Understanding a thing

some problems in Balinese naming.

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Commentary

This essay was written as part of my attempt over about a decade (coinciding roughly with the 1980s) to think through the potential relevance of philosophy to well established anthropological questions. Although there is a distinguished, if small, genealogy of anthropologists who have brought philosophy to bear in their work, most have been content to carry on regardless of the wider implications of their research. While I have found continental philosophers, perhaps most notably the so-called 'post-structuralists', congenial and pertinent, some of the debates in Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophy also offer opportunities for rethinking anthropological issues. Analytical philosophers might well dismiss my use of their work as misguided or plain wrong. However my concern is with how their arguments can be useful in cracking anthropological chestnuts. Some of the issues may even be of relevance to philosophers.[1]

How people name and categorize the natural world are old anthropological favourites. As elsewhere, I use ethnography from Bali to try here to broaden out a seemingly narrow anthropological topic by linking the naming of persons and species with ideas about what makes beings and objects what they are. Balinese categories have parallels with Aristotelian ideas of causation, which may be less surprising than might at first sight appear given the Indian philosophical aspects in Balinese thinking.[2] The different parts of the argument in this paper came about though in reverse order. During a fieldtrip in 1979-80, people were regularly invoking ideas of causation, which simply failed to fit my commonsense European expectations. While trying to sort out their uses of causal terms, I stumbled on the curious parallels with naming and so bounced these off people. Although it was I who articulated the connection, slightly to my surprise the usual response was that it made sense or it was obvious, but that they had not bothered to think about it that way. And, why should they? They had far more pressing concerns. If you were not a *Padanda* (a Brahman high priest), you would be laughed at and accused of arrogance.[3]

A reason for including this piece here is that it was one of my earliest attempts at exploring the disjunctures between Euro-American (for want of a better term) academic and Balinese thinking. The few scholars on Indonesia who have read it found that it helped to elucidate issues around the use of names not just in contemporary society, but in literature in Java as well as Bali (e.g. Worsley 2012). The present version was reworked soon after I gave a shorter version as a seminar paper to the University of London Intercollegiate Seminar in Anthropology in 1984. It must have been hard going for the audience.

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[1] Once, after a seminar, the distinguished philosopher Charles Taylor asked me whether Clifford Geertz's account of the person in Bali (see below) was correct. If it were, it would destroy much theorizing about the person. My response was equivocal. No: there were serious shortcomings in Geertz's ethnography. Yes: Geertz was correct in highlighting quite different ways of categorizing human subjects. Taylor is not alone. David Wiggins has drawn upon the same piece in his analysis of consciousness (1976: 155).

[2] While Sāṃkhya is the most obvious, for instance in idea about the constituents of all being and matter, some Nyāya categories are also in use: for example, the distinction between *upadana* and *nimitta*, roughly material and efficient causes.

The interesting question is how widely known such elements were and who used them under what circumstances prior to attempts to Indianize Balinese religion, which really took off in the 1980s. As I was living in a remote village, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the people with whom I was working knew little, if anything, about what was going on until television became widespread and with it religious broadcasting.

[3] Gramsci's remark comes to mind: 'All men are intellectuals…but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals' (1971: 9).

This paper needs an apology. It deals with Balinese notions of names, identity and knowledge rather than with their usage. So it is an essay in what one might call folk philosophy. Unfortunately the result is rather technical, evasive and exploratory. There are no juicy new naming systems (although *nauseanym* come to mind); time prevents my discussion being comprehensive and many questions are not fully answered; finally I am ill-equipped to discuss the underlying philosophical problems of reference, meaning and truth. To avoid some of the difficulties I shall try to keep close to the Balinese ethnography – whatever the problems entailed in translation and interpretation. Nonetheless I fear that I am poking my nose into realms where those who enter are advised to leave behind all hope.

Thinking about naming is hard, because the word 'name' has so many connotations, at least in English. Naming and use is not simply arbitrary, as Humpty-Dumpty pointed out to Alice. Names have associations quite apart from their reference. In her reflections on that most anthropologically exciting of topics, feud, Juliet rails at the gulf they create:

> 'T is but thy name that is my enemy.
> 'Thou art thyself, though not a Montague…
> What's in a name? That which we call a rose
> By any other name would smell as sweet (Romeo and Juliet II, ii 38-44).

It may equally mean role, reputation or essential nature. Quite which is intended in Caesar's remark?

> Yet if my name were liable to fear,
> I do not know the man I should avoid
> So soon as that spare Cassius. (He reads too much) Julius Caesar I, ii 192-4

So naming also involves figurative language. The change from Schicklgruber the house painter to Hitler the leader was intended as a change of identity (Burke 1973: 27). The link is metonymic (name for thing named). As transparent an epithet as 'Richard the Lionheart' needs two tropes – a synecdoche (part for whole) and internal metaphor (for a discussion/see Sapir 1977). Even in that most innocent of activities, giving seminars, references to authors may serve metonymically to ally us to schools of thought; while criticism of the argument has on occasions been intended for the person. These connotative and figurative aspects of naming hint at two dangers. As much is implicit, we may think our analyses to be in some way 'objective'; worse we may assume that other cultures recognize the same connections equally.

Names then, in English, do many things. They may also disguise in the verb 'mean' - what does X mean by…? – what X *understands* by saying/referring to something as opposed to what he *intends* by it. The first is semantic and cultural; the second instrumental and political. As this latter depends for its efficacy upon the former, I intend to dwell here on what one might loosely call the cultural 'logic' of naming. That is the way that Balinese ideas of what names, personal identity and so on are, constrain their use. My concern then is not so much with names, which I shall argue are too ambiguous in meaning, as in what naming does and implies.

