

THE REFERENCE OF A PROPER NAME: ON KRIIPKE'S NAMING THEORY

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BASED ON HIS modal logic theory, Kripke puts forward a new naming theory, which we can call historical-causal naming theory. In this paper, I shall first recapitulate his main points, then point out some problems resulting from this theory, and finally pose a tentative solution of these problems.

I

In his famous work *Naming and Necessity*, Kripke criticizes the description theory about proper names, which is advocated by Frege and Russell. It is well known that Frege makes an important distinction between the 'Sinn' and the "Bedeutung"¹ of a sign. By "Sinn" he means "the mode of presentation" and by "Bedeutung" that which the sign designates.² So two names can have the same Bedeutung but different Sinne. For instance, the Sinn of the Morning Star is the star seen at such a place in the morning and the Sinn of the Evening Star is the star seen at such and such another place in the evening, but both the morning Star and the Evening Star designate the same planet Venus. On the ground of this distinction he can solve the paradox of identity. Consider two statements:

- (1) The Morning Star is the Morning Star, and
- (2) The Morning Star is the Evening Star.

Apparently, statement (1) is an analytic statement and we can get this statement without any help of experience, but statement (2) is an important scientific discovery. Yet from the semantic point of view, both statements express the self-identity of the planet Venus, then what's the difference between them? Frege's answer is that although 'the Morning Star' and 'the Evening Star' have the same Bedeutung, their Sinne are different; thus from the two names themselves we cannot get statement (2) while statement (1) can be obtained by the law of identity. We shall return to this paradox in section II. Now let's go on to review Russell's relevant view. In order to solve the problem that the subject of some statements has no real denotation Russell presents his description theory, according to which we can eliminate the subject in question by rewriting the statement. For example, to analyze the statement

¹ There are several different interpretations of this pair of words, such as, 'connotation' and 'denotation', 'sense' and 'meaning'. Due to this ununiformity I directly use the original German words 'Sinn' and 'Bedeutung' in this paper.

² Frege, 'Sense and Meaning'. See *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic and Philosophy*, ed. Brian McGuinness (Basil Blackwell 1984) 158.

(3) The planet between Mercury and the Sun is green,

we can rewrite it into the conjunction of the following three statements:

(4) There is at least one planet between Mercury and the Sun,

(5) There is at most one planet between Mercury and the Sun, and

(6) Any planet between Mercury and the Sun is green.

Thus, statement (3) is meaningful although the planet between Mercury and the Sun doesn't exist.

Russell further argues that proper names like 'Socrates' and 'Plato' are really abbreviations for descriptions,³ and therefore can also be rewritten into descriptions. For example, 'Socrates' may be rendered as 'the Master of Plato' or 'the philosopher who drank the hemlock'.

What is called by Kripke the description theory holds such an idea: the description corresponding to a proper name gives the meaning of the name, that is, the description and the proper name are synonymous. Kripke disapproves this idea which he thinks is advocated by Frege and Russell.⁴ He distinguishes strictly between using the description to fix a reference and using it to give a synonym. Let's take 'Phosphorus' for instance. Someone saw a star at such and such a place in the morning and called it 'Phosphorus'. By the description 'the star seen at such and such a place in the morning' we fix the reference of the name 'Phosphorus', which is actually the planet Venus because Venus actually appeared at the described place in the morning. Yet, is 'the star seen at such and such a place in the morning' the synonym of 'Phosphorus'? As we all know if two signs are synonymous, they have to be interchangeable, that is to say, we can use one sign to replace the other in a statement without altering the meaning of the statement. Now consider the following statements:

(7) It is impossible that Phosphorus isn't Phosphorus, and

(8) It is impossible that Phosphorus isn't the star seen at such and such a place in the morning.

