My Perry-inspired view can be understood as follows. The *name*-network and the *notion*-network need not be mutually exclusive; they work in tandem and tend to proceed hand in hand. Depending on the speaker/thinker cognitive situation, sometimes it is the notion-network that guides the referential link, while other times it is the name-network. On the other hand, the notion-network, characterized by Perry's ES role, is what delivers how the speaker gets the relevant referent in mind.

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<sup>6</sup> "I can think of and talk about Aristotle because of a network involving notions, names, and other references to Aristotle that have been going on since he was born. My use of 'Aristotle' is supported by this network. Aristotle is the origin of the network ... Once we recognize the importance of network we can introduce a level of content, network content ... The network is a public object, that exists independently of any particular utterance that exploits it. It is these networks, I claim, that provide the structure that allows us to speak of beliefs that are directed at the same object, even when there is no object at which they are directed" (Perry 2001/2012: 14-5).

Furthermore, it is the notion-network that allows a speaker to cumulate and pass on information concerning a given referent. Most of the time we face no problems. The object one has in mind is the object that one, through the name-network, refers to. The name-network and the notion-network work in parallel. It can happen, though, that the object one has in mind through the notion-network and the one she has in mind through the name-network differ. In some cases, people can pass on information (and the individual they have in mind) without having the name of that individual in their idiolects. Thus, the passing of information from one speaker to the other, the passing of whom they have in mind, can be sustained by a notion-network without having to appeal to a name-network. The name-network and the notion-network, in some awkward cases, can run in different directions. As would be the case, for instance, if one looking at Mr. Smith utters “Mr. Black looks happy” and, thus misrepresents Mr. Smith as being Mr. Black. In such cases we would, no doubt, face a situation of misplaced information and some misunderstanding is likely to arise. An attentive audience can easily correct the speaker by pointing out her mistake. In such a case the speaker, if rational and recognizing her misidentification, would revise her original utterance.

## 1.2. Names and Singular Thoughts

On top of singling out an object of discourse, as a mental tool a name is also a tag or label for an idea or notion one entertains about the name’s referent. Actually, names are what help us to store information about the objects that names name and to retrieve the information stored under these names/labels. Actually, to be functional, a system of information storage needs a system of information retrieval. As an analogy we can think of the way we save files in our computers. We name the file and when retrieving



that file we use the name we created for that particular file. The file-name is thus what helps us to store information and to retrieve it. Names play a key role in that. Roughly, the main idea can be summarized as follows: a tokened name relies on both the name-network, i.e., the so-called causal link that relates the name with its bearer, and the name-notion connection, i.e., the way the name *qua* mental tool helps in storing and retrieving information about the name's bearer. While the former is what fixes the reference of the tokened name, the latter is what contributes to the cognitive significance (or cognitive organization) associated with the tokened name.

My idea of Plato, my *Plato-idea*, is about Plato because 'Plato' stands for Plato—or, more precisely, because my Plato-idea bears a mental name (or label) corresponding to the natural language name 'Plato'. For simplicity's sake, I henceforth will not distinguish between current (natural language) names and mental names. If one is keen on Mentalese one can consider a mental name as a token in Mentalese translating a natural language name. Furthermore, I do not want to commit myself to the view that one cannot think of Plato if one does not have the label 'Plato' in her idiolect and mind. As reported by Kaplan, Donnellan once suggested that people can have in mind, refer and pass to others a specific individual they think about even if they do not have and know the name of the relevant individual:

Donnellan once said to me that he could imagine the name 'Aristotle' having been first introduced in the Middle Ages by scholars who previously had used only definite descriptions to write and speak about Aristotle. According to Donnellan, these scholars may well have had Aristotle in mind, and through their conversations, through the referential

use of definite descriptions and other devices, passed the epistemic state of having Aristotle in mind from one to another. Thus they were properly situated from an epistemic point of view to be able to introduce a proper name. (Kaplan 2012: 142)

Donnellan's example of the medieval scholars points out that people can have Aristotle in mind and, thus, entertain singular thoughts about him. In other words, the scholars pass to each other, generation after generation, the individual they have in mind (*via* notion networks) and only later tag the individual they have been cumulating information about with the introduction of the name 'Aristotle'. In so doing they initiate a name network. In short, one can entertain a singular, *de re*, thought about an individual *via* a notion or idea of that individual she has in mind without having a specific label for that very individual in her idiolect. To put it in a nutshell, people can pass to each other generation after generation the individual they have in mind without having a name for that individual.

The important point to bear in mind is that in hearing a name the audience calls to mind an idea or notion corresponding to that name. How does this work? A useful and powerful metaphor coming from Grice (1969) and subsequently refined by Perry (1980) is the one of mental files.<sup>7</sup> Think of our mind as being (partly) organized like a file cabinet. In

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<sup>7</sup> Bach (1987), Castañeda (1989), Recanati (1993, 2012), and Jeshion (2009), among others, also appeal to mental files when discussing the cognitive impact and importance of proper names. As Castañeda aptly puts it: "The role is twofold. On the one hand, proper names have a *doxastic*, or (since we aim at gaining knowledge) *epistemic* role: They function as devices by means of which we *organize* our beliefs, that is, the information we possess as belief. To acquire a proper name in one's idiolect is to open a file for the storage of information ... On

our cabinet we keep various files about different individuals (be they persons, places, events, etc.). Our files bear different names: the latter are what link the files to the individuals so named.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the aboutness of the file often depends on the name it bears. It does not rest on the information stored in the file. Yet, as in Donnellan's example of the medieval scholars introducing the name 'Aristotle' as the label of the individual they had in mind, a file may be related to its origin (individual) *via* relevant information transmitted through the notion network. The name we saw is a (very) useful, but inessential, feature relating a file to the objects it is about. After all, we have many individuals in mind we can recognize, ascribe properties to, and so on, without being able to name them. I know the waitress in my local bar quite well. I recognize her and salute her when I meet her out of the bar. Yet, I do not know her name. I

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the other hand, proper names have a *retrieval* or *causal* role. They are keys that open the information file for the retrieval of particular pieces of information.” (Castañeda 1989: 41)

<sup>8</sup> If one is disposed (as, e.g., Carruthers 1998) to think that in our conscious conceptual thinking, unlike in our visio-spatial thinking, we operate using natural language, then a natural language name works both ways, i.e., as a referential tag and as the name of the file. On the other hand, if one is more sympathetic with a Fodorian notion of Mentalese (see, e.g., Fodor 2001), one is likely to hold the view that the natural language name translates a symbol in Mentalese. This debate, as interesting as it may be, transcends the scope of this study. For the safety of my argument it suffices to stress that a name plays two distinct roles, i.e., as a referential tag and as the name (or translation of) the file so labelled. It goes without saying, though, that we can have files about individuals without having a name (or knowing the name) of the relevant individual the file is about. We can also have files of fictional, non-existent, characters.

can talk using various descriptions of her with my colleagues, family and friends and, in so doing, I can pass my having her in mind to them. She may become a central figure in our talks. One of us may start to call her ‘Sue Bar’. We can all adopt this name when referring to her. So ‘Sue Bar’ enters our idiolects and becomes our name for her. Although we are not in a position to alter her passport’s entry or her birth certificate, she may become famous in the wider community so that ‘Sue Bar’ begins to spread around, like a virus, in the linguistic community. A convention enabling speakers to token ‘Sue Bar’ to refer to our waitress has been created. As Chastain puts it: “The simplest way to introduce a proper name is just to start using it” (Chastain 1975: 217). We will have a mental file concerning her that we can now label ‘Sue Bar’. If people later discover that Sue Bar’s “real” name is ‘Mary White’ a Frege-like puzzle may arise and an utterance like “Sue Bar is Mary White” can become informative, just as “Hesperus is Phosphorus” became informative with the Babylonian astronomers when they came to discover that the star rising in the morning was the same as the one disappearing at night.

A file is useful insofar as it is a good place to store information about the individual that we can later retrieve. Files may be generated in many ways. One may form a file in one’s mind when hearing a proper name and start storing some information into the file so named. One may come to form a mental file on perceiving an individual, collect some information on the perceived individual, and only later come to label the file (e.g., when learning the name of the perceived individual). Furthermore, one may have files with lots of information labelled with vacuous names (e.g.: ‘Peter Pan’, ‘Santa Claus’, ‘Robin Hood’, ‘Vulcan’, ‘William Tell’, etc.). It is likely that when Urbain Le Verrier came to stipulate the existence of a

planet disturbing the orbit of Mercury, he created a file that he then named ‘Vulcan’.<sup>9</sup>

Some, or even most, of the information stored in a file could be incorrect. This, though, *pace* Frege, does not make the file stand for another individual that would eventually satisfy the information contained in the file. Our Einstein-file is about Einstein even if we find out that Einstein did not discover the theory of relativity. In hearing ‘Dartmouth’ one may store into one’s file under the label ‘Dartmouth’ that it is a town or a city standing on the mouth of the Dart. Yet this information, as useful as it can be, does not play any role in linking ‘Dartmouth’ to Dartmouth. The stored information, though, plays an important cognitive role in guiding our actions. When searching for Dartmouth on a geographical map one may first look at the mouth of the Dart. One can give Mary Smith a present or invite her out for dinner on her birthday because one has stored her birth date into one’s file. Yet Mary’s birth date does not contribute in determining the referent of ‘Mary’ and, thus, what the mental file stands for. There may have been an error in the creation of Mary Smith’s birth certificate and, thus, that her passport registers the wrong birth date, and so on and so forth. A friend of mine—lucky him—celebrates two birthdays: the one when he was actually born and the one registered two days later on his birth certificate (and, later on, on his passport and driving license). In short, from a cognitive perspective, a name is what helps us to store and retrieve information from the relevant file. Names (just like other nouns) play thus a pivotal role when storing and organizing information

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed discussion on the formation of files, their possible origins and the way they belong to an intersubjective network allowing us to share and transmit information, see Perry (2001/2012: 196ff.)

concerning a particular (someone or something) under a given label within our long-term biological memory.<sup>10</sup> When hearing or using a name, *viz.* when a name comes to mind, we activate the so-named notion or idea: we open, so to speak, the file so-named and we can thus retrieve and/or store information from and/or in our file. We open, we could say, a channel of information.

### 1.3. Names and Information

We also use names when storing information into our phones, notebooks and laptops. And we do so pretty much the same way we store information into our biological memory. Our phone can be regarded as an extension of our biological memory. Some scholars, advocates of the extended-mind conception, go as far as to claim that there is no principled difference between our biological memory and our phone memory. Clark & Chalmers (1989), for instance, suggest that there is no basic difference between information and beliefs stored in memory and information and beliefs stored in one's notebook. Someone may reliably believe that a meeting starts at 4:30 pm on Wednesday July 6, 2015 because they registered it in their notebook.<sup>11</sup> I know Mary Smith's phone number and birth date because they are stored in my iPhone under the label 'Mary Smith'. I know what she looks like because I registered an image of her in

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<sup>10</sup> While names tag ideas of specific individuals, nouns tag ideas of classes of individuals. 'Jane Smith' tags an idea of Jane Smith while 'woman' tags an idea of which women are the extension.

<sup>11</sup> See Clark & Chalmers' (1989) case of Otto who, suffering from Alzheimer's, cannot store in his biological memory relevant information and, as a consequence, reliably stores it and successfully retrieves it from his notebook.

my iPhone. People with a better memory than mine may know Mary's birth date, address and phone number because they stored it in their biological memory. Whether my iPhone is part of my mind or not is an open question. Yet we cannot deny that there is a similarity between storing information on our phones and storing it in our biological memory under a given name. The practice of storing information in our notebooks is what allows us to lower the cognitive cost of having to stock information in our biological memory. Like other organisms, we tend to stock information in our surroundings that we can then reliably retrieve. Actually, not only humans but organisms of a great many species use the strategy of exploiting or even generating structures in their environment to lower cognitive complexity. Examples in other species include pheromones, markers, and color codes, amongst other things. In our own species, examples range from academic books and journals to appointment books and signs in hallways.<sup>12</sup>

Curiously enough, this is what Mill himself (whose famous lesson is that names are the only linguistic signs that do not connote)<sup>13</sup> seems to

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<sup>12</sup> “[E]volved creatures will neither store nor process information in costly ways when they can use the structure of the environment and their operations upon it as a convenient stand-in for the information-processing operations concerned” (A. Clark 1989: 64). This phenomenon is, for instance, nicely illustrated in the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales on Hansel and Gretel. In the tale the siblings are abandoned in the forest. To mark their way back Hansel takes a slice of bread and leaves a trail of bread crumbs to mark the path to follow on their return home.

<sup>13</sup> The following quote is possibly the main source inspiring the so-called Millian theory of naming or, simply, Millianism:

Proper names are not connotative: they denote the individuals who are called by them; but they do not indicate or imply any attributes as

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belonging to those individuals. When we name a child by the name Paul, or a dog by the name Cæsar, these names are simply marks used to enable those individuals to be made subjects of discourse. It may be said, indeed, that we must have had some reason for giving them those names rather than any others; and this is true; but the name, once given, is independent of the reason. A man may have been named John, because that was the name of his father; a town may have been named Dartmouth, because it is situated at the mouth of the Dart. But it is no part of the signification of the word John, that the father of the person so called bore the same name; nor even of the word Dartmouth, to be situated at the mouth of the Dart. If sand should choke up the mouth of the river, or an earthquake change its course, and remove it to a distance from the town, the name of the town would not necessarily be changed. That fact, therefore, can form no part of the signification of the word; for otherwise, when the fact confessedly ceased to be true, no one would any longer think of applying the name. Proper names are attached to the objects themselves, and are not dependent on the continuance of any attribute of the object. (Mill 1893: Book 1, chapter 2, §5)

The common lesson taken from Mill is, roughly, that all there is to a proper name is its referent. As Wettstein (2004: 81) puts it, the main moral we should bring home from Mill is that reference is *cognitively innocent* and that names are merely tags: “*His* [Mill’s] semantical story, or so it would seem, is merely that a name is a tag for its bearer” (Wettstein 2004: 84). As will become clear later, I would prefer to say that reference by proper names, although it may be *cognitively unmediated*, is far from being cognitively innocent. By cognitively unmediated I merely mean that: (i) the name’s referent is not fixed by the information a speaker-hearer can associate to it and (ii) when the speaker/thinker tokens a (non-vacuous) proper name she entertains a singular thought. Following Mill, names are deprived of any connotative feature:

From the preceding observations it will easily be collected, that whenever the names given to objects convey any information, that is, whenever they



point toward when, in arguing that names are just tags, he mentions the burglar marking (chalking) the house he plans to visit later and rob. In marking the house, the burglar stores important information in the surroundings:

If, like the robber in the Arabian Nights, we make a mark with chalk on a house to enable us to know it again, the mark has a purpose, but it has not properly any meaning. The chalk does not declare anything about the house; it does not mean, This is such a person's house, or This is a house which contains booty. The object of making the mark is merely distinction. I say to myself, All these houses are so nearly alike that if I lose sight of them I shall not again be able to distinguish that which I am now looking at, from any of the others; I must therefore contrive to make the appearance of this one house unlike that of the others, that I may hereafter know when I see the mark—not indeed any attribute of the house—but simply that it is the same house which I am now looking at. Morgiana chalked all the other houses in a similar manner, and defeated the scheme: how? simply by obliterating the difference of appearance between that house and the others. The chalk was still there, but it no longer served the purpose of a distinctive mark. (Mill 1893: Book 1, chapter 2, §5)

The robber now knows that he can *recognize* and *re-identify* the salient house because of the tag. Whether the burglar marked the house with yellow, green, or blue chalk does not matter. Instead of marking the house the burglar could have stamped a name on it. The color used (or the name

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have properly any meaning, the meaning resides not in what they denote, but in what they connote. The only names of objects which connote nothing are proper names; and these have, strictly speaking, no signification. (Mill 1893: Book 1, chapter 2, §5)

he could have written on the house) is not part of the meaning of the tag/name. To be sure, the mark on the house, though it is a tag, is not a designating term. Unlike names, the robber's mark does not belong to the language, it did not initiate a name-network, it did not enter the public language. It is a kind of private sign the robber uses to identify and remember the house. Yet, the robber's practice is useful in illustrating how names (like marks) help us to individuate individuals and entertain singular thoughts about them. This is another lesson concerning names that is sometimes ignored in Mill's picture. It concerns the individuating role names play in our cognitive system.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.4. Names *qua* Fingers of Ostension

Names are what connect us to their bearers. They are, as Barcan Marcus puts it, long fingers of ostension:

Proper names serve as a long finger of ostension over time and place. On this account 'proper name' is a semantical, not a merely syntactical notion. Reference is supposed. We may mistakenly believe of some syntactically proper name, say 'Homer', that it has an actual singular referent and is a genuine proper name, but if its use does not finally link it to a singular object, it is not a genuine name at all.... Proper names have fixed values in our language as a historical institution and are part of the public vocabulary. In this way they allow reference to an object despite the vicissitudes the objects undergo and despite the absence of direct

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<sup>14</sup> I think that Frege and so-called descriptivists about reference somewhat conflate these two distinct roles when claiming that a name stands for an object because the latter satisfies some information associated with the name or, as I prefer to say, some information one (or some experts) stores in one's mental file so-named.

acquaintance with many and perhaps most of the objects that the language user correctly names. (Barcan Marcus 1986: 203-4)

A way to understand Barcan Marcus' characterization of names *qua* long fingers of ostension is to compare them to Pylyshyn's mental pointers or, more precisely, FINSTs (FINGers of INSTantiation; see Pylyshyn 2003, 2007). FINSTs are a kind of mental indexical anchoring of our perceptual representations to the objects we are perceptually tracking:

I propose that a pointer, called a visual index or, for historical reasons, a FINST (for FINGER of INSTantiation) is set to point to the object. Note that the properties of the individual objects are not used to detect their relational pattern; in fact, the properties must be explicitly ignored. The same applies when acting on an object, such as moving the gaze to it. (Pylyshyn 2000: 200)

Our perceptual thoughts (e.g., the thought we would express using perceptual demonstratives like 'this/that' or 'she') are *de re* insofar as mental indexicals anchor our representation to the relevant objects. Pylyshyn's FINSTs are devices enabling us to keep track of perceptual (visual) objects. These mental indexicals "are the most primitive preconceptual contact that the mind has with things in the world, when the visual system is not in a position to decide what to index" (Pylyshyn 2007: 42).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> It may be possible or even probable (but I am unaware of any empirical study on this) that we also have some "mental indexicals" that help in keeping track of, for instance, noises, smells, etc.

If Pylyshyn is right, then we (and other species as well) are cognitively programmed to keep track of the objects in our surroundings using mental indexicals. The latter are, to borrow Barcan Marcus' happy metaphor, *short* fingers of ostension. As fingers of ostension they are what enable us to entertain singular (*de re*) representations and thoughts. Names, on the other hand, are what enable us to keep track of objects that are not in our perceptual field. They are *long* fingers of ostension. Yet, *qua* fingers of ostension, names, like mental indexicals, are what allow us to entertain singular thoughts about the bearers of the names.

