

# Landgrebe's Reading of Marty: On Name and Proper Name

*Charlotte Gawry*

## Preview

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Ludwig Landgrebe wrote prolifically and his work dealt with various fundamental phenomenological issues. However, my paper will only focus on one specific aspect of his analysis. I will pay attention to the thoughtful analysis regarding the *philosophy of language*, developed in his 1934 habilitation thesis, *Nennfunktion und Wortbedeutung. Eine Studie über Martys Sprachphilosophie*.<sup>1</sup>

The dissertation was written in Prague under the supervision of Oskar Kraus, a former student of Anton Marty.<sup>2</sup> The first part is devoted to the analysis of Marty's philosophy of language and furnishes a precious analytical commentary of his 1908 *Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der allgemeinen Grammatik und Sprachphilosophie*.<sup>3</sup> The last two parts of the dissertation are more polemical and raise a number of problems in Marty's theories. Most of these criticisms are directly influenced by the German psychologist and philosopher of language Karl Bühler,<sup>4</sup> who was a reader of Marty too and whose *Sprachtheorie* was also published in 1934.<sup>5</sup> Against this background, it makes sense to consider the young Landgrebe as an "indirect member" of the Brentano

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion und Wortbedeutung. Eine Studie über Martys Sprachphilosophie* (Halle: Akademischer Verlag, 1934). English translation is mine.

<sup>2</sup> Anton Marty (1847-1914) is a Swiss-born Austrian philosopher who is considered one of the most faithful students of Franz Brentano (whose teaching he followed in Würzburg). He was especially interested in philosophy of language and applied Brentano's theory to this new field.

<sup>3</sup> Anton Marty, *Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der allgemeinen Grammatik und Sprachphilosophie* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1908).

<sup>4</sup> Karl Bühler (1879-1963) studied psychology at Würzburg with Carl Stumpf and Oswald Külpe and had epistemic exchanges with Alexius Meinong who were all philosophical heirs of Brentano. He also knew perfectly Marty's work and made a critical review of his *Untersuchungen*: Karl Bühler, "Rezension: Anton Marty, Untersuchungen zur Grundlegung der allgemeinen Grammatik und Sprachphilosophie," *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, 171 (1909), 947-979. On Bühler and Marty's similarities and discrepancies, see: Laurent Cesalli & Janette Friedrich, *Anton Marty & Karl Bühler — Between Mind and Language* (Basel: Schwabe, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Karl Bühler, *Sprachtheorie. Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache* (Tena: Gustav Fischer, 1934).

school.<sup>6</sup> Independently of those historical considerations, I will suggest that Landgrebe's 1934 dissertation, which has somehow been forgotten,<sup>7</sup> is worth considering for at least two reasons:

1) From an exegetic point of view, the first part of Landgrebe's dissertation presents one of the clearest overviews on Marty's complex 1908 work. In that respect, it provides a useful introduction to Marty's main ideas, which are not so easy to pinpoint, especially because of the length and the density of his *Untersuchungen*. Additionally, Landgrebe's dissertation clears up some misunderstandings on Marty's position, in particular regarding his psychologist position. As a consequence, one can first use Landgrebe's dissertation as an exegetical commentary and as a clear introduction to Marty's somehow "Brentanian" conception of language.

2) From a conceptual point of view, the two last parts of Landgrebe's dissertation endorse a more critical point of view. Besides, they formulate some general criticisms regarding common and proper names and raise fundamental, and still contemporary, questions regarding referential and contextual considerations.

### **The First Part of Landgrebe's Dissertation: A Reading of Marty's Philosophy of Language**

One can consider the first part of Landgrebe's 1934 dissertation as one of the most synthetic and lucid presentations of Marty's theory of language. Following Landgrebe's helpful reconstruction, (1) endorsing Brentano's distinction between descriptive and genetic philosophy,<sup>8</sup> Marty considers that the philosophy of language has to be a descriptive theory of meaning. (2) Additionally, against the nativist conception of language which was endorsed in the late 19th and early

20th century (in particular by W. Wundt or H. Steinthal)—i.e., the view that language is instinctive—Marty considers both that (3) the language is empirically elaborated and that (4) it is above all a means of communication. He consequently fully endorses a functionalist conception of language. However, in

