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The meaning of names: A defence of The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood (TPTP) addressed to Van Langendonck, Anderson, Colman and McClure

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Abstract: In a number of interrelated articles, I have presented some ideas about the nature of proper names, and specifically about their meaning. A central concept of these papers has been subjected to criticism, I believe inappropriately, by several scholars. The present paper is a rejoinder which defends a close approximation to the position taken in the earlier ones. It shows how that position can be reconciled in some measure with their apparently divergent views, whilst rejecting or suggesting modification of other aspects of both their critiques and my stated position.

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Keywords: The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood (TPTP); sense, denotation, reference – their definition and interrelation; logic, necessity, presupposition and probability; pronouns and nonsense; epiphenomena and prototypes.

La signification des noms propres : travail en défense de la Théorie pragmatique des noms propres (TPTP) adressé à Van Langendonck, Anderson, Colman et McClure

Résumé : Au cours d'un certain nombre d'articles interdépendants, j'ai présenté quelques idées sur la nature des noms propres, et en particulier sur leur contenu et leur fonction sémantiques. Plusieurs spécialistes ont critiqué – à mon avis improprement – un des concepts centraux de ces documents. Le présent article constitue une réplique qui aura le but de justifier une approximation proche de la position adoptée dans les précédents. Il montrera comment cette position peut être conciliée dans une certaine mesure avec leurs points de vue apparemment divergents, tout en rejetant ou en suggérant de modifier d'autres aspects de leurs critiques et de ma position déclarée.

Mots-clés : La Théorie pragmatique des noms propres (« TPTP ») ; définition des modes de signification et relations entre eux ; logique : nécessité, présupposition et probabilité ; les pronoms et le non-sens ; épiphénomène et prototype.

Die Bedeutung der Eigennamen: eine Verteidigung der Pragmatischen Theorie der Eigennamen (TPTP) an Van Langendonck, Anderson, Colman und McClure gerichtet

Zusammenfassung: In einer Reihe miteinander zusammenhängender Artikel habe ich einige Ideen zur Natur von Eigennamen und insbesondere zu deren Bedeutung vorgestellt. Ein zentrales Konzept dieser Papiere wurde, wie ich glaube, von einigen Wissenschaftlern unangemessen kritisiert. Die vorliegende Arbeit ist eine Gegenerwiderung, die eine Annäherung an die Position der früheren Papiere verteidigt. Es zeigt, wie diese Position in gewissem Maße mit ihren anscheinend unterschiedlichen Ansichten in Einklang gebracht werden kann, während andere Aspekte ihrer Kritik und meiner erklärten Position abgelehnt oder modifiziert werden.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Die Pragmatische Theorie der Eigennamen („TPTP“); Bestimmung der Bedeutungsarten und ihrer Verhältnisse; Logik: Notwendigkeit, Voraussetzung und Wahrscheinlichkeit; Pronomina und Unsinn; Epiphänomena und Prototype.

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The meaning of names: A defence of The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood (TPTP) addressed to Van Langendonck, Anderson, Colman and McClure

RICHARD COATES

1. The fundamentals of the project "The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood" ("TPTP")

For a number of years now I have been developing an approach to proper name meaning which diverges in some important respects from all previous theories (so far as I can tell). The central divergence is this: The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood is founded on the notion that proper names [hereafter simply *names*] are best defined on the basis of their referential function rather than on the basis of their denotation, and that, crucially, they lack sense altogether. The signature idea, concisely expressed, is that the notion of *proper name* is to be equated with the notion of a *senselessly referring expression*. This has given rise to misunderstandings in the technical literature which need to be addressed. No doubt the problem is partly due to the inherent difficulty of the relevant concepts, which have been clawed over and dissected for the best part of 2500 years; partly due to inconsistent use of terminology both within and between linguistics and philosophical logic; partly due to my struggle to formulate and express my ideas with suitable clarity; and partly, it must be said, to the preconceptions which some readers have brought to the task. This paper is an attempt to restate my position, responding to claims made by several influential writers, showing in some cases why I believe their criticisms to be at least in part mistaken, and trying to improve and to introduce greater clarity in my own thinking in other cases where their criticisms suggest rigour or clarity is lacking. It should be borne in mind that The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood is a project to reconcile the sometimes abrasively conflicting histories, and some of the persistently discrete interests, of theoretical and historical linguistics, philology and logic. It should also be borne in mind that a central plank in the theory is an attempt to deal with expressions which may be ambiguous between proper and common status, essentially those which consist of more than one word and are lexically and grammatically transparent, within the same framework as archetypal proper nouns.