It may be helpful to summarize my argument. I shall suggest that the English term 'name' is heavily laden with cultural presuppositions in use, and so analyses confuse *emic* and *etic* aspects. The existence of a single term implies, possibly

falsely, the existence of some 'system' to be discovered, often through the interpretation of features by peculiarly culturally biased standards. I shall suggest theoretical and ethnographic grounds for favouring the under-determination of theory by evidence. In other words, I shall be sceptical of arguments claiming uniquely valid interpretations, be they 'structural', 'hermeneutic' or whatever. Where alternative interpretations exist, recourse to indigenous theories and standards offer potentially useful criteria of evaluation. It will be suggested that such apparently fundamental notions as person (or even definition) may be open to radically different cultural analogies. Identity in Bali is defined for humans by reference to the body, while names serve two functions: denoting the body and describing its salient attributes. The two types of name do quite different tasks and raise wider questions of what they imply about what exists and what can be known truly. In short reference words imply a theory of the necessary existence of named objects, attributive names raise problems of what descriptions do. Evidence suggests that the requisite folk theories indeed exist, but that the English term name describes no coherent category. Support for this last view is obtained by lading at names in terms of general Balinese ideas of knowledge. The result is a revealing interpretation of the significance of names and suggests that other aspects of a person, notably in Bali the circumstances of his birth, may be critical. It would seem that ideas of identity, naming, and their interpretation in Bali may be radically different.

My suggestion that indigenous forms best be approached through indigenous theory needs testing itself. Many anthropological arguments quietly assume consistency or coherence to postulate interpretations (see Gellner's critique of Evans-Pritchard, 1970). My question here is rather the extent and ways in which ideas in fact do hang together. We shall see that Balinese appear, even at a village level from which all the present information comes, to have a highly comprehensive and distinctive answer to the problem of naming and identity. To the extent that Balinese seem to provide cultural answers to basic metaphysical questions, it seems legitimate to talk of their philosophy.

It may be useful to consider briefly some of the kinds of issue that underlie identity and naming. For instance is personal identity to be defined in terms of the body, memory, personality or what? Or is there some 'self' apart from these? Which of these is it that is named, and if they change must names too? Is naming invisible, but postulated, beings like gods the same as persons or animals? Are personal names and species names the same or not? Only the elasticity of our commonsense notion of names makes such problems appear to disappear.

Philosophically naming is often regarded in terms of the problem of how words can mean. Two types of theory are relevant here: correspondence and use theories. In the former, words (or sentences) gain meaning, by being related to things, or images, concepts or pictures of things and states. The emphasis is on the proper, *de jure*, use of words. Opposed to this are use theories which locate meaning in *de facto* use in social contexts. It was the broad use of a representational theory of the first kind, which Foucault has argued gave coherence to thought in the Classical Age (1970). As we shall see, how radical the differences are may be questioned. Nonetheless there is sufficient controversy to make the simple anthropologist wish for Omar Khayyam's 'grape that can with Logic absolute, the two-and-seventy jarring Sects confute'!

Two aspects of correspondence theories, which are the closest to commonsense, are worth reflection. If words have meaning by standing for, or naming, something, the catch is that to name something which does not exist is meaningless. So how can we refer to things, or people which no longer exist, or even have changed substantially? One object or person may have radically different descriptions which questions how far identity is defined by referring, as in Frege's famous example of the morning star and the evening star both being Venus (1952: 56-78). Can one speak of Dr. Jekyll when describing Mr. Hyde's nocturnal habits? To escape these problems Russell, in his theory of descriptions, suggested that most names, including personal, did not denote (unlike logically proper names) but were descriptions based on selected attributes, and so need not refer to actual things. My favourite example is: 'The King of France is bald.' This ostensible, if unflattering, reference should, it is argued, properly read: 'There is a unique individual ruling France and if someone rules France he is bald', which separates a statement about existence and a conditional description.

Whether it refers or describes, naming present problems. A new attempt to solve these last bears directly on the Balinese data. Traditional theories of classification and meaning depend on a distinction between describing (connoting, intension) and referring (denoting, extension). Sets of attributes, that is properties, are opposed to those things in the world which possess such attributes. Personal names may be viewed as class names with one member. To my great delight, phrased this way, Wittgenstein's family resemblances, or polythetic classification, merely substitutes the criterion of a cluster for a set. Kripke, who argued this (e.g. 1977), has tried to justify the old view that names of persons and natural kinds refer (that is they are rigid designators in all possible worlds, so descriptions become necessary but *a posteriori* to a particular world). To do so he has to account for names of non-existent things. His answer is to focus upon the initial act of labelling, or baptism, as authoritative. We shall see that the themes of reference, description and baptism and the problem of what exists are explicit in Balinese naming. My sad apology for a discussion on naming theory is not so much to invoke western philosophy as to hint at the sort of issues the more reflective may muse over in some societies while the anthropologist is counting the harvest.

A convenient starting point for questions of naming and identity in Bali is Clifford Geertz's *Person, Time and Conduct in Bali*. He suggests that there are six 'orders of person-definition' which identify a person as a unique individual (1973: 368). These are: personal names (autonyms); birth order names (fratronyms); kinship terms; teknonyms; status titles (caste titles); and public titles (or offices). The set defines personhood, or selfhood, and in them 'Balinese notions of personal identity are embodied' (1973: 389). In public office, for instance, men

> …do not merely occupy a role. They become, in the eyes of themselves and those around them, absorbed into it. They are truly public men, men for whom other aspects of personhood take symbolically at least, a secondary position… They say that their role is of the essence of their true selves (1973: 386).

