

Proper Names and the Definite Article

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This paper compares fairly orthodox looking proper names like 'Ginza Station' and 'Hyde Park' with naming expressions of a slightly more complex nature like 'The Ginza Line' and 'The Ritz Hotel'. Names of the first type have no definite article while those of the second type do and the main purpose of the paper is to try to provide some rationale for the difference. A variety of objects named in the two different ways are compared and contrasted and a synthesis of key differences is presented. While these differences may not provide a perfect guide to usage, they do seem to point to a clear way forward. For the most part names without the article are used for things with a very clear identity and a specific place in a particular community relative to other places, etc, in that community. Names which require the article instead tend to be used for things which are picked out in the first instance as members of types identified by the head noun. When we come to name this latter type, we seem to be more interested in the function of the thing in question rather than its position in the world. Accordingly, the name does not appear to tie the object it names to any particular area or space, or mark where it is relative to other places or things, etc.

In this paper I plan to investigate one small aspect of how things are named in English. In particular I will examine why it is that combinations such as 'Victoria Station' or 'Ginza Station' can be used perfectly well as names of subway stations whereas names of subway lines, for example, require combinations which include the definite article, as in 'The Victoria Line' or 'The Ginza Line' in order to function correctly. We might paraphrase this by asking why it is that 'Victoria Station' is acceptable as the name of a station while 'Victoria Line' is almost certainly not acceptable as the name of a subway line. Are there particular reasons why the definite article is necessary in one case but not in the other, or are we simply obliged to learn these, and other examples on a case by case basis?

As a preliminary to this enquiry I shall take a brief look at contemporary classifications of this issue. Since these fail to explain why the article is necessary in certain naming expressions and not in others, and moreover make no attempt to look for some sort of grounding for the distinction, I shall go on to consider whether or not there is something fundamental about the way that naming takes place here that accounts for the difference. To a large extent this will involve examining whether or not the variety of objects named by these different naming expressions fall into two clear types.

PART ONE

A brief look at any contemporary grammar reveals long lists of names of the kind we have in mind, some of which require the definite article while others operate quite well without it. Declerk (1991), for example, tells us that:

"a. Geographical names consisting of only one proper name usually have no article. E.g. Japan, Israel, Flanders, Kent, Asia

Exceptions:

1) Regular exceptions are *the Sahara, the Tyrol, the Crimea, the Argentine*, (now usually, *Argentina*), *(the) Sudan, (the) Lebanon, (the) Congo, the Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the Hague* and plural names like *the Netherlands, the United States, the Philippines, the Midlands*.

2) The article is used if the name is restrictively modified.

e.g. The Germany of 1960 was smaller than the Germany of before the war.

This is no longer the London that is described in the works by A. Conan Doyle.

The England of Cromwell was one of terror and famine.

- 3) The definite article is normally used before names of
- a) rivers
e.g. the (River/river) Nile / Amazon / Thames, the Danube
 - b) seas and oceans
e.g. the Mediterranean (Sea), the Baltic (Sea), the Atlantic (Ocean), the Pacific (Ocean)
 - c) mountain ranges
e.g. the Alps / Apennines / Pyrenees / Andes / Himalayas
But names of mountains do not usually have the article
e.g. Mount Everest, Kilimanjaro, Etna, Vesuvius
 - d) groups of islands
e.g. the Hebrides /Canaries / Bahamas / Shetlands / Philippines / West Indies / Azores
- b. Geographical names consisting of a proper name and a common noun sometimes take the article, sometimes not.
- 1) Names of hotels, theatres, clubs, museums, etc. usually take the article.
e.g. the Hilton / Savoy, the Lyceum (theatre), the Marlborough (club), the Tate (Gallery), the Bodleian (Library), the British Museum, the National Gallery.
 - 2) Names of seas, canals, etc. take the article:
e.g. the Bristol Channel, the Suez Canal, the Yorkshire Moors
 - 3) Most other place names have no article.
e.g. Westminster Abbey, London Bridge, Kew Gardens, Hyde Park, Oxford Street, Piccadilly Circus, etc.”¹

A similar list is seen in Swan (1995), who also adds the rider that: “*the* is unusual in the titles of the principal public buildings and organisations of a town.

