

## BEING NAMED OR BEING NAMELESS: ON THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF PROPER NAME GIVING

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### Abstract

The existence of the category of proper names is as old as human language, and it can be considered a linguistic and anthropological universal. Names can play several important roles in the life of society, the givers, bearers and users of names. One of these functions is to create and express personal identity. Using names also expresses the naming community's knowledge about the world, familiarity instead of strangeness, the existence of personal connections. Name giving can be an act of humanising, or expressing ownership over the human environment. Names can be given to anybody and anything who/that can be identified and differentiated as an individual, and is considered important in any way for humans. However, there are more and less typical categories of named entities. Namelessness (or anonymity) can primarily (but not exclusively) also be looked at through these considerations. The questions listed here are illustrated in the paper by a wide range of examples for using and giving (or not giving) proper names, in a way that also portrays humans as *homo nominans*.

**Keywords:** proper names, linguistic universals, naming, name use, identity, anonymity, *homo nominans*

### 1. Introduction

The linguistic, referential and semantic status of proper names is a central question of name theory, interpreted diversely by various linguistic theories and researchers (for an overview see Hansack 2006; Van Langendonck 2007: 17–71; and also Hajdú 2003a: 46–59; Várnai 2005: 20–37; Slíz 2015: 94–96). While some claim that proper names have no meaning, others analyse the complexity of their semantic structure (e.g. J. Soltész 1979; Van Langendonck 2007: 71–84; Nyström 2016). The field of onomastic studies certainly profits more from the latter approach (cf. Hoffmann 2010).

According to a minimalist but rather revealing definition of a proper name, it is a linguistic sign that its creator or user regards as a proper name (Hajdú 2003a: 58). This perspective, in accordance with that of several other researchers sheds light on the importance of functional, cognitive, pragmatic and sociocultural approaches to proper names. All these, in turn, seem to be inevitable for an in-depth onomastic study of the various roles and functioning of proper names and the category of proper names itself.

The present paper makes no attempt at contributing to theoretical discussions about the linguistic status of proper names. Its approach is defined by the functional considerations briefly mentioned above and detailed in other publications (e.g. Hoffmann 2012; Farkas

2014). Its focus is on the phenomena of proper name giving and the reasons and factors that influence whether an entity is named or remains nameless.

The paper considers the existence of proper names a linguistic, cultural and anthropological universal. It demonstrates their roles in the creation and expression of personal identity and also their roles played in relation to human activity involving exploring and forming a relationship with our environment. It discusses the most important factors of naming an entity and some of the basic questions of namelessness (anonymity). The paper presents its topics using examples from various sources for the activities of humans involving giving and using names and their attitudes towards onomastic phenomena.

## 2. The origin of the category of proper names

The emergence of the category of proper names clearly dates back to the time when language itself emerged. However, the question whether common words or proper nouns arose first, or the two came into being simultaneously cannot be answered definitively (Hoffmann 1993: 18–21; Reszegi 2018a: 159–160).

That much is certain, though, that proper names play an important role in the most ancient narratives on how humans think about the world, i.e. mythologies and creation myths. Here the beginning may be characterised by namelessness, and the creation of the individual entities and their names may have gone hand in hand. (Note, however, that it is not always possible to distinguish between common words and proper names in mythological stories, cf. Tokarev (ed.) 1988. 1: 198–200; Slíz 2013: 221–223.) In some narratives about creation, the first act of creation can be the naming of entities, such as in the Tibetan creation myth, where the first being, endowed with magical abilities, names itself (Román 1963: 290). The coming into being of something new can definitely call for being named, as shown by the Indian creation myth in which a being created by Brahma screams for being named and for being given a home (Baktay 1963: 24–25). Gods are said to give names not only to living creatures but also some important places. For example, the founding and naming of Babylon is attributed to the god Marduk (Enuma Elish, Tablet V, 129). Some peoples, like the Inuit, consider name giving an act of giving a spirit as well, and the name might even be considered a separate entity (Bramwell 2016: 276–277).