So names serve paradoxically to depersonalize by blunting as far as possible the sense of temporality by encasing unique persons within standard moulds (1973: 390).

Leaving the more general issues for a moment, there are one or two points of interest. The analyst's set of concepts is rich: name, title, person(hood), self(hood), subject, individual, unique, role, essence, true self. It is not clear which terms if any are translated, nor how, from the Balinese. In the extended quote above, the conjunction seems Fortesian between role (not name) and self; and the conclusion requires either that words contain the essence of a thing, or that there is privileged access to native 'true' thoughts and intentions. As we shall see, both are questionable and with them the assumption of an easily available perfect interpretation. Finally the types of name are treated as a set. This ignores both differences between address and reference, and other terms like nicknames (despite any ambiguity I prefer the term to some ghastly neologism like 'idionym'). Clearly what the analyst regards as needing explanation will affect its form.

This is not the place for a detailed critique of the ethnography on Balinese naming. Such a study would have to encompass the evidence both for varying evaluation of the implications of each form, and the dynamics of choice between alternatives. A few remarks may help, however, to clarify the types of names Geertz mentions. Personal names are 'arbitrarily coined nonsense syllables' which form the 'rudiments of a completely unique cultural identity' (1973:369). The gradual switch to other forms is necessary to suppress this identity. Unfortunately for Geertz's 'name' as a hermeneut all the nonsense syllables turn out to be common Balinese words, and not unique to one person either.[4] Rather than read questionable interpretations into autonyms, it might be more use to examine such topics as the cultural significance of sequence order, especially the emphasis on first and last in widely different contexts.

The idea of series re-appears in birth order names. All offspring of a male (not a union) are distinguished by temporal order of birth in a series repeated after four members among low castes and five among high. To Geertz these appellations are completely contentless (1973:371) as they define no real classes, nor are the extension of any particular attribute. So 'physically men come and go as the ephemerae they are, but socially the dramatic personae remain eternally the same' (1973: 372). I might add three points. Four and five represent the ideal numbers of children for low and high castes respectively in one view; more serious the distinction *even : odd* parallels that of *complete : incomplete* and *human : divine* as part of a complex set of dual analogies. The order of birth determines the differentiation of the family, for succession and inheritance, and so domestic authority, pass to a single heir – roughly by primogeniture for high, and ultimogeniture for low castes. While babies are named by sequence of birth, not

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[4] Geertz added: 'With respect to ones' forebears, including one's parents, it is in fact sacrilegious to use them' (1973: 380). Unfortunately his description of personal names and their use in Bali is wildly inaccurate as a general summary. Far from being hidden, at meetings in many villages they are bellowed out across the village square during roll calls for all to hear. Geertz read as culturally unique to Bali an issue of etiquette across much of the Malay world, namely that it is impolite to refer to superiors and seniors by their full name especially in public. As to so doing being sacrilegious, this presupposes Balinese work with a notion of the sacred, which in effect they did not until they imported the notion and the Dutch term, *sakral*, during the 1980s under a government-driven programme to bring Balinese religion in line with the major world religions. In short, such interpretations are exercises in rewriting someone else's 'culture'.

uncommonly names are realigned later to fit the circumstances. Whether fratronyms are contentless or not depends upon the interpretation.

Teknonyms are interesting. According to Geertz, it is procreation not legal union which is important in marriage and so is signalled by a new name. The resulting system grades people by generation into a four class model of children, active adults, elders and the nearly-dead, teknonymy ensuring progressive anonymity of personal names and so increasing depersonalization in an unperishing present (1973: 379). As Feeley-Harnik has argued for the Sakalava of Madagascar, teknonymy may be understood in terms of males moving from the insignificance of descendant to the dominant position of ancestor (1978). I would not enjoy the task of arguing that the Sakalava interpretation is irrelevant in Bali. There is also an annoying lack of fit from Geertz's point of view between teknonymy and kinship, were this to be allowed as part of the system. The function of teknonymy according to Geertz is precisely to eliminate knowledge and even the possibility of reference to the dead. If this interpretation is correct, it is unclear why the Balinese have specific reference terms for the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh generations of ascendants.

As public titles were effectively discussed earlier, let me finish with the problem of rank names. Whether the Balinese have status or caste has been discussed elsewhere; so I would note here that Geertz's emphasis is again on depersonalization. This is so because caste titles are not 'completely coincident' with the actual distribution of wealth, power and esteem. To Geertz this omission is sufficient evidence to conclude that the 'diversity of human talent and the workings of historical process are regarded as superficial phenomena' (1973: 384). We reach the crunch. What is not named within the 'system' as defined by the analyst must therefore not exist culturally. How names could ever fit in this way is unclear, especially if the world is seen as changing (cf. Gellner 1970 on, how concepts may allow for change. Names may present different problems.). The choice of criteria predetermines the interpretation. If the attribute were purity, not power, the reading would be: quite different. As it is stands, it is not sure whose notions of power and wealth are invoked. If it is not the Balinese, one wonders why their names should fit some future observer's *etic* model. The argument is strongly crypto-Whorfian both in its arbitrary and privileged use of names, and in its rigid theory of the relation of word, connotation and meaning.

