

Reference and Quantification: The Partee Effect

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Proper Names and Language ¹

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1.1 Introduction

Partee (1973) discussed quotation from the perspective of the then relatively new theory of transformational grammar.² As she pointed out, the phenomenon presents many curious puzzles. In some ways quotes seem quite separate from their surrounding text; they may be in a different dialect, as in her example in (1),

- (1) ‘I talk better English than the both of youse!’ shouted Charles, thereby convincing me that he didn’t. [Partee (1973):ex. 20]

or even in a different language, as in (2):

- (2) Louise said ‘Je voudrais un auto-da-fé’, but I didn’t know what she meant.

On the other hand the contents of a quotation are available to be used for ellipsis, as in (1), or other kinds of anaphoric devices, as in the examples in (3).

- (3) a. The sign says ‘George Washington slept here, but I don’t believe *he* really did.’ [Partee (1973):ex. 26;]

¹I am grateful to Kent Bach and Larry Horn for extensive comments on prior drafts of this paper which have resulted in substantial improvements. Nevertheless possibly neither is completely happy with all of the remaining features.

²Partee’s paper was actually presented in Berkeley, California in May of 1971, the spring of my first year of graduate school. It was my first exposure to Barbara’s clarity and wit and I retain a vivid memory of the talk despite not having a very good memory for much of anything else.

- b. What he actually said was, ‘It’s clear that you’ve given this problem a great deal of thought,’ but he meant quite *the opposite*. [Partee (1973):ex. 32]

Her conclusion was that quotations are not actually part of the sentence in which they occur, yet their phonological form is definitely there, just as the utterance of another person in a discourse is there in the context, to be used for reference and ellipsis;

all the apparent evidence for deeper syntactic and semantic structure is a result of the main sentence speaker’s understanding and analyzing the noises he is quoting as a sentence, just as he understands and analyzes a sentence...that comes to him from someone else. [Partee (1973):418]

Thus we account for the potential separateness of quotation from the language and dialect of the speaker of the quoted text by postulating that the quoted material is not linguistically a part of that text. However its phonological availability makes the rest of its linguistic content available to both speaker and addressee, to the best of their linguistic abilities.

In arriving at this conclusion Partee drew on Davidson’s demonstrative theory, which was at that time in the process of being developed. On this theory the quoted material serves, in effect, as part of the context of utterance, the text-external world (in the happy phrasing of Lambrecht (1994)). The quotation marks are like a demonstrative element, to be accompanied by tacit pointing to the quoted material.

Thus instead of:

‘Alice swooned’ is a sentence

we could write:

Alice swooned. The expression of which this is a token is a sentence.

Imagine the token of ‘this’ supplemented with fingers pointing to the token of ‘Alice swooned’. (Davidson (1979):91.)

This is Davidson’s way of making quoted material escape its textual bounds, yet remain available for reference.³

Partee focussed on direct quotation of whole utterances (as in (1)-(3) above), specifically excluding what she called “word quotation”,⁴

³Rich Hall has pointed out to me a possible problem. Note that on Davidson’s analysis, the sentence Alice swooned appears by itself - apparently as an assertion, although the following sentence does not take it this way. It would seem that some device (like quotation) is needed to remove the assertive force.

⁴I have tried to adhere to the following punctuation conventions:

as in (4):

- (4) I used to think that the word “ellipsis” was related to “elide”.
 [Partee (1973):ex. 5]

as well as mixed direct and indirect quotation, as in (5):

- (5) Captain Davis said that he did not intend to “go soft on those
 bomb-throwing hippies”. [Partee (1973):ex. 6]

However she tacitly acknowledged that her reasons for doing so were not strong (411).

More recently, Cappelen and Lepore (1997), in developing Davidson’s approach, have specifically argued for overlapping treatment of all of these varieties of quotation, plus what Cappelen and Lepore call “pure quotation”, exemplified by Davidson’s example, where an expression is cited for the purpose of discussing its linguistic properties ((Cappelen and Lepore, 1997, p. 427); actually Cappelen and Lepore’s category of pure quotation appears to subsume Partee’s category of word quotation). In any case, certainly an analysis which treats these types of quotation as involving the same mechanism is to be preferred to one which treats them differently, other things being equal.

