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Power, Politeness, and the Pragmatics of Nicknames

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Nicknames distribute power within a social group: they can be imposed, or they can be used by agreement between namer and named. This is not the difference between political and apolitical uses of nicknames: agreement is a political act, the result of social negotiation, in which the nickname is a token. Agreement is a matter of pragmatics and politeness, so a theory of nicknames and nicknaming depends on the pragmatics of nicknames and the politeness structures implicated in them, rather than conventional logico-semantic accounts of names. Negotiation of social power within the constraints of speech acts and maxims of politeness leads to iterations of "naming contracts" between named and namer, such that nicknames are politically focusing social objects.

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Nicknames distribute power within a social group: they can be imposed, or they can be used by agreement between namer and named. This is not the difference between political and apolitical uses of nicknames: agreement is a political act, the result of social negotiation, in which the nickname is a token. Agreement may depend on symmetrical political status, or it may be a means of constructing symmetry within a politically complex relationship. Agreement is a matter of pragmatics and politeness. A cartoon character constantly surrounded by a cloud of his own detritus is called *Pig Pen*, an impolite and probably hurtful name, by all of his friends: will so-called Pig Pen defer to the assumed naming power of the group? The illocutionary force of the onomastic act may be simultaneously familiar and insulting. Pig Pen might reject the name and the group's authority to name him, but complex illocution allows him to choose the path of perlocution: the tension between illocutionary and perlocutionary force in the nicknaming act is renegotiable as power relations change.[1] When nicknaming converges with institutional political power, as in President George W. Bush's propensity to nickname colleagues and subordinates, perlocutionary choice may be limited and negotiation problematic (see Adams, 2008), but the

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present argument is concerned with everyday nicknaming, rather than extreme or unusual cases, and its relationship to everyday politics, the distribution of power within a social group, rather than institutional politics.

We have long understood that nicknames are associated with various types of power. In *Nicknames: Their Origins and Social Consequences* (1979: 5), Morgan, O'Neill, and Harré argue that a young person, particularly, has nicknames "thrust upon him by his colleagues, playmates, friends and family," that the names "represent him [or her] as others see him." As a result, "managing a nickname is one of the most fateful of social skills," not, as Paul Leslie and James Skipper (1990) suggested, participation in a social game governed by constitutive and preferential rules. Still more recently, Valerie Alia has described various political effects of naming in *Names and Nunavut: Culture and Identity in the Inuit Homeland* (2007: 9–10) some of which apply to nicknames: "Considering personal and place names, personal names are the most charged with power. This upholds, and is supported by, Lévi-Strauss's observation that individuation is the 'final level of classification' [. . .] The power to name is a politically charged power. The right to bestow names is a right which signifies that the namer has power." Recognizing that nicknaming *can* reflect power is not quite the same as insisting that power is at issue in *all* nicknaming, the position I advance tentatively here. The power is implicit in the pragmatic and politeness structures relevant to nicknaming, and the complexity of these structures is the ground on which power between namer and named is subtly, continually negotiated.

In a logico-semantic tradition extending from Frege's problems of naming and reference to Searle's *Speech Acts* (1969), names have generally been considered, if not semantically empty, at least of minimal semantic significance. As John Saeed (2003: 27) puts it, "Names after all are labels for people, places, etc., and often seem to have little other meaning." They might, as Bertrand Russell hoped they would, function as shorthand for the meaningful descriptions we associate with them: *Pig Pen* has meaning insofar as we translate it into a definite description, such as *unhygienic character in "Peanuts*." Or they might be understood as deictic, such that the name serves to point at the referent, sometimes with a very strong force, spatiotemporally conditioned, as in *Pig Pen is in the house* — you can turn and point to the cloud of detritus over by the door. But there are more types of meaning in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in this philosophy.

