Wittgenstein on Names

I

In *Naming and Necessity* Kripke rejected the Russellian theory of proper names as neither an adequate nor a correct treatment of proper names. Kripke argued (along with many others) that the Russellian view fails to account for the significance of the fact that different descriptions may be (and are) used in place of a name to designate an object. So one person might designate Aristotle as 'the teacher of Alexander the Great', another as 'the most famous student of Plato', another as 'the author of the *Metaphysics*' and so on. (Even a single speaker might use various descriptions at different times to designate Aristotle.) Clearly, the notion of proper names as disguised or shorthand definite descriptions is faulty, for if the name 'Aristotle' means 'the teacher of Alexander the Great' then the statement 'Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great' would be a tautology - something it surely is not. So, said Kripke, being the teacher of Alexander the Great cannot be part of (the sense of) the name 'Aristotle'.

Kripke then went on to say that the most common way out of this difficulty with names is to say that no particular description may be substituted for a name; rather what is needed is a family, or cluster, of descriptions. A good example of this, said Kripke, is found in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. Kripke quoted the following part of paragraph 79 as introducing the idea of family resemblances:

Consider this example. If one says 'Moses did not exist', this may mean various things. It may mean: the Israelites did not have a single leader when they withdrew from Egypt - or: their leader was not called Moses - or: there cannot have been anyone who accomplished all that the Bible relates of Moses -...But when I make a statement about Moses, - am I always ready to substitute some ONE of those descriptions for 'Moses'? I shall perhaps say: by 'Moses' I understand the man who did what the Bible relates of Moses, or at any rate, a good deal of it. But how much? Have I decided how much must be proved false for me to give up my proposition as false? Has the name 'Moses' got a fixed and unequivocal use for me in all possible cases?

Kripke (5, p. 31) then stated:

According to this view, and a *locus classicus* of it is Searle's article on proper names [*Proper Names* *Mind* 67 (1958): 166-173], the referent of a name is determined not be a single description but by some cluster or family. Whatever in some sense satisfies enough or most of the family is the referent of the name.

Now, I want to argue that Wittgenstein did not hold the cluster view of Searle and that Kripke misread the very passage of Wittgenstein's which he quoted, first by wrongly attending to certain notions in
paragraph 79, and second by bypassing the more significant claims (which he does not quote) of paragraph 79 and the surrounding paragraphs of the *Investigations*. First, I will lay out Searle's view and then show that it is not the same view as is found in paragraph 79.

Searle recognized the difficulties facing the Russellian view of names as shorthand definite descriptions and amended it by claiming that a name refers to an object in virtue not of a single description, but rather in virtue of a cluster or disjunctive set of descriptions:

Suppose we ask the users of the name "Aristotle" to state what they regard as certain essential and established facts about him. Their answers would constitute a set of identifying descriptions, and I wish to argue that though no single one of them is analytically true of Aristotle, their disjunction is. Put it this way: suppose we have independent means of identifying an object, what then are the conditions under which I could say of the object, "This is Aristotle?" I wish to claim that the conditions, the descriptive power of the statement, is that a sufficient but so far unspecified number of these statements (or descriptions) are true of the object. In short, if none of the identifying descriptions believed to be true of some object by the users of the name of some independently located object, then that object could not be identical with the bearer of the name. It is a necessary condition for an object to be Aristotle that it satisfy at least some of these descriptions. (9, p. 169)

So, associated with a name 'N' is a disjunctive set of descriptions, the satisfaction by an object of some of which is necessary for the object to be the referent of 'N'. Clearly, the disjunctive set of descriptions which are associated with a name can vary from speaker to speaker and from occasion to occasion; as new beliefs are accepted about an object, new elements might be added to the set of descriptions, and as old beliefs are rejected, some elements might be dropped from the set of descriptions.

It is not clear how many of these descriptions must be true for a name to refer, and it is no oversight on Searle's part in failing to specify such a sufficient number, for it will depend upon too many specific and contextual factors to be able to indicate such a number. However, critics of Searle's view are right in interpreting the view as requiring that at least one of the descriptions be true of an object in order for the name to successfully refer to the object. That is, it couldn't be possible that all of the elements in the set of descriptions associated with a name turn out false and yet reference successfully take place.