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2. The key ideas of The Pragmatic Theory of Properhood

This is not the place to rehearse the nature of the entire theoretical apparatus of TPTP, which I have done generally in several other places (particularly Coates 2006a, 2006b, 2009 and 2012) and with a range of applications dealing with linguistics and philosophy, historical linguistics, toponomastics and literary onomastics, e.g. Coates (2009), (2016), (2013) and (2015, forthcoming b) respectively. Van Langendonck (2013: 100) dignifies it with the description "a full-fledged pragmatic name theory". In the absence of a monograph, all the relevant papers are listed in the bibliography at the end of this article. But one central element especially has caused misunderstanding and led commentators to reject it: namely the idea that the essential change in the process of becoming a name is (as implied above) for the expression in question to lose any sense it possessed, and that the two notions *becoming a name* and *losing sense* are in fact one and the same concept.

With this in focus, I amplify the troublesome central element in the three related propositions (1.1–1.3), adapting wording I have used in previous publications:

1.1. Names are linguistic devices for referring senselessly. [= Names have no sense, i.e. they have no synchronic semantic content (defined below).]

1.2. An expression which is used on some occasion to refer senselessly is a name [= a corollary of (1.1), but not one which is espoused explicitly by theorists in this area].

1.3. Etymological sense is cancelled or suspended by the process of becoming a name and by the act of creating one [= the historical precondition for (1.1)].

A speculative psycholinguistic or neurolinguistic model for the operation of the process was put forward in Coates (2005b).

Some of the many difficulties that have arisen in complex discussions of names stem from the fact that key terms such as *meaning*, *sense*, *denotation* and *reference* have not achieved unified definitions across philosophy and linguistics. I re-present here my understanding of these terms following the spirit of definitions offered by John Lyons some 40 years ago (Lyons 1977: 197–206), and these definitions are the ones adhered to throughout my work, including this paper:

2.1. *Reference* is the act of picking out an individual referent in a context of utterance (which can be defined in relation to speech, signing or writing, or non-linguistically through gesture; in the last case it is sometimes sub-classified as *ostension*). A *referring expression* is a noun phrase that does this (N-double bar, or the functional

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equivalent of a noun phrase in other approaches, such as a determiner phrase in frameworks that distinguish the two concepts).

2.2. *Denotation* is the range of potential referents of a word, other lexical expression, or noun phrase; that is, it is an abstraction from reference and must not be confused with it. The notion is called the *extension* of the expression by philosophers.[1]

2.3. *Sense* is the network of semantic relations in which lexical words and more complex lexical expressions participate; those relations include synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, polysemy, and so on: i.e. a set of logically definable relations among lexical items in a conceptual space or field, involving identity, negation and inclusion of various sorts; along with tropes (meta-denotations, i.e. relations between denotations) such as metaphor and metonymy, which are based on comparability and association respectively. It can practically be equated with the *intension* of the item.

The *meaning* of an expression might be viewed as the integration of its sense and what it denotes (its *semantic value*), or that integrated construct coupled with its reference in a context (its *pragmatic value*). Reference may trump the other aspects of meaning, as can be seen in such examples as *She's spilled her vodka* spoken in the false belief that the gin in her glass was actually vodka and where the bar staff are motivated by hearing the word *vodka* to bring her a glass of vodka to replace her spillage. It should be remembered that semantic value is not fixed for ever, and that denotation, and hence sense, may be statistically skewed and ultimately modified by cumulative acts of reference – and equally by any understandings of what is referred to – that are untypical of the referring expression in question at the moment of utterance. Such shifts may derive from the behaviour of either or both of the speaker/writer/signer and the interlocutor.

The *associations* or *connotations* of an expression consist of any non-definitional propositions which are held to be true of the denotata of that expression, and which may exist on a cline of agreement or acceptance from conventional culturally-held belief in their truth to individual and

[1] It might be tempting to regard the extension of a term as being determined by its intension (see 2.3). But this is false. The intension of a term is in an evolutionary and helical relation with its extension. The use of a term in referring expressions is typically, largely, in accordance with its accepted or conventional intension, but if some act of reference links a term with some individual beyond its accepted extension, whether deliberately in error, then this new usage, if it is repeated and socialized, expands the intension. The way real-world usage develops is what determines the continuing story. This is a matter that takes us well beyond the concerns of the present paper, and must be left aside here.

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idiosyncratic belief in their truth.[2] They have no role in the computation of the core (logical) meaning of an expression (grounded in sense and denotation), i.e. the meaning abstracted away from the behaviour of individuals on particular occasions, but they may be contextually invoked. There is no harm in calling them part of the *meaning* of an expression in use provided their contingent nature is fully accepted. Van Langendonck (2007: 69) states that I [RC] "admit" that names are not meaningless, because they may have associations. Why he should view that as a concession or admission on my part I do not know. It is of course true, and I have never said that names are meaningless. To lack sense (1.1) is not to be meaningless.

