Has Semantics Rested on a Mistake?

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HAS SEMANTICS RESTED ON A MISTAKE?*

GOTTLOB FREGE motivates his famous distinction between
sense and reference by formulating what amounts to a con-
dition of adequacy for a semantic account of singular terms.
Frege's idea is that any such account must provide an answer to a
crucial question concerning the cognitive significance of language:
the question of how identity sentences in which proper names flank
the identity sign can both state truths and be informative. Subse-
quent Fregeans—and in this respect Bertrand Russell was himself a
Fregean—fully concurred that a semantic account should yield an-
swers to questions like Frege's. Indeed Russell's somewhat Fregean
treatment of ordinary proper names, his view that such names are
not really names—not really tagging devices—but rather disguised
definite descriptions, derives from a sensitivity to the sorts of episte-
mic problem one encounters if one treats proper names as John
Stuart Mill's remarks suggest and as Russell himself treats "logically
proper names," as purely designative, or nonconnotative singular
terms. Contemporary neo-Fregeans, moreover, make such epistemic
concerns central to their arguments against the Mill-inspired view
recently called "the new theory of reference." New theorists like
Keith Donnellan, David Kaplan, Saul Kripke, John Perry, and Hilary
Putnam—and my own work falls into this tradition—proffer an ac-

count that, according to their neo-Fregean critics, is insensitive to
the sorts of epistemic puzzle that Frege and Russell took to be cen-
tral. It is a scandal, or so it has seemed, that new theorists argue so
vigorously against Frege's positive account, yet have had so little to
say about the kind of problem that both dominated Frege's attention
and motivated his view.

New theorists have not been unimpressed either with the puzzles
in question or with the argument that the new theory, as Alvin Plan-
tinga says, "founders on these rocks."[1] Indeed they have been too
impressed, too Fregean, or so I shall argue. They have not quite
treated these concerns about cognitive significance as conditions of
adequacy, as do the Fregeans. This would be to give up the game; for
the anti-Fregean approach just doesn't yield an account of cognitive
significance, at least not in any direct, straightforward way. Never-
theless, the anti-Fregeans have at least paid lip service to the need for
a semantic account that does justice to the *Frege puzzles*, as I shall
call them. Indeed a few stabs were even made at showing how the
Frege puzzles were, after all, no problem for the new approach.

The point of this paper is to challenge Frege's condition of ade-
quacy. This condition cannot, however, be challenged in isolation.
That an adequate semantics must be epistemologically sensitive is no
separable, isolable feature of Frege's semantical enterprise, a feature
that might be rejected while retaining the spirit of Frege's approach.
Rejecting Frege's adequacy condition, on the contrary, involves re-
jecting Frege's conception of the semantical enterprise. I will urge
that we replace Frege's conception of semantics with a radically
different conception that was implicit, even if deeply buried, in the
new theory from the outset.

I. THE NEW THEORY OF REFERENCE AND WHY IT HAS SEEMED WRONG

Central to the new theory is the rejection of Frege's explication of
the notion of "proposition" and its replacement by something like
the Russell-Kaplan notion of "singular proposition."[2] Let us, follow-
ing Kaplan, represent such propositions as ordered pairs (more gen-
erally, ordered n-tuples) of the object(s) referred to and the property

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[1] "The Boethean Compromise," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, xv, 2 (April 1978): 129–138, p. 130.

[2] The heart of the new theory is not this notion of proposition, but rather the idea that certain sorts of terms, e.g., names and indexicals, function not to introduce a sense into the proposition, but rather to make it the case that a certain referent is under discussion. This intuitive point—that it is the referent itself, and not some descriptive characterization of it, which figures in what was asserted—might be given a number of theoretical treatments. For purposes of this paper I provisionally adopt the Russell-Kaplan treatment.

(or relation) predicated. Why has this notion of "proposition" been thought to be epistemologically inadequate?

First, there is the problem of nondenoting singular terms.[3] Consider a sincere assertive utterance of 'Vulcan is a large heavenly body', where, unbeknownst to the speaker, 'Vulcan' does not refer. Alternatively, to give an example involving indexicals, one might say, hallucinating a new Apple Macintosh computer across the room, "I want that." The new theorist seems committed to the apparently absurd claim that in such cases, since there is no referent, no complete proposition has been expressed. The contrary—and apparently overwhelming—Fregean intuition is that the thought content of an utterance cannot depend upon whether or not the uttered expressions refer.[4] Along similar lines, such speakers presumably express determinate beliefs. The new theorist cannot account for this, or so it seems, since on his view there are no complete propositions to serve as objects of belief.

A second Frege puzzle concerns the informational content of directly referential singular terms. The new theorist holds that 'Cicero was an orator' and 'Tully was an orator' express the same proposition, that believing what the first sentence expresses just *is* believing what the second expresses. This seems plainly wrong, since the *cognitive* contents of the two sentences seem very different. One can understand both sentences, accept the first as expressing the truth, while not accepting the second. Similarly, the new theorist is committed to the view that 'Cicero = Cicero' and 'Cicero = Tully' express the same proposition. This seems wrong, however, since it is surely plausible to suppose that virtually everyone believes the first proposition, but only a select few believe the second.[5]

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[3] Nondenoting singular terms present several different sorts of problem, some of which are not my concern here. I have nothing to say in the present paper, e.g., about the crucial problem posed by negative existentials, or the related problem of apparently genuine reference to fictional or mythological entities. My motivation for discussing here only what I do discuss is (briefly) as follows. Negative existentials present problems for everyone, not just for the new theorist. The problem I discuss in the text is, by contrast, a problem specifically for the new theorist, a problem over and above any general difficulties about negative existentials. The account of negative existentials, moreover, that I am tentatively attracted to—I develop the beginnings of this briefly in "Did the Greeks Really Worship Zeus?" *Synthese,* LX, 3 (September 1984): 439–449—would be of no help with the problem I discuss in the text.

[4] As Frege notes in his "Introduction to Logic" [*Posthumous Writings,* edited by H. Hermes, F. Kambartel, and F. Kaulbach, translated by P. Long and R. White (Chicago: University Press, 1979)], "the object designated by a proper name seems to be quite inessential to the thought-content of a sentence which contains it" (191).

[5] This is essentially Frege's original problem about informative identities. The first proposition is trivial and uninformative whereas the second contains substantive information. These propositions are, then, not the same.

The new theorist's difficulty here, just as with Frege puzzle 1, has nothing essential to do with proper names. Imagine that I see a man about to be mugged by a prominent philosopher of language. Unbeknownst to me I am witnessing the scene by means of a series of mirrors, and, in fact, *I* am the intended victim. It is plausible that in such a context different propositions are determined by 'He is about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean' and 'I am about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean'. Presumably, in the case described, I believe the first of these propositions, indeed I know it to be true, but not the second.[6]

A third Frege puzzle concerns the explanation of action. If singular propositions are objects of belief, then they ought to figure in explanations of action. Singular propositions, however, as John Perry has emphasized, seem singularly unsuited for such explanations. Consider again utterances of '*He* is about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean' and '*I* am about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean', where he and I, unbeknownst to the speaker, are really one. The beliefs expressed by such utterances typically lead to dramatically different actions. But the propositions believed, at least according to the new theorist, are the same.