Many names we store in our long-term memory are names of individuals we are acquainted with or have been acquainted with. Roughly, they concern individuals we have perceived. We thus have a sort of demonstrative knowledge of them. That is, the kind of discriminatory knowledge we would manifest by uttering sentences like: "She is Mary Smith", "This is Michelangelo's David" or "That is the Eiffel Tower". For, in our mental files, associated with the labels of the individual the file is about, we may have stored some pictorial images or perceptual knowledge of the relevant individual. Many names we use can be associated with some episodic memory formed when we came across the name's referent. On the other hand, one may be acquainted with a given individual even if one does not have its name in one's idiolect. As we will see in the next chapter, someone may lose the capacity to associate relevant information stored in her mind with a proper name, while maintaining the capacity to retrieve the stored information when presented with a picture of the relevant individual. One presented with the name 'Barack Obama' may be unable to retrieve the information that he won the election in 2008, but able to retrieve this information when presented with a picture of Barack Obama. This does not mean, though, that we cannot have a singular

thought about, say Aristotle, because we never saw him. As I have already mentioned, a tokened name relates (is *causally* related) to its bearer *via* a name-notion network. Thus, my thought is about Aristotle insofar as, through the name-notion network, I am related to Aristotle and I thus come to have Aristotle in mind. On the other hand, the thought I entertain by uttering “Peter Pan never grows old” is not singular. For there is no object the name refers to. The name-notion network ends in what Donnellan (1974) characterizes as a block that was initiated when the Scottish novelist J. M. Barrie created the fictional character so named. Hence, I cannot have Peter Pan in mind for ‘Peter Pan’ is not a long finger of ostension. When J. M. Barrie created the fictional character and the name ‘Peter Pan’ he was not acquainted with Peter Pan. In his creative act Barrie did not intend to refer to an existing individual. In short, although the thought I would express by uttering “Peter Pan never grows old” looks (or has the syntactic form) of a singular thought, it is not *de facto* singular for the simple reason that Peter Pan does not exist. Or, as Frege would say, it is because ‘Peter Pan’ is a mock proper name.<sup>16</sup> There is no object that enters the proposition expressed or Kaplanian content. With the same token I cannot have future individuals in mind. Mary Smith can decide to

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<sup>16</sup> “Although the tale of William Tell is a legend and not history and the name ‘William Tell’ is a mock proper name, we cannot deny it a sense. [...] Thus if the sense of an assertoric sentence is not true, it is either false or fictitious, and it will generally be the latter if it contains a mock proper name” (Frege 1897: 130). As Geach puts it: “A detective who did use ‘Mr. Glass’ as though it could be a subject of predicates would not be actually naming a man who happened to be imaginary rather than real, but only acting as if he had named a real man and said things about him; he would not actually be managing to name anybody or to state anything” (Geach 1969/1972: 157).

name her first child ‘Robin’ and introduce among her family members the name ‘Robin Smith’. Yet, she cannot entertain a singular thought concerning the not yet conceived child. To put it in a nutshell: if there is no *res* a thought cannot be *de re*. I leave open the question whether similar considerations apply to names introduced by stipulation, like Evans’ (1982) famous examples of ‘Jack the Ripper’ or ‘Julius’ introduced for whoever invented the zipper. One could claim that in the Jack the Ripper example, the investigator is (indirectly) acquainted with the criminal, for he has been presented with the corpses of the victims. Just as one can claim that one is acquainted with Aristotle insofar as one has been presented with Aristotle’s books, theories, etc.

One could make a *de re* attribution concerning both Aristotle and Jack the Ripper. Let us imagine that a bystander hears the investigator uttering: “Jack the Ripper will be caught”. If our bystander happens to know that the ripper is, say John Smith, he can report to John Smith: “The investigator said that *you* will be caught”. This report is *de re*. On the other hand, one cannot make a *de re* report if the singular term used in the that-clause is an empty term. A report like “John said that Peter Pan never grows up”, given that ‘Peter Pan’ is an empty term, cannot be *de re*. Roughly, it cannot be of the form: “Of Peter Pan, John said that he never grows old”. The proper function of a name is to single out an object of discourse and thought. By analogy, we can say that the proper function of a mental file is to enable the thinker to entertain a singular or *de re* thought. As a defective screwdriver does not cease to be a screwdriver, a defective proper name (a mock proper name) does not cease to be a proper name. With the same token we can add that a “defective” mental file (i.e., a file that does not stand for an individual) does not cease to be a mental file. We can thus have files concerning Peter Pan and Robin Hood, even if

‘Peter Pan’ and ‘Robin Hood’ are empty or vacuous names. And these files can certainly play an important cognitive role when we engage, for instance, in games of make-believe.

The proper function of a file is to enable the speaker/thinker to store (and retrieve) information that will help in the guiding of variegated actions, etc. A necessary, though not sufficient, condition for one to entertain a singular thought is thus for one to activate a mental file. If the file is then causally related, *via* a name-notion network, to a real individual our subject entertains a *de re* thought. If the name-notion network ends in what Donnellan characterizes as a block, our subject will then entertain a *mock* singular thought. That is, a thought that shares all the relevant cognitive characteristics with a *de re* thought, but is not *de re* insofar as there is no object (*res*) it stands for. We could characterize it as a *mock de re* thought. Such a thought can have many causal properties. A child who believes in Santa, guided by her *mock de re* thought will engage in many appropriate behaviors, and so on and so forth. The adults who do not believe in Santa, through some processes of pretense, can easily interact with the child. Similar considerations could be formed about names introduced for future objects (that may or may not come into existence). An architect can decide to name her next building ‘XZY’ and start planning for it even if the building will never materialize. Michelangelo may have named his famous David statue well before producing it, and so on and so forth. The thought our architect entertained using ‘XZY’ and Michelangelo entertaining ‘David’ did certainly contribute to guiding their actions.

To summarize: names and their corresponding mental file labels permit us to entertain singular thoughts. As a finger of ostension, a tokened proper name rests, like a tokened demonstrative, on what Kaplan

(1989) characterizes as *directing intention*. As such, it also depends on the speaker's referential intention, or to use Donnellan's terminology, on the having in mind. I am therefore sympathetic with Jeshion's cognitivist approach to singular thoughts:

Cognitivism adopts a 'bare file view': we think singular thoughts about individuals if and only if we think of them through either an object file or a mental file. Object files, a notion invoked in vision science, are files on individuals that we directly perceive. [...] Mental files are files on individuals that we may or may not have directly perceived, though they serve many of the same structural and organizational roles in cognition as object files. A single mental file is a repository of information that an agent takes to be about a particular individual. An agent's set of mental files partly constitutes her perspective on the world insofar as the individual mental files capture the agent's way of individuating and identifying objects, and the objects she has mental files on are the objects that are available for her to think about. (Jeshion 2009: 393)<sup>17</sup>

### 1.5. Names as Empathic Inducers

There is another important aspect about the cognitive importance of names. We usually name individuals who are salient to us and we tend to retain in our memory names of individuals who play some role within our linguistic community and our psychological organization. Since the mind is finite, there are only a certain number of names (and consequently ideas or notions so named) we can store. A normal person cannot store a phone book in their mind. We are not like Dustin Hoffman's character,

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion of Jeshion's cognitivist approach to singular thoughts, see Sawyer (2012).



Raymond, in *Rain Man*. We must make choices. It is likely that nature attuned us to make these choices.<sup>18</sup>

It is for this reason that people do not usually name their car, their computers, or their furniture. We always name a baby: can you imagine parents refusing to name their newborn baby? In most cultures parents are obliged to give a name to their newborn children. When we name a pet it is because it is psychologically salient to us.<sup>19</sup> My grandmother used to name her pet cats ‘Fifi’—she was not very inventive. She did not name the rabbits and chickens she used to raise as food commodities. And the calves that were destined for the butcher, unlike the cows kept for milk and their reproductive capacity, did not get named either (this is probably because she did not want to get affectionate with them).

As the well-known Latin dictum says: *Sine nomine persona non est*. It is for this very reason, I think, that prisoners get tagged with numbers and not names: Prison-guards do not get emotionally involved with the prisoners. Thus, avoiding using their name helps in that. I guess that

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<sup>18</sup> For the same reason we tend to forget the names (and even the people) we have not met again in a long time. There is also empirical evidence suggesting that names for people are processed differently from geographical names. The latter tend to be processed like common nouns. McKenna & Warrington (1980) and Semenza, Zettin & Borgo (1998) show that geographical names (like common nouns) can be preserved when persons’ names are lost. More on this in the next chapter.

<sup>19</sup> “By giving them a name entities are made salient and important in a given psychological context ... Regarding name usage in the societies of Central Brazil, Maybury-Lewis (1984: 7) states: “names do not ... function primarily to identify individuals. Their purpose is rather to transform individuals into persons”. (Van Langendonk 2007: 89)

naming something is often a way to build some empathic relation with the named individual. Think of children naming their stuffed animals and dolls. Children tend to act *vis-à-vis* their named dolls as if they were real agents with intentions, motives, and emotions. In so doing they get psychologically involved with them and engage in games of make-believe with them. We could venture to claim that a name contributes in raising to salience an individual we could (in principle) empathize with, and that all other names (e.g., geographical names, event names, or names of artifacts) are somewhat secondary to this “primary” naming-practice.<sup>20</sup> The picture I am proposing comes close to Jeshion’s theory on the significance of names:

We name our dogs and cats to signal their individuality, their worth beyond being a dog or a cat, despite the availability of common non-relational identifying descriptions. Common practices and wisdom involving naming supports this idea. We readily name those animals that we keep as pets; failing to do so is normally interpreted as regarding the animal as insignificant, or replaceable, or otherwise somehow valued only as an instance of its kind, not, in the first instance, as an individual. Dog breeders frequently discourage their children from naming the puppies that will eventually be sold to others as a means of containing, or not allowing for the enhancement of the emotional significance of the puppies to the children. A family that raises chickens for their own consumption had the

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<sup>20</sup> I am using the notion of empathy in a broad and sloppy sense. One could empathize with an unanimated object (e.g., a place or an artifact) insofar as the latter comes to play some salient psychological role in one’s life. The first names children come to master are the names of their caregivers (they tend to use ‘mum’ and ‘daddy’ as proper names). They then go on to learn the names of their siblings, friends, etc.

practice of strongly discouraging the children from naming their chickens to prevent them from becoming too attached to those destined for the skillet. (Jeshion 2009: 379)

At Sunday dinner my grandmother would often say that we were eating a chicken. She would never say that we were eating Felix or Fido. Furthermore, cross-linguistic evidence shows that names are primarily given to people and places: other nominations are anthropocentric extensions of this convention (see Anderson 2007: 114). This can also easily be explained in evolutionary terms: our ancestors, needing to keep track of people and places, started naming them. Besides, the people they first came to name were the ones who were psychologically salient to them, say members of their family or tribe. Names may have helped the caregiver to call their kids into the cave for dinner and/or away from predators. The first names may have been given to individuals who could have been grouped under the pronoun ‘we’, i.e., individuals recognized as belonging to the community/family/etc. That is, individuals our ancestors could empathize with. Names contributed to enhancing a sense of belongingness. We can sit with Jeshion (2009: 373) when she claims that on top of being devices of reference, names are, by their intrinsic nature, markers of their bearer’s significance.

To summarize: our naming practice does not spring from nothing. It is highly constrained by our practical and cognitive interests. We would not have names if they were not cognitively worthy. Our ancestors did not initiate a naming practice out of the blue. They would not have initiated a naming practice if names were not useful cognitive tools enhancing their daily interactions, activities, “family” relations, etc. It is for these very reasons that I think Wettstein’s (2004) appeal to social security numbers as

an exemplification of a naming-practice falls short of capturing the whole aspect and importance of *our* naming practice, i.e., of the utility and cognitive importance of having names. Numbers, we could say, are both too cold to work as names (they would not trigger any empathic relation), too difficult to pronounce, *and* too costly to be memorized. Could we imagine a *real* community keeping track of their friends using their phone number and not their name? What would their phone book or their diary life look like?

Names have a long history and they usually derive from common nouns or words. A noun became a name when the common noun was adopted as a word for a single entity. Thus, we have names like ‘Rose’ and ‘Paul’ deriving from the Latin ‘rosa’ meaning rose and ‘paulus’ meaning small or humble; ‘Mary’ or ‘Miryam’ deriving from the Egyptian ‘mry’ meaning beloved or ‘mr’ meaning loved; and ‘Hilary’ deriving from the Latin ‘hilarius’ meaning cheerful and amusing, and so on and so forth:

[M]ost—perhaps all—naming traditions clearly originate in processes of naming based on common nouns or other categories, though often any such origin may be obscure ... Names tend to institutionalize. And even the literary inventors of ‘pen-names’ are remarkably uncreative in this respect. (Anderson 2007: 92)

This does not mean, though, that a name’s origin (e.g., the corresponding common noun or lemma it derives from) contributes to determining the referent of the name, or that the latter must satisfy some connotative properties conveyed by the common noun. Far from it: names are tags, i.e., tools of direct reference that relate to their bearer through a name-notion network. The empathetic aspect of names does not concern the *how*

question, i.e., how the name relates to its bearer. It merely brings forward some aspects that may be relevant in dealing with the *why* question, i.e., why we have names to begin with. It is basically for this reason that the number-names practice envisaged by Wettstein, although it sheds some light on the how question, is silent on the why question and, for this very reason, may not be a fortunate analogy.<sup>21</sup> The fact that names tend to

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<sup>21</sup> Wettstein (2004), inspired by Mill, considers names to be mere tags (or marks) for the objects (usually persons and important places) they stand for. To illustrate this point Wettstein invites us to imagine a society where numbers (e.g., social security numbers) instead of proper names were used as the tools to name objects. In that case it is hard, if not impossible, to attach any connotative feature to a proper name, say '129451'. (If it is a social security number, though, the name signals that it stands for a person and, as such, it conveys some connotative information; places, let alone artifacts or events, do not have social security numbers). Notice, though, that if we were to use phone numbers as names, they would carry some connotative (conventional) features as well, such as the nation and region of the phone owner. Consider: '001 415 92342'. The name/number connotes the individual as being from the San Francisco, California area, for the prefix '001' conventionally signals the country, and '415' the region. Is, though, such a practice viable? As a matter of fact, each cross-cultural study I have come across suggests that speakers' communities use proper names more or less as we do. I am aware of no community using numbers or, for that matter, random letters possibly mixed with numbers (like, e.g., car plates) as names for persons. In short, since no actual community has been reported to be using numbers, or similar tags, *qua* names, it may be for some good practical reasons. And this is because there is more to a name than its referent (more on this in the next chapters). The social security number practice of naming may be a good thought-experiment to illustrate Mill's point about reference and, in particular, to stress that, as reference is concerned, like tags, names do not select their bearer in a satisfying way. Yet it

originate from common nouns (and not from number systems) suggests that, to some extent, names play a psychological role in enhancing the bearer as a psychologically salient individual. Just think of the many naming practices where newborn babies need to go through some initiation ceremony often considered sacred. In many cultures people are named after their parents while in many other cultures people also carry a *family* name. People tend thus to be recognized as members of a family or group and names contribute to that. In these cases the name conveys a sense of belongingness and thus a psychological significance. Names seem thus to play an important psychological role insofar as they may contribute to the need to belong, considered a fundamental psychological motivation (see Baumeister & Leary 1995):

The need to belong is one of the most basic and powerful human needs, as well as one of the most social. A drive to form relationships with other members of our species would be relatively trivial, even problematic, in nonsocial species that live by direct interaction with the environment. Of what use would a “need to belong” be in a tree, for example? ... For creatures like us, however, evolution smiled upon those with a strong need to belong. Survival and reproduction are criteria of success by natural selection, and forming relationships with other people can be useful for both survival and reproduction. ... [C]ompetition for resources would specifically favor a need to belong. Belongingness would likewise promote reproduction, such as by bringing potential mates into contact with each

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fails to capture (or illustrate) *real* naming practices. How would we use numbers *qua* names to refer to events such as the Second World War, the Holocaust, etc.? To groups or teams such as The Beatles, The Back Street Band, The Gunners, The Lakers, etc.? Thus, Wettstein’s imagined practice seems a *de facto* impracticable practice.

other, and in particular by keeping parents together to care for their children, who are much more likely to survive if they have more than one caregiver. (Baumeister 2005: 107)

There is, therefore, more to names than just their bearers.

## CHAPTER 2

# THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF NAMES

In this chapter I will further develop the view that names allow us to entertain *de re* thoughts. I will also show how these tools are psychologically grounded in our cognitive apparatus insofar as they help to store information taken to be about *specific* individuals. This will further help us highlight the importance of the ‘proper’ in ‘proper names’. To sustain this view I will mention some empirical evidence furnished by psychological studies concerning the way we process proper names and how their cognitive processing differs from the processing of other words.

### **2.1. Names, Nouns, and Cognitive Processing**

To begin with, let us now imagine that the Arabian Nights robber Mill mentions (see previous chapter) needs to distinguish two houses from among the many similar houses he faces and plans to visit. In one house he may need to defeat a specific alarm system, while in the other he needs to enter from the unlocked back door. To distinguish the two houses the robber marks them with two chalks: a red one and a blue one. In that case the color of the chalks plays an important role. It allows the robber to distinguish the two relevant houses and perform different actions. The robber’s situation parallels the one faced by parents having to name identical twins. The newborn babies are often tagged by bracelets with distinct labels on them. When the babies get registered the bracelet will



eventually be replaced by the babies' names. A name-using practice then enters the community. We need different tags as distinctive individuating marks enabling us to tell various individuals apart.<sup>22</sup> A name recognized as such is known as a tag individuating a specific individual. It is thus recognized as being distinct from a common noun or other terms. It is recognized as being a *proper* name.

We have empirical evidence suggesting that proper names are processed differently from other word categories (e.g., count nouns).<sup>23</sup> The recognition of an expression as a proper name, like the recognition of a face, triggers someone to access *identity-specific* semantic information (see Valentine et al. 1996: 58ff.). This suggests that name recognition and face recognition are analogous when it comes to acknowledging the individuality and singularity of their bearer. Names are thus cognized as tools of *singular* reference. As such, they differ from common nouns and, therefore, from a cognitive perspective proper names differ from count nouns such as 'apple' or 'tiger'.

When infants come to the task of learning proper names and common nouns, they already possess

[T]he conceptual resources to learn words for either individual objects or object categories, along with conceptual biases that lead them to construe

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<sup>22</sup> To be sure, in the case of identical twins parents rely on some other clues to tell them apart, such as, for instance, some accidental marks or scars.

<sup>23</sup> Dyslexic patients could read aloud lexical items that are part of a name correctly (e.g., 'Olive Cooper' and 'Robin Kelly', while misreading the very same lexical item: 'olive' is read as 'black' and 'robin' as 'bird'. (See Saffran et al. 1976, Valentine et al. 1996: 77), suggesting that the semantics of a common word tend to be suppressed when the item appears in a proper name.

some objects (notably people) as individuals in their own right and to construe most other objects (including artifacts) as interchangeable instances of their category. (Hall 2009: 429)

The picture I presented in the previous chapter that insists on the double function of names is consonant with empirical evidence coming from neuropsychological studies showing how the recall of proper names is more difficult than the retrieval of common nouns.<sup>24</sup> In particular, this is the case with the so-called double dissociation task, *viz.*, with the view that proper names and count nouns are neurologically processed differently. Neurological damage can impair the retrieval of information associated with proper names, while the capacity to retrieve encyclopedic information associated with common nouns remains efficient.<sup>25</sup> In other words, one can lose the capacity to process proper names while maintaining the full capacity to process other nouns (and *vice versa*, though it is more common for one to lose the capacity to process proper names than the capacity to process other nouns, as happens in early Alzheimer's cases). The basic idea is that one can lose the ability to retrieve information associated with a name while retaining the capacity of retrieving information associated with other nouns. Besides, one who cannot recover information associated with a name may be capable of retrieving the relevant information when presented with a picture of the name's bearer. The moral seems to be that

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<sup>24</sup> For a discussion on the relevance (or not) of empirical evidence coming from neuroscience and the way it may be relevant in shaping our semantic intuitions, see Marconi (2005), Valentine et al. (1996) and Segal (2001).

