
DO BELIEF REPORTS REPORT BELIEFS?

BY

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Abstract: The traditional puzzles about belief reports puzzles rest on a certain seemingly innocuous assumption, that 'that'-clauses specify belief contents. The main theories of belief reports also rest on this "Specification Assumption", that for a belief report of the form 'A believes that p' to be true, the proposition that p must be among the things A believes. I use Kripke's Paderewski case to call the Specification Assumption into question. Giving up that assumption offers prospects for an intuitively more plausible approach to the semantics of belief reports. But this approach must confront a puzzle of its own: it turns out that every case is a Paderewski case, at least potentially.

Short Version

My thesis is very simple: belief reports do not report beliefs. But that needlessly sounds paradoxical. What I mean is that a belief report does not do quite what it appears to do, namely, say what someone believes. That is, it does not specify what the person believes but merely describes it. (1), for example, though true,

- (1) The Joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is a wimp.

does not specify something the Joker thinks. For if it did do that, then (2) would be true too,

- (2) The Joker thinks that Batman is a wimp.

since the proposition that Batman is a wimp is the same (singular) propo-

sition as the proposition that Bruce Wayne is a wimp. But (2) is false – the Joker does *not* think that Batman is a wimp. QED: Belief reports do not specify beliefs but merely describe them.

Long Version

The problem of belief reports (and other attitude attributions) has puzzled philosophers of language for over a century. There are basically two kinds of puzzle cases: those with and those without substitution. Substitution cases, of the Hesperus/Phosphorus, Cicero/Tully, Leningrad/St Petersburg, and Superman/Clark Kent variety, are illustrated by (1) and (2):

- | | |
|---|---------|
| (1) The joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is a wimp | [true] |
| (2) The joker thinks that Batman is a wimp | [false] |

In these cases replacing a term with another, co-referring term changes the belief report's content turning a true belief report into a false one. The problem is how to explain this.

Why does this need to be explained? Because given certain plausible, widely held principles – Semantic Innocence, Semantic Compositionality, and Direct Reference – which we will assume for the sake of discussion, it seems impossible that (2) could be false while (1) is true. It seems that substituting the name 'Batman' for 'Bruce Wayne' could never affect the truth value of sentences in which they occur (if used, not mentioned). If, for example, Batman is not a wimp, then Bruce Wayne is not a wimp (he might act like one but that's irrelevant). But if the Joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is a wimp, as (1) says, then how can (2) not be true too? How could it be false that he thinks that Batman is a wimp? Given our principles, and given that Bruce Wayne is Batman, (2) seems to have the joker believing the same thing as (1) does, in which case (2) should be true too. Yet the substitution here does affect truth value – belief contexts are opaque. So how is this opacity possible?

Assumed Principles

1. *Direct reference*: Singular terms contribute their referents to propositions expressed by sentences in which they occur.
2. *Semantic Innocence*: Embedding a term in a 'that' – clause does not change its semantic value.
3. *Semantic Compositionality*: The semantic value of a semantically composite expression is a function of its structure and the semantic values of its constituents.

1. *Four Familiar Approaches*

The effect of substitution cannot be explained by citing the believer's relation to the particular terms that occur in the two belief sentences. The difference between (1) and (2), for example, need not have anything to do with the Joker's relation to the names 'Bruce Wayne' and 'Batman,' for they can differ in import even if the Joker has no familiarity with these (or any) names for the individual in question. The difference between what (1) and what (2) report might correspond, for example, to the difference between a tuxedo and a batsuit.

There have been four main ways in which philosophers have tried to explain (or in one case explain away) the opacity of belief reports. These correspond to four different theories of belief reports: the Fregean, the quotationalist-sententialist, the hidden-indexical, and the neo-Russellian theories. As we will see, none of them solves the problem of opacity. They do not keep opacity from leading to paradox (clash of irresistible intuitions with immovable principles). Three of the four give up at least one principle, and the fourth tries to explain away the anti-substitution intuition.

FREGEAN

According to Frege (1892), (2) can differ from (1) in truth value because embedding affects reference – an embedded term refers not to its “customary” reference but to its “customary” sense, which in this context is its “indirect” reference. Frege would have claimed that 'Batman' in (2) does not have the same semantic value as 'Bruce Wayne' in (1), and that would explain how (2) could be false even though (1) is true. His ingenious idea complies with Compositionality but only at the expense of violating Innocence (it also conflicts with direct reference). One cost of this violation is illustrated by (1+),

(1+) The Joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is a wimp, but he is not.

where the pronoun 'he', which is anaphoric on the name 'Bruce Wayne,' is being used, and used literally, to refer to Bruce Wayne. Frege's theory predicts that it refers to the sense of the name 'Bruce Wayne,' not to Bruce Wayne himself. This difficulty may not be insuperable, but it illustrates why denying semantic innocence just doesn't ring true.

QUOTATIONALIST-SENTENTIALIST

Popular several decades ago, mostly among those of positivist bent, the metalinguistic or quotationalist-sententialist view also violates Innocence, for it claims that a 'that'-clause refers to a sentence. On the simplest version

of this view, an embedded sentence refers to itself. On more lavish versions, an embedded sentence refers to a sentence in the believer's language, perhaps in his mental language. The quotationalist-sententialist view respects Compositionality – it holds that the constituents of a 'that'-clause also refer to linguistic items – but, as with Frege's view, its denial that they refer to their ordinary referents is naked violation of Innocence.

Historically, the quotationalist-sententialist view seems to have been motivated by an aversion to propositions. It seems to me, though, that philosophy of language should not let metaphysical considerations so easily trump semantic ones, if only because a language might have bad metaphysics built into it. One might have scruples about the objective character of moral or aesthetic values, for example, but this should not lead one to suppose that adjectives like 'good' or 'beautiful' are to be treated differently, from a semantic point of view, from 'round' or 'reptilian'. Also, the quotationalist-sententialist view has the same sort of problem with (1+) that Frege's view has. The pronoun 'he' in (1+), which is anaphoric on 'Bruce Wayne,' is not used to refer to the name 'Bruce Wayne' or to any other name of Bruce Wayne. It is being used to refer to Bruce Wayne himself. This fact becomes something of a mystery on the quotationalist-sententialist view.

HIDDEN-INDEXICAL

Introduced by Schiffer (1977), revived by Crimmins and Perry (1989), and developed by Crimmins (1992), the hidden-indexical theory respects Innocence by holding that an embedded sentence refers to the same proposition that it expresses unembedded. According to this theory, what explains how (1) and (2) can differ in truth value (and content) is not what they say explicitly, about *what* the Joker believes, but what they say implicitly, about *how* he believes it. (1) and (2) have him believing the same proposition but not taking it in the same way, and their different truth values (and contents) are relative to these different, implicitly referred to, ways of taking that proposition. The beliefs that (1) and (2) impute to the Joker differ not in their content, the singular proposition that Bruce Wayne/Batman is a wimp, but in the way in which he is being said to be taking that proposition.