Donnellan (3) offered the following case in response to Searle's requirement. Consider a case, he said, in which a young child is awakened during a party given by the child's parents. During the brief interruption of the child's sleep, the child speaks with one of the party guests, and learns the name of the guest to be Tom. Later, reflecting on the occurrence, the child remarks to his parents, 'Tom is a nice man.' This is the child's only description associated with Tom, but it does not identify for the parents who Tom is, as they know many Toms. It might even be that Tom is not a nice man, but the child believes him to be so. In such a case, all of the descriptions which the speaker associates with an object are false, yet it seems that reference successfully occurs. If Searle's view forbids the possibility of the entire disjunctive set of descriptions being false, then such a counter-example would seem to refute Searle.

Now, why would Searle want to forbid such a possibility? Because he wants to retain the position that words (names) have senses, or meanings. If the disjunctive set of descriptions associated with a name are to give the meaning of a name, the possibility of every description in the set being false would entail the possibility of the name losing, or having no meaning, supposedly something Searle wanted to forbid. The purpose of this paper is not to debate whether or not Donnellan's counter-example works - I have argued
elsewhere (1) that it does not - but to put forth Searle's purported view and contrast it with Wittgenstein's.

Turning to Wittgenstein, I want now to argue that Kripke mistakenly identified Wittgenstein's view with Searle's. This is not to say that Wittgenstein's view is not similar to Searle's in many respects; it is. However, the differences are enough that a clear distinction can be made between them, and arguments offered by Kripke and Donnellan against Searle's view do not apply to Wittgenstein's view.

We saw above that Kripke took paragraph 79 of the *Investigations* to be a forceful statement of the view that "the referent of a name is determined not by a single description but by some cluster or family". This paragraph, he said, is where the idea of family resemblances is introduced (though, Wittgenstein actually does so in paragraph 67) and is a good example of the view that "what we really associate" with a name is a family of descriptions. There is an important jump made here which is a clear misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's view. Kripke didn't say much more directly related to this misunderstanding, but I think it is fair to believe that he was guilty on this point. Schwartz (8), however, explicitly committed the error, namely, taking Wittgenstein to be saying that we only associate names with a family of descriptions; taking Wittgenstein to be saying that words have meaning only in virtue of family resemblances. According to Schwartz:

According to one contemporary version [of a descriptionist theory of reference] there is not a conjunction of properties associated with each term, but there is a cluster of properties associated with it. For example, it is held that we cannot define "game" by a conjunction of properties such as having a winner and a loser, being entertaining, involving the gaining and losing of points, because some perfectly acceptable games lack some of these features. According to the cluster theory, something is a game because it has enough features from a cluster of properties like these. A cluster theorist would claim that there need not be any property in the cluster that is sufficient for the application of the term, but he nevertheless holds that the cluster taken as a whole determines the extension of the term. Wittgenstein's position that there are only family resemblances among the individuals in the extension of many ordinary terms can be construed as a version of the cluster theory. (8, p. 15)

True, Wittgenstein's position could be construed as a version of the cluster theory, but only on a misunderstanding and false representation of Wittgenstein's position. Wittgenstein's point in introducing the notion of family resemblances was to show that it is a mistake to insist that because we use the same word to refer to different objects that there must be some essential property of those objects in virtue of which we use the same word for them all. (Indeed, his immediate concern was to show that it is mistaken to suppose that there is a general form of propositions, something common to all that we call language. As well, it is mistaken to object to the notion of language games because no essence of a language game can be given.) This is not to say that some words have only family resemblances; some words might well have a single (conjunction of) description(s) giving the meaning of a word, e.g., 'bachelor' ('adult human male who has never been married') or 'mule' ('offspring of a female horse and male donkey'). It IS to say that many words do not have a single (conjunction of) description(s) giving the meaning of a word.