Admittedly, statement (7) is true. But statement (8) isn't true, because suppose due to the attraction of another star Phosphorus changes its route, then we won't see it at the described place in the morning and such a circumstance isn't impossible. On the other hand, statement (8) is obtained by replacing 'Phosphorus' by the description 'the star seen at such and such a place in the morning'; now that the meaning of the statement has been altered, the name 'Phosphorus' and the description 'the star seen at such and such a place in the morning' aren't synonymous. Kripke calls names like 'Phosphorus' rigid

³ Russell, 'The Philosophy of Logical Atomism'. See *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. Robert C. Marsh (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1956) 200.

⁴ Frege can be said to hold this idea obviously, because 'Sinn' can here be rendered as 'meaning'. By contrast, Russell doesn't hold this idea definitely. He sometimes even says that a proper name has no meaning. See Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980) 27 footnote.

designators and descriptions like ‘the star seen at such and such a place in the morning’ accidental designators. Rigid designators designate the same thing in all possible worlds, but accidental designators don’t have this property.

Opposing Frege and Russell’s description theory, Kripke returns to Mill’s view about proper names. It is a famous doctrine of John Stuart Mill that names have denotation but not connotation. He takes the name ‘Dartmouth’ for instance to show this. A place in England, Dartmouth got its name because it lies at the mouth of the river Dart. Suppose the Dart changes its route someday and no longer flows into the sea at Dartmouth: nevertheless we can still call this place ‘Dartmouth’; we even can say ‘Dartmouth doesn’t lie at the mouth of the Dart’ at this time without any absurdity. We can see, once Dartmouth got its name, it has nothing to do with the description ‘the place at the mouth of the Dart’ . The name ‘Dartmouth’ only has a reference, a certain place in England, but it has no meaning. Based on the analysis of the modal statements like (7) and (8), Kripke arrives at the same idea. By the description ‘the star seen at such and such a place in the morning’ we fix the reference of the name ‘Phosphorus’; besides this, the name has nothing to do with the description. It’s by no means the synonym of the name. In fact, names like ‘Phosphorus’ have no meaning.

Furthermore, Kripke argues that the description even can not fix the reference of a name. In his work, Kripke carefully analyzes the six theses of the description theory and disproves them one by one. Here I only intend to mention thesis (3). I can restate it as follows:

Thesis (3): If most of the descriptions corresponding to a name, suitably weighted, are satisfied by a unique object, then this object is the referent of the name.

It is well known that Peano discovered the theorem of natural numbers, therefore we can use the description ‘the discoverer of the theorem of natural numbers’ to fix the reference of the name ‘Peano’. But actually, it was Dedekind who discovered the theorem first: hence, when we use the description ‘the discoverer of the theorem of natural numbers’ to refer to Peano, we are actually referring to Dedekind. In this way, Kripke disproves thesis (3).

After he has refuted the description theory, Kripke presents his own theory about how to fix the reference of a name. Because it is very important for this paper, I wish to copy the relevant passage below:

Someone let’s say, a baby, is born: his parents call him by a certain name. They talk about him to their friends. Other people meet him. Through various sorts of talk the name is spread from link to link as if by a chain. A speaker who is on the far end of this chain, who has heard about, say Richard Feynman, in the market place or elsewhere, may be referring to Richard Feynman even

though he can't remember from whom he first heard of Feynman or from whom he ever heard of Feynman. He knows that Feynman was a famous physicist. A certain passage of communication reaching ultimately to the man himself does reach the speaker. He then is referring to Feynman even though he can't identify him uniquely. He doesn't know what a Feynman diagram is, he doesn't know what the Feynman theory of pair production and annihilation is. Not only that: he'd have trouble distinguishing between Gell-Mann and Feynman.⁵

From the citation above we can see, a name was given to an object in a naming ceremony, maybe an ostension, after that the name was fixedly connected with the object; when someone used the name later, he was referring to the object even if he didn't know it. Apparently, the passage of the reference of a name is a completely objective process, independent of human knowledge; whether we know the object or not, once we use a name, the original reference will pass to us from link to link, and we are referring to the corresponding object. We can call this the historical-causal theory about a proper name.

Now we can summarize Kripke's naming theory by the following theses:

Thesis A: Names are rigid designators. Fixing a reference is not equivalent to giving a synonym. A proper name has no meaning but only reference.