Unfortunately, it seems that for the hidden-indexical theory to preserve Innocence it must give up Compositionality. It may assert that a certain way of taking the proposition expressed by the 'that'-clause is an "unarticulated constituent" of the proposition expressed by the entire belief report, but there is no syntactic basis for this contention. A sentence of the form 'S believes that *a* is F' contains no empty category (in the linguist's sense) for this alleged unarticulated constituent. So it is gratuitous from a linguistic point of view to suppose that such a belief sentence expresses

a proposition containing an unarticulated constituent for a way of taking the proposition expressed by its 'that'-clause. Crimmins claims that there are counter-examples to what he calls the "Principle of Full Articulation" (1992, pp. 15–21). Sentences like 'Fred is ready' and 'Jerry has finished,' for example, are each missing an argument. But it doesn't follow that they express propositions with unarticulated constituents – they might not express propositions at all. Crimmins implicitly assumes that if a sentence is used to convey a proposition, it must have a proposition as its semantic value. He does not consider the possibility that such sentences are semantically incomplete and simply fail to express complete propositions (for discussion of this idea see Bach 1994).

Violating compositionality is not the only trouble with the hidden-indexical theory. As Schiffer (1992) has argued (see also Bach 1993), its claim that belief reporters make reference to ways of taking propositions is not plausible psychologically. But the fundamental problem, also raised by Schiffer, is that the hidden-indexical theory implausibly treats 'believes' (and other verbs of propositional attitude) as expressing a triadic relation rather than the dyadic relation which, from a linguistic point of view, it appears to express.

This last problem is avoided by a variant of the hidden-indexical theory that was suggested originally by Schiffer (1977) and has since been developed by Recanati (1993, ch.18). This version treats the belief relation as the dyadic relation it appears to be, by claiming that 'that'-clauses are contextually sensitive. In particular, instead of claiming that a belief report with a 'that'-clause of the form 'a is F' refers explicitly to a singular proposition, $\langle a, F \rangle$, and tacitly to a way of taking that proposition, $\langle m_a, m_F \rangle$, it claims that the 'that'-clause itself refers to a "quasi-singular," mode-of-presentation-containing proposition of the form, $\langle \langle m_a, a \rangle, \langle m_F, F \rangle \rangle$. This notational variant of the hidden-indexical theory might be called the "overt-indexical" theory, since the 'that'-clause itself is claimed to be the vehicle of reference to modes of presentation. In this way the overt-indexical theory preserves Compositionality but, unfortunately, only at the expense of Innocence – it claims that embedded sentences undergo a shift in reference (in the case of a singular sentence of the form 'a is F,' referring to a quasi-singular rather to a singular proposition).

NEO-RUSSELLIAN

This view (Salmon 1986, 1987, Soames 1987, 1988) aims to respect Innocence (as well as Direct Reference) without violating Compositionality. The neo-Russellian theory agrees with the hidden-indexical theory that the 'that'-clause in a singular belief report refers to the singular proposition that the agent is being said to believe. It agrees further that to believe a proposition is to believe it under some mode of presentation – one must take the

proposition in some way or another. But the neo-Russellian theory denies that ways of taking propositions enter into the semantic contents of belief reports. For, as noted above, nothing in ordinary belief sentences encodes information about ways of taking propositions (or modes of presentation of their constituents).

To avoid giving up any of our three principles, neo-Russellians bite the bullet and reject the anti-substitution intuition – they deny that (2) can be false while (1) is true. Instead, they claim that (2) must be true if (1) is, but that ordinarily we wouldn't assert (2). That is, if the Joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is a wimp, he thinks that Batman is a wimp, regardless of what we – or he – would say. What we say is sensitive to a pragmatic “requirement that the reporter be maximally faithful to the words of the agent unless there is reason to deviate” (Soames 1988, p. 123). Relying on their pragmatic strategy, neo-Russellians contend that the common intuition stems from a confusion between what a sentence like (2) says and what uttering it conveys, namely that the believer accepts the sentence embedded in the ‘that’-clause or otherwise takes the proposition expressed by that sentence in a way that is pragmatically associated with that sentence. In the box below, where all four views are schematized, the representation of the neo-Russellian view has modes of presentation in brackets, indicating that they are not part of the semantic content of the belief sentence.

Four Theories of Belief Reports	
	<i>Form of described belief (that a is F)</i>
1. Fregean	$\langle m_a, m_F \rangle$
2. Quotationist/sententialist	$\langle 'a', 'F' \rangle$
3. Hidden-indexical	$\langle a, F \rangle, \langle m_a, m_F \rangle$
4. Neo-Russellian	$\langle a, F \rangle, [\langle m_a, m_F \rangle]$

One counter-intuitive consequence of their pragmatic strategy is that neo-Russellians must deny that negative reports like (2-) are literally true:

(2-) The Joker does not think that Batman is a wimp.

They would claim that there *is* a way of taking the proposition that Batman is a wimp, the one pragmatically conveyed by an utterance of (1), whereby the Joker *does* think that Batman is a wimp. Similarly, to vary the verb, they would say that if (1d) is true,

(1d) The Joker doubts that Bruce Wayne is a threat.

then so is

(2d) The Joker doubts that Batman is a threat.

and that if (1f) is true,

(1f) The Joker fears that Bruce Wayne is Batman.

then so is

(2f) The Joker fears that Batman is Batman.

In every case, neo-Russellians will explain away any anti-substitution intuition, no matter how strong, by distinguishing the proposition referred to by 'that'-clause from the way of taking it which, in Salmon's phrase, is merely "pragmatically imparted."

The neo-Russellian approach has met with considerable scepticism. Mark Richard suggests that it would take "bribery, threats, hypnosis, or the like . . . to get most people" to regard pairs of sentences like (1) and (2) as the same in content (1990, p. 125). Substitution in attitude contexts seems to be able to turn into a falsehood, especially with verbs like 'doubt' or 'fear,' as above, or with 'forget,' 'know,' 'notice,' 'suspect,' or 'realize.' So, for example, it seems just plain false that the Joker, even though he realizes that Bruce Wayne is rich, realizes that Batman is rich. He might suspect that Batman is onto him without suspecting that Bruce Wayne is. So the effect of substitution does not seem to be merely pragmatic, at least not in the way suggested by the neo-Russellian theory.