Oxford University
Hull Station
Salisbury Cathedral
Birmingham Airport, etc.”²

A more extensive list is found in Brender (1989), who informs us that: “*the* is also frequently used before the names of railway lines.

Examples: The Yamanote Line
The Piccadilly Line
The Chuo Line, etc.”³

PART TWO

The list of names outlined in part one is not meant to be exhaustive but it does serve to illustrate the issues we are concerned with in this paper. Quite a variety of noun phrase combinations which function as proper names like ‘the Bristol Channel’ or ‘the Hilton’, require the definite article in order to be well-formed while other, seemingly more ‘orthodox’ proper names like ‘Westminster Abbey’ and ‘Hyde Park’ function quite legitimately without such an addition.

I do not propose to consider all of the examples cited in section 1 since that would be beyond the scope of the present discussion. What I will do is examine a cross-section of the examples listed and try to look for similarities and differences between the two groups we have identified. Insofar as any are forthcoming, it may help us to determine whether or not there is something that roots the

¹ Declerk, R. 1991: 336-338.

² Swan, M. 1995: 68.

³ Brender, A. 1989: 141.

distinction. This however is to anticipate. In the first instance I will now turn to a closer examination of some of the things that have so far been mentioned and of the names that are used to refer to them.

Stations

As an example of this category let's take 'Ginza Station'. This is the name of a station located in central Tokyo and as with many stations it takes its name from the area, in this case - Ginza, in which it has its being. Ginza Station is a subway station with a variety of entrances and exits and it has several subway lines running through it. These subway lines comprise part of the greater Tokyo subway system. Taken from the area in which it is located, the name of this station seems quite apt. It would have been quite inappropriate to have called it 'Yurakucho Station' or 'Kyobashi Station' since these are the names not only of other stations but more importantly, other places.

Train lines

'The Ginza Line' in contrast with 'Ginza Station' does not name a subway station but a subway line which runs through central Tokyo from Shibuya to Asakusa. The line as such has a certain extension and passes through several places in Tokyo including Ginza. The line seems to have its existence by virtue of connecting the places it goes through on its way. The Ginza line while passing through Ginza is not of it. 'Ginza' here is part of the name of the line, a line which is not restricted to the confines of Ginza. Indeed, several other lines going by different names also pass through Ginza station.

Hotels

There are many hotels in the Ginza area: 'The Nikko Hotel', 'The Daiichi Hotel' and even 'The Ginza Tokyo Hotel'. Only the last of these has anything in its name that connects it with the place where it has its location. But it is clear from the names of the other hotels - 'the Daiichi', 'the Nikko', etc. - that no connection with the place they have there existence is actually necessary. The hotel name can be almost anything we like. 'The Kangaroo hotel' might at first sound preposterous but there is no grammatical reason why there could not be a name of that kind. Also there is no good reason why there could not be a hotel called 'The Ginza hotel' in London, Sydney or even New York.

Parks

'Singleton Park', 'Hyde Park', 'Ohori Park', and 'Green Park' are all names of parks found in different cities throughout the world. These parks and the multitude of parks that are to be found in cities, towns and villages, etc., come in various shapes and sizes and they are all usually looked after by councils or organizations that are responsible for their maintenance. Named after people who donated the land, famous sons or daughters of the area, or other people connected with the community, these parks have 'orthodox' proper names which do not usually require the definite article. The parks themselves all seem to have clearly defined areas and are usually surrounded by fences marking their boundaries. Those that do not still have very clear perimeters and like other parks, occupy fixed and recognizable positions in the areas in which they are located.

Deserts

'The Sahara Desert', 'the Gobi Desert' and 'the Sonoran Desert' are names of deserts found in different parts of the globe. The area called 'the Sahara' is first and foremost a desert. It covers most of North Africa, more than a third of the continent, which is an area around the same size as the United States. This is an absolutely huge area which takes in parts of several countries making up that region. While it undoubtedly covers a large landmass it is not easy to specify clearly the exact area of its extension into the various countries it encroaches into or precisely what its outside edge is.