Thesis B: The reference of a name is fixed in a naming ceremony. When someone use the name later, the reference will pass to the user objectively; the user is referring to the original referent even though he doesn't know it clearly.

I grant thesis *A* but disapprove thesis *B*. For my part, a proper name is just like a label. The function of the label is to designate an object, and the label itself can have no meaning. In section II I shall discuss some problems resulting from thesis *B* under the premise of thesis *A*.

II

Let us return to the paradox of identity. As I said above, by distinguishing Sinn and Bedeutung Frege gives a solution of the paradox. Although the Bedeutung of 'the Morning Star' and that of 'the Evening Star' are the same object, which makes statement (1) and (2) true, their Sinne are different. This distinguishes statement (2) from statement (1), therefore statement (2) can be an empirical discovery. Now Kripke has proved that a proper name has no meaning as said in thesis *A*, it follows naturally that Frege's solution becomes untenable. Although he spends a lot of ink in the discussion of

⁵ *Naming and Necessity*, 91.

identity statement, Kripke rarely mentions the paradox of identity. So let's investigate now how he can or if he can solve this paradox on the ground of his basic theses.

In order to emphasize the proper name status of 'the Morning Star' and 'the Evening Star', he uses the names 'Phosphorus' and 'Hesperus' instead. For the sake of consistence, I shall rewrite statement (1) and (2) into:

(9) Phosphorus is Phosphorus, and

(10) Phosphorus is Hesperus.

According to thesis *A*, both 'Phosphorus' and 'Hesperus' have no meaning but only reference, thus their difference and sameness can only be indicated by their references. But according to thesis *B*, the references of 'Phosphorus' and 'Hesperus' were fixed in the naming ceremonies and they are actually the planet Venus: when we use 'Phosphorus' and 'Hesperus', we are referring to Venus no matter what knowledge we have about it. Thus, the reference of 'Phosphorus' and that of 'Hesperus' were the same before we found that Phosphorus and Hesperus were the same object and after that discovery.

Then a problem comes up. What's the difference between statement (9) and statement (10)? Another example is about the names 'Cicero' and 'Tully'. As we now know 'Cicero' and 'Tully' are the names of the same person, who was a famous Roman orator. In addition, let's consider these two statements:

(11) Cicero is Cicero, and

(12) Cicero is Tully.

From thesis *B*, the reference of 'Cicero' and 'Tully' are the same person whenever we use these two names. Thus according to thesis *A*, 'Cicero' and 'Tully' are the same name. Then, there seems no difference between statement (11) and statement (12) either. But actually statement (12) was once a historical discovery while statement (11) can be obtained from logical laws.

We may distinguish between our knowledge about the referent and the actual reference, or we may argue when we use a name we may not know clearly what its reference is although actually we are referring to the referent. But that will do no good to change the nature of statement (12). From thesis *A* we can get that the two names 'Cicero' and 'Tully' have no meaning but only reference. Now that 'Cicero' and 'Tully' have the same reference, they are also the same name. Our knowledge about the referent cannot change the nature of these two names, and cannot change the nature of statement (12) either. The problem remains. Perhaps we can still attribute our knowledge about the referent to the name as one of its elements. But as what element? According to thesis *B*, we cannot take it as a part of the reference. If we take it as an element of the name other than the reference, this means no other than coming back to Frege's theory. That will go against thesis *A*. Still the problem remains. In a word, Kripke's theory cannot solve the paradox of identity.