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<sup>6</sup> On the history of the Brentano school, see e.g. Jean-Pierre Cometti & Kevin Mulligan (eds.), *La philosophie autrichienne de Bolzano à Musil* (Paris: Vrin, 2001); Denis Fisette & Guillaume Fréchette (eds.), "Introduction", *À l'école de Brentano. De Würzburg à Vienne* (Paris: Vrin, 2007); Arnaud Dewalque, "The Rise of the Brentano School" and "The Unity of the Brentano School" in *Handbook of Brentano and the Brentano School*, U. Kriegel (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Despite some great contributions. See e.g. Laurent Cesalli, "Marty, Bühler and Landgrebe on Linguistic Fiction" in *Anton Marty & Karl Bühler, op. cit.*; Gottfried Gabriel, "Why a Proper Name Has a Meaning: Marty and Landgrebe vs. Kripke," in *Mind, Meaning and Metaphysics*; Kevin Mulligan (ed.), (Kluwer, Dordrecht-Boston-London: 1990); Kevin Mulligan, "Marty's Philosophical Grammar" in *Mind, Meaning and Metaphysics, op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. Franz Brentano, *Deskriptive Psychologie* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1982); Hamid Taieb, "La description chez Anton Marty: philosophie et psychologie du langage," *Bulletin d'analyse phénoménologique* X, 9 (2014).

<sup>9</sup> On this topic, see also Anton Marty, *Ueber den Ursprung der Sprache* (Würzburg: Stuber, 1875).

a very Brentanian way, (5) he adds that theory of language and psychology have a strong connection, so that linguistic problems are “either problems of psychological nature or at least problems that cannot be solved without the essential help of psychology.”<sup>10</sup> Following (1), (4) and (5), Marty consequently considers that (6) the purpose of the philosophy of language is to describe the different fundamental functions<sup>11</sup> of the meaning ( *Grundfunktionen des Bedeuten*). In the first and broader sense (6a), “meaning” is a linguistic function whose purpose is to *trigger* a presentation, a judgment or an emotion in the hearer.<sup>12</sup> In this first sense, the meaning of the name “cat”, for instance, is a function that triggers the presenting of a cat in another person’s mind: to mean is an *act* of triggering. Consequently, according to Marty, “deliberate speaking is a special kind of acting, whose proper goal is to call forth certain psychic phenomena in other people. In relation to this intention, the announcement of processes within oneself appears merely as a *means*.”<sup>13</sup> However, (6b), linguistic signs also have to be considered according to another linguistic function: the “intimation” (*Kundgabe*), the “indication” (*Anzeigen*) or the “expression” (*Äusserung*) of my own mental act of presenting, judging, feeling, etc.<sup>14</sup> Following this second sense, the linguistic function of “a cat” is for instance the intimation or expression of my “presentation” (*Vorstellung*) of a cat. By making a clear distinction between these two different functions, Landgrebe helps us to better understand how to connect the functionalist and the psychological dimensions of Marty’s theory.

In addition to this overview, Landgrebe clarifies controversial points in Marty’s position. The first controversy regards psychologism. Bühler notably attacked Marty on this polemical topic.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, as a careful reader of Husserl, Landgrebe intends to defend Marty’s theory against all charges of “psychologism.” On one hand, following Marty’s own claims, Marty’s theory of meaning has to be clearly understood as a psychology of language (*Sprachpsychologie*). According to both linguistic functions (6a and 6b), meaning is indeed either an act of triggering or of intimating. As a result, as Laurent Cesalli noticed in his commentary: “the analysis of what it is to be a sign ... always *involves* a psychic phenomenon as what is intimated (in the utterer) or

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<sup>10</sup>Anton Marty, *Untersuchungen*, 19.

<sup>11</sup> The notion of “linguistic function” has met a great success in linguistics. It was notably developed by Roman Jakobson (“Linguistique et poétique” in *Essais de linguistique générale* (Paris: Minuit, 1963) but was first introduced in Karl Bühler, “Kritische Musterung der neuern Theorien des Satzes,” *Indogermanisches Jahrbuch*, 6 (1918), 1–20.

<sup>12</sup>Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion*, 19.

<sup>13</sup>Anton Marty, *Untersuchungen*, 284 (my emphasis).

<sup>14</sup>Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion*, 21.