My aim is not so much to criticize Geertz's arguments as to highlight some of the assumptions we make in discussing naming. These emerge in an elegant play on Lévi-Strauss's exertions among the Penan and French fauna by Geoffrey Benjamin, who analyses Temiar names as a structure (1968). Kin terms appropriately are dismissed and he contrasts what he reads as the implication of teknonyms and death names with those of fratronyms. The former state a relationship only to declare it abolished and so, by musical analogy, *en clé de mort*; the latter isolates the emerging unit of siblings through which society continues, and so *en clé de vie*. In a final resolution of the disjuncture between Cambridge and Paris, the two keys become an opposition between the principles of descent or filiation, and the unity of the sibling group. The contrasts are as informative as the similarities. Structure is not bound by English folk ideas of names; choice of data is clearly realized to affect analysis; and the interpretation remains a possibility not a necessity. Both face problems in spelling out how names mean and so the interpretations seem to depend on

predilection. You pays your money and you takes your choice. Both tend to conflate indigenous and analysts' terms and concepts. Naming is not an easy subject.

The problem of interpretation is worth a little more attention. For instance teknonymy is found in many societies. Are we to assume that it permits of only one valid interpretation in all? The evidence suggests that, while structure constrains possibilities, it hardly determines meaning. Lakalava and Balinese manage to read teknonymic systems differently. Connotations may also vary: do teknonyms stress generation or generative status? Among the Land Dayak, childless couples may take their teknonym from a dog. In Bali, where the emphasis is on socially recognized reproduction, the Dayak solution is unthinkable. So far one system has yielded an emphasis on age, generation, generative capacity, descent or filiation, the dominance of ancestors and the depersonalization of adults. It may be wise to distinguish here between collective representations, often inherited, such as names; and the range of culturally approved means of connecting them (Needham 1972: 157-9). The latter, of course, allows for change. Pragmatic philosophers, notably Quine, have cogently argued this scepticism as to the possibility of privileged access to hermeneutic truth. Briefly he has suggested that in the situations faced by anthropologists and others, we have no access to the true intentions, whatever those are, of any culture. If the 'hard' sciences suffer a problem in choosing between alternative theories which each explain empirical events, interpretation in anthropology is still more fraught (Quine 1960; Hookway 1978).

Whatever ultimately its merits, indigenous theory helps reduce the field. Most analyses confuse native and observers' models and the resulting ambiguity is such as to make Mary Douglas and her pangolin a paragon of categorical rectitude. It is easy to miss the cultural assumptions underlying our own knowledge and to confuse these with 'science'. The work since Kuhn on implicit metaphors should be enough to raise qualms in the most Popperian breast. While looking at indigenous ideas may help, it is not in itself a complete analysis. Nor is the legitimacy of such theory decreed by fiat. The aim of this paper is to see how far Balinese ideas are organized, and on what basis. How far other societies may differ is a matter for further study.

The Balinese live in a Heraclitean world. Everything visible changes. It is not that no man can step into the same river twice but worse: that the man is no longer the same. Coping with identity and reference is therefore something of a problem. How to identify a changing entity would appear to be a difficulty. The Balinese answer seems to be in a transformational theory of identity and a theory of reference that allows for redefinition. I shall discuss these in turn.

As I have talked on Balinese ideas about identity at too much length elsewhere, I shall be brief. Personal identity refers basically to the body and its change. As villagers note, memory and intention need have little continuity, while the body does.[5] Consciousness is in effect marginal as a definition. Humans are conceived in

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[5]   So Balinese villagers' answers to Shoemaker's test is perhaps not surprising. The test is to determine whether personal identity is more associated with the mind or the body. In an imaginary experiment, two people have their brains switched during an operation. It is assumed that cognition, memory and mentally-based are located in the brain. The question after the operation is: who is who? Balinese tended to opt for the body not the mental faculties, which they viewed as highly changeable.

markedly functional terms. There are the organs of sense, the *pañca-buddhīndiya*[6]: sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing. The equivalent organs of action, the *pañca-karmendriya*, are the capacities of hands, feet, stomach, genitals and buttocks. Higher-level theories of human ability (such as that of the *triguṇa*, the three constituents of the world and humans) tend to deal with the proper balance of senses. This may sound very Indian, but attains a distinctly Balinese flavour. Ideals of perfection, and emphasis on the soul, tend to be re-rendered. Asceticism is widely considered fanatical, and the notion of personal identity being continued through some soul problematic. So names do not define identity in any simple way. 'The responsive 'I' is linked to the body. As an informant put it on being asked about reincarnation: 'When I die, I die.'

To what extent is it useful to talk of personal identity cross-culturally? Lukes (1973), Rorty (1976) and Dumont (1977) have shown the peculiar development of the European idea of person or self, and the place of philosophy in its definition.[7] On another score Marriott (1976, following Schneider 1968, 1972; and Inden 1976) has questioned whether the applicability of the notion of the 'individual' in Indian metaphysics (1976). In the enthusiasm for phenomenological realism, no one seems to have considered what happens if the experiencing self is not quite what, or as important as, its proponents might have wished. In Bali the lexical field is fairly simple. Terms distinguish gods from humans and animals. While ideas of humanity are developed, the term for person, *anak*, tends to be a poor designator. The personal pronoun 'I' receives more cultural attention. There is a range of terms for 'I'. *Tiang* (in middle Balinese, *titiang* in high) also refers a upright pillar or post (its sense in Old Javanese).[8] The synonyms are *iraga* (high) or *awak* (low) which both denote the body. How much connotations of these various Balinese terms overlap with those of English is open to question.

In fact the definition of the problem of personal identity is a peculiarly ethnocentric one. As this paper is not directed mainly towards the problem, I hope I shall be forgiven if I question the question the question. In an amusing article, Parfit (1971) has challenged the view that to talk of personal identity is coherent at all. Identity strictly implies complete sameness. So continuity of personhood is a matter of degree (so also opening the whole question of differences of degree and kind). To ask whether I am the same person tomorrow is of the same order as asking if Britain is the same country in ten years' time. What is being asked is a question about survival and how 'I' now is continuous with, or connected to, 'me' in the future. We have confused identity and continuity. Now, if 'self' is not some perduring entity, it follows that any doctrine based on such a presupposition deserves reassessment. Unfortunately this includes much twentieth century thought! An obvious candidate – apart from schools of self-expression – are theories of self-interest. If self is changing, whose interests are at stake – self present or self future?