Another problem I want to point out is about the status of names which have no actual referent, such as 'Hamlet'. In *Naming and Necessity* Kripke rarely discusses this problem either. Only in the addenda he writes:

I hold similar views regarding fictional proper names. The mere discovery that there was indeed a detective with exploits like those of Sherlock Holmes would not show that Conan Doyle was writing about this man: it is theoretically possible, though in practice fantastically unlikely, that Doyle was writing pure fiction with only a coincidental resemblance to the actual man. Similarly, I hold the metaphysical view that, granted that there is no Sherlock Holmes, one cannot say of any possible person that he would have been Sherlock Holmes, had he existed. Several distinct possible people, and even actual one such as Darwin or Jack the Ripper, might have performed the exploits of Holmes, but there is none of which we can say that he would have been Holmes had he performed these exploits. For if so, which one?⁶

From the citation we know, Kripke grants that the sign like 'Holmes' do can be taken as a proper name, but it has no reference. Obviously 'Holmes' has no meaning either: but if a name has neither meaning nor reference, what is the function of such a name in a language? Before we discuss this idea further, let's first observe the case of historical names like 'Aristotle'. What do we know about 'Aristotle'? From historical materials we know that it is a name of a person who was a Greek philosopher, who wrote the book *Metaphysics*, who taught Alexander the Great and so on. How can we know that Aristotle was a real person in history? We may answer that there are a lot of materials about Aristotle and they all cohere with each other well enough to convince us that they were real historical events. However, there existed a period of time during which we couldn't assert that Aristotle was a real historical figure but only a legendary one. Thesis *B* tells us that even during this period of time, when we used the name 'Aristotle' we were still referring to Aristotle, and thus the reference of 'Aristotle' was Aristotle. Now when we use the name 'Holmes', I cannot see any difference between this circumstance and the above one, because before we proved that Aristotle was a real person, we couldn't guarantee this proof. Someone may say, the existence of Aristotle can be proved, but we cannot prove the existence of Holmes. However, how did we prove that Aristotle was a real person? From the historical documents, mainly the books written by the ancients. Then, why isn't it possible that someday historians will prove Holmes was also a real person? Here we have no reason to make any distinction between the linguistic status of historical names like 'Aristotle' and that of fictional names like 'Holmes' and 'Hamlet'. That is to say, the name 'Holmes' also has to have a reference: yet as we know now that Holmes isn't a real person, then what should 'Holmes' refer to? What nature should the reference of a name have? To answer these questions will be the task of my next section.

⁶ *Naming and Necessity*, 157—158.

III

Opposing thesis *B*, I wish to put forward a new idea about the reference of a proper name. I think, when we use a name, the reference of the name do have something to do with our knowledge about the referent. Let's expose how we get to know a name well. We still take 'Aristotle' for instance. At first, we might just know 'Aristotle' was a man's name, then when we used 'Aristotle' we referred to any person who had the name 'Aristotle'. Later, we might get to know Aristotle was an ancient philosopher who wrote the work *Metaphysics*. During this period, when we used the name 'Aristotle' we were referring to the author, of *Metaphysics*. Still later, we found that Aristotle was also the teacher of Alexander the Great. At this moment, we used the name 'Aristotle' to refer to the ancient philosopher who wrote *Metaphysics* and taught Alexander the Great. The similar processes would take place until the present situation. With the increase of our knowledge about Aristotle, the reference of the name 'Aristotle' were also undergoing a process of incessant change.

Such an idea about reference seems running counter to common sense. Ordinarily, we hold that a proper name designates an actual object, so the reference of a proper name should also be an actual object, but not an image. But what does 'an actual object' mean? In the history of science, there are many cases in which a former object was found later by scientists that it is not real object, but only an action of other objects or other phenomenon. We can see, the term 'an actual object' has sense only if it is used in a certain knowledge system: an object in one knowledge system may not be an object in another knowledge system, the same object in one knowledge system may be the combination of several objects in another knowledge system. 'An object in the absolute sense' has no meaning. Our present knowledge isn't absolute knowledge, thus 'an actual object' we now say is said only with reference to our present knowledge. Maybe someday scientists will find that Venus is not an independent object, but an image made up of cosmic rays. Then the name 'Venus' will have no actual referent.