<sup>15</sup>Karl Bühler, “Rezension,” 961.

triggered (in the hearer).”<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, as Landgrebe explicitly outlines, “meaning” is not by itself a “psychic phenomena:” it is a linguistic function of triggering. Psychic phenomena are consequently only a *mean* in order to communicate:

It is thoroughly misleading to interpret Marty’s theory of meaning as if, according to him, the meaning of an expression was a psychic phenomenon (i.e., for instance, Bühler, *Rezension*, 961). On account of this interpretation, a large part of Marty’s theory of meaning has been criticized and considered as psychological. According to Marty, one can never answer to the question “What is the meaning of an expression?” that it is a psychological phenomenon. But instead: the expression has the meaning = function to arouse (*erwecken*) such a phenomenon and is certainly at the service of the mutual understanding. The expressions *have* a meaning only if they fulfill such a function or if they are able to contribute to this function.<sup>17</sup>

The second controversy regards the functionalist dimension of Marty’s theory. My intuition is that Landgrebe not only minimizes the psychologist aspect of Marty’s theory but also emphasizes its functionalist dimension. For instance, Landgrebe explicitly claims that Marty’s criticism of the nativist view has to be *a contrario* considered as a support to the functionalist conception of meaning according to which the words are understood as communication tools: “The nativist view ... misses the instrumental character of language signs and their intentional use (*absichtlicher Gebrauch*) aspect. Consequently, it can only understand language as an intimation (*Kundgabe*).”<sup>18</sup> To formulate it in other words, although quite schematic, one could claim that Landgrebe tends to minimize Brentano’s influence on Marty and rather puts the emphasis on Marty’s proximity with Bühler.

For all those briefly exposed reasons, I consider Landgrebe’s 1934 work as an inspiring and critical presentation of Marty’s theory. However, as I will now suggest, its interest is not solely exegetical. Landgrebe’s dissertation indeed raises several relevant questions, even for the contemporary philosophy of language.

### **On “Naming Function” (*Nennfunktion*) of Common Names: Original Nomination and Predication**

As the title of his 1934 dissertation suggests, Landgrebe’s main objections against Marty’s view regard the “naming function” (*Nennfunktion*) of common names. More precisely, Landgrebe reproaches Marty for his inaccurate distinction between the “naming” and the “meaning” functions of a name.

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<sup>16</sup> Laurent Cesalli, “Marty, Bühler and Landgrebe,” 62 (my emphasis).

<sup>17</sup> Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion*, n. 60, 27–28.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

This critical distinction between “meaning” and “naming” is not Landgrebe’s own insight. It was first introduced by Brentano, who distinguished between three functions of a name.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, this distinction was not developed in his published papers but only in his lessons and thus circulated among his students. One finds however some mentions of the distinction in his 1877 and 1878/79 Logic manuscripts.<sup>20</sup> Marty, like Twardowski in 1894,<sup>21</sup> mentions the three-functions theory in his 1884 article on “subjektlose Sätze.”<sup>22</sup> Following Brentano, Marty indeed introduces a distinction between three functions of a name: 1) the “intimation” or “manifestation” (*Kundgabe*) function of a psychic act; 2) the “meaning” function (*Bedeutung*) of the conceptual content of a psychic act, 3) the “naming” function (*Namen*) of an object. Originally, the distinction between the two last functions was introduced by Brentano in order to answer several controversies regarding the question whether names are names of ideas (as Locke would say) or of things, and whether a name “means” an object or a conceptual content (i.e., the controversy between Hobbes’ and Mill’s positions). Regarding this last controversy, Brentano precisely considers that it stems from a confusion between two different functions of the name (see Brentano EL80 13.014[2]).

However, according to Landgrebe, Brentano’s and, above all, Marty’s distinction between “meaning” and “naming” functions of a name are still not clear enough. As a starting point, Landgrebe is not convinced by Marty’s use of the notion of “naming.” Following his reconstruction, Marty affirms that the naming function of a word consists in naming the “extension” (*Umfang*) of the concept, that is, of what the word “means”: what “dog” names is the extension of the dog concept, i.e., all the objects that can be named “a dog.”<sup>23</sup> Consequently, in Marty’s view, there is a strong connection between the two functions. Besides, according to Landgrebe, Marty’s strong view on this connection is not in a position to explain why two different names, whose meanings are different, can name the same object and why the same name can be used to name different objects. By contrast, Landgrebe considers the “naming” function as primitive and autonomous. In other words, it doesn’t necessarily depend on the “meaning”

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<sup>19</sup> For a clear overview of the historical emergence of the distinction between the three functions of a name, cf. Fisette & Fréchette, “Introduction,” 158 ff.