<sup>25</sup> "A reliable double dissociation between two tasks (in this case retrieving proper names and retrieving common names) is interpreted in neuropsychology as a proof of the independent processing of the two tasks" (Semenza 2009: 363).

it is more difficult (cognitively costly) to recover information associated with purely referential terms (names) than it is to retrieve information associated with common nouns. Semenza (2009: 364) mentions the ‘baker-Baker’ puzzle that helps highlight the different abilities at work in recalling proper names or cognate names of professions associated with the same given faces. Roughly, the task consists, after learning sessions, of revealing in one session the name and in another the profession of the face shown by the examiner. The result is that it is easier to associate the face to a tailor than to Mr. Taylor and another face with a baker than to Mr. Baker. In other words, it emerges that it is easier to learn that a face belongs to a baker than it is to learn that the same face belongs to Mr. Baker. Since this difference cannot be attributed to a phonological difference between occurrences of ‘baker’ and ‘Baker’, it rests on the fact that recovering a proper name is more difficult (cognitively costly) than retrieving a common noun.<sup>26</sup> The ‘baker-Baker’ phenomenon can also be explained by the fact that ‘Baker’, unlike ‘baker’, is not a label for a category and as such it conveys little information about the entity it names (see Valentine et al. 1996: 108). In other words, in hearing an utterance containing ‘baker’ like “Mr. Smith is a baker” a competent speaker can engage in various inferences, such as Mr. Smith makes bread, produces cakes, sells bread, etc. Yet our competent listener may not infer much about Mr. Smith, besides the fact that he is a male carrying the family

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<sup>26</sup> Semenza also mentions studies (see Pelamatti, Pascotto, & Semenza 2003) showing that: “two-week exposure to high altitude (5000 meters) produces a significant decrease in the primacy effect for proper names. This effect lasts at least four weeks after returning at sea level. A decrement in oxygen thus seems to affect retrieval of proper names more than the retrieval of common names” (Semenza 2009: 364).

name ‘Smith’ whose occupation is to be a baker. These features, though, do not give the audience much information about Mr. Smith. There are many Smiths in the world, half of the world population is male and there are many bakers around:

The fact that a proper name conveys so little information about the entity it names (and even that may be misleading) seems to be a consequence of the fact that proper names typically denote individuals and not categories in which exemplars inherit properties defining the category. (Valentine et al. 1996: 108)

To make a long story short, we can say that the biologically based evidence concerning the difficulty people may have with proper names that they may not have with other terms suggests that the retrieval of information using proper names is cognitively more costly than the retrieval of information using other terms or devices. This, according to Semenza, ultimately rests on the different nature of the referential link between a name and its bearer, on the one side, and the nature of the link between a common noun and its extension, on the other side. The referential link between a name and its bearer is more fragile, and thus, biologically more costly. And this is due, according to Semenza, to the fact that names are directly referential (tags).<sup>27</sup> This seems to support, from an empirical viewpoint, the view I defended in the previous chapters,

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<sup>27</sup> Actually Semenza talks about proper names being rigid designators vs. common nouns being non-rigid. I think that the rigidity feature of names is a derivative feature, i.e., that proper names are rigid designators *because* they are directly referential. This debate, though, transcends the scope of this chapter. I will come back to discuss it in the next chapter.

i.e.: (i) that names are Millian tools of direct reference, (ii) that they differ from count nouns, and (iii) that they are useful keys allowing us to store and retrieve information concerning the bearer of the name.

## 2.2. The Double Function of Names

The empirical evidence proposed by Semenza goes hand in hand with the view I suggested about the double aspect of proper names and their cognitive importance. The important thing to notice is that there is a difference in the cost of processing a proper name and a common noun. The fact that it is more costly to retrieve a proper name than a common noun rests on the separate cognitive processing of the two categories. The two linguistic categories follow different pathways: while proper names follow a hard pathway, common nouns follow an easier one. To use a metaphor, proper names follow a mountain path while common nouns have it easier in following a highway.<sup>28</sup> On the one hand, proper names are more difficult and cognitively costly to retrieve insofar as they are tools of direct reference, i.e., they refer without the mediation of any descriptive content. Or, to use Mill's famous dictum: names denote without connoting. On the other hand, the fact that someone unable to recover information associated with a proper name may retrieve it when presented with a picture (or the face) of the bearer, suggests that the information one

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<sup>28</sup> “These findings favor the idea that processing proper and common nouns follows at least partially independent pathways in the cognitive system and in the brain. [...] One pathway, i.e. the proper name pathway, has been traditionally thought to be intrinsically more difficult to use. [...] The linking of proper names with their reference is more fragile than of common nouns with their reference and may even require a larger amount of metabolic resources” (Semenza 2011: 277).

stores using a name is psychologically relevant in enabling the cognizer to single out a specific individual. More precisely, Semenza & Zettin (1988, 1989) show that patients who could not retrieve the name of a face, could provide correct information about the person they could not name:

Retrieving the phonological form of a proper name from semantic memory thus seems to be these patients' problem. Semantic knowledge in itself is preserved. These patients can in fact give all the information they know about the entity whose proper name they cannot retrieve, and do not omit information they knew pre-morbidly. (Semenza 2009: 353)

This constitutes further evidence favoring the mental file analogy. One can lose, so to speak, the label of the file without losing the information contained in the file. In another case (see Semenza, Zettin & Borgo 1998) a patient can retrieve biographical information only when provided the name by the examiner. Furthermore, the fact that one can retrieve this information when presented with a picture of the bearer or with their name suggests that the names one stores in one's memory are cognitively important. That is, that they are names carrying important information for the subjects who store them in their memory: one does not keep empty files in one's mind just as we do not keep empty files on our computers.

Once again, this does not mean that the name refers *via* some mode of presentation or descriptive content. It merely suggests that there is more to a name than just its bearer. It further suggests that the names stored in one's mind are devices of empathic inducement. Actually, face recognition is one of the basic mechanisms in human beings. This capacity is present at the very beginning among human newborns. We are genetically programmed to recognize faces. It should not be surprising, therefore, that

when presented with an image of the bearer an agent unable to associate the name with the image may still be capable of retrieving the information she stored in her memory *via* the image. This is further enhanced by the fact that recognition of both faces and names draws on common sources. In particular, that:

[F]ace and name recognition units are closely linked, and that identification of a face or name accesses the same central pool of semantic knowledge regarding the famous person. (Green & Hodges 1996: 111)

We can thus stipulate that, since name and face recognition activate the retrieval of biographical (semantic) information about the bearer, names and faces trigger the recognition of the bearer as “one of us”, as being a psychologically salient individual. It is in that sense that I claimed that names could also be viewed as empathic inducers. And it may also be for this reason that persons’ names are processed differently from geographical names.<sup>29</sup>

Last but not least, proper names *qua* empathic inducers also contribute in situating us in a social setting. They put us in contact with other socio-psychologically salient beings. This idea finds its cognitive underpinning in neurological studies as well. It has been shown (see Semenza 2011) that the processing of proper names mainly activates the Left Temporal Pole (LTP) of the brain, the region of the brain that plays a crucial role in the

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<sup>29</sup> “Connectivity between the lemma and the conceptual system for a country name is likely to require diffuse multiple connections. This connectivity is likely to resemble that of common name representations, rather than the single connection between the lemma and the token marker that we postulate exists for people’s names and landmark names” (Hollis & Valentine 2001: 113).

retrieval and processing of words for unique concrete individuals. The LTP is also involved in the accumulation of social conceptual knowledge:

Longer social interaction apparently may thus contribute to convey proper names processing toward areas closer to those supporting social cognition. [...] The LTP would accumulate both social conceptual knowledge and (indeed important social interaction) information about unique entities acquired in life. Its close and privileged connections with the frontal lobe, and with the wider social cognition system, would thus be increasingly reinforced. Stronger activation of LTP in the elderly would thus reflect relying on this system in order to overcome the higher demands of proper name processing relative to processing of common nouns. (Semenza 2011: 282)

From an evolutionary perspective we can thus stipulate that the capacity to single out specific individuals using proper names may have played a beneficial role (X is a friend, Y is an enemy, Z is a dangerous place, etc.). Our ancestors certainly gained some precious advantages with the occurrence of proper names in their thinking and communicative episodes. In the case of naming their conspecifics our ancestors gained additional social advantages in their survival and mating struggles:

Thus, those humans with a neural system that more efficiently and unambiguously sustained designating categories or designating individual entities (distinct functions may allow quicker and more precise processing) might have had greater chance of survival and of mating, and in this way their neural system would have been winners in natural selection. That's why in humans' evolving brain the increasingly important semantic function of individual designation might have moved forward, in closer



connection to frontal lobe areas where social cognition was supported. (Semenza 2011: 282)

Along these lines we can further stress how words (and in particular proper names) can be connected with past experiences and can thus contribute in triggering some emotional reactions:

If words activate traces of perceptual experience, then the exposure to words should lead to the activation of the neural substrates that are also active when their referents are perceived. Neuroimaging research has produced just such evidence. (Zwaan & Kaschak 2009: 372)

Names *qua* empathic inducers put us in “emotional” contact with their bearers. This emotional contact, though, can be vicarious. One can get (emotionally) in contact with the bearer even if one never got the chance to know, let alone to meet, him or her. A proper name itself carries this effect insofar as it is perceived as a tag for a psychologically salient individual. This, I reckon, is part of the “connotative” (or better “psychological”) power of names, which contributes to making them, to mention Barcan Marcus once again, long fingers of ostension. As I understand it, this feature of proper names can be understood as a specific aspect having to do with the cognitive drive of language. It obeys what Glenberg & Kaschak (2002) characterize as ACE, i.e., the action-sentence compatibility effect:

[L]anguage comprehension is grounded in the same neuronal systems that are used to perceive, plan, and take action in the external world. In this way, the comprehension of language involves the vicarious experiencing of people, objects, emotions, and events that are described in the text. More

broadly, just as our ability to plan and take action in the world relies on the ability to anticipate likely changes that will occur in the environment, we argue that an essential part of language comprehension process is the ability to anticipate what is coming next, both in the linguistic input and in the situations that are being described. This process of resonance is immediate and effortless. It allows us to resituate ourselves and vicariously experience (and learn from) events that have happened in situations other than the one we currently find ourselves in. (Zwaan & Kaschak 2009: 377)

To summarize: the picture I propose concerning the cognitive aspect of proper names may be best appreciated if we do not consider language as an abstract calculus but as belonging to the varieties of human actions and if we, therefore, approach words as being tools enabling us to think, plan, influence our conspecifics, and participate in complex joint activities. As names are concerned, we can thus embrace Wettstein's (2004: 86) suggestion and concentrate on individuals participating in name-using communities. It is only in so doing that we can come to appreciate the psychological aspect of names *qua* tags used to single out individuals.

To summarize: In the previous two chapters, my aim was to challenge the Millian dictum that names denote but do not connote without undermining the Millian lesson that names are devices of direct reference. In so doing I focused on the complex cognitive role names play. We should now be in a position to further investigate how names function from a linguistic and communicative perspective and show how some information they may convey can help a speaker-hearer in determining the ontological category the bearer of a name belongs to and, as such, help in linking the name with the right anaphoric pronoun.

## CHAPTER 3

# NAMES, MEANING, GENDER, AND CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURES

Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, the well-known right wing French politician and head of the National Front party, stated: “J’aurais préféré que Rachida Dati et Nicolas Sarkozy donnent des prénoms français à leurs enfants, ça fait partie de l’identité française [I would have preferred that Rachida Dati and Nicolas Sarkozy gave French names to their children, it is part of the French identity]”.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the fact that Rachida Dati and Nicolas Sarkozy called their daughters ‘Zhorra’ and ‘Giulia’ transgressed the French identity and offended Ms. Le Pen’s well-known bigoted sentiments. For ‘Zhorra’ and ‘Giulia’ are not French names, Ms. Le Pen supposes. How to explain Ms. Le Pen’s reaction? In this chapter I will try to shed some light on precisely this kind of information that names putatively convey. The distinction between generic names (or lemma) and proper names will come to the forum. I will argue that the information conveyed by the lemma which has been adopted in the creation of a proper name (*via* an assignment) can be explained using Grice’s notion of generalized conversational implicatures. In doing so I’ll also elucidate how anaphoric resolutions exploit that name.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.bfntv.com/politique/marion-marechal-le-pen-rapport-lintegration-cest-lanti-modele-republicain-668122.html>

### 3.1. Names and Stereotypes

Like other words (count nouns, mass terms, verbs, etc.) names convey some information. In English, Italian, French, and Spanish, to name only a few languages, people's names tend to signal, among other things, the referent's gender. Thus, 'Paul', 'Paolo', 'Pierre', and 'Jesús' strongly suggest their referent is male, while 'Ortensia', 'Mary', 'Paola', 'Pauline', and 'Lizbeth' indicate that the referent is a female. To borrow the terminology introduced by Putnam (1975) we can characterize this extrinsic information conveyed by a name as stereotypical information. As such it does not affect someone's linguistic and semantic competence: one is not linguistically incompetent if one does not know that 'Sue' is usually used to refer to females.

Some names, though, are opaque about the referent's gender: 'Alexis', 'Ashley', 'Avery', 'Chris', 'Jessie', 'Kerry', 'Kim', 'Robin' or 'Riley', for instance, are commonly used to name either males or females.<sup>31</sup> When linking the name with an anaphoric pronoun we face the problem of choosing between 'he' or 'she'. In languages like English or German that have the neutral pronoun 'it', there is the further problem of choosing among 'he', 'she' or 'it'. E.g.: "I saw *Felix*, *it/he* was chasing a ball", "John visited *Paris*, *it/she/he* was amazing". If I saw Felix Magath I will end up using the anaphoric 'he', while if I saw your cat Felix I will use 'it'; if John visited the capital of France we ought to use the anaphoric 'it', while if he visited Paris Hilton we would have to use 'she'. For convenience, I will call these names *gender-silent names*.

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<sup>31</sup> In North-American English 'Robyn' is usually used for females while 'Robin' can be used for either males or females. For argument's sake we can here forget these subtleties. In spoken English 'Robin' and 'Robyn' sound exactly the same.

To my mind an account taking into consideration these data must recognize that names, like other linguistic expressions, convey some extrinsic, stereotypical information. Ms. Le Pen's claim that 'Zhorra' and 'Giulia' are not French names rests on stereotypical information. As extrinsic information, it can be cancelled. 'Sue', for instance, conveys the stereotypical information that the referent is a female; yet this information is defeasible insofar as one can, as in Johnny Cash's song, name a boy 'Sue'. (As a corollary we can claim that names, like other linguistic expressions such as count nouns, mass terms, verbs, and adverbs [amongst others] belong to the language).<sup>32</sup> I will propose some linguistic data

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<sup>32</sup> This does not mean, though, that names belong to a particular language, say English or Japanese. The claim that names belong to the language means that they belong to *any* language. Having said this, common names do not translate. When talking about my friend María I do not translate her name into 'Mary'. The name 'María' belongs to Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian, Navajo, etc. This phenomenon is not confined to names: other expressions travel across languages. E.g., the Latin 'ipso facto', 'a priori', 'reductio ad absurdum', etc. are common currency in many languages. The English 'football', 'corner', 'off-side', 'week-end', 'email', etc. are used in many languages, as are the French 'vis-à-vis', 'fil rouge', 'genre', etc. Another way to state this point would be to claim that the very same proper names, like foreign words such as 'a priori' and 'ipso-facto', can be used in sentences of a given language. Thus the very same names/words, like 'María/Sevilla' and 'a priori', can be incorporated in sentences of different languages: e.g. "My friend *María* works in *Sevilla*/Mon amie *María* travaille à *Sevilla*"; "2=2 is an *a priori* statement/2=2 est une énonciation *a priori*". Usually only names of (some) very famous people and places translate, e.g. in Italian 'Descartes' becomes 'Cartesio', 'Plato'-'Platone', 'London'-'Londra' and 'Netherlands'-'Olanda'. Yet, not all names of famous people or cities translate;

supporting this thesis. E.g., if one says: “I went to Paris”, “I spent the night in Paris”, or “I bought it in Paris”, ‘Paris’ cannot stand for Paris Hilton. On the other hand, if one says “Paris visited us”, “Paris sent me a postcard”, or “I borrowed it from Paris”, ‘Paris’ cannot stand for the capital of France.

### 3.2. Names and Genders

In English, for instance, when engaging in some communicative acts using a proper name, like when using other expressions (e.g. ‘the general’, ‘the professor’, ‘a child’, ‘a doctor’ etc.), the speaker-hearer often ought to resolve the gender of the referent.<sup>33</sup> This exercise is highlighted when one uses a name that does not stereotypically suggest the gender (e.g.: with names like ‘Chris’, ‘Robin’ and ‘Hilary’ one would have to choose whether to prefix them with Mr. or Ms., Sir or Madam, while with a name like ‘Sue’ or ‘Mary’ one would feel confident in prefixing it with ‘Ms.’ or ‘Madam’). In this respect names are context-sensitive. Their context-sensitivity, though, differs from the context-sensitivity of indexical expressions. For names, unlike indexicals, do not have a token-reflexive character that can be represented as a function taking as argument some contextual parameter and giving as value the referent. As I mentioned, following Kaplan, names have, if anything, an uninteresting character. A

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e.g. ‘Einstein’, ‘New Orleans’, ‘Washington’, or ‘Seattle’. As far as I know, there is no established convention on whether or not and when a name translates.

<sup>33</sup> For sure, there can be linguistic exchanges when the gender question does not come to the forum. If Jane, for instance, asks me what to do with her student named ‘Robin’, I may give her some suggestions without bothering about Robin’s gender.

name can also be sentence and discourse sensitive, for some linguistic constructions help the audience to determine whether it stands for, say, an animate (intentional agent) or an inanimate entity (non-intentional entity).

To begin with, let us imagine the following scenario. John is married to Sue who has two friends, a man and a woman who both go by the name ‘Chris’. John does not know Sue’s friends. To distinguish them let us use, for convenience, ‘Chris<sup>m</sup>’ and ‘Chris<sup>f</sup>’ for Sue’s male friend and female friend, respectively. Let us now consider the following two situations:

*Situation 1*

Chris<sup>m</sup> calls John and says:

(1) Hello, I’m Chris. Please tell your wife that I can meet her tonight

When Sue comes home, John faithfully reports:

(2) *Chris* called and said that *he* can meet you tonight

*Situation 2*

Chris<sup>f</sup> calls John and says:

(3) Hello, I’m Chris. Please tell your wife that I cannot meet her  
tonight

When Sue comes home, John faithfully reports:

(4) *Chris* called and said that *she* cannot meet you tonight

John’s reports are felicitous inasmuch as he has been capable of recognizing the caller’s gender. He can thus select the correct anaphoric pronoun and pass the right message to his wife. Had John received an email with the same information, he would not be capable of associating the name, ‘Chris’, with the female or male gender and, therefore, he would not be able to choose the right anaphoric pronoun.

The relevant information about the caller's gender is not captured by the linguistic meaning of the sentence uttered by Chris<sup>f</sup> or Chris<sup>m</sup>, let alone in the name 'Chris'. In the telephone conversation it is conveyed by the tone of the caller's voice, i.e. by John's auditorial perception of the utterance enabling him to recognize one caller as having a female voice and the other as having a male voice. The important point to bring home is that the relevant information is not conveyed by the word 'Chris': parents can choose 'Chris' to name either their newborn girl or boy without breaking any socio-linguistic or cultural conventions. The lemma 'Chris' can easily be used in the creation of a name for a boy or a girl without breaking any socio-cultural practice. The information that 'Chris' stands for a male or a female is not semantically conveyed. The information concerning the gender of the referent is inherent in the situation of the utterance. In our example the gender information is conveyed by John's perception of the speaker's voice. As I anticipated, we characterize this as a case of a *gender-silent name*.

