

PROPER NAMES: A DISPUTE OF MISCONCEPTIONS

ROSTISLAV PAZURKIN

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

0.1 Proper names constitute a specific class of lexical phenomena which are perfectly mastered by the everyday speaker, whilst they seem to withstand all attempts to subject them to scientific analysis and systematization. Students of proper names are thus faced by a typical linguo-theoretical problem, that of the *explication* of a certain semantic concept, which, while it is vividly present to their intuition, escapes, nevertheless, an explicit definition and description.

We know a vast range of prominent philosophers, logicians, and linguists who have long been concerned with this problem; nonetheless, the solutions proposed by them are for the most part discouraging. Some recent observations reveal, however, the decisive inaccuracy that makes all such efforts ineffective. This appears to be researchers' chronic inability to overcome some old prejudices that still envelop this question. To put it succinctly, *the lack, from the start, of an accurately stated problem* is, I suppose, what prevents investigators from arriving at an acceptable theory of proper names. In this paper — which is merely a sort of introduction to my own hypothesis — I try to unravel a tangle of confusions and contradictions which has consequently formed around this question.

0.2 The Ancients held that proper names were names for private, or individual, qualities and things (Priscian 1961: sec. II/25; Priscian 1961a: sec. III/73). *Nomina propria* were thereby contrasted with *appellativa*, which were thought of as being common to a vast number of things that shared some observable traits (Priscian 1961: II/24). This implies that, for instance, *homo* designates the class of beings which possess some common human features; whereas *Plato* is yoked to an entity which is individual, that is, logically

indivisible (*átomos*) into a number of homogeneous entities¹. In the case of several persons bearing the same name — a purely contingent fact — these persons can by no means form any specific sub-class of human beings: they do not possess in common any specific evident features (Priscian 1961 : sec. II/25).

The opposition, *nomina propria vs appellativa*, has survived in its primitive form almost until modern times. We still find it, for example, in Leibniz, who distinguished *termes généraux*, which serve to denominate genera and species, from *noms propres*, which are used wherever a need arises to indicate certain individual phenomena (Leibniz 1912: sec. III/1, § 3; III/3, §§ 1–5). What characterizes this traditional (linguistic) opposition is that it fully coincides with the (logical) opposition between class and individual terms:

APPELLATIVES — PROPER NAMES

(1)

(class terms)

(individual terms)

0.3 The 19th century brought the first attempt to revise scheme (1). The initiators of this critical approach were John St. Mill Jr and Gottlob Frege, whose pronouncements released a general debate on the nature of proper names which has lasted up to the present. According to Searle, each known doctrine of proper names can be classified as belonging either to 'no-sense' (or Millean) theories, or to 'sense' (or Fregean) theories:

Perhaps the most famous formulation of this no-sense theory of proper names is Mill's statement that proper names have denotation but no connotation. For Mill, a general noun like 'horse' has both a connotation and a denotation; it connotes those properties which would be specified in a definition of the word 'horse', and it denotes all horses. But a proper name only denotes its bearer. [...] According to the Fregean theory, they [proper names] essentially have a reference. They refer iff there is an object which satisfies their sense (Searle 1967: 487–8).

This quotation depicts the state of the art in the sixties: then, most workers on proper names split up into Milleans and Fregeans and sought the solution of the problem in a confrontation of Mill's and Frege's views, or in a convenient compromise between them. Up till now, however, no promising advance in this field has been achieved, nor — supposedly — will be made in the future. One finds too many confusions and aberrations involved in the Mill-Frege controversy, which, therefore, deserves to be called a 'debate of misconceptions'.