Furthermore, if the cluster theory "holds that the cluster taken as a whole determines the extension" of a term, it is obvious that this is not Wittgenstein's view. The major reason for this is that Wittgenstein denies that it makes any sense to even speak of "the cluster taken as a whole." This is because words (at least some words) are not "closed by a frontier (12, para. 68); they have, in Waismann's (11)
terminology, an open texture. Open texturedness leads into the heart of Wittgenstein's view and this will be dealt with in section II of this paper. About this point, I want to say here that this is precisely the issue of greatest divergence between Wittgenstein's view and Searle's view. Where Searle admitted the sense and usefulness of speaking of the logical sum or inclusive disjunctive set of descriptions associated with a name, Wittgenstein did not; rather Wittgenstein spoke of the lack of any fixed meaning of a name.1

II

We have seen what Wittgenstein's view is not - it is not a version of the cluster theory of names - but the question remains of what it is. While in this section I will explicate his view, I want first to stress that Wittgenstein presented (as Kripke said of his own view) a "better picture" than those given by other views, rather than having presented an alternative theory.

Above, Wittgenstein's view on names was hinted at when the differences between his view and Searle's were indicated. The hint was the notion of open texture when dealing with (some) words, and it is best to flesh out this notion now. In paragraph 68 of the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein said:

"All right: the concept of number is defined for you as the logical sum of these individual interrelated concepts: cardinal numbers, rational numbers, real numbers, etc.; and in the same way the concept of a game as the logical sum of a corresponding set of sub-concepts." - It need not be so. For I CAN give the concept 'number' rigid limits in this way, that is, use the word "number" for a rigidly limited concept, but I can also use it so that the extension of the concept is not closed by a frontier.

What Wittgenstein was getting at is, on the one hand, the projectibility of words - that is, the propriety and legitimacy of using a word or phrase in a novel manner or context (e.g., 'feed' as in 'feed the parking meter') - and, on the other hand, the lack of distinct boundaries or a clear extension of a word or phrase (e.g., 'game').

Waismann, who coined the term 'open texture' (11, p. 125), stated that open texture might mean that we could get acquainted with some totally new experience or that some new discovery could be made which would affect our interpretation of certain facts. He offered the following example:

The notion of gold seems to be defined with absolute precision, say be the spectrum of gold with its characteristic lines. Now what would you say is a substance was discovered that looked like gold, satisfied all the chemical tests for gold, whilst it emitted a new sort of radiation? 'But such things do not happen.' Quite so; but they might happen, and that is enough to show that we can never exclude altogether the possibility of some unforeseen situation arising in which we shall have to modify our definition. Try as we may, no concept is limited in such a way that there is no reason for any doubt. We introduce a concept and limit it in some directions; for instance, we define gold in contrast to some other metals such as alloys. This suffices for our present needs, and we do not probe any farther. We tend to overlook the fact that there are always other directions in which the concept has not been defined. And if we did, we could easily imagine conditions which would necessitate new limitations. In short, it is not possible to define a concept like gold with absolute precision, i.e. in such a way that every nook and cranny is blocked against entry of doubt. That is what is meant by the open texture of a concept. (11, p. 126)
The point is this: when it comes to giving an account of (most) words - including names - we are not able to state a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the applicability of those words. Specifically, for names, we are not able - contrary to both the descriptionists and causalists - to establish these conditions prior to and independently of the use of the names in discourse. So we cannot say 'ahead of time' as it were, what conditions must be met for a name to refer to an object nor for what, in general, naming is. A mistake of the descriptionists is the attempt to establish those conditions through the notion of a disjunctive set of descriptions associated with a name; a mistake of the causalists is the attempt to establish these conditions through the notion of a causal chain connecting an utterance of a name and an original baptismal act in which an object is referred to by the name. This aspect of open texture is, for both Wittgenstein and Waismann, an empirical fact about our use of names; we do in fact often use names without any fixed meaning.²