Analyses of quotation come into play in a perhaps unexpected quarter — the analysis of the semantics of proper names. In this paper I would like to take a look at a particular approach to the semantics of proper names which appears to be gaining wide support, and which involves a claim that proper names have a self referential aspect, either in virtue of explicitly expressing a quoted version of themselves, or in virtue of expressing a self referential relation. Versions of this METALINGUISTIC approach to proper names often incorporate a claim that proper names are not a part of any language, and it is this claim that we will be focussing on in particular. In Section 1.2 we will quickly review the history of the treatment of proper names. In Section 1.3 we will look more closely at two particular exemplars of the metalinguistic approach to proper names, and their respective claims of the extralinguisticity of proper names. In Section 1.5 we will look at arguments for and against the claim that names are not part of a language. Section 1.6 will summarize some of the other issues in the semantics of

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- (i) double quotation marks for quoting someone else and for reference to meta-language expressions;
 - (ii) single quotation marks for quotes within quotes, for scare quotes, and for reference to meaning; and
 - (iii) italics for reference to object language expressions. Within quoted material conventions of the original are preserved, modulo (ii).

proper names, and Section 1.7 contains concluding remarks.

1.2 Historical Review

1.2.1 Classical Approaches

Mill (1851) asserted that proper names, unlike ordinary nouns denoting concrete objects, lack a connotation (in Mill's sense of 'connotation'). In other words, a proper name does not express any properties in virtue of which some item is denoted by it. They are, as it were, simply labels; they are nondescriptive. To cite one of Mill's famous examples: although the town of Dartmouth may have originally been called that because it lay at the mouth of the Dart river, should the river change its course so that the town no longer lay at the mouth, it would still be called Dartmouth.

Frege (1892) differed from Mill on the semantics of proper names, apparently holding that proper names do express a sense, albeit one which can vary from speaker to speaker of a language. These senses would be equivalent to the sense expressed by some definite description. The sense of the name Aristotle, for instance, might for some speakers be the same as the sense of the Stagirite teacher of Alexander.⁵

Russell (1905), also differed from Mill on proper names and, like Frege, held them to be equivalent to definite descriptions semantically. However Russell did not believe in senses. Rather, definite descriptions were analyzed by him as quantificational expressions, and so proper names would be equivalent to quantificational expressions also on his view.

Others have argued for a somewhat vaguer descriptive approach. Both Wittgenstein (1953) and Searle (1958) put forward CLUSTER views, on which names are associated with a cluster of definite descriptions, of which some indeterminate number must be true of an entity for it to be denoted by the name.

Kripke (1980) argued strongly against all of these descriptive theories of proper names (Frege's, Russell's, Wittgenstein's and Searle's), and in favor of a return to Mill's nondescriptive view. Kripke's modal argument notes that Mill's view explains the difference between pairs like 6, where DESC stands for an expression expressing one of Nixon's contingent properties.

⁵"In the case of an actual proper name such as 'Aristotle' opinions as to the sense may differ. It might, for instance, be taken to be the following: the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. Anybody who does this will attach another sense to the sentence 'Aristotle was born in Stagira' than will a man who takes as the sense of the name: the teacher of Alexander the Great who was born in Stagira" Frege (1892):58, n. 2.

- (6) a. Nixon might not have been Nixon.
 b. Nixon might not have been DESC.

Intuitively, (6a) is false but (6b) is true for any instantiation of DESC. (In the relevant cases instantiations of DESC will be definite descriptions, but of course 6b will be true for any expression expressing a contingent property of Nixon.) Put in terms of possible worlds, proper names designate the same thing in every possible world in which that thing exists (Nixon always designates Nixon). In Kripke's phrase, proper names are rigid designators (Kripke (1980):48f). However any definite description expressing a contingent property of, say, Nixon, will not denote Nixon in a possible world where he exists but lacks that property. A phrase like *the winner of the 1968 US Presidential election* denotes Hubert Humphrey in that far off world in which Humphrey won, and *Nixon might not have been the winner of the 1968 US Presidential election* is true because of such possibilities.

1.2.2 The Metalinguistic Approach

During the course of his discussion Kripke referred to the somewhat different descriptive theory suggested in some remarks of Kneale (1962). Kneale had observed that "it is obviously trifling... that Socrates is called Socrates", and suggested by way of explanation that that is because *Socrates* **means** 'the individual called *Socrates*' ((Kneale, 1962, p. 630)). Kneale's quotational view was an early instance of the metalinguistic approach.