We face a similar problem with homonyms. If the two people calling John bear the name 'Paul', for instance, John would not face the anaphora problem, i.e., whether to use 'he' or 'she' in his report to his wife, for 'Paul' is not a gender-silent name: it is conventionally used for males. That is to say, it comes with the stereotypical information that the referent is of the male gender, i.e., the lemma 'Paul' is conventionally used to create a proper name for a male individual. Yet, if Paul does not further identify himself (using, for instance, his family name), to pass on the relevant information John must appeal to some extra-linguistic clues. He could mention that one had a British accent while the other had an American accent and report:



- (5) Paul, who has a British accent, called and said that he cannot meet you tonight
- (6) Paul, who has an American accent, called and said that he can meet you tonight

In this case, the information conveyed by the relative clause may help Sue to distinguish who, among her friends named ‘Paul’, can meet her or not on the relevant night. Before making his report John ought to engage in a sort of name disambiguation process. To do so, he must rely on information pertaining to the situation of the utterance. This is not surprising. Most of the relevant information transmitted in our communicative interchanges is not syntactically driven or semantically encoded. Yet, I will now defend the view that most names convey some extrinsic, stereotypical information that helps in selecting the referent’s gender. But, unlike with a Fregean mode of presentation: (i) the referent need not necessarily satisfy this information (as in Cash’s song, ‘Sue’ can refer to a man); (ii) this extrinsic information does not end up in the proposition expressed (roughly, what is said [or the Kaplanian content]); (iii) one is not linguistically incompetent if one does not know that the socio-conventional practice associated with ‘Sue’ is that it usually refers to a female; and (iv) names are Millian tools for *direct* reference, meaning that the tokening of a proper name refers without the mediation of a Fregean sense or mode of presentation.

Besides, as Strawson (1950) points out, mentioning or referring is not something done by an expression, but something that one *using* an expression can do. Reference is not secured by the linguistic meaning (nor by the information associated with a given name). It is the act of referring that singles out a specific referent ending up in the (singular) proposition

expressed. People uttering sentences express propositions: sentences do not. The very same sentence can be used to express different propositions (e.g., “I’m happy” uttered by Paul expresses the proposition that Paul is happy; uttered by Jane it expresses the proposition that Jane is happy). The same goes with proper names. In uttering “Paris is beautiful” one can express the proposition that Paris Hilton is beautiful or the proposition that the capital of France is beautiful.

The linguistic meaning (or character to use Kaplan’s terminology) of a demonstrative expression like ‘she’ classifies the referent as a female. Nonetheless, one can succeed in referring to a male using ‘she’ (e.g. indicating a man disguised as a woman). In such a case something went wrong because a linguistic convention has been broken.<sup>34</sup> A similar story can be told about proper names. The extrinsic, stereotypical convention that ‘Sue’ is used to refer to females may be flouted. Since reference is determined in the context of use, the extrinsic information conveyed by a proper name can only be a pragmatic guide helping the audience to single out whom or what the speaker intends to talk about or, to borrow Donnellan’s (1966) terminology once again, whom or what the speaker

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<sup>34</sup> See Corazza (2002) for a discussion on how pronouns like ‘he’ or ‘she’ can be successful in singling out an object of discourse and can express a proposition having the latter as a constituent even if the referent does not satisfy the gender marked by the pronoun. That is, the speaker can succeed in referring to an individual even if the latter does not satisfy the character (or linguistic meaning) of the spoken demonstrative. This comes close to Donnellan’s (1966) treatment of the referential use of a definite description. One can successfully refer to a given person using a misguided description. One can, for instance, succeed in indicating to his audience the individual one has in mind using ‘the man with the Martini’, even if the latter has plain water in his glass.

has in mind. This type of information is non-truth-conditional information. A boy can be named ‘Sue’ and some people are called ‘Jamaica’, ‘Rio’ or ‘Brooklyn’. This stereotypical information does not enter the proposition expressed. It only helps or guides the speaker and audience in the identification of the referent—the individual the speaker intends to talk about. Thus:

- (7) Sue is a man
- (8) Rio is a woman

are not contradictory. For, “Sue is a girl” is neither analytic nor tautological. As I just mentioned, one can succeed in referring to a man using the demonstrative ‘she’. Sure, something has gone wrong when one refers to a man using ‘she’.<sup>35</sup> Yet, as in Donnellan’s (1966) famous example of the man with the Martini, one can succeed in referring to someone drinking plain water with: “That man with the Martini is Mary’s brother”. The same with ‘Sue’: one can (maybe perversely as in Cash’s song) name one’s baby boy ‘Sue’. The name, though, conveys the extrinsic information that it is usually used as a name for females. It is this

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<sup>35</sup> “She [pointing to an individual] is a man”, literally understood, makes no sense insofar as we have a gender conflict. One who does not know that the pronoun ‘she’ marks the referent as a female is linguistically incompetent, while one who does not know that ‘Sue’ is usually used to refer to females is not linguistically incompetent. This is a main difference between indexicals and proper names. The former, unlike the latter, refers in a descriptive way; the referent is supposed to satisfy the character (or linguistic meaning) of the indexical. Since proper names do not have a Kaplanian character that can be represented as a function from context to referent, they refer without connoting (or describing) the referent.

extrinsic, stereotypical, information that makes Cash's song hilarious.<sup>36</sup> If one does not know whom 'Sue' stands for, one is likely to look for a female and, when discovering that it stands for a male one is likely to be, to say the least, puzzled, since a strong socio-cultural convention or rule has been broken (for the lemma 'Sue' is usually used to create a name for a female). Usually the (proprietary) lemma used in the creation of a name comes with the gender. In Euskara, for instance, typical Basque names that derive from common nouns are paired with the gender. We are told that 'Arkaitz' (deriving from 'rock'), 'Eder' (from 'handsome'), 'Edur' (from 'snow') and 'Zeru' (from 'sky') are names for males; while 'Bihotz' (from 'heart'), 'Bizane' (from 'way'), 'Euria' (from 'snow'), and 'Hilargi' (from 'moon') are names for females. This phenomenon is particularly evident when the lemma used in the creation of a proper name derives from a common word in languages that mark the grammatical gender. In Italian, for instance, 'Alba' (from the feminine 'alba [down]'), 'Chiara' (from the feminine 'chiara [clear]'), and 'Margherita' (from the feminine 'margherita [margarita]'), are names for females, while 'Angelo' (from the masculine 'angelo [angel]'), 'Benvenuto' (from the masculine 'benvenuto [welcome]'), and 'Massimo' (from the masculine 'massimo [maximum]') are names for males. Given that names for "usual" people do not translate (e.g., 'Gianni Versace', 'Maria Callas' and 'Yelena Isinbaeva' when appearing in an English sentence do not become 'John Versace', 'Mary Callas' and 'Helen

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<sup>36</sup> Besides, some names are also more frequent in some geographical areas than in others, or in some cultural communities than in others. Someone named 'Iker', 'Kepa' or 'Larraitz' is likely to be Basque or have some connection with the Basque country, while one named 'Mohammed' is likely to have some connection with the Muslim community. This extrinsic information may help in calculating some inferences or biases (as some secret agencies know and often exploit).

Isinbaeva’), they tend to carry across languages the gender (*qua* stereotype) they inherited from the lemma adopted when the proper name was created.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.3. Names and Anaphoric Resolution

One of the problems we face is that names like ‘Chris’, ‘Hilary’, or ‘Robin’, unlike most proper names, do not convey the extrinsic information that Chris/Hilary/Robin is a male or a female. Yet, for John to appropriately match the anaphoric pronoun in his report “Chris called and said that *s/he* can/not meet you tonight” he must have access to extra-linguistic information. Let us consider the following report.

- (9) *Chris* called and said that *she* can meet you tonight and *Chris* called and said that *he* cannot meet you tonight.

Using indices we have:

- (10) *Chris*<sub>1</sub> called and said that *she*<sub>1</sub> can meet you tonight and *Chris*<sub>2</sub> called and said that *he*<sub>2</sub> cannot meet you tonight.

John can correctly match the anaphoric pronouns with the antecedent because he grasped the callers’ gender. Without associating the relevant gender to ‘Chris’ John would be unable to report (9)/(10). In other words,

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<sup>37</sup> It is probably for this reason that when hearing names coming from exotic languages or simply from a language or culture one does not know, one faces difficulties in associating the name with a given gender and, thus, in computing the conversational implicature concerning the referent’s gender.

before making his report, John must engage in a process of gender-determination.

The gender-determination problem with names can be seen when dealing with some inferences as well. Consider:

- (11) If Chris visits, then Chris will not visit

As it stands, it sounds odd and contradictory. Yet if we represent it as:

- (12) If Chris<sup>f</sup> visits, then Chris<sup>m</sup> will not visit<sup>38</sup>

we avoid the apparent contradiction, for it would be like saying: “If Chris Smith visits, then Chris Brown will not visit” which does not sound odd, let alone contradictory.

It is also worth considering cases of names that people share with cities. For instance, if one says: “I visited *Amalfi/Ariel/Athens/Chelsea/Doris/Geneva/Jamaica/Lourdes/Maya/Paris/* ... and *she/he/it* was amazing”, we also face the gender-determination problem. This parallels the case when we ought to disambiguate a name, as in “London is a nice city” when the hearer needs to figure out whether the speaker intends to talk about, say, London the capital of England or London, Ontario.

Some linguistic constructions, though, help in determining the gender of the referent. Consider:

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<sup>38</sup> In normal parlance John would probably say something like: “If your female friend Chris visits, then your male friend Chris will not visit”.

- (13) Jane went to/studies in/travelled to/...*Paris*, she loves *it*
- (14)\* Jane went to/studies in/landed in/...*Paris*, she loves *her*
- (15) *Paris* visited/wrote/admires/kissed/... John, *she* loves him
- (16)\* *Paris* visited/wrote/admires/kissed... John, *it* loves him
- (17) John saw/described/admires/dreamed of/... *Paris*, he loves *it/her*

Literally understood (14) is ungrammatical because one cannot study or land in a person (as the anaphoric ‘her’ stresses; therefore it generates a gender conflict) and (16) is ungrammatical because places, *qua* inanimate entities, cannot perform intentional actions like visiting, writing, etc. In (17) ‘Paris’ can stand both for a place and a person: someone can visit, describe, admire, and dream of both places and people. E.g.: one can dream, think, etc. of both the capital of France and/or Paris Hilton.

A way to understand the grammaticality/ungrammaticality of sentences like (13)-(17) is to claim that the predicate determines whether the name stands for a place or a person. The name itself is indeterminate on whether it stands for an animate intentional or an inanimate non-intentional entity. This information is projected by the predicate. It is in this sense that we can claim that names are sentence-sensitive. This point can be trivially highlighted if we compare “John is a happy man” with “John is a happy place”. The predicate associated with the name determines, for instance, whether it stands for an animated (intentional) entity or an inanimate (non-intentional) entity. Some names, though, seem to convey this information. This helps in understanding why the following, if not ungrammatical, sounds awkward:

(18)?\* I went to/study in/travelled to/eat in (at)/... Bob/Sue/...<sup>39</sup>

(18) is awkward, for names like ‘Bob’ and ‘Sue’ are *usually* (conventionally) used to name persons and possibly other animate entities like, for instance, pets: their default use is to name persons, not places.<sup>40</sup> I know of no place bearing these names. Were ‘Bob’ and ‘Sue’, though, common or well-known names for, say, a chain of restaurants (e.g.: names like ‘McDonalds’ or ‘Wendy’s’), erotic boutiques and adult places named ‘Eros’, or towns/cities (e.g.: names like ‘Geneva’, ‘Marion’ or ‘Madison’), (18) would not sound awkward at all—one can travel or study in Madison (WI): “Madison traveled to Madison” is perfectly acceptable, for a competent speaker computes that the first occurrence of ‘Madison’ stands for a person (animate entity) and the second for a location (an inanimate entity)—unless we take the first occurrence of ‘Madison’ as the name of a plane or train for example.<sup>41</sup> It is the verb associated with the name(s) that determines that the first occurrence of ‘Madison’ stands for an intentional (animate) individual while the second occurrence refers to an inanimate entity. In other words, we could say that verbs like ‘to travel to’, ‘to visit’,

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<sup>39</sup> I will mark grammatical, yet awkward, sentences using ‘?’\*. This can also be interpreted as signaling that a convention of use (or social convention) has been broken.

<sup>40</sup> There is cross-linguistic evidence that names are primarily given to people and places: other nominations are anthropocentric extensions of this convention (see Anderson 2007: 114). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this can easily be explained in evolutionary terms: our ancestors needed to keep track of people and places, thus they started naming them.

<sup>41</sup> We say, for instance, that Apollo 13 flew to the moon and that the Santa Maria travelled to Cuba.



or ‘to walk in’, Theta-mark a location as one of their arguments. Names that are usually used for animate entities, when appearing as arguments of predicates Theta-marking a location, make the sentence, if not senseless then awkward, for a strong socio-cultural convention conveyed by the extrinsic information associated with a name has been broken.

### 3.4. Names and Conversational Implicatures

As a first approximation we can say, borrowing Grice’s (1967/89) terminology, that the gender is conversationally implicated:

Since the truth of a conversational implicature is not required by the truth of what is said (what is said may be true—what is implicated may be false), the implicature is not carried by what is said, but only by the saying of what is said, or by “putting it that way”. (Grice 1967/89: 39)

Furthermore, in adopting Grice’s distinction between generalized and particularized conversational implicatures, we can argue that the stereotypical information associated with a name belongs to the category of *generalized* conversational implicatures:

Sometimes one can say that the use of a certain form of words in an utterance would normally (in the absence of special circumstances) carry such-and-such an implicature or type of implicature. Noncontroversial examples are perhaps hard to find, since it is all too easy to treat a generalized conversational implicature as if it were a conventional implicature. [...] Anyone who uses a sentence of the form *X is meeting a woman this evening* would normally implicate that the person to be met was someone other than X’s wife, mother, sister, or perhaps even close platonic friend. (Grice 1967/89: 37)

Following Grice, a generalized conversational implicature can be presumed or presupposed independently of the particular context of the utterance.<sup>42</sup> It constitutes, so to speak, the *default interpretation* a communicator would associate with an utterance. In the case of proper names, the default interpretation one associates with ‘Sue’ or ‘Pia’ is that it is used to refer to a female, while the default interpretation one would associate with ‘Middlesbrough’, ‘Sunderland’ or ‘Riverside’ is that it is used to refer to a location. It is in this sense that we can say that the stereotypical extrinsic information that a name carries belongs to the category of generalized conversational implicatures. As I understand it, gender determination, along with other stereotypical information involved with the use of a proper name, such as the referent being of the Anglo-Saxon/Muslim/... culture (e.g., ‘Cassius Clay’/‘Muhammad Ali’), is a kind of default inference triggered by the stereotypical information associated with the name. To highlight this let us consider:

- (19) Jane: “I spoke with Sue yesterday”  
(20) Paul: “I don’t know *her*. What did *she* tell you?”

Paul automatically uses the pronouns ‘her’ and ‘she’, for he takes ‘Sue’ to stand for a female, i.e., he computes the default interpretation of the name and can form the generalized conversational implicature *that Sue is a*

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<sup>42</sup> For a book-length, detailed discussion of generalized conversational implicatures, see Levinson (2000). See also Huang (2000, 2007). Among some (relatively) clear examples of generalized conversational implicatures we have: “Jane thinks there is a meeting tonight” implicates “Jane *doesn’t know for sure* that there is a meeting tonight”; “Jane has two children” implicates “Jane has *no more than* two children”; and “Jeff broke a leg” implicates “Jeff broke *his own* leg”.

*female*. This generalized conversational implicature need not be consciously calculated. Yet it is what explains Paul's automatic choice of the anaphoric pronouns 'her' and 'she'. As a *conversational* implicature, though, it can be cancelled. Jane could well reply:

- (21) Sue is a boy and he may have had trouble growing up bearing that name

One of the lessons we can bring home is that the fact that 'Sue', though it carries the extrinsic stereotypical information that it is a name for a female, does not affect a linguistic convention. Rather, it affects a convention of use. In other words, it is because 'Sue' is *standardly* used as a name for females that on hearing it Paul automatically uses 'her' and 'she'. In calling a boy 'Sue' one does not break a grammatical or semantic rule. What one breaks is a convention (or a social practice) governing the use of the name. More precisely, what breaks the convention is the creation of a proper name for a male using the lemma 'Sue'. In other words, the convention has been broken in the creation of the proper name, for a lemma usually used to baptize or dub females has been adopted in the baptism of a male.<sup>43</sup>

In terms of Grice's cooperative principle—i.e., the assumption that speakers are maximally efficient rational cooperative language users—we can explain Paul's matching of the anaphoric 'she/her' to 'Sue' for he takes the speaker, Jane, to obey the maxim of Quantity. In particular, Paul

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<sup>43</sup> In onomastic books or common books like *Thousands Ways to Name Your Child*, the lemmas (or generic names) listed state, among other things, whether the lemma mentioned is for males or females.

takes Jane to be making her linguistic contribution as informative as required for the purpose of the communication. By not signaling that Sue is a male, Jane is somehow flouting this maxim. The fact that Paul automatically matches ‘Sue’ with ‘she/her’ can be further spelled out as being an inference from stereotypes, i.e. the conversational implicature triggered by the most stereotypical and explanatory expectation given our knowledge about the world (see Huang 2000: 209). If Jane hears, for instance, “The nurse/dental hygienist/secretary/cashier/... saw John”, based on the stereotypical knowledge (or sexist bias) that nurses, dental hygienists, secretaries, and cashiers tend to be women, Jane can continue the discourse using the anaphoric ‘she’ and ask: “Was *she* nice?” If, instead, Jane hears “The general/despot/prisoner/president/pirate/pilot/mechanic/... was brutal” Jane is likely to continue the discourse using the anaphoric ‘he’ and ask, for instance, “What did *he* do?” Jane’s choice of the anaphoric pronoun is based on the generalized conversational implicatures “The *female* nurse/dental hygienist/secretary/cashier/... saw John” and “The *male* general/despot/prisoner/president/pirate/pilot/mechanic/ ... was brutal”. These implicatures are triggered by the stereotypical information one associates with the noun. As such, they seem to be calculated on the noun phrases (NPs) composing the sentence uttered. Since stereotypes are not analytically tied to a term, they do not contribute to determining a term’s extension (they do not work as Fregean modes of presentations determining the extension of the NPs). They convey, though, some background or presupposed information. Although we tend to consider a tiger as a big dangerous feline with a yellow-black striped fur, a small albino feline can be a tiger. Yet, if one hears “Yesterday John came face to face with a tiger”, on the stereotypical representation that tigers are big dangerous felines, one can ask: “Was

John scared?” or “Did he get injured?” Although we (or at least I) tend to picture a nurse as a woman with a white blouse, a male with a blue top can be a nurse. Yet, if one hears “John went out with a nurse last night”, based on the stereotypical representation that nurses are women, one can ask: “Isn’t his wife jealous?”<sup>44</sup>

One way to spell out these kinds of implicatures is in adopting Levinson’s (2001; see also Huang 2000: 207) quantity principle (Q-principle) and the informativeness principle (I-principle)<sup>45</sup>, i.e.:

*The Q-principle*

Do not provide a statement that is informationally weaker than your knowledge of the world allows, unless providing a strong statement would contravene the Informative principle (I-principle).

*The I-principle*

Say as little as necessary, i.e. produce the minimal linguistic information sufficient to achieve your communicational ends.

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<sup>44</sup> Social stereotypes, unlike the stereotypes we may associate with terms for animals, vegetables, etc., depend on the socio-cultural setting one is operating in. As such, they may vary across time and cultures, and they can be subject to some biases and operate at the sub-conscious level.

