

ON THE STATUS OF PROPER NAMES IN THE GRAMMAR

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This paper is yet another contribution to the enormous theoretical headache that is the syntactic and semantic analysis of proper names. In particular, I provide a preliminary argument for the claim that proper names are always syntactically base-generated as functional items, as types of pronouns. I will do so by constructing a *reductio ad absurdum* argument against the opposing view, the view that proper names are generated as plain common nouns. The debate between the characterization of proper names as functional versus lexical developed here mirrors the debate in the area of analytical philosophy between the proponents of Descriptivism (championed most notably by Frege (1892) and Russell (1905), and most recently Geurts (1997) and Elbourne (2005)), who view names as disguised definite descriptions, and those who support the Causal Theory of proper names which claims that names have no inherent content (Donnellan, 1966, 1970; Kripke, 1972, 1979 among others). I will first briefly summarize these two influential views in philosophy, and then show how, given the commonly assumed distinction between lexical and functional items (Abney, 1987), these semantic theories will be translated into syntactic ones: the Frege-Russellian view claiming that names would be generated as lexical and the Kripkean view favouring a functional treatment. The bulk of this paper consists in arguing that, contrary to what studies in theoretical syntax seem to suggest (see, for example, Longobardi (1994); Chierchia (1998); Borer (2005a) *inter alia*), if proper names are base-generated as lexical items, i.e. items with descriptive content à la Frege-Russell, given the structure of the model we are working in (The Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995)/Antisymmetry (Kayne, 1994)), then we run into a contradiction. The lexical analysis of proper names having been shown to be untenable, we are left with the only possible analysis being one in which proper names are treated as content-less functional items, a characterization which clashes with a descriptivist view of names, but meshes perfectly well with a Causal Theoretic perspective.

1. Two conflicting views of proper names in philosophy

For the past 200 years or so, the domain of philosophy of language has been marked by a fierce debate between two opposing approaches to reference and, in particular, proper names: the Descriptivists (Frege, 1982; Russell, 1905;

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Searle, 1958, among others) and the Direct Reference/Causal theorists (Kripke, 1972 and his followers).

1.1. The Definite Description Theory of Proper Names

Descriptivist theories of proper names postulate that the sense of a name is given by a definite description associated with it. So, for these theories, names are simply abbreviated descriptions. For example, as Frege writes, the name “Aristotle” would be a phonologically reduced stand-in for the sense, “the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great” (Frege, 1952:58n; cited in Devitt & Sterelny, 1987:39). It is this sense that determines the reference of the proper name. In other words, the content of the description goes out into the world and picks out the unique object that has its properties. Therefore, in the case of “Aristotle”, when someone says his name, the properties “pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great” searches throughout time and space and, provided there is one and only one pupil of Plato who also taught Alexander the Great, it settles on the desired Greek philosopher. This is the essence of the Classical Description theory, which is based on work by Gottlob Frege (1892) and Bertrand Russell (1905)¹.

However, this scenario seems to make a number of wrong predictions. For example, if the name *Aristotle* is just a stand-in for *the pupil of Plato who taught Alexander the Great*, then the sentence in (1a) should be analytic, because its true meaning is (1b).

- (1) a. Aristotle taught Alexander the Great.
- b. The pupil of Plato who taught Alexander the Great taught Alexander the Great.

This does not seem to be the case. Also, if names inherently have content, then saying something that would negate part of that content ought to result in a contradiction, of the type in (2):

- (2) #That bachelor is married.

However, though the sentence in (3) may be false, it is certainly not a contradiction.

- (3) Aristotle never taught anyone.

Problems such as the one that I have just outlined have led philosophers to postulate the *Cluster Theory* of proper names, which is most famously associated with the work of John Searle (Devitt & Sterelny, 1987). In these theories, proper names are stand-ins not for a single description, but for a cluster of descriptions, some of which may be false. The descriptions inside the cluster

¹ More modern incarnations of this theory, such as Geurts (1997) and Elbourne (2005), have a more *quotative* flavour (i.e. a name is a DD of the type “The person who is called NN”); however, as we will see, as well as being independently questionable for reasons discussed in Kripke (1972), Abbott (2002), and section 3.1.1, this theory makes the same syntactic prediction as the classical description theory, so I will group them together.

can be given different weights, making some more important, more defining than others. It is the heavily weighted/defining descriptions that pick out the referent, and are therefore necessarily true about the object in question. In the case of *Aristotle*, the name might include the cluster of descriptions in (4).