Kripke rejected Kneale's suggestion, adding two arguments to the modal argument cited above (Kripke (1980), 68ff). One of these, the CIRCULARITY argument, claims that metalinguistic theories of proper names are unsatisfactory as a theory of reference, since they presuppose that relationship. Being called by a name and being referred to by a name seem to be virtually the same property, and so the theory presupposes the relation it is supposed to elucidate. As Kripke put it,

We ask, 'to whom does he refer by "Socrates"?' And then the answer is given, 'Well, he refers to the man to whom he refers.' If this were all there was to the meaning of a proper name, then no reference would get off the ground at all. (Kripke (1980), 70).

We will return briefly to the circularity argument the penultimate section below.

Kripke's other argument, the GENERALITY argument, relies on the fact that the metalinguistic theory is not one that any one would want to adopt for words in general. As Kripke presented this argument it was linked to the implicit argument from Kneale given above for the

metalinguistic approach.

For example, though it may be informative to tell someone that horses are used in races, it is trifling to tell him that horses are called ‘horses’. Therefore this could only be the case because the term ‘horse’, means in English ‘the things called “horses”’. (Kripke (1980), 69)

Note the heavy sarcasm here; clearly this is not a theory of meaning of which Kripke approves. And since most people agree with Kripke that a metalinguistic theory would not be a good one to use for words in general, anyone who espouses it for proper names will need to explain why proper names are relevantly different from other words.

Note that this requirement of a response to Kripke’s generality argument seems to hold even for those metalinguistic theorists who do not explicitly adopt Kneale’s argument (despite the fact that Kripke’s presentation of this argument drew implicitly on Kneale’s remarks). That is because we have no reason to think, a priori, that words will differ in the **kinds** of meanings they have. True, a distinction between function words (grammatical morphemes) and content words (lexical morphemes) has been established within linguistics, where function words (unlike content words) express one of a certain small class of grammatical meanings such as number or verbal aspect. Here however there are relatively clear criteria for making the distinction between function and content words, and it has stood the test of time. On the other hand within the category of content words there seems to have been a tacit assumption among both linguists and philosophers of language that one of theory should work for all of them. Of course Kripke (and Putnam) did argue that proper names were different from other words in being nondescriptive, but they also argued for the same view of natural kind terms (one of which is Kripke’s example *horse*). The metalinguistic approach proposes a more radically different kind of semantic analysis for proper names by themselves. At first glance, then, the question can arise of why proper names should have this particular kind of analysis while other words do not, and this is the essential challenge of the generality argument.

In any case the generality argument has been taken to be a strong one. Indeed, Recanati describes it as Kripke’s “ost serious” objection ((Recanati, 1993, p. 161)), and Simchen takes this argument as “decisive” against metalinguistic approaches (Simchen, 2003, p. 290).

Despite Kripke’s critical comments the metalinguistic approach has become more popular recently, though most partisans promote it for virtues other than the one cited by Kneale. Some of these partisans are Bach (1987), Bach (2002), Katz (1990, 2001), Recanati (1993), Geurts

(1997), and Justice (2001). (David Lewis also expressed his support for this type of theory, in ancillary comments during a talk given at the University of Michigan not long before his untimely death.) It should be noted that there are many differences of detail among the analyses of these proponents. In the following we will focus on two particular versions of the theory, those of Recanati (1993) and Bach (1987, 2002)).

As noted above, one issue associated with metalinguistic theories is whether or not proper names are a part of language. Partee's investigation of quotation led to the conclusion that quotations are not a **linguistic** part of the sentences in which they occur. That is, they are as extraneous to an utterance as an interjection by another speaker would be. If the semantic impact of proper names is as the metalinguistic theory claims, namely, that a name expresses the property of being the bearer of itself, then it would seem that the main burden of a name is simply to appear, to provide a token of itself, rather than forming a part of the of the language of the surrounding text. That is, while in the case of other words their external form is irrelevant to their contribution, proper names, on the metalinguistic approach, are like quoted material, whose external form is really all that matters. And if names are not part of the language of the surrounding text then, since there is no reason to consider them to belong to some other language, they are not part of any language at all. The remarks of the preceding paragraph are meant to be suggestive. These considerations may not be a motivating factor for any holder of a metalinguistic theory, and they may not lead inexorably to the conclusion that proper names are extralinguistic. Nevertheless, as noted above, some metalinguistic theorists, including — Bach and Recanati, have urged that the conclusion is correct, and the thesis that proper names are not a part of language is useful to them in coming up with a response to Kripke's generality argument. It is time to take a closer look at these two theories, and their responses to the generality argument.