Names can also be seen as identity markers that depend on the established convention of calling a person by that name (though, obviously, not by that name exclusively). If you hear someone else call a person suddenly in your acquaintance by the name *Pig Pen*, you are likely to use the same name, in spite of its obviously pejorative connotation, until you know a better name by which to call the referent. This way of looking at the semantics of names, suggested by Saul Kripke in his seminal treatise, "Naming and Necessity" (1972: 302 and *passim*), has come to be called the Causal Theory (see Evans, 1973: 187); it escapes the trammels of formalism and recognizes an informal influence in establishing and maintaining the meanings of names different from the conventions necessary to lexical meaning generally, influence on the level of discourse or social behavior.[2] At least at the outset, naming involves an illocutionary act in which the namer judges or evaluates the named in

order to choose an "appropriate" name. Supposedly, after the dubbing, the initial application of name to named (or some indeterminate number of dubbings that makes the dubbing secure), the verdictive illocutionary force diminishes or disappears and the name becomes mere convention.

This account seems reasonable for names given at or near birth (Kripke referred to the original naming as "the initial baptism" [1972: 302]). If I name my child *Alexander*, I may well think he looks like a classical hero, or will grow up to be a Presbyterian minister, or even the US Secretary of the Treasury, professions with which, for historical reasons, I might associate the name. After a while, though, I may call him *Alex*, because I judge him to be diminutive in the world according to me; he may call himself *Xander*, because he thinks it is a cool name, and if enough of his friends call him *Xander* they are agreeing (judging) that the name suits the person. The self-dubbing is an assertion of power, agreement within the adolescent group an assertion of generational power: one can conceive of them as complementary to my paternal power to diminish the son with a nickname, but one can just as easily conceive of them as competitive, and, in practice, they are probably both. In any of these cases, according to the Causal Theory, once the name or nickname has become habitual among certain speakers and the one named, it loses its original pragmatic force.

Of course, the Causal Theory has its problems: Kripke (1972: 270 and 289) took names to be rigid designators, that is, they would identify the referent in all possible worlds. Personal names, however, do not meet that stringent expectation, least of all of them nicknames. As Daniel Vanderveken argues, different names may belong to different worlds, for "the sense of a proper name in a context is the sense of the bearer of that name for the speaker of that context. Thus, different names with the same bearer must have different senses in contexts where the speaker does not know that they name the same individual" (1990: 98). Nicknames are so embedded in social context as to be unreliable when dislocated. Also, as Searle has argued, it is not clear how the causal chain works, but it's not "pure," in the sense that causation alone accounts for onomastic reference (1983: 235–236), nor is it clear how speakers know the right name for the right person at the right time (Evans, 1973: 194; and Searle, 1983: 241). In other words, semantics of naming, and, I will argue, especially nicknaming, is much more pragmatic than at first it seems. Concerned primarily with problems of referential logic, these several approaches, while sensitive to context, nonetheless overlook the social meaning of names and the politics implicit in their use, and this article attempts to supply that deficiency as it contributes to a general theory of nicknames.

Consider the sentence *You can come to my party, Pig Pen*. For the sake of argument, let us assume that the sentence represents an "initial baptism" or "dubbing." On the face of it, the speech act is an invitation — that is certainly its locutionary purpose. But the meaning is complicated by a bundle of illocutions. We can think of these as illocutionary acts (up to a point), but they are really illocutionary forces of variable impact on those interpreting the invitation. For instance, at dubbing, nicknaming constitutes a declaration: the illocutionary act brings about the state of affairs to which it refers, just as it does in baptism, marriage, passing sentence, or excommunicating. The declarative force may not manifest itself in all uses of *You can come to my party, Pig Pen*, however, because not all uses are dubbings. Nonetheless, there

is a corresponding illocutionary force: the speaker claims the right to use the name *Pig Pen* for the person in question, in the nature of an assertive: *I assert the right to call you Pig Pen and you can come to my party*, where the first element of the conjunction conveys an illocutionary force.