This leads to a question which was touched upon earlier in laying out Searle's view. The question was: does at least one member of the disjunctive set of descriptions associated with a name need to be true for reference to successfully occur? Wittgenstein's answer to this was that the question is a faulty one; it displays a misunderstanding of the relationship between names and descriptions. For Wittgenstein, names can be used as abbreviations for descriptions, although in such cases the name would not function as a name, but as a description. For Wittgenstein, names can be explained by descriptions, but are in no way synonymous with them (cf., 12, paras. 43-45). For example, suppose Jones says something about N and Smith wants to know who N is, to whom reference is being made. Jones remarks that N is the man at the bus stop over there. Now, this description does not define 'N' in any sense - the description is not a synonym and no necessary and sufficient conditions of reference are laid down - rather it helps to identify N for Smith providing instructions of finding out who N is. If the identification fails - if Smith cannot pick out N - another description might be given (perhaps, 'N has on a grey hat'). It is these sorts of considerations that Wittgenstein had in mind when he spoke of various descriptions that we could use to give them the meaning of 'Moses' and that we use a name without any fixed meaning. Although descriptions explain (identify) - and, in many cases, make possible - the use of names, the meanings, or uses, of the descriptions are not identical with the meaning, or uses, of the name.³

The above remarks sound quite similar to what Kripke had to say about descriptions as reference fixers and indeed it is similar. However, Kripke's account of descriptions as reference fixers (5, pp. 31-32), seems to miss Wittgenstein's main point, namely, the open texture of names. Kripke claimed:

Now another view might be that even though the description in some sense doesn't give the meaning of the name, it is what determines its reference and although the phrase 'Walter Scott' isn't synonymous with 'the man such that such and such and such and such', or even maybe with the family (if something can be synonymous with a family), the family or the single description is what is used to determine to whom some-one is referring when he says 'Walter Scott'....some of the attractiveness of the [descriptionist] theory is lost if it isn't supposed to give the meaning of the name; for some of the solutions of problems that I've just mentioned will not be right, or at least won't clearly be right, if the description doesn't give the meaning of the name....If, on the other hand, 'Moses' is not synonymous with any description, then even if its reference is in some sense determined by a description, statements containing the name cannot in general be analyzed by replacing the name by a description, though they may be materially equivalent to statements containing a description.
Attractiveness notwithstanding, one of Wittgenstein's concerns in talking about open texture was precisely that it is mistaken to think that a name can in general be analyzed by replacing it with a description (cf., 12, para. 63). An identifying description helps to pick out the referent of a name for a given speaker or listening in a given context; in a different situation with a different speaker or listener the identifying description might not succeed in picking out the referent, where another description might. Nor was it Wittgenstein's view that offering descriptions as identifying descriptions rather than as synonyms of names is intended to replace talk of meaning of names. That is, to replace talk of descriptions as synonyms with talk of descriptions as reference fixers is not to abandon talk of meanings, for Wittgenstein. Again, Kripke seemed to be assuming that for names to have meanings, they must have fixed meanings, which, as noted above, Wittgenstein denied.

Besides this error of supposing that names are synonymous with their identifying descriptions, philosophers have committed the error of supposing that they are able to uniquely pick out objects prior to or separate from the use of identifying descriptions. This, for Wittgenstein, is a mistaken picture of how reference (and language) works. One possible candidate offered against Wittgenstein's claim is that of ostension. Ostension, it is claimed, is a clear example of picking out referents without appeal to any descriptions. However, Wittgenstein went to some lengths (12, paras. 27-38) to show the misleadingness of such a claim. The gist of his arguments is that ostension can occur only within a given language game, i.e., ostensive definitions only work when it is clear what is being defined, and this cannot happen separate from any descriptions. For example, suppose Jones points to a red pencil and says, "This is tove." Smith might interpret Jones's statement as meaning: a tove thing is a pencil, a tove thing is round, a tove thing is wooden, a tove thing is singular, a tove thing is hard, a tove thing is red, etc. Without some background (or additional) information, Smith is unable to understand and use the word 'tove' successfully. Ishiguro (4) gives a nice summary of Wittgenstein's position on this issue:

The *Tractatus* [and the *Investigations*] view entails that it is the use of the Name which gives you the identity of the object rather than vice versa....If the object can be identified by a description we can learn the reference and use of a name by correlating it to the object picked out by the definite description, as indeed we normally do....The *Tractatus* theory of names is basically correct, however, in so far as it is a refutation of views which assume that a name is like a piece of label which we tag onto an object which we can already identify. A label serves a purpose because we usually write names - which already have a use - on the label. (4, pp. 34-35)

III

Having shown that Wittgenstein's view on names is not that of Searle's and having indicated what Wittgenstein's view is, I now want to offer some comments in way of assessment of his view.