3. Six challenges

Six influential texts by a range of scholars with differing backgrounds, Willy Van Langendonck (2007; also 2013), John M. Anderson (2007), Fran Colman (2014), Willy Van Langendonck with Mark Van de Velde (2016), and Peter McClure (2017) have criticized the above position. They have taken issue with certain ideas deriving from it, and with its apparent implications for expressions which are understood to be names but which remain lexically, and (they have claimed) semantically, transparent. A case in point would be the lead example from my key paper (Coates 2006a), *The Old Vicarage*, understood as a house-name. If they are right, it is possible for names to retain sense, and/or the sense of some or all of the elements they contain, and the position I have expressed in (1.1–1.3) is therefore indefensible. Whilst it is gratifying that TPTP has been discussed seriously by scholars of their standing, its initiator has been cast as the "bad guy", and a response is called for.[3] I shall discuss the counter-opinions of these critics, and evaluate the status of my position in the light of that discussion. I think we are not so far apart as they seem to believe. But there is at least one major and fundamental, though largely technical, issue that needs to be resolved, namely that of the existence of categorical presuppositions as argued for by Van Langendonck (2007, 2013) and Nyström (2016), alongside many others. In my view a weaker logical relationship between names and their denotata is required, and the reasons for this, which I think are compelling, will be

[2] I leave aside here the *associations* or *connotations* which the *form* of an expression itself may have as opposed to its *content*, though such connotations of form may contribute to the wider cultural meaning of an expression (e.g. taboo status of the form as opposed to the content, the potential for humour in the shape of puns, and the significance of atypical spellings).

[3] Some of the key issues are also importantly discussed by Nyström (2016). He does not explicitly target the framework of TPTP, but it is clear that, like the cited scholars, he would not accept its central ideas.

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expounded below. The broader contentious issue is my equation of *name* with *senselessly referring expression*. I hope the following discussion will shed some light on these two points, and the relation between them, where there seems to have been a pool of shadow.

4. Willy Van Langendonck (2007, 2013), also with Mark Van de Velde (2016)

The elements of TPTP in question are discussed by Van Langendonck (2007: 65–71). He characterizes TPTP as "reductionist" in an article devoted specifically to rebutting its essentials (Van Langendonck 2013: 99).[4] The first two of these pages (2007: 65–66) present a broadly accurate characterization of my position. But he states: "Coates does not seem to recognize a linguistic convention level of denotation (extension), at least not for proper names […]" (2007: 66), i.e. what Van Langendonck [hereafter WVL] has elsewhere called *proprial lemmas*.[5] However, he also states that I allow room for "the proper nouns which are the prototypical proper names". There is no difficulty in accommodating what he thinks is absent. The denotation or extension of a proper name is the set of individuals that the expression in question may be used to refer to.[6] The issue for WVL is whether such a set can be characterized as anything more substantial and interesting than a collection of individuals, i.e. whether the individuals in question share any properties and therefore justify our categorizing the expressions denoting them into verifiable groups such as personal names, dog-names (cynonyms), place-names or whatever, and whether the denotational duplication of a name, even within a putative class, merely represents a case of homonymy. Putting it differently: does the set of such individuals share any intensional properties? I have addressed this issue elsewhere (Coates 2014), and concluded that names are not categorizable in any way that allows the formulation of intensional presuppositions of the kind recognizable by logicians. Consider this:

3.1. Louise enjoys ginger biscuits.

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4 I would reply that he multiplies entities *praeter necessitatem* – see below.

5 It must be this concept which permits Van Langendonck & Van de Velde (2016: 22) to continue to use the term "the unique denotation of names", meaning that a name may uniquely exemplify a particular *category*. In the framework adopted in this paper, this term could only apply to names for which precisely one actual denotatum exists, no matter in what category. A very significant proportion of names, especially those of human beings in Western cultures, do not have this property.

6 With the proviso, alluded to in footnote 1, that the denotation of any lexical item is not for ever fully determinate. Class membership of a name, if we acknowledge it (see more on this point below), is always provisional, and the boundaries of such classes are indeterminate.

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If (3.1). is true of some individual, and if WVL would categorize *Louise* as a female given (personal) name as seems probable, that would seem to entail the decontextualized truth of (3.2):

3.2. Some female person enjoys ginger biscuits.

I submit that this is not logically defensible. *Louise* as a name can be used to refer to individuals in other categories without logical impropriety, for example a dog or a cat (a Google™ search will reveal examples of both), or even a place (Louise, Mississippi, USA) or a ship (the former American naval patrol vessel *(USS) Louise*). The name *Louise* is therefore uncategorizable *logically*. Of course that does not mean that it cannot give rise to stereotypical, even prototypical, probabilistic expectations, allowing weaker inferences such as:

3.3. Some individual who/which is probably a female person enjoys ginger biscuits.

The inference (3.2) is defeasible, for example if the individual called *Louise* in some context turns out to be a dog. The decontextualized inference in (3.3) is unharmed by such a discovery. The falsity of the entailment (3.2) *Louise* ∈ *female person* does not damage (3.3) *Louise* ∈ *(above some threshold of probability) female person*.

