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**Marcus, Kripke, and the origin of the new theory of reference. (English. English summary)
With a comment by Scott Soames and a reply by the author.**

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At an American Philosophy Association colloquium on December 28, 1994, Quentin Smith presented this paper arguing that many of the key ideas of the New Theory of Reference that have commonly been attributed to Saul Kripke really originated in Ruth Barcan Marcus' writings. Smith held that this historical misunderstanding had been caused by the lack of familiarity among philosophers with Marcus' earlier contributions and by the absence of attributions to her in the relevant places of Kripke's celebrated papers "Naming and necessity" and "Identity and necessity". The explanation suggested for why Kripke did not attribute "the central features of the New Theory of Reference to Marcus is that he originally misunderstood Marcus' New Theory of Reference. When he eventually understood it, after a year or two, the insight that came made it seem that the ideas were new".

This presentation was strongly opposed by Scott Soames with a detailed response which qualified it as an inaccurate historical picture and argued that Smith did Kripke a grave injustice with it. Although Smith's paper was also understood by some philosophers as an ethical charge of misappropriation against Kripke, the core of the debate is a matter of degree concerning the central or marginal role of Marcus' ideas in Kripke's development, and more generally about the ownership of ideas in a professional field of research. Probably everybody in the field will agree with Soames that "Marcus, along with certain other philosophers, does deserve credit for anticipating important aspects of contemporary theories of reference", and at the same time they will acknowledge that "this credit in no way diminishes the seminal role of Saul Kripke". But who is to be credited as "primary founder" of the New Theory of Reference? In fact, as a joke, it might be answered that according to this very theory the term "primary founder" is not a rigid designator.

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