It was suggested that a main strength of Wittgenstein's view over Searle's was his recognition of the open texture of words, including names. However, I find the treatment of open texture given by both Wittgenstein and Waismann to be rather unsatisfying in terms of clarifying the role of descriptions in naming and referring. What I find unsatisfying is this: neither Wittgenstein nor Waismann make it clear how open texture is. Granted, we might not be able to find necessary and sufficient conditions for something being a game or a number or a chair (or even being open textured), but to leave matters at that is not very enlightening. For clearly, the texture of 'game' is not so open as to include numbers or chairs in its extension, nor that of 'chair' to include numbers or games. What would be helpful, and indeed, needed, is an explanation of why open texture is not 'wide open texture', i.e., how open texture is limited and limiting in the extension of a word (name).
Another fundamental point of Wittgenstein's view is that descriptions associated with a name are not synonyms of the name, but rather are identifying descriptions. However, there are problems here. Consider a case in which Jones says, "I wonder if Aristotle wore socks." Smith, who hears Jones's ponderative utterance, knows only that 'Aristotle' is the name Jones uses to refer to some ancient Greek philosopher. Looking in his copy of the definitive work on the history of socks, Smith reads that no ancient Greeks wore socks. Smith relays this information to Jones with syllogistic candor: "No ancient Greeks wore socks, Aristotle was an ancient Greek, so Aristotle did not wear socks." Now, did Smith refer to Aristotle? What would Wittgenstein have said? Smith has been able to use the name 'Aristotle' and even to say something true and informative about Aristotle, which would lend credence to saying that Smith has referred to Aristotle. Nevertheless, it seems from what Wittgenstein said about descriptions associated with a name that they are called into play only when reference fails or is unclear from the utterance of a name. So when Jones says something about N ("N has on a grey hat"), Jones might have no descriptions in mind associated with 'N'. But if Smith is unable to pick out N, Jones can use certain descriptions to help Smith pick out N. If this is so, though, then how could Smith refer to Aristotle in the case of informing Jones that Aristotle did not wear socks? (I must stress here that the problem I see is not so much whether Smith did in fact refer to Aristotle, but where the talk of identifying descriptions fits in here. I don't see how Wittgenstein's view makes clear the role of identifying descriptions in the context of referring.)

One objection to my interpretation of Wittgenstein's view might be that I have misrepresented the relationship between naming and descriptions. On this Wittgenstein said:

For naming and describing do not stand on the same level: naming is a preparation for description. Naming is so far not a move in the language-game - any more than putting a piece in its place on the board is a move in chess. We may say: nothing has so far been done, when a thing has been named. It has not even got a name except in the language-game. (12, para. 49)

However, it seems to me that the question here isn't over the naming of an object, but whether Smith referred to Aristotle, and, underlying that immediate question, what the role is of identifying descriptions in the context of referring. If descriptions are used even as only identifying descriptions, and not as synonyms of names, they are used to pick out objects. But in this case, it doesn't seem as if Smith can pick out the object, even though Smith was successful in salving Jones's curiosity with a true, informative assertion about Aristotle.