In addition, nicknaming carries a verdictive force: it judges, assesses, or ranks. This is true at dubbing, regardless of the type of naming, as demonstrated earlier, when the namer assesses the usefulness (on extralinguistic terms) of the name as a designator of the named; but it is especially true of nicknames, where the terms of evaluation are "stronger" than they are in general naming. I use the word "strong" here to indicate an illocutionary force likely to prompt a calculated perlocutionary response, one above the level of consciousness, one that exceeds simple acquiescence that the nickname used applies to the named and that it is, as asserted, appropriate for the namer to use it. There may also be linguistic bases for judgment, of course, as in the contribution of a given name to the prosody of a full name, and they may be stretched to include some residual illocutionary force, as well, such as the verdictive force expressed in *Alexander is a deservedly attractive name*. Again, though, in general naming, the verdictive force diminishes once use of the name between or among interlocutors becomes habitual. (I am not sure that it disappears, however, in the sense that it disappears for all time in all contexts: for instance, there is no reason to suppose that the namer *never* remembers why he or she chose the name *Alexander* while using the name and that the memory never infuses a statement with illocutionary meaning, though generally it does not.)

In the case of nicknames, verdictive force is often strong and complex. Consider again, *You can come to my party, Pig Pen*. In context (perhaps in any familiar context, though not in every possible world), *Pig Pen* is pejorative, so a version of the illocution underlying the statement might be something like *I assert the right to call you by the pejorative Pig Pen* or, underlying that, *I assert the right to evaluate you negatively/rank you low among those in this social interaction*, even as I invite you to my party. At first, it may seem odd to attribute these illocutionary acts to the speech act, since they depend entirely from the nickname, not from the locutionary act *per se*. The attribution is plausible, however, if one considers, as Robert J. Stainton (2004) does, that, contrary to old-fashioned speech act theory, non-sentences carry illocutionary meaning: I can hail a person as *Pig Pen*, as in *Hey, Pig Pen!*, and the utterance bears the same verdictive forces as those *Pig Pen* contributes to the full-sentence invitation. One must recognize pragmatic differences between, say, *Pig Pen! You can come to my party* and *You can come to my party, Pig Pen*. They are not, however, relevant to the issue of whether the nickname employed in whatever function adds its own set of illocutionary forces to those of the complex speech act.[3]

The politics inherent in social contexts complicates matters further. If Lucy invites Pig Pen to her party, the illocution is more complicated, because pejoration is not the only connotation operating in her use of the nickname *Pig Pen*. Lucy may be disgusted by Pig Pen, and she may be willing to voice that disgust in the nickname *Pig Pen*, but Pig Pen is part of her social network, arguably even a friend, to the extent that Lucy is capable of friendship. Thus, when Lucy says, *I assert the right to call you*

Pig Pen, she really means *I assert the right to call you by the pejorative Pig Pen because we are familiar*, where both pejoration and familiarity (as well as respect, for instance) are categories of evaluating, ranking, and judging. Such categories are not mutually exclusive, and because they are often combined in verdictive force, those hearing the nickname used (including the named) have many ways to interpret its illocutionary meaning. (Familiarity might be expressed in the strength of assertion rather than as a verdictive, such that the assertion by a namer unfamiliar with the named to a naming right might be taken as impolite assertion, rather than impolite evaluation.)

Morgan, O'Neill, and Harré (1979: 13), whose view of nicknames was based on fieldwork, argue that "[t]he management of nicknames is, of course, a much more difficult affair" than managing one's given or family names, "since they are not so much within the personal power of the nicknamed as within the social practices of his peers. Most of our observations of techniques used to resist damaging nicknames involve either reprisals or reciprocal naming of an equally stigmatising character." This certainly represents something universal about schools and playgrounds, and the social power at stake in nicknaming, since, as Morgan, O'Neill, and Harré (1979: 15) put it, "nicknaming systems [. . .] have their origins in small groups and [. . .] play such an important part in their social organization." But we use nicknames in adult settings, and in settings apart from the most highly competitive ones. There are many perlocutionary options open to Pig Pen, and those who hear him called *Pig Pen*, other than retaliation, as a result of the complex illocution to which he or they respond.

