

La Mothe Le Vayer's Interest in Names

JOHN VAN EERDE

FRANÇOIS DE LA MOTHE LE VAYER is known to students of seventeenth century French literature as a sceptic and a scholar, who, born in 1588, belonged to a distinguished circle of learned men, including Diodati, Gassendi, and Naudé. A follower of Baranzani, who introduced him to many of the implications of the Copernican theory, Le Vayer directed his mind to a multiplicity of subjects. One of these is onomatology. This article will concern itself with the various aspects of that topic found in the 5700 pages of the 1669 edition of the *Œuvres complètes*.

The comments of Le Vayer upon the Nominalist-Scotist quarrels are a typical indication of his philosophical interest in names. He remarks that thinkers like Ockham and Roscellinus protested against the Scotist view that Universals are real things, that actually subsist, holding instead that Universals are pure terms or names invented at one's pleasure.¹ Elsewhere Le Vayer resists going so far as the Stoics, who would call each thing by its name, but warns against the exaggerated avoidance of exact terms.² In yet another portion of his writings Le Vayer raises the whole question as to the origin of names. Do they come from the pure instinct of Nature or from men's fantasy? Plato holds for the natural origin; Socrates accepts both possibilities. *Genesis* shows Adam naming things as he liked, while Diodorus the Sicilian claims that men were at first inarticulate and became articulate only through the gesture that accompanied the word as they pointed out what they were talking about.³

In a chapter of *Des Petits Traitez en forme de lettres*, entitled "Des Noms," Le Vayer sketches the history of names in religion and

¹ La Mothe Le Vayer, *Homilies académiques*, 11ème, in *Œuvres* (Paris, 1669), XIV, 146. Subsequent references are to this edition.

² Le Vayer, *De L'Eloquence française*, in *Œuvres*, IV, 17.

³ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez en forme de lettres*, in *Œuvres*, X, Lettre XXXIII.

philosophy.⁴ He points out again that in *Genesis* Adam gives a name to everything created. Plato, he continues, sees names as the instruments proper for discerning the substance of things. Epicurus, Le Vayer says, thinks of the first names ever used as the effects men have imagined to emanate from each material object. Nigidius, like Plato, considers names to stem from Reason and calls them natural as opposed to positive and arbitrary. For Pythagoras names are the result of extreme and sovereign wisdom. Aristotle and the Stoics seek the fundamental truth of things in names. In the sixth chapter of *Exodus* God has a name and reveals it to Moses. And Eusebius shows in Chapter 6, Book XI of the *Evangelical Preparation*, that God's name is formed by the seven vowels of the four elements of grammar.⁵

Le Vayer, typical of his century, leans heavily upon such writers of the past as Pliny, Solinus, Diodorus, and Homer, in whom he finds examples of certain animals responding to particular names. Thus dolphins answer to Simon, goats to Jeanne, and donkeys to Martin. Whereas in Libya children have been given the names of monkeys, recently history has attested to a monkey named *Robert*, a lamb *Robin*, a crow *Colas*, a jay *Richard*, a magpie *Margot*, black-birds and starlings called *Little Sampson*, and a parrot *Little Peter*.

From history and literature further materials for Le Vayer's chapter are gathered. Thus Valerius Soranus was executed for revealing Rome's secret name (*Valentium*).⁶ The Chinese changed their kingdom's name with each change of dynasty. In Homer, the gods and men call a certain column by different names. Just so does the Xanthus River of men become the Scamander of the gods. In *Iliad* 14. 291 the gods call a certain night-bird *khalkis*, while men call it *kymindis*.

⁴ Le Vayer, *op.cit.*, Lettre XVIII.

⁵ The reference is obviously to Yahweh and is part of a long discussion on sacred names. See *Eusebii Caesariensis Opera* (Leipzig, 1867), II, 16. In another work Eusebius discusses the name of Jesus. See his *Ecclesiastical History*, tr. Rev. C. F. Crusé (Boston, 1836), bk. 1, ch. 3, pp. 21–25.