Let us characterize in a general way the Fregean argument that these three puzzles embody. The argument proceeds by specifying certain *data* (hereafter, *Frege's data*) concerning the cognitive significance of sentences: that one who utters the "Vulcan" sentence asserts a complete, determinate proposition, or expresses a complete, determinate belief; that one who utters the "Cicero" sentence asserts a different proposition (or expresses a different belief) than one who utters the "Tully" sentence; that when one believes what 'I am about to be attacked . . .' expresses, one characteristically acts differently than one does when one believes what 'He is about to be attacked . . .' expresses. Second, the Fregean advances what I shall call *Frege's insight,* the idea that Frege's data, which seem to be nicely explained by the Fregean hypothesis that singular terms have not only references, but also senses, cannot be accounted for by appeal simply to the level of reference.[7]

II. HOW NOT TO DEVELOP THE NEW THEORY

I shall now consider two strategies that have been employed in defense of the new theory, strategies that maintain that the new theory has within it the resources to account for the cognitive significance of

[6] My example here is essentially Perry's in "The Problem of the Essential Indexical," *Noûs,* XIII, 1 (March 1979): 3–21. In Perry's examples, formulated before the neo-Fregeans mounted their recent counterattacks, the attacker was a bear.

[7] Although I can't discuss it here, it is less than obvious that the Fregean orientation does so well with "Frege's data." See fn 28 below.

language. I believe both strategies are unsatisfactory. Indeed, the first is more or less hopeless, and I mention it only to highlight what needs to be done. The second is more promising. The discussion of why it fails will point toward a new way of looking at the relation between semantics and cognitive significance.

First, the new theorist might bite the bullet. New theorists have indeed been known cheerfully to deny that in the nondenoting-term cases a complete proposition was expressed.[8] Similarly, new theorists have insisted that utterances of the "Cicero" sentence and the corresponding "Tully" sentence are assertions of the same proposition, expressions of the same belief, or, turning to the puzzle of informative identities, that the proposition expressed by 'Cicero is Cicero' is none other than that expressed by 'Cicero is Tully'. Pending some further explanation, however, such insistence surely seems ad hoc and unintuitive. Tyler Burge, in a fit of subtle humor, states that "where 'a' and 'b' are proper names, a belief that $a = b$ is really the same belief as the belief that $a = a$ (so that one believes both or neither) seems to be completely implausible. I shall therefore ignore it."[9] Again, the intuitions to which the Fregean appeals certainly seem substantial.

A much more promising strategy derives from the work of John Perry and David Kaplan. Perry, in his seminal paper "Frege on Demonstratives,"[10] suggests that the apparatus Kaplan developed for the semantics of indexicals might be utilized for the solution of puzzles about cognitive significance. Although Perry's central focus in this paper is not the solution of any of the puzzles I've mentioned, his remarks are intriguing because they suggest a general approach to the problems of cognitive significance.[11]

Perry, unlike other new theorists, recognizes that singular propositions are not adequate to the phenomena of cognitive significance.

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[8] Kaplan once argued in conversation that a "gappy proposition" was expressed. Donnellan in "Speaking of Nothing," *Philosophical Review*, LXXXIII, 1 (January 1974): 3–32, says that in such cases no proposition has been expressed.

[9] "Belief *De Re*," this JOURNAL, LXXIV, 6 (June 1977): 338–362. The quoted remark occurs on p. 354.

[10] *Philosophical Review*, LXXXVI, 4 (October 1977): 474–497.

[11] Neither Perry nor Kaplan (see especially sec. XVII, "Epistemological Remarks," of Kaplan's unpublished monograph *Demonstratives*) developed these ideas in quite the general way that I will explore here. Kaplan emphasized the application to the original puzzle of informative identities, and Perry emphasized the application to the puzzle concerning the explanation of action. Perry's remark in "Frege on Demonstratives," however, that "roles," pretty much Kaplan's "characters," can do the cognitive work of Frege's senses, certainly suggests the generalization I explore here. The idea that this apparatus ought to be of use with regard to the first Frege puzzle occurred to Kenneth Olson and me in a discussion of these questions.

He concedes, moreover, that these phenomena can be explained only by appeal to something very much like Frege's "modes of presentation." Frege's mistake, according to Perry, consisted in taking modes of presentation to be purely qualitative characterizations that, given the facts of the world, apply uniquely to some individual. On this mistaken view, when I say to you, "You look happy," there must be an operative mode of presentation that specifies you in a purely qualitative way, that selects you from everything else in the universe in terms of your qualitative properties—from God's point of view, so to speak. But surely, when I refer to you pronominally, I need have at hand no such purely qualitative way of distinguishing you from everything else. Frege, then, advanced an unrealistic view of modes of presentation, of the cognitive perspectives from which we view the referents of our terms.

Why not, asks Perry, appeal to linguistic meanings, as Kaplan has explicated this notion, for an account of modes of presentation? 'I', e.g., in virtue of its Kaplanian "character," conveys a particular *way of presenting a referent*. 'I' and 'he' may be used to refer to the same thing, but will present it in radically different ways, 'I' as the speaker or writer, 'he' as (roughly) the indicated male. Thus, we can explain the difference in behaviors noted in the third Frege-puzzle in terms of the different linguistic meanings of 'I' and 'he'.

In order to emphasize the non-Fregean character of Perry's proposal, a proposal endorsed and developed by Kaplan, let us note the vast difference between Frege's modes of presentation and those of Perry and Kaplan. The cognitive perspective under which I am presented when I use the first-person pronoun is, according to Perry and Kaplan and contrary to Frege, exactly the same as that under which you are presented when you use 'I'. Since the linguistic meaning of 'I' stays constant from your utterance of it to mine, the way it presents the referent also stays constant. What makes my utterance count as a reference to me, and yours count as a reference to you, are the facts that in one case *I* uttered it, and in the other case *you* did. These are facts not about our mental states, or the senses we apprehend, but about the context of utterance.

A second difference from Frege is that Perry and Kaplan insist that their modes of presentation are not constituents of the propositions expressed. When I refer to myself as "I," in assertively uttering, say, "I am happy," I apprehend myself as the speaker or writer, but this does not mean that I assert that the speaker or writer is happy. What I assert is rather the singular proposition ⟨Wettstein, property of being happy⟩. Thus Perry and Kaplan are led sharply to distinguish the proposition asserted from the speaker's cognitive perspective on

that proposition, or, as Perry often puts it, the proposition believed from the "belief state."

The Perry-Kaplan strategy seems easily generalizable to the other Frege puzzles. Consider the puzzle of nondenoting singular terms. A soldier in an enemy prison camp hallucinates a fellow soldier coming to rescue him. "You are wonderful," he says. I noted above that the new theorist's account of such an example—that no singular proposition is asserted—seems to violate Frege's quite reasonable demand that the thought content of such an utterance should not depend upon which things actually exist. Perry and Kaplan can apparently meet Frege's demand, however; despite the fact that the speaker's words fail to determine a singular proposition, they do determine, in virtue of their linguistic meaning, a definite cognitive state or perspective. In fact, as Frege demanded, the speaker is in exactly the cognitive state in which he would have been had his singular term, 'you', referred.