We do not know of any community that makes no use of names, their existence can thus be seen practically as a linguistic universal (Szépe 1970: 308). As far as we know, proper names are inherent in every language that has ever existed. The same goes, of course, for sign languages and even computer programming languages have proper name-like elements. If we look at the etymology of the words signifying 'name', for example in Indo-European and Finno-Ugric languages, we can also see how ancient and widespread this concept is (Nicolaisen 2011: 302–303).

People today learn about the existence of the category of proper names and their specific examples as part of their linguistic and cultural socialization. As part of their name competence they are able to recognize and use proper names, and also create new names (Hoffmann–Rác–Tóth 2017: 16–17). However, this does not explain the emergence of the category of proper names.

The emergence of the category of proper names cannot be explained simply with logical reasons or causes from within the language system – rather, the causes are to be found in more general factors stemming from human thinking and society (Szépe 1970). The roles of proper names could be performed by other linguistic elements and using different strategies,

such as circumscription and expressions made up of common words. The main reason for them is their communicative practicality (Nyirkos 1989). They exhibit two basic linguistic principles to a high degree, namely those of economy and unambiguity. This makes it possible for proper names to identify individual entities without other additional components or (too much of a) context. (See also Várnai 2005: 14–16; Hoffmann 2010: 50.) Identification itself is an essential ability, multiple ways of which have been developed also in the animal kingdom (Hajdú 2003b). Since humans are language-using creatures, it is quite natural for mankind to have created the possibility of identification by the means of language as well.

Due to their specific semantic structure, however, proper names also have a variety of additional possible functions, which may prompt or boost the need for naming. From now on we will focus our attention on these.

### 3. Identification and personal identity

“Names are the badge of individuality. So long as the individual is nameless, he is amorphous. When he receives or creates a name by which he can identify himself, he enters upon a truly subjective existence” – this could be a concise definition of one of the main functions of proper (in this case of personal) names (Pei 1966: 78). This function is especially impressively expressed in the prelogical (or rather translogical; cf. Várnai 2005: 84–85) way of thinking by the archaic, but nevertheless still extant beliefs of name magic: those who have no name can be viewed as non-existing; the name pertains substantively and inseparably to its owner; the name predicts the very essence and properties of the named entity (*Nomen est omen*). It is also a powerful example of the importance of proper names that the expression of *HaShem*, meaning ‘name’ is used for naming God of the Old Testament.

Countless further examples could be cited from different historical times, peoples and cultures. This approach establishes a substantial, deep and multilateral connection between names and existence, and names and the named individual (Hajdú 2003a: 101–127; Takács 2005; Várnai 2005: 84–91). It could also be exemplified by the 20<sup>th</sup> century novel by Italo Calvino titled *The Non-existent Knight*, in which the main character, the actually non-existing person (his empty armour) is bound to reality exclusively by his name, while his servant (who imagines himself to be a different person every time, and has a range of different names) very much has a body, but no real name and no real personality (Slíz 2007). Folk tales and authored tales provide a host of further examples for the magical significance of names (let me mention here just Michael Ende’s novel, *The Neverending Story*).

Name giving and name bearing presuppose the possibility and intention of distinction and identification, which relates to the issues of individualization and creation, the forming and expression of identity (Alford 1987; Aldrin 2016) both as a cause and as a consequence. This is the case even when a name is assigned to its bearer without any magical principle, not in a descriptive or property-defining way but as a mere tag (Hoffmann 2010: 53). The close interconnectedness of a name and a personal identity of one’s own is demonstrated by the possible emotional harm that results from any breach of the conventions governing name use (Korompay 1999). An extremely strong case of which is the loss of one’s name, as testified by a note by Arthur Koestler (who lived during World War II using the alias *Albert Duval*): “But sometimes feel so lost that I repeat to myself half aloud my name, the real one – conveys a feeling of complete unreality. Had never known what importance one attaches to one’s name, and what a queer amputated feeling it is to lose it” (*Scum of the Earth*, July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1940). Names received from others and carried ever since serve astools of individualization, while