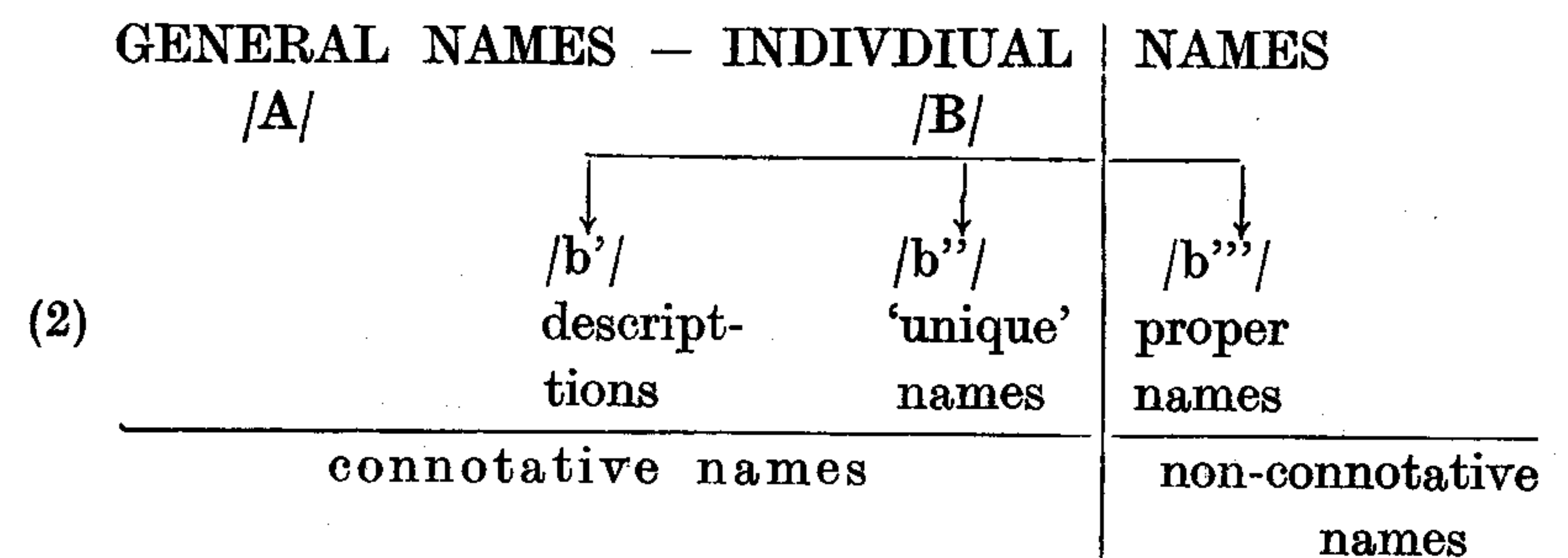
In what ensues, I shall discuss two main kinds of such misunderstandings: some popular and imprecise interpretations of Mill's and Frege's text by their

¹ From this, Adolf Noreen derives his own discrimination of *Individua* and *Dividua* (1923 : 380, 384).

followers, and unhappy modifications of principle (1) by Mill and Frege themselves.

1.0 According to one current opinion, Mill treated proper names merely as signs 'having no meaning' (cf. Ullmann 1957 : 73). This view is, however, too simplified; we shall see below that it disregards some essential phases in Mill's reasoning.

The basic point of Mill's theory is his observation that proper names by no means constitute the only class of individual names. There are also complex names (descriptions), *The king who succeeded William the Conqueror*, and some appellatives which denote certain unique phenomena like *the sun*, *God*, etc. (Mill 1889: sec. I/ii, §§ 3, 5). In this manner, Mill comes to the classification as exhibited in diagram (2):



Here, it is apparent that proper names $/b''/$ form a subclass of individual names $/B/$. Accordingly, contrasting proper names with general names ($b'' : A$) loses, in this case, all its significance. Mill rejects, as a consequence, the semantic opposition 'a class — a particular' which has now grown irrelevant, cf. scheme (1). His concern is rather to find some other semantic property that could contrast proper names not only with general names but also with remaining types of individual names, that is, $b'' : (A + b' + b'')$. Mill is sure that this relevant property is the absence, or the presence, of a 'connotative meaning'. The *connotation* is defined by Mill as the capacity (of a word) 'to denote a subject and to imply some of its attributes' (Mill 1889 : 19)². In this fashion,

the word *man*, for example, denotes Peter, Jane, John, and an indefinite number of other individuals, of whom, taken as a class, it is the name. But it is applied to them, because they possess, and to signify that they possess, certain attributes. These seem to be corporeity, animal life, rationality, and a certain external form which for distinction we call the human [...]. The word *man*, therefore, signifies all these attributes, and all subjects which possess these attributes. (Mill 1889 : 19)

² More recently, Susan Stebbing has defined the connotation as 'the characteristic, or set of characteristics, which anything must have if the term can be correctly applied to it' (Stebbing 1943 : 101).