The new theorist has not quite met the challenge of the first Frege puzzle; for that challenge, as I formulated it in section I above, is to give an account of the proposition asserted or believed in the hallucination case. The new theorist remains committed to denying that there is any proposition asserted or believed in such cases, and on this the Perry-Kaplan-based strategy agrees with the bite-the-bullet strategy. The Perry-Kaplan strategy goes beyond the latter, however, by removing the sting from the Fregean argument. It does this by supplying an account of the indisputable fact that the utterance has cognitive significance. The new theorist can now argue that the Fregean has confused the real datum with the theoretical consequences of the Fregean view. The real datum is not that belief in a determinate proposition is expressed by the utterance in question. It is rather that such an utterance has determinate cognitive content.

Let us turn to the second Frege puzzle. The Fregean maintains that, in some relevant context, the belief expressed by, e.g., "I am about to be attacked," is quite different from that expressed by "He is about to be attacked," even though 'I' and 'he' are coreferential. Armed with the Perry-Kaplan strategy, we can reply that, although there is a single proposition asserted by both utterances, there is indeed a difference in the cognitive significance of the utterances. 'I', in virtue of its linguistic meaning, presents the referent in a very different way than does 'he'. Again, the real datum that underlies the Fregean challenge, the idea that these utterances differ in cognitive significance, has been explained.

Finally, the new theorist can now explain how utterances of identity sentences can express truths and, at the same time, be informa-

tive. Although the singular propositions corresponding to my utterances of 'I = I' and 'I = him' are the same, the relevant cognitive perspectives are very different. The second utterance can be informative since, unlike the first, the modes of presentation associated with 'I' and 'him' are different.

I believe, however, that the Perry-Kaplan strategy, tantalizing as it is with regard to certain well-chosen examples, fails to resolve the Frege puzzles in the general case.[12] I shall first discuss some problems with the application to utterances involving proper names and then return to indexical utterances.

The Perry-Kaplan approach individuates cognitive states by linguistic meanings. The application of this approach to utterances involving names depends, then, upon our grasp of the notion of the linguistic meaning of a name. New theorists, however, haven't told us much about the linguistic meaning of names. Indeed, it might be tempting to think that the new theory, since it holds that names are "purely denotative," that they lack sense, or Millian connotation, holds that names lack linguistic meaning. If so, the Perry-Kaplan approach would be of no use here.

Such a conclusion, however, would be hasty. For one thing, the new theorist need not deny that names have linguistic meanings, only that they have descriptive meanings. For another, the Perry-Kaplan approach can be formulated without mention of linguistic meaning. Cognitive significance, Perry and Kaplan hold, is determined by semantic significance, by the semantic rules that govern the expression. Names, no less than other singular terms, have semantic significance in this sense.

The difficulty, though, is that the new theorists have not yet developed a clear conception of the rules or conventions that govern names. New theorists, following Donnellan and Kripke, typically subscribe to some form of historical explanation (or "causal")[13] theory of names, and it might thus seem that an account of the semantic rules would be forthcoming. The historical-chain approach, however, really is, as Kripke says, a picture rather than a theory. I mean this not only in the, by now, obvious sense that necessary and sufficient conditions for the reference of names have never been given, but in the more basic sense that the historical-chain approach

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[12] Kaplan recognizes this when he says, in sec. XXII of *Demonstratives*, "proper names do not seem to fit into the whole semantical and epistemological scheme as I have developed it [for indexicals]" (98).

[13] Both Donnellan and Kripke have expressed skepticism about whether the view they advance is in any crucial sense a *causal* theory, Donnellan in "Speaking of Nothing," and Kripke in a talk at Stanford University in the spring of 1983.

fails to give us any clear indication of the nature of the rules for names. Indeed—and this is a related point—advocates of this approach have never provided an account of what exactly the *semantic* function of the historical chain is.

One possibility is to treat the chain of communication as a semantic determinant, on a par with the contextual features that determine the reference of an indexical. The reference of a token of the first-person pronoun, e.g., depends upon who produced the token, and this is what the semantic rule for 'I' specifies. Similarly, on the view in question, the reference of a token of 'Aristotle' depends (roughly) upon which individual is historically connected, in the "appropriate" way, to the production of the token (or to the speaker's acquisition of the name), and this is what the semantic rule for 'Aristotle' tells us.

Treating names as similar in this way to indexicals, however, has its drawbacks. New theorists generally, and Kripke specifically, take themselves to be developing Mill's "connotationless tag" conception of names. Talk of historical chains is notably absent from Mill, nor is it, in any obvious way, part of his idea. How, indeed, is Mill's conception of a pure tag supposed to be integrated with the thesis that the reference of a name is determined by a chain of communication? The latter thesis, in giving an important semantic role to the historical chain, apparently must deny that, as Millians sometimes put it, "all there is to the semantics of names is reference."

Kaplan's emphasis on the difference between indexicals and Millian tags highlights the difficulty just noted. Indexicals, he urges, but not Millian tags, have "descriptive meanings," formulable by semantic rules that include the appropriate descriptive information. This is, of course, not to say that the rule gives us the Fregean sense of an indexical. It rather specifies, in descriptive terms, how the reference of the indexical is determined. In Kripke's terms, the description merely fixes the reference of the indexical. If the semantic rules for names incorporate the description, 'the individual that stands in the appropriate historical relation . . .', as they do on the indexical model, then names are not just tags, any more than indexicals are just tags. Perhaps Kripke gives voice to this intuition when, at least in some passages, he expresses skepticism that any description might play even the meager semantical role of fixing the reference of a name.[14]

[14] This is not, of course, to say that a name cannot be *introduced* by a reference-fixing description. The point is rather that no such description stays attached to a name as the determinant of its reference. Kripke's views on this question are complex, and difficult to unravel completely. See footnote 38, p. 88, of *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1980). Perhaps it is not altogether clear that

There are difficulties, then, with this construal of the semantic
rules governing names. It is far from clear, moreover, that this con-
strual of the semantic rules, even if correct, would be adaptable to
the Perry-Kaplan treatment of cognitive significance. It is one thing
to suggest that the semantic rule governing the first-person pronoun
captures the cognitive perspective of one who utters it. Perhaps I do
cognize myself as "the speaker" when I use 'I'. It is quite another to
suppose that everyone who uses 'Aristotle' to refer to the ancient
Greek philosopher must be thinking of him as "the individual who
stands in the appropriate historical relation. . . ." Most competent
users of that name have never even heard of the Donnellan-Kripke
account of names and do not think of the referents of names in such
terms. Nor is there much reason to suppose that even one who
believes that the semantic rule in question is correct typically thinks
of, say, Aristotle in this way. Perhaps the rule accurately represents
the *semantics* of 'Aristotle', although for reasons given in the last
paragraph I doubt it. If it does, however, then the idea that *semantic
rules* capture *cognitive significance* seems to break down.

Let us sketch an alternative treatment of the semantics of names,
one that takes more seriously the idea that the semantic significance
of a name is exhausted by its reference. There is a suggestion in
Kaplan's *Demonstratives,* a suggestion recently developed by Joseph
Almog, that the historical chains play a "pre-semantic" role, and that
the semantics of a name is completely specified by noting its refer-
ent.[15] Such a suggestion fits better with Mill's "tag" picture, and even
with some of Kripke's more Millian remarks. Here we have the mak-
ings of a very different account of the semantic conventions for
names. Those conventions do not specify the referents of names in
terms of historical chains. They simply specify a referent for each
name. A referent is *assigned* directly to each name.