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[6] The spelling and definitions of Sanskrit and Kawi (Old Javanese) words are taken from Zoetmulder 1982.

[7] Charles Taylor's work on the person was published after this paper was written, but it underwrites my argument nicely (1985a, 1985b).

[8] The association may be carried quite far. When aristocrats married women of significantly lower caste, reputedly the bride was married to a dressed- up pillar in the male's compound, the bridegroom being absent.

If personhood is problematic, so is defining it. Before we turn to naming, what is implied in defining deserves comment. As Burke noted (1973), the essence of a thing is often phrased in terms reminiscent of Aristotle's entelechy by its fulfillment. The focus on the end is reflected in our terminology of define, determine and so on. The developmental metaphor seems to have become spatial over time, as the bounded limits presumably within which a thing's nature is essentially captured. The Balinese image is quite different. One of the most persistent themes in Java and Bali is that of diffusion and concentration, represented spatially as presence surrounding an ideal centre. Just as kingdoms are defined by the court – and ultimately the being of the king – so kin groups have origins and so forth. Definition may therefore be represented in terms of degrees of intensity rather than a spatial metaphor. Knowledge is easily included as the variety of modes from weak diffuseness to concentrated presence. The extent to which such key, if partly implicit, metaphors colour our thinking tends to be underestimated.

After such murky waters, Balinese ideas of naming seem at first refreshingly simple. What is crucial is that there is no equivalent to the simple English. Words, *keruna*, include the class of *adan* (its importance is reflected in differentiation by language level: *wasta* in middle Balinese; *pesèngan* in elevated usage) and a less clear-cut set of *parad*. Autonyms and species terms are *adan*; all other forms of name are widely regarded as *parad* or *parab* (which is also an Old Javanese, hereafter Kawi, term for name), the latter, curiously, sometimes being reserved for nicknames. One way that Balinese villagers explained it to me is by homonymic analogy with *parid*, the remains of eaten food, or the residue of offerings to gods. (Converting an external analogy into an internal) *adan* becomes the vital, necessary part, or loosely essence, as against what is contingent or inessential.

Sari : *Parid*		*Adan* : *Parad*	
The best or most useful/valuable part of something	What remains of food after offering; what is contingent	Autonym; species name	Other personal names

Adan form a simple class, whereas whether parad extends to kin terms and so on depends a little on the speaker and the context. Two points are important. First all humans and natural kinds have *adan*. Here the relation of word and object is simple: such names refer to things that exist. The Balinese term is *nuding*, to point. *Parad*, by contrast, *nerangang*, explain, clarify or describe; or *nuwekang raos*, sharpen speech and give it a point, make it effective. Second, humans and species have only one reference name; the number of other names is open. It is sometimes unclear whether gods, who often have multiple designations, have autonyms or descriptions. The significance of this uncertainty will, I hope, be clear shortly. So, on the account I was generally given, the Balinese distinguish sharply between reference and description in naming.

The relationship between what for convenience I shall call proper names and designations may be more evident by a brief look at Balinese ideas of truth. The most common statement about any kind of name was that it must be true, *wiakti*. To exaggerate or invent is not clever insult, it is simple lying (*mogbog*) and so, in

effect, without meaning.[9] One must be particularly sure never to be inaccurate in designating or describing enemies.[10] (One may do almost anything else to them!) With close friends more latitude is tolerated in jest. Nicknames, for instance, must describe actual features of a person, usually bodily ones. In this sense such names refer directly to personal identity as it is understood. The connection is reinforced by beliefs about *karma pala*, the law of the consequences of actions, so that what people do (but also what is done to them) are held to affect the person – in Bali the effects typically being evident in the body. By extension serious misdeeds are held to lead to congenital defects on rebirth. Naming is therefore consistent with their ideas of personal identity.

Proper names and designations may be linked conceptually in more than one way. The most obvious is that discussed. Proper names refer and designations describe or connote. People are on occasions called or spoken about using designations. A potentially intriguing connection between names may be made at the level of statements about truth. The easiest way is to step back for a moment. At first sight Balinese designations appear a mixed bag. Fratronyms and teknonyms are relational, as are kin terms. That is they do not strictly describe attributes but relationships. Public office is a corporation sole; while caste may be viewed as attributional, substantive or relational. In fact, as we saw the Balinese can interpret these terms in different modes. In calling heirs 'last-born', or politically active grandfathers 'father of…X' they convert relational terms into connotative ones. At another level, however, the designations form a single group. Several terms *prima facie* express necessary truths. Any child, simply by virtue of being born, is placed in a birth order and is a son or daughter. It is a necessary and inevitable concomitant of birth. So, by the rules of caste naming, is any caste title. (I do not want to deal with office at length here. I would merely note that however democratic incumbency is in theory, in practice there is a strong bias in favour of succession by a fixed heir.) Teknonymy is the exception. It is not strictly necessary. People die; or fail to marry or adopt. If, as Balinese are prone to argue, life without reproduction is useless (*sing maguna*), teknonyms seem an instance of entelechy. The stress is in fact not upon relationship but reproduction. A teknonym is not withdrawn on a child's death. In this way, teknonyms refer to a truth about all proper adult Balinese. My emphasis on necessity is clear in contrast to defining a person through marriage. 'Wife of X' is not a necessarily true description, as marriages break up. No subsequent births or deaths affect a Balinese teknonym: e.g. 'Father of Y'. This last section is speculative. It does however suggest that Balinese use of naming reflects a concern with truth, particularly with what we might call necessary, rather than contingent, truths.