⁶ The unreliable chronicle of Cuma refers to Valentia as an early name of Rome. The name is commented upon by H. F. Pelham, *Outline of Roman History* (New York, 1901), 261: "To the colonies must be added not only the fora, established by Roman magistrates . . . but the numerous settlements of Roman citizens up and down the country, with their characteristically euphemistic names, *Industria*, *Faventia*, *Pollentia*, *Fidentia*, *Valentia*, *Florentia*."

Papal history makes its contribution to the subject as Le Vayer inquires into the origin of the Pontiff's assumption of a new name upon his election. Plotinus is cited as claiming that Sergius II started the custom in order to avoid being called "A Pig's Snout." Baronius traces the tradition to the humility of Sergius III in eschewing Peter, his baptismal name. Onuphrius would carry the matter back to John XII (or XIII, depending on how you count the Johns), who wished to dissociate himself from the too aristocratic name of Vespasian. Finally Le Vayer cites an opinion that the custom is an imitation of St. Peter, who was called Simon before Jesus gave him his nickname of *Cephas*.

The similar adoption of a new name is of course evident outside of the Papacy. In Ethiopia Atani-Tingil assumed the name of *David* on coming to the throne, and in Rome Diocletian had been Diocles before becoming Emperor. In Book IV of *Kings* Necho names Kliakim *Joachim* when putting him on the throne. Just so did Nebuchadnezzar change the name of Mathaniah to *Zedekiah* on making the latter king.

Sometimes an individual's name is changed more than once. Homer is reported to have been called *Melesigenes* and *Tigranes* before his enduring name became his. Moses, according to Clement the Alexandrian, was called *Joachim* until he was three months old and had a third name, *Melchi*. Le Vayer notes that the Japanese and Chinese, like some Christians, change their names as many as three times. He pursues the subject in another major chapter devoted to names in a later volume.⁷ He discusses people who have wanted to change their names, alluding to the wrath visited upon Christians by Pope Paul II for choosing pagan names.

Le Vayer himself accepts a nasty or pleasant sound or association as a legitimate reason for the changing of a name. That reason is illustrated by such a name as *Reuchlin*, meaning "manure," and also called *Capnio* on occasion. Reuchlin himself gave Melancthon his name, the Greek translation of *Schwartzerd* (Black Earth). Other changes of name listed by Le Vayer exemplify the Renaissance indulgence in latinization and include the altering of Martin Bucer to *Aretius Felinus*, Gherardus Gherardi to *Erasmus*. He also mentions Dr. Sammalitius ('Without Malice') being changed to *Akakia*, and

⁷ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres*, XII, Lettre CXLI.

Janus Nicius Erythraeus, who addressed a dialogue on history to Le Vayer, to Ianne Vittorio de Rossi, as he was known in Rome.

The psychological reason behind a change of name is obviously what has interested Le Vayer in many instances. Thus he finds Aristotle calling his favorite disciple *Theophrastus* rather than *Tyr-tanus*. The Romans were so affected psychologically by names that when raising troops they always tried to make sure the first recruit bore a name indicating a good augury. The name *Regillianus* was liked so much that the bearer became Emperor wholly on the strength of it, says Le Vayer. *Jovian* sounded so like Julian of the then cherished memory that he was chosen Emperor. In more modern times the French ambassador chose Alfonso IX's ugly daughter to wed the French king rather than her sister whose name, *Urraca*, was considered ugly.⁸ Another type of rejection in Spain concerned a priest named Martin Luther, who was refused a favor by Philip II for the obvious reason. The attachment of a moral and social connotation to names is a universal phenomenon. Thus *Abel* and *Benjamin* have been associated with mourning and sadness in Hebrew, as have been *Tantalus* and *Pentheus* in Greek. In France the name *Tristan* has been given to princes born in some notable affliction. *Egerius* was the traditional name of beggars in Rome. The Egyptians considered *Cheops* and *Cephrenes* to have such unhappy associations that they said the shepherd *Philiton* built the Pyramids. It has been thought ominous that all the *Caius Caesars* perished by the sword. The *Janes*, Queens of Naples, and the *Jameses*, Kings of Scotland, were also unfortunate. Pope Paul II was advised to avoid the name *Formosus* because of Pope Formosus having been exhumed by Stephen VI. The Irish avoid giving a child the name of a living relative for fear of shortening the latter's life, and the Hurons seem to do likewise.⁹

Chance may associate a name with an unhappy historical event as in the War of Granada in 1566. A general called to a soldier named *Santiago*. Others took it for the signal to attack, and the battle was

⁸ Amy Kelly, whose source is Don Pedro Niño, *Sumario de los Reyes de España*, in *Colección de las crónicas de Castilla* (Madrid, 1782), 3, pt. 1, recounts the diplomacy involved in this episode and states that both Urraca and her sister, Blanche, were beautiful. See Amy Kelly, *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (Cambridge, Mass. 1950), 359.