In spite of the Causal Theory of names, you might not want to call Pig Pen *Pig Pen* the first time you meet him, on the basis of what you hear others say. It will be difficult for him not to interpret your assertion of the right thus to nickname him as aggressive or presumptuous, even if aggression and presumption are far from what you mean.[4] In this precise interaction, familiarity is a minimal basis of evaluation (you and Pig Pen have just been introduced, so cannot be familiar), whereas the pejoration is overt and heightened unless there is some other verdictive force, like strong familiarity, to qualify it, to offer Pig Pen a perlocutionary way out of challenging the power asserted in uninvited nicknaming. If there is no way out, Pig Pen may be pushed into "reprisals or reciprocal naming of an equally stigmatising character," schoolyard behavior, in order to redistribute power within the group to his advantage. But when strong familiarity *does* balance pejoration, and when that familiarity implies acceptance or respect, then it competes with the disrespect implied in the pejoration. So, Pig Pen can interpret the nicknaming as more respectful than disrespectful when it comes from Lucy, Schroeder, or Charlie Brown, who by the way, cannot deny their familiarity with Pig Pen or entirely disrespect him in his role within their social network.

We have long accepted that power in discourse is regulated by a Cooperative Principle, that interlocutors with shared conversational goals maximize their success when following a set of Conversational Maxims. In the case of nicknames, however, the appropriate extension of the Cooperative Principle is not H. P. Grice's, but Robin Lakoff's (1973): the negotiation of illocutionary and perlocutionary interests in

nicknaming is a matter of politeness. According to Lakoff's politeness rules (1973: 298), interlocutors should observe formality/distance (do not impose), hesitancy/deference (provide options for response), and equality/camaraderie (act like equals). Obviously, some nicknaming violates all of the rules, as when a stranger presumes to call Pig Pen by his in-group name, and thus at most imposes a name or at least assumes an inappropriate informality, thus limiting Pig Pen's response to deference that violates the equality rule or inviting reprisal in the interest of equality that violates the deference rule.

Within the *Peanuts* group, however, the intersection of politeness and illocution is significant. When Lucy calls Pig Pen *Pig Pen*, she is expressing informality, but the assertive force is not particularly strong — the extent to which naming is an imposition is problematic. Similarly, because familiarity strongly qualifies the verdictive force when Lucy utters *Pig Pen*, Pig Pen is offered options for response, not hesitancy or deference in quite the way Lakoff means the terms, but illocution that offers perlocutionary options as a kind of structural deference. In other words, deference is a way of describing the illocutionary/perlocutionary interface in nicknaming: it allows the named to choose from among the bundle of available illocutions or it allows the named to interpret the bundle as a matrix of mutually dependent responses with unique rather than conventional illocutionary force. Finally, while Lucy does not treat Pig Pen as an equal, indeed, the nickname both constructs and signifies inequality, she does concede camaraderie.

In proposing the intersection of illocution, perlocution, and politeness in nicknaming, Lakoff's politeness rules are useful: they are straightforward and easily correlated to illocutionary meaning. They are, however, oversimplified, and one wonders whether the approach to politeness taken by Brown and Levinson (1987), a fully elaborated and theoretically better grounded politeness theory, is similarly compatible with the present argument. I think it is. Brown and Levinson start, not with maxims, but with the sociological concept of "face," introduced by Erving Goffman (1967). In Lucy's interactions with Pig Pen and within the *Peanuts* group, nicknaming would be a "face threatening act" (FTA), one that violates "positive politeness," the principle that a speaker wants an interlocutor's wants, particularly in categories (ia) and (iif) in Brown and Levinson's catalog of FTAs: "expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule" and "use of address terms and other status-marked identification in initial encounters" (1987: 66–67), though, as I have suggested, the politeness problem is not, in fact, restricted to initial encounters. The difference between (ia) and (iif) is the difference between classifying the relevant illocutionary forces in a nicknaming act as verdictive or assertive, as discussed previously.