Let us see how far this discussion helps explain the use of names. Every child is named on the day that the end of its umbilicus falls off (within five days of birth).

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[9] This rather stark and odd-looking assertion makes more sense when considered in the light of Balinese theories of meaning, discussed in my *Beyond the Whorfs of Dover* (n.d.).

[10] My guess is that this concern may underlie a singular feature of Balinese writing about the past, *babad*. There is often a singular compunction about presenting what happened in terms that avoid value judgements as far as possible. So, for example, in political conflicts both sides may broadly agree to what is written as an accurate, if minimal, statement of what happened, although they are likely of course disagree profoundly about its interpretation.

The reason seems to be that, with links to the mother finally broken, the infant is notionally independent. The rite is performed in the kitchen by the fire. There are conceptual links to Brahma as fire and creation, and to the hearth, which is said to resemble a vagina. Reeds are taken, the tops wrapped in cotton and soaked in coconut oil. To the base is attached a small section of palm leaf inscribed with a name. The number of stems (*linting*) varies with the child's order of birth in descending number, the series repeating after four births (the maximum for firstborn is reduced however for fifth). Names are taken from one or two series of 12 items. The ideal is a literary series of qualities, such as honest, faithful etc. The other uses beautiful flowers. (Each name is associated with a direction, the order running anti-clockwise, that normally linked with death.) The stems are lit and the sequence in which they burn out observed. Only first and last are taken. The child's autonym is then a matter of family choice. They may take either the whole word, a contraction of the initial letter, or convert the word into an anagram. Only those words should be used, as 'it is Brahma who made a gift of the name'. In a sense we seem to be dealing with personal names as a play of possibility.

This connection needs stressing. Gods are the source of most power, knowledge and happiness. Their relation to humans, however, is widely understood in terms of gift as a kernel, jewel or *raos wayah* (mature speech, the meaning of which is not immediately obvious).[11] The image stresses divine omniscience, while allowing humans to fit injunctions to the circumstances and personal predilection. In naming it is no use calling some hare-lipped brat *Bagus*, handsome. The notion of what is fitting (*manut*) mediates between man and god. This may help to explain the significance of homonymic associations. Most Balinese conceive of similarity of sounds between words as one of the means to knowledge. These seem to be thought of as a gift hidden in language, which humans may fit into their own path to understanding the world.

Does this account, help in explaining the use of names? I am not convinced that all use can be explained by any general rules. Instrumental concerns modify semantic ideals; villages and kin groups vary in their preference; idiosyncrasy of style may be cultivated; villagers were far from unanimous as to the connotations of different forms of address. Varying use mostly concerns address not reference. People are generally referred to by their proper names. Much of the avoidance in address should perhaps, be seen as part of the wider context of politeness, or refinement. All direct speech is *nguda*, young or raw. It reflects the thoughts (and so the character at that time) of the speaker.

One ethnographic possibility might seem to contradict my argument. This is when people change proper names. This is uncommon but not unknown. When a man called I Béjo was shot accidentally by guerillas and shortly after survived a serious fall, he publicly announced that he was renaming himself *Sadiya* (good fortune). When another young man fell some 200 feet down a gorge and survived unhurt, he was merely nicknamed *Kuat* (interesting, the term is Indonesian). It was

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[11] The antithesis is *raos nguda*, immature speech, which is perhaps fairly self-explanatory. It is when you speak directly or bluntly without inflecting what you say according to the circumstances and the particular addressees. There is a third form, *raos makulit*, 'veiled speech'. It is used by skilled speakers or when you wish only the more thoughtful members of your audience to understand a second hidden reference.

deemed not extreme enough. One family all changed their names and was much ridiculed. As I understand it, most villagers feel that names should fit circumstances. So, if quite abnormal events occur – especially surviving likely death, a sort of new life – changing one's name is an appropriate way to reflect this. To do so summarily is arrogant or ignorant. This does not in theory preclude naming in anticipation, but with a Balinese emphasis on truth it was rare. It is not that names cause misfortune; they should however be fitting.

Now all this ethnography may be very pretty, but the more sceptical may be wondering if it amounts to more than that someone somewhere has odd customs. So in the last minutes I would like to examine critically how inquiry into indigenous metaphysical ideas may help.[12] So far I have dwelt on the link between names and objects, and truth. Let me turn rapidly to the problem of names and existence; then finally to naming and knowledge.

At the beginning I noted that western philosophers have puzzled over the problem of denoting non-existent objects. This may throw a new light on two otherwise curious features of Balinese ethnography. There is an explicit view that everything that exists has a name and conversely everything that is named exists. (I leave aside the questions about what has ceased to exist, which trouble Balinese.) This raises interesting questions about the status of non-manifest beings like spirits or gods. For those who like their meat linguistic, the term for exist is *ada* (in low Balinese), while the word for name is *adan*. The Balinese language uses the Eastern Indonesian genitive suffix '-n'. So 'the existing of X' and 'the name of X' are either perfect homonyms or the same word. In Bali, both semantically and metaphysically, to utter the *adan* of something is to affirm its existence.