1.1 At the same time, proper names are not connotative (Mill 1889 : 20—1), they involve no indication as to the attributes of their bearers (cf. a childish name Paul and a dog's name Caesar). Proper names are sheerly *asemantic marks* comparable to the chalk-cross put by a robber on Ali-Baba's door:

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. (Mill 1889 : 22).

According to Mill, proper names, while unable to tell anything about the object, possess, however, the following specific powers: first, they enable individual objects to be subjects of discourse (Mill 1889 : 20); second, they enable us to distinguish a singular object "when it is spoken of, either in the records of our experience or in the discourse of others" (Mill 1889 : 22).

1.2 There is a substantial difficulty, however, to be found in Mill's system which Mill is unable to resolve. Generally, this difficulty is ignored by those who support his views of proper names or popularize them. It resides in the necessity to account for the way in which a proper name 'is connected' with the objects it identifies. There is no kind of physical contiguity between a name and its bearer: usually, we have not our name tattooed on our face. Again, we can use proper names in our speech in situations where their bearers are absent, for instance, "in the records of our experience"! Being conscious of this fact, Mill is driven to introduce surreptitiously an intermediate category, "the idea of the object", which, in his estimation, is the connecting link between the proper name and the corresponding object:

A proper name is but an unmeaning mark which we connect *in our minds* with the *idea of the object*, in order that whenever the mark meets our eyes, or occurs in our thought, *we may think of that individual object* (Mill 1889 : 22: all emphasis mine).

This surprising declaration inevitably evokes a series of critical comments. It is well known that one is not in a position to think of some absent object without being conscious of some of its characteristics. If this is so, then we must admit that no "idea" whatever can substitute for the unseen individual object "in our thought" unless it contains, at least, a minimal knowledge of the object in question. Provided, as Mill maintains, a proper name is "connected in our mind" with the "idea of the object", it would be natural to assume that this name is regularly associated with some knowledge of the object it denotes. This, however, amounts to saying that proper names are *meaningful words*: a *distinctive mark* being associated with an "idea of the object" becomes automatically a *sign* of it!

1.3 The apparent contradiction we have just disclosed in Mill's system follows undoubtedly from his inadequate interpretation of the chalk-mark on Ali-Baba's dwelling (1.1). We can agree with Mill in that the mark in question is certainly not the *sign for Ali-Baba's house*. It does not stand for the

house but is rather a *part of it*. Covering the door, or the wall, of a building with chalk strokes merely changes the appearance of it and adds a new perceptible feature to its known characteristics, such as its specific configuration, construction, dimensions, the colour of the walls, etc. From this quarter, the chalk mark is to be seen, in fact, as a *distinctive feature* (in a phonological sense) of a house and, by no means, as a sign of it. The situation radically alters, however, as soon as we change our point of view and take into account the (hidden) booty which is kept inside the house. In this case, we shall find no physical contiguity between our chalk mark and the treasure denoted by it. The robber's chalk presents itself, here, as a *sign* tied by a mnemonic relation to the 'idea of the booty': were the chalk mark incapable of announcing the loot, it would, indisputably, have no importance to the robbers!

To make the situation more perspicuous, let us concede that our robber-reconnoiterer has additional mission: to localize and to mark some other house, in this very village, where some precious load is expected to be brought the following week. Accordingly, he makes use of another chalk mark, different from the former. From a semiotic point of view, the robber creates thereby a *code*, wherein three distinct *signs* stand for three potential *messages* capable of controlling the actions of the whole band, viz.: (1) a *zero-sign*: 'no booty'; (2) a *chalk cross*: 'the house which contains booty now'; (3) a *chalk circle*: 'the house where other booty will be available next week' (or something of the kind)³.