We have seen that the first, "indexical," model for thinking about
the semantic rules governing names was not adaptable to the Perry-
Kaplan treatment of cognitive significance. How about the present,
"assignment" model? Again, the Perry-Kaplan approach runs into
grave difficulty. If the semantic significance of a name consists simply
in the fact that it has a certain referent, then if two names have the

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he is opposed to such a view. My point is that very little is clear about the historical-
chain approach, at this level of refinement.

   [15] Kaplan and Almog give different accounts of the pre-semantic role. See Ka-
plan's discussion in sec. xx of *Demonstratives, op. cit.,* and especially fn 42 (119),
and Almog's paper, "Semantical Anthropology," in P. French, T. Uehling, and H.
Wettstein, eds., *Midwest Studies in Philosophy,* vol. IX (Minneapolis: Minnesota
UP, 1984), pp. 479–490.

same referent, they have the same semantic significance. If, however, the names have the same *semantic* significance, then, on the Perry-Kaplan approach they have the same *cognitive* significance. Accordingly, the Perry-Kaplan proposal cannot explain the Frege puzzles, when these are formulated with proper names.

The application of the Perry-Kaplan strategy to the case of proper names, then, presents severe difficulties. Even if we restrict our attention to cases involving indexicals, however, the Perry-Kaplan approach is not in the end satisfactory. The crucial problem for this account, given its thesis that cognitive states are to be individuated by linguistic meanings, is revealed by examples in which synonymous utterances differ in cognitive significance.

Imagine two utterances of 'He is about to be attacked', where a single individual is being referred to, but where it is not at all obvious that this is so. Indeed, let us suppose, it appears to both the speaker and his auditors that two very different individuals are being referred to. No doubt the cognitive significance of these utterances is dramatically different. One who understands these utterances might take only one of them to express a truth. This is, of course, the second Frege puzzle again. The third puzzle arises here as well; for one might well behave in one way if one takes the first utterance to be true and in quite a different way if one takes the second to be true. Perry and Kaplan *ought to say* that two different cognitive states are in question. If cognitive states, however, are to be individuated by linguistic meanings, then Perry and Kaplan cannot say that there are different cognitive states in question, since there is no difference in linguistic meaning. Thus they cannot explain "Frege's data" here.[16]

[16] One might try to resist the idea that these utterances differ in cognitive significance, in which case the present sort of example would not show that cognitive significance fails to be explicable in terms of linguistic meaning. One might insist, e.g., as Perry did recently in conversation, that the cognitive role of these two sentences—or utterances—is the same. It's just that so much else about the cognitive states of the person in question is different in the two contexts that we can account for his willingness to affirm one remark and unwillingness to affirm the other without supposing that the very remark in question has a different cognitive value in the two contexts. Whatever the ultimate virtue of such a move, it employs a very different idea of cognitive significance than does Frege—or, especially significant here, does Perry in "Frege on Demonstratives," or does Kaplan in *Demonstratives*. Perry, in "Frege on Demonstratives," (explicitly) following Frege, counts two utterances as different in cognitive significance if someone who understands both affirms the first but is unwilling to affirm the second. Indeed, Perry considers several examples that are essentially like the one I utilize in the text, and concludes, as I do, that the same sentence has different cognitive values. (See the "Enterprise" and "Morning Star" examples, pp. 483/4.) Perry somehow never makes the connection between these examples and his thesis expressed later in the paper that "we can take senses to be 'roles'," that cognitive significance can be accounted for in

The same problem arises with regard to Frege's original problem about informative identities. The Perry-Kaplan approach can handle informative cases of 'I = he', but what about 'He = he'? Imagine that our speaker is watching a rock singer from the hallway outside an auditorium. The singer is so outfitted and made up that one cannot tell from his right profile and from his left profile that the same person is in question. Our speaker first observes him from a small window in a door on the side of the auditorium and then walks to another doorway and sees what he takes to be an entirely different performer, performing in what he takes to be a different auditorium. We point out to him, "He (dragging our original speaker down the hall) is the same person as he is," or "That one is none other than that one." The cognitive significance of the first 'he' is clearly different than that of the second, but, again, the Perry-Kaplan approach cannot explain this since the term occurs twice with the same linguistic meaning.[17]

III. SEMANTICS AND COGNITIVE SIGNIFICANCE: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

The Perry-Kaplan approach, despite its shortcomings, points the way

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terms of linguistic meaning. These examples, however, make it clear that "roles," linguistic meanings, cannot be made to do the cognitive work of senses.

[17] One might try heroically to save the Perry-Kaplan approach by arguing that, contrary to what I take to be plain horse sense, not all (deictic) occurrences of, e.g., the demonstrative 'that' have the same linguistic meaning. Kaplan, although he no longer holds such a view, argued in *Demonstratives* that, e.g., the informativeness of 'That = that' should be explained by positing a difference in linguistic meaning or character between the first occurrence of the demonstrative and the second.

An interesting suggestion, made by a reader for this JOURNAL, is that there is a broader notion than "linguistic meaning" that deserves to be called "meaning"— for it is very much tied to public communicative conventions—and yet may capture cognitive significance. One who understands a use of a demonstrative grasps not just the linguistic meaning, but rather the "meaning" of the demonstrative-cum-ostension, ostension being a rule-governed practice. This broader notion of meaning can be pressed into cognitive service. Utterances will differ in cognitive significance if there is a relevant difference in the ostendings.

This proposal captures something of the spirit of Kaplan's intuition that there is a kind of incompleteness to demonstratives ('this', 'that', 'he', 'she'), as opposed to "pure indexicals" ('I', 'now'), an incompleteness that requires a "demonstration," e.g., a pointing gesture. Let me briefly mention some problems. First, ostending is inessential to the use of demonstratives, and it remains to be seen how this approach would generalize to cases in which there is no gesture, or in which there could be no gesture (e.g., demonstrative references to remarks people make or to someone who has just left the room). I discuss this and related matters more fully in "How to Bridge the Gap between Meaning and Reference," *Synthese*, LVIII, 1 (January 1984): 63–84. Second, this broader notion of "meaning" is both too coarse-grained and, at the same time too fine-grained. It is too coarse-grained because the speaker might utter the same sentence on two occasions with the same (or relevantly similar) sort of pointing gesture and still the cognitive significance of the utterances might be obviously different. It is also too fine-grained. Take a case in which "He = he" is trivial. It won't matter that the respective gestures were a bit different, or even very different.

to a new perspective on the problems of cognitive significance. I begin by reformulating that approach in a way that will bring out its novelty better than do Perry's formulations or Kaplan's. Perry and Kaplan offer us a distinction between propositions believed and cognitive states, or, as they both often put it, thoughts apprehended, on one hand, and cognitive perspectives on those thoughts, on the other. The former way of putting the point stands in need of clarification, but the latter is, to my mind, positively misleading.[18]

Let us review some of the properties of the Perry-Kaplan "thoughts," or singular propositions. First, such thoughts are individuated by the referents of the singular terms used, along with the properties (or relations) predicated. Second, a closely related point: Among the *constituents* of these thoughts or propositions are the referents of the singular terms, things like you and me, as well as the properties predicated. Third, in virtue of the way these thoughts or propositions are individuated, it is quite possible for a competent and attentive speaker to assert the same thought on two occasions, without being in any position to realize this. Ignorant of the Cicero-Tully identity, he may comment, "Cicero is often referred to by Quine," as well as "Tully is often referred to by Quine," while mistakenly, but quite reasonably, taking himself to be expressing two very different thoughts. Similarly, it is quite possible for one to accept and reject the same thought without being in any way illogical. Our speaker may affirm "Cicero is an orator," while denying "Tully is an orator."