Though Lucy is generally in charge of social interactions in which she participates, she is nonetheless disinclined to threaten face unequivocally, because "in the context of the mutual vulnerability of face, any rational agent will seek to avoid these face-threatening acts, or will employ certain strategies to minimize the threat" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 68). The bundle of illocutions, understood by both Lucy and Pig Pen (as well as informed auditors) is "off record," because "it is not possible to attribute only one clear intention to the act" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 211–213), so not only permits but demands perlocutionary selection from among that bundle. Thus, the

speech act includes a sort of structural "hedge," of a kind not identified by Brown and Levinson. In the interplay of FTA and hedge, taken on terms both illocutionary and perlocutionary, the politeness value of nicknaming is continually negotiated, "because 'face' is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61).

Preexisting social relationships determine what's at stake in nicknaming Pig Pen *Pig Pen*, or nicknaming anyone anything. At the dubbing, power is arranged asymmetrically: parents are more powerful than infants, older schoolmates more powerful than younger ones, and bossy, clean, older girls more powerful than self-absorbed, dirty, younger boys. But while nicknaming originally asserts the power of the namer over the named, that power can be quickly redistributed in social context. As Nancy Dorian (1970: 313) wrote of nicknaming in the Scottish Highlands, "the way in which a group of friends express social solidarity is in freely using certain offensive by-names among themselves." Commenting on Dorian's work, Theodore Holland (1990: 258) noted that "actual use of such names [. . .] demands social competence in order to evaluate the offensiveness of such names — a knowledge of social structure which is available only to 'insiders.'" While pet names are often viable only between two or among a very few friends or family members, nicknames are shared in larger groups, and group assessment of politeness at the illocutionary/perlocutionary interface is significant: power is not signified or constructed by dyadic naming relationships alone; power can depend on solidarity of a given group — kids in the neighborhood, for instance. Lucy and Pig Pen negotiate their respective power partly by means of naming, but only in the context of power-relations throughout their group, including how the group regards and distributes the authority to name. So, Lucy is allowed her pejoration but is constrained by the group to acknowledge camaraderie and to "play fair," to provide Pig Pen with perlocutionary options.

Morgan, O'Neill, and Harré (1979: 65) propose that "traditional nicknames are more concerned with the promulgation of social norms," which explains "the persistence of favourable traditional names" alongside offensive ones, which thus scapegoat their bearers less than we might at first assume. But much nicknaming is very close to scapegoating, because nicknaming is potentially a taunt and, as with *rukkar* in Faroese culture, the nicknamed must decide what to do about the taunt. Faroese discourse includes taunting as an artful strategy to validate the principle that anger is an unacceptable emotion. Taunting angers the *rukka* and exposes him to ridicule; the even temper is highly valued in the Faeroes. Dennis Gaffin, whose "The Production of Emotion and Social Control: Taunting, Anger, and the Rukka in the Faroe Islands" (1995) I follow here, quotes a young Faroese woman as saying, "There are some people who never get angry, who are always in good spirit. I think they are accepted more than others because the person doesn't take anything seriously. And that is a good thing, that is about the best thing you can do" (1995: 155).

Perhaps it is good to interpret nicknaming in a way always to preserve one's good spirits, not to become angry and engage "in reciprocal naming of an equally stigmatising character," for instance. In such cases you may be scapegoated but also may achieve a certain complementary status as one who preserves order by deflecting unwelcome assertion and evaluation. Hierarchy within groups, however, requires that

someone take the brunt from time to time, whether the poor fellow named *Sóti* "Sooty, Pig Pen" (see Fellows Jensen, 1968: 259) by his Norse clan chieftain or the poor fellow called *Pig Pen* by his comrades in a stereotypical American neighborhood. How does the weaker claim power appropriated by the stronger in a nicknaming act? Not by further name-calling or "reprisal:" when a namer tries to "get away" with asserting and thus constructing power, the named "knows how to take it," or, as the Faroese say, *duga at taka*. As a result of this exchange at the illocutionary/perlocutionary interface, power between nicknamer and nicknamed may not be symmetrical, but it may not end up as asymmetrical as the namer intended.