2. *Rejecting the Specification Assumption*

Both the hidden-indexical and the neo-Russellian theories exploit the distinction between the "what" and the "how" of belief, between propositions and ways of taking them. In so doing, they assume that the 'that'-clause in a belief report specifies the thing that the believer must believe if the belief report is to be true. Indeed, this assumption about the role of 'that'-clauses in belief reports is shared by all four theories considered above, despite their differences. I call this the Specification Assumption. In my view, it is the real trouble with all four theories. Its pernicious effect is evident from the dilemma that is presented by the theoretical choices considered so far: we must choose between a solution which assigns special, *ad hoc* semantic roles to terms in belief contexts and one which implausibly rejects the intuitive explanation of why the puzzle arises in the first place.

The Specification Assumption is an essential ingredient of what generically may be called the relational analysis of belief reports. This must be distinguished from the relational analysis of *belief*, which says that belief (and other propositional attitudes) is a relation to a proposition (opinions differ, of course, on the nature of propositions). The relational analysis of belief reports (RABR), which is shared by three of the above four views, the quotationalist-sententialist view excepted, says that a belief report (or attribution of any other propositional attitude) has just the logical form it appears to have: it expresses a relation between a person and a proposition, its 'that'-clause refers to a proposition, and this 'that'-clause specifies something that the person is being said to believe. On this analysis, a belief report of the form 'A believes that S' (we are not talking about ones with nominal complements, like 'Art believes Goldbach's Conjecture') cannot be true unless the proposition that S is among the things that A believes (on the quotationalist-sententialist view this is a sentence rather than a proposition).

The Relational Analysis of Belief Reports

1. *Relationalism*: Belief reports express relations between persons and propositions.
2. *Propositionalism*: The semantic value of a 'that' -clause is a proposition.
3. *Specification Assumption*: Belief reports specify belief contents, i.e., to be true a belief report must specify a proposition the person believes.

The RABR is not generally argued for but it is widely held, as indicated by the following representative quotations:

The Relational Analysis of Belief Reports: Apt Quotations

Tyler Burge: Sentences about propositional attitudes . . . have the logical form of a relation . . . between a person . . . and something indicated by the nominal expression following the propositional attitude verb. (1980, p.55)

Jerry Fodor: Propositional attitudes should be analyzed as relations. In particular, the verb in a sentence like 'John believes it's raining' expresses a relation between John and something else, and a token of that sentence is true if John stands in the belief-relation to that thing. (1981, p.178)

Stephen Schiffer: Believing [is] the relation expressed by 'believes' in a sentence of the form 'x believes that S.' The 'that'-clause ... is a referential singular term whose reference is a proposition. (1992, pp. 491 and 505)

Scott Soames: Propositions are objects of the attitudes . . . ; that is, these attitudes are relations to propositions. . . . To believe that S is to believe the proposition that S. (1988, pp. 105-6)

Robert Stalnaker: The semantics of belief attributions seems . . . very simple: the transitive verb *believe* expresses a relation between a person . . . and a proposition denoted by the sentential complement. (1988, pp.140-41)

RABR is intuitively appealing because it reflects the apparent logical form of belief sentences. In particular, it explains what appears to be the formal validity of inferences like the following:

- | | <i>Apparent logical form</i> |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 11. Art believes everything that Bart says. | $(x)(Sbx \supset Bax)$ |
| Bart says that Nixon was a crook. | Sbp |
| ∴ Abelieves that Nixon was a crook. | ∴ Bap |
| 12. Art believes that Paderewski had musical talent. | Bap |
| Bart believes that Paderewski had musical talent. | Bbp |
| ∴ There is something that Art and Bart both believe. | ∴ $(\exists x)(Bax \ \& \ Bbx)$ |

Given RABR, these inferences have the indicated forms and are formally valid. However, there is a problem with its third tenet, the Specification Assumption. It turns out that these inferences do not have the indicated forms and are not formally valid.

In order to appreciate what is wrong with this assumption, we need to consider the kind of puzzle case, introduced by Kripke (1979), that arises without substitution:

- (3) Peter believes that Paderewski had musical talent.
- (4) Peter disbelieves that Paderewski had musical talent.

As Kripke puts the problem, Peter uses the name 'Paderewski' for what he takes to be two different individuals. However, as noted earlier with

the substitution problem, it is inessential to the problem that the believer have any familiarity with the name in question or have any name at all for the object of belief. Uses of (3) and (4) could be prompted by Peter's reaction to two different photographs, for example. Whatever the details, the problem posed by (3) and (4) is to explain, given that Peter doesn't realize that Paderewski the statesman is Paderewski the pianist, how (3) and (4) can both be true (not that both would be uttered in the same context without qualification). They seem to have Peter believing and disbelieving the same thing. If the following inference is formally valid, that is, if its steps are correctly represented by the forms on the right,

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| I3. Peter believes that Paderewski had musical talent. | Bap |
| Peter disbelieves that Paderewski had musical talent. | Dap |
| There is something that Peter both | |
| ∴ believes and disbelieves. | ∴ (∃x)(Bax & Dax) |

then (3) and (4) do have Peter believing and disbelieving the same thing. But this seems incorrect. After all, Peter is not being illogical – he does not believe contradictory things – he is merely ignorant. Moreover, his problem does not seem to be, as both the hidden-indexical and the neo-Russellian views would have it, that he believes and disbelieves the same proposition but under two different ways of taking that proposition. Intuitively, the problem concerns *what* he believes, not *how* he believes it. As used, (3) and (4) are plausibly understood to have Peter believing one thing and disbelieving something else. If that is correct, inference I3 does not have the indicated form and, contrary to linguistic appearance, is not formally valid. But then, since there is no relevant difference between I3 and inferences I1 and I2 above, linguistic appearances are misleading for those two inferences as well – they do not have the forms indicated for them and are not formally valid either. 'That'-clauses do not refer to terms of the relation expressed by 'believes' (or whatever the attitude verb).

Aside from the above considerations, there is some striking linguistic evidence against RABR, especially when extended to reports of other sorts of propositional attitude. It is supported by the apparent equivalence of (5) and (5p),

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|---|
| (5) The Joker believes that Batman will capture him. |
| (5p) The Joker believes the proposition that Batman will capture him. |

but look what happens when we replace the verb 'believes' with 'thinks'. There is quite a difference in meaning between (5t),

(5t) Oscar thinks that Batman will capture him.

which entails belief, and (5tp),

(5tp) Oscar thinks the proposition that Batman will capture him.

which does not. And whereas replacing 'believes' in (5) with such other verbs as 'suspects,' 'fears,' or 'expects' yields the unproblematic (5v),

(5v) The joker suspects/fears/expects that Batman will capture him.

similar replacements in (5p) are nonsensical:

(5vp) The Joker suspects/fears/expects the proposition that Batman will capture him.

