WHAT-IS-SAID BY BELIEF ASCRIPTIONS

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Varieties of Meaning and Content
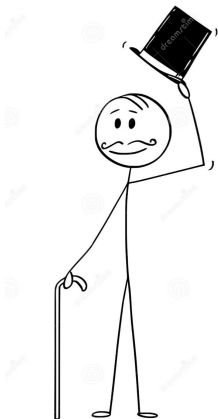
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THE QUESTION

How can Millians solve Frege's Puzzle once and for all?

Millianism: the semantic content of a proper name is only its reference.

Ex.

'Eric Blair' ➡️

FREGE'S PUZZLE

1) 'Aadya believes that Eric Blair was born in Motihari.' ➤ true

2) 'Aadya believes that George Orwell was born in Motihari.' ➤ false

3) Aadya doesn't know that Eric Blair is George Orwell.

❖ If Millianism is correct, then 'Eric Blair' ('EB') and 'George Orwell' ('GO') have the same semantic content.

❖ Assuming the Principle of Compositionality, 1 and 2 have the same semantic content.

❖ Therefore, Millianism entails a contradiction.

FREGE'S PUZZLE: PAST SOLUTIONS

❖ Many different attempts to solve the problem

❖ Each attempt is problematic in a way or another.

FREGE'S PUZZLE: NEW SOLUTION!

Hybrid View (for lack of better name)

Assumptions:

A.1 Millianism is correct about the **semantic content** of proper names.

- What matters for the truth-value of 'EB was born in Motihari' is EB and the property of being born in Motihari;
- Other properties, such as being the son Charles Blair, being the author of *1984*, etc. are not relevant (Modal Argument).

A.2 Millianism is incorrect about the **belief content** of proper names.

- Frege's Puzzle cases.

FREGE'S PUZZLE: NEW SOLUTION!

Hybrid View (for lack of better name)

Assumptions:

B.1 Fregeanism (a version of) is correct about the **belief content** of proper names.

- Frege's Puzzle cases.

B.2 Fregeanism is incorrect about the **semantic content** of proper names.
- What matters for the truth-value of 'EB was born in Motihari' is EB, the property of being born in Motihari, and some other property used to pick out EB, such as *being the son of Charles Blair, being the author of 1984*, etc.
- Modal profile of sentence with proper names (Modal Argument)

FREGE'S PUZZLE: NEW SOLUTION!

Hybrid View (for lack of better name)

Assumptions:

C Principle of Compositionality

- The semantic content of 'Fa' is a function of the semantic content of 'F' and 'a';
- 'EB was born in Motihari' = 'GO was born in Motihari';
- 1 = 2.

HYBRID VIEW: AN OVERVIEW

❖ Semantic content ≠ belief content;

❖ Semantic content of 'EB' = 'GO' =

❖ Belief content of 'EB' and 'GO' can be different, though not necessarily so. It depends on the context.

HYBRID VIEW: AN OVERVIEW

How does the belief content of a name depend on the context?

Example 1: Frege's Puzzle context

- We know Aadya has different ways of thinking (modes of presentation – mops) of   ;
- We also know that she doesn't know that they are different mops of the same person;

- We know he believes that   was born in Motihari under one mop but not under the other.

HYBRID VIEW: AN OVERVIEW

Mops:

the son of Charles Blair ≪ *SON* ≫
The author of 1984 ≪ *AUTHOR* ≫

Aadya's belief box

≪ *SON, born in Motihari* ≫   ≪ *AUTHOR, born in Motihari* ≫

HYBRID VIEW: AN OVERVIEW

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Example 1: Frege's Puzzle context

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- We know he believes that was born in Motihari under one mop but not under the other.

- ≠ proper names have the purpose of highlighting the aforementioned facts;

- To fit such a purpose, each name gets associated with a different mop;

    Ex.   'Eric Blair'   ➤ ≪ *SON* ≫

          'George Orwell'   ➤ ≪ *AUTHOR* ≫

EXAMPLE 1: FREGE'S PUZZLE CONTEXT

❖ How we want to "look at" or evaluate Aadya's mental life – namely, highlighting different mops – makes 'EB;' and

'GO' be associated with different mops of

❖ I call this 'evaluative interest';

❖ Thus, which mop is associated with a name depends on the evaluative interest in the context.