I do not have a quarrel with the idea that certain names prototypically name individuals in certain classes. But considering *Louise* as a candidate proprial lemma does not require us to embrace the idea that it is a female given name *tout court*, merely that it carries the expectation in most contexts that it names a female person. WVL is inconsistent on the point: he concedes that this is a probabilistic matter (2007: 68) whilst at the same time insisting on the validity of "categorical presupposition", i.e. the idea that names carry a presupposable categorial status with them (see also Van Langendonck & Van de Velde 2016: 24). He will be reduced to claiming that *Louise* the human given name and *Louise* the cynonym must be different proprial lemmas, which is bizarre, of course, given the conventional status of one but not of the other, and the conventional status of the tactic of bestowing names recognized as human names on domestic animals.

I do not dispute the broad-brush usefulness of WVL's concept of the proprial lemma. It is handy for many purposes – especially everyday ones – to be able to talk about, for example, *boys' names* and *girls' names*, but I dispute his insistence that individual instances of it carry with them some kind of obligatory categorial status. I suggest rather that *Louise* is one single name (proprial lemma if you wish) that has a greater probability in any context of being used to refer to a human being than to a dog – a probability which may vary diachronically with the swings of fashion and

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commemoration. I offer again my contention (2006a: 363) that "[n]ames identify individuals without utilizing any of their characteristics." WVL and I probably differ only in what we mean by *specify*. I mean that names do not require or (logically) presuppose any characteristics, though they may suggest them probabilistically, whilst WVL appears to believe either (1) that they really do presuppose certain characteristics, which is demonstrably false, or (2) that formally identical names in different categories are homonyms, which gives rise to evident problems when naming-after is considered: does a "human" name given to a cat become an ailuronym (= 'cat name')? Or a "human" name given to a locomotive become a …? (I cannot invent a technical term for that.) On completion of the act of naming, they are undoubtedly the names of the cat or the locomotive in question respectively, and that is *all* they are for a language-user who does not recognize their human origins, i.e. who does not understand their aetiology.

WVL (2007: 69) proceeds to accuse me of denying "Saussure's thesis that all linguistic elements have both form and sense." This is unfortunately an instance of the problems caused by lack of agreement on terminology. Despite my clarity on what I mean by *sense* (2.3), WVL uses the term differently, following the lead of Saussure's own terminology (1916: 98), as transmitted posthumously by his editors. *Sense* (*concept*, explicitly equated *with signifié* (1916: 100)), for Saussure, covers both of what Lyons and those who follow him carefully distinguish as *denotation* and *sense*. Of course I agree that any linguistic sign has both form and a *signifié* or Saussurean-*sense*; proper names have it in the guise of *denotation* with no necessary intensional definition of any such denotation.[7]

WVL also (2007: 67) takes issue with my concept of *onymic reference*, i.e. the successful achievement of reference without recourse to the senses of any transparent words in the referring expression, saying that it "remains to be defined", despite my defining it as I have just done. I am said to be "aware of this problem but relegate it to other sciences such as psychology and neurology[.]" (presumably a reference to Coates 2005b). This is simply not true. I define it as indicated, "the successful achievement of reference without recourse to the senses of any transparent words in the referring expression". That this happens scarcely needs demonstrating: but witness references to the racehorses called *April the Fifth*, *Commander in Chief* or *Ruler of the World*.[8] I invoke other disciplines to suggest how the concept might be operationalized in a model of the physical body, but I do not need them to

[7] Saussure's use of the word *sens* would require a further full discussion, but he appears to use it in a way compatible with a generalized sense of 'meaning' (1916: e.g. 166, 174, 193), labelling one pole of the linguistic sign.

[8] Winners of the Derby Stakes in 1932, 1993 and 2013 respectively.

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define it. Nor, incidentally, should we be thinking of other disciplines as mere parking places for ideas when our own road gets rocky. Surely one should not retreat to a linguistic silo when one acknowledges that work in other disciplines has the potential to complement and be integrated with one's own, even if one is not a practitioner of those disciplines.