Let us turn finally to the connection between naming and knowledge. If George Peter Murdoch had had a column for type and degree of philosophical bent, the Balinese would have scored well under 'epistemologically preoccupied' (although that does not exclude other preoccupations). Topics as diverse as natural classification, ageing, power and divinity are commonly portrayed in terms of access to knowledge. My section on ontology was brief because the villagers were far more interested in the difficulties of knowing what existed (and so potentially what you can do with the results) than in speculating about existence. This is combined with a pedantry about what one knows in daily discourse ('I know that I have heard'; 'I know that X said that Y said' and so on), which any analytical philosopher might envy.[13]

Knowing is a matter of degrees and this is significant for understanding naming. The terminology is revealing. To know (in low Balinese) is *tawang*, which is also 'sky' in Balinese and Kawi. It carries connotations of the visual metaphor of clarity. The high form *uning* (Kawi *uniŋa*, to pay attention to) has a homonym *ening*, which is literally 'clear, transparent' (cf. Kawi 'pureness', 'clearness', 'transparency'). Designations, you may recall *nerangang*, explain or elucidate (from the root

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[12] My sense of metaphysics is taken here from Collingwood 1940.

[13] Foreign anthropologists and others often attribute confusions or seeming mistakes to Balinese not understanding exactly what is required by way of answers to their questions. Far more confusion and plain error though is probably due to outsiders imposing their epistemology on Balinese without bothering to think or inquire first.

connoting clear, transparent). In contrast there are two distinct themes in the terminology for understanding. The word for meaning in sentences, propositions and descriptions is *arti* (cf. *artha* and *maŋartha*, 'to explain the meaning, interpret' in Kawi). However the primary meaning of *artha* is 'aim, purpose'. So the verb *ngarti* (*ngerti*) may be either to understand the meaning or to grasp the purpose. Interestingly the transitive form *ngartiang* covers the partly separate English domains of 'translate' (perhaps better 'paraphrase, 'explicate') and 'interpret'. The other term is from *resep*, 'penetrate or permeate into the deepest part', 'absorb', but also 'savour' or 'feel deeply'.[14] So *ngaresep* can be understood in the sense of 'to permeate' or 'to be permeated by'. *Ngresepang* is to cause to permeate into the minds of others. Suitably there is no noun form. In daily usage *resep* goes beyond knowing what something is to appreciating the full significance of statements uttered or someone's purpose in saying something. The aim of wiser Balinese is to recognize the complex meanings or purposes (*arti*) in mature speech (*raos wayah*).

The dichotomy between personal names and designations may now make more sense. Knowing a personal name one merely knows *who* that person is. To know *about* a person, one must know his or her designations as well. It is appropriate therefore that such designations are effectively restricted to the face-to-face community. Beyond that, personal names alone are known.[15] So the two types of name broadly fit two kinds of knowledge that Balinese recognize, because denotation and connotation here parallel the distinction between knowing and understanding. Unless one appreciates Balinese ideas of knowledge, it is hard to make full sense of naming. One aim of this paper was to assess the evidence for something approaching indigenous philosophical thinking. As I try to show below, if we do not allow for something like a body of philosophical terms and their uses, we risk condemning Balinese to exoticism or plain confusion.[16]

In the last minutes therefore I wish to explore some of the implications of the apparent link between naming and knowing. There is a fair measure of consensus among villagers that in order to say one knows about, or understands, something five more or less standard questions must be answered. (Suitably the inquiry is to *uning indik kewèntenan*, to know about the existence/state/circumstances of something.) The full form of inquiry is given in Table 1, and is used for asking about a previously unencountered object (e.g. bicycle, mechanical thresher, television etc.). Where some knowledge already exists, the order is changed accordingly. Those with a background in philosophy or the European classics will recognize that last four terms are very close to Aristotle's four types of cause. To Balinese, however, both names and places belong to the set as well.

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[14] Zoetmulder noted that in Kawi *resep* is 'a two-sided word, lit. 'entering, penetrating' and 'entered, penetrated' (1982: 1543). Its senses are complicated.

[15] At the time of writing, few Balinese had ventured far beyond ten kilometers from the research village. This changed dramatically after the 1980s with improved transport and communications. So the use of names has changed accordingly.

[16] As the table below and its explication make clear, Balinese draw on an extensive range of Sanskrit and Kawi terms, many with clear philosophical connotations, in daily life. I am not suggesting that Balinese wander round philosophizing, which would attract ridicule. Nor are they entirely ignorant of the explanatory frameworks available. The interesting question is: who makes use of these, how, when and why?

Table 1: The Relationship between Knowing and Naming

Balinese Term	Aristotelian Cause	Translation	Example (Motorcycle)	Extension to Names (of all kinds)
Adan	-	Personal or species name (reference)	Honda	Autonym (*Adan*)
Kerana[17]	Efficient	Immediate cause	Made by workers in factory	Circumstances of birth esp. calendrical combination and place
Guna[18]	Final	Use (Use value)	To travel 1. quickly 2. conveniently etc.	Teknonym or Caste title
Lakar[19]	Material	Constituents	Metal, glass, rubber etc.	*Kanda 'mpat* (the four mystic siblings)
Rupa[20]	Formal	Form/shape	Like bicycle with engine	Gender indicator (I/Ni) Caste title
Genah[21]	-	Place/location	Where found (if relevant) e.g. in towns, on roads	Fratronym

Naming and knowing are, at least formally, different activities. Reference is part of knowledge, and knowledge is required for reference and description; but the domains are not necessarily equated. As names are often stated explicitly to be to do with knowledge, it is instructive to carry a clearly available possibility to its conclusion. So what happens if we ask about a person, as if he or she were an unknown object? I take the questions in the order easiest for exposition. A person's *adan* is simply their autonym. *Rupa* – form or shape – is in the first instance the gender indicator, I or Ni, for (non-high caste) male and female respectively. As the Balinese hold that caste is evident in appearance (note again the corporeal dimension of personal identity), it might also be included here. *Guna*, here 'use', is perhaps less difficult than might be imagined. A childless adult is said to have no use – *tanpa guna*. Equally high castes according to some brahmanical theories have more *guna* than low. This might account for the restriction of teknonyms to low castes (great *guna* is incommensurably superior) and titles to high castes. Significantly high caste persons whose circumstances resemble low are generally

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[17] *Karaṇa* in Sanskrit is 'the act of making, producing' and in Kawi 'cause, reason'.