<sup>20</sup> Franz Brentano F. EL 80. (Houghton Library, Harvard University, 1869/1870-1870/71-1875-1877). Text available online: <http://gams.uni-graz.at/archive/objects/o:bag.el.80-html-norm/methods/sdef:HTML/get>. See also Franz Brentano EL 72, “Logikkolleg. Franz Clemens Brentano Compositions (MS Ger 230)” (Houghton Library, Harvard University, 1878/1879). One also finds a very similar quotation in Brentano’s controversial collected papers: Franz Brentano, *Die Lehre vom richtigen Urteil*, F. Mayer-Hillebrand (ed.) (Bern: Francke, 1956), 47.

<sup>21</sup> Kazimierz Twardowski, *Zur Lehre vom Inhalt und Gegenstand der Vorstellungen. Eine psychologische Untersuchung* (Wien: Philosophia Verlag, 1894).

<sup>22</sup> Anton Marty, “Über subjektlose Sätze und das Verhältnis der Grammatik zur Logik und Psychologie,” *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie* 8 (1884), 56–94.

<sup>23</sup> Anton Marty, *Untersuchungen*, 448.

function. Landgrebe speaks of a “priority rank [*Vorrang*]” of the naming function compared to the meaning function.<sup>24</sup>

In order to advocate this innovating thesis, Landgrebe first suggests to distinguish between two functions of naming: the original nomination (*das ursprüngliche Benennen*) and the function of predication (*das Prädizieren*). Following the first definition, a sound, “dog” for instance, “names” a real object (an animal) inasmuch as it is arbitrarily and conventionally linked to this animal thanks to an act of baptism: “the act of presenting a dog.” As a consequence, following this first definition, the naming function of a name doesn’t depend on its meaning function. On the contrary, the meaning function itself presupposes the original naming function: “dog” means dog on account of an original nomination.<sup>25</sup>

Landgrebe interestingly adds that this act of baptism is not the only way of naming. By virtue of the original nomination (which has conferred a meaning to a name), different things can then be designated by a name. Consequently, if the first function is primordial, naming is also a function of *predication*. This second function is derived from a *judgment*: to name something a dog is also to judge that some dog predicates have to be predicated to this thing:

To name something originally doesn’t only mean: to present something and to link this presentation with a sound so that what is named would be the object of the pure presentation. But it rather presupposes that the presentation refers, by a judgment, to a thing considered as a substratum of possible predications.  
<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, predication is not independent as it presupposes a previous nomination. However, independently of the initial “meaning” of the conceptual content associated to the name, the extension of what is named can vary depending on who is *judging*, and where: “different things can be named by a name.”<sup>27</sup> New essential predicates of, for instance, being a “dog” can be identified. Dealing with several examples, Landgrebe makes this consequence obvious. For instance, a chemist could deny that what I judge to be “salt”—and consequently name “salt”—is purely salt. To put it in other words, what a chemist judges or what I judge to be “salt” do not have the same *predicates*. Consequently, the name “salt” does not have the same extension for the chemist as for me: we do not “name” the same thing “salt.”

To be fair with Marty, the Swiss philosopher had already noticed the double

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<sup>24</sup> Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion*, 66.

<sup>25</sup> See Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion*, 66 and also 129: “A name gets its meaning by virtue of what is originally named with him.”

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

functions of nomination.<sup>28</sup> However, as far as I know, only Landgrebe puts the emphasis on 1) the autonomous and priority dimension of the original nomination, but also 2) on the derivative and contextual aspect of the predicative function.