Someone pointed to a star seen at a certain place in the sky in the morning and called it 'Phosphorus'. Later when he used the name, what was he referring to? You will reply, he was referring to the planet Venus. But your answer is given from the view of our present knowledge: yet our present knowledge isn't absolute knowledge and the planet Venus might be just an image. Or suppose the matter the man pointed to really is an independent object in the metaphysical world, but we never know what on earth this object is, even now. Hence, when we use the name 'Phosphorus', its corresponding object in the metaphysical world has no sense for us. The original referent cannot be passed to us from link to link;

even if it can be passed to us, it still has no sense for us. What is really passed to us is the original knowledge about the name. From historical documents we know that the name 'Phosphorus' was given to a star seen at a certain place in the morning, now we also know this star is actually the planet Venus, so we can assert that the name was given to Venus by the man. Therefore the name 'Phosphorus' is connected with Venus on the basis of our present knowledge. Besides these, we know nothing about the referent, and it has nothing to do with its corresponding object in the metaphysical world.

Next I will show how we can solve the paradox of identity on the ground of the above idea. For the sake of convenience, I'd like to introduce a new concept -- knowledge system. I have used this concept in the above paragraph. A knowledge system is a system of knowledge with relation to a concrete problem. Let us call our knowledge about Phosphorus and Hesperus before we found they are the same planet Venus knowledge system *A* and our relevant knowledge after that discovery knowledge system *B*. In knowledge system *A*, Phosphorus isn't Hesperus: they are two different objects. 'Phosphorus' refers to the star seen at such and such a place in the morning and 'Hesperus' the star at such and such another place in the evening. Because these two stars aren't the same object, the reference of 'Phosphorus' and that of 'Hesperus' are also different. Here we cannot say 'Phosphorus and Hesperus are actually the same object', because 'actually' can be said only in a certain knowledge system and in knowledge system *A* they are 'actually' two different objects. In knowledge system *B*, Phosphorus is Hesperus and they are the same planet Venus. The reference of 'Phosphorus' and that of 'Hesperus' become the same object; they both refer to the star seen at such and such a place in the morning and also the star seen at such and such another place in the evening, because they are the same object. Here we can say 'Phosphorus and Hesperus are actually the same object', but this statement is valid only in knowledge system *B*. It is possible that someday scientists will find that the star seen at such and such a place in the morning is not the same object all the time: maybe on odd date days it is the planet Venus, but on even date days it is another star *X*. At this moment, our knowledge about Phosphorus can be called knowledge system *C*. In knowledge system *C*, 'Phosphorus' won't be a proper name. Here, again we cannot say 'phosphorus and Hesperus are actually the same object'.

From thesis *B* we can infer, in knowledge system *A*, the reference of 'Phosphorus' and that of 'Hesperus' are also the same, then statement (9) and (10) cannot be distinguished. According to my idea, statement (10) can be distinguished well from statement (9). Although the reference of 'Phosphorus' is different in knowledge system *A* from in knowledge system *B*, statement (9) is logically true in both knowledge systems. On the other hand, the reference of 'Phosphorus' and that of 'Hesperus' are the same in knowledge system *B*, but are different in knowledge system *A*;

consequently statement (10) is true in knowledge system *B*, but is false in knowledge system *A*. This change of statement (10) from knowledge system *A* to knowledge system *B* just indicates that it is a scientific discovery. In this way the paradox of identity can be solved.

The problem about ‘Cicero’ and ‘Tully’ can be analyzed similarly. We can call our knowledge about Cicero and Tully before we found they were the same person knowledge system *L*, and our knowledge after that discovery knowledge system *K*. In knowledge system *L*, let’s suppose, Cicero was the author of such and such works, and Tully was the Roman orator who denounced Cataline; then they are different people. Here if we say ‘they are actually the same person’, what we say makes no sense; it makes sense only in knowledge system *K*; because we never know if Cicero and Tully are ‘actually’ the same person in the metaphysical world. Our present knowledge may be false. In knowledge system *L*, the reference of ‘Cicero’ and that of ‘Tully’ are also different. But in knowledge system *K*, Cicero and Tully become the same person, and the reference of ‘Cicero’ and that of ‘Tully’ are also the same. Thus we can distinguish statement (12) from statement (11). Statement (11) is a logical truth in both knowledge systems, but statement (12) is false in knowledge system *L*, yet true in knowledge system *K*. This change indicates that statement (12) is a historical discovery.