- (4) **Ancient Greek philosopher** **(defining)**
 Pupil of Plato **(defining)**
 Tutor of Alexander the Great

Under this approach, the non-triviality of (3) would be explained by saying that, since “tutor of Alexander the Great” is not a defining description, it is not necessarily true about the person in question. Thus it is not trivial to receive confirmation that Aristotle did indeed teach Alexander the Great.

1.2. **The Causal Theory of Proper Names**

The central Descriptivist claim, that content of a name (the definite descriptions inherent in it) determines its reference, has come under fire from philosophers in the second half of the 20th century in works such as Donnellan (1966;1972), but most famously in the work of Saul Kripke (1972;1979 *inter alia*). Kripke claims that the entire way that the Descriptivists have been looking at reference is flawed; he maintains that there is “not simply some technical error here or some mistake there, but that the whole picture given by this theory of how reference is determined seems to be wrong from the fundamentals” (Kripke, 1972: 282)

He takes issue with the characterization of proper names as being short forms for the phrase “is the F”, where F is a series of descriptions which, for the referent to be correctly identified, must apply to the object in question and *nothing else*. It follows from this that a speaker must have (at least one) *true* belief which wouldn’t be true of anything else. However, in *Naming and Necessity* (1972), Kripke presents cases where having true beliefs or, indeed, any beliefs about a person that uniquely pick him/her out is not necessary in order to use the name correctly.

A very strong argument that identifying knowledge is not necessary comes from cases where we refer to people whom we don’t know much about. The cases in question would be those where the properties that we have in mind are actually satisfied by two people. In this situation, how are we supposed to know which of the two people we’re talking about? Take, for example, Kripke’s discussion of the meaning of the name Cicero:

Most people, when they think of Cicero, just think of a *famous Roman orator*, without any pretension to think either that there was only one famous Roman orator or that one must know something else about Cicero to have a referent for the name (Kripke, 1972: 279)

If this is true, and it certainly seems reasonable, then, contrary to what is predicted by the Descriptivist model, identifying knowledge is not necessary for a name to have a referent.

Kripke also shows that identifying knowledge is not even sufficient to pick out the correct referent. This occurs in the very common situation where speakers have false beliefs about people they are referring to. For example, Kripke reports that he has often heard people say that Einstein’s most famous

achievement is the invention of the atomic bomb, and that Columbus discovered America and was the first man to realize that the earth is round. Since, under the Descriptivist theory, it is these descriptions that determine reference, it predicts that “when these people use the term “Columbus”, they really refer to some Greek if they use the roundness of the earth, or to some Norseman, perhaps, if they use the “discovery of America”” (Kripke, 1972: 280). But it is pretty clear that the person who has “the inventor of the atomic bomb” as the content of the name “Einstein” does not designate Oppenheimer; likewise, the person who has “the first person to think that the earth was round” as the content of “Columbus” does not designate some ancient Greek when s/he hears that “A city in Ohio was named after Columbus”.

These are two false predictions made by the descriptivist theories. There are many more, and the reader is advised to consult Donnellan (1966;1972) and Kripke (1972) for other problems, as well as Kripke (1978) for arguments that the problems that Descriptivism was conceived of to solve persist even under this approach.

Kripke’s alternative to Descriptivism is known as the *Causal theory* of reference. In this theory, “a term refers to whatever is causally linked to it in a certain way, a way that does not require speakers to have identifying knowledge of the referent. The causal links relate speakers to the world and to each other” (Devitt & Sterelny, 1987:55). What follows from this is that proper names are *rigid designators*. Kripke calls something a rigid designator if, in every possible world, it designates the same object (Kripke, 1972:269). The theory works as follows: the name is introduced through a formal or informal naming ceremony or baptism, where its phonological content is causally linked with the object that it will go on to designate. As a result of this action, witnesses of this linking will have the ability to refer to the object based on the name. People who were not at the baptism will be able to acquire the possibility of referring to the object in question from those who were present at the initial act, i.e. by being told about it in conversation. In this way, “the exercise of that ability will designate the object in virtue of a causal chain linking the object, those at the baptism, and the user through conversation” (Devitt & Sterelny, 1987:56).