somebody's deprivation of their name or taking it out of use are the tools of depersonalization. Name magic could have even more severe consequences: disannulment of somebody's name by the ancient Egyptians may have deprived them of their life in the afterworld (Eliade 1995–1996. 1: 30). Numerous results of contemporary psycholinguistics also indicate the very specific relation of us humans to our names (Reszegi 2018a: 160), which underpins the phenomena discussed here. However, the role of one's name is subject to quite remarkable individual and also cultural differences (Brennen 2000: 144–145).

Another fruitful question concerns the choice between names and numbers. Given that numbers are no less – or actually more – unambiguous as identifiers than names (cf. a house number vs. a house name, identity numbers vs. personal names), why don't numbers replace proper names altogether, not only in interpersonal contacts but even in the spaces of official registrations and communication? Obviously, an important factor is that names are easier to memorize. Moreover, identifying humans by numbers would seem to be inhuman, which is abundantly exemplified not only in fiction (e.g. the dystopian novel of Yevgeny Zamyatin *We: A Novel*, in which the characters are identified by letters and digits), but also by such factual historical cases as the worlds of labour camps in 20<sup>th</sup> century dictatorships. Despite initiatives for replacing names with numbers (Hajdú 2003a: 101), this has not become a general practice.

Multiple identity often comes with multiple naming, while different identities are accompanied by different names, the most impressive literary example of which is the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, a classic by R. L. Stevenson. The question is exemplified by the practice of using different (pen) names by some writers (e.g. *Romain Gary* ~ *Émile Ajar*, *J. K. Rowling* ~ *Robert Galbraith*), sometimes publishing under different aliases in different genres; or in everyday life by the use of internet nicknames constructed to be different from the real personal names, that is by the creation of virtual identities (Németh 2013; Martin 2016). The change of a personal name may serve as a tool of identity change and its expression (Hajdú 2009), which can be seen in the area of sacrality, e.g. in the Old and New Testaments (e.g. *Abram* → *Abraham*, *Simon* → *Peter*) or with the names assumed by the monks of different religions, while in the mundane world for example in the cases of sexual identity switch, and in some ways also in the widely used practice of the adoption of married names.

Proper names may also signal a kind of unity and belonging together of multiple individuals. Such names can denote very different groups of entities; e.g. groups of mythological characters (e.g. *Moïpai* or *Parcae* 'incarnations of destiny in Greek/Roman mythology'; cf. Slíz 2013: 222); groups of artists (e.g. *Moguchaya kuchka* 'Mighty Bunch', i.e. *The Five*, a group of classical Russian composers), groups of politicians (e.g. *Sì rén bāng* 'The Gang of Four', a faction in the Chinese Communist Party); Scout patrols (e.g. the first ones of the Movement: *Wolves*, *Ravens*, *Bulls*, *Carlews*) or the gangs of classic youth stories (e.g. *Pál utcai fiúk* 'Paul Street Boys' and *Vörösingesek* 'Redshirts' in Ferenc Molnár's *The Paul Street Boys*; *Vita Rosen* 'White Rose' and *Röda Rosen* 'Red Rose' in Astrid Lindgren's *Bill Bergson* series). These names are sometimes given by outsiders in order to deal with the named individuals as a single group. However, the cases of self-naming – especially if there is no institutionalized group behind them – can be explained with the demand for the presentation of a collective identity.

#### 4. Name, knowledge, and personal relations

In a variety of cultures, getting acquainted is closely related to introducing ourselves. The question 'Who are you?' is usually answered with our names, and knowing a name is some-

how considered to be the same as knowing the bearer of it. Just the indication of a name on a family tree could mean knowledge of the past of the family, and in a quiz or a school exercise solely giving a correct name often counts as equivalent to knowing the thing itself.