WVL then proceeds to wonder how I am able to differentiate proper names from personal and demonstrative pronouns, a revival of an old problem arising from the work of Russell (1905) which can be put to sleep finally within the framework of TPTP. The same criticism is made again by WVL (2013), and by WVL & Van de Velde (2016: 19). It is difficult to see why WVL thinks this is a problem. Pronouns of either sort that he mentions have senses through participating in systems of the simplest Saussurean oppositive and negative type. Personal pronouns in English include, for example, *me*: first and not-second and not-third person, singular and not-plural. The demonstrative pronouns of standard English are proximal vs. distal, singular vs. plural. Accordingly they have senses, grounded logically in the sense-relations of co-hyponymic mutual exclusion or antonymy. Proper names precisely do not have any such senses, and names and pronouns as linguistic objects are therefore clearly distinct in virtue of the way they refer into the real world.

Very curiously, WVL seems to think that TPTP will have difficulty in differentiating proper names from nonsense-words if the former lack sense. This idea is extremely odd because it embodies a mistaken idea about the nature of (at least literary) nonsense. Nonsense-words are interesting in that they are novelties. Paradoxically these novelties are used in ways that suggest, usually playfully, that they have a sense and denotation but that those are hidden or unknown, although they may be supplied by the reader or listener at will. Any user of English will recognize that Lewis Carroll's *slithy toves* in the *Jabberwocky* poem (in *Through the looking glass*, Carroll 1871) are countable individuals which have a property. The lexical, as opposed to grammatical, properties can be supplied by the reader, but few will have read this poem without mentally actualizing a *tove* in some guise or other, and attributing at least one property to it. Carroll himself, in the guise of Humpty Dumpty, supplied a model interpretation: "Well, 'slithy' means 'lithe and slimy' […]. 'toves' are something like badgers – they're something like lizards – and they're something like corkscrews." You, the reader, could substitute any explanation for Humpty Dumpty's, and you would have supplied the words with senses and denotations. They will lack sense and denotation only if you fail to supply them; the opportunity to do so is handed to you on a silver plate. Even if you do not supply them, you will still know that slithy toves are individuals, and that either they share characteristics (meaning that the expression is common not proper), or they may not (in which case the

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expression is consistent with being proper: things sharing only the name *Slithy Tove*). It is proper names that have no sense, and not nonsense-words, which command a bank-vault of sense whose doors are left wide open.

Finally, WVL states that "[i]t is not clear how Coates will deal with more marginal names like the names of languages, brands, years, months, or autonyms" (2007: 69), asserting that the first word in (4.1), and analogously for expressions in the other categories, is a proper name:

4.1. [WVL's (21) a.] Latin is a dead language.

and that the last word in (4.2) must be an appellative (common noun) on the grammatical grounds that it can (and here does) form an element of an indefinite noun phrase:

4.2. [WVL's (22) a.] I learnt a lot of Latin.

His point is backed up by examples such as *a Ford* (meaning 'a car made by the Ford company') and *another such June* in WVL's (22) b. and d.

I accept that expressions in these categories can be troublesome. I will leave numerical year-"names" and autonyms out of the discussion because, frankly, they leave me puzzled at the moment, and they are certainly abnormal as potential "names". Even WVL regards these, but also even the ones in (4.1) and (4.2), as "marginal", and therefore in some way different from "mainstream" names. On the grounds that "it is hard to come up with lexical senses" for such words as *Latin*, WVL believes (2007: 70) that I will have to conclude that they are senseless and therefore proper in both sentences, thereby blurring the distinction between sense and no-sense and accordingly between the two types of reference identified above.

It is notable that those languages which use overt criteria, such as capitalization in writing, to distinguish proper from common expressions differ in how they treat language "names":

5.1. Today Latin is no longer spoken.
5.2. Aujourd'hui le latin n'est plus parlé.

I think the solution is that language "names" are treated superficially *as if* proper in English but not in French, and that they are in fact taxonyms, not proper names. If one examines undisputed taxonyms like *tiger*, *leopard*, *cheetah*, *lynx* and so on, one will conclude that they are common nouns which are co-hyponyms of (let us say for the sake of argument) *cat*, and that their senses are distinguishable in accordance with an encyclopaedic list of characteristic (i.e. generalizable) features including skin colour and pattern, size, gregariousness, mating behaviour, geographical distribution and so on.

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Language "names" can be viewed in the same way. Their referential potential is patrolled by characteristic features of lexis, syntax, phonology, culturally agreed labelling (agreement about what "counts as" material in that language), geographical distribution and so on, the varying values of which constitute their sense; and they are co-hyponyms of the count-noun *language* (irrespective of whether intermediate levels of typological or historical taxonomic status are introduced). Thus *She speaks Vietnamese / Elle parle vietnamien* ∈ *She speaks a/some language / Elle parle une langue (quelconque).*