Although it is arguable that, in the domain of philosophy, the Causal theory of proper names has by and large won out over the Descriptivist theory since the last half of the 20th century, this does not seem to be the case in linguistics. In the next section, I will show how linguists adopt Descriptivism in the syntactic module of the grammar.

2. The Grammatical Encoding of Different Types of Information

Since the beginnings of Generative Grammar, it has been almost universally accepted that different types of semantic information are encoded syntactically in different ways. Since as far back as Jackendoff (1977), most analyses in this tradition formally distinguish *lexical* categories from *functional* categories, either explicitly (Jackendoff 1977, Abney 1987, Baker 2003, Déchaine & Tremblay, in prep.) or implicitly (Chomsky 1974, Anderson 1997, Déchaine & Tremblay 1997, Hale & Keyser 1997; cited in Déchaine & Tremblay, in prep.). However, the exact boundary between these two categories of items varies substantially from author to author (for example, there is a large

divide as to the status of prepositions: for Baker, 2003, Borer, 2005a,b, among others, they are functional; whereas for Jackendoff, 1977 & Déchaine & Tremblay, in prep among others, they are lexical), and, with the exception of Abney (1987)'s influential dissertation on this matter, there has been very little explicit discussion of the formal criteria for classifying something as lexical versus functional. It is, nevertheless, possible to identify a number of themes that emerge from the works dealing with this matter. From a syntactic point of view, elements that are classified as *functional* are often thought to be phonologically or morphologically dependent, and be stressless affixes or clitics; however, a quick look at quantifiers in French such as *plusieurs* and *beaucoup* counters this generalization, seeing as they are syntactically atomic and consist of at least two full syllables. Functional items are also supposed to form a relatively closed class, but again, if one considers numbers as cardinal quantifiers, seeing as the number of numbers is infinite, then it is pretty clear that this generalization does not hold for everything either. Instead, the deciding criterion in the classification of grammatical elements, across all authors, seems to be semantic, and this criterion is stated in (5):

(5) **Criterion for distinguishing functional items from lexical items**

Functional items: lack descriptive content, but “pass on” the descriptive content of their complement, if they have one (Abney, 1987; cited in Déchaine & Tremblay, in prep).

Lexical items: have descriptive “encyclopedic” content and consist of “a package of conceptual properties” (Borer, 2005a: 30).

Given this distinction, one can see that the two philosophical traditions that I have described in section 1 will be translated into syntactic theory in a very straightforward way: the Frege-Russellian view, which holds that proper names have descriptive content, would say that they are lexical items, a (sub)type of noun. The Kripkean view, which maintains that proper names are devoid of such content, would have to say that they are functional. Under this view, proper names are closer in nature to demonstratives and pronouns (which are both generally considered to be functional elements (Baker, 2003:127)) than common nouns.

Given the numerous arguments that have been put forth by philosophers in the past against Descriptivism (some of which I have summarized above), one would expect to find a similar debate with similar results to have taken place within the field of linguistics. This, however, is not the case: the treatment of proper names by syntacticians has been, to my knowledge, exclusively Fregean. That being said, I am absolutely not implying that linguists have not recognized the rigid designatorial properties of names or even that they haven't read Kripke; in fact, almost all current works on this subject in syntax make reference to at least *Naming and Necessity* (Longobardi, 1994; Matushansky, 2005; Ghomeshi & Massam, 2005 etc.). However, what I would like to maintain is that, when it comes to the Descriptivist theory, they, in the words of Kripke himself, “have abandoned its letter while retaining its spirit” (Kripke, 1972:272). What I mean by this is that, in every case that I have read, the linguist presents the property of

being a rigid designator as being acquired through a syntactic derivation. In every single one of these cases, the “proper name” starts out as a lexical item, sometimes a subtype of noun (Longobardi, 1994), but most often, as a plain common noun (Borer, 2005a; Ghomeshi & Massam, 2005; Chierchia, 1998). When the context is appropriate, they acquire their functional properties (rigid designation and lack of content) through an interaction with the determiner, a functional item (more discussion on this below). Thus the name-as-a-rigid-designator is a second order object, which is derived from a primitive that consists of a package of conceptual properties. In other words, all these syntactic theories postulate that proper names are inherently contentful, a position that is consistent with the Frege-Russellian theory, but not with the Kripkean one. Although I will go on to show that this type of scenario is untenable in linguistics (as it has already been shown to be so in philosophy), it is important to first note that there seem to be a number of syntactic reasons for preferring a Fregean treatment of proper names. In the next section, I will expose the two main reasons that proper names have been characterized as lexical, and I will discuss the consequences of this syntactic characterization in more depth.