Human knowledge crucially involves specific details, which in turn are associated with proper names. For the 20<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian writer Sándor Márai, who had to live in emigration, in his poem Funeral Sermon, memories of the lost home world are carried by names; among others: *Toldi* (the title of János Arany's epic poem), *Margitsziget* (St. Margaret's Isle, being one of Budapest's popular locations), *Jenő* (the name of a former friend) and *Shelley-kötet* (a volume of Shelley's poetry). Fictive worlds and stories also require proper names, therefore real, existing names have to be adopted or new ones created. Names are closely related to both individual knowledge or the sum total of the knowledge of a whole society: history, geography, etc. would be unimaginable without proper names, as without them it would be difficult to navigate through space and time. Named individuals and objects are also much easier to remember (Hajdú 2003b: 6). Even myths could not exist without proper names (moreover, quite a lot of mythologies have survived only in the form of names or lists of names, on the basis of which to be reconstructed; Tokarev (ed.) 1988. 1: 198).

As soon as we know at least the proper name of something or somebody, we no longer consider it as unknown. Giving a name or knowing something or somebody by name gives us a sense of familiarity instead of strangeness, some kind of certainty instead of uncertainty, the possibility of orientation instead of getting lost, and at the same time creates a personal human connection between the name giver or name user and the name bearer. The absence of this connection could be personally painful and tragic, as expressed by a poet in search of God: "»What is Thy name, beauteous, ancient Lord, / To whom I have said many prayers? / Alas, I had forgotten Thee.« / [...] / »Oh, that I knew Thy marvellous name. «" (Endre Ady: Neath the hill of Sion; transl. by B. Adams). Or, similarly for the literary character who falls in love in the novel by the well-known writer and semiotician: "[...] I burst shamefully into sobs and fled to my cell, where all through the night I chewed my pallet and moaned helplessly, for I was not even allowed – as they did in the romances of chivalry I had read with my companions at Melk – to lament and call out the beloved's name. This was the only earthly love of my life, and I could not, then or ever after, call that love by name." (Umberto Eco: The Name of the Rose, Fifth Day, Compline; transl. by W. Weaver). Note the title of the cited chapter: "In which [...] Adso discovers the power of proper names". Repeating the name of a beloved person is most probably a human universal (Korompay 1999: 291).

On the other hand, not naming by name could have the purpose of maintaining impersonality, or fending off any emotional connection. Not only was it easier to let a child perish in ancient Rome who had not been given a name yet, but so can it be to take animals to the butcher if they are nameless (Zgusta 1996: 1876). This well-known phenomenon is abundantly exemplified in fiction, too, of course. For example, in Blake Edwards' film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* the young woman calls her cat *Cat* to avoid commitment and connectedness; in George R. R. Martin's novel *A Game of Thrones* the combatant horsemen refraining from emotionality do not name their horses; in the Pixar movie *Monsters, Inc.* the monsters are not allowed to name children whom they scare because "Once you name it, you start getting attached to it". Giving and using a proper name represents the opposite of all that. The most beautiful examples of proper names getting emotional overtones – partly resulting from their identifying role – can be found in poetry (e.g. in the 18 rows of Lőrinc Szabó's poem *Your Name*, or even in Sting's song *Whenever I Say Your Name*).

## 5. Further functions of proper names

“The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point”, says the third sentence of the masterpiece of magical realism, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Chapter 1; transl. by G. Rabassa). Humans give names not only to living but also to lifeless entities of our environment; and in reality the most important elements of the world closely surrounding us get their names quite soon. In view of this theoretical assumption we must discard the earlier concept that the early dwelling places of the Magyars settling in the Carpathian basin were characterised by primary namelessness and only got named later, under the influence of their developing environment (Hoffmann–Rácz–Tóth 2017: 16).