What peculiar "thoughts" these are! Perhaps it was somewhat misleading even for Frege to use the term 'thought' as he does, since 'thought' may suggest presence in the mind. Frege, however, is on much safer ground than is the new theorist, for Frege's "thoughts" are at least relevant to explaining various cognitive phenomena. Indeed, if the new theorist adopts this vocabulary of "thoughts," then when he rightly admits that an utterance of, say, 'Vulcan is my favorite planet' fails to express such a thought, he might seem to be admitting that the utterance has no "thought content," i.e., that it is without cognitive significance. I suggest, then, that the Perry-Kaplan insight is better expressed if we drop all talk of thoughts. Talk of singular *propositions* is less misleading, but perhaps not entirely so.

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[18] Because it is so misleading to refer to singular propositions as thoughts, I have not done so in my exposition of the Perry-Kaplan view to this point. Perry and Kaplan repeatedly do so, however. See Perry's remarks, e.g., in "Frege on Demonstratives," where he thinks of himself as introducing a "new notion of thought" (p. 482), and Kaplan's, e.g., in sec. XVII, "Epistemological Remarks," in *Demonstratives*.

The Perry-Kaplan thoughts or propositions are more like *states of affairs* than they are like anything we might reasonably call thoughts, nor are they much like those putative entities that have been called propositions, entities constituted by something like concepts. Talk of states of affairs is also pedagogically useful here, because it facilitates distinguishing what is going on the side of the world from what is going on on the side of the mind. States of affairs, of course, are not exactly "out in the world," for presumably they are abstract entities. They are, however, abstract entities that are composed of objects that are out in the world, objects like you and me, as well as of properties.

This is not to say that the notion of state of affairs is unproblematic. Indeed, on some views, states of affairs, being abstract entities, cannot contain individuals, any more than propositions can. Nevertheless, there is a view of states of affairs that is congenial to the Perry-Kaplan picture. As Ruth Barcan Marcus[19] notes:

> Knowing and believing have been characterized as "propositional attitudes." The vagaries of the many uses of 'proposition' have been a considerable source of epistemological confusion. There is a seemingly naive as well as much maligned view, to which I subscribe, Russell's for example, where knowing and believing are attitudes toward states of affairs (not necessarily actual), which may have individuals and attributes as constituents. The "propositional content" of a sentence on an occasion of use is (are) the (those) state(s) of affairs that would make that sentence true (504).

My point here is not that Marcus's idea furnishes the best way to work out the anti-Fregean intuition that the referent itself, rather than a concept of it, figures in what was said. We would, I think, probably do better without states of affairs *or* singular propositions, indeed, without any unified upshot of an act of assertion, i.e., the proposition or state of affairs asserted, and without any unified entity to serve as the object of belief. I have in mind here another Russellian theme: the idea that, when I believe that Aristotle is smart, there is no entity that is the thing believed, e.g., the proposition *that Aristotle is smart*, but rather (roughly) that I am related by the belief relation to Aristotle himself and to the property of being smart.[20] In

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[19] "A Proposed Solution to a Puzzle about Belief," in French, Uehling, and Wettstein, eds. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. VI (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1981).

[20] As Russell says, in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism," in Robert Charles Marsh, ed., *Logic and Knowledge: Essays 1901–1950* (New York: Macmillan, 1956), "It is not accurate to say 'I believe the proposition p' and to regard the occurrence as a twofold relation between me and p . . . the belief does not really

any case, this is not the place to pursue this theme, which would take us far from our current concern with the Perry-Kaplan approach, according to which there are singular propositions, which are unified objects of belief and assertion. Still, states-of-affairs talk is at least often pedagogically superior to singular-propositions talk, and so I will frequently utilize it in what follows.

Adopting states-of-affairs talk, we can sharply distinguish the state of affairs determined by an utterance from the speaker's cognitive perspective on that state of affairs. The three features of the new theorist's "thoughts" mentioned above, features that seemed very strange indeed as features of thoughts and may even have seemed strange as features of propositions, now become quite natural features of states of affairs. First, they are to be individuated in terms of objects and properties. Second, those objects and properties are the very constituents of the states of affairs. Finally, a competent, attentive speaker may affirm the existence of the same state of affairs on two occasions without having the slightest clue that these are the same. How should such a speaker, after all, know that he affirms the same state of affairs when he says "Cicero is often referred to by Quine," as when he says "Tully is often referred to by Quine." Similarly, he may both affirm and deny what is, unbeknownst to him, the same state of affairs when he says, e.g., "Cicero was an orator, but Tully was certainly not."

So much for my reformulation of the Perry-Kaplan approach. What can we learn from that approach? The most important lesson is the crucial distinction between states of affairs and the ways in which they are cognized. Perry and Kaplan express this distinction confusedly when they refer to the former as "thoughts." They err further when they take the latter to be retrievable from the sentences uttered. Nevertheless, the landscape has been altered. In place of the Fregean picture according to which cognitive significance is to be absorbed into the proposition, we now have a distinction between singular propositions (or states of affairs) on the side of the world, and cognitive perspectives on the side of the mind.

This new picture gives a sensitive hearing to Frege's original problem. One thrust of Frege's opening remarks in "On Sense and Reference" was completely correct. Notions like "singular proposition" and "state of affairs" are just not adequate to the *cognitive* signifi-

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contain a proposition as a constituent but only contains the constituents of the proposition as constituents" (p. 224). Another and more radical suggestion involves denying that believing is a relation at all. I develop this in a forth-existing paper (based on existing talks), "Bringing Belief down to Earth."

cance of language. Having seen this, Frege went on to reject (a view
of a piece with) the new theory, for he believed that an adequate
semantic account must explain cognitive significance. Perry and Ka-
plan, anti-Fregean in other respects, approach the question of cog-
nitive significance under the influence of Frege. Semantics, they
agree, must provide an account of cognitive significance. They object
to Frege's criticism of the new theory, however, for they believe that
the new theory's semantic account is indeed adequate to the cogni-
tive problems. Admittedly, cognitive significance cannot be ex-
plained by reference to singular propositions, but it can be explained
by reference to another notion available from the new theorist's
repertoire, the notion of linguistic meaning, explicated along the
lines indicated by Kaplan.

I have, however, rejected the Perry-Kaplan attempt to explain
cognitive significance. Linguistic meanings, I have urged, will not in
general do the job. Am I not admitting, then, that the new theorist's
semantic account fails to provide anything like a solution to the
cognitive puzzles? Isn't this in violation of Frege's condition of ade-
quacy? My suggestion is that at this point we make a more radical
break with Frege's outlook. The new theorist should reject Frege's
adequacy condition outright.