⁹ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres*, X, Lettre XXXIII.

lost.¹⁰ In a happier coincidence Tamerlane is supposed to have named his son and a newly constructed town *Sarachi*, since his son was born and the town finished as he was gaining an important check in chess, known as *Sarache* in Arabic. Other onomastic connotations connected with history are ones such as *Nero*, which meant '(brave) man' in the Sabine tongue originally, and *Bajazet*, the name of sultans, used also as a pig's name, which was given to the animal out of scorn for the Turks.

Le Vayer also mentions the exclusiveness of certain names. Athens forbade men of low estate to call themselves Harmodius or Aristogeiton. In Rome Claudius forbade foreigners to take the names of Roman nobles. And in Le Vayer's day, Portuguese travelers apparently assumed illustrious names once they crossed the Equator en route to India.¹¹

Le Vayer also comments on the lengthening and shortening of names.¹² He cites God's making Abram into *Abraham* and Simon, of whom Lucian speaks, changing his own name to *Simonides* on becoming rich. And there is Bruna, the wife of Sigebert of Austrasia, who became Queen *Brunehault* or *Bruenchildis* (Brunhilda). Occasionally a syllable may be added or dropped out by chance as in *Sybilla* which became *Sylla*.

The above examples have involved various substitutions of one name for another. There are, however, cases — as Le Vayer notes — in which people receive no name at all, such as the Atlantes in Libya and the girls in China, the latter being designated simply by their order of birth. The lack of a name may also be indicated by designating an individual as *Anthropos* (so says Aristotle, *Ethics* 7. 6) or simply *No Man*, *None*, which Ulysses wanted to be called in order to deceive Polyphemus.

Where names are given, there are differences in custom as to the age at which the name is bestowed. Civilizations that have given names at a later age than the Christians include the Roman (boys being named at nine, girls at eight) and the Greek, in which children were named at seven.

¹⁰ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres*, XII, Lettre CXXI. *Santiago* of course means Saint James. *San Diego* is a variant.

¹¹ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres*, X, Lettre XXXIII.

¹² Le Vayer, *op. cit.*

Le Vayer closes his chapter "Des Noms" with a long list of princes' names attached to sovereignty. For the reader's convenience these are presented here alphabetically (something which Le Vayer does not do) with their geo-location:

<i>Abimelech</i>	Palestine	<i>Cypselides</i>	Corinth
<i>Aladin</i>	Iconium	<i>Ignatius</i>	Jacobites
<i>Alevades</i>	Thessaly		(Patriarch of)
<i>Alexander</i>	Balaxian	<i>Melich (David)</i>	Georgia
	(territory	<i>Miramamolin</i>	Africa
	mentioned by	<i>Mithridates</i>	Pontus
	Marco Polo)	<i>Nicomedes</i>	Bithynia
<i>Arsaces</i>	Parthia	<i>Palibotres</i>	India
<i>Artaxerxes</i>	Persia	<i>Peter</i>	Maronites
<i>Augustus</i>	Rome		(Patriarch of)
<i>Candace</i>	Ethiopia	<i>Sylvia</i>	Rome
	(Queens of)	<i>Taxiles</i>	India
<i>Chagan</i>	Huns and	<i>Tygranes</i>	Assyria
	Bavaria	<i>Zulcarnes</i>	Balaxian
<i>Crales</i>	Serbia		

Le Vayer adds a shorter list of titles that have traditionally been bestowed upon the successor to the throne in certain places:

<i>Prince of the</i>		<i>Duke of</i>	
<i>Asturias</i>	Castile	<i>Barcellos</i>	Braganza
		<i>Prince of Brazil</i>	Portugal