5. John M. Anderson (2007) and Fran Colman (2014)

Anderson [hereafter JMA] makes reference (2007: 5 and 76n) to an opinion which should not need refutation, because he and I agree fully. He quotes me as saying in a review (2002): "[…] onomastics may concern itself not only with proper names […]." This was not phrased as well as it should have been, but it was intended to be an observation on the way the scope of onomastics was understood at the date of the conference I was reviewing, because the proceedings included an abstract of a paper dealing with what should be distinguished as *taxonyms*, such as bird-"names". At the era in question, the journal *Names* included material on plant-"names" (vols 33 and 35), words for 'turkey' (vol. 31) and dog breed "names" (vols 43 and 45). As late as 2014, *Nomina* (vol. 37) included a reference to a piece on "the plant name *flag*" in its annual bibliography. During the same period, *Onoma* was free from such things. My quoted remark was not meant to suggest a programmatic definition of onomastics. Like JMA, I would firmly reject the idea that the study of taxonyms has anything directly to do with onomastics, and it is a pity that this issue may have helped to colour the rest of the discussion negatively.

The more substantive issues can now be pursued. JMA (2007: 116–130 *sparsim*) devotes space to attacking aspects of what he considers to be my "confusion", so a response is appropriate.

JMA correctly quotes me (Coates 2005a: 130) as subscribing to the view that saying *I live at the old vicarage* entails *I live at the house which was formerly that of some Anglican priest*, whilst saying *I live at The Old Vicarage* entails only *I live at the place called The Old Vicarage*. He notes that the entailment of the latter is what amounts to an acceptance of the categorical presupposition mentioned in my discussion of WVL's opinions above. It follows from that that the name *The Old Vicarage* has a sense which involves hyponymy with *place*. JMA's criticism of my wording is correct. I recant, and I would now, in line with my observations above, state that the relationship with place is probabilistic, and acknowledge that what I called an

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entailment in Coates (2005a) has no such logical security. The defect in the cited paper can be remedied easily without damage to the position I would now espouse, and which I have used in subsequent papers (e.g. 2012, 2014). The name-expression in question indeed has nothing that could be characterized with the logical certainty of a *sense*, though what might appear to be a sense-like quality has the nature of an implicature or a reasonable guess in the context of utterance.

JMA continues (2007: 117) by calling my "objection to the traditional view that what characterizes names is referring uniquely" a "trivial quibble". This is extremely unfortunate, because it trades on the widespread confusion between *reference* and *denotation* that I mentioned above (2.1–2.2). The wording by which JMA expresses "the traditional view" is precisely the position I hold, not one I reject. The substance of what I reject is the "traditional view that what characterizes names is denoting uniquely" (though it may not be worded in that way in venerable texts, such as those that exemplify the problem by invoking persons bearing names which, so far as is widely known, have been uniquely those of particular individual humans, such as *Vercingetorix*, *Cicero* and *Caligula*). I cannot grasp how it can be a trivial quibble to show that names are not characterized by denoting uniquely when one long-standing traditional view is precisely that they do. It is simplicity itself to show that they do not denote uniquely (that is, that they cannot by definition denote uniquely) – one simply has to point to two persons with the same name. But to make the point is something that causes difficulty for a supporter of that traditional view, which should evidently be discarded for ever.

A persistent difficulty for JMA is that I characterized name-expressions such as *The Old Vicarage* as necessarily lacking sense, and by implication, lacking grammatical structure, with the result that I appear to claim that such expressions are not transparent and therefore cannot be interpreted by a listener in line with the linguistic appearance of the expression. JMA says (2007: 117) that "Coates' confusion arises precisely from a failure to recognize the validity of associating with names both a distinctive 'mode of reference' [my main contribution to this debate, RC] and the content and structure of the category whose existence he denies, i.e. the name." Rather, the difficulty arises from my exposition focusing on the speaker and leaving no room for the interlocutor to pick up the structure of such a name-expression, i.e. to recognize the expression as referring semantically and therefore to fail to understand it as a name. JMA is therefore right to conclude that the same expression may be understood by the speaker and the hearer in a dyadic conversation as referring in different modes. That is, such expressions may indeed be ambiguous as regards referential mode, and I have rectified this oversimplification of the matter in work published since 2005. It

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is unfortunate that JMA has based his main disagreement with me on a short preparatory conference paper, though clearly I can apportion no blame to him for that. In agreeing in essence with his criticism, I continue to maintain that to do so does not damage the fundamental equation set out in (1.1–1.2). In the instance under discussion, the speaker in saying *The Old Vicarage* commits to no categorial presupposition, but the very wording of the name-expression leaves it open for an interlocutor to hear such a categorial presupposition, i.e. that the thing referred to is a place of a particular type, as if the speaker had used the phonologically identical expression *the old vicarage*.