At least at this point it is worth taking a closer look at the issue of place names as well, which we have discussed less up until now. Contrary to a common opinion, place names are not simply the result of the requirement of spatial orientation, although they undoubtedly make it significantly easier (Reszegi 2018b). As from the perspective of cultural geography, place can be interpreted as a location in space with human meanings, and the act of place naming can be interpreted as place making, that is, the act of turning a space with an uncertain shape and content into a system of places (Azaryahu 2020). Robinsonades (cf. Nicolaisen 1986: 141–143), where we can read about Robinson giving names even before Friday arrives, show that name giving is important not solely for communication. Names make the world a lived-in space, one which has become familiar, structured, interpreted, owned, shaped to our own concepts, “humanised” through names. Also the need for creation, for self-expression, for leaving a mark can be seen in the act of name giving (Balázs 2008: 60). It is quite a revealing fact that in the United States there are protected wilderness areas where it is forbidden to give names to places (Zgusta 1996: 1876).

Through proper names we can identify and differentiate, categorise, describe and characterise, express relations, attitudes and affections. All these could be not only the realised functions of names, but also the elementary motivation for naming. An instructive demonstration of the symbolic meaning of names is provided by the changing of place names, especially modern urbanonyms (cf. Rose-Redwood et al. (eds.) 2018), and also by the various phenomena and consequences of the so-called toponymic attachment in general, which refers to the positive or negative associations that persons and their groups make with toponyms (Kostanski 2016). Based on this potential, place names and the act of place name giving can even be regarded as a means of branding, and also as a means of turning locations into destinations, as can be seen in tourism nowadays (Azaryahu 2020).

Even if in other ways than anthroponyms, toponyms also have a role in identity formation (Helleland 2012) on individual and especially on a collective level. Name giving and name use are always connected to linguistic, cultural, or even ideological communities. At least potentially, competing, smaller or larger communities can bring this about, in the form of a kind of *bellum onomasticum* or along a principle of *Cuius regio, eius nomen*, with regard, among others, to the ruling ideologies, political practices, the power structure or the relationship between the majority and the minorities. This conflict potential inherent in place names is well demonstrated by the question of name use in different linguistic and ethnic groups throughout Europe, and outside Europe in the cases of indigenous vs colonial, colonial vs nationalist, a commodified neoliberal or postcolonial name giving (Berg–Vuolteenaho (eds.) 2016). Place naming (and even more obviously, place renaming) can always be interpreted as depending on the specific power relations, due to its sociocultural embeddedness (cf. Vuolteenaho–Berg 2016: 9).

The factors presented here also explain why the study of different types of proper names in public space (mainly the names of places, institutions and persons) is an essential component of the study of linguistic landscape (or namescape) – also as the study of a symbolic landscape –, a field that has gained great popularity recently (Puzey 2016).

## 6. The scope of named entities

A proper name can be given to anyone or anything that can be identified as a uniquely distinct and recognisable entity, calls attention to itself, and is considered important, at least temporarily for an individual or the community in any way, be it through its function, characteristics, relationship to the name giver or any affective aspects. Also, the fact that it is only important entities that are given a name is a further example of linguistic economy. (See Sliz 2012: 285–286; on toponyms Wahlberg 2005.) For instance among a group of domestic animals of the same species and kept in the same way, if naming them is not a usual practice, only those specimens get named that are outstanding in any respect. This is the case with a hen shunned by the other hens but kept as a good egg layer and named *Évike* (Erdős 2010: 52–53); the first cloned sheep *Dolly*, or the two pigs that escaped while being transported, *Ginger* and *Fred* (Van Langendonck 2007: 89). In practice any real or imagined creature, place or thing can be given a proper name, but there are more and less typical examples and categories of named entities.