Offensive nicknames are often taunts, attempts by namers to construct power by using them, daring the nicknamed to respond. But nicknames can taunt without being offensive, for the assertion of a traditional nickname, if not preferred by the named, is also a sort of taunt, the assertion of a right to nickname regardless of the named one's preferences: I prefer to be called *Michael*, but those wishing to construct or underscore an asymmetrical power relationship with me (often patronizing) begin by calling me *Mike*. Like Pig Pen, I find the illocutionary act offensive; unlike Pig Pen, I may counter with correction. But again like Pig Pen, and unlike the *rukka*, I do not rise to the taunt with anger. Rather, when someone tries to get away with offensive naming, Pig Pen and I redistribute power by choosing to follow the least offensive illocutionary path to the least offended perlocutionary result by upholding politeness rules violated by the nicknamer. Indeed, some intimates (family, old friends) are allowed to call me *Mike* regardless of my preference, on the assumption that politeness is thus best maintained.

Note that the same illocutionary force would be achieved if I preferred *Mike* but someone insisted on calling me *Michael*, not regardless of, but contrary to that preference. *Charlie Brown* is a similarly extended nickname: Charles Brown was nicknamed *Charlie* (by someone), but the kids in his neighborhood all call him, not *Charlie*, but *Charlie Brown*, and it is worth noting that Charlie Brown, not Pig Pen, is the community's primary scapegoat. Charlie Brown faces another, more complicated, nicknaming than Pig Pen or I, one that ameliorates his social position some. Peppermint Pattie, who has a romantic interest in Charlie Brown, calls him *Chuck*, clearly against his preference, and so asserts her nicknaming authority over him. But Charlie Brown is as powerless to resist her dubbing as he is to resist the extended form imposed by the larger group: he needs her nickname, regardless of his preference, because its verdictive force is the opposite of that attending *Charlie Brown*, and, in balancing that force, adjusts his status, as well.

Understood on the terms outlined above, the pragmatics of nicknaming (including pet naming) always involves exercise of power. Though much nicknaming, for instance, among family and friends, is affectionate and preferred (that is, the named prefers the nickname to other names), power is still an issue, rationalized in what I call "the naming contract," which is an expression of politeness rules.[5] This contract is an agreement reached between named and namer about their respective identities in the relationship and the names they will use to acknowledge those identities, in order to observe conventions of positive and negative politeness, on Brown and Levinson's terms. A nickname can serve as an in-group marker that validates the positive face of the named, but also can indicate familiarity that helps to minimize an FTA, a matter of the named one's negative face.

We come to agree with those around us about how to name one another in various circumstances. We also establish different contracts with different people, agreeing to use one set of names with one interlocutor and another set of names with another, reflecting our various social needs and motivations. Thus Charlie Brown agrees to *Charles*, *Charlie*, *Charlie Brown*, and *Chuck* in various contracts suitable to their social contexts, though the business of establishing and maintaining identity, of saving face, is managed, not in one or another naming contract, but in the array of them. Each contract depends on what we allow, and we can change our minds about that and renegotiate. Such negotiation and renegotiation are unavoidable conditions of nicknaming interactions.

In kinship and friendship, nicknaming marks familiarity, but even *Bobby* and *Tori* and *Chip* and *Sweetpea* originate in relations of the more and less powerful. In early years, or in some social systems, some are authorized to signify familiarity and exercise that authority partly in making nicknames. But when the nicknamed achieves majority (or a stage of development at which some of the perquisites of majority are conceded) or status, then he or she can adjust terms of the contract. In the context of politeness, others cede the naming authority to the named, or the named can accede to the validity of names already imposed and familiar. The illocutionary forces described above do not disappear from these transactions but are understood, taken for granted, as they are granted, in terms of the naming contract. In other words, as opposed to the Causal Theory, I do not think that pragmatic forces implicated in nicknaming are obviated by habitual use, but rather that, having agreed about what they mean by use of certain names, parties to the naming contract go about their business until circumstances make renegotiation of the contract desirable.