Deserts, as is well known, are largely made up of sand but what is less well known is that they are often home to a surprising number of plants and wild life.

Cinemas

Cinemas go by a variety of names but a very large number of them have names which include the definite article such as 'The Empire' or 'The Apollo' or even 'The Metro'. They are often run by large organizations that have a 'branch' cinema in towns and cities throughout the country in question. Thus, for example, many towns and cities in Britain have a cinema going by the name of 'The Odeon'. Independent cinemas such as 'The Ritzy' in south London also tend to have the article as part of the name. Other cinemas with names such as 'Warner Village', that tend to be made up of complexes including more than one cinema, have names that are more generic in form which are able to function without the article.

For the most part however names which include the article predominate and these names all serve to pick out particular cinemas in particular locales.

Oceans

Large ocean masses include the Pacific, the Atlantic and the Indian oceans, to name just three. These great masses extend over huge areas and in every case, as the name implies, are made up of salt water. We might say roughly that the Pacific is that great stretch of water between a line that takes in Japan and Australia on the one hand and the whole western coastline of North and South America on the other. The Atlantic stretches from the eastern coastline of the Americas to the western fringes of Africa and Europe. The Indian Ocean fills in that great area between the east coast of Africa through the Indian subcontinent to the western shores of Indonesia and Australia. The oceans all have slightly different temperaments depending on their place in the world and they are obviously influenced by local weather conditions.

Whilst deep within that area of sea labeled by any one of the names, 'the Pacific', 'the Atlantic', or 'the Indian Ocean' there is little doubt as to which ocean one might be sailing in, just where one ocean gives way to another is almost impossible to say and as such is generally a question which does not arise.

Rivers

The world has many great rivers including the Nile, the Amazon, the Mississippi, the Ganges as well as others such as the Danube and the Thames. Rivers are naturally occurring, meandering, flows of water that often start in hilly regions and end up leading into the sea. Rivers are not restricted to particular areas or regions; the larger ones amongst them like the Nile may pass through more than one country. Nor are they compelled to stick to the particular course they originally carved out for themselves; their courses may change slightly due, for example, to the formation of ox bow lakes or to the interference of man. One simple characteristic of rivers is that while their content is by definition water, this content is continually being replenished, so the river is never the same from moment to moment.

Newspapers

Names for newspapers include 'The Times', 'The Guardian', 'The Independent', 'The New York Times', 'The Washington Post' and 'The Herald Tribune'. All of these newspapers include the definite article as part of the name and this seems to be a particularly common feature of the names of newspapers.

Newspapers provide us with a certain amount of information each day and for those of us with great appetites for such things, there are usually further choices available either as early or late, or morning or evening, editions. The news may be local or regional or national and international and newspapers always include commentary and editorials as well as sports and financial news. While

the structure of a particular newspaper may stay fairly fixed for a set period, giving way to new layouts from time to time, the actual content of the paper changes almost completely from day to day depending on the edition. Thousands of copies of the same edition may be published on any given day, and each and every copy goes by the same name. This means that the name of a newspaper, for example 'The Independent', is not simply the name of a particular copy that you or I may or may not have bought and read, it is also the name of each and every copy that was ever, or will ever be, produced by a certain company, and moreover is the name of the organization that brings it into being. However, this doesn't preclude us from including the date of publication in the title when we wish to refer to a specific issue of the newspaper.

The name then functions very much as an umbrella term for an entity which has a certain fixed structure but a variable content which enables it to appear as 'new' everyday. That some might dispute this claim about novelty need in no way militate against this last point.

Mountains ranges / mountains

Mountain ranges familiar to many of us include the Himalayas, the Pyrenees and the Alps. All of them cover large areas of land which may include extension into more than one country. The Alps, for example, are not restricted merely to Switzerland but stretch into France, Italy and Austria at their various extremes. The Himalayas, too, take in parts of Nepal, India, Bhutan and also Tibet while the Pyrenees cross the border from Spain into France. Mountain ranges, as the name suggests, are comprised of large masses of rocky valleys and peaks, which because of the heights they reach are often covered with layers of snow.