Proper names are used in speech in the same manner — that is, as genuine *signs*. They do stand for the 'ideas of their respective objects', which is particularly manifest in situations where those objects are not directly observable (1.2). This purports that the correlation of proper names and chalk marks of the type described above does not at all warrant the claim that proper names are but 'meaningless distinctive tokens'. Quite the reverse, it has now become clear that, in both cases, we are dealing with regular signs associated with some information on the objects they represent. All this authorizes us to treat both of them as meaningful semiotic units.

1.4 In his special publication intended to defend Mill's theory, Gardiner endeavours to settle the problem of proper names by admitting that they are both (?) meaningful and meaningless (Gardiner 1957 : 32). After him, the 'meaning' of a proper name is a kind of 'exchange-value' — a mental counterpart of a thing denoted (Gardiner 1957 : 30). One cannot deny, Gardiner

³ One can imagine, for instance, another situation where a chalk mark can assume the function of a *sign*. Suppose the spy-robber draws the plan of a village on the wall of the cave and marks one of the points on it with a cross. Replying to the natural question of the chieftain: "What does this cross *mean*?", he may give quite natural answer: "This is Ali-Baba's house", or "This is a house which contains booty".

adds, that a proper name has some meaning, though this meaning is not familiar to all users of that language:

For a proper name to exist, it is necessary that there should be someone interested in, and having at least some knowledge of, that which it names, and this knowledge, whether great or small, must evidently be accepted as the meaning.

(Gardiner 1957 : 31).

Elsewhere, the difference between common and proper names is seen by Gardiner in "varying degree of the immediacy" of the semantic relation. According to Gardiner, ordinary words "directly convey information", while proper names "merely provide keys to information" (Gardiner 1957 : 32).

It is evident that these incoherent and fuzzy concessions, made unwillingly by Gardiner, can in no way strengthen the position of Mill. Symptomatically, we find no mention made of them in the resultant definition of proper names which crowns Gardiner's investigation:

A proper name is a word or group of words which is recognized as having identification as its specific purpose, and which achieves or tends to achieve that purpose by means of *its distinctive sound alone, without regard to any meaning possessed by that sound* from the start, or acquired by it through association of the object or objects thereby identified (Gardiner 1957 : 73).

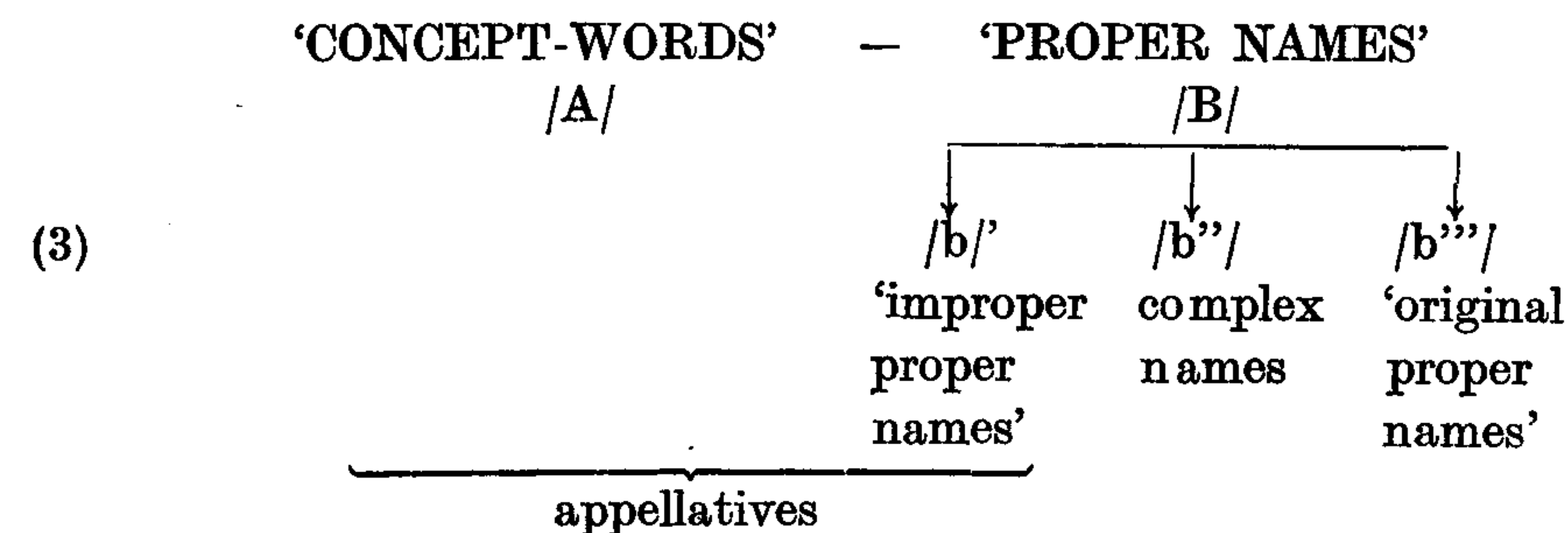
Gardiner's book abounds in keen and suggestive observations; nothing, however, justifies the above odd conclusion. Nor does Gardiner give, unfortunately, any reasonable explanation of the "power of distinctive word-sound to identify distinct things" which "is exhibited in a pure or nearly pure state, without that power being assisted to any degree by such meaning as may attach to the word" (Gardiner 1957 : 66). Since, however, 20th century linguistics knows no phenomenon of the kind, Gardiner's thesis of a "pure distinctive word-sound" is pure rhetoric. It seems that in trying to apply "a little alteration and elaboration" to Mill's theory (cf. Gardiner 1957 : 8), Gardiner simply reduces Mill's central thesis to an evident absurdity. Starting from this thesis, some authors come to still more absurd declarations that put every proper name, practically, outside language (cf. Vendler 1967 : 117).