The name bearing of humans has been unexceptional since the most ancient times. As in the *Odyssey*: “No one among all the peoples, neither base man nor noble, is altogether nameless, once he has been born, but always his parents as soon as they bring him forth put upon him a name” (Book VIII, 552–555; transl. by R. Lattimore). Or to summarise it in another way, “Sine nomine persona non est” (quoted by Van Langendonck 2007: 89). The statement issued by the Constitutional Court of Hungary is very revealing in this respect: “Each person has got to have a name of their own and this name is not to be replaced by a number or code or any other symbol. One’s own name is one of the – essential – determinants of personal identity serving one’s identification and differentiation from others and so it is one of the things expressing a person’s individuality and unique and irreplaceable nature. The right to have a name of one’s own is thus an essential component of the right to identity, and so it is one of the fundamental rights, emerging at birth, it cannot be alienated by the state and – with regard to its significant content – unlimitable. The same evaluation and protection is due to the right to bear one’s own name as well [...]” (58/2001. [XII. 7.] Decision of the Constitutional Court, III. 4; transl. for this paper.) Beyond persons’ names, in other categories of entities to be named, name giving can be justified with other, such as legal or technical reasons, for example in the case of registration of a new company or brand, or registering oneself as a user of a certain website. Or if we look at the other end of the typicality scale, proper names can be given to the individual teddy bears adorning the curtain of a child’s bedroom, the unique pieces of a set of building blocks, or a plaster cast worn on a limb for a few weeks. Many of the examples illustrate how name giving is, in a more general sense, a tool of the humanisation of our environment or sometimes even the personification of different (non-living or non-human) entities.

Differences in typicality occur among different name types, or rather the various categories of entities that are being named. For example, personal names and brand names cover the full set of entities they are used for, while in the case of the names of animals and objects this is not the case at all. Within the main name types we can observe the similar differences: con-

cerning place names, a settlement versus an undefined segment of the surface of the Earth; among objects, vessels versus vacuum cleaners are different in terms of how frequently they get named. Within the category of vessels, we see a difference between warships and passenger ships versus little boats and canoes. Degree of typicality can vary within one set category of named entities as well: swords were named if they were unique and especially valuable, and not named when they were ordinary; pet cats are always named, as opposed to stray or occasionally fed ones. Children's language is also revealing: toys predominantly get names if they are modelled after a living being, thus dolls and animals are regularly named (Leibring 2010: 366); and young children tend to perceive a word denoting an anthropomorphic entity or an animal that usually gets a name more as a proper name (cf. Sliz 2012: 401). These differences further illustrate the considerations already discussed under the motivations of name giving.

The usual practice of proper name giving can vary across cultures and traditions as well. In South Africa it might be usual to name local taxis (Van Langendonck 2007: 89), while in other countries this does not normally happen. Street names are not used in Japan, but individual buildings and blocks have a name of their own. In Hungary, we usually find the exact opposite, but nowadays, also following the international trends, there are more and more individually named buildings and high-end housing estates.

The typical scope of named entities can be looked at from a historical perspective as well. As a general rule, we can say that the scope of named entities has been ever widening, already at the level of main name types: the emergence of the primary categories of personal and place names has been followed by the emergence of a set of other name types. The category of titles, for example, emerged gradually, and by now it has become widespread for publications in general and works of art. Some processes, however, may have had the opposite effect. Locomotives in England were frequently named in the early days of train transportation, but with mass production, this name type has become rather insignificant (Coates 2016). When pharmacies were taken into state ownership during the socialist period in Hungary, they lost their individual names, but after they were reprivatized, individual naming was back in fashion (Bölcskei 2003). It can be revealing what subset within a certain category of entities gets individual names in a given period; like for instance how the emergence of macrotoponyms signals the widening of the horizon of the onomastic community that creates these names (Hoffmann 1993: 25).

## 7. Namelessness

Just like having a name, not having one can also be interpreted in the specific onomastic community's reference system. Thus for example, even if the fields of an abandoned village were considered nameless by its new settlers or the places of a continent was treated as nameless by the first European arrivals, they may well have had a name given by those who had been there earlier.