Mountains, in contrast to mountain ranges are individual peaks which rise up above their surroundings and give us cause to single them out, on occasion, with names such as 'Mount Everest', 'Mount Kilimanjaro', 'Mont Blanc' and also 'Mount Fuji'. These names pick out particular elevations of rock in different parts of the world, all of which culminate in definitive, identifying peaks which constitute part of their make up. Usually such mountains occur as part of mountain ranges which include other mountains with smaller peaks. While the exact spot where a particular mountain melds into the rest of the range, as it were, may be impossible to pinpoint, the peak which individuates it and for which it may be famous, is much easier to pick out. Thus, for the most part, it is the upper elevations of the peaks which give mountains their characteristic appearance and it is these, surely, which are named.

Unions

When we think of names for unions we must certainly include 'the United States of America', 'the United Arab Emirates' and also 'the United Kingdom'. In all of these cases we are clearly talking of composites of some description; groups of things with a certain autonomy and definition of their own are brought together for a particular reason and given a title which reflects this fact. So, while unions of the kind we have mentioned ultimately function as definite wholes managed by a central agency, each one's constitution is a collection of separate parts or units with a specific identity of their own. The United States of America, for example, is comprised of fifty separate States which all come together to elect a single President as their head of government. While for the most part there are laws of the land that apply to every State, there are indeed State to State variations. Such variations are not limited only to laws, of course, but may include dialect, custom and social practice. This notwithstanding, at bottom, the fundamental point about unions is that they are a conglomeration of parts, each with a certain autonomy and their own defining characteristics, which are brought together to function, as far as possible, as a unified whole.

PART THREE

In the previous section we considered, in part, names of two different kinds: those which look

like 'ordinary' proper names such as 'Ginza Station' and those which include the definite article such as 'The Pacific Ocean'. In an attempt to get a little clearer about how these naming expressions are used we examined a few of the features of the things named by these expressions such as, stations, parks, mountain ranges and oceans, for example.

In part three I would like to examine the categories discussed in part two in a slightly different manner. In part two we looked at the things named in isolation, in separation from other things named by the same type of name. Now I would like to examine different pairs of these objects with a view to isolating factors that might help to account for their being named in the particular way that they are. In part three I shall first compare things named with expressions involving the definite article and then move on, in part four, to a comparison of items named by expressions which do not include the article.

Train lines and rivers

Train lines and rivers both have several things in common. They both map out a course that looks like a line; the first being man made with the second being more natural in origin. They both have 'stopping off' points on their routes; in the first case stations appear at regular intervals along the way while in the second, towns and villages of different sizes crop up indeterminately on the banks of the river. They both have movement in at least one direction although it is much more common, perhaps, for the train line to provide for complete movement in both directions. In carving out a specific route through particular terrain they both seem to have the purpose of reaching a destination.

In naming them the fact that, in the first instance, we are naming a train line rather than a place it passes through, and in the second that we are naming a river rather than any of the towns on its banks, seems of prime importance. Neither of them is confined to any particular area and both can transcend boundaries of a local or national nature. While both have a definite location in the world, neither of them occupies a space that falls within a specific area singled out by human beings for a special reason.⁴ As such, to examine either of their positions on a map would be to observe something that does not have a single set of coordinates, does not form a recognized area of its own and does not fall within a man-made classification of any description.

Oceans and deserts

Oceans are comprised of water while deserts consist mostly of sand but both oceans and deserts cover quite large amorphous areas. They do not carve out lines, either naturally or otherwise as do subway lines and rivers and they do not provide links between towns or other settlements even though some such places often exist on their outside fringes.

Deserts and oceans are of indefinite proportions. The fact that seawater is divided up at all is, indeed, somewhat arbitrary, and is largely done for the purposes of navigation and classification. The oceans such as the Pacific and the Atlantic that this gives rise to have no clear outside edges and hence no clear boundaries. They touch on the borders or peripheries of many countries and regions but are not typically defined as being a part of any. Deserts, too, have no clear boundaries or outside edges and although, unlike oceans, they may fall partially in one country or another, they generally extend across regions and even countries and have no readily identifiable perimeter.