3. Arguments for the Lexical Status of Proper Names

3.1. The Distribution of Determiners with Proper Names

By and large the most significant and seemingly convincing argument for treating proper names as underlyingly common nouns is the observation that they can co-occur with a wide range of determiners, as do common nouns. This is shown in the examples in (6):

- (6) a. **Three Peters** called for you last night.
 b. That woman is **a real Clytemnestra**.
 c. **Almost all Mohammads** are muslims. etc.

Examples such as the ones in (6) have been repeatedly cited (Longobardi, 1994;2005; Borer, 2005; Ghomeshi & Massam, 2005 among others) as definite counterexamples to the purely functional analysis that follows from the work of Kripke and the logicians. However, though such examples are frequently trotted out to this end, it is not very often the case that they are looked at with greater depth than just to remark that they occur with a determiner. In the present section, I will do just that. I will argue that, upon further examination, these names preceded by a determiner fall into two classes: metalinguistic uses, and attributive uses. I will argue that it is only the latter cases that should be looked at within the framework of a study of proper names, as the possibility for a metalinguistic use (i.e. for the name to mean “that which is called ‘X’”) is not a property specific to names, but one that is common to all words.

3.1.1. Metalinguistic Uses

The first type of determiner-clad “proper name” that is frequently cited in the literature is what I will call the *metalinguistic* name. Examples of this use are found in (7).

- (7) a. **The tall Kim** showed up here. (Borer, 2005a: 73)
 b. We had **a Larry** and **an Earl** working on reception and **the Larry** looked like **an Earl** and **the Earl** looked like **a Larry**. [SalonManager, *Toni & Guy*] (Ghomeshi & Massam, 2005: 8)
 c. **All the Émiles** that live near us like red wine.

All the examples shown above have roughly the same meaning: “X which is called NN”. So basically, in (7a), *the tall Kim* can be glossed as *the tall person whose name is Kim*. Are these actually proper names? If we say that these objects are actually the same objects that occur in a sentence such as *Kim showed up here*, then we have to conclude that “X which is called NN” is part, if not all, of the meaning of NN. However, this sort of reasoning is subject to what Recanati (1993) calls *Kripke’s Generality Argument*. He summarizes this argument as follows:

If we say that being called NN is part of the meaning of the proper name NN, then, by parity of reasoning, we shall have to say the same thing of all denotative words in the language—we shall have to say, for example, that ‘being called “alienist”’ is part of the meaning of ‘alienist’, or that ‘being called “red”’ is part of the meaning of ‘red’. But this is absurd. It follows that a proper name NN does not mean ‘entity called NN’. (Recanati, 1993: 161).

In the cases in (7), then, perhaps the referent of *Kim*, *Larry*, *Earl*, and *Émile* is not the actual person that ends up being designated, but more along the lines of the convention that associates some phonological material to a meaning. If this is the case, then the fact that, intuitively, there seems to be two referents to *Giorgione* in the example in (8) would be explained: the first use of the name designates in all possible worlds whoever the speaker is talking about, and the *so* is co-referential with the phonological features of the name itself.

- (8) *Giorgione* is so-called because he is very large.
 (Quine, 1953; cited in McCawley, 1993: 27)

If “being called NN” was really a fundamental part and distinguishing feature of proper names, then the “double take” that is necessary to understand the referent of *so* would not be expected. Notice also that adopting the type of explanation that would derive the metalinguistic reading through the insertion of a determiner would not do the trick, as there is no determiner in (8), and yet the metalinguistic reading is still available.

The possibility of referring to the phonological character of a word is by no means limited to proper names. As shown in the examples in (9), when the context is appropriate, the metalinguistic reading of non-proper names is available:

- (9) a. There are three banks in this town: one on main street and one on each side of the river.²
 b. If you call a tail a leg, then a horse has five ‘legs’.³

² Example (9a) is due to Adèle Mercier.