1.3 The Approaches of Recanati and Bach

As suggested above, most recent defenders of the metalinguistic approach to proper names have not embraced Kneale's argument for it, or at least have not relied solely on that kind of argument. Nevertheless the generality objection must still be addressed in each case.

1.3.1 Recanati's Approach

According to Recanati proper names are indexicals like *you* and *now*. (See Burge (1973) and Pelczar and Rainsbury (1998), for other indexical approaches.) All that the language specifies about a proper name NN

is ‘that there is an entity x such that an utterance $S(NN)$ is true iff $\langle x \rangle$ satisfies $S(\)$ ’, and ‘*that x is the bearer of the name NN* ’ (Recanati (1993), 139; italics in original). The entity which actually is the bearer of the name NN , the reference of the name, is determined by a **social** convention, rather than a **linguistic** one.

In this framework, a proper name refers by linguistic convention to whoever (or whatever) happens to be the bearer of that name; but who (what) is the bearer of the name is a contextual, non-linguistic matter, a matter of social convention. The reference of the name thus depends on a contextual factor, as the reference of an indexical expression does. (Recanati (1993), 140)

This is one sense in which Recanati views proper names as indexical, and also as, in a sense, not a part of the language. (We will see another below.)

One peculiar feature of Recanati’s view is his apparent perception of indexicality. Prototypically, indexicals point to features of the context of utterance – the text-external world – in terms relative to that context. These features are items such as the speaker and addressee, the time and place of the utterance, and other entities in the immediate extralinguistic context. As such the referents of indexicals typically vary with utterance – when Sue says *I*, the referent is Sue, and when Bill says *I*, the referent is Bill. Proper names, on the other hand, do not have these characteristics – there is no need for the bearer of a proper name which is used in an utterance to be part of the extralinguistic context of that utterance; and a given proper name will have the same referent no matter what the context of utterance is. As Bach points out, “the name-bearer relation is not context-sensitive at all. . . .” (Bach (2002), 91).

There is another sense in which Recanati seems to view proper names as indexical, which depends on the fact that a given proper name form may have two or more referents. *Paul Simon* is the name of a well-known former senator as well as of a well-known musician. It is true that who the referent of a given occurrence of *Paul Simon* is depends on a contextual factor – namely the intention of the speaker. Recanati seems to suggest that this makes proper names indexical also: he contrasts his indexical view with a ‘homonymy’ view, on which there would be two homonymous names *Paul Simon* (Recanati (1993), 143ff). But a word like *bat* is not viewed as indexical, despite the fact that the speaker’s intention will determine whether a flying mammal or a piece of baseball equipment is in question. As Kaplan says, responding to a hypothetical scholar who takes a similar line to the one Recanati puts forward:

Some may claim that they simply use ‘indexical’ in a wider sense than I (perhaps to mean something like ‘contextual’). But we must be wary of an overbroad usage. Is every ambiguous expression an indexical because we look to utterer’s intentions to disambiguate? Indeed, is every expression an indexical because it might have been a groan? (Kaplan (1989), 562)

This kind of homonymy is known to exist in natural language, and given the other ways in which proper names differ from ordinary indexicals, viewing them as homonymous rather than indexical seems more natural.

In any case the relevant byproduct of Recanati’s particular indexicality claim for proper names is the fact that, in his view, this makes them not a part of a language. A central part of his approach is his assumption 2* (138; boldface added):

(2*) The conventions assigning bearers to proper names are not linguistic conventions. They are part of the context **rather than** part of the language.

And this helps Recanati to address Kripke’s generality and circularity arguments.

The generality argument asks why the metalinguistic analysis of proper names should not be extended to ordinary words. Recanati’s reply is that the conventions associating proper names with their bearers are not linguistic conventions, whereas the conventions associating other words, like red or alienist with their extensions *are* linguistic conventions.

Suppose 2* is right: then there is a difference between proper names and ordinary words like ‘alienist’ or ‘red’, and this difference provides a good reason for saying that proper names do, while other words do not, include ‘being so-called’ as part of their meaning. (164)

Given this fundamental difference between proper names and other kinds of words, on Recanati’s view, the implicit *ceteris paribus* clause of Kripke’s argument does not apply.