As a natural conclusion, Landgrebe asserts that, even if the original nomination is a primitive act, prior to the syntactical formation of the discourse,<sup>29</sup> the predicative function is always exerted “in the context of discourse (*im Zusammenhang der Rede*).”<sup>30</sup> In that respect, Landgrebe claims that common names have a predicative function only in a social situation. Naming, in its second sense, is consequently a *contextual* operation:

What is named [white] depends on the context in which one refers to white things, on the judgments in which the name actually appears and also on the situation in which it is *used* ... The name names something only in the context of *discourse* (*Zusammenhang der Rede*) and that is the reason why a discrepancy between what is named and what is meant can only be shown in context.<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly, Landgrebe does not put the emphasis on the context of the *proposition* (*Satzzusammenhang*), as other Austro-German philosophers had already done some decades before him, but more radically on the context of discourse (*Zusammenhang der Rede*).<sup>32</sup> Even if this idea is not totally new, Landgrebe explicitly adds that this context is a social context of use (he mentions the “situation in which [the name] is used”) and that the naming function itself depends on the “situation” in which the discourse is uttered.<sup>33</sup> To my mind, this is one reason why the 1934 dissertation deserves large attention. One can wonder whether Landgrebe is not one of the first to introduce some considerations on the normative function of the social context of discourse. He somehow anticipates what Wittgenstein and the philosophers of ordinary language will later call the normative “circumstances” (*Umstände*) of the discourse.

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<sup>28</sup> Anton Marty, *Untersuchungen*, 448.

<sup>29</sup> “The names have consequently also a genetic priority compared to all other linguistic signs”. They have to be considered as the “origin of the human discourse,” (*Nennfunktion*, 131).

<sup>30</sup> Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion*, 58.

<sup>31</sup> Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion*, 70.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g., Gottlob Frege, *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik: eine logisch mathematische Untersuchung über den Begriff der Zahl* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1986), Foreword; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, engl. translation C.K. Ogden (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922), 3.3.

<sup>33</sup> One already finds some mentions of this “Zusammenhang der Rede” in Brentano, for instance in Brentano EL80 13.001 or in the contested Brentano, *Die Lehre vom richtigen Urteil*, 36, 44. There are also numerous occurrences in Marty’s *Untersuchungen* or in Bühler’s *Sprachtheorie*.

However, it is not my intention to put exceeding emphasis on this aspect of Landgrebe's thesis. Indeed, he also specifies, by contrast, that the "meaning" (*Bedeutung*) function of a name is totally independent of the context of the discourse: "But the names have their meaning on their own totally independently of the context of the discourse in which they are each time employed as theoretical autosemantic terms (*theoretische Autosemantika*)."<sup>34</sup> More precisely, Landgrebe considers that the theoretical (and not practical<sup>35</sup>) meaning of a name is fixed once and for all by the psychic presentation.<sup>36</sup>

Consequently, at least two main conclusions can be drawn from Landgrebe's rephrasing of the "meaning" and "naming function" distinction. First, Landgrebe's considerations on the naming function—regarded as a predicative one—are not psychological inasmuch as he considers this function as partially disconnected, if not to the original nomination, to the meaning function. In other words, the theoretical meaning of a name is not the only input of the predication. One has also to consider in which judgment, expressed by which practical sentence, it is used in order to determine the extension of the name.<sup>37</sup> Psychic presentation is consequently not the last, nor even the first step of predicative naming. What comes into consideration is not only the context of the sentence (*Satz*) but the context of the discourse (*Rede*).

As a result, Landgrebe is one of the first philosophers to introduce a strong context principle, not only in Marty's philosophy, but in the philosophy of language in general.<sup>38</sup> Following Bühler, he rightly claims that the predicative function of a common name is only determined in its social, or at least real, context of use. As a confirmation, Cesalli perfectly noticed that: "Landgrebe has taken the idea of a functionalism of use more seriously than Marty himself"; "what is named by a name in actual discourse is ultimately determined not by its meaning, but by the concrete situation of discourse (*Situationsgebundenheit der Nennungsfunktion*)."<sup>39</sup> In other words, the extension of a name is not fully determined by its theoretical meaning.

However, as previously mentioned, Landgrebe doesn't consider once and for all that neither the original nomination nor the theoretical "meaning" of a *common* name is contextually fixed. Yet his analysis of the meaning of *proper* names raises different conclusions. That is the reason why I now suggest we now turn our attention to Landgrebe's own contribution to the tricky problem of the meaning of "proper names."

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<sup>34</sup>Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennungsfunktion*, 72.

<sup>35</sup>Regarding this interesting distinction between "theoretical" and "practical" meaning of a name, see Oskar Kraus, *Wege und Abwege der Philosophie* (Prag: Robert Lerche, 1934), 39.

<sup>36</sup>Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennungsfunktion*, 72.

