

PHIL 4233: Philosophy of Language
Prof. Funkhouser
Kripke, "A Puzzle about Belief"

I.

- Recall the distinction between Fregean and Millian accounts of names. On the Fregean account, names have, in addition to their reference, a sense (e.g., a descriptive component that determines reference). For the Millian, names have reference only.

- What follows from the Millian account?

If a strict Millian view is correct, and the linguistic function of a proper name is completely exhausted by the fact that it names its bearer, it would appear that proper names of the same thing are everywhere interchangeable not only *salva veritate* but even *salva significatione*: the proposition expressed by a sentence should remain the same no matter what name of the object it uses.

But then: "Cicero admired Tully" = "Tully admired Cicero" = "Cicero admired Cicero" = "Tully admired Tully"

- Kripke applies the Millian points to so-called opaque contexts: modality and propositional attitudes.

Whether a given subject believes something is presumably true or false of such a subject no matter how that belief is expressed; so if proper name substitution does not change the content of a sentence expressing a belief, coreferential proper names should be interchangeable *salva veritate* in belief contexts.

- Of course, substituting in different descriptions could change the content.

- Kripke is not concerned here with *de re* beliefs or modal claims.

- Recall that Kripke held the following to each be necessary truths:

"Hesperus = Hesperus", and

“Hesperus = Phosphorus”

Kripke argued that co-referential names can be substituted in modal contexts with truth being preserved. But it does not seem like similar substitutions preserve truth in belief contexts. For example, someone can believe that “Hesperus = Hesperus” without believing that “Hesperus = Phosphorus”.

Objection to the Millian: “Hesperus = Hesperus” and “Hesperus = Phosphorus” seem like distinct propositions (e.g., after considering the belief example just given), but “they” are identical on the Millian account (since “they” share the same sense).

◦ In *Naming and Necessity* Kripke distinguished metaphysical and epistemic possibility/necessity. This seems to suggest a non-Millian account of belief contexts.

For I presupposed a sharp contrast between epistemic and metaphysical possibility: before appropriate empirical discoveries were made, men might well have failed to know that Hesperus was Phosphorus, or even to believe it, even though they of course knew and believed that Hesperus was Hesperus. Does not this support a Fregean position that ‘Hesperus’ and ‘Phosphorus’ have different ‘modes of presentation’ that determine their references?

◦ Q: Might it be that names are *modally* rigid, but not substitutable *salva veritate* in *belief* contexts?

- Extreme Frege-Russellism: Perhaps each person has his/her own sense for names (Lockeanism?). Kripke does not think we should multiply languages in this manner.

- Kripke reminds us of his examples from *N&N* in which speakers assign the same sense, if any, to many names — e.g., ‘Gell-Mann’ and ‘Feynman’. This forms an objection to the Frege-Russell position.

The premise of the argument we are considering for the classic position of Frege and Russell — that whenever two codesignative names fail to be interchangeable in the expression of a speaker’s beliefs, failure of interchangeability arises from a difference in the ‘defining’ descriptions the speaker associates with these names — is, therefore, false.

II.

- There is a good summary of the discussion thus far in the first paragraph of this section.

- Kripke introduces two main principles in this section that will be needed for the puzzle of section III.

Disquotational Principle: *“If a normal English speaker, on reflection, sincerely assents to ‘p’, then he believes that p.”*

Strengthened Disquotational Principle: *“A normal English speaker who is not reticent will be disposed to sincere reflective assent to ‘p’ if and only if he believes that p.”*

Principle of Translation: *“If a sentence of one language expresses a truth in that language, then any translation of it into any other language also expresses a truth (in that other language).”*

- A substitutivity principle (of coreferential names) for belief contexts would then entail (in conjunction with the disquotational principle) that those who sincerely assent to “Cicero is bald” and “Tully is not bald” hold contradictory beliefs.

◦ Kripke puzzle about belief will not rely on such a substitutivity principle, however.

III.

- Finally, the puzzle:

Pierre is a French (only) speaker who believes that London is pretty. At least so it seems, since he assents to the French translation of this. Eventually, Pierre comes to move to a bad part of London, and he learns English from his neighbors. He comes to assent to the English sentence “London is not pretty.” And he does not assent to the English sentence “London is pretty.”

◦ If we wiped out Pierre’s French-speaking past, he would clearly have the “English belief”. Conversely, if he didn’t have the English-experiences, he would clearly have the “French belief”.

◦ Pierre has contradictory beliefs, but this is not a logical deficiency on his part. Worse yet, *we* believe a contradiction with respect to Pierre!

- Kripke holds that there are 4 moves in logical space that one can take with respect to this puzzle. Each is unsatisfying.

◦ Kripke acknowledges that we can coherently describe Pierre’s situation. However, Kripke claims that we cannot satisfactorily answer the following

question: Does Pierre believe that London is pretty?

◦ Perhaps the puzzle is simply a result of Pierre associating different descriptions with the two names for London? Kripke denies this for the, now familiar, ‘Gell-Mann’/‘Feynman’ reasons. Or, Pierre could even have two sets of descriptions (in French and English) that are translations of one another, but he fails to recognize that they so correspond.

◦ Maybe the translations aren’t right, then.

Aside from the principles of disquotation and translation, only our normal practice of translation of French into English has been used. Since the principles of disquotation and translation seem self-evident, we may be tempted to blame the trouble on the translation of ‘*Londres est jolie*’ as ‘London is pretty’, and ultimately, then, on the translation of ‘*Londres*’ as ‘London’.

But there is no better translation-candidate. And surely we can translate Pierre’s statements about ‘*Londres*’ into English!

And it does no good to keep the original French word ‘*Londres*’ in our English translations. Are we to do this with natural kind terms too? Here recall the Kripke/Putnam points that show similarities between natural kind terms and proper names. Anyway, problem cases like these can arise even within a language — e.g., the ‘Paderewski’ example.

IV.

• What is Kripke’s conclusion? Does he have a solution? Not really:

The primary moral — quite independent of any of the discussion of the first two sections — is that the puzzle is a puzzle. As any theory of truth must deal with the Liar Paradox, so any theory of belief and names must deal with this puzzle.

◦ He insists, though, that the problem is not with substitutivity:

It is wrong to blame unpalatable conclusions about Jones on substitutivity. The reason does not lie in any specific fallacy in the argument but rather in the nature of the realm being entered. Jones’s case is just like Pierre’s: both are in an area where our normal practices of attributing belief, based on the principles of disquotation and translation or on similar principles, are questionable.

Shakespearean: One who believes that codesignative proper names are interchangeable *salva veritate* in belief contexts.

The question at hand was whether belief contexts were ‘Shakespearean’, not whether they were ‘referentially transparent’. (Modal contexts, in my opinion, are ‘Shakespearean’ but ‘referentially opaque’.)

This is because Kripke is taking the failure of interchangeability of definite descriptions *salva veritate* as sufficient for referential opacity.

○ Conclusion:

Rather Jones’s case, like Pierre’s, lies in an area where our normal apparatus for the ascription of belief is placed under the greatest strain and may even break down.