

**Phil 435: Philosophy of Language**

[Handout 7]

**Quine & Kripke  
Reporting Beliefs**

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**W. V. Quine,  
Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes  
(1956)**

**\* The problem:**

\_\_\_ The logical structure of existential quantifier ( $\exists x$ ) is translated as “There is an  $x$ , such that  $x$  is...”. But in some cases there is *nothing* that stands in the relation. If we use this structure to render ‘Ctesias is hunting unicorns’, we’ll get the absurd result of posting non-existing things such as unicorns.

**\* The solution:**

\_\_\_ Separate *notional sense* and *relational sense*

I want that ..., I thought that ..., I wish that ...,

\_\_\_ The subject is having a notion of, or entertaining a proposition expressed by the that-clause.

➔ **notional sense**

I want  $x$ , I desire  $x$ , I think about  $x$ , ...

\_\_\_ The subject is related to an object.

➔ **relational sense**

*Q*: Is “I desire happiness” used in a relational sense or a notional sense? Do I desire something called ‘happiness’ or do I desire *that I am happy*?

**§ Propositional attitudes**

**[propositional attitudes]:**

\_\_\_ A propositional attitude is a relational mental state connecting a person to a proposition. Linguistically, they are denoted by an embedded "that" clause, for example, 'Sally believed that she had won'. [Wikipedia]

**examples: beliefs (believe that ...), thought (think that ...), hopes (hope that...), etc.**

*Q*: What kinds of mental attitudes are *not* propositional?

§ **The Case of Ralph and B. J. Ortcutt** (a very famous example)

**The story:**

There is a certain man in a brown hat whom Ralph has glimpse several times under questionable circumstances. Also there is a gray-haired man, vaguely known to Ralph as rather a pillar of the community, whom Ralph is not aware of having seen except once at the beach. Now Ralph does not know it, but the men are one and the same. Can we say of this man, (Bernard J. Ortcutt, to give him a name) that Ralph believes him to be a spy? Ralph believes that the man in a brown hat is a spy, but he is at the same time ready to say, in all sincerity, "Bernard J. Ortcutt is no spy."

We find ourselves accepting a conjunction of these two belief reports:

- (1) Ralph believes that the man in the brown hat is a spy.
- (2) Ralph does not believe that the man seen on the beach is a spy.

**Q: Does Ralph have contradictory belief of the same person?**

Quine:

\_\_\_ We must treat propositions (expressed by that-clauses) in contexts of propositional attitudes as *referentially opaque*.

\* **Note:**

\_\_\_ **Two expressions with the same reference should be freely exchanged without altering the truth value of the original sentences. When the truth value is preserved after the substitution of two co-referential terms is made, we call it "*salva veritate*" (saving the truth).**

E.g. 'George W. Bush is the current President of the U.S.'



'The former President Bush's oldest son is the current President of the U.S.'

**[referential transparency] / [referentially transparent]**

\_\_\_ A sentence, or more accurately a position in a sentence, is held to be referentially transparent if terms or phrases in that position that refer to the same object can be freely substituted without altering the truth of the sentence. The (non-belief attributing) sentence "Jill kicked X" is naturally read as referentially transparent in this sense. If "Jill kicked the ball" is true, then so also is any sentence in which "the ball" is replaced by a term or phrase that refers to that same ball, e.g., "Jill kicked Davy's favorite birthday present", "Jill kicked the thing we bought at Toys 'R' Us on August 26". [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy]

**[referentially opaque] / [referential opacity]**

\_\_\_ Following Quine, we can say two terms are referentially opaque if they cannot be substituted *salva veritate* (i.e. without changing the truth value of the statement).

(<http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/referentialopacity.html>)

\_\_\_ An **opaque context** is a linguistic context in which it is not possible to substitute co-referential terms while guaranteeing the preservation of truth values. (Wikipedia)

\_\_\_ Sentences, or positions, are referentially opaque just in case they are not transparent, that is, if the substitution of co-referring terms or phrases could potentially alter their truth value. *De dicto* belief attribution is held to be referentially opaque in this sense. On the *de dicto* reading of belief, "Ralph believes that the man in the trench coat is a spy" may be true while "Ralph believes that the mayor is a spy" is false. Likewise, "Lois Lane believes that Superman is strong" may be true while "Lois believes that Clark Kent is strong" is false, even if Superman and Clark Kent are, unbeknownst to Lois, one and the same person. [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy]

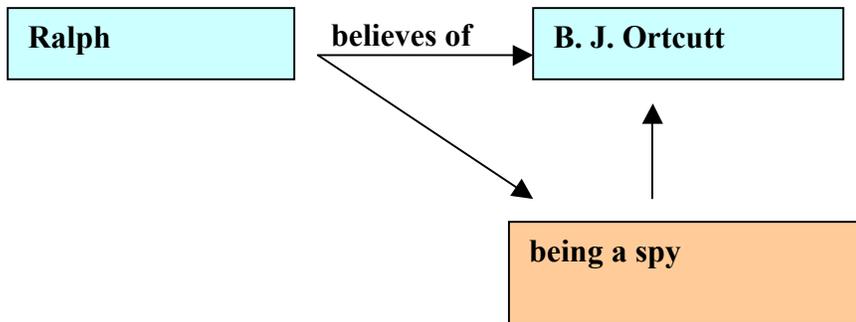
**§ Quine’s Proposal: Two sense of ‘Belief’**

**(1) Belief as a dyadic relation between a believer and a proposition**

e.g.