You can suspect (or fear or regret) that such-and-such, but you can't suspect (or fear or regret) a proposition (that such-and-such).

3. *The Descriptivist View*

According to the view I wish to defend, (3) describes Peter as believing something and (4) describes something but, because they do not have Peter believing and disbelieving the same thing, they can both be true. According to the "descriptivist" view and contrary to the Specification Assumption, the 'that'-clause in (3) does not specify which thing Peter believes, and the 'that'-clause in (4) does not specify which thing he disbelieves. So these needn't be the same thing. And there is no reason to suppose that *either* of these things is the proposition expressed by the 'that'-clause in (3) and (4), the proposition that Paderewski had musical talent. By symmetry, any reason to suppose that (3) says that Peter believes this proposition would be an equally good reason to suppose that (4) says that Peter disbelieves this proposition. But he does not believe and disbelieve the same proposition.

The lesson of the Paderewski case, then, is that 'that' – clauses are not content clauses. The Specification Assumption is false: even though their 'that'-clauses express propositions, belief reports do not in general *specify* things that people believe (or disbelieve) – they merely *describe* or *characterize* them. A 'that'-clause is not a specifier (much less a proper name, as is sometimes casually suggested) of the thing believed but is merely a descriptor of it. A belief report can be true even if what the believer believes is more specific than the proposition expressed by the 'that'-clause used to characterize what he believes.

It is not clear how to make this precise or even that it should be made precise. According to the descriptivist view, the condition on the truth of a belief report is that the believer believe a certain thing which requires the truth of the proposition expressed by the 'that'-clause in the belief report. In order for (3) to be true, for example, Peter must believe a certain thing that requires the truth of 'that Paderewski had musical talent.' In other words, he must have a certain sort of that-Paderewski-had-musical-talent belief, a belief which requires that it be true that Paderewski had musical talent. However, the language of (3) does not specify precisely what belief this is. As will be suggested below, the further constraint imposed by the 'that'-clause on what belief the believer must have for a belief report to be true can vary with the context. Just as 'Adam bit a certain apple' does not specify which apple Adam bit, although it entails that there is a certain one that he bit, so 'Peter believes that Paderewski had musical talent' does not specify which sort of that-Paderewski-had-musical-talent belief he has, although it requires that there be certain one that he has.

The basic idea of the descriptivist view may be brought out by the following puzzle. Consider Kripke, who, unlike Peter, realizes that Paderewski the statesman was the same person as Paderewski the pianist. Whereas both (3) and (4) above are true, (3k) is true and (4k) is false.

(3k) Kripke believes that Paderewski had musical talent.

(4k) Kripke disbelieves that Paderewski had musical talent.

But if, as the descriptivist view says, what Peter disbelieves is not the same as what Peter believes, then does (3k) have Kripke believing what Peter believes or believing what Peter disbelieves? There seems to be no reason to say that Kripke believes one rather than the other or that he believes both – he has but one relevant belief about Paderewski. Perhaps we should say this: what Kripke believes is consistent with the thing Peter believes and consistent with the (other) thing that Peter disbelieves, but he does not believe either of those things (since it is not clear what these "things" are, I am reluctant to call them "propositions").

The lesson of the Paderewski case, that 'that'-clauses do not necessarily specify belief contents, applies to substitution cases, such as (1) and (2) above. Contrary to linguistic appearances, due to the illusion created by the Specification Assumption, the following inference does not have the indicated form and is not formally valid,

- | | | |
|-----|--|------------------------|
| 14. | The joker believes that Bruce Wayne is a wimp. | $B_j(w, W)$ |
| | Batman is Bruce Wayne. | $b = w$ |
| | \therefore The Joker believes that Batman is a wimp. | $\therefore B_j(b, W)$ |

even assuming Direct Reference and Semantic Innocence. On those principles, the proposition expressed by the 'that'-clause in the argument's first premise and the one expressed by the 'that'-clause in its conclusion are identical: $\langle w, W \rangle = \langle b, W \rangle$. So it might seem that the first premise and the conclusion have the Joker believing the same thing. But this appearance is deceptive. Neither the first premise nor the conclusion have the Joker believing any specific thing – they merely characterize things he believes, and these need not be the same thing.

From the standpoint of the descriptivist view, there is a straightforward explanation why replacing one term with a co-referring term can affect the content of an entire belief report even though it does not affect the content of the 'that'-clause. This happens because the two belief reports do not characterize the same beliefs. That is, what the believer must believe in order for the second belief report to be true can be different from what he must believe for the first to be true. For example, if (2) is true, its truth might have nothing to do with the truth of (1).

- (1) The Joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is a wimp.
- (2) The Joker thinks that Batman is a wimp.

The Joker might come to believe that Batman is a wimp quite apart from the fact that he already believes that Bruce Wayne is a wimp. The belief that makes (2) true could be different from the belief that makes (1) true, even though the 'that'-clauses of both belief reports express the same singular proposition. Substitution of one co-referring term for another, even though it does not affect the proposition expressed by the 'that'-clause, can make for a difference in the belief being characterized.

4. The Significance of Substitution

The specific difference that a particular substitution makes is not determined by any difference in the semantic values of the two terms. That difference is not semantic but contextual. The same substitution can make one difference in one context, another difference in another context, and no difference in a third context. Whether a substitution makes any difference in a given context depends on what is being substituted for what. For example, if Batman were known by the Joker and everyone else as the Hero of Gotham, then substituting 'the Hero of Gotham' for 'Batman' would not make any difference even though substituting 'Bruce Wayne' for 'Batman' would.

If substitution (of co-referring terms) makes no semantic difference, how can it affect the content of a belief report? How can substitution turn a true belief report into a false one? Part of the answer is that the

sentences used to make the belief reports, though semantically equivalent, are also *semantically incomplete*. That is, they do not express complete propositions, and to that extent they are like such sentences as

(5) Fred is ready.

and

(6) Jerry has finished.

Though syntactically well-formed (compare (6) with the virtually synonymous but ungrammatical 'Jerry has completed'), these sentences are semantically incomplete because of a missing argument. The hidden-indexical theory claims that belief reports are semantically incomplete for the same reason: a belief report not only reports the proposition believed but makes implicit "reference to a contextually determined mode of presentation" (Schiffer 1977, p. 34); this is the argument missing from a belief sentence. However, lacking an argument is not the only way for a sentence to be semantically incomplete (for further discussion of this notion see Bach 1994). On the descriptivist view, belief sentences are semantically incomplete for a different reason. Like words such as 'big' and 'short', a belief-predicate does not have a context-independent condition of satisfaction, so that a sentence containing it does not have a context-independent truth condition. A belief-predicate does not express, independently of context, a unique belief-property. So, for example, there is no unique property of believing that Batman is a wimp. Completion is achieved by the import of using of one term rather than another in the 'that'-clause, e.g. 'Batman' rather than 'Bruce Wayne'. This determines what it takes, relative to the context in which the belief report is made, for the believer to satisfy the belief-predicate. Using one term rather than another, co-referring term makes a contextually relevant difference concerning what the subject must believe for the belief report to be true. So, for example, uttering (2), 'The Joker thinks that Batman is a wimp', rather than (1), 'The Joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is a wimp,' is not misleading (as the neo-Russelian theory would say) but downright false.