<sup>37</sup>On this related topic, see the earlier Letter from Marty to Brentano (May 28th, 1873).

<sup>38</sup>Kraus' *Wege und Abwege* however considers that Marty was the first one.

<sup>39</sup>Laurent Cesalli, "Marty, Bühler and Landgrebe," 74.

## The Meaning of Proper Names

The question of the “meaning” of proper names is an old one and has prompted extensive literature dating back to J.S. Mill’s seminal assertion: “The only names of objects which connote nothing are *proper* names and these have, strictly speaking, no signification.”<sup>40</sup> A quite similar thesis was still endorsed 150 years later by Saul Kripke in his famous 1980 *Naming and Necessity*.<sup>41</sup> Following this very influential thesis, proper names have to be considered as “rigid designator” whose naming function is fixed once and for all by a baptism act: after this act, in virtue of causal relations, the referent of the proper name would not change in any possible world. It is consequently totally impervious to the variation of contexts of discourse or to the modal modifications of the circumstances of the world. To use the previous distinction, in Mill’s or Kripke’s backgrounds (although they are very different), proper names would have only a naming function but no meaning function. By contrast, against this widespread philosophical consensus, Landgrebe’s 1934 dissertation not only claims that proper names do have a meaning but that this meaning is contextually determined.

More specifically, Landgrebe’s commentary is a polemical response to the account of “proper name” (*Eigennamen*) provided by Marty in a long note of his 1908 *Untersuchungen*.<sup>42</sup> Landgrebe formulates his position in section 16 of his 1934 dissertation. According to Marty, proper names have no meaning. His first argument in favor of this conclusion lies on the “incompleteness” of proper names. As Mill already noticed, one could imagine numerous definite descriptions in order to expose what a proper name names. For instance, “Aristotle” can be described by the following descriptions: “Alexander the Great’s tutor,” “the founder of the Peripatetic School,” etc. Yet none of these descriptions gives a “complete” description of the potential *meaning* of “Aristotle:” “Each of those conceptions is, in its own way, incomplete and individual but without grasping in what consists exactly the individuality of the object.”<sup>43</sup> According to Marty’s second argument, proper names are “equivocal” expressions. To take Marty’s example, an expression such as “Heinrich” or “Fritz” does not determine which Heinrich or Fritz is concerned and, even if it does, it still fails to determine under which (mental) “presentation” (*Vorstellung*) of Fritz.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, according to Marty, even if proper names have a naming function, “being named” Fritz, Bismarck, Napoleon or Rome... cannot be

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<sup>40</sup> John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic. Ratiocinative and Inductive* (London: John Parker, 1843), chap. 2, § 5.

<sup>41</sup> Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Harvard, Mass.: Harvard U. P.-Blackwell, 1980).

<sup>42</sup> Anton Marty, *Untersuchungen*, n. 438-439.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 438.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 439.

considered as the meaning of those proper names. Marty's conclusion is very clear: "The proper names only name something *without meaning anything*.<sup>45</sup>"

Landgrebe concedes the relevance of most of Marty's arguments. According to him too, proper names have no theoretical or semantic (to use another terminology) meaning inasmuch as no "*Vorstellung*" is associated to Bismarck, Fritz, etc. He equally considers that one cannot determine the meaning of a proper name on the basis of its naming function. Even if I know who is *named* "Anton Marty," I am not able to determine what the proper name "Anton Marty" *means* and if it *means* anything.

However, against Marty, Landgrebe thinks that proper names are less equivocal than common names. Although a common name is general and can refer to several things of the same kind ("cat") or even to very different things (as in case of homonym the German word "Kreuzer" can refer to a coin or to a special type of boat), a proper name such as "Fritz" or "Bismarck" necessarily refers to an individual thing.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, Landgrebe concedes the "incompleteness" of proper names: one cannot formulate the "meaning" of a proper name in a complete, definite description. The case of translation is an illustration of this incompleteness: it makes no sense to "translate" a proper name in another language.<sup>47</sup> Yet this "incompleteness" of proper name presents a *positive* dimension. What is denied by this argument is solely the idea that one *unique* meaning is attached to a proper name. Contrary to Russell,<sup>48</sup> Landgrebe consequently considers that the numerous descriptions attached to "Aristotle," "Bismarck" or "Rome," etc., can be considered as part of the richness of their proper name meaning, and more precisely as different descriptions of their meaning.