(Le Vayer says that the latter title has been described to him as "d'une Pragmatique tout nouvelle"):

<i>Duke of</i>		<i>Duke of</i>	
<i>Calabria</i>	Naples	<i>Montblanc</i>	Catalonia
<i>Count of</i>		<i>Duke of Rothesay</i>	Scotland
<i>Charolles</i>	Burgundy	<i>Prince of Viane</i>	Navarre
<i>The Dauphin</i>	France	<i>Prince of Wales</i>	England
<i>Duke of Girona</i>	Arragon		

Another chapter in the same work by Le Vayer is entitled "Des Epithètes."¹³ Here he reminds the reader that philosophers, especially the Stoics, consider names as serving to identify the very substance of things. He further states that, since epithets are a kind of second name, invented to designate more accurately that which

¹³ Le Vayer, *op. cit.*, Lettre XVIII.

already has a name, they too must be important. He notes that professors and theologians have been particularly prone to epithets.

He gives a long list, which here also is arranged alphabetically for the reader's convenience:

NAME	EPITHET	NAME	EPITHET
Abelard	<i>The Dialectician</i>	Hippocrates	<i>Divius</i>
Agrianus (Michael)	<i>The Unknown Doctor</i>	John of Oxford or of Bacon- thorpe	<i>Dr. Resolutus</i>
Alanus	<i>The Universal Doctor</i>	Lescot	<i>The Subtle Doctor</i>
Albert, Bishop of Ratisbon	<i>The Great</i>	Lombard (Peter)	<i>The Master of Sentences</i>
Alexander the Aphrodisian	<i>The Interpreter</i>	Lully (Raymond)	<i>The Enlightened Doctor</i>
Antiochus	<i>God</i>	Martinus	<i>Martinus contra communem</i>
Archelaus (So- crates' tutor); also Strato of Lampsacus (Theophrastus' disciple)	<i>The Physician</i>	Oekham	<i>Venerabilis Inceptor</i>
Aristides	<i>The Just</i>	Origen	<i>The Syntactic or the Composer</i>
Aristotle	<i>The Genius of Nature</i>	Petrus of Apono	<i>The Conciliator</i>
Averroes	<i>The Commentator</i>	Philo	<i>The Circumcized Plato</i>
Dr. Campegius, also Dr. Dedonis	<i>The Aggregator</i>	Phocion	<i>The Good</i>
Domus (Thomas)	<i>Dr. Veritatis</i>	Plato	<i>Divius and The Athenian Moses</i>
Durandus	<i>The Speculator</i>	Rabbi Moses	<i>Dr. Perplexorum</i>
Gerson	<i>The Very Christian Doctor</i>	Rafis	<i>Experimentator</i>
Grammaticus (Johannes)	<i>The Industrious or Philopone</i>	Ripa (Lucas)	<i>Magister Syllabarum</i>
Gregory of Nazianzus	<i>The Theologian</i>	St. Bonaventure, also St. Hilary	<i>The Seraphic Doctor</i>
Henry of Ghent	<i>The Solemn Doctor</i>	St. Thomas	<i>The Angelic Doctor</i>
		Socrates	<i>The Wise</i>
		Suiseth (Richard)	<i>The Calculator</i>

The list also includes a humble man known only as *The Idiot*.

Another phase of the epithet treated by Le Vayer concerns the slight change of a name for the purpose of effect. Thus, because of his follies Epiphanes was called *Epimanes*. Ptolemy Euergetes, which means 'The Beneficent,' became Ptolemy *Cakergetes*, meaning 'The Malevolent.' Other such changes include Plato to *Sato* ("The Well-Jointed"), Democritus to *Leroclitus* or *Lemocritus*, Chrysippus to *Chesippus* and Tiberius to *Biberius*. A certain military commander named Belle-garde lost a fort to the enemy and was thereafter called *Malle-garde* by the Duke of Savoy. The Romans renamed the town Maleventum, *Beneventum*. Because of the evil presage of Epidamnus, that name was changed to *Dyrrachium*. An Arabian town named *Siene* 'ugly' became *Asna* 'beautiful.' Lycon's name was changed to *Glycon* to indicate his soft speech. Justinian I's wife, Lupicana, became *Euphemia* to avoid all suggestion of resemblance to her own name. Sometimes there is a type of irony (antiphrasis) in the epithet bestowed as in the case of the three Ptolemies of Egypt, called *Philadelphus*, *Philometor*, and *Philopator*, respectively, although they had killed a brother, a mother, and a father.