Therefore, we can conclude that the examples in (7) do not constitute true examples of referential names (pace Recanati, 1993; Geurts, 1997), and so this data is irrelevant in the determination of the particular syntactic status of proper names

3.1.2. Attributive Uses

This being said, there do exist examples of what we normally think of as proper names with determiners that are not metalinguistic, such as in (10):

- (10) a. Sara is **a young Einstein**.
 b. In Hitay's class, there are **many budding Chomskies**.
 c. My sister's high school is filled with **little Britney Spears**'

These examples differ from the ones discussed in the previous section in that, in (10), we are not referring to the character of the name itself, but instead we are ascribing certain discourse relevant properties of the referent of the proper name to someone else. For example, in (10a), I am attributing the intellectual characteristics of Albert Einstein to Sara, and in (10c), I am attributing the behavioural and physical characteristics of Britney Spears to the girls at my sister's private high school. These examples are thus different from the metalinguistic usages because they involve referring, albeit indirectly, to a person or object. But how is the example in (11b) different from regular determiner-less proper names, such as in (11a)?

- (11) a. **Chomsky** entered the room.
 b. **A Chomsky** entered the room

I propose that the difference between *Chomsky* and *a Chomsky*, in the usage described here, parallels Donnellan (1966; 1970)'s well-documented distinction between the *referential* use and the *attributive* use of definite descriptions. He differentiates the two uses of a definite description in the following way:

A speaker who uses a definite description **attributively** in an assertion states something about whoever or whatever is the so-and-so. A speaker who uses a definite description **referentially** in an assertion, on the other hand, uses the description to enable his audience to pick out whom or what he is talking about and states something about that person or thing...in the **referential** use, the definite description is merely one tool for doing a certain job—calling attention to a person or thing...in the **attributive** use, the *attribute* of being the so-and-so is all important, while it is not in the **referential** use. (Donnellan, 1966: 285).

For example, in the sentence in (12a), the content of the description *the president of the United States of America* is what determines the answer to the question. Thus, what is important in (12a) is the *property* described by the description (the property of being president) not the man it ends up referring to.

- (12) a. Is George W. Bush **the president of the United States of America**?
 b. **The president of the United States of America** gave a speech on TV last night.

³ This example is attributed to Abraham Lincoln by Abbott (2002; her (9b))

In (12b), however, the same description is being used, in this case, to designate George W Bush. Although, if it turned out that Bush had not won the 2000 election after all, (12b) would be, strictly speaking, false based on the content of the description, it would not change the fact that the description was meant to pick out Bush at the time of the utterance. As discussed above, this is the function that *Chomsky* serves in (11a). In (11b), however, *Chomsky* serves not to pick out the man Noam Chomsky, but to denote a set of discourse relevant properties of him that we are ascribing to my friend Sara, in this case, those concerning his intelligence. What are important in (11b) are the various properties that the speaker attributes to Chomsky. Based on the similarity with attributive definite descriptions, I will call the “common noun” uses of names *attributive* proper names. I propose that these uses constitute real examples of proper names used with determiners, and any comprehensive theory of proper names in English should account for them.

3.1.3. Consequences of Determiner-clad Proper Names

The existence of what appear to be proper names which take articles and other modifiers like quantifier and adjectives has been taken as conclusive proof that, in these uses, the names are actually common nouns, lexical items. This conclusion is due to a principle that is almost universally adopted as much in traditional grammar as in generative grammar that, as Baker (2003) so concisely puts it,

Only NPs can appear with articles that mark distinctions like definite versus indefinite and specific versus non-specific—a generalization that is cross-linguistically robust... Numerals and other expressions of cardinality, including morphological marking for singular and plural, are also restricted to noun environments. (Baker, 2003: 97)

The argument is therefore the following:

- (13) 1. Attributive uses of proper names are preceded by determiners
2. Only nouns may be preceded by determiners⁴
 ∴ Attributive names are nouns (i.e. lexical items)

3.2. Movement from N to D in Italian (Longobardi, 1994)

Another argument for the underlying lexical status of proper names comes from the work on Italian done by Longobardi (1994). He observes that, in Italian, proper names may appear alone or accompanied by a determiner with no change in meaning:

- (14) a. Gianni mi ha telefonato
 Gianni called me up
 b. Il Gianni mi ha telefonato
 Gianni called me up (Longobardi, 1994: 622, his (24))

⁴ It's not obvious that premise 2 is always true, that just because something appears with a determiner, it's necessarily a noun. For example, the Old French form of the generic pronoun (*on* in Modern French, although *l'on* is still acceptable in some registers) is *l'on* (Det + pronoun) (Buridant, 2000). Here we have a determiner preceding a pronoun, which is a functional item.