Nevertheless, Landgrebe warns us not to consider proper names as concepts and consequently their meaning as general conceptual meanings. His main argument can be formulated as follows: no complex of general concepts in a definite description would be able to grasp the singular meaning of a proper name. Even if a proper name, say "Aristotle," may have several meanings, none of these is general. Consequently, the definite descriptions of a proper name have to adopt a specific format: they have to be constituted by at least another proper name in order to properly describe a proper name meaning. For instance, in order to specify one of the meanings of Aristotle, it won't be sufficient to use the general term "philosopher" or "tutor." A relevant description would rather adopt this format: "Aristotle is the philosopher who was born in 384 BC in Stagira" or "Aristotle tutored Alexander the Great," etc. Consequently, the meanings of a proper name are *individual* meanings, specified by other proper names (Stagira,

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 439.

<sup>46</sup> Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion*, 85.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>48</sup> Following Russell's famous claim (against Frege's 1892 "Sinn and Bedeutung"), we have a knowledge of proper names by acquaintance and not by description. See Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting," *Mind* (1905).

Alexander the Great, etc.).

Moreover, those proper names' "meanings" are not only individual but also *contextually* determined in two senses. Firstly, their meanings may change depending on context variations (in different contexts "Aristotle" would mean different things). Secondly, and more radically, they have a meaning only in a context: "It consequently means that a proper name also has no meaning outside this context."<sup>49</sup> Outside their context of utterance, they have no meaning and even no naming function:

*A proper name has then a meaning when it is manifested in the context of the discourse so that we know what can be named with him and when it is able to actually accomplish its name relation (Nennbeziehung) towards an individual object.*<sup>50</sup>

Only contextual determinations may individualize one proper name meaning and anchor it in the real world. For instance, "Aristotle" has no meaning apart from the context but may have several meanings depending on the context of use. "Aristotle" can consequently name various determined individual persons: Alexander the Great's tutor, a citizen in nowadays' Athens, a professor of philosophy in a certain university (if the term is used as a nickname), or even a corpus of philosophical texts (when used as a common name), etc. As a result, according to Landgrebe's position, proper names have a meaning or, more precisely, have different meanings. These meanings are context-dependent and may vary according to the different contexts.

## Conclusion

As a conclusion, I will try to formulate a modest critical assessment of Landgrebe's idiosyncratic theory of nomination and proper names. More precisely, I suggest confronting some of his main ideas with contemporary arguments.

I first intended to outline how polemical Landgrebe's position was for his contemporaries. I tried to show his deep allegiance to Marty as well as the few radical differences between the two philosophers. As previously shown, the rift between them mostly concerns the naming function of common names and the meaning function of proper names. More precisely, it concerns their contextual dimensions. This first controversy between them pinpoints one crucial aspect of Landgrebe's analysis: his acute sensitivity to the normative role of the real context of discourse. It can be explained considering the strong influence of Bühler on his early writings. As an interesting consequence, I think that it would make sense to carefully compare Landgrebe and the quite similar attention paid by the so-called philosophers of ordinary language (Wittgenstein, Austin) to the contextual variation of the meaning of terms in a discourse.

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<sup>49</sup>Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion*, 85.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 87.

Landgrebe's thesis according to which (at least, some) proper names have a meaning, in addition to their naming, was innovative at the time. However, it was not totally isolated. For instance, one of his forgotten contemporaries, the linguist Hermann Ammann, notably asserted that proper names, "Goethe" for instance, have a meaning.<sup>51</sup> Yet contrary to Landgrebe, he claimed that this meaning is institutionally fixed by means of a baptism act that is independent of any contextual variations. Consequently, to my knowledge, Landgrebe is one of the first, if not the first, philosopher who argued in favor of a contextual position regarding the meaning of proper names.