<sup>45</sup> These implicatures could also be spelled out in adopting Horn’s (2004) bipartite model appealing to the Q-principle and the R-principle, i.e.: Q-p: say as much as you can (given R) and R-p: say no more than you must (given Q). The two antinomic principles “interact definitionally and dynamically, each referencing and constraining the other” (Horn 2004: 14). The picture I am proposing should be neutral on whether one adopts Levinson’s or Horn’s principles. For a survey discussion on the various theories and accounts on implicature see, for instance, Davis (2019).

In knowingly using ‘Sue’ as a name for a male without signaling it to one’s audience, a speaker is flouting the Q-principle for she does not “cancel” the stereotypical information that ‘Sue’ is a name for females—it goes without saying that if a speaker is not aware of Sue’s gender, she would not flout the Q-principle in using ‘Sue’.<sup>46</sup>

Another important difference between names for persons and names for locations is that the latter, unlike the former, can be adjectivized. While “She is a *Parisian/a Roman/an Italian/ ...*” makes sense, “She is a *Mary/a Sue/a Lizbeth/ ...*” can only be interpreted as meaning that she is named ‘Mary’, ‘Sue’ or ‘Lizbeth’. When a geographical name gets adjectivized, suffixes like ‘ian’ carry the information ‘associated with’: thus ‘*Italian*’/‘*Parisian*’ means associated with Italy/Paris. This may provide further evidence for the view that names convey some extrinsic information. In particular, geographical names convey the information that they stand for inanimate entities, and it may be because of this feature that names for locations, unlike names for persons, can be adjectivized.<sup>47</sup> If, for

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<sup>46</sup> The generalized conversational implicature conveying the gender associated with the use of a proper name is likely to be Q-driven. For, the Q-Principle subsumes Grice’s first Quantity maxim (“Make your contribution as informative as required”) and Grice’s first two sub-maxims of the general maxim of Manner (“Avoid obscurity of expressions” and “Avoid ambiguity”). At first sight, it seems that the generalized conversational implicature is calculated on the basis of the Q-Principle. If I am right in claiming (see next chapter) that ambiguity, like polysemy and name-gender determination, ought to be resolved at the presemantic use of context, then generalized conversational implicatures should be resolved at the presemantic use of context as well.

<sup>47</sup> Only names of famous characters can get adjectivized. When they are they tend to pick up a relevant property of the bearer of the name. E.g.: ‘Aristotle’-

instance, one hears “He is Israel” one automatically computes that the demonstrated person is named ‘Israel’ while if one hears “He is Israeli” one processes that the demonstrated person is from Israel. This feature, i.e., that names for locations can be adjectivized, may also explain why geographical names are better preserved than personal names. For example, in the early stages of Alzheimer’s, patients first lose the capacity for retrieving names for persons; only subsequently do they lose the capacity for retrieving geographical names (see Semenza 2009). Names or nicknames of famous people can also appear in the predicative position and take a determiner: “He is not a Pelé/Einstein/Shumaker/Baudelaire/Pavarotti/Callas/Cartesian/...” In these predicative uses the name comes to represent some relevant features (or stereotypes) characteristic of the name’s bearer, e.g., meaning that he is not a good soccer player/very intelligent/a good driver/a good writer/singer. It is probably the case that names of famous people that are adjectivized get retrieved more easily than common names as well. It is worth noticing, though, that most of the time it is the family name (or nickname) that gets adjectivized, not the given name. We say: “Jane is not a Fregean/Cartesian”. We do not say: “Jane is not a Gottlobian/Renéian”.

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‘Aristotelian’; ‘Descartes’-‘Cartesian’; ‘Frege’-‘Fregean’; ‘Fellini’-‘Fellinian’. In Italian, for instance, ‘*donna felliniana*’ [‘Fellinian woman’] characterizes a big-breasted lady given the fact that in Fellini’s movies most actresses have extremely big breasts. In these cases the adjectivized name seems to become an idiomatic expression.

### 3.5. Names and Predicates

Let us now consider:

(22)?\* The stone kissed/admires/loves/ ... Bob/Sue

Although it is syntactically well-formed (like Chomsky's famous "Green colorless ideas sleep furiously"), if understood literally it does not make sense, for verbs like 'to kiss', 'to admire' and 'to love' Theta-mark as arguments an intentional agent and an object. We could say that the lexical meaning of a verb like 'to kiss/admire/love' constrains the ontological category of one of its arguments and that this constraint is entailed by all uses of this verb, independently of the context of use.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the agent cannot be an inanimate entity: stones cannot kiss, admire, or love. And this is so because the noun 'stone' encapsulates the information that it stands for an inanimate entity. A competent speaker knows that, and because of

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<sup>48</sup> Another way to spell this out would be to adopt a position after Asher (2011) and argue that the predicates distinguish the type of objects (or ontological category) they can take as argument: 'is blue', for instance, cannot take as argument an abstract object (\*"The number four is blue" vs. "The car is blue"); verbs taking instantaneous events as argument generate ungrammaticality when they are coupled with an extended interval of time (\*"John died for two hours" vs. "John talked for two hours"); etc. A discussion of Asher's analysis of predication appealing to a rich system of semantic types, though, transcends the scope of this chapter.



this (tacit) knowledge one would consider sentences like (22), literally understood, to be meaningless.<sup>49</sup>

In languages like Spanish, Italian, or French, where common nouns also mark a grammatical gender, the word includes, in its lexical meaning, the grammatical gender as well. Thus, the Italian sentence:

- (23) *Il sasso è caduto dalla montagna*  
 [The stone dropped from the mountain]

is grammatical, while

- (24)\* *Il sasso è caduta dalla montagna*

is ungrammatical, for we have a gender conflict between the noun ‘sasso’ whose masculine grammatical gender is marked by the article ‘il’ and the verb ‘caduta’ which marks the agent as being of the feminine gender.

The lexical meaning of the Italian noun ‘sasso’ can be represented, roughly, as:

- (25) ‘sasso’ (NOUN, -animate, +masculine)

The capitalized ‘NOUN’ marks the syntactic category the word belongs to, while the lower case ‘animate’ and ‘masculine’ specify the types of individuals that can be subsumed under its extension. Thus, someone who

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<sup>49</sup> For a sentence like this to make sense it must be understood metaphorically. E.g.: if one were speaking metaphorically, or sarcastically, describing Bob/Sue falling on the stone, one could say, sarcastically: “The stone kissed Bob/Sue”.

would apply ‘sasso’ to refer to animate and/or feminine (grammatical)-gender individuals would not be a competent speaker of Italian. In other words, a speaker who does not know that under the extension of ‘sasso’ we can have only entities that are inanimate and of the grammatical masculine gender, would not be competent with Italian.

Along these lines we can recognize that proper names, like other words, convey some information. This information helps in determining the syntactic category it belongs to. One who does not know that tokenings of ‘Sue’, ‘John’, ‘Paris’, and the like, are proper names would not be linguistically competent. Yet one cannot be tagged as being linguistically incompetent if one does not know that ‘Sue’ is usually used to refer to female individuals and ‘John’ to male ones. For ‘Sue’ and ‘John’ do not *grammatically* mark the gender. These names, though, carry the *stereotypical* information suggesting the gender of the referent. A name for persons (or pets) like ‘Sue’ or ‘Pia’ may convey the following information:

(26) ‘Sue’/‘Pia’ (NAME, *+animate*, *+female*)

In this case the capitalized ‘NAME’ marks that the word belongs to the category of names, while the italics ‘animate’ and ‘female’ stand for the extrinsic, stereotypical information carried by the name. That is, the information conveyed by the lemma used in the creation of the name. The latter, though, does not pertain to the linguistic meaning of the name. It merely indicates or suggests some convention of use.

A word of clarification. Only tokened words can be recognized as names and thus, from a logical viewpoint, any word could become a proper name. This feature does not go the other way. A word recognized

as a proper name in a given utterance, like ‘Pia’ or ‘Mary’ in “Pia smokes” or “Mary is a linguist”, cannot be taken to stand for a category or class of objects. For the tokened names instantiate uniqueness in the universe of discourse. Thus, to be precise, we should say that it is only when a tokened word is recognized as a proper name that it conveys the information that it is a proper name. This sounds circular, for it suggests that a word is first recognized as a proper name and then it suggests that it is a proper name. Yet, to recognize a word as a proper name, a competent speaker has to know that it is a sign used to designate a specific individual and that it has a fixed reference (and, hence, that the speaker has a particular individual in mind). A competent speaker must thus grasp that a given word, when used as a proper name, instantiates these features. Since only a *tokened* word can be recognized as a name, a speaker-hearer’s competence can be captured using Grice’s notion of generalized conversational implicatures. As a *conversational* implicature it can only be triggered by an utterance or, to use Grice’s terminology, by putting it that way. As such, it is only in the interpretation of an utterance that a speaker/hearer can recognize a word *qua* proper name. Such recognitional capacity is likely to be linked with other linguistic competences. For instance, a competent speaker grasps that the utterance of a sentence like “Aristotle smokes” is of the subject/predicate form and that it is true if the object designated by the subject instantiates the property of smoking. A competent speaker also knows that the subject cannot take the negation, that only the predicate or the whole utterance can be negated, that the predicate is unsaturated, that “—smokes” is an open sentence that must be completed by a subject, etc. Similar competences are at work when someone interprets the utterance of a sentence containing, e.g., count nouns or mass terms like: “Dogs bark”, “Water can inundate” or “Roses smell delicious”. A competent speaker

computes that in utterances like these, ‘dogs’, ‘water’ and ‘roses’ are not proper names. If ‘dogs’ were used as a proper name ‘bark’ should take the ‘s’ and “Dogs barks” would be interpreted like an utterance of “Fido barks”. If ‘water’ were used as a proper name it should be analyzed the way we analyze “The Nile can inundate”. As such, they would be of the form  $Fa$  and not quantifications of the form  $(\forall x)(Fx \rightarrow Gx)$  or  $(\exists x)(Fx \& Gx)$ . The same goes with ‘roses’. Frege was on to something when he proposed the context principle and claimed that it is only in the context of a sentence that a word has meaning and, therefore, that any inquiry about names *qua* referring expressions can be made only when they are considered as constituents of sentences *used* to express thoughts. This, though, should not undermine compositionality, i.e., that the meaning of the whole depends on the meaning of the parts. As we will see in the next chapter, the distinction between presemantic and semantic use of context should help us to deal with the apparent tension between the context principle (which operates at the presemantic use of context) and compositionality (which operates at the semantic use of context).<sup>50</sup>

The extrinsic information conveyed by a proper name can encompass many other features, such as being from the Anglo-Saxon culture, being a person, a pet, a location, an institution, etc. For simplicity’s sake, though, I confine myself to the animate/inanimate information which seems more basic. It is for this reason that we can classify it along the lines of Grice’s generalized conversational implicatures.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> For a detailed discussion of Frege’s context principle and the alleged tension with compositionality within Frege’s philosophy, see Dummett (1981: 360 ff.).

<sup>51</sup> If we frame this in terms of world knowledge vs. linguistic knowledge we could say that one who does not know that ‘stone’ is a count noun standing for an

Names for locations, like ‘Barcelona’ or ‘London’, may convey the following information:

- (27) ‘Barcelona’/‘London’ (NAME, *-animate (location), +neutral*)

The Italian equivalent or translation, though, marks the gender as well:

- (28) ‘Barcelona’/‘Londra’ (NAME, *-animate, +feminine*)

For this reason

- (29) Londra è *magnifica*  
[London is beautiful]

is grammatical, while

- (30)\*? Londra è *magnifico*<sup>52</sup>

is, to say the least, awkward, for the adjective ‘*magnifico*’ classifies Londra as being of the masculine gender and, thus, generates a gender conflict. (30) sounds awkward because in Italian, names for cities (given

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inanimate entity is linguistically incompetent, while one who does not know that ‘Sue’ is a paradigmatic name for females, though linguistically competent, misses some world knowledge, i.e., she has not mastered a convention of use.

<sup>52</sup> In Spanish, though, the masculine and feminine constructions are both allowed: “Londra es bonito/bonita”.

that ‘città [city]’ is a feminine noun) are of the feminine gender. We can thus stipulate that in Italian cities inherit the feminine gender from the feminine ‘città’. For (30) not to sound awkward ‘Londra’ should be a name for a male individual.

No doubt, there are important differences between natural gender and grammatical gender.<sup>53</sup> Yet, there are also some analogies worth taking into consideration when we come to compute the information conveyed by a word. In languages marking the grammatical gender, nouns marking the feminine gender (e.g. the Italian ‘rosa’ [rose], ‘ortenzia’ [ortensia], ‘margherita’ [margarita], ‘pietra’ [stone], and ‘luna’ [moon]), for instance, have never been adopted, as far as I know, as names for males (‘Rosa’, ‘Ortensia’, ‘Margherita’, ‘Pietra’, and ‘Luna’, within the Italian community, are names for females). The fact that names can convey as extrinsic information the gender of the referent should not be that surprising, for names do not spring from nothing. Names have a long history and they usually derive from common nouns or words from languages marking the grammatical gender (e.g.: within Romance and Germanic languages most names derive from Latin and Greek). A noun becomes a name when the common noun has been adopted as a word for a single entity. To be precise we should say that when a common noun works as a lemma (or generic name) in the creation of the proper name, the proper name tends to inherit the gender associated with the lemma. Hence, the biological gender conveyed by a proper name tends to match

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<sup>53</sup> Grammatical gender does not always match the natural gender: in Italian, for instance, ‘una donna [woman]’ (feminine) takes the superlative ‘one’ and can become ‘un donnone’ (masculine). Yet ‘la donna’ cannot become ‘la donnone’ (masculine): it becomes ‘il donnone’ (feminine).

the grammatical gender of the common noun adopted *qua* lemma in the creation of the proper name. Thus, we have names like ‘Rose’ and ‘Paul’ deriving from the Latin ‘rosa’ meaning rose and ‘paulus’ meaning small or humble, ‘Mary’ or ‘Miryam’ deriving from the Egyptian ‘mry’ meaning beloved or ‘mr’ meaning loved, ‘Hilary’ deriving from the Latin ‘hilaris’ meaning cheerful and amusing, and so on and so forth.<sup>54</sup> In modern English, the influence of Anglo-Norman, an old French dialect containing Germanic words intermixed with the Latin base, helps us to explain why most common names used within the Anglo-Saxon community tend to suggest the gender as well. Actually, many common names within the English-speaking community originate from Old English, which, like current Romance languages, marked the grammatical gender. In short, since names usually derive from common nouns, it should not be that surprising that most names convey as extrinsic information the gender of their referent. Thus, this information can be understood along the lines of Grice’s generalized conversational implicatures. This does not mean, though, that there is a logical relation between the common noun from which a name may derive and the individual that name is used to refer to: Rose has nothing to do with roses and Hilary may be anything but hilarious. Yet ‘Rose’ inherits, so to speak, the feminine gender from the Latin noun ‘rosa’ [rose], while ‘Ilario’ inherits its masculine gender from

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<sup>54</sup> It is probably for this reason that in languages marking the grammatical gender it is more difficult to find gender-silent names. In Italian we do not have ‘Hilary’, but the respective “translations”, ‘Ilario’ marking the masculine gender and ‘Ilaria’ marking the feminine one. It may also be for this reason that books such as *A Thousand Ways to Name your Baby* classify names as names for girls and names for boys.

‘ilario’ [hilarious]. They inherit, in other words, the gender conveyed by the common noun adopted, *qua* lemma, in the creation of a proper name.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.6. Names Constructions

The idea that names may convey as extrinsic information their referents’ gender is further highlighted if we consider languages like Catalan or Milanese, where names for people, unlike names for locations, mandatorily take a gender-determining article (either masculine or feminine). E.g.: ‘*la* Marta’, ‘*el* Martín’ (Catalan) and ‘*la* Lúisa’, ‘*ul* Lúis’ (Milanese). ‘\**el* Marta’ and ‘\**la* Martín’, like ‘\**el* Lúisa’ and ‘\**la* Luis’, are ungrammatical insofar as we have a gender conflict between the article and the name.

Furthermore, in Italian and French, for instance, some constructions force the use of a gender-marking article with names of locations as well:

- (31) *La* Milano di Manzoni e *la* Parigi di Baudelaire<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> The fact that Rose has been named ‘Rose’ is not a semantic fact. It belongs, as some would say, to meta-semantics. Yet, the fact that the name ‘Rose’ derives from the noun ‘rosa’ helps to explain why it carries the extrinsic information that the referent is of the feminine gender. An interesting question would be to determine how in gender-free languages like Euskara, for instance, proper names deriving from common nouns turned out to suggest the gender of the bearer (‘Iker’, ‘Kepa’ and ‘Iosu’ are used to create names for males and ‘Larraitx’, ‘Oihane’ and ‘Maite’ for females while ‘Araitx’, ‘Izar’ and ‘Hodei’ are used for both males and females).

<sup>56</sup> Were we talking of the football team, AC Milan, we would usually use the article ‘il’, thus marking the masculine gender: “Il Milan di Allegri”, “Il Barcelona di Guardiola”, “Il Kaiserslautern di Kurz”, “Il Madrid di Mourinho”, “Il



- (32) *Le Milan de Manzoni et le Paris de Baudelaire*<sup>57</sup>  
 [The Milan of Manzoni and the Paris of Baudelaire]

To summarize: if one does not know that ‘she’ is a pronoun conventionally used to select females as object of discourse, one is linguistically incompetent. With proper names, the story is a bit different. One is not linguistically incompetent if one does not know that ‘Sue’ is usually used as a name for females. Yet one is linguistically incompetent if one does not know that in a given utterance it is a proper name. The fact that ‘Sue’ is usually used as a name for females does not belong to one’s linguistic competence. It belongs, we can say, to one’s world knowledge. We can recognize two types of conventions: linguistic conventions (which belong

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Manchester di Sir Alex Ferguson”, etc. Yet we would say “La Roma di Enriquez” and “La Lazio di Reja” to designate the soccer teams AS Rome and AS Lazio. These “exceptions” may be explained by the fact that ‘Roma’ and ‘Lazio’ are short for ‘L’Associazione Sportiva Roma/Lazio’ with ‘associazione’ marking the feminine gender. In the majority of cases names of soccer teams are short for ‘Il Football Club Milan/Madrid/Manchester/Barcelona’ with ‘football club’ marking the masculine gender.

<sup>57</sup> Compound proper names in gender marking languages also mandate the use of an article marking the grammatical gender: ‘l’Impero Romano’/‘l’Empire Romain’/‘el Impero Romano’ [the Roman Empire], ‘la Vergine’/‘la Vierge’/‘la Virgin’ [the Virgin], etc. The same with river and mountain names: in English they sometimes take the article ‘the’ (rivers: ‘the Thames’, ‘the Po’, ‘the Nile’, ‘the Mississippi’, etc.; mountains: ‘the Matterhorn’, for example), in Italian they take the article ‘il’ and mark the masculine gender (rivers: ‘il Tamigi’, ‘il Po’, ‘il Nilo’, ‘il Missisipi’, etc.; mountains: ‘il Monte Bianco’, ‘il K2’, ‘il Matterhorn’, ‘il Cervino’, ‘l’Everest’, etc.). This is probably due to the fact that ‘(il) fiume’ [{the} river] and ‘(il) monte’ [{the} mountain] in Italian are masculine.

to linguistic competence) and conventions of use (which may belong to some pragmatic and practical competence). As Searle nicely puts it: “it may be conventional to name only girls ‘Martha’, but if I name my son ‘Martha’ I may mislead, but I do not lie” (Searle 1958: 173). Conventions of use, unlike linguistic conventions, affect the way one can calculate conversational implicatures. In the case of names, it affects—I surmise—the generalized conversational implicatures triggered by the extrinsic stereotypical information associated with the name. In learning English one comes to know that on top of being a proper name, ‘Sue’ is usually used to refer to females, and ‘Paul’ to males. That is to say, in learning the language one comes to master, on top of so-called linguistic or lexical meaning, some generalized conversational implicatures as well.