So, while both oceans and deserts are clearly finite they are not really restricted to a specifically defined space within the scheme of things. We need to consider whether this fact is reflected in the way we name them or not.

Hotels and cinemas

Hotels are primarily places for people to stay, usually on a temporary basis while they are away

⁴ For example, train lines and rivers may pass through areas in Britain like Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire without any regard for the particular areas they pass through. They go through these areas but they are not of them.

from their homes for reasons of various kinds. Cinemas, on the other hand, are essentially places for watching movies and people rarely stay in them for more than two or three hours at a time even though some of them may have films showing round the clock. Both hotels and cinemas tend to exist wherever there is a demand for them, which usually means where there are large congregations of people as in towns and cities. Depending on demand, there may be more or less of them and the positioning of them quite often varies to satisfy that demand which means they do not have to be specific to one place. While many cinemas and hotels do tend to be long standing, and while the introductions of new ones often creates a new demand, there is nothing to stop hotels or cinemas from passing out of existence in certain places or regions due to considerations of interest or economy. So, while any building or institution must have an exact location, the location is not on the whole central to its existence.

Names of hotels and cinemas, for the most part, include the definite article. Examples we have looked at have included 'The Odeon' and 'The Empire' for cinemas and 'The Grand Hotel' and 'The Daiichi Hotel' for hotels. When we initially see or read the name of any of these places, we generally have no clear idea of their location. We have to examine their addresses to determine that.

It seems that we consider hotels and cinemas in terms of their function - for what they offer, for what we can do there - rather than for any other reason. In more general terms we appear to look at them in terms of content - in terms of what they are - rather than in terms of where they are. And in this regard at least they have something in common with train lines and oceans, etc.

Train lines and hotels

We have already looked at both of these categories in comparison with other things: rivers in the case of train lines and cinemas in the case of hotels. Train lines and hotels may at first appear to have very little in common, and in terms of function, even though they both purport to be of service in some sense to the local community, this seems, perhaps, undeniable. One thing we noted with train lines and rivers however is that they are not restricted to particular areas but can cross boundaries and run through a variety of different regions.

Hotels, too, as we have just noted, have a similar feature. Unlike rivers they do not form lines and instead form single units, but like rivers and train lines they are not tied to any particular area or region and readily transgress these boundaries. In naming these things, just as we noted in the last section, we seem more interested in what they are, in what their function is, rather than in where they are located.

PART FOUR

In this section we shall be comparing things named by expressions which do not include the definite article.

Stations and parks

We earlier considered examples involving Ginza Station and Singleton Park. Ginza Station is situated in Ginza in Tokyo, Japan while Singleton Park is to be found in Swansea in South Wales. Ginza Station is the main subway station in the area of Tokyo whose name it bears. Ginza itself has very clear dimensions, forming a particular district within the Tokyo metropolis and is further divided into sub categories in order to make every part of it readily discernable and accessible. The boundaries of Ginza are very clearly drawn and no sooner does one cross one of those boundaries than one ceases to be in Ginza and enters instead a completely different area with a completely different name. Ginza Station also has fixed dimensions and a very clear place on the Ginza line: one station after Kyobashi station and one station before Shinbashi. Several other lines also pass through Ginza Station and, quite clearly, its position on these lines must also be fixed which means that that the exact coordinates of the station are already drawn up and such knowledge is in the

public domain. Ginza Station could, theoretically, be expanded at any time but such expansion is limited and, for the most part, would be restricted to the confines of the Ginza area.