Why did Frege take it for granted that semantics ought to provide
an explanation of cognitive significance? Frege, unlike the new
theorist, was not concerned—or at least not primarily concerned—
with what we might call the *anthropology* of those institutional ar-
rangements which constitute natural language, the uncovering of the
semantic rules that govern our linguistic practices.[21] His main inter-
est was rather in thought contents, in the "eternal structure of
thought," as Tyler Burge puts it.[22] Michael Dummett attributes the
following three theses to Frege: "first, that the goal of philosophy is
the analysis of the structure of *thought;* second, that the study of
thought is to be sharply distinguished from the study of the psycho-
logical process of *thinking;* and, finally, that the only proper method
for analysing thought consists in the analysis of language."[23] We
don't have to imagine Frege's reaction to a proposed semantic ac-
count that, from his point of view, leaves opaque the relation be-
tween language and thought contents, e.g., one that fails to explain

[21] I borrow the term 'anthropology', as used in this connection, from Kaplan, who
used it in his 1982 Pacific APA response to John Searle to characterize the nature of
Kripke's study of proper names.
[22] "Sinning against Frege," *Philosophical Review,* LXXXVIII, 3 (July 1979):
398–442. The quotation is from p. 398.
[23] *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1978), p. 458.

the fact that 'Hesperus = Hesperus' and 'Hesperus = Phosphorus' express different thought contents. To leave the cognitive significance of language untouched is, for Frege, to leave the philosophical study of language virtually untouched.

There is here a fundamental, but not generally appreciated, contrast between Frege's conception of semantics and that of the new theorist. It is easy to see, and new theorists have repeatedly pointed out, that the new theory contrasts with Frege's approach in its rejection of senses and in its substitution of a more direct picture of the language-reality relation. More fundamental, however, is the distinct project the new theorist advances for semantics. Where Frege's primary focus was on the connection between language and the mind, or, more accurately, between language and objective thought contents, the new theorist is largely unconcerned with matters cognitive. His interest is in the connection between language and the world, the realm of referents. He is doing the anthropology of our institutions of natural language, and he wants to understand the institutionalized conventions in accordance with which our terms refer. Indeed, many of the new theorist's arguments against Frege take the form of pointing out that the sense-reference model, no matter what its apparent advantages with regard to problems of cognitive significance, just cannot be correct since it is incompatible with actual linguistic practice.

New theorists, often not keenly aware of this fundamental difference between what they were, in fact, doing and Frege's project, have been embarrassed by the failure of their positive account to be responsive to the problems of cognitive significance. These problems seemed to them, given their Fregean upbringing, crucial for the semantics of natural language. Given the perspective just delineated, however, there was little reason to think that the new approach to semantics would have any immediate implications for the problems of cognitive significance, and, therefore, no reason to be embarrassed by this failure. There is no reason to suppose that, in general, if we successfully uncover the institutionalized conventions governing the references of our terms, we will have captured the ways in which speakers think about their referents.

Examples concerning names and indexicals help to concretize the point. Let us suppose for a moment that Mill, unadorned with causal-historical chains, gave the correct account of the conventions regarding names. These conventions associate names not with properties, but directly with individuals. Notice that this account gives us no help at all with the question of a particular speaker's cognitive perspective on the referent of a name he utters. Nor, as noted above,

does the Donnellan-Kripke historical-chain variant illuminate the cognitive significance of names. That account, like the unadorned Millian view, attempts to specify the conditions under which an utterance of a name counts as a reference to an individual. It does not attempt to characterize, nor does it characterize, a speaker's way of thinking about the referent of a name. We do not typically think of Aristotle as "the individual who stands in the appropriate historical relation. . . ."

Consider the following three competing accounts of the semantics of 'that'.

(1) The reference of 'that' is the unique individual that stands in the appropriate causal relation to the utterance of 'that'.

(2) The reference of 'that' is the unique individual that the speaker has in mind in uttering 'that'.

(3) The reference of 'that' is the unique individual that is indicated by the cues that are available to the competent and attentive addressee (where the relevant cues include pointing gestures, the fact that some individual is perceptually salient, etc.)[24]

The debate between the proponents of (1), (2), and (3) concerns the question of which rule governs our linguistic practice. It does not concern, nor does it have any obvious implications for, the question of how speakers cognize the referents of their demonstratives. None of these rules gives us a plausible candidate for that role.

I have argued that there is no prima facie reason to suppose that the rule of reference for an expression should provide the key to speakers' cognitive perspectives on the reference of that expression. A look at some plausible candidates for being the correct rules has, moreover, reinforced the point. Leading candidates for correct rules, at least for names and demonstratives like 'that', don't, on the face of it, provide characterizations of speakers' cognitive perspectives. Considerations concerning the epistemic status of semantic rules reinforce the point further. Notice that the rules that govern our referential practices need to be *uncovered* by the anthropological semanticist. There is an important sense in which masters of a

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[24] The first of these rules, consistent with a genuine causal theory of reference, is of a piece with the views of Michael Devitt in his *Designation* (New York: Columbia, 1981). The second applies to demonstratives the view defended by Donnellan with regard to proper names and definite descriptions. Donnellan, in conversation, has argued for this sort of rule for demonstratives. The last rule is in line with the view I defend in "How to Bridge the Gap between Meaning and Reference."

practice, in this case, competent speakers, often, even typically, do not "know" the rules that govern the practice, in this case, the semantic rules. Perfectly competent speakers are often in no position *either* to specify the rules that determine the references of expressions *or even* to select a correct rule from a list of plausible candidates. Consider the three competing accounts of the semantics of 'that'. Most people would have no idea which of these rules, if any, governs our practice, or, indeed, how one would go about finding out. How plausible is it, then, to take the rule, so far removed from consciousness, as specifying the way the speaker is thinking about his referent?[25]

Imagine that Jones is attending a lecture given by a great mathematician. After hearing the lecture, Jones says, "That is a brilliant man," gesturing to the mathematician. Is it at all plausible to suppose that how Jones is thinking about the mathematician is affected by which rule in fact correctly specifies the semantics of 'that' as he uses it? The differences between these rules emerge only with respect to recherché cases about which Jones has probably never even thought. Why should Jones's membership in a community that uses the demonstrative in one of these ways rather than another affect how he thinks about the mathematician?[26]

It was natural for Frege, given his conception of the semantic enterprise, to require that an adequate semantic account yield the epistemological riches in question. Remarks like Dummett's "a theory of meaning is a theory of understanding," John Searle's "the philosophy of language is a branch of the philosophy of mind," and Stephen Schiffer's "the basis of a theory of reference must . . . be a theory of the thought in the mind of a person using a singular term," all issue from such a perspective.[27] The seeds of a radically different

[25] None of this precludes, I suppose, some sort of "implicit knowledge" of such rules. Perhaps such rules are "encoded" in our brains. This is not, however, germane to the present discussion, so far as I can see. Perhaps an omniscient god could "read" the rules directly from my brain, but I cannot. So it is hard to see how the rule can be taken to specify how I am thinking about the referent.