**(2) Belief as a triadic relation of belief among a believer, an object, and an attribute.**



**Belief in sense (1): the proposition is believed when an object was *specified in one way*, and yet not believed when *the same object was specified in another way*.**

➔ Think about Kripke’s Puzzle

\* **This is a referentially opaque context.**

\*\* **We can call it *de dicto* belief.**

**Belief in sense (2): the belief is *of* a certain object. The believer is related to the object directly.**

**\* This is a referentially transparent context.**

**\*\* We can call it *de re* belief.**

### **§ Solving the Problem**

Ralph does not have contradictory belief of B. J. Orcutt. He has two distinct *de dicto* beliefs: that the man in brown hat is a spy and that the man on the beach is not a spy.

#### **\* Application:**

(3) Lois believes that the Superman can fly.

(4) Lois does not believe that Kent Clark can fly.

(5) Sally believes that Mark Twain was the greatest American author.

(6) Sally does not believe that Samuel Clemens was the greatest American author.

**Q: What does this show about the nature of our belief? How do you approach Kripke's puzzle about belief now?**

\* You may want to check out this site on *de dicto* and *de re* belief ascriptions:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/prop-attitude-reports/dere.html>

**Saul Kripke:  
A Puzzle about Belief  
(1979)**

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**§ Background**

\_\_\_ **Mill's view:**

\_\_\_ A proper name is simply a name. It simply refers to its bearer, and has no other linguistic function. Unlike a definite description (e.g. 'the man with a red nose'), a name does not describe its bearer as possessing any special identifying properties.

\_\_\_ [JeeLoo]: Proper names are not connotative; they denote the individuals who are called by them, but they do not indicate or imply any attributes belonging to those individuals.... Names are simply marks used to enable those individuals to be made subjects of discourse.

➔ **direct reference theory of names**

\_\_\_ **Frege/Russell's view**

\_\_\_ To each proper name, a speaker of the language associates some property (or conjunction of properties) which determines its referent as the unique thing fulfilling the associated property (or properties). [e.g. 'Socrates' = 'the man who was Plato's teacher.')] This property constitutes the 'sense' of the name.

\_\_\_ [JeeLoo]: Different proper names have different *senses*. A name refers not directly to its referent (object), but via the sense or the associated descriptions the speaker has in mind. Traditional description theorists take the *sense* of a name to be a description of the properties the name bearer supposedly has. And it is through *satisfying this description* that the bearer gets to be the referent of the name. So, reference is accomplished through the mediation of the *sense*, or we can say, *intension* determines *extension*.

\* **The contrast:**

If a strict Millian view is correct, then two proper names of the same thing are everywhere interchangeable *salva veritate* but also *salva significance*.

**§ Problem with the Millian View**

[substitution in intensional contexts]:

\_\_\_ **Co-designative proper names are not interchangeable *salva veritate* in modal contexts and in belief contexts.**

\_\_\_ **Therefore, names must express different senses.**

**(i) modal contexts (It is necessary/contingent that ...; it is possible/impossible that ...)**

Note:

**[necessary]: true in all possible worlds; can't be otherwise**

**[contingent]: true in *our* world, but could have been otherwise (could be true in other possible worlds)**

e.g. (Cicero = Tully)  
It is necessary that Cicero is Cicero.  
(?) It is necessary that Cicero is Tully.

(JeeLoo Liu = the instructor for Phil 435 in Spring 2007).  
It is necessary that JeeLoo Liu is JeeLoo Liu.  
~ (It is necessary that the instructor for Phil 435 in Spring 2007 is JeeLoo Liu.)

**(ii) belief contexts**

e.g. (Cicero = Tully)  
John believes that the author of *On Friendship* is Cicero.  
~ (John believes that the author of *On Friendship* is Tully.)

(Mark Twain = Samuel Clemens)  
Sally believes that Mark Twain was the greatest American writer.  
~ (Sally believes that Samuel Clemens was the greatest American writer.)

(Superman = Clark Kent)  
Lois believes that the Superman can fly.  
~ (Lois believes that Clark Kent can fly.)

[JeeLoo]: **There are two arguments that Kripke aims to refute:**

- [I]** 1. If substitution of proper names can be applied in belief contexts, then the truth of a statement should be preserved after the substitution of a proper name by another name that designates the same object.  
2. But it is possible that Jones believes that Cicero is bald while he also rejects the belief that Tully is bald.  
3. Therefore, substitution of proper names is not applicable in belief contexts.