This example points to another issue involved in naming, and one which is more of a problem for the causal view of names than for Wittgenstein's view. The issue is the place of evidence in reference. Consider the situation: Jones is an incoming student in the first term of graduate study in philosophy. The faculty whom Jones has so far encountered at Philosophy University have all been bearded and rather elderly. Jones decides to enroll in a course taught by Professor Schmipke. That is, Jones enrolls in a course, the description of which (in the college catalog) states is taught by Professor Schmipke. At the first class meeting, a clean-shaven, young-looking person enters and begins lecturing. During the course of the lecture, Jones overhears several students remark that they think the lecturer is a graduate assistant (being so young-looking). Later that day, Jones sees the same lecturer sitting in an office which Jones knows is not the office of any other member of the faculty. Later yet, Jones passes the same office and sees the same lecturer still there. As Jones continues down the hallway, Jones meets Smith, who asks, "Have you seen Professor Schmipke?" Jones replies, "Yes, he's in his office now, right down the hall."
Now, in this case Jones successfully refers, as indeed Schmipke is the clean-shaven, young-looking lecturer. Here is what I find important about the example: the causal theorist will claim that Jones referred to Schmipke through a causal chain connecting Schmipke to Jones's contact with the name 'Schmipke' which Jones read on the course description in the college catalog, etc. But what seems involved in this case is the relevance of evidence Jones had which led Jones to infer that this lecturer was Schmipke. It seems much more likely in this case than in many others which the causal theorists cite that evidence plays a genuine role in Jones hooking up a name with an object. On the relation between naming and evidence, Steinman (10) has shown that the causal chain connecting an object and an utterance of its name is not necessary and suggested a spectrum of cases that involve the relationship between naming and evidence. Steinman showed the causal chain to not be a necessary condition for reference to succeed with the following example. Suppose Bob is at a party and sees the wife of his friend Dave. During their conversation, Dave's wife informs Bob that Dave names all of his pets 'Sal'. She also tells Bob that, Dave being a one-pet-at-a-time man, there is never any confusion as to what he is referring to when he utters the name 'Sal'. (At any time, Dave has at most one pet and that pet's name is 'Sal'.) Several days later, Bob comes over to Dave's house and Dave shows Bob his new pet goldfish. Upon seeing the fish for the first time, Bob remarks, "Sal sure is a fine specimen!" In this case, Bob's utterance of the name is not causally connected to the object, even though he successfully referred to the object. The evidence that Bob has about the name of the object (Dave is a one-pet man, Dave names all of his pets 'Sal', Dave's wife is known to be a reliable person, who always tells the truth, etc.) is what made successful reference possible.

Back to the Schmipke case, (in which evidence played a part for reference to have occurred, though not the extent as in the 'Sal' case - hence talk of a spectrum of cases), the point is not at all to deny that a causal chain existed between Schmipke and Jones's utterance of 'Schmipke'. Indeed, the presence of a causal chain connecting utterances of a name with the referent of a name does not seem to me to be a point of contention between the causalists and Wittgenstein. Both would admit that a causal chain exists between an object and the name-utterances (at least in most cases). Where the conflict of views occurs is in the referring status granted to descriptions. The causalists hold that it is in virtue of the causal chain alone that reference occurs; the descriptionists hold that it is in virtue of descriptions associated with a name alone that reference occurs. Wittgenstein held that in some cases it is in virtue of the causal chain that reference occurs and in some cases in virtue of the descriptions associated with the name. This is to say that Wittgenstein held that there is no unique essence to naming. This denial of an essence to naming is one which Wittgenstein dealt with directly in paragraphs 37 and 38 of the *Investigations*:

What is the relation between a name and the thing named?...This relation may...consist, among many other things, in the fact that hearing the name calls before our mind the picture of what is named; and it also consists, among other things, in the name's being written on the thing named or being pronounced when the thing is pointed at.....we call very different things "names"; the word "name" is used to characterize many different kinds of use of a word, related to one another in many different ways....Naming [under Russell's account] appears as a queer connexion of a word with an object. - And you really get such a queer connexion when the philosopher tries to bring out the relation between name and thing by staring at an object in front of him and repeating a name or even the word "this" innumerable times ....And here we may indeed fancy naming to be some remarkable act of mind, as it were a baptism of an object.
Tied in with this belief that there is no essence to naming is the main point of difference between Wittgenstein's view and the causalist view. The difference is made explicit in paragraph 87:

Suppose I give this explanation: "I take 'Moses' to mean the man, if there was such a man, who led the Israelites out of Egypt, whatever he was called then and whatever he may or may not have done besides." - But similar doubt [about meaning and reference] to those about "Moses" are possible about the words of this explanation (what are you calling "Egypt", whom the "Israelites" etc.?). Nor would these questions come to an end when we got down to words like "red", "dark", "sweet". - "But then how does an explanation help me to understand if after all it is not the final one? In that case the explanation is never completed; and I still don't understand what he means, and never shall!" - As though an explanation as it were hung in the air unless supported by another one. Whereas an explanation may indeed rest on another one that has been given, but none stands in need of another-unless WE require it to prevent a misunderstanding. One might say: an explanation serves to remove or avert a misunderstanding-one, that is, that would occur but for the explanation: not every one that I can imagine.