As we saw, names like ‘Chris’ and ‘Robin’ do not convey the extrinsic information concerning the gender of their referent. As I argued, they are gender-silent and, as such, they do not trigger the generalized conversational implicature concerning the referent’s gender. They can be represented as follows:

(33) ‘Chris’ (NAME, +*animate*, +/-*male*)

This analysis of proper names I am proposing mirrors, to some extent, the analysis of other terms. A verb like ‘to fry’, for instance, differs from ‘to boil’. The former encapsulates the information ‘to cook in oil (or butter)’ while the latter encapsulates ‘to cook in water’. If we put a potato into boiling oil, we fry it, while if we put a potato into boiling water we boil it. For this reason, from:

(34) Sue boiled a potato

we can infer that

(35) Sue cooked a potato

We cannot, though, go the other way around: (35) does not entail (34). The same with nouns like ‘boy’ or ‘girl’ whose lexical meaning can be cashed out as follows:

(36) ‘boy’ (NOUN, +human, -adult, +male)

(37) ‘girl’ (NOUN, +human, -adult, +female)

This helps to explain why, from:

(38) Sue saw a boy/girl

we can infer:

(39) Sue saw a child

(39), though, does not entail (38), for ‘child’ does not mark the gender.

Thus:

(40) If Sue saw a girl, then Sue saw a child

is not controversial, while the following *is*:

(41)?\* If Sue saw a child, then Sue saw a girl<sup>58</sup>

In languages that mark the grammatical gender this would be even more evident. Consider the Italian:

(42) Se Maria ha visto un bambino, Maria ha visto un ragazzo

(43)\* Se Maria ha visto un bambino, Maria ha visto una ragazza

(44) Se Maria ha visto una bambina, Maria ha visto una ragazza

(45)\* Se Maria ha visto una bambina, Maria ha visto un ragazzo

[If Mary saw a child, Mary saw a boy/girl]

The grammaticality/ungrammaticality is determined by the fact that ‘un bambino’/‘un ragazzo’ mark the masculine gender, while ‘una bambina’/‘una ragazza’ mark the feminine one.<sup>59</sup> A competent speaker of Italian knows that and, as such, would automatically compute these sentences as either grammatical or ungrammatical. This belongs to one’s linguistic competence. With the same token we can say that a competent speaker of English knows that ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ mark the gender. One would not be a competent speaker of English if one did not know that ‘boy’ and ‘girl’

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<sup>58</sup> This sentence could make sense in some particular contexts. E.g.: when it is common knowledge that all the children in the speaker’s and her audience’s discourse situation are girls. Without this background assumption, the inference does not go through.

<sup>59</sup> In the past, in Italian (and I think in Spanish as well) the convention (or sexist habit) was that when using the masculine ‘bambino’ one did not mark the gender, while using ‘bambina’ one unambiguously marked it. For simplicity’s sake we can ignore this detail.

stand for animate entities of the masculine and feminine gender respectively.

Be that as it may, the view that words come equipped with some specific meaning information also helps account for the fact that, literally understood, the following are senseless:

(46) ?\* The crocodile got married

(47) ?\* Sue ate an orange juice

(48) ?\* John drank a steak

Marriage is a contract between humans: non-humans, let alone crocodiles, cannot marry. To eat is to ingest some solid substance, while to drink is to consume some liquid: one cannot drink a solid element or eat a liquid one.<sup>60</sup>

If I am right, names do not differ from other terms in conveying some stereotypical information that speakers can exploit. In this way a word like ‘woman’ can be analyzed as:

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<sup>60</sup> The important question we face here is whether the knowledge enabling one to accept/reject these sentences belongs to linguistic competence, i.e., if this knowledge depends on someone’s mastery of the language, or rests on world knowledge. For a detailed discussion of this debate see Asher (2011). This discussion, though, should not affect the main point of my argument concerning proper names insofar as the extrinsic information associated with a proper name belongs to world knowledge. For my argument to succeed it suffices to notice that the extrinsic information associated with a name helps in calculating generalized conversational implicatures and that the latter, as an inference from stereotypes, may be characterized as world knowledge.

(49) ‘woman’ (NOUN, +human, +adult, +female)

with ‘human’, ‘adult’ and ‘female’ being part of the lexical meaning of the noun. The name ‘Mary’ can be analyzed as:

(50) ‘Mary’ (NAME, +*animate*, +*female*)

with the italic ‘animate’ and ‘female’ being the stereotypical information associated with the name. Some of this information (as e.g. the gender) is what the proper name inherits from the lemma (or generic name) adopted when the name was created.

In choosing an anaphoric pronoun coreferential with ‘woman’ or ‘Mary’, one is likely to select ‘she’ (or possibly ‘it’ if ‘Mary’ is the name of a pet). The anaphoric pairing is selected on the basis of the extrinsic information conveyed by the name and on the fact that one automatically computes the generalized conversational implicature *that Mary is a female* triggered by the stereotypical information associated with ‘Mary’. A friend of mine named his male cat ‘Fidel’. I am quite sure he would not have adopted that name if the cat were a female.

With gender-indeterminate names (like ‘Chris’, ‘Robin’, or ‘Hilary’) whose stereotypical information cannot be marked as ‘+male’ or ‘+female’, when having to select the appropriate anaphoric pronoun, a speaker must first determine the right gender. To be sure, this determination may be guided by biases and stereotypes and, as such, is likely to be computed at the sub-conscious level.

Anaphoric resolution is one among many phenomena requiring the gender determination of a gender-silent name. E.g.:

- (51) Mary is visiting her *uncle/aunt* Ashley
- (52) Alexis bought *his/her* mother a new car
- (53) Kim is the *son/daughter* of the president
- (54) Hilary is our new post-*man/woman*
- (55) Robin is a wonderful *actor/actress*

This phenomenon is particularly evident with languages that grammatically mark the gender: “Il Dottore/La Dottoressa Hilary ...” [Doctor Hilary ...], “El Profesor/la Profesora Kim ...” [Professor Kim ...], “Nôtre maître/maîtresse Chris ...” [Our teacher Chris...]. If one translates a sentence like “Professor/Doctor Hilary Smith visited us” into a language that grammatically marks the gender, one must resolve the gender of the referent (‘Il Professore/La professoressa’, ‘il Dottore/la Dottoressa’), just as one translating the ambiguous ‘bank’ or ‘bat’ needs to disambiguate it.

Since the nouns ‘boys’ and ‘women’ determine the gender, sentences like “Boys are wonderful actresses” or “Women can be good sons” are, literally understood, senseless: they can only be understood metaphorically or sarcastically. In such cases, we could say, the metaphorical or sarcastic interpretation is triggered by the gender conflict. The same happens with names like ‘Mary’ or ‘Jeff’. Since ‘Mary’ and ‘Jeff’ suggest the gender, they make sentences like “Mary is a wonderful actor” or “Jeff is a good daughter” awkward. When the name (like ‘Hilary’ or ‘Robin’) is gender-silent, in order to say whether Hilary/Robin is an actor or an actress, a son or a daughter, a priest or a nun, a father or a mother, a brother or a sister, etc., the gender must be determined.

# CHAPTER 4

## NAMES AND CONTEXT-SENSITIVITY

In this chapter I will discuss how variegated contextual aspects contribute in the interpretation of utterances containing proper names. As we will see, extra-linguistic context can be exploited in multi-faceted ways.

### 4.1. The Three Uses of Context

To clarify the issue we can begin by distinguishing between presemantic, semantic, and postsemantic (or “content supplementing”, to borrow Perry’s recent characterization) use of context:

Sometimes we use context to figure out with which meaning a word is being used, or which of several words that look or sound alike is being used, or even which language is being spoken. These are *presemantic* uses of context: context helps us to figure out meaning. In the case of indexicals, however, context is used *semantically*. It remains relevant after the language, words and meanings are all known; the meaning directs us to certain aspects of context. Both these uses of context differ from a third. In the third type of case we lack the materials we need for a proposition expressed by a statement, even though we have identified the words and their meanings, and have consulted the contextual factors the indexical meanings direct us to. Some of the constituents of the proposition expressed are *unarticulated*, and we consult the context to figure out what they are. I call these ‘content-supplementing’ uses of context. Finally and importantly we use context to interpret the intention with which the



utterance was made, what was the speaker trying to do? This is the *pragmatic* use of context. (Perry 2001/2012: 47-8)

This distinction should not be understood in temporal terms, i.e., that there is a temporal order within the threefold division concerning context-exploitation. It is a rational reconstruction aiming to capture some important phenomena concerning, on the one hand, the syntax-semantics-pragmatics interface and, on the other hand, the dissimilarity between different types of referring expressions (e.g.: between the reference made using names and reference made using indexicals).

## 4.2. The Presemantic Use of Context

At the *presemantic level* context is used to figure out the meaning of words, to disambiguate, to determine which homonym is used, to resolve polysemy, to decide which language is used, etc. If, for instance, one hears or reads “David went to the bank” one needs to know who, among the many Davids (David Kaplan, David Smith, David Ginola, David Matheson, etc.), went to the bank and whether he went to the financial institution or near the river. This information, though, is not carried by the meaning of the name. It does not make sense, for instance, to ask “What does ‘David’ mean?” (we would rather ask: “*Whom* do you mean by ‘David’?” or “*Whom* does ‘David’ stand for?”). The name ‘David’ does not tell us whether a speaker is using it for the ex-soccer player David Ginola, the UCLA logician David Kaplan, the epistemologist David Matheson, or whom have you. If one comes across “John saw Jane with the binoculars”, before processing its truth-conditions one ought to determine whether it is of the form “ $_s$ [John  $_{VP}$ [saw  $_{NP}$ [Jane with a binocular]]]” or of the form “ $_s$ [John  $_{VP}$ [saw  $_{NP}$ [Jane]  $_{PP}$ [with the

binoculars]]]”. If one hears “Jeff is out for a duck” one ought to interpret whether ‘duck’ is used to mean the animal or as a cricket slang meaning that the batter has failed to score. If one hears ‘Ich!’, one ought to know whether it is an utterance made by an English-speaking person expressing some kind of disgust or distress or by a German speaker meaning ‘I’. These choices happen at the presemantic level:

In a disambiguated language, semantics can associate meaning with expressions. Even in a language containing ambiguities, semantics can associate a set of meanings with an expression. But given an utterance, semantics cannot tell us what expression was uttered or what language it was uttered in. This is a presemantic task. When I utter a particular vocable, for example the one characteristic of the first person pronoun of English, you must decide what *word* I have spoken or indeed, if I have spoken any word at all (it may have been a cry of anguish). (Kaplan 1977: 559)

Consider the word ‘bank’. Because of a historical accident, *viz.* two very different origins, we have two words that are spelled and sound alike. In other languages we do not have this problem with ‘bank’. If we were to translate ‘bank’ into French or Italian we would first have to disambiguate the word and decide whether to use ‘banque’/‘banca’ [*qua* financial institution] or ‘rive du fleuve (lac, canal)’/ ‘riva/sponda del fiume (lago, canale)’ [the side of the river (lake, canal)]. The same, or a similar story must be told about proper names. If we hear “I visited London” we ought to know whether the speaker visited the capital of England or London the city in southern Ontario, Canada. Thus ‘London’ must be “disambiguated”. The disambiguating process involved, though, is not a process of figuring out which meaning a single word has. It is rather to figure out *which word*

has been uttered. If we want to translate this sentence into French, for instance, we have to decide whether to transform it into “J’ai visité Londres” or “J’ai visité London”, for unlike ‘London’—the capital of England—‘London’ (Ontario), like most names, does not translate. On the other hand, many lemmas, like common words, translate (in Italian ‘Rose’ is ‘Rosa’, ‘Mary’-‘Maria’, ‘Jane’-‘Giovanna’, ‘John’-‘Giovanni’, ‘Mark’-‘Marco’, ‘Paul’-‘Paolo’). Yet, proper names of “common” people do not translate (‘Jane Smith’, ‘Hillary Clinton’, ‘David Kaplan’, ‘Kepa Korta’, and ‘John Perry’ do not become ‘Giovanna Smith’, ‘Ilaria Clinton’, ‘Davide Kaplan’, ‘Pietro Korta’ and ‘Giovanni Perry’). In our ‘London’ example, ‘London’ is not a single word that in the context of the speech act designates either the capital of England or London, Ontario. ‘London’ does not work like an indexical having a character that directs us to some contextual aspects to fix its reference, to give us the propositional constituent. Proper names, to repeat Kaplan once more, have, if any, an uninteresting character; i.e., a character that in any context of use delivers the same referent. What the hearer needs to resolve is *which* convention is exploited, i.e., whether one is exploiting the convention linking ‘London’ to the capital of England or the one linking ‘London’ to the Canadian city in southern Ontario and, therefore, which proper name is uttered. Since the (permissive) convention linking a name to its bearer comes into existence when the bearer has been dubbed, in our example we have two distinct conventions and, thus, two name-notion networks involved.

The question to be solved is, therefore, which notion-network is the speaker exploiting, *viz.* which name sustaining practice the speaker is embedded into. We thus have a vocable that looks and sounds alike, but two distinct conventional links. If a name gains its existence and life through an original dubbing and a subsequent name-notion network, then

the dubbing episode corresponds to the creation of a new word, of a new name. As Kaplan puts it: “what I actually had in mind was the use of a proper name word with the ... intention to originate a word rather than conform to a prior usage. Thus a fleeting ‘Hi-ya, Beautiful’ incorporates all the intentional elements required for me to say that a dubbing has taken place” (Kaplan 1977: 560). Dubbings *create* words.<sup>61</sup> The permissive convention linking a tokened name with its bearer is part and parcel of a name. Just as the conventions linking ‘bank’ to financial institutions or to river-banks are constitutive of the fact that we have two distinct words that happen to look and sound alike. As an analogy, think of two siblings who are genetically identical. What distinguishes them is, among possibly other things, the different spatio-temporal worldly relation each one entertains to oneself. The same with two homonyms. What makes a tokening of ‘Aristotle’ referring to the philosopher a different name from a tokening of ‘Aristotle’ standing for the Greek magnate is the fact that the tokened names are sustained by a different *causal*, worldly relation, i.e., by two distinct name-using practices. In short, the phenomenon of homonymy parallels the one of ambiguity. As such, it must be settled at the presemantic level of context.<sup>62</sup> Only once this is settled can the official

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<sup>61</sup> For a detailed discussion of dubbing episodes, how tokened names are linked to them, and how they must be dealt with at the presemantic level of context see Perry (2001/2012: chapter 3).

<sup>62</sup> For sure, there are differences between ambiguous terms and homonymous names. To begin with we have few ambiguous terms while we have many homonyms. The number of people outnumbers the number of vocables, proper names (of common people), unlike ambiguous terms, do not translate. Yet from a semantics perspective, ambiguity and homonymy should be treated on a par. In distinguishing between homonymy and ambiguity Perry talks about *nambiguity*:

truth-conditions of the utterance be calculated and, in the case of a proper name, the object enters *qua* constituent of the proposition expressed (or what Perry characterizes as the official or referential content).

A tokened name, in the speaker's mind, is not ambiguous (unless the speaker is merely repeating, like a parrot, a sentence she heard). In uttering "Aristotle is Greek" a speaker has either the philosopher or the magnate in mind. Thus, from the speaker's perspective the name 'Aristotle' is not ambiguous. Besides, if we distinguish between generic names (or lemma)

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"However, the problem arising from the two uses of 'David Kaplan' is not that there is a single word with a single meaning which determines different designations in different contexts. Rather, the problem is nambiguity: there are a multiplicity of relatively local naming conventions that are relevant in different conversations; the role of context is presemantic, to help us figure out which convention is being exploited. The locality of these conventions made the case rather different from straightforward ambiguity, but the principle is the same. To grasp the meaning relevant to a particular use of 'David Kaplan'—to grasp the relevant convention—is just to grasp who is designated" (Perry 2001/2012: 123). In the parlance I adopted, following Kaplan, the role of context is to figure out which proper name has been uttered. When Perry talks about the same name being assigned to different things, I talked about the same lemma (generic name) being used in the creation of different proper names. When Perry talks about the necessity to individuate the name-notion network I talk about the individuation of which proper name has been used. Both in the individuation of a name-notion network and in the individuation of a proper name the speaker must grasp whom or what the name stands for. In many cases we would face no difficulties, while in other cases the individuation of the proper name would be deferential, i.e., guided by the referential intention to refer to the same individual (to use the same proper name as the one used by the speaker), whom the person we picked up the proper name from referred to.

and proper names, in our example we have two proper names that happen to look and sound alike; we have two distinct proper names sharing the same generic name or lemma. If, for instance, one uses ‘Aristotle’ to single out the Greek philosopher, while someone else uses ‘Aristotle’ to single out Onassis, the Greek magnate, they are not using the same name. What the philosopher and Onassis share is not a proper name, but a lemma (or what Kaplan 1990 characterizes as a generic name).<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, if I utter the demonstrative ‘this’ pointing to a picture of Plato and then utter ‘this’ pointing to a picture of Socrates, I use the very same word that, given the different contexts it appears in, selects different referents. While if you utter ‘Aristotle’ intending to single out the philosopher, while I utter it referring to Onassis, we utter distinct proper names. In hearing ‘Aristotle’ the audience ought to figure out whom the speaker has in mind and, in so doing, which proper name has been tokened. As Perry puts it:

In each of these cases [ambiguity and homonymy], it is the environment of the utterance (i.e., the larger situation in which it occurs) which helps us to determine what is said. But these cases differ from indexicals. In these cases it is a sort of accident, external to the utterance, that context is needed. We need the context to identify which name, syntactic structure or

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<sup>63</sup> Linguists often distinguish between proprial lemma and proper names. Thus, Socrates the philosopher and Socrates the soccer player, although they do not share a proper name, do share a proprial lemma: “A proprial lemma like *John* may give rise to different denotata yielding different ‘proper names’ at the level of established linguistic conventions” (Van Langendonck 2007: 68). Proprial lemmas are the vocables we find in onomastic dictionaries: each lemma is often coupled with the gender (if it is a lemma used in the creation of the proper name for a person), the origin or etymology, the region/culture in which it is more used, etc.

meaning is used because the very same shape and sounds happen to be shared by other words, structures, or meanings. The appeal to context comes in determining the meaning. Thus these appeals to context are presemantics. (Perry 2001/2012: 50)

Korta & Perry (2011: 76 ff.) introduce the notion of *conditional co-reference* (*coco-reference* for short). Two tokens of a singular term *coco-refer* if the second token is used with the intention to co-refer with the first token.<sup>64</sup> If John utters: “William Tell was an archer from Uri” and Mary replies: “Hence, he/William Tell was Swiss”, Mary uses the anaphoric ‘he’ or the proper name ‘William Tell’ with the intention to *coco-refer* to whomever John referred to with his tokening of ‘William Tell’. Mary can have this referential intention even if she never heard about William Tell and does not know that it is an empty, fictional, name (a mock proper name, as Frege would say).