Since there is absolutely no change in meaning or referential capacities between (14a) and (14b), he concludes that the *Giannis* in both sentences are actually the same object. Moreover, Longobardi claims that there is more going on with the syntax of proper names in Italian than simply the optional presence of an overt determiner. He also notices that the bare name and the name with the determiner pattern differently with respect to the presence of possessive adjectives such as *mio*: when the proper name appears with a determiner, it follows the adjective; however, when it appears alone, it must precede the adjective, as shown in (15):

- (15) a. Il mio Gianni ha finalmente telefonato
 the my Gianni finally called up
 b. *Mio Gianni ha finalmente telefonato
 my Gianni finally called up
 c. Gianni mio ha finalmente telefonato
 Gianni my finally called up (Longobardi, 1994: 623, his (28))

So it seems that, when there is no determiner, the proper name has been inserted into the determiner position, a functional position. Longobardi proposes that this is necessary for the name to acquire its rigid designatorial properties, a job which can also be accomplished by the insertion of an expletive Det in (15a), and then LF movement of the name into D.

Longobardi's data from Italian give us the following picture of the syntax of proper names:

- (16) 1. Proper names can appear in N ((15a)), as **lexical** items.⁵
 2. Proper names can appear in D ((15c)), as **functional** items.
 3. The functional names and the lexical names are the same object.
 ∴ Either the functional name or the lexical name is derived from the other.

But how do we decide which one is the primitive and which one is derived? In other words, how do we choose between a Fregean analysis, where the lexical item is the primitive, and a Kripkean one, where the functional item is generated first?

3.3. The Consequences of Antisymmetry

Current Generative syntactic theory itself provides the answer to this question. The framework of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1995) incorporates certain constraints that would render a Kripkean analysis, where proper names are generated as functional items and move to become lexical, unthinkable. This framework adopts the principle of *antisymmetry* as a fundamental property of the grammatical system (see Kayne, 1994). The assumption is that “the human language faculty is in fact rigidly inflexible when it comes to the relation between hierarchical structure and linear order. Heads

⁵ Again, I feel that the acceptance of this premise is somewhat premature. In reality, what Longobardi has shown is that names can occupy a position inside the DP-shell. Given the recent explosion of projections in this area of the grammar (see, for example, Cinque, 1999), it's by no means obvious that the name moves from N. Therefore, using this data from Italian as an argument for the lexical status of proper names, as does Elbourne (2005), is not very strong.

must always precede their associated complement position. Adjunctions must always be to the left, never to the right. That is true of adjunctions to phrases and it is true of adjunctions to heads” (Kayne, 1994: xv). Thus, the direction of the construction of the grammar, which is accomplished through the operation *merge*, which takes two syntactic objects (SO_i, SO_j) and replaces them by a new combined syntactic object SO_{ij} (Chomsky, 1995: 226), is always upwards and to the left. What follows from this is that elements cannot be merged lower down in the structure. This framework also assumes the copy theory of movement (Chomsky, 1995). In this theory, movement is accomplished through the combination of two or more fundamental operations: *copy*, which makes a copy of the constituent to be displaced, and *merge*, which merges the copy into a position higher up in the structure. Since movement involves *merge*, it is therefore subject to the constraint of antisymmetry.

Longobardi has already established that the difference between the lexical proper name and the functional name is created through movement. Now, based on the fundamental characteristics of our syntactic system, we know in which direction the movement must take place. Due to the ban on downward movement, it must be the name in N that moves to D, not vice versa because D is higher up in the structure than N. Thus, if they believe that there exist lexical proper names, syntacticians are obliged to accept that the lexical name, the package of conceptual properties, is the primitive. In other words, they are forced to adopt Descriptivism.