1.3.2 Bach’s Approach

Bach calls his approach the “Nominal Description Theory” (NDT):

“ ‘nominal’ not because it isn’t really a theory but because it says that when a proper name occurs in a sentence it expresses no substantive property but merely the property of bearing that very name” (2002, 73).

Bach says that a name *N*, when it is used as a full NP, is “semantically equivalent...’ to the bearer of “*N*”” ((Bach, 2002, p. 75)).⁶ “Semantically equivalent” does not mean, according to Bach, that you can simply substitute the definite description any time the name occurs. Rather,

the name ‘*N*’, unlike the phrase “bearer of ‘*N*,’” does not express the bearing relation or the property of being ‘*N*’. It expresses only the relation of bearing ‘*N*’. And whereas the phrase mentions ‘*N*’, the name does not mention itself. (Bach (2002), 76)

Bach resists the description “quotational” for his theory of proper names, unlike other developers of metalinguistic approaches. Nevertheless he does insist that names are not part of a language. “Proper names are not lexical items in a language” (Bach (2002), 82). An earlier statement indicates an initial rationale for this conclusion.

It is important to appreciate that NDT makes a *generic* claim about proper names. It provides a schema that can be filled in by any proper name. As such, it applies routinely to familiar and unfamiliar names alike. This suggests that one’s knowledge about particular bearers of particular names does not count as strictly linguistic knowledge. (Bach (2002), 76; italics in original.)

The reasoning here has not been spelled out in full detail. After all, there are plenty of classes of words about which one can make blanket statements which apply “routinely to familiar and unfamiliar” items, but about which we would not be inclined to say that knowledge of the individual meanings of such words was not linguistic knowledge. For example we can make a generic statement about count nouns: they individuate their denotation. Similarly it has been argued that determiners in general are conservative in the sense of Barwise and Cooper (1981) (very roughly, they combine with a common noun phrase to denote a subset of the denotation of that phrase). But the fact that we can recognize such general statements does not lead us to think that

⁶An anonymous reader has pointed out that this way of describing his theory is problematic, because of the presence of “*N*” within quotes. Clearly Bach would not want to say that the name *Madonna* is semantically equivalent to the *bearer of ‘*N*’*. What we need are Quine’s corners - quasi-quotation marks intended to be understood as applying to the instantiations of variables within their scope rather than to the variables themselves (see e.g. (Quine, 1979, p. 35)). The reader suggested the following for a more correct statement of the theory: “For all proper names *N*, *N* means the same as [the bearer of ‘*N*’]”. Note that here we must take potential substitutions for “*N*” to be names, rather than names of names. Otherwise the quotation marks around the final occurrence of “*N*” should be removed. Similar remarks apply to Bach’s statement quoted above. I am grateful to Rich Hall for drawing my attention to this potential problem.

knowledge of the particular meanings of count nouns or determiners is not linguistic knowledge.)

Of course these general statements do not tell us what individual count nouns or determiners mean, just as Bach's proper name formula does not tell us what individual proper names denote. The difference, according to Bach, is that for names no specific information about who or what the bearer is is needed for understanding. But it is not clear that one can fully understand a sentence like *I visited Kirghiz last week*, without any knowledge of who or what *Kirghiz* denotes. Certainly one who had never heard the name before, but who recognized it as a name, would very likely still want to have some more information about the denotation in order to feel satisfied that their comprehension of that sentence was complete. (Geach argues that more than the denotation is required for understanding a proper name, and that a "proper name conveys a nominal essence; thus, 'cat' expresses the nominal essence of the thing we call 'Jemima'" (Geach (1962), 43f; italics in original).)

Bach does give other arguments for his claim of extralinguisticity, which we will review in the next section. But first let us take a look at the role of the extralinguisticity itself in Bach's response to Kripke's generality argument. Here is the reply to Kripke's generality argument which Bach gives in his 2002 paper (which is similar to the reply he gave in his 1987 book – cf. (Bach, 1987, p. 136)).

The fact that NDT applies to proper names as a class helps to explain why endorsing it does not commit one to a similar view about common nouns, e.g., that 'horse' means "thing called 'horse'." To understand 'horse' requires the specific linguistic knowledge that this word expresses the property of being a horse. Knowing the "meaning" of a name (as it occurs in a sentence) consists of recognizing that it is a name and, applying NDT's equivalence schema to it, that it expresses the property of bearing that name. (Bach (2002), 76)

In other words understanding a name does not require knowing what it is used to refer to, whereas knowing the meaning of a common noun does require familiarity with the property it expresses. Of course this reply relies heavily on buying into Bach's claim that the relation between proper names and their denotata is not linguistic. If the relation between a name and its denotation were of the same type as the relation between a common noun and its denotation, then there would be no basis to forestall Kripke's generality argument.