Le Vayer tells us that he has found more material on his subject in Pliny and Macrobius. In the *Natural History* (Book XI) it is shown that names like Strabo, Coclites, Scaures, and Vares were given because of some bodily mark; that the Stolons and Frondites came from trees, and that the persons named *Piso*, *Fabius*, *Lentulus*, and *Cicero* received their names from the crops they grew.

Recent history, says our author, shows kings and princes among those receiving some very interesting names. He mentions Foulques d'Anjou, known as *Gray-Beard*, and Raymond of Barcelona, called *Stuffing-Head*. King Alfonso of Castile carried generosity to the point where he was referred to as *Pierced Hand*, and King Ferdinand was *El Empleado* (One called before the court.). Garcias Sanctius was known as *The Trembler* just as a Roman Consul spoken of by Livy was called Quintus Martinus *Tremulus*, and a certain informer *Timidius*. Two notable Roman epithets based on moral qualities are *Ovicula* (Little Sheep) by which the mild Quintus Fabius Maximus was known, and *Corculum* (Little Heart), the name given to Publius Scipio Nasica. Finally the Spaniard Paulus was so good at intrigue in the Court of Constantine that he was called *Catena* (Chain).

The subject of epithets furnishes some French and foreign parallels. Caesar's Divitiacus relates semantically to French, *Richardière*; Greek *Lycisca* is French *Louvet* (wolf-color); Roman *Pecuniola* corresponds to French *Argenton* or *Argenteau* (having to do with silver or money).

In his work, *La Géographie du prince*, Le Vayer discusses the names of cities and countries.¹⁴ He remarks that under the Turks Athens was called *Setina*; Thebes, *Stives*; and Sparta, *Misithra*. Poland (he explains) derives its name from *pole* 'country,' a reference to Poland's flat countryside. It is also pointed out that Königsberg is sometimes known by the French translation of the word, *Royaumont* or *Montroyal*.¹⁵ In another work, Le Vayer's chapter, "Des Villes remarquables," continues this subject.¹⁶ Here we are again told that Rome's secret name was *Valentium* and that Athens was named for the plurality of its women.¹⁷ Menander is the authority invoked to claim for Athens the names of *Carthinia*, *Cecropia*, *Acte*, and *Attica*. Stating that Jerusalem has had the greatest number of names, Le Vayer quotes the couplet:

*Solyma, Lusa, Bethel, Ierosolyma, Iebus, Elia,
Urbs sacra, Ierusalem dicitur, atque salem.*

According to Le Vayer, *Samaria* is said to be named for the Samarites, guards whom Salmanasser placed over a colony of Assyrians. *Alep*, the first town in a certain region, was so named because aleph is the first letter in Hebrew and Arabic. Susa is reported to have been called *Lis* because of its beauty. *Istanbul* is explained as a corruption of the word "Constantinople," or as originating in three words uttered by Greeks en route to that city, or from "Istamboul," meaning 'the abundance of the faithful.'^{17a} *Cairo* is suggested to have come either from Arabic *Chaira*, meaning 'hatching chicken,' or from *Cahar*, meaning 'to conquer,' or, finally, from *Cairoam*,

¹⁴ Le Vayer, *La Géographie du Prince*, in *Œuvres*, VI, 65.

¹⁵ Le Vayer, *op. cit.*, 75-76.

¹⁶ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres*, XI, Lettre XCI.

¹⁷ Despite many such theories regarding the name, *Athens* is now generally thought to be derived from the patron goddess, *Athene*.