One may thus infer that the only real effect produced by Gardiner's argumentation is that it offers convincing evidence of the Milleian 'no-sense' theory being, effectively, non-sensical.

2.0 Frege, reputed to be Mill's major antagonist, advances a complicated and rather obscure alternative system that requires manifold clarification procedures. The main hindrance one usually meets in analysing Frege's text is its author's tendency to use commonly known linguistic and logical terminology in an unusual and subjective way. This fact, perhaps, explains why Frege's doctrine of proper names still remains practically unknown in all its details.

It should be stressed, at the outset, that Frege's stance is by no means the attitude of a linguist. Frege concentrates wholly on the logical opposition between "class terms" and "individual terms" (cf. 0.2); hence, he is not interested in specifying the class of words we are accustomed to call, in lexicology, *proper names*; his aim is to isolate and to describe the class of expressions, built both of words and of non-linguistic signs, that, being inserted in particular utterances, relate to particular singular objects (Frege 1892 : 39). It must also be emphasized here that this situational denotative relationship is the only relevant feature of Frege's *Eigennamen*, while their formal (paradigmatic) properties are neglected in his classification. *Eigennamen* is, therefore, the name of a heterogeneous class of expressions of which the 'original proper names', or *eigentliche Eigennamen* ('Aristotle', 'Odysseus', 'Kepler') form but an insignificant subclass (cf. Frege 1892 : 40, footnote 2). Owing to this, the Fregean term 'proper name' cannot match its correlate used in linguistics. I put it herein, as well as other Fregean terms, between inverted commas.

2.1 The crucial opposition, in Frege's system, is between *Begriffswörter*, or 'concept-words', and *Eigennamen*, or 'proper names'. The decisive difference between them is ascribed to their *Bedeutungen*, 'meanings'. Whilst the 'meaning' of a 'concept-word' is a concept, the 'meaning' of a 'proper name' is an individual object (Frege 1892a: 66–71; Frege 1892: 39, 41–2, 53–4, 55). The Fregean system, as a whole, can be diagrammed as in scheme (3):



As seen from scheme (3), the class of Frege's proper names' includes, besides, 'original proper names', *Zeichen- or Wortverbindungen*, which I call 'complex names', such as *the morning star*, $2 \cdot 2^2 + 2$, or *the king which reigns in this kingdom now*, as well as the sub-class I have chosen to label 'improper proper names' (a specific term for them is lacking in Frege). The last mentioned sub-class integrates ordinary common names when these are used to denote singular objects. In other situations these very common names can, in turn, be applied to denote concepts. In such cases they are classified by Frege as *Begriffswörter*! This principle is exemplified below by the speech employment of the word 'horse'.