The point of these remarks in relation to the problems of naming and reference is this: in some cases (at least) the presence of a causal chain is unnecessary as an explanation of how reference occurs. (The 'Sal' case, as noted above, makes the point that the causal chain isn't even necessary IN an explanation of how reference occurs.) Causal chains might well serve as descriptions of how reference occurs, and they might even serve, in some cases, as explanations of how reference occurs, but if what we want is an understanding of how we refer by naming, then causal chains are not needed to be indicated. Wittgenstein's reasoning is that we require explanations in order to solve problems of failure to understand. Explanations serve to remove or avert misunderstandings, but these explanations are needed only in such a capacity; if there were no misunderstanding that needed removing or averting, the explanation would not be needed. So when it comes to naming, the problems that actually occur, such as knowing the correct name of someone or knowing when to use one name rather than another, are ones such that any misunderstandings that might arise (at least, generally) can be handled without having to bring in talk of underlying causal chains. This is not to deny that causal chains might be invoked in some explanations; it is only to claim that in general such explanations aren't necessary to provide an understanding of how naming and reference successfully occur.

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Endnotes

1. In fact, Wittgenstein made this very point toward the end of paragraph 79, part of the paragraph which Kripke didn't quote when identifying Wittgenstein as a cluster theorist. It is worth noting that Linsky (7) did recognize this difference between Wittgenstein and Searle: "[Wittgenstein and Searle] say that the main difficulty with [Russell's] theory is that it ignores a certain looseness in our use of proper names. Proper names, they say, are not, in general, associated by their users with unique descriptions as Russell's theory requires. Here Searle and Wittgenstein part company. Searle thinks that in place of the unique description required by Russell there are a cluster of descriptions which the users of a name associate with it. He thinks that it is a necessary truth that some 'sufficiently large' (but indefinite) number of the open sentences on which these descriptions are built are uniquely satisfied by the referent of the name. Wittgenstein's correction to Russell's theory is rather different. He thinks proper names are
characteristically used without any fixed meaning; there is neither a unique description nor a cluster of
them which fixes the sense of our names. We can use these names without a fixed sense." (7, p. 93)

2. This insistence that we often use names without any fixed meaning is tied up with Wittgenstein's
notions of language games and rule-following, and his rejection of the distinction between contexts of
discovery and contexts of justification. This is not to say that no names have a fixed meaning. What is
important in connection with the fixing of meaning when it does occur is that it is done as part of an
activity (within a language game), for certain purposes (cf., 7, pp. 104-105). In other words, a word is a
name only when it is used as one (as opposed to being used as, say, a demonstrative; cf., Kripke (6, p.
272, note 9). To be used as a name means that we employ it in calling for, asking about, saying
something about, etc., the object being named. Cf., Canfield (2, pp. 108-109), where he considers
Kripke's case in which a speaker mistakenly says that Jones is raking leaves (but actually Smith is): "It is
correct to say that either he'd attribute the predicate ['is raking leaves'] to Jones or to Smith depending
on how we take the question. How we take the question is something we have to learn to do. We can take
the question in a way that will give only the results that Donnellan intends. But then the right thing to
say is that it is the series of examples he gives that teaches us how to take the question. In
Wittgensteinian terms Donnellan teaches us a certain language game, one of establishing the speech act
referent by answering a certain question in a certain way." Cf., also, Ishiguro (4, p. 25).

3. Cf., Ishiguro (4, p.23): "Throughout his later works, Wittgenstein discusses the temptation to look in
the wrong direction for a mark which would tell us why a word refers to a certain object. We look for
mental processes that go on as we utter the words rather than the rule governing the use of the words that
we can come to grasp. And similarly in the Tractatus Wittgenstein is anxious to stress that we cannot see
how the name refers to an object except by understanding the role it plays in propositions."

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