HYBRID VIEW: AN OVERVIEW

Which mop is associated with a name may change with changes in context;

Example 2: Counting context.

> "Jon and I are making a list of people Aadya believes were born in Motihari and those who she doesn't. We go through several names (Mary, Alice, etc.). Then we get to George Orwell, and we consider the question: 'Does Aadya believe that George Orwell was born in Motihari?' "

EXAMPLE 2: COUNTING CONTEXT

❖ We know the same things as before:

   ▪ Aadya has different ways of thinking (modes of presentation – mops) of ;

   ▪ We also know that she doesn't know that they are different mops of the same person;

   ▪ We know he believes that was born in Motihari under one mop but not under the other;

❖ Relevant knowledge:

   ▪ We know that there's a mop of , namely, ≪ *SON* ≫, under which she believes he was born in Motihari;

   ▪ Any name **we** know is about the same person as Aadya's mop serves the purpose;

   ▪ 'GO' is such a name;

   ▪ Therefore: 'George Orwell'   ➤   ≪ *SON* ≫

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EXAMPLE 2: COUNTING CONTEXT

❖ How we want to "look at" or evaluate Aadya's mental life – namely, highlighting the fact that there's a mop of under which she believes he was born in Motihari – makes 'EB' and 'GO' be associated with the same mop ≪ *SON* ≫

❖ Which mop is associated with a name may change if there are changes in the evaluative interest in contexts;

   ▪ Evaluative interest: **purpose of the conversation** (highlighting the fact that Aadya has different mops of and that she believes he is born in Motihari under one but not under the other) and **background beliefs** (that Aadya has different mops the same person without knowing, that she would call him by the name 'EB' if she sees him in a school reunion but 'GO' if it's in a book reading, etc.).

❖ ≠ evaluative interests in Frege's Puzzle and Counting context → ≠ mops associated with 'GO'.

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING FREGE'S PUZZLE

1) Aadya believes that Eric Blair was born in Motihari. ➤ true

2) Aadya believes that George Orwell was born in Motihari. ➤ false

❖ In Frege's Puzzle context, 'EB' and 'GO' are associated with different mops because the interested is in precisely in highlighting the different mops

❖ 1 is **true** because 'EB' is associated with ≪ *SON* ≫ and this mop is in Aadya's belief box;

❖ 2 is **false** because 'GO' is associated with ≪ *AUTHOR*≫ and this mop is NOT in Aadya's belief box.

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING FREGE'S PUZZLE

Problem: 1 and 2 have the same semantic content but different truth-value. **Contradiction!**

Solution: relativize the truth-value of belief ascriptions to a new parameter, an **evaluative perspective**.

- To evaluate 1, we look at Aadya's mental life from the perspective of which mop would come to her mind when she hears the name 'EB' or the name she'd use to express a belief the content of which contains ≪ SON ≫. In short, that's a perspective of *the mop of 'EB' for Aadya* ➤ evaluative perspective *e1*.

- To evaluate 2, we look at Aadya's mental life from the perspective of which mop would come to her mind when she hears the name 'GO' or the name she'd use to express a belief the content of which contains ≪ AUTHOR ≫. In short, that's a perspective of *the mop of 'GO' for Aadya* ➤ evaluative perspective *e2*.

- 1 is true in *e1*.

- 2 is true in *e2*.

- No contradiction because 1 and 2 get different truth-values in different parameters of evaluation.

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

Problem: 2 has the same semantic content in Frege's Puzzle and Counting but different truth-values. **Contradiction!**

Solution: relativize the truth-value of belief ascriptions to a new parameter, an **evaluative perspective**.

- To evaluate 2 in FP, we look at Aadya's mental life from the perspective of which mop would come to her mind when she hears the name 'GO' or the name she'd use to express a belief the content of which contains ≪ AUTHOR ≫. In short, that's a perspective of *the mop of 'GO' for Aadya* ➤ evaluative perspective e2.

- To evaluate 2 in Counting, we look at Aadya's mental life from the perspective of all mops she has of .