^{17a} The Turkish name *Istanbul* for Constantinople is of course from Gr. *stim-bóli* 'in or at the City' (*Póli* in mod. Greek 'Con/ple'). See D. J. Georgacas, "The Names of Constantinople," *Trans. of the Amer. Philolog. Assoc.* 78 (1947), 366f. [D. J. G., Ed.]

meaning 'council' or 'assembly.' Cairo has also been called both *Babylon* and *Bagdad*, the name of a hermit who lived near the city. *Carthage* is 'the city of gardens'; and *Fez* means 'gold,' that metal having been found when Moulay Idris established the city. *Tripoli* is said to refer to the three towns located within it (Tyre, Sidon, and Aradus). In Sicily *Tricala* or *Triocala* (where modern *Caltabellotta*) is traced to its having three remarkable things, commemorated by Greek words which have been transliterated. *Famagusta* for Greek *Ammochostos* is paretymologically traced to *Fama Augusti* 'Augustus' Renown,' a reference to Augustus' defeat of Antony there. *Samos* is said to have come from the Greek name for lofty things. Le Vayer also discusses the French suffix *-dun* on names, as in *Cha-teaudun*, pointing out that it means 'high place' in Old *Gaulois*. Thus *Lugdunum* meant 'Mount of Crows' if the whole word was Gallic and 'Mount of Light' if the first syllable was Latin (*lux*). Le Vayer makes a similar claim of geographical connotation for towns called *Verrues*, earlier *Verrucas*. The Thracian ending *-brie* (Greek *-bria*) is cited as the equivalent of Greek *pólis* 'city.' The name *Terouenne* is explained as *Terra vana* (badly situated territory). In the Far East, Le Vayer speaks of *Quinsai*, meaning 'City of Heaven,' and *Singiù*, signifying 'City of Health.' Both *Calamina* and *Meliapur* mean 'City of Peacocks,' many of which are found in those places. *Malacca* means 'Exile,' a name indicating a most suitable place for happy banishment.

Many types of discussion are pursued by Le Vayer on the subject of names. For instance, as a figure of speech he brings up antonomasia, that is, the use of a name belonging to several to designate one. His examples are *the Apostle* for St. Paul, *the Greek Poet* for Homer, and *the Latin Orator* for Cicero.¹⁸ In this same chapter he notes how names may be played upon to produce different meanings. He cites Cicero's play on Varro whom he called *Verrem nequam* (Evil Swine). He mentions a similar technique used in the *Philippics* against Marc Antony.

Le Vayer's interest in names even extends to famous horses of history.¹⁹ Thus he writes of *Pherenicus* (Bearer of Victory), King Hiero's horse at the Olympic Games, where there also starred

¹⁸ Le Vayer, *La Rhétorique du Prince*, in *Œuvres*, VI, 191.

¹⁹ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres*, X, Lettre XLI.

Pertinax, the Emperor Commodus' steed. In Juvenal's *Satire VIII*, Le Vayer finds *Corintha* and *Hirpin* mentioned as famous horses of their time. Hadrian's hunting-horse, we are told, was named *Boristhenes*. Selim owned *Carabula* (Black Cloud), and Emperor Varus named a crystal vase after his horse, *Volucer*.

Plant life is another subject which evokes comment on Le Vayer's part with regard to names. He notes that a certain sensitive plant in the "Jardin Royal" is one that Pliny calls *Aeschynomenen* and which moderns call *Herbe pudique* or *H. honteuse* or *H. vergogneuse* (The Modest Plant).²⁰ Le Vayer also mentions a plant named by a Dr. Menardes of Seville, the *Bajatene* or *Sevadilla*, a type of barley that wilts or revives according to how much it is touched.

In another major chapter on names Le Vayer speaks of the weight a name carries through the ages.²¹ Surely, he claims, great names of history and fable evoke universal desire to emulate the famous bearer; for example, *Alexander*, *Caesar*, *Pompey*, and *Hercules*.²² The Spaniards say, "A que buen nombre, no presumo yo que sera menos el hombre" (Who has a good name, I do not presume will be less of a man). Le Vayer cites Dio Cassius to the effect that Caesar took a soldier named *Scipio* to Africa because the Scipios were reputed always to win there.