The difference that substitution makes can vary with the context. What is variable is whether the appropriate identity is presumed. A presumed identity licenses substitution. Substitution is blocked if it makes a contextually relevant difference, due either to the absence or to the suspension of a presumption of identity. Ordinarily, there is no presumption of identity, and using one name rather than another name carries a presumption of non-identity. In utterances of (1') and (2'), for example,

(1') The Joker thinks that Harvey Furber is a wimp.

- (2') The Joker thinks that Marvin Frubish is a wimp.

there is no presumption of identity between Harvey Furber and Marvin Frubish, who, for all we know, are one and the same guy. There is a suspension of a presumed identity in the case of the original (1) and (2). Its suspension explains why the truth of (1) and the falsity of (2) have no tendency to suggest that the Joker believes that someone both is and is not a wimp. The situation would be different if it were common knowledge that Bruce Wayne is Batman and presumed that the Joker realized this. But this is not presumed. So even if it came to be true that the Joker believed that Batman is a wimp, this would be so in virtue of a different belief on his part.

Now consider the situation among those of us who do realize that Bruce Wayne is Batman. For us, a belief which could be characterized as a that-Bruce-Wayne-is-a-wimp belief could equally be characterized as a that-Batman-is-a-wimp belief. If Val is such a person, one and the same belief on his part would make either of the following belief reports true:

- (7) Val thinks that Bruce Wayne is a wimp.
 (8) Val thinks that Batman is a wimp.

If Val thought that Bruce Wayne is a wimp and that Batman is not a wimp, he would be guilty of believing a contradiction, because in his case that would be tantamount to believing that Bruce Wayne both is and is not a wimp. He could not be merely a victim of ignorance, like the Joker. The presumption of identity, though maintained above (with respect to Val), would be suspended in the following iterated case:

- (9) Val thinks that the Joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is a wimp.
 (10) Val does not think that the Joker thinks that Batman is a wimp.

We would suspend the presumption of identity here, because we do not suppose that the Joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is Batman, or, more to the point, that Val thinks that the Joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is Batman.

Substitution in a belief report makes for a difference in the belief described and thus is relevant to the content of the report. Why does substitution have no such effect in the case of simple sentences? If you utter "Bruce Wayne is a wimp," you thereby say, and express the belief, that Bruce Wayne is a wimp. But you are not saying that you are saying this or that you believe this. If you uttered "Batman is a wimp" instead, you would not be expressing the same belief, but the content of what you are saying would be the same, the singular proposition that Batman/Bruce Wayne is a wimp. For you are expressing your belief but not describing it. You are talking about Batman/Bruce Wayne, not your belief about

him. The opacity of attitude reports, on the other hand, is due to the fact that they describe attitudes.

When substitution fails, as in the inference from (1) to (2), it fails not because 'that Batman is a wimp' refers to a different proposition than 'that Bruce Wayne is a wimp' but because it characterizes a different belief. But it can also characterize the same belief, namely when it is no news to anyone, including the believer, that Batman was Bruce Wayne. In that case, substitution preserves truth value. So sometimes it fails and sometimes it does not. This is so not because the name sometimes occurs "opaquely" and sometimes "transparently" or because the belief report may be either "*de dicto*" or "*de re*" (there is a difference between "*de dicto*" and "*de re*" beliefs (Bach 1987, ch.1), but that, in my view, has nothing to do with the alleged difference between *de dicto* and *de re* belief reports).

There is no reason to assume that there is any specific sort of difference that substitution makes. In particular, it need not be a difference in associated mode of presentation. There might not be any unique mode of presentation, or even unique type of mode of presentation, associated with each of the terms in question. Associated mode of presentation may vary, perhaps in unpredictable ways, from one person to another and from one time to another for a given person. It may not be determinate enough, even relative to a given context of utterance, to be part of what is communicated. Even so, communication can still be successful. Nor need the difference that substitution makes concern which words the subject would use to express his belief. The subject may not even be familiar with the terms used to ascribe the beliefs in question. He may not even be familiar with synonyms of those terms or with translations of them in his own language. The use of different terms might mark differences in modes of referring to, and thinking of, the individuals in question without signalling just what those differences consist in. So, for example, a Batman/Bruce Wayne case could arise just from pointing to different pictures. Using a 'that'-clause containing one name rather than the other indicates, barring a presumption of identity, a difference in ascribed belief, but that is not sufficient to determine which particular belief the believer is being said to have.

Obviously there is no contextual effect of substitution in the Paderewski case, since there is no substitution. Here only the context can vary – the 'that'-clause is fixed. Utterances of (3) and (4):

- (3) Peter believes that Paderewski had musical talent.
- (4) Peter disbelieves that Paderewski had musical talent.

can both be true, even without any implication that Peter believes that someone both did and did not have musical talent, provided that what

'that Paderewski had musical talent' in (4) describes Peter as disbelieving is not the same thing as what in (3) it describes him as believing. How is this possible? If (3) and (4) were both uttered in what, broadly speaking, is the same context, there would have to be some immediate difference in the circumstances of their utterance, e.g., a demonstration first of one photograph and then of another. There would have to be some way for one and the same 'that'-clause to signal a difference between what Peter is being said to believe and what he is being said to disbelieve. This difference could be indicated by using the appositives 'the pianist' and 'the statesman' after the name 'Paderewski.' Using one appositive rather than the other would be sufficient, in the context, to differentiate one belief from the other, although both beliefs are such as to be true only if Paderewski had musical talent.

5. Is the Descriptive View a Hidden-Indexical Theory in Disguise?

People have suggested to me that the descriptivist view is a notational variant of the hidden-indexical theory, or perhaps of the overt indexical theory (briefly mentioned earlier), but this is a misunderstanding. Both views, it is true, claim that belief sentences are semantically incomplete, hence that utterances of them need completion in context to convey a complete proposition. And both views claim that substitution, despite not affecting the semantic content of the 'that'-clause, can affect the content of the entire belief report (the specific difference that it makes in each case is determined contextually). But the resemblance ends there. The hidden-indexical theory claims that a belief report makes tacit reference to a way of taking the proposition expressed by the 'that'-clause; the descriptivist view does not. Indeed, the hidden-indexical theory claims that, contrary to linguistic appearances, the belief relation is not dyadic but triadic. The descriptivist view claims no such thing. It denies that belief reports make tacit reference to anything. In this way, it can maintain that the relation expressed by 'believes' is the dyadic relation it appears to be.