Namelessness can be interpreted in different ways from the perspective of the onomastic community and its members: (i) the given entity really has no name (which might also mean that it has no name already/yet; (ii) it has got a name but it is unknown to them; and (iii) it has got a name, it is known to them, but is practically not used for some reason. Even if these may seem superficially similar, they are in fact different. For example, it was thought earlier that the women of the Nenets people had no names, while in fact it was just taboo to utter the names of women who were present in front of strangers (Hajdú 2003a: 312). The various

types of namelessness can have different reasons, which are, however, outside the scope of this paper. On the other hand, it might not be easy to remain nameless within a given system of name use: this is what gives rise to pseudonyms to replace one's own personal name, or apotropaic names in systems with taboos concerning the use of certain names (Sitkei 2018).

The most complex set of questions is probably constituted by the type of existent but not used proper names, and the sociocultural and sociopragmatic background of this phenomenon. In some socioculturally defined situations, relations and roles, the use of actual personal names is avoided (e.g. addressing a higher ranking person, addressing parents), and the question can also be put into a historic perspective (e.g. the conventions regulating the naming or anonymity of the creators of works of art) (see e.g. Taavitsainen–Jucker 2016; Genette 1992; Németh 2013: 7–18; Újvári 2014). Literary works also provide a rich and varied source of information on the matter (see e.g. Kovalovszky 1934: 36–37; K. Szoboszlay 2000).

Finally, it is worth reflecting on the question of proper names whose etymological meaning is related to the expression of namelessness. From the Hungarian proper name stock, the proper names *Nevetlen* ('nameless'), *Nevesincs* ('has no name'), created from Hungarian common nouns, can be documented, or more recently *Noname* or *Nonick*, created from English nouns. Among the abovementioned and similar examples there are historical given names and surnames, one time pseudonyms and recent internet nicknames, pet names, names of rock climbing routes as well as codenames. Similar names also occur in other name structures, e.g. *Nevetlenfalv* ('nameless village', now located in Ukraine), *Nevetlen-tó* ('nameless lake', in multiple locations of Hungary), *Névtelen Nulla* ('noname zero', name of a music band), *A névtelen vár* ('The nameless castle', title of Mór Jókai's novel) etc. Of course, these examples are proper names, too; and they are not even substitutes for existing names, like the real or fictive pseudonyms as *Ignotus* (Lat. 'unknown'), *Nemo* (Lat. 'nobody'), *Netuddki* (Hung. 'never-know-who') or *He Who Must Not Be Named* (the name of Lord Voldemort in the Harry Potter books).

The identifying and distinguishing role of the names mentioned above is unquestionable. An edifying example for this is provided by the most famous anonymous person of Hungarian history, the author of *Gesta Hungarorum*, P dictus magister, widely known as *Anonymus*, whose name is clearly distinguished in Hungarian usage from similar names, like *Anonymus Ravennatis*, *Gallus Anonymus*, etc. Also, the name *Anonymus* can be documented from numerous other name types, for example as a pseudonym, as a dog name or as a name of a rock climbing route. The functioning as proper names of names with similar etymological meaning is exemplified also by the possible adopting of such foreign names into Hungarian without semantic translation, as with the Russian name *Bezymianny* (name of a settlement, of a volcano, and of some other locations).

## 8. Conclusion

Proper names are components of language with complex semantic structure, strong socio-cultural embeddedness and, not independently of these, special functions.

They can be seen as linguistic, cultural and anthropological universals, and giving names is not a purely linguistic (communicational) function but also an anthropological function performed through language (Szépe 1970: 308–309). Thus, alongside the commonly used expressions *homo sapiens*, *homo loquens*, *homo faber* and *homo ludens* – and connected to these as well – *homo nominans* (see Nicolaisen 1986: 141–143) is also an instructive characterisation of our species.

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