According to Frege, the word *Pferd* 'horse', taken as a member of the utterance, *This horse here*, represents a 'proper name', while within the statement, *The horse is a quadruped*, it functions as a 'concept-word'. One can infer from this that 'concept-words' and 'improper proper names' are merely two different settings of one common name; in the one case, the word draws our attention to a class (a group) of objects, while in the other we are called on to heed a single particular object. It also becomes evident that, in such cases, it is the *context* in which a word occurs that indicates the type of denotation it represents. Frege insists, for example, that the definite article placed before a singular noun makes it a 'proper name' in most cases; at the same time, 'concept-words' can be characterized by the presence of the indefinite article and the expressions *all, every, no, some* (Frege 1892a : 67–8, 70). An attempt to give a more sophisticated outline of the types of contexts which distinguish common names in their singular function has been more recently undertaken in (Vendler 1967 : 115ff., especially 129–32).

One can have no doubt now that, seen from the standpoint of a lexicologist, the difference between the two uses of 'horse' cited above is an irrelevant one: these uses cannot be approached as autonomous lexemes which pertain to two different lexical classes. Conversely, they do belong to one *word* and represent what was called *suppositiones* by the mediaeval Nominalists. It seems natural, then, to conclude that Frege's opposition of 'concept-words' and 'improper proper names' may be completely disregarded by a linguist engaged in the study of proper names of whatever language.

2.2 Let us now revert to the 'original proper names' (b'') which seem exclusively to merit the notice of a linguist. Unhappily, we find that Frege dedicates only a few words to them. From Frege's text, one could deduce only that the distinction between *eigentliche* and '*uneigentliche*' *Eigennamen* (b'' : b') lies probably in the latter being seen as a kind of 'words-werewolves' freely convertible into *Begriffswörter* (cf. *dieses Pferd | ein Pferd*), while the former are treated as tightly attached to their singular objects.

Frege insists that 'original proper names' (OPN) are not meaningless: they do possess their 'sense' (*Sinn*) and, occasionally, their 'meaning' (*Bedeutung*). In accordance with what has been said in 2.1, the 'meaning' of an OPN must be a concrete person, a being, a geographical point, etc. By contrast, the specific Fregean term 'sense', which has been the subject of a lasting discussion, requires additional explanation. The 'sense' (in Frege's interpretation) appears to be a semantic category akin to Mill's 'idea of the object' (cf. 1.2). It may be construed as a fragmentary knowledge of the 'meaning' of a word (that is, of the object the name refers to). In Frege's rendition, the 'sense' is a particular, partial description (one of many possible incomplete descriptions) of the object. In this fashion, for example, the number 16 can be represented as 2^4 , $4 \cdot 4$, 4^2 ; whereas the planet Venus is describable either as

the morning star or as *the evening star* (Frege 1891 : 24–5; Frege 1892 : 39). An OPN, such as *Aristotle*, also can have different senses: *A pupil of Plato*, *A teacher of Alexander the Great*, *A native of Stagira*, etc. (Frege 1892 : 40, footnote 2). A 'sense' is generally linked to the name by a language, or code, convention (Frege 1892 : 40).

This all suggests that every OPN has its 'senses' but not every OPN can have its 'meaning'. Only in cases where one is able to ascertain the real existence (including in the past) of the denoted person, animal, place, etc., is one allowed to attribute a 'meaning' (cf. *Aristotle, Kepler, Vesuvius, Venus*) to an OPN (Frege 1892 : 52). By contrast, in the case of "mythological" names (*Odysseus*, etc.) it is doubtful whether one can speak about their actual 'meanings' (Frege 1892 : 45). Sometimes, these two varieties were treated by Frege's followers as 'genuine' and 'apparent' proper names, respectively (cf. Searle 1967 : 489).