Political organization of everyday life underlies nicknaming, and, in human relations, we constantly negotiate power, but, more precisely, we negotiate power *over* or power *with regard to*. A nickname is a politically focusing social object. In social terms, we need nicknames, just as we need scapegoats and both cooperative and uncooperative nicknamed and nicknamers — they are all essential tropes of social organization. In nicknaming, there is lots of business to transact, and because power is brokered in the politeness strata of speech acts, any adequate theory of nicknames must account for the pragmatics of nicknames and for the role of politeness in nicknaming.

Notes

[1] Those unfamiliar with speech act theory may benefit from the following generic explanation of speech acts and their components. Every speech act comprises three component acts: the locutionary act is production of an utterance (its sounds, words, syntax) and its referential meaning; an illocutionary act is the intended meaning of that utterance or the conventional force associated with the type of utterance; and the perlocutionary act is the effect of the utterance on an interlocutor. A speech act is not complete until all three component acts are complete. Of course, this is a rudimentary description, and the nature of illocution, particularly, is a fertile field of linguistic inquiry. Readers of this article should keep in mind the following categories of illocutionary act: representatives/assertives (which represent states of affairs), verdictives (which judge or value states of affairs), and declaratives (which create the very states of affairs to which they refer).

[2] The Causal Theory and criticism of it are elements of larger philosophical debates about meaning, reference, and intentionality of which names and naming are an interesting special case. The scope of the current article unavoidably prohibits forays into more general theories, but readers should be aware

that removing debate about the Causal Theory from its general context distorts both the theory and the debate somewhat.

[3] Evans (1973: 189) rejects the notion "that in order to be saying something by uttering an expression one must utter the sentence with certain intentions; this is felt to require, in the case of sentences containing names, that one be aiming at something with one's use of the name." Here, I am arguing that nicknaming and use of nicknames does involve such intentions, expressed in illocutionary forces embedded in the particular speech act, some of which are contributed to the speech act by the nickname itself. The political intentions implicit in such illocutions are absent from philosophical treatment of the problem of onomastic meaning, which underscores the difference between the present argument and the logico-semantic tradition from which it departs.

[4] Though one may not mean to be aggressive or presumptuous in calling another by an unwanted nickname, the naming is nonetheless subtly political and not quite an innocent mistake. For one thing, the namer has accepted the authority of those who have introduced him to the nickname and by their use encouraged him to use it; he has done so *rather* than to inquire of the named what he prefers to be called, and has thus aligned himself with other namers rather than with the named. The namer may assume that it is all right to use the nickname, because if it bothers the named, the named will surely say so, and he will then use whatever name the named prefers. In other words, if using the name proves a mistake, then the namer can excuse himself as innocent of the naming facts. Really, though, the namer has assumed unwarranted authority (and thinks it appropriate that he do so) over the named and has shifted the burden of addressing the nickname onto the named. So the act is not innocent in the sense that it is apolitical, but in the sense that it is thoughtless.

[5] An earlier version of this article was presented at the ICOS meeting at York University, in Toronto, August 17–22 2008. After the presentation, Professor Grant Smith, of Eastern Washington University, asked me whether power is implicit in use of pet names as well as nicknames. Morgan, O'Neill, and Harré (1979: 31) distinguish pet names from nicknames, and there are differences between them, especially that pet names are typical of dyadic relationships and nicknames of larger social groups. Also, pet names assume an unusual level of intimacy between users and bearers, and from this intimacy reticulates an elaborate web of understandings that generally ameliorate anything problematic about the names. In other words, the challenges that occur at the interface of illocution and perlocution in Pig Pen's case do not occur in pet naming, at least, not in ideal pet naming. In fact, we know that some romantic partners, married couples, siblings, and parents and children have less than ideal relations, and pet names are certainly used as tokens of power among them. The status of pet names used in moments of social and emotional friction reminds us that the ideal compact, in which the names are always and only affectionate, reflects respectful understanding between the naming parties and an agreement thus to use the names.

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