Although there are substantial differences between Recanati's theory and Bach's, they agree in holding that proper names are in some sense not part of a language semantically, and this conviction helps each, in his own way, to try to escape Kripke's generality argument. So let

us now look at the arguments they give for the extralinguisticity of proper names.

1.4 Proper Names and Language

There are two general kinds of argument given by Bach and Recanati collectively for the conclusion that proper names are not part of language. The first has to do with individual speakers' knowledge of what proper names denote, and the second has to do with the interlinguistic behavior of proper names. Let us address each of these in turn, and then see what our conclusions should be.

1.5 Proper Names and Linguistic Competence

Both Bach and Recanati insist forcefully that competence in the use of proper names is not required for linguistic competence — that failure to be familiar with the denotation of a particular name is not evidence of faulty linguistic training. “Name-conventions do not seem to be *linguistic* conventions because it is not necessary to know the bearer of a name such as ‘Aristotle’ or ‘Ralph Banilla’ in order to master the language” (Recanati (1993), 144; italics in original). “Proper names are not lexical items in a language. Dictionaries are not incomplete for not including them, and your vocabulary is not deficient because of all the proper names you don’t know” (Bach (2002), 82).

There are several responses to make to this line of argument. One is that, as Bach and Recanati acknowledge, there is much about proper names that is indubitably linguistic. Their phonology comports with the phonological constraints of the language which I would say they belong to. (It is true that proper names are occasionally allowed mild exceptions to phonotactic constraints, but these cases are the exception rather than the rule.) (It is true that proper names are occasionally allowed mild exceptions to phonotactic constraints, but these cases are the exception rather than the rule.) If they are not “lexical items in a language” how is that to be explained? Syntactically they belong to the category NP, and are interchangeable with other expressions of that category — something which would be very hard to explain if proper names were not expressions in a language. Furthermore we readily describe name forms as belonging to particular languages: *Guillermo* is a Spanish name, and *Mao* is a Chinese name.

Bach and Recanati argue that since failure to be familiar with certain proper names does not mean that a person’s linguistic competence is faulty, proper names do not belong to the language. But that only follows if knowledge of every word in a language were required for a

person to be regarded as competent in that language, which is obviously not the case. There are perfectly fine English speakers who do not know what *grilse* or *retinary* or *chiasmus* means. Of course it may be true that speakers of English know a relatively much smaller proportion of the proper names in English than they do of other categories of words, but that is easily explained. People only learn words for what they want to talk about. Someone who is ignorant of a named thing is not going to need to know its name. And on the other hand there are many proper names (*Shakespeare*, *Washington DC*, *Coca Cola*) which a present day English speaker **would** be regarded as deficient in their knowledge of English for not being familiar with.

In any case there is the prior question of what constitutes the language in the first place. As Chomsky has stressed, “language” in its foundational sense must be taken to refer to the competence of an individual speaker. Those entities we dub “English”, “Armenian”, “Swahili”, are much less well defined and must be viewed as a vague combination of the overlap of idiolectal grammars, modified by social and political considerations.

It may be possible and worthwhile to undertake the study of language in its sociopolitical dimensions, but this further inquiry can proceed only to the extent that we have some grasp of the properties and principles of language in a narrower sense, in the sense of individual psychology. (Chomsky (1988), 37.)

And of course the language of any individual is complete.

Recanati takes note of this contrary line of argument, and attempts to turn it aside. His counter is that it neglects the “local” character of proper names. Recanati acknowledges that there is a continuum of words based on how familiar ordinary speakers are with them, where being familiar with a word depends not only on knowing its phonological shape and syntactic category (which one can usually grasp on first hearing) but also knowing something about its semantic value. Some words would be required to be in everyone’s vocabulary, but others not. Proper names, in his view, fall at the extreme end of the continuum, and also are such that they may come into prominence and fall out again. But one could say the same about slang terms, for example – they can be extremely local and are often designed to be so, but no one has argued from that fact that they are not lexical items. And on the other hand some proper names (*Shakespeare*, *London*) have proved to have longevity.