4. The Paradox of the Grammaticalization Analysis

In this section I will show that the Grammaticalization analysis, which I have argued arises as a natural consequence of adopting a Fregean theory of proper names in the syntax, results in paradox, if one carefully examines the data from the *attributive* uses of proper names with determiners.

4.1. The Grammaticalization Analysis

The analysis that is necessary to account for the distribution of proper names in N and in D if one accepts that the noun is primitive is what I will call the *Grammaticalization Analysis*, based on its similarity to the diachronic phenomenon of grammaticalization, where an element starts off as lexical and becomes functional throughout the course of time, for example, the change from regular verbs (lexical) to modal verbs (functional) in the history of English (see Clark & Roberts, 1993). All analyses where proper names start out as lexical adopt something along the lines of the following: Proper names are base-generated in N. In order to acquire definite, rigid designatorial properties, they move into D, thus becoming functional like pronouns and demonstratives. Who the functional name ends up designating depends on the content it had when it was in N. The influence of the Descriptivist tradition can be seen in the most recent incarnation of this type of analysis, Borer, 2005a:

By virtue of having merged with <def-u> [Borer’s version of moving to D], *John Smith* or *Cat* becomes a restricting modifier of the index of <def-u>...Thus neither *John Smith* nor *cat* carried an index, in itself, when functioning as a proper name...we assume that their copies within

the L-domain (categorized as an NP) continue to function as predicates which in effect mean something like ‘the antecedent with *John Smith* properties’.
(Borer, 2005: 79)

4.2. The Paradox

In summary, the Grammaticalization analysis proposes that the attributive name is created before the referential name. In other words, it proposes that the speaker knows what *a Chomsky* is before they know who *Chomsky* is. However, I will now provide an example that shows that, in the cases that concern us here, knowledge of the referent of a proper name is prior to the attribution of their characteristics to something else. This example draws its inspiration from Kripke (1972)’s famous story about the origin of the discovery of the incompleteness of arithmetic.

Imagine that I have a friend, named Sara, who is a brilliant young mathematician, and, in describing her to another friend, I say,

(17) Sara is a Gödel.

In reference to the fact that Gödel, the discoverer of the incompleteness of arithmetic, was a great mathematician. Thus, I am attributing the (contextually relevant) properties of Mr. Gödel to describe my friend Sara. Now, imagine that we discover, as is the case in Kripke’s example, that the discovery of the incompleteness of arithmetic was not actually made by Gödel, but, rather by his research assistant, a student named Schmitt. It is therefore Schmitt who has the properties of being brilliant and being a mathematician, i.e. all the properties that I am attributing to Sara. Gödel himself would have the property of being a dishonest person who takes advantage of his research assistants. Thus, even though, in my mind, I had the representation “Gödel=a brilliant mathematician who discovered that arithmetic was incomplete,” my own intuitions, the intuitions of speakers that I have consulted, as well as Kripke’s own intuitions are that (17) was false. And so, after having learnt of the scandal involving these mathematicians, looking back on the statement, I have to admit that I was mistaken, although understandably so. Were it the case that the attributive use of the name corresponds to what I think/thought that I know/knew about Gödel, there would be no need for me to apologize to Sara for having inadvertently called her a cheater.

So, through this example, we can see that the meaning of the attributive use of the proper name is directly dependent on the person designated by the referential one. To be “a Gödel” always means to have the (contextually salient) properties of Gödel. Those properties may change depending on what Gödel ends up doing/becoming in each possible world, but, although we may perhaps be mistaken about them at times, it will never be the case that they do not belong to the individual rigidly designated by the term “Gödel”.

It may be the case that, once a name has been used in its attributive sense, the properties that are extracted based on the speaker’s current knowledge about the referent of the proper name can be formed into a separate lexical item. This occurs in cases when certain characteristics of a person who is relatively well-known are so salient that they become fixed. This has probably occurred in the

cases such as the use of *Judas* to refer to the property of being a betrayer. For example, it seems somewhat infelicitous to call someone a Judas and mean that he has long hair and a beard. Since the names have now become regular common nouns, they can undergo derivational morphology, while always conserving their very specific meaning, as in *a Machiavellian smile* and *to gerrymander*. I propose that, in these cases, the word ceases to be a name, and therefore has no place in the discussion here. This is shown by the fact that, as a result of this fundamentally diachronic process, the causal chain connecting the usage of the name to the individual it once referred to is severed, as witnessed by the fact that speakers can use the attributive version of the name, even though they may not have ever heard of the person designated by the referential use. For example, the word *gerrymander*, meaning roughly, “to manipulate electoral district boundaries to advantage the incumbent”, is relatively common; however, the knowledge that having the idea set electoral in this manner was originally a property of Elbridge Gerry is less so. In fact, even for those who do see a relation between the word and its namesake, the chain is not intact, since most of the people I have consulted, including myself, other undergraduates and faculty members at Queen’s University, have, when prompted, attributed the origin of the word to the actions of a certain Mr. Gerry Mander.