  In short, that's a perspective of *any of Aadya's mop of* *for Aadya* ➤ evaluative perspective e3.

- 2 is false in *e2*; 2 is true in *e3*.

- No contradiction because 2 gets different truth-values in different parameters of evaluation.

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

Paderewski case:

> "Mary first met Paderewski in a music hall after attending one of his concerts and formed the belief that Paderewski is a great musician. After some time, Mary was introduced to Paderewski again at a political rally. She did not recognize Paderewski as someone she had met before, and when considering the belief that Paderewski is a great musician, she concludes, perhaps unwarrantedly, that she does not believe it."

❖ Does Mary believe that Paderewski is a great musician?

❖ Is 4) 'Mary believes that Paderewski is a great musician' true or false?

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

Paderewski case:

❖ Does Mary believe that Paderewski is a great musician?

　❖ Under one mop (≪ *MUSIC HALL* ≫), yes. Under the other (≪ POLITICIAN ≫), no.

Mary's belief box

≪ *MUSIC HALL*, be a great musician≫　　　≪ *POLITICIAN*, be a great musician≫

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

Paderewski case:

❖ Is 4) 'Mary believes that Paderewski is a great musician' true or false?

    4) 'Mary believes that Paderewski is a great musician' ➤ true if we keep in mind the first encounter

        4 is true in e4

    4) 'Mary believes that Paderewski is a great musician' ➤ false if we keep in mind the second encounter

        4 is false in e5

    ▪ "keep in mind" is an evaluative perspective;

No contradiction.

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

London/Londres case:

> "Pierre, who only speaks French, learned the name 'Londres' by seeing a picture of a nice neighborhood in London, and formed the belief that London is pretty. He later moves to an ugly neighborhood in London, without speaking English, and learns that the name of the city he lives in is 'London'. When considering the belief that London is pretty, he concludes that he does not believe it."

❖ Does Pierre believe that London is pretty?

❖ Is 5 true or false?

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

London/Londres case:

❖ Does Pierre believe that London is pretty?

    ❖ Under one mop (≪ *PICTURE* ≫), yes. Under the other (≪ LIVE IN ≫), no.

Pierre's belief box

≪ *PICTURE*, be pretty≫

≪ *LIVE IN*, be pretty≫

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

London/Londres case:

❖ Is 5 true or false?

    5) 'Pierre believes that London is pretty'   ➤ true if we keep in mind the first encounter (picture)

        5 is true in e6

    5) 'Pierre believes that London is pretty'   ➤ false if we keep in mind the second encounter (moving in)

        5 is true in e7

    ▪ "keep in mind" is an evaluative perspective;

No contradiction.

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

But…

❖ Does Mary believe that Paderewski is a great musician without context? Does Pierre believe that London is pretty

context? Does Aadya believe that Eric Blair/George Orwell was born in Motihari without context?

❖ Are 1, 2, 4, and 5 true or false *simpliciter*?

   1) 'Aadya believes that Eric Blair was born in Motihari.'

   2) 'Aadya believes that Eric Blair was born in Motihari.'

   4) 'Mary believes that Paderewski is a great musician.'

   5) 'Pierre believes that London is pretty.'

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

❖ Those are ill-formed questions in my view.

"It is worth reminding ourselves that frequently, when we report someone's beliefs, we do so in response to a question about the person's view on a *topic*, and not in response to a question of the form 'Does the person believe that *p*, or not?' That is, frequently, the question to which we are responding is focused on the person's stance toward a topic and not toward a specific sentence. When this is so, our response frequently takes the form of a narrative in which belief sentences – in the philosopher's sense, sentences of the form '*x* believes that *p*' – are embedded with other sentences, some of which may not even be explicitly psychological in character, but **which set a scene, describe a context, or provide relevant background**. Judging from the surface of our practice, the narrative surrounding belief sentences frequently is not mere embellishment but is integral to conveying what we wish to convey about the person's outlook."

Wallace & Mason (1990, p.182)

"On some thought experiments about mind and meaning"

HYBRID VIEW: SOLVING OTHER PROBLEMS

Thank you!