[26] Tyler Burge, in "Individualism and the Mental," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, IV (1979): 73–122, argues that the thoughts and beliefs we attribute to an agent reflect not only his own "psychological states narrowly conceived," but also social facts, including facts about how his linguistic community employs its terms. It is not clear to me that the different rules I am imagining would engender a difference in cognitive states, even according to Burge. In any case, Burge's intriguing view, which clearly cannot be investigated here, appears to rest upon assumptions that I do not share about the semantics of belief sentences.

[27] Dummett, in *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1981), attributes this remark to his earlier *Frege: Philosophy of Language* (London: Duckworth, 1973), without citing a page reference. Searle's remark is from *Intentionality* (New York: Cambridge, 1983), p. vi. Schiffer's can be found

conception of semantics can be found in the work of the new theo-
rists. An account of linguistic meaning is no longer to be seen as an
account of anything like what the competent speaker understands by
his terms, but rather as an account of the practices he has mastered.
Given this new, quasi-Wittgensteinian perspective, the most natural
course for the new theorist is not to accept the burden of Frege's
epistemological condition of adequacy and then try to show that
somehow we can retrieve an account of cognitive significance from
our new semantic account, as Perry and Kaplan do. The most natural
course for the new theorist, given the nature of his project, is to
reject outright Frege's condition of adequacy. The problems of cog-
nitive significance are real and important, but their solution does not
lie within the province of semantics, at least not as the new theorist
conceives, or ought to conceive, his subject.[28]

    AFTERWORD: BELIEF SENTENCES AND COGNITIVE SIGNIFICANCE
I have argued that the new theorist, qua semanticist, need not worry
about the problems of cognitive significance. There are, however,
closely related puzzles that cannot be excised from semantics. My
remarks have been restricted to simple, unembedded sentences.
What about the well-known puzzles concerning belief sentences and
other attitudinal embeddings, the genuinely semantic problem, for
example, created by the alleged fact that substituting one name for
another in the embedded sentence of a belief report often fails to
preserve truth? If 'John believes that Cicero was an orator' expresses
a truth, then so should the corresponding "Tully" sentence, accord-
ing to the new theorist. But, urges the Fregean, if John assents to
'Cicero was an orator', but forcefully dissents from 'Tully was an
orator', the respective belief reports will have different truth values.
    Attitudinal embeddings seem to be a place where cognitive and
semantic questions converge. These sentences might therefore seem
to place great strain on my idea that we can separate semantic ques-
tions from questions concerning cognitive significance. Nor does my
apparatus—the distinction between states of affairs, linguistic
meanings, and cognitive perspectives—promise any immediate solu-
tion to this semantic problem. What can be said here on behalf of the

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on p. 171 of his paper "The Basis of Reference," *Erkenntnis*, XIII, 1 (July 1978):
171–206.
    [28] Perry, especially in "The Problem of the Essential Indexical," argues convinc-
ingly that the Fregean orientation runs into severe problems even in the area of
cognitive significance. These arguments of Perry, based upon the work of Hector-
Neri Castaneda, ought to make us even more suspicious about Frege's epistemo-
logical condition of adequacy. Not even the Fregean orientation, motivated by such
epistemological concerns, can provide the wanted epistemological results.

new theorist? Unfortunately, the questions involved take far more space than I have, and so I can only indicate the direction of my thinking.

New theorists should not respond, as some have,[29] by denying the putative Fregean datum that, in the sort of example considered above, the truth values of the respective belief sentences differ. This response has all the charm of biting the bullet. Perhaps the data here are less than absolutely hard, but it is far from clear that the Fregean intuition is mistaken. New theorists' arguments against Frege often give great weight to ordinary intuitions about truth values, and so they ought not to dismiss the apparently unfriendly intuitions to which Fregeans appeal here. The consequences of those intuitions, however, may not be what they have seemed.

It is interesting to note, to begin with, that the Fregean argument from belief sentences depends upon a highly selective view of the "data." Perhaps our practices of substituting one name for another are not nearly as liberal as the new theory seems to demand. They are not nearly as restrictive, however, as Fregeans would lead us to believe. In many, many ordinary contexts of reporting what other people say, think, believe, and so on, substitutions of embedded singular terms preserve truth, and so do substitutions of names for other names, even names for definite descriptions, definite descriptions for names, or definite descriptions for definite descriptions, as the following examples illustrate.

Nigel, an Englishman, says "Tully was an orator" (imagine that the British use only this name for Cicero—Nigel has never heard the name 'Cicero'), and I report him to you (an American who has never heard the name 'Tully') as believing that "Cicero was an orator." Tom, a new faculty member, is told about all the new funding that the dean has arranged for faculty research. He says, not having any idea of who the dean is, "The dean is obviously very smart." I report to Barbara that Tom believes that Mike is very smart or that Jonathan's soccer coach is very smart (in case Barbara, say, characteristically refers to the relevant individual as "Mike" or is most familiar with him in his role as Jonathan's coach).[30]

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[29] Thomas McKay, in "On Proper Names in Belief Ascriptions," *Philosophical Studies*, XXXIX, 3 (April 1981): 287–303, denies "Frege's datum" here. See also Kripke's discussion in "A Puzzle about Belief," in Avishai Margalit, ed., *Meaning and Use* (Boston: Reidel, 1979), pp. 234–283. Recently both Nathan Salmon and Scott Soames, the latter in a 1985 Pacific APA symposium with David Kaplan and John Perry, have advanced such a response.

[30] For a case in which a definite description is substituted for a name, let Barbara use the name 'Mike', and let me, the reporter, use the definite description in reporting Barbara's belief to Tom. The truth-preserving substitutions that involve

Such substitutions, at least in the sorts of context indicated, are perfectly acceptable. Nor do we, in making such substitutions, have to worry about preserving or reporting the Fregean sense of the original remarks.[31] In such contexts at least, the truth or falsity of the report depends not upon accurately capturing the Fregean thought believed, but simply upon correctly formulating who it is the believer has a belief about and what the believer believes about him. New theorists, also selective in their choice of data, have occasionally appealed to such examples as defeating the Fregean orientation and as establishing their own notion of a singular proposition as the object of belief.[32] Belief reports have thus sometimes been seen as the main battleground between the Fregean and the anti-Fregean.[33]

I believe that this aspect of the debate has been misguided. Belief reports are extremely resistant to neat theoretical treatment—and this is so on either the Fregean or the anti-Fregean orientation. Perhaps a neat treatment is not even possible if, as Kripke suggests in

definite descriptions are particularly interesting, since not only Fregeans but just about everyone has assumed that such substitutions ought not to preserve truth. This shows, I think, that we've virtually all had the wrong idea about the semantics of attitude reports. I develop these themes in "Bringing Belief down to Earth."

[31] In some cases this may present no problem for the Fregean. Jones says, "Reagan is a Republican," and someone reports him as believing that the President is a Republican. This may present no problem for the Fregean (even though, let us assume, 'the President' does not formulate the sense of the name 'Reagan') for the reporter may be assuming (perhaps with good reason) first, that Jones also believes that Reagan is President and so Jones, no doubt, believes that the President is a Republican. The reporter, that is, may not be trying to report precisely the same belief that the believer expressed by his original utterance. This will accommodate certain examples, but will surely not accommodate all. Similar remarks apply to the new theorist with respect to truth-preserving substitutions involving definite descriptions, substitutions that ought not to preserve truth even according to the new theorist.