The previous example showed the extent to which an attributive name can become disconnected from its original referent once it has been lexicalized over a long period of time. However, although I maintain that this is a diachronic phenomenon in the sense that it involves a change from a grammar with a functional proper name and the ability to extract salient properties from it to a grammar with a functional name and separate but homophonous lexical item, I am by no means implying that it requires a large time frame. In fact, what seems to be sufficient for the lexicalization of an attributive name is its nonce creation and a sufficient context and number of speakers to store it. The rapidity of this lexicalization process is what explains the possibility for (18) to be ambiguous between a contradictory reading (18a) and a felicitous one (18b), given the situation I have described above.

- (18) Not even Gödel is a **Gödel**
- a. #Not even Gödel has his properties
 - b. Not even Gödel has the properties that I believed to have held of him at the moment when I uttered (17).

The sense in which (18) is contradictory ((18a)) is the attributive name, which still preserves the link to the referential name, and therefore still counts as a proper name; whereas, in the felicitous reading (18b), *Gödel* is a separate homophonous lexical item meaning “a brilliant mathematician” which is no longer causally linked to Mr. Gödel. Of course the formalisation of the exact mechanism(s) involved in the formation of the attributive name and its possible subsequent lexicalization is out of the scope of this paper.

Given the arguments I have put forth for the parasitic relationship of the attributive form of a name to its referential form, as well as the shape of the model we are working in, the paradox can be stated as in (19).

- (19) 1. Since downward movement is prohibited, the referential use (the functional item) must be derived from the attributive use (the lexical item)(Section 3.2), making the latter the syntactic primitive.
 2. The meaning of the attributive use is directly dependent on the meaning of the referential use, the derived form (Section 4.2.)
 \therefore The primitive makes reference to the derived form

But this is absurd. I therefore consider this to be a *reductio ad absurdum* argument against the view that proper names are all based generated as lexical items.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that the adoption of a Descriptivist characterization of proper names in the syntax yields an absurd result. If, as the Fregeans claim, proper names consisted of a package of descriptive properties, then they would be encoded in the syntax as lexical items, in accordance with Abney (1987)'s criteria distinguishing between functional items and lexical items. This encoding predicts that names should be able to be found with determiners, and indeed they are. However, I have argued that not all names found with determiners are actually referential proper names: some simply refer to the fact that they are a name, nothing more. Data from Italian (Longobardi, 1994), has shown that, in addition to being found with a determiner, which he takes to be evidence that, in these cases, the name is in N, proper names can also be found in D, a functional projection. I have shown that, based on the assumption of asymmetry in the grammar, if we accept that names with determiners are actually lexical items (as predicted by Descriptivism), then we must adopt the *Grammaticalization Analysis*, where names are generated as nouns and move in the syntax to become rigid designators. In this way, the version of the name that appears with a determiner is predicted to be the primitive, from which the determiner-less name is derived. However, I have also argued based on a variation of Kripke's Gödel example that the meaning of proper names which are preceded by determiners in English is dependent on the meaning of one with no determiner. In this way, we arrive at a paradox, where what is predicted to be the primitive under Descriptivism has to make reference to something that has not yet been created by the syntax. It follows that proper names cannot be base generated as common nouns; they must be generated as some sort of functional item. By generating names as elements which are similar to pronouns, we can reconcile the conflicting approaches of philosophers and linguists in a way that, has not yet been possible.

This proposal has many implications for, among other things, the precise syntactic structure of both referential and attributive names in English, as well as for the role of the determiner in the organization of the nominal system, particularly in languages such as Italian and Catalan where a determiner can precede a referential proper noun. Unfortunately, the exploration of these research areas is out of the scope of the present work.

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