Communication is a joint action in which the speaker(s) and hearer(s) are engaged in a *coordinated* activity. *Coco-reference*, as I understand it, rests on this coordinated action. If we translate Korta & Perry’s notion of

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<sup>64</sup> “Coco-reference is short for ‘conditional co-reference’. This suggests that *coco-reference* is a species or special case of *co-reference*, but that’s not quite right. A later utterance *co-refers* with an earlier one, if both utterances refer, and refer to the same thing. A later utterance *conditionally co-refers*, or *coco-refers*, with an early one, if conditions are such that, the later utterance will refer if the early one does, and refer to the same thing. So there are cases of *coco-reference* that are not cases of reference, and so not cases of *co-reference*. We know how to make utterances that *coco-refer*, and we do so intentionally, but not in a way that requires that we have the concept of reference, *co-reference*, or *coco-reference*” (Perry 2001/2012: 172).

coco-reference into the picture I have been proposing, it amounts to saying that the speaker(s) and the hearer(s) have the (referential) intention of using the same proper name. In our example Mary has the intention to use the same proper name, ‘William Tell’, used by John. That is to say, Mary has the intention to *repeat* the name used by John and, thus, to pick up the same individual John referred to. When proper names are involved, coco-reference can be explained in terms of repetition. More precisely, it can be explained in terms of the hearer(s) referential intention to repeat the same name as the one picked up from the speaker or writer.

In an ideal scenario the speaker and the hearer, by using the same name, refer to the same individual. Communication is successful. In other cases communication can break down. An example may illustrate that. Imagine a first-year philosophy class. During the exam a poorly prepared student facing the question “Was Socrates a Greek philosopher?” answers: “No, Socrates was a Brazilian soccer player”. It is plausible to assume that with her use of ‘Socrates’ the student has the intention to coco-refer with the teacher and, thus, to repeat the same proper name. Yet, our student fails the exam because the teacher and the student have different individuals in mind. While the teacher is embedded in the name-notion network that links her token of ‘Socrates’ to the Greek philosopher, the student is embedded in a different name-notion network that brings her use of ‘Socrates’ to the famous Brazilian soccer player. In short, although the student has the intention to use the same proper name as the one used by the teacher, she ends up tokening a different proper name.

This case of misidentification can be explained by the fact that, although the student has the intention of uttering the same proper name,



she ends up using a different one.<sup>65</sup> What we encounter here is a conflict of intentions. The teacher's and the student's misunderstanding can also be explained by the fact that while the teacher in formulating her question activated her Socrates-the-philosopher file, in her answer the student activated her Socrates-the-Brazilian soccer-player file. The teacher and the student have different individuals in mind. In that case the student has been induced into misidentification because Socrates the philosopher and Socrates the soccer player have been dubbed with the same lemma. That is, that the proper name for the philosopher and the different proper name for the soccer player have been created by adopting the same lemma.

In an ideal language (like Frege's logical notation as advocated in his 1879 *Begriffsschrift*) where names—like passports and social security numbers—could not be shared, we would not have the distinction between lemmas (or generic names) and proper names, just as we would not have ambiguous expressions. If we were to speak such an ideal language, cases of misidentification would not arise. We would have one name, one object. Names would simply work like individual constants. But this is not the way *natural* languages work.

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<sup>65</sup> Perry characterizes cases like this as *messes*: “Misidentifications often create what I call *messes*. Messes occur when one referential utterance ends up being part of two (or more) coco-networks, because of confused intentions. Messes mean that coco-connectedness as defined is at best a near-equivalence relation. Because of messes we need to recognize several kinds of blocks in addition to the sort Donnellan recognized” (Perry 2001/2012: 179).

### 4.3. Grice's Circle

The presemantic notion of context is also what permits us to escape what has been characterized as Grice's circle, while maintaining a clear distinction between pragmatic and semantic phenomena:

Grice's account makes implicatures dependent on a prior determination of 'the said'. The said in turn depends on disambiguation, indexical resolution, reference fixing, not to mention ellipsis unpacking and generality narrowing. But each of these processes, which are prerequisites to determine the proposition expressed, may themselves depend crucially on processes that look indistinguishable from implicatures. Thus what is said seems both to determine and to be determined by implicatures. Let's call this *Grice's circle*. (Levinson 2001: 186)

According to Levinson this circle affects any theory that relies on a clear-cut distinction between semantics and pragmatics when attempting to build a general theory of meaning and a general theory of communication:

If Gricean pragmatics seeks explanations for why someone said what they did, how can there be Gricean pragmatics on the near-side? Gricean reason seems to require what is said to get started. But if Gricean reasoning is needed to get to what is said, we have a circle. (Korta & Perry 2008: 347)

At the presemantic level we determine which word is used, i.e., whether it is a proper name, a count noun, a mass term, a verb, etc. These classifications can begin with the syntactic distinction between Noun Phrase (NP) and Verb Phrase (VP), i.e., the classic view that simple sentences like "The cat is on the mat" or "Socrates is wise" are composed of an NP and a VP. Once we get an NP we can then decide to which sub-category the NP belongs,

amongst other things. After recognizing that the NP is a proper name we will then start a sort of disambiguating process, *viz.* whether the proper name stands for an intentional/non-intentional entity, which gender it marks, etc. We can then resolve which conventional link is exploited and, ultimately, who enters the proposition expressed. These processes are guided by generalized conversational implicatures. The latter are driven by both the stereotypical information conveyed by the name and information gathered from the sentence uttered, e.g. which ontological category the predicate projects. In other words, the general situation and context, as well as the common background shared by the communicators, in which the utterance occurs, enter the scene in determining what the speaker intends to communicate. The VP ‘is wise’, for instance, suggests that the NP cannot stand for an inanimate entity, for cities or artifacts, for instance, cannot be classified as wise. Once this is settled, we can engage in our semantic reasoning. In hearing the utterance: “John Perry is wise” the audience automatically computes that ‘John Perry’ is a name standing for a male person. If instead of “John Perry is wise” a hearer encounters “Canada is wise”, without knowing whom or what the speaker intends to talk about, by simply taking it to be the utterance of a declarative English sentence of the subject/predicate form, she can still nonetheless compute something like: “The speaker used ‘Canada’ to refer to some entity *x* and *x* instantiates the property designated by ‘is wise’”. This is not what the speaker intends to communicate. It is, to borrow from Perry, a form of reflexive content.<sup>66</sup> It

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<sup>66</sup> Perry adopts a pluri-propositionalist model of communication. A single utterance comes equipped with variegated contents or propositions. This, though, does not amount to saying that in producing an utterance a speaker ends up expressing (or saying) a multitude of propositions. It simply means that many propositions (or truth-

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conditions) are *available* when we come to analyze a communicative interaction. Propositions are abstract entities that, although they have no causal power, play an important classificatory role. In short, the pluri-propositionalist model of communication can be spelled out as follows. Utterances of simple sentences like:

- (i) Your shoe is untied
- (ii) Fred's shoe is untied

come equipped with various contents. Their analysis starts by distinguishing between the reflexive and the referential (or official) contents. Thus, while (ia) and (iia) constitute the reflexive contents, (ib) and (iib) are the referential contents:

- (i) a. There is an individual  $x$  the speaker of (i) addresses by uttering the possessive 'your' & the speaker of (i) says that  $x$ 's shoe is untied
- b. That Fred's shoe is untied
- (ii) a. There is an individual  $x$  and a convention  $C$  such that:  $C$  is exploited by the speaker of (ii);  $C$  permits one to designate  $x$  with 'Fred' & the speaker of (ii) said that  $x$ 's shoe is untied
- b. That Fred's shoe is untied

By simply hearing an utterance of (i) or (ii), a competent speaker would understand something like (ia) and (iia) even if she is unable to grasp whom the speaker is and whom she or he designates with his or her use of 'your' and 'Fred'. These are the *reflexive* contents of utterances of sentences like (i) and (ii). They represent the conditions the referent (in our example, Fred's shoe) must fulfill to be the individual the speaker refers to and intends to talk about. What the speaker (in our example, Mary) says, though, is not something about these contents. What she says is something about Fred's shoe and what she says is true if Fred's shoe is untied. What Mary expresses is the proposition that Fred's shoe is untied. That is, in uttering (i) or (ii) Mary expresses the proposition (ib)/(iib). Since the latter is the same, in uttering either (i) or (ii) Mary said the same thing. But she said it in different ways, i.e., in exploiting different conditions that Fred's shoe, the referent and propositional constituent, must fulfill, in the context of the utterance and communicative exchange, to enter the proposition expressed by Mary.

gives us the conditions that the utterance ought to fulfill in order to be true. Once the reflexive content is fixed, pragmatic reasoning aiming at grasping what the speaker intends to communicate enters the scene.

If, for instance, the hearer does not realize that the speaker intends to use ‘Canada’ as the name of a country, given that the literal meaning of ‘is wise’ is something along “having the ability to discern or judge what is true, right, etc.” the hearer is likely to compute that with an utterance of “Canada is wise” the speaker uses ‘Canada’ as a name for an intentional being. It is only after the hearer realizes that the speaker used ‘Canada’ as a name for a country (a non intentional, inanimate, entity) that she is able to compute that the utterance is not used in its literal form. These kinds of reasoning happen at the presemantic use of context and are guided, I reckon, by generalized conversational implicatures—*viz.* by implicatures based on general world knowledge and variegated stereotypes, biases, etc. that the communicators happen to share. In short, generalized conversational implicatures, as I understand them, aim to deal with some of the common background or presuppositions that the communicators share, i.e., the common ground upon which the linguistic interchange occurs. Where the audience’s interpretation starts depends on how much the speaker and hearer take it for granted (as common knowledge) during their linguistic interchange: this, of course, need not be a conscious deliberation. A rational hearer can engage in the interpretation of an utterance even in her encounter of the utterance of a sentence of a foreign language. In reading, for instance, a note like “Lo ammazzo domani [I kill him tomorrow]” a competent speaker of English can compute that: if the message is a declarative sentence of an (unknown) language *L*, the writer intends to communicate what the utterance of “Lo ammazzo domani” means given the meaning of ‘lo’, ‘ammazzo’ and ‘domani’ in *L*. The

reader can compute that insofar as she grasps the reflexive truth-conditions, i.e., something along: an utterance  $u$  of “Lo ammazzo domani” is true in  $L$  if there is a proposition  $p$  expressed by the writing of  $u$  in the context in which the words ‘lo’, ‘ammazzo’ and ‘domani’ occurred with the meaning they have in  $L$ , and (if  $u$  is the utterance of a declarative sentence), then  $p$  is either true or false. We thus have truth-conditions that quantify over meanings enabling us to capture or classify the thinker’s cognitive activity.

The basic idea is that there is always a pure reflexive content upon which the interpretation of a given utterance starts. Think, for instance, of the first anthropologists engaged in the interpretation of some totally unknown language (e.g.: Egyptian hieroglyphs found in the tomb of some king or queen). In their activities our anthropologists probably started with some general description of the sort: ‘ $\text{𓆎}$ ’ and ‘ $\neg$ ’ are likely to be tokens of words of the language  $L$  used by the people of this culture; ‘ $\text{𓆎}$ ’ and ‘ $\neg$ ’ can combine to make the sentence “ $\text{𓆎}\neg$ ”; if it is a sentence it is likely to parse as “ ${}_S[{}_{NP}[\text{𓆎}]{}_{VP}[\neg]]$ ”; an utterance of this sentence is true in  $L$  if the words ‘ $\text{𓆎}$ ’ and ‘ $\neg$ ’ have the meaning they have in  $L$ , and in the context they have been produced they express a proposition  $p$ . And so on and so forth. I guess that it is on the basis of this type of reasoning (or processing of reflexive contents) that our anthropologist can formulate some interpretative hypothesis and proceed to figure out the meanings and syntactic structures of the tokens they encounter (but, to be honest, this is mere speculation, for I have no empirical evidence and knowledge on how the people who engaged in deciphering the Egyptian hieroglyphs, or whatever unknown written signs they may have encountered, proceeded).

It is also worth remembering that the presemantic, semantic, and postsemantic use of context distinction does not aim to capture a linear

(temporal) reasoning. It is a mere rational reconstruction aiming at distinguishing the various mechanisms involved in the computation of an utterance. At the cognitive level, these mechanisms are likely to operate online and work in parallel.

To summarize, the reflexive truth-conditions generated by an utterance of “John Perry is wise”, can—roughly—be cashed out as follows: (i) There is an individual  $x$  and a convention  $C$  such that:  $C$  is exploited by the speaker,  $C$  permits one to designate  $x$  with ‘John Perry’; (ii)  $x$  is a male person; (iii) There is an individual,  $x$ , the speaker has in mind (and intends to talk about) such that: the speaker utters ‘John Perry’ to designate  $x$ ; and (iv)  $x$  is wise. As such, semantics gives us the reflexive content(s), while pragmatic reasoning may enter the scene only after the semantic (reflexive) content is fixed:

What we propose is a) that the reflexive content, with meaning fixed, is the content provided by semantics, in the sense in which a literalist wants such a thing for theoretical purposes, that is, constructing a compositional, truth conditional theory of meaning: b) while the reflexive content is not *what is said*, it provides a description of what is said, that serves the purpose of allowing Gricean reasoning about why something, meeting the description, was said. In this way we avoid the pragmatic circle (Korta & Perry 2008: 350).

#### 4.4. The Semantic Use of Context

At the *semantic level*, context is exploited in order to determine the referent of so-called indexical expressions (‘I’, ‘here’, ‘now’, ‘today’, and the like). Once all expressions are disambiguated, structural ambiguity and polysemy resolved, the language fixed, etc., context remains relevant, for

the content or referent of indexical expressions can be determined only relative to the context of the utterance itself. As Kaplan forcefully pointed out, indexicals have a linguistic meaning (character) which can be represented as a function taking as argument the context (whose parameters are: agent, time, location, demonstratum or directing intention, and possible world) and giving as value the referent (content). The linguistic meaning of ‘today’, for instance, can be characterized as “the day in which this token is uttered” which takes as argument the relevant day and gives as value that very day. We cannot fix the referent of an indexical expression at the presemantic level: we do not have infinitely many words for ‘I’ or ‘now’ standing for infinitely many individuals or times. A language like that would be, if not impossible, extremely different from natural languages such as English, Russian, Navajo, etc. Furthermore, ‘I’ and ‘now’ are not ambiguous terms. They are not proper names either. They are particular words working in a specific way. In English we have just one ‘I’ and one ‘now’ that we all use to refer to different people and moments depending on the context we happen to be in and to exploit. As far as I know, this is a universal phenomenon across natural languages. If we translate ‘I’ into French we have ‘je’ which presents the very same semantic properties:

The contextual feature which consists of the causal history of a particular proper name expression in the agent’s idiolect seems more naturally to be regarded as determining what word was used than as fixing the content of a single context-sensitive word. Although it is true that two utterances of ‘Aristotle’ in different context may have different contents, I am inclined to attribute this difference to the fact that different homonymous words were uttered rather than a context sensitivity in the character of a single word ‘Aristotle’. Unlike indexicals like ‘I’, proper names really are



ambiguous. The causal theory of reference tells us, in terms of contextual features (including the speaker's intentions) which word is being used in a given utterance. Each such word is directly referential (thus it has a fixed content), and it also has a fixed character. (Kaplan 1977: 562)

At the *postsemantic level* context is relevant when we try to cash out some utterances' truth-value. If one were to hear "It's raining" one ought to determine *where* it is raining. For, rain occurs at times and locations. Yet, in "It's raining" no location is picked out by an element of the utterance (unlike in "It's raining here" or "It's raining in London", where the relevant place is referred to by 'here' and 'London' respectively).<sup>67</sup>

#### 4.5. Names and Generalized Conversational Implicatures

With these distinctions in mind we can now return to the problem we faced in the previous chapter concerning gender-silent names. The solution is quite simple. As in cases of ambiguity, the problem should be resolved at the presemantic level. Actually, before choosing among the many Chrisses she happens to know, Sue must resolve the gender of the referent and thus associate the gender specificity to 'Chris'. She can then refer to her friend Chris<sup>f</sup> or her friend Chris<sup>m</sup>. In case she has many female acquaintances named 'Chris', Sue must further decide whether she refers

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<sup>67</sup> This is so if one accepts Perry's (1986) idea that the location of "It's raining" is an unarticulated constituent of the proposition expressed. Indexicalists (e.g.: Stanley 2000, Stanley & Zabó 2000) deny the existence of unarticulated constituents and thus the need for a postsemantic notion of context. They argue that the relevant location is selected by a hidden indexical present in the logical form. This debate, as interesting as it may be, does not affect, though, the main topic of this chapter. For more on this see, e.g., Corazza 2007.

to Chris<sup>f</sup> Black, Chris<sup>f</sup> Smith, or one of the actresses Chris<sup>f</sup> Barber, Chris<sup>f</sup> Lowe, or Chris<sup>f</sup> Martin. The audience must determine whom Sue has in mind and intends to talk about. Sue's interlocutors can ask themselves whether Sue intends to refer to one of her male acquaintances or one of her female ones. If the latter, the audience ought to further detect whether Sue intends to refer to, say, Chris<sup>f</sup> Barber, Chris<sup>f</sup> Lowe, or Chris<sup>f</sup> Martin. From a psychological viewpoint these choices are likely to happen at the subconscious level and be computed online during the communicative interchange. The reflexive truth-conditions of the utterance merely give the audience the fact that there is a convention allowing one to refer to a given individual using 'Chris' and that the speaker-writer has a particular individual in mind. To grasp whom the speaker has in mind and intends to refer to, the audience has to disambiguate the name. Hence, in arguing that a gender-silent name must be gender-determined at the presemantic level of context I do not mean that one must engage in a conscious deliberation concerning the referent's gender. In the context of a discussion about US foreign policies, for instance, one can automatically take 'Hillary' to stand for Hillary Clinton while in a philosophical discussion about twin-Earth scenarios one automatically computes that the speaker intends to talk about Hillary Putnam. One spontaneously (and subconsciously) assigns the feminine or masculine gender to the name. In this sense, the name can be viewed as discourse or situation sensitive.

Besides, in claiming that the gender of a gender-silent name is selected at the presemantic level of context I do not mean that one first selects the gender of the name and subsequently determines whom that name stands for. When a speaker has an individual in mind and intends to talk about him/her/it, she "knows" the individual's gender. As I mentioned, the presemantic, semantic, and postsemantic use of context

distinction does not reflect a temporally ordered reasoning going on, i.e., that one first engages in a presemantic reasoning, then in a semantic one, and finally in a postsemantic analysis. I reckon that relevant information—like language selection, gender determination, disambiguation, polysemy, indexical and anaphoric resolution, etc.—is automatically processed online. As I understand it, the presemantic, semantic, and postsemantic use of context distinction is merely a rational classification of what is going on rather than a temporal or sequential description of what happens in one's mind. The mind does not work in a temporal sequential order such that one first decides the parsing of the sentence to be uttered, then chooses the words, as one would choose the clothes to wear. It is our biological make-up (e.g.: vocal apparatus) that forces us to utter (and hear) words composing an utterance in a temporal sequence.

Like any event, an utterance is a process, an episode, having a beginning and an end. If our mind, as I believe, works in a language-mode, though, words are put together in whole sentences before they reach the speaking organs, before being uttered or produced in a sign language. One parses sentences to find out their meaning. This process is done online. In the case of syntactic ambiguity, for instance, one must resolve the ambiguity before being able to process the meaning of the sentence uttered. To grasp the meaning of “Jane saw John with the binoculars”, the hearer must know whether Jane used the binoculars to see John, or whether she instead saw John carrying the binoculars. The difference between these two readings of the same utterance must be found in syntax. Similarly, if one hears “They are hunting wolves” one needs to know whether ‘they’ refers to some hunters, or whether it refers to wolves who are characterized as hunting-wolves. Thus the understanding of a word *qua* name, noun, verb, etc. and its function in an utterance is syntactically

driven. This happens at the pre-semantic level. Once a word is considered to be a name, then the hearer ought to engage in a sort of mind-reading activity in order to disambiguate the name and grasp whom the speaker intends to talk about. In the head of the speaker the name is not ambiguous. It refers to the object she has in mind. This depends on the file she activates.