The next problem is the linguistic status of fictional proper names. According to my idea about the reference of a proper name, I hold that names like ‘Hamlet’ also have reference, and their reference is the corresponding figure in the fiction. Let’s think about how we use ‘Hamlet’ ordinarily. We say ‘Hamlet was a Denmark prince’, ‘Hamlet’s father was murdered by his uncle’, ‘Hamlet finally killed his uncle and revenged his father’ and so on. Is there any difference between the circumstance when we talk about Hamlet and that when we talk about Aristotle? Even though we now know Aristotle was a real person, while Hamlet was a fictional figure, there is no difference between the ways in which we use the names ‘Hamlet’ and ‘Aristotle’ in our language. We use both names to refer to their corresponding objects on the basis of our knowledge about the objects. We know Aristotle did such and such a set of deeds and had such and such a bundle of relations with other people, then we use ‘Aristotle’ to refer to such a person: we know Hamlet did such and such another set of deeds and had such and such another bundle of relations with another group of people, then we use ‘Hamlet’ to refer to this figure. The existence of the referent has no influence on the way in which we use the names. Consequently we should not consider the existence or the non-existence of the referent when we analyze the status of a name in a language.

If my idea about reference is correct, then the reference of a name can only be fixed by the descriptions corresponding to the name on the basis of our knowledge. It is a fact that most names are

given to an object by ostension; we point to an object and call it by a name. But for nearly all the names we use, we haven't personal familiarity with their ostensions. Then how can we know about a name? From our indirect knowledge about the name. From books and other people we learn that Aristotle was an ancient Greek philosopher, he wrote the work *Metaphysics* and he once taught Alexander the Great, therefore we can assert that 'Aristotle' is the name of such a person. The reference of 'Aristotle' is fixed by the description 'the ancient Greek philosopher who wrote *Metaphysics* and taught Alexander the Great'. Even though there might be an error in the historical documents, and actually the person who was named 'Aristotle' didn't enter into the field of philosophy and didn't teach Alexander the Great either, but another person who was given the name 'Cicero' did these things, when we use 'Aristotle' now, we are referring to the latter person, not the former one. The naming ceremony of the former person can't pass to us: we can only fix the reference by the description corresponding to the name based on our knowledge. If you claim we are referring to the former person, then because there are many other people who were also named 'Aristotle', are we referring to all of these people?

We should distinguish the reference of a name in two different senses. When a person uses a name, he will refer to an object subjectively; but the name also has an objective reference. The former is based on the user's personal knowledge about the name and we can call the reference in this sense the user's reference; the latter is based on human knowledge about the name and we can call the reference in this latter sense linguistic reference. I can use an example to explain this. We now know Phosphorus and Hesperus are the same planet Venus, but someone may only know Phosphorus is a star which can be seen at such and such a place in the morning. When he use the name 'Phosphorus', the user's reference of the name is the star seen in the morning, but the linguistic reference of the name is Venus.

The aim of the above distinction is to give a solution to one of Russell's puzzles put forward in *On Denoting*. His first puzzle says:

(1) If *a* is identical with *b*, whatever is true of *a* is true of *b*, and either may be substituted for the other in any proposition without altering the truth or falsehood of that proposition. Now George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of *Waverley*; and in fact Scott was the author of *Waverley*. Hence we may substitute 'Scott' for 'the author of *Waverley*', and thereby prove that George IV wished to know whether Scott was Scott. Yet an interest in the law of identity can hardly be attributed to the first gentleman of Europe.⁷

⁷ Russell. 'On Denoting'. See *Logic and Knowledge*, 47—48.