Another possible move on behalf of the Fregean is to bite the bullet and insist that the sorts of substitution discussed in the text do not preserve truth. My report of Nigel's belief, then, is false, although useful or conversationally acceptable. This denial of the putative data, however, exactly parallels the move of some new theorists discussed above (fn 29), and seems similarly objectionable.

[32] John Perry does so in "The Problem of the Essential Indexical," pp. 9/10.

[33] Nor does substitutivity cause the only problems for either approach. John sincerely says, "Vulcan is a large heavenly body." The problem for the new theorist is not one of substituting some other term for John's 'Vulcan'. The problem is that even reporting him in his own words seems to attribute to him a relation to a *nonexistent* singular proposition. Problem for the Fregean: since listeners, at least in many cases, do not know which Fregean senses speakers attach to the names they utter and, therefore, do not know which propositions those speakers express when they use names, there is a problem about how it is possible to report the beliefs so expressed. This clearly requires more exposition than I can give here, and I will provide it elsewhere. Kripke discusses such problems for the Fregean in "A Puzzle about Belief."

"A Puzzle about Belief," there are deep puzzles and paradoxes sur-
rounding our reporting practices. Belief sentences, as Kripke em-
phasizes, present problems for all sides.[34]

I want to recommend a more fruitful and natural battleground:
the study of simple, unembedded sentences. Before concluding with
such a recommendation, however, I will offer something of a diag-
nosis, a suspicion about the (or at least a) source of the problems
created by belief reports. My diagnosis will further motivate the
policy of not giving pride of place to belief reports.

My diagnosis begins with the thought that the problems posed by
belief sentences derive from the thesis, jointly accepted by Fregeans
and new theorists, that belief sentences report propositional content
believed, that 'S believes that p' attributes to S belief in the proposi-
tion denoted by 'that p'. Such an account of belief sentences is
natural enough, but it is not inevitable, even granting that belief
consists in a relation to a proposition. Ordinary reports are, after all,
ordinary reports, and it's not obvious ahead of time that our report-
ing practices must be aimed at the philosophically favored purpose
of capturing propositional content believed. One might, then, de-
fend a Fregean account of propositions or a Kaplan-Russell account,
along with the idea that belief consists in a relation to a proposition,
and still deny that ordinary belief sentences report the content be-
lieved.

Nor is this just a theoretical point. Both accounts of propositional
content, when embedded in the traditional picture of belief sen-
tences as reporting propositions believed, face recalcitrant data. This
complicated array of data[35] thus suggests that what is reported is not
(at least not exclusively) propositional content believed. Indeed, the
truth of belief reports does not seem to depend upon *any* single sort
of factor. What the relevant factors are, moreover, seems highly
context-dependent, dependent, that is, upon the communicative
purpose for which the report was issued. Sometimes what predomi-
nates is the end of indicating the referent of the belief, that is, what

[34] In "Bringing Belief down to Earth" I expand on these remarks, as well as on the
diagnosis offered below. I argue that neither Fregeans nor new theorists have done
very well with attitudinal embeddings. A Fregean exception is John Searle. My
diagnosis has been partly inspired by Searle's discussion in "Referential and Attrib-
utive," in his *Expression and Meaning* (New York: Cambridge, 1979), pp.
137–161. See especially sec. 3.4, *"De Re* and *De Dicto."* I further argue that the
social character of our reporting practices, emphasized by W. V. Quine in, e.g.,
Word and Object (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 218/9, and briefly
discussed below, provides a key to the well-known puzzles, as well as to more
substantive questions about belief.

[35] I have in mind here not only the substitutivity data adduced by both sides, but
also the other sorts of relevant data mentioned in fn 33 above.

the belief is about, along with the property predicated. These, of course, are the contexts in which truth is preserved by the substitutions in question. On other occasions, those to which Fregeans have drawn attention, a report can be false even if it gets the reference and predication correct, false because it, in effect, puts the wrong words in the believer's mouth or the wrong ways of thinking about the referent into his head. These, of course, are just a sample of the sorts of relevant factors.

Fregeans and new theorists, not particularly attuned to the social character of our reporting practices, have generally taken for granted the traditional view of belief sentences. Giving up the traditional view may open the door to a more adequate account of the semantics of attitudinal embeddings.[36] Whether either or both approaches are adequate to the explanation of all the data remains, of course, to be seen. We ought not to be too quick in ruling out either orientation because of as yet inadequate treatment of belief reports. This suggests, what seems plausible anyway, that such embeddings are not the obvious starting points for the semantics of natural language.

Turning to problems of cognitive significance, it is far from obvious that belief reports even constitute the natural place to begin one's study of these phenomena.[37] I say this in part because of how difficult and messy the study of attitudinal embeddings turns out to be. A more important reason, however, is my suspicion that the substitutivity puzzles, and related problems, do not exclusively, or even centrally, reflect difficulties about the cognitive significance of the embedded singular terms. That 'Cicero' and 'Tully' play different cognitive roles for many people is a fact about the cognitive significance of these names. That 'Cicero = Tully' is often informative is a fact about the cognitive significance of that sentence. What about the fact that with respect to 'John believes that Cicero was an orator' there are some contexts in which we can substitute 'Tully' for 'Cicero', *salva veritate*, as in the Nigel case above, and other contexts in which such substitution fails to preserve truth? Is this a fact about the cognitive significance of the names? Or is it rather a fact

[36] As it has for Searle, in the paper noted above. I have doubts about the final adequacy of Searle's approach to the data, but I believe that it represents an important advance.

[37] Can one really study the cognitive significance of simple sentences without in effect, studying the semantics of additudinal embedding? Answer: clearly, yes! In doing the former one will make *use* of cognitive notions, but will not have to provide a semantics for the terms that express such notions. Why should one have to provide a semantics, clearly a very difficult task, in order to use the notions?

about the social and communicative purposes served by belief reports? Indeed, if we had a good explanation of the cognitive significance of the names, if we had, for example, a general idea about how the explanation of the informativeness of identity ought to proceed, would that automatically explain the substitutivity phenomena, the explanation of which would seem to involve a central social component? Conversely, if we had an account of the substitutivity phenomena, an account that centrally involved the social character of belief reports, is it obvious that this would explain the cognitive significance of the names for the believer?

It is interesting to note that the Perry-Kaplan strategy, explicitly an approach to cognitive significance, was aimed at providing an account of the cognitive significance exclusively of simple sentences.[38] It is perhaps even more interesting to note that Frege, as opposed to some recent neo-Fregeans, seems to locate the central problem of cognitive significance at the level of simple, unembedded sentences. His objection, at the beginning of "On Sense and Reference," to a view that is of a piece with the new theory, is *not* that it cannot handle *belief contexts*. It is rather that the view cannot handle the cognitive significance of simple, unembedded sentences, specifically the informativeness of factually true identity sentences in which the names flank the identity sign. I believe that this is where the Fregean should focus his attack. Blunting the force of such a Fregean attack has been the point of this paper.

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[38] Belief sentences are not, e.g., treated in Kaplan's *Demonstratives* or in Perry's "The Problem of the Essential Indexical."