JMA then (2007: 120) appears to misunderstand a remark I made (Coates 2005a: 131): "the category of proper nouns is epiphenomenal upon the basic category of proper name-expressions". He queries what kind of category or categories is involved. He and I appear to agree that names as functional entities operate as noun phrases (or determiner phrases, or the equivalent concept in other grammatical frameworks, i.e. archetypal referring expressions, however one theorizes them in some particular approach); in any case they do the job of referring as, or as if, phrasal. We differ in that I assert that any lexis and structure they may appear to show does not contribute logically to the act of reference. I have often used the example of the linguistic unrestrictedness of names for racehorses to make this point, though in my view it can be made more subtly but just as potently with examples such as *The Old Vicarage*, as discussed: the point being that there is no logical requirement for The Vicarage to be a vicarage. A high probability that on some conversational occasion *The Old Vicarage* does indeed refer to an old vicarage does not address the issue of logic, and therefore of presupposition and entailment, which I spelt out above. In that light, I can reiterate that "the basic category of proper name-expressions" just means any linguistic material which is used senselessly as a referring expression on some occasion (see 1.2). I should have made it clear just how all-embracing that "category" can be, and it is inappropriate in that light to call it a "category" at all.

JMA finds it odd that I can characterize proper nouns as both epiphenomenal and prototypical, but it is not odd at all. The epiphenomenality of proper nouns, i.e. of the readily recognizable nouns which are never used outside tropes to refer sensefully, such as *John*, *Willy*, *Louvain*, *Edinburgh*, is self-evident. Given that literally any linguistic material can serve as a proper name,[9] such material as can *only* do that job is unusual and special at the type level as opposed to the token level. Conversely, material of the *John* and *Willy* type is prototypical at the token

[9] Van Langendonck & Van de Velde (2016: 20) appear to concede the point: "[…] names can be based on all kinds of lemmas."

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level; they are the kind of material that is most often used to fill the role of proper names through their capacity repeatedly and cumulatively to refer to individuals with economy of (psycho)linguistic means.

JMA also believes that the prototypicality of proper names does not require them to lack sense. He therefore subscribes to the same view of their supposed categorial presuppositions as is espoused by WVL, which I have argued against above.

Much the same position as JMA's is espoused by Colman (2008: 38) and later also by the same author (2014: 36–37), and I respond to it separately in a review of the 2014 book (Coates forthcoming a). She also objects to my proliferation of category-labelling terms yielding a range of potential "-onymies": this in an early paper (Coates 2000) dating from before my views on categoriality were fully formed (see now especially Coates 2014), and I do not wish to insist on certain aspects of the detail of what I said in that early paper.

6. Peter McClure (2017)

Peter McClure has reviewed the handbook edited by Hough with Izdebska (2016), to which I make a contribution rehearsing some of the ideas set out above as part of an assessment of the relationship between onomastics and historical linguistics. McClure (2017: 135) characterizes my view that "[…] names are, by definition, semantically empty even when they simultaneously connote something true about their referents" as "extreme", and he is "[…] not in the slightest bit convinced that it [loss of lexical sense, RC] is a necessary prerequisite for onymisation." For consistency with other work in linguistics including my own, I would not have chosen this wording; for *semantically empty* I would have put *devoid of sense*, for *connote something true* I would have put *have valid entailments* and/or *presuppositions*, and for *true about their referents*, I am not sure whether McClure might not have meant *true about their denotata*; there is an ambiguity here. But the essence of the point McClure makes is nonetheless clear: he rejects the idea that expressions functioning as names necessarily lack sense, citing my example of *The Houses of Parliament*. He cites semantically transparent by-names such as Middle English *Talkewell* as counterevidence; expressions with this lexically and grammatically transparent structure appear to be exclusively onymic.

My response to this begins by offering an analogy. At the level of lexical category, the name *The Houses of Parliament* is structurally parallel to *The Stadium of Light*, the name of the home of Sunderland Association Football Club. Few, I suspect, would argue that the name of the venue in

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Sunderland is processed for lexical sense when used referentially by most English-speakers. It is processed as a chunk or idiom. Its lexical elements are detached from their senses because of the onymization of the expression. A straightforward consequence of that is that their senses do not participate in ordinary logical relations. In (6.1):

6.1. The Stadium of Light is a place of darkness these days.

may be taken (charitably) as a witticism, but it is not self-contradictory as (6.2) is:

6.2. The stadium of light is a place of darkness these days.

Of course, if someone says (6.1), they are likely to be doing so because they intend the etymology of the name-expression to be accessed by an interlocutor. But in so doing they are not committed to any propositions which would follow from it if it were non-onymic, not even that the place is a stadium. The stadium of Manchester United is (nick)named *The Theatre of Dreams*, but it is not a theatre; The Stadium of Light is not *required* to be a stadium for its name to be used in successful reference. That does not detract from the expectation that a place with this name is *likely* to be a stadium. By the same token, *The Theatre of Dreams* is *likely* to denote a theatre. The expectation aroused is true in one case, and false in the other, a matter of pure contingency. It follows that if these expressions are of the same type (i.e. names), it must be a general fact about that type that the expectations arising from their lexical content are not guaranteed to be true as they would be by presupposition or entailment.