Russell doesn't take into account modal statements, so he thinks 'Scott' and 'the author of *Waverley*' are synonymous. In fact he is wrong, but these two signs are still interchangeable in non-modal statements. The key problem of the puzzle is the confusion between the references of 'Scott' in two different senses. Based on the common knowledge 'Scott' refers to a person who wrote *Waverley*. In this sense, 'Scott' and 'the author of *Waverley*' are interchangeable. But George IV didn't know that Scott wrote the book *Waverley*, so when he used the name 'Scott', the user's reference of 'Scott' was different: it refers to a person who might have nothing to do with *Waverley*. In this latter sense, 'Scott' and 'the author of *Waverley*' aren't interchangeable. For George IV, 'Scott was the author of *Waverley*' wasn't equivalent to 'Scott was Scott'. It's a news to him.

Although I have shown that the reference of a name can only be fixed by the descriptions corresponding to the name, I still hold that the descriptions don't give the synonym of the name. Kripke's proof is tenable in my case. Consider again statement (7) and (8). No matter what object 'Phosphorus' refers to, the object must be self-identical, thus statement (7) is true in all knowledge systems. In knowledge system A, 'Phosphorus' refers to the star seen at such and such a place in the morning. For this star, it is possible that it has a different route and doesn't appear at the described place in the mornings; so statement (8) is false. In knowledge system B, 'Phosphorus' refers to planet Venus. Similarly, for Venus, it is possible that it doesn't appear at the described place in the morning either: statement (8) is also false. Therefore, in both knowledge systems 'Phosphorus' and 'the star seen at such and such a place in the morning' are uninterchangeable, that is to say, they aren't synonymous.

However, in non-modal statements such as existential statements, the name and the description do be interchangeable. What does the statement 'Aristotle existed' mean? Kripke may claim, it doesn't mean 'The ancient Greek philosopher who wrote *Metaphysics* and once taught Alexander the Great existed', and he may argue if Aristotle didn't get into the field of philosophy and didn't teach Alexander the Great, then such a person didn't exist, although Aristotle still existed. But if so, Aristotle isn't the reference of 'Aristotle' in the statement and for the statement, Aristotle means no more than any other person who was named 'Aristotle'. I think, 'Aristotle existed' just means 'The ancient Greek philosopher who wrote *Metaphysics* and once taught Alexander the Great existed'. And I feel this is much nearer to the common sense.

IV

At the end of this paper, I would like to contrast my view about a proper name with that of Frege-Russell and Kripke. Frege distinguishes between the Sinn and the Bedeutung of a proper name: we may know clearly about the Sinn of a name without full knowledge of the Bedeutung. Russell doesn't distinguish meaning and reference definitely, but they both think that a name and its corresponding description are synonymous. Kripke criticizes them because they don't take modal statements into consideration: and he has proved that a name and its corresponding description are uninterchangeable in modal statements, and thus they aren't synonymous. Therefore he returns to Mill's view and claims that a proper name has no meaning but only reference. He further argues even the description cannot fix the reference of the name; and his historical causal theory says, after a name was given to an object, the reference of the name will pass through a historical causal chain to the user no matter what knowledge the user has about the referent. I approve Kripke's view in that he distinguishes between using a name to fix a reference and using it to give a synonym, but I disapprove his historical causal naming theory. Both Frege's 'Bedeutung' and Kripke's 'reference' mean an object in the metaphysical world which is independent of our knowledge: on the contrary, I think that the reference of a proper name does have something to do with our knowledge about the referent: in different knowledge systems the reference of a name are also different. We never know the corresponding object of a name in the metaphysical world; the reference of a proper name can only be fixed by the corresponding descriptions on the basis of our knowledge. At last, I want to show our major differences by a simple table:

	Frege-Russell	Kripke	I
Epistemic World	Sense		Reference
Metaphysical World	Reference	Reference ⁸	

⁸ As I first read the book *Naming and Necessity*, I was profoundly interested in the thought stimulating views put forward in it. Afterwards I thought much about these views and finally decided to write a paper on Kripke's naming theory. Then this paper was born. In this paper I only intend to pose a tentative idea about the reference of a proper name; it will be enlarged as my theses for the Master's degree of philosophy. Here heartfelt thanks should be given to my advisor Professor Dunhua Zhao, from whom I got much help in the course of writing this paper.