Singleton Park in Swansea is also an area of very clear dimensions and it is bounded on its perimeter by fences and walls. Like Ginza, the area it occupies is quite precisely defined but, since it has no residents other than perhaps a Park keeper, it does not, like Ginza, need to be divided into postal districts. Nonetheless, like all parks, it has a very clear geographical position, in this case in the city of Swansea. A park, of course, is in obvious ways different from other areas of a town or city. As we have noted, parks generally do not have residents and they are not typically hosts to business and commerce even though there may be the odd shop or two selling food and drink to those requiring it. Parks are usually areas consisting of trees, wide open grassy spaces, the occasional lake and ubiquitous flower beds. They often provide recreational facilities for children, too.

Parks are important to people and communities and the land they occupy is almost never encroached upon; parks, for the most part manage to retain their geographical position in the scheme of things. In being named after a particular person who lived in the area they retain a very real link both with the city or town in which they are situated and with an individual who actually, at some time, existed.

Mountains and parks

Having looked at parks in the last section it might prove interesting to compare them with mountain peaks to see if there are any similarities of any kind. In terms of the objects themselves it seems that we might be hard pressed to find anything in common at all.

Firstly, parks seem to be bounded on all sides whereas this does not seem to be the case with mountains. We noted in an earlier section, however, that while it may be difficult to say precisely when a mountain like Mount Everest gives way to the rest of the Himalayas, there is absolutely no doubting the identity of the magnificent peak which goes by that name. It stands out clearly from the rest. And this makes it clear, I think, that when we name mountains, particularly those in extensive mountain ranges, it is the peak which ultimately defines them. In this respect, the upper boundaries, the silhouettes which outline mountain peaks are as clear and obvious as the walls of any park, even if unlike parks they can never be completely enclosed. With mountains however it is clearly peaks that we are naming and these, just like hats, are not complete on every side but their features are as distinct and as idiosyncratic as any of the more 'recognizable' members of the human race.

Mountains and parks, then, both seem to have very clear identities and occupy a definite position in the scheme of things. Perhaps this feature is of importance when we come to name them.

Stations and mountains

Once again when we attempt to compare two quite obviously different things as stations and mountains, it is the differences that seem easier to enumerate. Stations are to be found in towns and cities while mountains are usually found in the wild. Stations are man-made while mountains occur naturally. Stations function as places to board and alight from trains of different kinds while, despite the protestations of mountaineers, it is still not clear that mountains have a function at all. Still, there are similarities and these may turn out to be important. As we have noted, both mountains and stations have a very clear identity and a fixed position in the different environments in which they are found. Moreover, this very identity is tied up with the larger space these things find themselves in. Ginza station, for example, is a particular station in the Ginza area while Mount Everest is a particular peak in the Himalayan mountain range. These individuating features, which lock them into a certain well-defined environment, may be meaningful when we come to name these things.

PART FIVE

In part two we briefly examined a variety of categories, some of which required the use of naming expressions utilising the definite article and others which did not. Those that did require the definite article were then compared with each other in different groupings in part three, while those that used naming expressions that did not require the article were compared with each other in section four.

In this section we will try to draw together all the similarities we found in sections three and four in an attempt to lay bare the underlying reasons why some naming expressions require the article while others do not.

Naming expressions requiring the article

In examining these we looked initially at the objects being named: train lines, rivers, oceans, deserts, mountain ranges, hotels and cinemas. We noted that train lines and rivers occupy spaces that cross boundaries and have no fixed address in the sense that they do not exist completely in any of our usual compartments. We noted further that oceans and deserts occupied large amorphous spaces that either touch the fringes of several regions or, like rivers, somehow run through them. These spaces again had no clear boundaries and were tied to no particular area.

When looking at hotels and cinemas we recognised that they have to have fixed bases as such but noted that the position they occupied seemed less important than the function they served. Put more generally, as we observed, this reduces to saying that what they are seems to be more important than where they are. To a large extent this seemed true of the other categories. These things are first and foremost rivers, hotels, oceans and cinemas, etc. We seem to see them, initially, in rather general terms. So it may be that when we first come to name them, simple nouns in the singular are used. These need the definite article for two reasons: one, to make them specific; two, for noun phrase completion. This would leave us with simple noun phrases like ‘the river’, ‘the hotel’, ‘the ocean’, etc., which would be specific and referential in a particular context but would hardly constitute naming expressions in the sense we are considering. To achieve this, a third part, a basic naming element is necessary to make a complete name. Basic naming elements would include such expressions as ‘Thames’, ‘Grand’, ‘Sahara’, etc. These elements would serve as a kind of embellishment to enable the creation of such naming expressions as ‘The Thames River’, ‘The Grand Hotel’, ‘The Sahara Desert’, and ‘The Pacific Ocean’, for example.