Both Bach and Recanati point out that a dictionary is not considered incomplete if it does not include every proper name, but here again

there is a ready explanation. To include every name would obviously be impractical, if it were even possible, and also unnecessary. Most people are not familiar with most named things, and so have no reason to use those names. Furthermore most dictionaries do include a number of proper names – those which speakers of the language might be expected to want to know. In fact a random check of several pages of my American Heritage Dictionary (3rd edition) suggests that a pretty big proportion of the words in that dictionary are proper names, perhaps between a quarter and a third. (Of the 31 entries on p. 1100, 12 are proper names: (John) *Marin*, *Marina* (CA), *Marine Corps*, (Emilio) *Marinetti*, (Giambattista) *Marini*, *Marion* (city in Indiana), (Francis) *Marion*, *Maritime Alps*, *Maritime Provinces*, *Maritsa*, (Gaius) *Marius*, (Pierre) *Marivaux*.) Furthermore the main big dictionary that I know of which did not include proper names (Webster’s Third International) lost a great deal of utility because of that omission.

Compare also Geach’s remarks on this point:

I have said . . . that the use of proper nouns is dependent on the language system to which they belong; perhaps, therefore, it will be as well to mention the odd view that proper names are not exactly words and do not quite belong to the language in which they are embedded, because you would hardly look for proper names in a dictionary. On the contrary: it is part of the job of a lexicographer to tell us that “Warsaw” is the English word for ‘Warszawa’; and a grammarian would say that ‘Warszawa’ is a Polish word - a feminine noun declined like ‘mowa’. And what is wrong with this way of speaking? (Geach (1962), 26f.)

To reply to Geach’s final rhetorical question - nothing at all!

1.5.1 Interlinguistic Behavior

Bach in particular stresses that proper names cannot be translated.

Paul Ziff observed that “If I say ‘are you familiar with Hsieh Ho’s view on art?’ I am speaking English: I am not speaking a combination of English and Chinese” (1960, 86). He was not suggesting that ‘Hsieh Ho’ is an English name. His point, rather, was that proper names do not, strictly speaking, belong to particular languages, and thus are not translatable. (Bach (2002), 82)

Bach also points out that “if you wish to speak in English about your Spanish friend ‘Juan’, you do not switch to ‘John’, and in writing you do not use italics” (Bach (2002), 82).

Bach is very largely correct that proper names cannot be translated. But that is because in order to translate a term from one language to another, the target language must have a corresponding expression with approximately the same semantics value, but typically there will

not be corresponding proper names in different languages for the same entity. Of course we do not switch from *Juan* to *John* when speaking of our Spanish friend, but that's because the only name he has is *Juan*, not *John*; we do not have a name for this particular guy in English. However proper names are not in principle untranslatable, and when there are different names in different languages for the same thing (*Londres–London*, *Vienna–Wien* or *Warsaw–Warszawa* as in Geach's example above), then the one serves as the translation for the other. And we might ask what is the Spanish version of *John*, just as we do when translating an ordinary word.⁷

Granting that in the typical case translation is not possible, there is still a better way to explain Ziff's observation above about the English speaker than the radical step of removing names from the language altogether, and that is to note that names, like other words, can be **borrowed** from one language into another. It is perfectly ordinary for speakers of one language to borrow words and phrases from another language for newly acquired objects, properties, or other abstract things which speakers of the source language have words for. English has done a lot of that. Similarly when speakers of a language become aware of a particular person, place, or thing with a proper name in another language, and want to talk about it, they will borrow the name.

It is much more natural to suppose that when we use a name from another language that we have borrowed it, rather than to suppose that the name was not really in the other language (or any other language) to begin with. The phenomenon is entirely parallel to the myriad other cases of lexical borrowing between languages, and requires no unusual stipulations at all.

1.5.2 Section conclusions

We have seen that the arguments given by Bach and Recanati for their claim that proper names do not belong to any language do not hold up well under scrutiny. Furthermore there are good reasons to believe that proper names **do** belong to a language — we describe them as belonging to a language; phonologically, morphologically, and syntactically they are indubitably part of a language; and so to suppose that they are semantically anomalous in that respect is a strange claim to make and one requiring stronger arguments than those given by Bach and Recanati.