[18] *Guṇa* in Sanskrit is 'quality, attribute, property' and in Kawi is 'use, employment'.

[19] *Lakar* is Kawi for wood as a building material. Whether it has a broader sense in Kawi not noted by Zoetmulder or not, I do not know.

[20] *Rūpa* in Sanskrit and Kawi is 'outward appearance', form, shape, figure'.

[21] *Genah* is 'place, location' in Kawi, as in Balinese.

given part-teknonyms (suffix of father, grandfather, mother etc.). In some respects the Balinese series is incomplete. It is often necessary to know the place of something. *Genah*, place, is widely used as a synonym for *undag-undag lekad*, birth order (literally 'steps').[22] So far I hope the exercise is suggestive at least.

The remaining two questions are less clear. What do raw materials and efficient causes have to do with names? The short answer is nothing obvious. With ingenuity the remaining designations can, of course, be made to fit. There is a simpler answer, however. Designations are not a system to Balinese; and on other grounds I could question whether we are obliged to treat kin terms and public office in the same manner as other descriptions. If we open the field, the problem is transformed. To ask about a person's *lakar*, constituents, raw ingredients, elements, is to refer to the blood, amniotic fluid and so on that accompanied his or her body (so identity) into the world. Now the amniotic fluid, blood, *vernix caseosa* and afterbirth are a child's four mystical siblings, which guard him or her from birth until the last rites for the body (Hooykaas 1973:3). The set may also be identified with the *Pañcamahābhūta*, the five elements of which all existing forms are combinations. These *kanda 'mpat* are of great importance in many circumstances, most notably they form the basis of much supernatural practice. It would be an imposition of Western categories to see the atomized individual as the basic conceptual entity to the Balinese. The *kanda 'mpat* are a necessary concomitant of any being with an autonym.

Balinese ideas of causation are complex and cannot be discussed in detail here. *Kerana* usually refers to antecedent events, narrowly understood. The *kerana* of a toothache is what one experienced to bring it on. That is the circumstances surrounding the start of an event. So *kerana* applied to a person is an inquiry into the circumstances of birth. This is not as odd as it seems. Let us dispose of kings first. Any ruler of consequence can be recognized before his birth by amazing signs – his mother's urine turns red hot, her abdomen glows at night and so forth. The day of birth allows the Balinese imagination to run riot. Lesser mortals must be content with having a particular configuration of calendrical signs. What counts as auspicious is in many instances not invariant but a function of a person's birth dates. What is good is uniquely fitting to that person.[23] Such horoscopic systems are found in many Asian societies. So I suspect their inclusion as a relevant part of reflections on personal identity is not really surprising.

One last problem may now be clearer. It is the stress on birth and naming. As the Balinese fall short of the strict standards of collective effervescence laid down by Durkheim, it is unclear why naming rites should be so developed. If names are labels, then following Kripke, the original act of baptism is vital, as it is in Bali.

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[22] Perhaps one of the aspects of Balinese society most under-estimated by foreign researchers is the importance of place in the sense of the unique history and quality of a specific location. Although particular places come to have stories and attributes attached to them because humans have frequented them over the centuries, others such as some ravines, caves etc. are generally avoided because they have grown the reputation of being dangerous. Where you were born and where you live are part of what makes you who you are.

[23] Stupidly, I calculated the Balinese calendrical combination from my date of birth in the presence of some villagers instead of privately. In both main kinds of week and the month, I fell under the God Brahma, who is associated with fire – and anger! I have never been allowed to forget my cosmological status as an angry young man.

Something else suggests itself. Myths often recount the arrival of culture heroes who, rather than setting off to explore life's virgin possibilities, devote themselves instead to naming places, species and even their uses (in some Balinese accounts, charmingly, the flora and fauna come and name themselves).[24] Who named the culture heroes is another matter.

Let me conclude briefly. Here I have tried to show that Balinese have more or less explicitly developed theories of naming. The logical articulation with metaphysical ideas is sufficient to suggest that to talk of indigenous philosophy is not entirely a misnomer. How far this is itself merely another variety of interpretation remains to be discussed. It may be that the notion of interpretation is too vague to be useful, despite the blandishments of a voguish 'interpretive anthropology'. At times the search for the 'true' meaning seems itself to fall into the trap of assuming that all descriptions must have a reference. The result is not so much a growing consensus, but rather a spawning of rival claims with little critical evaluation.

If it can be shown that they are workably coherent, indigenous criteria, it may at least offer one possible alternative mode of analysis. If nothing else, a more reflective approach suggests the extent to which the observers' cultural presuppositions severely bias their interpretations at the expense of the understanding of the peoples whose thinking they are supposed to be explicating. At times I have a ghastly suspicion that much anthropological interpretation – including I hasten to add my own – is fundamentally unsound. If this piece has encouraged you to reflect on the use of familiar categories as self-evident, then the exercise will not have been completely *tanpa guna*, useless.

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[24] A well known example is the Taru Pramana, a text which lists the names of species of plant and their medical and other uses. I discuss the implications of the apparent agency of plants in *The patience of plants* 1990.

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