However plausible this might first seem as an explanation of how this type of name is formed we have not yet, of course, demonstrated it to be the case. But one thing seems clear: The basic naming element we have just introduced seems at best to have a contingent relationship with the place or area where the thing named is to be found. Which is to say that such embellishments, when they are employed, do not serve to tie the thing named to a particular community, geographically or otherwise.⁵

⁵ This may turn out to be important. It seems that with a name like ‘Ginza Station’, for example, there is a clear connection between the name and the area of town that the station is to be found. Names created using the definite article do not generally have such connections. ‘The Grand hotel’, for example, could be found absolutely anywhere, and while, as we have seen, a hotel going by that name must have a specific address, the name itself does not lock it into a certain area. Of course, in the case of names which do not use the definite article the connection with the area does not need to be as obvious as the Ginza station example. Names of parks for example might be named, as we have noted, after citizens from the area. A name of a newspaper like ‘The New York Times’ might seem to challenge this suggestion until we see that while it claims for itself to be somehow representative of that city, it is in fact one of many newspapers produced there and is definitely not the official newspaper of that city or state. At this point however our discussion would need to talk about definite descriptions which is outside the scope of this paper. It should be clear however that the names formed using the definite article that we are discussing are quite different from standard definite descriptions like ‘The President of the United States’, etc. These phrases are comprised of descriptions with internal meaning that fixes their referents. Names like ‘The Grand Hotel’, ‘The Independent’ and ‘The Odeon’ are, of course, quite different in construction and meaning.

Names without the article

Names without the article have structures much more like 'ordinary' proper names: Albert Einstein, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Ichiro Suzuki, Mount Everest, Ginza Station, and Hyde Park. One obvious difference, of course, is that many ordinary proper names, name people.

We looked mainly at names for stations, mountains and parks in this category and the things we have to say will accordingly reflect any bias this choice may have brought with it. However, that notwithstanding, in our consideration of these names some interesting features have been revealed.

We noticed for example in the case of stations and parks, that these things tend to be very clearly defined entities in the sense that they occupy precise locations in a town or city and hence have fixed boundaries. Moreover the position they occupy is necessarily relative to the things around them, the things on their borders. Statements of position thus become inter-dependent and inter-defined. Ginza Station, as we have noted on several occasions, is in an area called Ginza in Tokyo and it is positioned on two or three subway lines, where it stands in a fixed relationship to the stations around it. It has a clear identity, a clear geographical position and is tied to the community in which it finds itself.

Singleton Park in Swansea has similar features. It is not simply a park but a very specific one with a definite position in the geography of the city. Its position is defined in terms of its place in the city which includes its relationship with the places adjacent to it. Like the subway station just mentioned, it has a specific position within the geographical community.

Mountains or mountain peaks have a similar, if not slightly different, clarity of definition. Here the definition comes from a particular and individual projection into the skyline. Their presence is immediately obvious from the way they stand out from their surroundings, demanding, so it might seem, special attention. They are unique points that we mark out, or indeed which mark themselves out, because of this. They are the ultimate in landmarks.

In naming these objects - stations, parks and mountains - perhaps we reflect the fact that they we see them as definite individual entities that have a very clear and special position in their different environments. Their relationship to the things around them is precise and, in a sense, dependent. In being picked out and named in the way that they are, they become locked into or tied to the geographical community that houses them.

In a similar way ordinary proper names like 'Albert Einstein' reflect the fact that the name is given to a unique individual with a clear place in the scheme of things. This person, like all others, is the product of a process involving a contribution from two other people, one female the other male. It is quite common and perhaps usual in such cases for the resultant child to be given both a family and a personal name. This practice reflects the fact that the child springs from a particular, fixed, source and is named in relation to that source. Whatever mobility the child has does not militate against this fact.