We have already seen instances of individuals who have wanted to change their offensive names. Le Vayer also cites whole groups with a similar desire. Turkish Moslems have preferred being called *Musulmans* (Believers or Orthodox) to *Turks* (The Banished). Some Jews might be sensitive to the meaning of the name *Hebrew*, which suggests 'Passer-by' or 'Stranger.' The *Pelasgi* bore their somewhat flighty name meaning 'Vagabonds' or 'Wanderers.'^{22a} Groups have sometimes been unable to rid themselves of an unpleasant name. The Locrians could not escape the name *Ozol*, meaning 'Stinking': it was thought to be derived from Nessus or from the serpent,

²⁰ Le Vayer quotes Pliny's explanation for the name: ". . . quoniam appropinquante manu folia controheret" (Since, on the approach of the hand, the leaf will draw itself in). Le Vayer, *op. cit.*, Lettre L.

²¹ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres XII*, Lettre CXLI.

²² Hercules, Le Vayer notes, was first named Alcaeus and was first given a name by Virtue, through the mouth of Pythia, according to Apollodorus.

^{22a} This is hardly the case concerning the origin of the name; cf. now Fritz Lochner-Hüttenbach, *Die Pelasger* (Vienna, 1960), 143-146. [D. J. G., Ed.]

Python, or from the goatskin or sheepskin worn by the Ozolian Locrians. Le Vayer describes a modern parallel in the Jesuits' name of *Robes Noires* (Black Robes) in Canada, similar to the Ancients' *Melanchlaeni*.

Examples of individuals trying to avoid or change their names were noted above. Sometimes there has been an official prohibition against taking a name. The family of Manlius Capitolinus, after his execution as a traitor, decided against further use of his name, *Marcus*. The Greeks suppressed the name of the man who, to perpetuate his name, burned the temple of Diana at Ephesus. *Ruthven* in Scotland and *Ravaillac* in France are traitors' names also suffering from general disapprobation.

Furthermore, Le Vayer gives evidence of a scholar's interest in names. It is obvious that the study of pertinent words enabled him to make up lists of names comprising chapters or major portions of certain chapters in his writings. This erudite interest is not limited, however, to an encyclopedic exposition. The sporadic parenthetical references that abound in his works also prove the fundamental place that names occupy in his thinking. Thus in a discussion of music, we are told that the Greeks called music *ethos* 'character' to show its power over our way of life.²³ A *solecism* evokes mention of the source of this figure in *Soloi*, a town of Cilicia, built by Solon.²⁴ An allusion to aristocracy as a form of government leads to the remark that an Aristophanes character hated Scellius' son because his name was *Aristocrat*.²⁵ The advocacy of travel reminds Le Vayer that the ancient Greeks were called *Pelasgians* (cf. above, p. 91) because they went from place to place like swans.²⁶ A chapter on bastards includes the designation of Henry of Castile, known as *The Cold* after consenting to his Queen's becoming pregnant by Bernaldo de la Cueva. It also tells of a Spanish family, *Hurtado*, receiving its name from a child kidnaped (*hurtado*) just after birth.²⁷ The subject of the memory is illustrated by Homer's naming *Agamemnon* thus and Artaxerxes, *Memnon*, due to their good

²³ Le Vayer, *Discours sceptique sur la musique*, in *Œuvres*, IV.

²⁴ Le Vayer, *La Rhétorique du Prince*, in *Œuvres*, VI.

²⁵ Le Vayer, *La Politique du Prince*, in *Œuvres*, VII.

²⁶ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres*, X, Lettre VI. On the name *Pelasgi* see note 22a.

²⁷ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, *op. cit.*, Lettre XLIII.