Similarly, if the expression *the houses of parliament* is used in conversation with a knowledgeable interlocutor, successful reference can no doubt be achieved in a suitable context. No-one will dispute that *The Houses of Parliament* is also the name of the relevant building (whether by bestowal or evolution), and that the building could be correctly identified in context even if an interlocutor lacked relevant lexical knowledge. That is, *The Houses of Parliament* can successfully refer onymically even though *house(s)* is used in a somewhat abnormal sub-sense and even if the sense of *parliament* is not understood.

On this foundation, I think it is clear that a lexically and grammatically transparent expression can refer on some occasion in either mode, onymically or semantically. The constructs and requirements of TPTP acknowledge that this is possible, but apply the term *name* to such an expression only when it is used to refer onymically. In a dyadic conversation, one participant may use it to refer onymically and the other may understand it semantically, i.e. decode

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it lexically and grammatically *in order to* identify the intended referent (compare above, p. 19). Either participant may access the etymology of the name in order to do second-order processing (i.e. to do anything other than achieve reference). The speaker may make a joke (the darkness of The Stadium of Light); their interlocutor may identify a paradox (The Long Island of the Hebrides is not an island); either may make an observation based on etymology, i.e. on *apparent* or *historical* sense (some individual called *Faith* is indeed religious). The point is that none of these perfectly legitimate conversational activities has anything to do with using the lexis or grammar of the name-expression to achieve reference, which is what the essence of this paper, and indeed of TPTP, deals with.

Let us return to McClure's example of the Middle English by-name *Talkewell*, a fine and challenging example. To call it a by-name requires us to believe that it remains transparent in some sense. To call it a name requires the apparatus of TPTP to enforce the belief that it is not sense-bearing once it has been bestowed. The apparent paradox is that such names were coined and bestowed in order to continue to (somehow) convey meaning after bestowal in the society in which the coining and bestowal took place. The TPTP resolution of the issue is that the expression was clearly intended to be sense-bearing at the pivotal moment of bestowal; that was the rationale for its bestowal. But it also lost that sense at the moment of its bestowal on, say, Henry, meaning specifically that the sense of the proposition *Henry talks well* was no longer obligatorily accessed in order to achieve reference to Henry in the context of utterance. If the transparency of the expression was called upon at some subsequent point in Henry's life, for example to be made fun of, or to have its continuing truth affirmed, then what was accessed for that purpose was the etymology of the expression, i.e. what it had meant when it was bestowed. In other words, successful reference does not depend on the transparency of the expression as uttered in some context; Henry Talkewell might be silent in the relevant context and therefore more easily identified by his characteristic green jacket and hose, even whilst someone refers to him as *Henry Talkewell*. Understanding it as a name, in the sense I have defined, trumps the validity of its being understood as a synchronically accurate description.

7. Taking stock

Taking account of all of the above, I continue to defend the position that:

7.1. Names are linguistic devices for referring senselessly, i.e. without commitment to any logical proposition that might appear to follow from their lexis or grammar.

7.2. An expression which is used on some occasion to refer senselessly

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is a name, even if its lexis and grammar are (etymologically) transparent. Users of such an expression may access any etymological sense inherent in lexis and grammar for second-order processing tasks of various types.

To accommodate some aspects of the critique by Van Langendonck and especially by Anderson, I would clarify that names may give rise to expectations of a categorial status, but I continue to defend the idea that such statuses are never presupposed, and that the lexical and grammatical content of names (as defined in 7.1) never give rise to entailments.

To accommodate especially McClure and Anderson, I would add:

7.3. In a dyadic conversation, an expression which is potentially ambiguous as to referential mode (semantic or onymic) may be processed differently by each participant.

But I continue to defend the idea that it is philosophically, semantically, pragmatically and psycholinguistically appropriate to equate *names* with *expressions used in a particular referential mode that does not access sense*. What this allows is:

8.1. The elimination of the *structural* boundary between names and non-names, i.e. between proper and common expressions, acknowledging that any linguistic material whatever can fulfil the *function* of name (that is: the default interpretation of any string is as a proper name).

8.2. The acknowledgement that, in use, some expressions may be processed differently without an obligation to label the expression in question definitively a name or a non-name; in such cases it is the *(referential) use* that is onymic, not the *expression itself*.

On the whole, critics have not fully understood the intended relationships among transparency, referentiality and etymology that I have reiterated here. I hope that this paper goes some way towards clarifying, and increasing understanding, of the position I have taken, and towards clearing the ground for further exploration on an agreed foundation.

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