

# Social Convention, Identification and Description in the Mechanism of Reference for Proper Names

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How does a proper name refer to a particular object? This is the problem that theories of reference for proper names have tried to solve. Today, there are two influential theories of reference for proper names. One is so-called description theory, championed by Searle, and the other is so-called causal theory, proposed by Kripke and Donnellan. In this essay, I will examine essential claims in and crucial difference between these two theories, then try to propose a unified view about reference of proper names.

Two questions come in sight through the examination. Firstly, is reference of a proper name explained by its speaker's ability to identify its object? Secondly, do descriptions associated with a proper name by speaker constitute a mechanism of reference of the proper name? To these questions, description theory gives a reply 'Yes', and causal theory, 'No'. My answer to them is in one sense 'Yes' but in another sense 'No'. What makes such an answer possible is this: the mechanism relating a proper name to a particular object determined by social convention (that is, at the level of proper name-type) is fundamentally different from one relating an utterance of the proper name at particular occasion to its referent (that is, at the level of proper name-token). We will confirm this, considering a theory of reference for proper names in Evans[1982].