Conclusions

We began this enquiry by asking if there was an explanation for naming expressions of a certain kind falling into two clear types: those like 'Ginza Station' which do not need the definite article and those like 'The Ginza Line' which emphatically do need it. Ordinary speakers of English seem to employ the distinction with ease and part of our concern in this paper has been to understand how and why this is possible. Two answers suggest themselves. People simply learn each and every name separately, on a case by case basis rather in the manner mapped out in grammar books: stations do not need the article, subway lines do, etc. Another possible answer is that there is something fundamental about the distinction between these naming expressions which the brain, as it were, grasps. This something, which might be a rule or guiding concept, would once acquired, form the basis for future employment of the distinction.⁶

As should be obvious by now, this paper has proceeded on the basis that the second of these answers might offer the more realistic way forward. And, indeed, in examining the similarities and

differences of different pairs of names that fall into the two basic categories under consideration, we came up with some interesting disparities:

Names requiring the article

1. The things named have no fixed coordinates in the sense that they cross boundaries or ordinary ways that we divide up the world. The Ginza line, for example, is not confined to one district in Tokyo but runs through many.
2. The things named are hence not tied to a particular area or community, geographically or otherwise. In the case of rivers, for example, this is because they run through various areas,. In the case of hotels and cinemas we find examples of like named things in many different parts of the country.
3. With regard to the things named, we generally seem more concerned with what they are than where they are. As such names which include the article seem to be arrived at by expanding or embellishing the simple noun phrase. A naming element such as ‘Grand’ or ‘Thames’ is added to the simple phrases, ‘the hotel’ and ‘the river’ to yield the names, ‘The Grand Hotel’ and ‘The Thames River’.

Names without the article

- 1) The entities so named are clearly defined in the sense that they all have clear peripheries and dimensions which may include a certain recognisable shape or badge of uniqueness, as in the case of mountains.
- 2) The positions of the things named tend to be fixed relative to other points within a certain area and as such they are restricted to that area. Their names often reflect this fact. Ginza station is in Ginza and is placed between Kyobashi and Shinbashi stations on a certain subway line. We might express this by saying that the ‘what’ and the ‘where’ go together.⁷ As such the things named tend to be highly recognizable individual elements or specific items whose position is fixed relative to other points within a particular community, social, geographical or otherwise.

In coming to these tentative conclusions about what underpins the use of these two different naming expressions we need to express some caution. Just because we have found that objects named with, or indeed without the article, have a few things in common, it doesn’t follow, necessarily, that these similarities actually form the basis for the use of a particular type of name. They may constitute necessary conditions for the use of a certain name type without actually being sufficient conditions. On the other hand, we may simply be recording contingent features of the category in question, in which case we will have fallen a long way short of our task. In the space between saying something true and actually providing an explanation there is a chasm of black hole proportions into which all weak arguments are destined to fall. It is perhaps too early to say whether ours is one of those or not but a preliminary question we need to ask of course is: Can we use the suggestions we have come up with in a practical way? Do these suggestions offer a basic guide to the use of the two types of name we have been looking at? Our response must be a tentative ‘Yes’. If we cannot answer this question wholeheartedly in the affirmative at this stage we should not be too alarmed, for what we have arrived at is perhaps the beginnings of an explanation for the distinction which further research may be able to confirm or deny. In so far as we have succeeded in that rather humble aim, we shall have achieved our objective.

⁶ Interestingly, an ordinary speaker of English is usually able to transfer the ability to form names in English to noun phrases in a foreign language. Thus an ordinary speaker of English quite naturally creates the sentence: ‘He teaches at Kawai Juku,’ rather than the corresponding one with the definite article, automatically seeing it as the name of one kind of thing rather than another. (Or as one kind of name rather than another, which is, importantly, different.)

⁷ Or, in the case of a name like ‘Singleton Park’, at the very least, have strong connections with the local community in virtue of being named after someone from the area.

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