The descriptivist view is distinct from both the hidden- and the overt-indexical theories in that it denies that there is any reference to ways of taking propositions or ways of thinking of their constituents. Therefore, it cannot hold that the difference that substitution makes is a matter of which such ways are signalled by which terms. Then what difference does substitution make, according to the descriptivist view? The use of one term rather than another, e.g. 'Bruce Wayne' rather than 'Batman', in the 'that'-clause of a belief report signals a contextually relevant difference in belief, *whatever that difference is*. The semantics of belief reports is silent as to what it consists in. Maybe it does consist in a difference in ways of taking

the same proposition, but that is a matter for the theory of belief, not the theory of belief reports. The semantics of belief reports just says that there may be some such difference, signalled but not encoded by the difference in co-referential terms. As mentioned earlier, for a given substitution there can be one difference in one context, another difference in a another context, and no difference in a third. There is no hard and fast difference, for example, between believing that Batman is a wimp and believing that Bruce Wayne is wimp, and not always any difference at all.

Even so, it might seem that although the descriptivist view is not explicitly a hidden-indexical theory, still it cashes out into one. For what can the difference consist in between believing that Batman is a wimp and believing that Bruce Wayne is a wimp? Surely there is a difference only if one does not believe that Bruce Wayne is Batman and the easiest way not to believe that Bruce Wayne is Batman is to believe that Bruce Wayne is not Batman. But to do that, so the objection goes, requires thinking of Bruce Wayne/Batman in two different ways, and this is precisely the difference that is marked between (1) and (2), just as the hidden-indexical theory says. And it does not say that the distinct 'that'-clauses of (1) and (2) specify the difference, but only that they mark the difference. However, it also says that there is reference to the two different ways of thinking of Bruce Wayne/Batman or, to allow for indeterminacy of what those ways are, to two different types of ways of thinking of him. This is what the descriptivist theory denies. Unlike the hidden-indexical theory, it does not claim that the explanation of the indifference enters into the content of the belief reports.

Finally, it might even seem that the descriptivist theory is really just a notational variant of the neo-Russellian theory. For it could be argued that everything I have said is consistent with the claim that belief reports do report relations to propositions. After all, if the 'that'-clause of a true belief report expresses a proposition, then the believer does bear a certain relation to that proposition. The trouble with this objection, however, is that the relation in question is not the belief relation. If it were, then Peter would bear the belief relation both to the proposition that Paderewski had musical talent and to the proposition that Paderewski did not have musical talent, in which case he would believe contradictory propositions. The descriptivist theory specifically denies this. Besides, because the relation in question would vary from one context to another, it could not be *the* belief relation.

6. Every Case a Paderewski Case

Substitution cases show that propositionally equivalent 'that'-clauses can characterize different beliefs – substitution can be proposition-preserving

without being belief-preserving. Different beliefs can be characterized – they are not fully specified – by semantically equivalent but linguistically distinct ‘that’-clauses. ‘That’-clauses narrow down the beliefs they characterize to the degree circumstances require, but different ‘that’-clauses, even semantically equivalent ones, do so differently. The Paderewski case, which involves no substitution, illustrates why ‘that’-clauses do not individuate beliefs – the same ‘that’-clauses, as in (3) and (4), can be used to characterize a coherent belief-disbelief pair. And, as I now wish to show, every case is a Paderewski case, at least potentially.

For any ‘that’-clause ‘that S’, there could be circumstances in which it is true that A believes that S and true that A disbelieves that S but without A’s being illogical. This is illustrated by what (3) and (4) say about Peter. Not every case is an actual Paderewski case, of course, but it is not on account of its ‘that’-clause that a given belief report fails to be such a case. Moreover, if beliefs (belief types) are individuated by their contents, then no ‘that’-clause is inherently capable of fully individuating a belief (type). So there is really nothing special about ‘that Paderewski had musical talent’ – it is a perfectly ordinary ‘that’-clause. *Any* ‘that’-clause could be used, given the right circumstances, to describe something that someone believes and to describe something that he disbelieves, and do so without imputing any incoherence to him. Similar puzzles arise with belief reports whose ‘that’-clauses express general propositions rather than singular ones. For *any* ‘that’-clause ‘that S’, there could be circumstances in which someone believes that S and disbelieves that S without being illogical. For it need not specify anything that he both believes and disbelieves.

A natural objection here is that such a ‘that’-clause does not contain enough detail. Make it more specific in one way and you can say what Peter believes; make it more specific in another way and you can say what he disbelieves. Thus we could embellish (3) and say that Peter believes that Paderewski *the pianist* had musical talent and embellish (4) and say that he disbelieves that Paderewski *the statesman* had musical talent. But ultimately this strategem does not work. Consider the following variation on the original version of the Paderewski case. Suppose that Peter hears a recording of Paderewski playing Rachmaninov in Carnegie Hall. Peter likes what he hears. Then Peter hears a recording of Paderewski playing with a jazz combo at the Apollo Theatre. This time he hates what he hears. It is clear to us that Peter does not realize he has heard the same pianist twice. But here it won’t do any good to say that Peter disbelieves that Paderewski the pianist had musical talent, because we could also have truly said that he believes that Paderewski the pianist had musical talent. We could say that Peter disbelieves that Paderewski the *jazz* pianist had musical talent and say too that he believes that Paderewski the *classical* pianist had musical talent. But this ploy won’t ultimately work either. Suppose Peter hears a recording of an atrocious performance by

Paderewski playing Mozart. It is clear to us that Peter does not realize that he has heard the same pianist a second time. We could say that Peter disbelieves that Paderewski the classical pianist had musical talent, but this would not distinguish what he disbelieves from what he believes. We would need to say that Peter disbelieves that Paderewski the classical pianist *playing Mozart* had musical talent, and that Peter believes that Paderewski the classical pianist *playing Rachmaninov* had musical talent. Well, you get the idea.

If every case is potentially a Paderewski case, then 'that'-clauses are not inherently capable of specifying the contents of beliefs fully. Any 'that'-clause that describes something someone believes could also describe something he coherently disbelieves. Then how are belief contents to be specified fully? That is a very good question, one which I cannot answer. As we just saw, the extended versions of the Paderewski case, which involve inserting additional material into the 'that'-clause, show that insufficient detail is not the problem – you can add all the detail you want but the problem doesn't go away. No matter how much material is inserted into it, a 'that'-clause does not determine belief content but merely narrows it down. So it seems that no belief report is inherently capable of specifying a belief fully. That is why I say that every case is potentially a Paderewski case. A belief report can always be tightened, if need be, by means of more verbiage, so as to meet any given threat that it is an actual Paderewski case, but any such elaboration will be open to further threats of the same sort.