This position raises several difficulties. First of all, one can wonder whether proper names are comparable to deictic terms like demonstratives (this, that,...), personal pronouns (I, you, we...), or adverbs of place or of time (here, there, yesterday, now...), etc. In the case of both deictics and proper names, their meaning and naming functions are indeed dependent on the actual context in which they are used. In other terms, are "Aristotle," "Rome," etc. just deictic terms? Landgrebe himself asks the question. This is not so surprising as the discussions on deixis were very lively at his time. Even if the debates were popularized in the late 1970's thanks to David Kaplan's famous paper, "Demonstratives,"<sup>52</sup> it was still at the heart of philosophical considerations in the 1930's, especially thanks to Bühler's analysis.<sup>53</sup> Landgrebe's answer to the question is clearly negative. He develops two main arguments in order to dissolve any attempt of assimilation. First, according to him, it is true that the meaning of proper names and deictics are context-sensitive. However, when the meaning of a proper name is fixed thanks to contextual specifications, it cannot change anymore in the same context: if in a determined context, the meaning of "Aristotle" is "Alexander the Great's tutor" and if the term names this historical character, those meanings and namings are fixed in the situation of my actual discourse. By contrast, according to Landgrebe, the meaning and naming functions of a demonstrative (this...) or a pronoun (I...) may change several times in the same context, according to some interlocution or demonstration modifications:

When the reference of a proper name to a determined person is fixed, then it is maintained and it is always used in a determined context in order to indicate this determined person. By contrast, pronouns can change their indicative function even in the same context.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Hermann Ammann, *Die menschliche Rede. Sprachphilosophische Untersuchungen* (Lahr: Moritz Schauenburg, 1925).

<sup>52</sup> David Kaplan, "An Essay on the Semantics, Logic, Metaphysics, and Epistemology of Demonstrative and Other Indexical," in *Themes from Kaplan*, Almog J., Perry J. and Wettstein H. (eds.) (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1989).

<sup>53</sup> See Bühler *Sprachtheorie* and also Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1913), II/1 §26.

<sup>54</sup> Ludwig Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion*, 89.

In other words, deictics are more sensible to variations than proper names.

Landgrebe adds a second argument in order to clarify the distinction. Although the meaning of proper name can be expressed thanks to an incomplete definite description combining proper names and concepts (as “Alexander the Great’s *tutor*”), the meaning of a deictic cannot be expressed with a concept: “They manifestly differ from proper names inasmuch as their meaning can never be a concept. They are linked to the situation in a very different way than proper names.”<sup>55</sup> Accordingly, deictics such as “I”, “you”, “this”, “that”...have no conceptual meaning. Consequently, although contextual-dependent, proper names cannot be considered as deictic terms.

For all those reasons, following Gottfried Gabriel’s 1990 suggestions, one can consider Landgrebe’s position regarding proper name as an anachronic alternative to the Kripkean position. Nowadays, Kripke’s position is the standard one. However, it is not uncontroversial. His “rigid designator” theory of reference raised a number of specific difficulties and was, for instance, accused of ethnocentrism and of scripture-centrism. Several anthropologists have shown that in some civilizations (in particular for the Inuits), the link between an individual and his proper name is not fixed: the same individual can have several proper names depending on the circumstances.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, in oral civilisations, there is no clear baptism act and proper names are not fixed once for all. Kripke’s theory is consequently not universal and it has faced criticisms. Against this critical background, Landgrebe’s theory presents the historical lineaments of a non-referential and above all contextual way of defining proper names. In that respect, it somehow anticipates or duplicates Wittgenstein’s considerations that were developed in the same period and appeared in their clearest form in the §79 of the *Philosophical Investigations*.<sup>57</sup> Although Wittgenstein first considered in the *Tractatus* that a proper name was an “abbreviation” of descriptions, he then criticized his own position and the idea that the meaning of a proper name is ultimately fixed by its bearer. By contrast, he develops the following arguments in §79.<sup>58</sup> Different speakers associate different modes of presentation to the same proper names. For instance, Moses is “the child saved from the Nile by the Pharaoh’s daughter,” “the author of the Pentateuch,” etc. Besides, different individuals can fit the same descriptions: “King of France”, etc. Finally, there are descriptions (that are not definitions) that are not relevant in any circumstances in the sense that different speakers would use different criteria for identifying a proper name. As a consequence, against a long tradition spanning from Mill to Kripke, both Landgrebe and Wittgenstein reject strictly referential theories and

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>56</sup> See e.g., Bernard Saladin d’Anglure, *Être et renaitre inuit: Homme, femme ou chamane* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953).

<sup>58</sup> For a clear overview, see Hans-Johann Glock, “Names,” in *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 254–257.

suggest that there is room for contextual considerations in the characterization of proper names.