We have thus recorded a striking and unsuspected resemblance between the viewpoints of Frege and Mill: they both hold that each proper name must be conjugated with a certain knowledge of the object it denotes; this knowledge is kept in the mind of speakers — Strawson calls it "identifying knowledge" (1974 : 48, 53 footnote 3). From this common premiss they come, curiously, to opposite solutions: as is known, Mill decided to treat proper names as asemantic, while Frege counts them as meaningful words!

2.3 Certain doubts concerning 'odd consequences' that may derive from Frege's concept of proper names have already been reported by logicians (cf. Searle 1958 : 169). We must concentrate, however, on the effects that follow from some grave *linguistic* inaccuracies which one can detect in Frege's reasoning.

It should be noted, first of all, that the 'original proper names' of Frege do not comprise the phenomenon, known in lexicology as "proper names", in its totality. The OPNs represent only a particular (and marginal) case of the employment of proper names, the case which Gardiner defines as "embodied proper names". These constitute "the sort that is exclusively employed of, and tied down to, a particular person or place or whatever it may be" (Gardiner 1957 : 11). Such 'embodied names' (cf. *Hitler, Lope de Vega, Bayreuth, Manhattan, Piccadilly, Sirius*) usually have the tendency to 'accrete' to their denotata and to become 'self-subsistent' entities, placed outside particular languages. They are of minor interest to a linguist and predominate in encyclopaedias, biographic, astronomical, geographical, etc., reference books (Gardiner 1957 : 9–10). In dictionaries of the *Larousse* type, 'embodied names' are carefully separated from the rest of the entries.

An 'embodied name' bears, in fact, rich information about the person, geographical point, celestial body, etc., it represents. Russell calls such names as *Socrates* "abbreviations for descriptions":

... what they describe are not particulars but complicated systems of classes or series (Russell 1956 : 200—1).

From the above discussion, it becomes evident that 'embodied names' constitute an exceptional phenomenon in lexicography and can give no clue to an adequate understanding of the nature of proper names in general. Wherever this discrepancy is neglected by authors, they invariably arrive at fallacious deductions (cf., for instance, Kuryłowicz 1965 : 182). Also, Frege pays dearly for his error: he fails to notice the fact that proper names are usable, on certain occasions, as typical 'concept-words':

I have known several *Jacks*, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. [...] And I pity any woman who is married to a man called *John*. (Wilde. *The Importance of Being Earnest*, act I, p. 14).

We can't be christened *Ernest*. It's absurd. (Wilde. op. cit., act II, p. 55).

It is apparent that none of the above-cited Christian names identifies any single particular person (cf. Palmer 1976 : 128).

2.4 Frege's erroneous approach (see above) is also characteristic of many workers in the theory of proper names. They confine their analyses to specific situations and specific uses of proper names in speech. From the casual and incomplete data obtained thereby, they try to develop general descriptions of proper names and to explain their specific position within the lexical system of a language.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the problem of proper names, like many other focal problems in lexicology and lexicography, pertains predominantly to the level of *la langue* (in the Saussurean sense). In other words, a lexicologist has before him a vast diversity of word classes discriminated in accordance with the linguistic intuition of language users. His task is, thus, to test and explain, in theoretical terms, this intuitional classification. In the present case, a lexicologist must indicate relevant differences (if any) between the two word classes:

(1) *pine, window, glory*, etc., — on the one hand, and (2) *Jane, Richard, Smith*..., — on the other.

The distinctive features of proper names, as a lexical class, must, of necessity, be *semantic*. (There can also be found, in particular languages, some *formal* differences between common and proper names; these are not, however, universal and are of a derived and secondary nature.⁴) The task of a lexi-

⁴ I can in no way agree with Kuryłowicz who contends that "l'interêt linguistique du rapport entre nom commun et nom propre ne commence qu'au moment où entre ces deux groupes de substantifs concrets il s'établit une différence formelle, comme, p. ex., une différence d'accentuation, des différences dans l'usage de l'article, des particularités de flexion, etc." (Kuryłowicz 1960 : 184, 192). Formal differences between these two

logist is, therefore, to try to specify the intrinsic *semantic* structure of proper names and to confront it with that of common names.