Tightening a belief report can at least meet the threat that actually arises. According to the descriptivist view, such a tightening plays the role which, according to other theories, specifying a mode of presentation is supposed to play: it distinguishes one belief from another when the original 'that'-clause fails to do so. However, it does this not by specifying how what is believed is believed but by describing the belief more fully. That is, it narrows down the condition that must be met if the belief report is to be true. It narrows this condition down to the extent that is contextually relevant, that is, to the extent to which, in the context, different ways of expressing the proposition expressed by the original 'that'-clause would make a difference to what belief is being characterized.

Nothing is being said here about what beliefs are. Whatever they are, the claim is that non-semantic differences between two referring terms in the 'that'-clauses of two otherwise identical belief reports signal contextually relevant differences in the described beliefs (beliefs whose possession by the subject make the belief reports true). The descriptivist view does not imply that there are two types of content. Although I agree with Loar's (1988) well-known argument, to which this paper is indebted, that 'that'-clauses do not express contents of the sort relevant to psychological explanation and relevant to capturing the subject's point of view, I want

to deny that 'that'-clauses capture any sort of mental content. Rather, they abstract from mental contents. Mental contents are more specific than the 'that'-clauses used to characterize them. As I have urged, different 'that'-clauses, even semantically equivalent ones, merely differentiate mental contents, to the degree contextually required.

For all we know, beliefs are not realized by encodings of individual propositions – they could be abstractions from cognitive maps, for example, representations of possibly infinitely many propositions. That is why Jackson raises the question “whether we should think of the causes of behaviour as individual beliefs and desires, or as rich systems of belief and desire” (1996, p. 403). If the latter is correct, then they might be like maps, in which case there are “no natural ways of carving up maps at their representational joints,” natural ways of itemizing what they say and correlating each item with the way they say it. Particular elements of a map (and of a picture – see Bach 1970) play many representational roles at once, different ones in relation to different other elements. If systems of belief are like this, then, as Jackson writes,

when Jones believes that snow is white . . . inside Jones there is a structure that constitutes a rich system of belief that represents, among a great many things, that snow is white: Jones believes that snow is white by having a system of belief according to which snow is white. We can still *talk* of individual beliefs in the sense of aspects of the way heads represent things as being which can be captured in individual sentences, but there will be no underlying individual states that these belief sentences report. (Jackson 1996, pp. 404–5)

At present no one is in a position to know the truth about the nature of belief. So it is advisable for theories of belief reports to be neutral on the subject. We should not suppose, for example, that because we use 'that'-clauses to report beliefs, beliefs are couched in some sort of “language of thought”. On the other hand, we can acknowledge that differences in semantically equivalent 'that'-clauses can make differences in the beliefs reported, specifically differences in their logical properties. However, the logical properties of reported beliefs are not fully determined but are only delimited by the semantic contents of the 'that'-clauses used to report them. In saying this I am not implying that there are two *kinds* of content (“wide” and “narrow”) but only that the contents of beliefs are more fine-grained than the contents of 'that'-clauses used to report them. Non-semantic differences in semantically equivalent 'that'-clauses can signal, even though they do not encode, logical differences in reported beliefs. The opacity of belief contexts does not have a semantic basis (aside from the semantic incompleteness of belief sentences).

There is also a linguistic reason for denying that the semantics of 'that'-clauses is the source of opacity. There are alternatives to the standard form of belief report ('A believes that S') which contain no embedded clauses but still give rise to the same phenomenon:

- (1a) In the Joker's opinion/According to the Joker/
From the Joker's point of view, Bruce Wayne is a wimp. [*true*]
- (2a) In the Joker's opinion/According to the Joker/
From the Joker's point of view, Batman is a wimp. [*false*]

So it has been only for the sake of discussion that I have played along with the widespread philosophers' myth that belief sentences must contain 'that'-clauses.

7. *Loose Ends*

The descriptive view has been sketched and motivated here, but it has not been explained fully or defended against objections. A fuller exposition would offer a precise account of what it is for a 'that'-clause to describe or characterize a belief. It would consider puzzle cases involving general rather than singular terms, such as

- (11) (a) Lorena thinks that attorneys are rich.
(b) Lorena thinks that lawyers are not rich.
- (12) Byrd thinks that aviaries house airplanes.

It would take into consideration the fact that 'that'-clauses can themselves be semantically incomplete and fail to express full propositions, as in

- (13) Dan thinks that Fred has arrived.
(14) John thinks that Jerry is late.

It would take up cases in which the described belief is explicitly more specific than the proposition expressed by the 'that'-clause, e.g.

- (15) Newt thinks that someone is following him, but I forget who.

It would have to reckon with cases involving 'that'-clauses which are necessarily false.

- (16) Jenny thinks that Jerry is Jerry's father.
(17) Marla thinks that Donald's sloop is longer that it is.
(18) (a) Albert thinks that $1024 > 1000$.
(b) Albert thinks that $4^5 < 1000$.

Needless to say, there are many other sorts of puzzle cases. Dealing with them would require a fuller account of the various ways in which using one term rather than another in a 'that'-clause can affect the content of a belief report.

More needs to be said about the presumption of identity and its absence or suspension. In this regard, it might be objected that the descriptivist view gets caught in a circle when the 'that'-clause expresses an identity proposition, as in (19).

(19) The Joker thinks that Bruce Wayne is Batman.

This seems to pose a problem, because the descriptivist view says that substituting one co-referring term 'b' for another 'a' can affect the content of a belief report only if there is no presumed identity 'a = b' in force. If the 'that'-clause expresses an identity, how can there be a presumption of identity or of non-identity? What allows or, alternatively and more to the point in this case, what prevents the substitution? Presumably (19) is not being used to attribute a trivial belief in someone's self-identity, as (20) would be:

(20) The Joker believes that Batman is Batman.

What prevents the substitution is that the very use of two different names in a identity statement, or in the attribution of an identity belief, suspends any *presumption* of identity that might be in force. So the (short) reply to this objection is that with such belief reports there is no presumed identity – substitution always matters, precisely because identity is at issue. A longer reply would have to address Frege's puzzle about identity statements. Indeed, for Frege himself the problem of propositional attitude reports was subsidiary to the problem concerning the informativeness of identity statements.