- [II]** 1. If codesignative names have the same sense, then they should be interchangeable in all contexts.  
2. But in belief contexts codesignative names are not interchangeable.  
3. Therefore, codesignative names must have different senses. (Frege is right!)

**§ Kripke's Defense of the Millian View (the Direct Reference View)**

**[A] Rejection of the Modal Argument:  $\Rightarrow$  Naming and Necessity**

**Replacement of a proper name by a codesignative name leaves the modal value (for example, necessarily true or false, contingently true or false) of any sentence unchanged.**

e.g.

'Hesperus is Phosphorus' is a necessary truth.

Because:

- (i) names are "rigid designators" – they designate the same individuals across all possible worlds
- (ii) epistemic questions (about "cognitive values" of a term) should be separate from the metaphysical questions (about identity of things)
- (iii) the identity statement is not *a priori*, but it is nonetheless *necessary*.

**[B] Belief Context****[Frege's Argument]:**

1. Codesignative names are not interchangeable *salva veritate* in belief contexts.
2. Failure of interchangeability of proper names arises from a difference in the defining description the speakers associates with these names.
3. Therefore, different names have different definite descriptions associated with them (these different definite descriptions = their different *senses*).

**[Kripke's Criticism of the Fregean Theory]**

1. For common people, senses are often not uniquely identifying
2. Senses for different names (using an indefinite description) are often identical.

**Kripke:**

\_\_\_ Premise 2 of Frege's argument is false.

The puzzle is a real puzzle. The apparent failure of codesignative names to be interchangeable in belief contexts remains a mystery, but the mystery no longer clearly supports a Fregean view.

**§ The Preliminaries: Two Principles****I. [the disquotation principle]: [PD]**

If a normal English speaker, on reflection, sincerely assents to '*P*', then he/she believes that *P*.

*Q*: Is this principle acceptable? Can it be made into a necessary and sufficient condition (as stated, it is a sufficient condition only)?

\* 'sincerely'  
 \_\_\_ excludes lying, acting, irony, etc.

\* 'on reflection'  
 \_\_\_ exclude linguistic error

→ **A normal English speaker who is not reticent will be disposed to sincere reflexive assent to 'P' iff he believes that P.**

\* 'no reticence'  
 \_\_\_ exclude shying, secrecy, etc.

**[the translation principle]: [PT]**

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).

**§ Kripke's Counterexample: A Puzzle about Belief**

\* **The Purpose:**  
 \_\_\_ to find an example demonstrating the same problem in belief context, that also *does not involve different proper names or different senses, and does not invoke any principle of substitutivity.*

\*\* **The puzzle is a puzzle. One simply cannot make substitution (of any two terms) in belief contexts. [So Frege's argument based on substitution failure in belief contexts does not lend support to his description theory of names.]**

**[The Puzzle about Pierre's Belief]**

The first principle seems to reflect our common practice in talking about others' beliefs.

The second principle seems to be a basic assumption concerning the validity of translation, and one has to accept this assumption unless one is willing to entertain extreme cultural relativism. Based on these principles, Kripke's first puzzle involves a Frenchman Pierre who is attributed the following set of beliefs:

- (1) Pierre believes that London is pretty.
- (2) Pierre believes that London is not pretty.

**[The Puzzle about Peter's Belief]**

The second puzzle that Kripke discusses invokes only the principle of disquotation and no translation is involved. Peter learned the name 'Paderewski' with an identification of a famous pianist; so he would assent to the statement: Paderewski has musical talent. On another occasion, Peter also learned the name 'Paderewski' with an identification of a politician. Since he is skeptical of the musical talent of politicians in general, he would assent to the statement: Paderewski has no musical talent. Unbeknownst to him, however, the musician is the politician. So we get a similar set of contradictory belief reports:

- (3) Peter believes that Paderewski has musical talent.
- (4) Peter believes that Paderewski has no musical talent.

**Q: How do you solve the puzzle?**

\* Note: According to Kripke, to solve the puzzle we don't need a different theory of proper names, but a different theory of belief attribution or interpretation. What do you think?

**§ Conclusion**

**When we enter into the area exemplified by Jones and Pierre, we enter into an area where our normal practices of interpretation and attribution of belief are subjected to the greatest possible strain, perhaps to the point of breakdown. So is the notion of the *content* of someone's assertion, the *proposition* it expresses. In the present state of our knowledge, I think it would be foolish to draw any conclusion, positive or negative, about substitutivity.**

“[Cases like these] lie in an area where our normal apparatus for the ascription of belief is placed under the greatest strain and may even break down. There is even less warrant at the present time, in the absence of a better understanding of the paradoxes of this paper, for the use of alleged failures of substitutivity in belief contexts to draw any significant theoretical conclusion about proper names.”

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**Focus Questions for Essay #5: (Due next week)**

1. Explain Frege's distinction between "sense" and "reference" as it applies to names. Using this distinction, explain Frege's puzzle of identity and what Frege concludes about the nature of identity statements (such as "a = a" or "a = b").
2. How does Frege solve the problem of substitution failure in indirect discourse?