It must be stressed that every word is here taken in its so-called 'vocabulary form', which is exempt from any context and from any concrete situational reference. The classification a lexicologist deals with here relies upon the *general meanings* of words. Meanwhile, the speech employment of words in particular situations is regarded by him as merely the logical consequence of those general meanings. And it is at the level of 'vocabulary forms' that a lexicographer must decide whether proper names have specific general meanings and what kind of meanings these are.

2.5 In most cases however, researchers manifest no bent for considering the 'vocabulary forms' of proper names. Many of them, by contrast, seem to be anxious to rid their study of this 'uncomfortable' topic; they treat it merely as a troublesome complication of no consequence to the central theme. A vivid example of such an approach is offered by Searle, who, in a series of works endeavours to elaborate "a sort of compromise between Mill and Frege". We shall not consider here his proposals, which contain no essential novelty as compared with the achievements of his predecessors. What will be of particular interest to us here, is, of course, the theoretical argumentation by which Searle hopes to dismiss the annoying problem of the 'vocabulary forms' mentioned above.

In his polemic against Milleans ('Non-sensitists') he makes recourse to the strange argument that a proper name has as many distinct meanings as there are persons who bear it:

That different objects are named 'John Smith' is no more relevant to the question 'Do proper names have senses?' than the fact that both riversides and finance houses are called 'banks' is relevant to the question, 'Do general terms have senses?'. Both 'bank' and 'John Smith' suffer from kinds of homonymy...

(Searle 1967 : 490; Searle 1969 : 139).

Surely, this astonishing 'argumentation' needs elementary corrections rather than a professional discussion. John Searle is well known for not being all that careful about the linguistic premisses he starts from in his speculations on language. This time, however, he commits an obvious, 'childish', fault by confusing, or pretending not to distinguish between, two distinct semantic levels, that of 'meaning' and that of 'reference'.

groups of lexemes could be exhaustively described only on condition that a linguist is in a position to correctly identify words which are proper names. This, in turn, depends on a previously elaborated general definition of proper names which must, of necessity, be *semantic*.

Granted that *bank*₁ (fin.) and *bank*₂ (geo.) are, in fact, homonyms, we ought to treat them as two different words with two independent meanings. These two words can have, in turn, numerous referents at a 'lower' level. In this fashion, we have *Bank of England*, *District Bank*, *National Bank*, etc. Similarly, we can refer to the banks of the Thames, the Rhine, the Volga. And it is precisely these referents, and not meanings, that can be safely correlated with countless John Smiths, which, therefore, cannot be approached as different 'meanings' belonging to countless autonomous *homonymic* expressions. They represent a set of extra-linguistic referents of a single complex lexeme, a combination of two proper names, seen as *monosemic*. As a consequence, the expression *John Smith* must have as yet unspecified general meaning (at the 'upper' level) and can have, as well, numerous persons-referents (at the 'lower' level). It thus becomes obvious that Searle's attempt to eliminate the cumbersome problem of the 'disembodied', or 'vocabulary', forms of proper names and of their 'general meanings' is linguistically untenable.⁵

3.0 This incident helps me to draw a general conclusion: one cannot expect the famous *Mill vs Frege* controversy to foster any appreciable advancement in the study of proper names in the future. The debate has now a historical significance only⁶; it has been conducted in a form and with arguments that are not compatible with the requirements of rigorous linguistic research. As a result, we can accept neither the claim that a proper name is merely the gibberish used as a distinctive mark of an object, nor the view which identifies the meaning of a proper name (being its constant attribute) with its (accidental) referents.

In subsequent publications I intend to explore some new directions for the further investigation of proper names which still remain a kind of impregnable fortress for the modern lexicologist.

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⁵ Searle and his adherents should not disregard the situations where proper names can exist solely in their 'disembodied', or 'vocabulary' form, having no real bearers (cf. Gardiner 1957 : 10; Withycombe 1953).

⁶ It has recently dissolved in a general dispute between "Causalists" and "Descriptionists".

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