Another objection points out that 'that'-clauses occur in contexts other than belief sentences, e.g., causal and modal contexts, and that there they are used to refer. However, the descriptivist view of belief reports can concede that in causal and modal statements 'that'-clauses *are* used to refer, but say that this is because actual and possible states of affairs are the subject-matter of such statements, unlike that of propositional attitude reports. In causal and modal statements 'that S' is used elliptically for 'the fact/state of affairs that S.' but it is *not* so used in belief and other attitude reports. Besides, as noted earlier, attitude reports do not require the use of sentences containing 'that'-clauses. So the opacity of attitude sentences cannot be due to any distinctive feature of 'that'-clauses. Rather, it stems from the fact that they are used to describe propositional attitudes.

The following theses summarize the descriptivist approach to belief reports.

Descriptivist Theses

1. 'That'-clauses don't refer, they describe ('that' is not a term-forming operator on sentences, and 'that'-clauses are not noun phrases).
2. 'That'-clauses generally do not specify complete contents of beliefs (belief-predicates do not individuate belief contents) – a belief report can be true even if the person does not believe the proposition expressed by its 'that'-clause.
3. Coherent belief/disbelief pairs can be described with the same 'that'-clause, or with semantically equivalent ones.
4. Belief reports do not distinguish the "how" from the "what" of belief. They make no reference to ways of taking propositions (or to representations or modes of presentation of their constituents).
5. Semantic content of a belief report: An utterance of 'A believes that S' is true iff A believes a certain thing which requires the truth of the proposition of that S.
6. Belief reports are semantically incomplete (not true or false independently of context) – they are sensitive to contextually variable conditions of difference of thing believed.
7. Substitution of co-referring terms in the 'that'-clause of a belief report can affect its content and change its truth value, but not because of anything encoded by the different terms.
8. Presumed identities license substitution; contextually relevant differences in semantically identical 'that'-clauses are due to the absence or suspension of a presumed identity.

My main aim has been to undercut the Specification Assumption, shared by the best known theories of belief reports, which says that 'that'-clauses of belief reports specify the contents of beliefs being reported. My descriptivist view respects the anti-substitution intuition, which rightly resists free substitution of co-referential terms in belief contexts. Unlike the neo-Russellian theory, the descriptivist view does not try to explain this intuition away and, unlike the hidden-indexical view, it insists that the difference that substitution makes concerns what is believed, not how it is believed. Both the Fregean and the metalinguistic ways of explaining the difference that substitution makes implausibly attribute a reference shift to embedded terms. In my view, verbal differences in semantically identical belief reports generally make for differences in beliefs reported, but I have not gone into detail on just what these differences can consist in or on how variation in context, specifically in shared background information, can affect what the difference is in a given case. But much of what is missing here goes beyond the semantics of belief reports. To

say that a belief report of the form 'A believes that S' is true iff A believes a certain thing which requires the truth of the proposition that S is not to say how it is determined what that thing is.*

ADDENDUM

In an important paper that appeared in this journal after this paper was drafted, David Shier (1996) also rejects the Specification Assumption, although he calls it the "Relational Analysis" (recall that what I call by that name includes two other theses along with the Specification Assumption). Focusing primarily on singular belief reports of the form 'S believes that *n* is G,' he proposes the "Quantified Relational Analysis," according to which a singular belief report is true just in case S believes some "finer-grained version" of the proposition expressed by the 'that'-clause, namely a proposition of the form, 'the F is G', where *n* is the F. Shier's primary motivation, as suggested by his title "Direct Reference for the Narrow Minded," is to reconcile direct reference with narrow individuation of beliefs. Like me, he agrees with Schiffer (1977) that a singular, object-involving proposition cannot comprise the complete content of a propositional attitude. By claiming that a singular 'that'-clause 'that *n* is G' "is used to *characterize*, though not to *specify*, the content of the belief: (1996, p. 227), Shier can deny that the singular 'that'-clause, although it expresses a singular proposition, individuates the belief being reported. The belief report can be true if S believes a finer-grained version of that proposition.

Although I am in general sympathy with Shier's position, my own view differs from his in several important respects. First, on Shier's view it is straightforward how to specify the complete content of a singular belief: you just replace 'that *n* is G' with 'that the F is G'. This requires that there be some determinate definite description which picks out the object in question and under which, if the belief report is true, the believer thinks of the object (it is unclear whether Shier requires that the belief reporter have this description in mind). So Shier assumes a descriptive theory of singular thought, according to which the contents of ostensibly singular

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thoughts are really general propositions, of the sort given by Russell's theory of descriptions (Shier's "Russellian individualism" does not invoke Fregean senses). Along with many others, I have argued against this view of singular thought. Contrary to that view, the object of a singular thought is determined "relationally," not "satisfactionally." The object is thought of under what I call a "*de re* mode of presentation," not under a description (Bach 1987, ch. 1).

Second, Shier's formulation of QRA implicitly assumes that any general proposition, whose only singular terms are bound variables, *can* be the complete content of a propositional attitude. In effect, he is assuming that the substitution problem arises only with respect to terms for particulars and not terms for universals (property or kind terms). However, the same problem arises for the latter as well. For example, it might be true that Larry believes that Lee is a lawyer and false that Larry believes that Lee is an attorney.

Third, QRA says that a singular belief report is true just in case the believer believes *any* maximally fine-grained version of the proposition that *n* is G. In this respect, QRA is like the Salmon-Soames view – it denies the opacity of belief reports. It does this by appealing to Russellian descriptions rather than Fregean senses (in this respect calling the Salmon-Soames view "neo-Russellian" is rather misleading, since it invokes ways of taking propositions, i.e., modes of presentation of them). On QRA, if A believes that *n* is G, then if $m = n$, A believes that *m* is G. For if the proposition that the F is G is a finer-grained version of the proposition that *n* is G, and A believes that the F is G, then, since $m =$ the F, A believes that *m* is G.

Shier does not attempt to explain away the anti-substitution intuition. It seems to me, however, that his Russellian individualism does not require him to reject opacity. Instead of holding that a belief report is true just in case the believer believes *any* maximally finer-grained version of the proposition that *n* is G, he could take a contextualist approach and claim that a singular belief report implicitly alludes to a certain contextually determined definite description, and says that A believes a contextually determined finer-grained version of the proposition that *n* is G. This would accommodate the anti-substitution intuition. Even so, I am reluctant to concede that it is literally true that *any* proposition of the form 'the F is G' is a finer-grained version of the proposition that *n* is G. For even if *n* is the F, *n* does not enter into the proposition that the F is G. Because that proposition does not have *n* as a constituent, it does not require the truth of the proposition that *n* is G. The proposition that the F is G is no more a version of the proposition that *n* is G than is the proposition that some F is G. Shier rightly says that the Paderewski puzzle "just evaporates" once it is understood that Peter is not being said to believe contradictory propositions, but, it seems to me, this cannot be because

what he believes and what he disbelieves are different “versions” of the proposition that Paderewski had musical talent.

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