memory.²⁸ Discussing news of the Court, Le Vayer digresses to remark that Ulysses was so named because he was born en route and was also called *Outis* for having large ears;²⁹ the name *Outis* means of course 'No man' (see above, p. 91). In the midst of a plea for the aged, we learn that whereas in France people take the name of a town, in Brazil towns are named for people.³⁰ Some remarks on geography attribute the misplacing of Mt. Ida on maps to the fact that the Greeks called any place covered with forests of high trees an *Ida*.³¹ A philosophical discourse on divine cults lists various names of the Devil: *Arimanes* in Persia, *Manitou* in Canada, *Maboya* in the American Islands [*sic*], and *Camate* in the Cape Verde Islands.³² A review of the history of oracles includes, somewhat parenthetically, a reference to Strabo's discussion of the name of Daphne, called Phemonoe by Strabo himself, but by others *Pythia* from the Greek, signifying "to question." According to Pansanias, continues Le Vayer, her name was either *Hierophile*, containing the prediction of Ilium's burning, or *Lamia*, the daughter of Neptune.³³ In a treatise on scholarly writing, Le Vayer notes that Minerva favored rest and vacations, and was therefore called the Goddess *Vacuna* by the Romans.³⁴ A passage on bringing up children digresses to remark that Aegisthus was so named for having been nursed by a goat, a fact which made him capricious and fleet-footed.³⁵ Le Vayer, the pedagogue, tells of a teacher who had to give a dull pupil playmates, each called by a letter of the Greek alphabet, to encourage him to learn it.³⁶ Writing on life and death, Le Vayer suddenly introduces the Nacrobians of Apollonia, so named for their longevity.³⁷ The name *Paris* offers several quasi-parenthetical references. In a *Dialogue* it is suggested that Paris might well be named *Ticinum*, as once was Pavia, for its admirable appearance. However, it is also stated that the poor treatment of foreigners warrants for Paris the name *Epidamnum*, "... quod

²⁸ Le Vayer, *op. cit.*, Lettre XLVI.

²⁹ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres*, XI, Lettre LXVI. A second reference to the name, *Outis*, in a later volume suggests that Ulysses' big ears made him a good listener to prophecies. See *Dernières Homilies académiques*, in *Œuvres*, XV, 25^e Homilie, p. 360.

³⁰ Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres*, XI, Lettre LXXVI.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Lettre LXXXIX.

³² *Ibid.*, Lettre CLI.

³³ *Ibid.*, Lettre CVI.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Lettre CVII.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, *Œuvres* XII, Lettre CXXXI.

³⁶ Le Vayer, *op. cit.*

³⁷ Le Vayer, *op. cit.*

illuc nemo fere nisi damno suo diverteret" (because scarcely anyone will go there except he be damned). As the residence of princes and ministers, Paris might be called *Melilot*, 'City of Counsel,' a name a Florida tribe gave their capital. During this dialogue, the Seine is called the *Chrysorroas*.³⁸ A disquisition on names calls forth the Persian name for chess; namely, *Sedrents*, 'A Hundred Cares,' or *Schach* (from Shah), the source of French "échec."³⁹ Criticizing the publication of certain contemporary books, Le Vayer compares them to *Axilon* in Asia, a name which Livy attributes to its total lack of the production of wood.⁴⁰ Finally, a comment on contemporary literary quarrels evokes the passing statement that *Coion*, an insulting name in France, is an honorable one in Bergamo.⁴¹

It is pertinent to mention that one type of book recommended by Le Vayer for a library limited to a hundred books is an encyclopedia of names.⁴² His own continual reliance on such a work for the material exposed in this article is obvious. However, his frequent allusions to names reflect a method of thought fundamental to his writings. As a sceptic, Le Vayer doubts the decisiveness of philosophical systems. He makes manifest his opposition to dogmatic systematization through a method used already by Montaigne and later brilliantly exploited in Voltaire's *Essai sur les mœurs*, which is simply a comparative study of world customs. Located deep within the roots of various cultural heritages, names comprise a telling illustration of the invalidity of definitive statements with regard to world-wide social practices.

Lehigh University

³⁸ Le Vayer, in *Œuvres*, XIII, Dialogue IV, "Entre Tubertus Ocella et Xilinus." He would seem to be referring to the economic advantages of the Seine, as the word means 'gold-pouring' and was once applied to the elegant style in which John of Damascus wrote Greek.

³⁹ Le Vayer, *Homilies académiques*, in *Œuvres*, XIV, 4^e Homilie.

⁴⁰ Le Vayer, *Observations diverses sur la composition, & sur la lecture des livres*, in *Œuvres*, XV, 16.

⁴¹ Le Vayer, *op. cit.*, "Préface," p. 259.

⁴² Le Vayer, *Des Petits Traitez*, in *Œuvres*, X, Lettre XIII.