Recall Partee's comments about quoted material – that it is isolated

⁷I am grateful to Larry Horn for pointing this out to me. And we might ask what the Spanish word for *John* is, just as we do when translating an ordinary word.⁸

from the linguistic context in which it occurs, but that speakers (and addressees) will hear the sounds constituting the quotation and analyze and interpret them as best they can. There are at least a couple of reasons for thinking that proper names are not like this at all. For one thing, intuitively we have no sense of responding to proper names like we do quoted material - as though it came from a different contributor to the discourse. And secondly, were proper names like this, and always and only like this, then their interpretation would not be possible because there would be no other semantic convention to supply an interpretation. In the case where what is quoted is a phrase other than a proper name, or a sentence, the speaker and addressee, as Partee points out, will have their knowledge of the relevant language or dialect to help them interpret the quoted material. But for proper names under the metalinguistic approach there will not be any other semantic conventions to refer to. (Recanati recognizes the need for a convention associating name with bearer, but asserts that these conventions are social, and not linguistic. However as we have seen, there is little reason **not** to term a convention associating a word with its denotation “linguistic” or “semantic”.)

If the claim of extralinguisticity cannot be sustained, then the metalinguistic approach to proper names has the problem of coming up with an adequate response to Kripke’s generality argument.

1.6 Some Other Issues

Although the generality argument has been taken to be the most significant challenge for metalinguistic approaches to proper names, there are other issues in this regard. In this brief section I will just list some of these remaining issues. I do believe that when the day is over, they will not be resolvable in favor of the metalinguistic approach, but to make good on such a wager would go beyond the scope of this paper.

Two of the remaining issues have been mentioned above, in connection with Kripke’s arguments. The circularity problem is one. Recall Kripke’s point, that a theory of reference must not make essential use of the notion of reference. Metalinguistic approaches may seem to do that, since they make essential use of such notions as “bearing” a name, which seems to be the inverse of the denotation relation. Bach denies this (2002, 83), but does not give a satisfactory account of what it is to bear a name. He insists that “bearing a name is not the same property as being referred to by that name” (Bach (2002), 83), but does not give examples which show that these two properties can diverge. (He sketches a hypothetical situation in which people are referred to

by their social security numbers, but it's not clear that people would not in that circumstance also be said to bear their social security numbers.) Bach and Recanati both attempt to escape this argument by saying that they are not giving a theory of reference for proper names (Bach (2002), 84; Katz (2001) agrees with Bach here), or not giving a **complete** theory of reference (Recanati (1993), 159).

Kripke's modal argument is also a prima facie problem for metalinguistic theories. The problem, recall, was to account for the intuitive difference between sentences of the following form:

(7) a. N might not have been N.

b. N might not have been DESC.

where DESC stands for an expression expressing a contingent property of N. (7a) seems false while (7b) is true. Recanati's response to the argument takes the form of defending the truth of *Socrates might not have been the bearer of "Socrates"*, but does not explain how that sentence can be different from *Socrates might not have been Socrates* (cf. Recanati (1993), 155ff).

Bach's reply to the modal argument is to claim that (7a) has a reading on which it is true.

Suppose Aristotle's parents were debating what to call their newborn son. They were torn between 'Aristotle' (or its classical Greek version) and 'Aristocrates'. . . . Hearing this you might utter (26)

(26) If his parents had named him 'Aristocrates', Aristotle would have been Aristocrates instead of Aristotle.

It seems to me that (26) has a reading on which it is perfectly true, namely a predicative reading. (Bach (2002), 85.)

Disputing judgements is typically a weak response, but I have to say that I find Bach's (26) very difficult to get. On the other hand it is certainly true that proper names can on some occasions have predicative uses, as in Lloyd Bentsen's famous remark directed at Dan Quayle during the Vice Presidential candidate debates of 1988: *Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy*. This raises another issue – how the Millian can account for these predicative uses. That and the issue of names with more than one bearer are important and need to be dealt with in a full reply to the metalinguistic approach, but they go beyond the scope of this paper. (Katz (1994) also argues that his metalinguistic theory is not vulnerable to Kripke's modal argument; Braun (1995) contains a reply to Katz on this point.)

1.7 Concluding Remarks

In this paper I have tried to use Partee's analysis of quotation to probe a weakness in metalinguistic theories of proper names. This weakness makes them particularly vulnerable to Kripke's generality argument against metalinguistic theories, and so perhaps tips the balance against them. However, as noted in the preceding section, there are many other issues in the semantics of proper names which need to be dealt with thoroughly before any ultimate conclusions are drawn.

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