If one uses ‘Paul’ one is likely to refer to male individuals. If one baptizes one’s baby-girl ‘Paul’ one is breaking a well-established convention of use. In Italian one ought to choose between ‘Paolo’ or ‘Paola’ for his baby-boy or baby-girl, respectively. The same with Russian: one must choose between ‘Aleksandr’ or ‘Aleksandra’, ‘Eugeny’ or ‘Eugenyia’, ‘Vladimir’ or ‘Vladimira’, etc. for one’s baby-boy and baby-girl respectively. It is also interesting to notice that in Russian most family names also mark the gender: ‘Kurnikov’ vs. ‘Kurnikova’, ‘Safin’ vs. ‘Safina’, ‘Tolstoy’ vs. ‘Tostoyova’, etc. In these cases the generalized conversational implicature triggered by the stereotypical information carried by the name is even more evident. Furthermore, in Russia and Ukraine, patronymics (based on the father’s given name) as a means of conveying lineage are required as a middle name. Patronymics mark the referent gender.<sup>68</sup> Yet, in many linguistic communities one can baptize both one’s baby-girl and one’s baby-boy ‘Chris’, ‘Hilary’, or ‘Robin’; insofar as these names do not carry stereotypical information concerning the gender, they are, as I argued, gender-silent. As such, they do not

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<sup>68</sup> A woman named ‘Eugenyia’ with a father named ‘Nikolay’ would be known as Eugenyia Nikolayevna (Eugenyia daughter of Nikolay), while a man named ‘Igor’ with a father named ‘Nikolay’ would be known as Igor Nikolayevich (Igor son of Nikolay).

trigger a generalized conversational implicature concerning the gender of the referent. As I see it, the gender-specification is determined at the presemantic level of context. Since this determination belongs to the category of generalized conversational implicatures, it is not part of the literal, lexical, meaning of the name. It is triggered by what I characterized as the stereotypical and default interpretation, associated with the word.<sup>69</sup>

Generalized conversational implicatures, like many presuppositions, are computed online. According to the rational reconstruction I am proposing they pertain to the presemantic use of context. They are likely to belong to the sphere of (tacit) knowledge one internalizes when learning her mother tongue and how to use sentences to express one's thoughts. In learning English, for instance, one comes to know that "Airplanes fly", unlike "Boats swim", is an accepted sentence, though there seems to be no rationale for that. There is no cogent reason I can imagine to explain why we came to characterize planes as flying things like birds but not boats or submarines as swimming entities like fish. This is, I guess, a kind of linguistic knowledge a competent speaker comes to internalize. Like many (unconscious) biases, generalized conversational implicatures interfere with one's syntactic and semantic competence. For these reasons they are often automatically calculated online. Just as a speaker would be classified

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<sup>69</sup> If one were to follow Levinson's (2001) treatment of generalized conversational implicatures, one would be likely to commit oneself to the view that we have some sort of pragmatic intrusion into semantics. This debate, though, as interesting as it can be, transcends the scope of this chapter. But see the previous section where, in discussing Grice's circle, I suggested that in adopting Perry's distinction between reflexive content and official (or referential content) on top of escaping Grice's circle, we can maintain a clear cut (Gricean inspired) distinction between semantics facts and pragmatics ones.

as linguistically incompetent if she could not compute that ‘but’, unlike ‘and’, entails a contrast between the two conjuncts, one who does not distinguish the occurrence of a proper name from the occurrence of a general term would not be linguistically competent. One may wonder, for instance, whether a word is used as a proper name or as another linguistic expression. In “Sure; come in”, for instance, the first word can be understood either as a proper name or as an assent. In hearing “The cat is on the sofa” one automatically computes that ‘cat’ is a count noun, while hearing “Cat is on the sofa” she would compute that ‘Cat’ is a name. In hearing “Tully is Tully” one computes that it is of the form  $a=a$ ; in hearing “Tully is Cicero” that it is of the form  $a=b$ , while hearing “Tully snores” that it is of the form  $Fa$  and that ‘Tully’ refers to an animate entity (rivers and buildings do not snore). In hearing a tokened name and in relying on the utterance in which it appears one also automatically computes the gender of the referent. This can be cashed out using the presemantic notion of context. One “knows” that in English the lemma (or generic name) ‘Mary’ is usually adopted, in the creation of a proper name, for a female person. If I am right, generalized conversational implicatures, unlike particularized conversational implicatures, exploit a presemantic use of context and get automatically computed. As such, they often work at the subconscious level and rarely reach a speaker’s reflective mind.

Once the gender-specification is in place one can link the name with the relevant anaphoric pronoun and/or use appropriate linguistic constructions. By voicing ‘Robyn’/‘Robin’ one can refer either to the famous ex-Arsenal and Manchester United striker Robin Van Persie, the photographer Robyn Hitchcock, the linguist Robyn Carston or the singer

Robyn Fenty (best known as Rihanna).<sup>70</sup> If one acquainted with only these four people says: “Most people love Robyn because *he* is so intelligent” one intends to refer to either Robin Van Persie or Robyn Hitchcock, while if one says “Most people love Robyn because *she* is so intelligent” one refers to either Robyn Carston or Rihanna (well, if one knows Robyn Carston one is likely to take ‘Robyn’ to refer to her, without suggesting, though, that Rihanna is not intelligent). With homonyms that are not gender-silent, the name itself, *via* a generalized conversational implicature, suggests which anaphoric pronoun to use. Thus a sentence like:

- (1) John<sub>1</sub> is happy because *he*<sub>1</sub> won the lottery

is uncontroversial, while the following, literally understood, is not:

- (2) ?\* John<sub>1</sub> is happy because *she*<sub>1</sub> won the lottery

The following phrases, though, are both uncontroversial

- (3) Hillary<sub>1</sub> is happy because *she*<sub>1</sub> won the lottery  
 (4) Hillary<sub>1</sub> is happy because *he*<sub>1</sub> won the lottery

insofar as the name ‘Hillary’, as we saw, is gender-silent.

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<sup>70</sup> As I already mentioned in a previous footnote, in US and Canadian English ‘Robyn’ is usually used for females while ‘Robin’ can be used for either males or females. For argument’s sake we can here forget these differences, for in spoken English “Robin’ and ‘Robyn’ sound exactly the same.

Furthermore, in cases where the antecedent of an anaphoric pronoun is a gender-silent noun, we can substitute the anaphoric ‘he’ (+pronoun, +male) with the gender-neutral ‘they’ (+pronoun, neutral). Thus (6) is nowadays more acceptable, or politically correct, than (5):

- (5) If a student<sub>1</sub> wants to come to my office, he<sub>1</sub> should make an appointment
- (6) If a student<sub>1</sub> wants to come to my office, they<sub>1</sub> should make an appointment<sup>71</sup>

When the antecedent is a proper name suggesting the gender we ought to use either ‘he’ or ‘she’. We cannot say: “If Mary wants to come to my office, he should make an appointment” meaning that Mary should make an appointment, without breaking a well-established convention of use. In case the antecedent is a gender-silent name, we are forced to use ‘he’ or ‘she’ as well. Gender-silent names, unlike gender-indeterminate nouns, prevent the use of ‘they’ as a pronoun coindexed with them. Hence, (7) is, to say the least, awkward:

- (7) ?\* If Chris<sub>1</sub> wants to come to my office, they<sub>1</sub> should make an appointment<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> One could also use the common ‘she or he’ and say: “If a student comes to my office she or he must make an appointment”.

<sup>72</sup> Maybe one could say: “If Chris wants to come to my office, he or she (s/he) should make an appointment”. To my ears this sounds, if not ungrammatical, awkward as well, insofar as it suggests that the speaker/writer does not know the gender of whom he is talking about and thus does not know whom he is talking about. In other words, when one uses a name one usually has some specific



This seems to further suggest that a proper name's gender must be presemantically resolved when we engage in a speech act, i.e., that the gender specification of a name is, most of the time, mandatory.<sup>73</sup>

Whether one accepts the type/token distinction for names or embraces (as I did) Kaplan's (1990) distinction between names and generic names—*viz.* the view that a name, say 'Aristotle', when used to designate the philosopher, is a *different* proper name from the homophonic name designating Onassis—we can safely adopt the idea I have been proposing. That is, names come equipped with some stereotypical information. In other words, anything referred to as 'Pauline', 'Pia' or 'Rose' is likely to be animate and feminine, while anything referred to as 'New York', 'Switzerland', 'Finland' or 'Middleborough' is likely to be non-animate. This extrinsic information conveyed by a tokened proper name is the property the name inherits, so to speak, from the generic name (or lemma) that has been adopted when the creation of the proper name occurred, i.e., the lemma adopted in the creation of a new word. For these reasons, the stereotypical information does not affect the semantic value of the tokened name. As such, this information does not undermine the view that names are Millian tools of direct reference. This information works at the presemantic level of context in triggering generalized conversational

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individual in mind and for this very reason one associates the right anaphoric pronoun to it. If one does not have a specific individual in mind one would rather bracket the name with quotation marks and say: "If someone named/called/... 'Chris' comes to my office, he or she should make an appointment".

<sup>73</sup> It may be worth noticing that in languages marking the grammatical gender, names for persons come with a gender specification: it is only when adopting or incorporating "foreign" names that we face the gender-selection problem.

implicatures and in guiding the audience in grasping whom the speaker has in mind and whom she intends to talk about.

The idea that names are associated with some stereotypical information is further highlighted if we consider constructions with the verbs ‘to name’, ‘to baptize’, and the like.

- (8) They named/baptized/... him/?\*her ‘John’<sup>74</sup>  
 (9) They named/baptized/... ?\*him/her ‘Mary’

The puzzlement raised by linking the pronoun ‘him’ with a name like ‘Mary’, whose conventional use is for females, suggests that the name mentioned is not a mere tag conveying no information except that the bearer bears that name. If a name were a mere tag we would not be able to explain why “They named him ‘Mary’” is, to say the least, awkward.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> In these examples the quotation marks surrounding the name could be omitted, for the verbs ‘to baptize/name/call/...’ Theta-mark the argument to be a name and thus the quotation marks may be superfluous. For simplicity’s sake, though, I have continued using the quotation marks.

<sup>75</sup> A Swiss would likely consider a sentence like “They call him Mary” ungrammatical. For Switzerland legally requires that a given name clearly indicate the gender of its bearer (see Allerton 1987: 89). Under Franco’s dictatorship Spain forbade the use of gender-indeterminate names as well; it did so by forbidding the use of non-Christian names (there are no names of Saints that do not mark the gender). In English as well if we were to baptize a boy ‘Mary’ we would be infringing some established conventions and the boy would likely be offended if he were referred to using the demonstrative ‘she’. A similar story can be told about many geographical names, in particular the ones that contain classifiers like ‘town’, ‘bridge’, ‘land’, ‘side’ or ‘borough’ which conventionally mark the name

This is further highlighted by cross-linguistic evidence. In Italian if we associate a name marking the feminine gender with a male and *vice-versa* we are breaking a well entrenched convention:

- (10) *Lo* hanno chiamato ‘Mario’/?\*‘Maria’ [they called him ‘Mario’/?\*‘Maria’]
- (11) *La* hanno chiamata ‘Maria’/?\*‘Mario’ [they called her ‘Maria’/?\*‘Mario’]

Although the names ‘Maria’ and ‘Mario’ are not used but mentioned, this suggests that they convey some stereotypical information resting on a well-established convention of use suggesting the gender of the referent. And it is by virtue of this stereotypical information that sentences like “*Lo* hanno chiamato ‘Maria’” are awkward, for there is a gender conflict between ‘*lo*’ marking the masculine gender and ‘Maria’ suggesting the feminine one.

I should stress, once again, that the account I propose does not undermine the Millian or direct reference conception of naming, *viz.* the view that names refer without the mediation of a Fregean mode of presentation entering into the proposition expressed (or official/referential content) by an utterance containing the name. The stereotypical information associated with a name only suggests the class of individuals

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as a geographical name (e.g.: ‘Middletown’, ‘Stamford-bridge’, ‘Riverside’, ‘Greenland’, ‘Finland’, ‘Switzerland’, ‘Middleborough’, ‘Edinburgh’, etc.). Names like these conventionally mark a place as their referent, i.e., these suffixes bring to the surface, so to speak, the fact that these names’ “linguistic meanings” indicate that they stand for a place. How awkward it would be to name a baby, say, ‘Riverside’ or ‘Switzerland’.

that can be (directly) referred to. A name's stereotypical information only reflects the conventions of use associated with a name.<sup>76</sup> To begin with, names by themselves do not refer: speakers using names refer. A name is a referential tool only when used. What the name stands for depends on the particular tokening of that very name. One cannot be taxed as linguistically incompetent when one does not know whom Jane refers to when using 'David'. Yet a linguistically competent speaker knows that 'David' is a proper name. Furthermore, a native speaker also masters some conventions of use and as such she knows that 'David' is paradigmatically used to single out male individuals and she can thus compute (unconsciously) the generalized conversational implicature *that David is a male*.

As I argued, names are sentence and discourse sensitive. On the one hand, the discourse in which a name appears may contribute in determining whether it is a name for an animate entity, an event, a location, etc. On the other hand, the discourse situation helps in associating the name with some encyclopedic information. If one hears or reads, for instance:

- (12) Robin Van Persie won the FA footballer of the year award in 2010. The Arsenal captain scored more than 35 goals that season

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<sup>76</sup> Empirical evidence based on double dissociation, i.e., the view that the use of names and the use of common nouns exploit different neuropsychological abilities, also points to the conclusion that names are devices of direct reference (see Semenza 2009). See also, the previous chapter.

- (13) London won the contest; the capital of England hosted the 2012 Summer Olympics
- (14) Tony Blair got GB into the Iraq war. The 2003 British Prime Minister misled the parliament

The default interpretation is that in (12) ‘Robin Van Persie’ is coreferential with ‘the Arsenal captain’, in (13) ‘London’ is coreferential with ‘the capital of England’ and in (14) ‘Tony Blair’ is coreferential with ‘the 2003 British Prime Minister’. Even if one knows nothing about soccer and the Premier League, London and the Olympic games, or England’s politics and the Iraq war, in reading these sentences (and taking them to be true) one comes to learn that Robin Van Persie was Arsenal’s captain (in 2010), that London is the capital of England and that Tony Blair was the British Prime Minister in 2003. A competent speaker is thus in a position to stock into her mental file labeled ‘Robin Van Persie’ the information that in 2010 he was the captain of Arsenal, that he won the FA footballer of the year award and that he scored more than 35 goals.

The view that names, unlike nouns, are referential devices used to single out *specific* individuals, i.e., are singular terms, is further highlighted if we consider, once again, some cross-linguistic data. In languages (e.g.: Catalan and Milanese) where names for individuals come with a determiner, they come with the *definite* article: ‘el’/‘ul’ and ‘la’. When a name is associated with determiners like ‘some’ and ‘many’ or an indefinite article, as in:

- (15) There are some/many Davids in my class
- (16) I met a Mary

they ought to be interpreted “meta-linguistically”, i.e., meaning that there are some/many people named/called/... ‘David’ and that I met someone named/called/... ‘Mary’. In such cases the name is used attributively, not referentially. It sort of ceases to be a proper name.

Furthermore, the view that names convey some stereotypical information does not undermine Kripke’s (1980) view that names, unlike definite descriptions, are rigid designators used to refer to the same individual in all possible worlds where he/she/it exists.<sup>77</sup> In other terms, the specific use of a name picking up a particular individual in the actual world is a directly referential term referring independently of any mode of presentation one can associate to it. As such, it is a rigid designator referring to that individual in all the possible worlds in which it exists. And it is so insofar as the (actual) referent itself enters the proposition expressed or official content (intuitively what is said). The (singular) proposition can then be evaluated across possible worlds (or circumstances of evaluation, to borrow Kaplan’s terminology). Rigidity, as I understand it, is derivative from direct reference. In particular, a name is a rigid designator when used to single out an object of discourse: only once reference is fixed (in the actual world) do questions pertaining to counterfactual situations arise. Actually, it is commonly accepted (see Kaplan 1977) that indexicals are rigid designators as well. Thus, indexicals rigidly designate only at the level of language use (for they fix their

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<sup>77</sup> For more on this see, for instance, Bach (1997, 2002). The picture proposed, though, does not embrace Bach’s Nominal Description Theory in claiming that a name ‘N’ is semantically equivalent to “bearer of ‘N’”. On the other hand, though, like Bach, I subscribe to the view that the use of a name in argument position expresses the reflexive property that the referent bears that name. And the latter is captured at the reflexive level or content of the utterance.

reference in the context of the utterance). The rigidity of an indexical is inherited from its tokening in a reference-fixing episode. Reference-fixing is thus what confers rigidity or non-rigidity on an expression. As such, rigidity is best understood as a property of a token rather than a property of a type. If proper names, like indexicals and descriptions used referentially, are tools used to convey what the speaker has in mind and intends to talk about, rigidity as well could (also) be characterized in cognitive terms. That is, on the speaker entertaining a singular, *de re*, thought.

## CONCLUSION

I am quite sure that in this rather long journey, interrupted by various interferences requiring many detours, I have been unable to persuade most readers. I hope, nonetheless, that at least a few readers have been convinced that proper names, and naming in general, is still a topic worth investigating.

One of my aims has been to challenge the Millian dictum that names denote but do not connote without undermining the Millian lesson that names are devices of direct reference contributing the referent into the proposition expressed (or official content). In so doing I focused on the complex cognitive and psychological role names play both in organizing our mental life and in everyday communication. I tried to show how both the referentialist and the descriptivist intuitions concerning proper names help us to deal with the connotative aspect of proper names and keep a straight distinction between the latter and other words (in particular indexicals and count nouns). I hope to have been able to show: (i) How names help to organize our mental life by aiding us in storing, cumulating, retrieving and transmitting information about individuals; (ii) that they do so insofar as they are (or translate) names of the ideas (or files) we have about individuals (as such, names allow us to entertain singular [*de re*] thoughts); (iii) How names can play these specific cognitive roles inasmuch as they perform a double role—they are terms of direct reference and help in entertaining singular (*de re*) thoughts about the referents; and (iv) How names, *qua* empathic inducers, make their referent



cognitively salient and, as such, they obey some primitive psychological motives governing complex human social interactions. I presented some empirical evidence supporting these claims.

I have also attempted to show how names, like other words, convey some information that speakers-hearers exploit in building and understanding sentences. Although names are tags, and as such, devices of direct reference, the stereotypical information they convey helps the speaker-hearer to characterize some feature the referent is likely to satisfy, i.e., whether it is a male or female, an animate or inanimate entity, etc. This stereotypical information conveyed by a proper name can be cashed out along the lines of Grice's generalized conversational implicatures. This implicature is what helps in some cases of anaphoric resolution.

I also pointed out how the predicate the name is associated with often helps in determining the ontological category the name's referent belongs to. In this respect names can be viewed as sentence and discourse sensitive. In arguing about that, though, I showed how a name's context sensitivity differs from an indexical's context sensitivity. While the latter exploits the context of the utterance to fix the object of discourse, names come to us pre-packed with their semantic value. Names are conventionally linked to their bearers and they tend to have a fixed reference. As such the speaker is not responsible in fixing the name's value (unless the speaker is creating a new name, like, for instance, in a baptism episode). What the speaker ought to select is which name to use or which convention to exploit to convey to the audience the individual she has in mind and intends to talk about. Yet, I also showed that since reference is fixed by the tokening of a proper name, sometimes one can refer to an individual even if the latter does not bear the name used to single it out. With the use of an indexical, on the other hand, the speaker

selects the referent during the very use of the indexical. And she does so by exploiting some relevant contextual parameters the indexical is sensitive to. For, the tokening of an indexical, by its very linguistic meaning (character) directs the speaker-hearer to some contextual features. As such indexicals exploit context at the semantic level, while in the case of a tokening of a proper name the name cannot change the fixed reference that the name carries.

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