

TROUBLES WITH DIRECT REFERENCE*

PIERRE BAUMANN

I. Introduction

The Direct Reference (DR) view of proper names has enjoyed considerable popularity since the 1960's, even though it is known to be seriously undermined by three longstanding problems: Frege's puzzle concerning identity statements, Frege's second puzzle concerning the substitution of coreferential expressions in non-extensional contexts, and the so-called "empty names" problem. Different advocates of DR have devised different solutions to these problems, but so far none of these proposals has emerged as a clear favorite, or is viewed as completely satisfactory.

In this paper I examine two recent strategies for rescuing DR from these objections, Braun's (1998, 2001a, 2001b) and Soames's (2002, 2004, 2009). I argue that the two proposals are inadequate for (different) internal reasons—that is, for reasons having to do with the main concepts the authors employ in constructing their explanations, and without taking into account other independent evidence that would undermine any DR theory. My aim here is wholly critical; I do not offer a positive proposal of my own regarding the semantics of proper names. I should perhaps disclose at the outset that I believe DR to be mistaken, and have argued against the view explicitly elsewhere (see Baumann, 2010a). Those arguments will not be reiterated here; the discussion is focused solely on the accounts of Braun and Soames.

* I am grateful to Stephen Neale for his comments on an earlier version of this paper. This paper is dedicated to the memory of my friend, teacher, and colleague, Dr. Álvaro López Fernández. *Para Álvaro, en testimonio de respeto y amistad.*

The discussion is organized as follows. In §2, I briefly review the three traditional problems/objections to DR mentioned above: Frege's puzzle of identity statements, Frege's puzzle of substitution in non-extensional contexts, and empty names. In §§3-6, Braun's and Soames's respective strategies for dealing with these objections will be examined. A summary of each proposal is followed by discussion of its shortcomings. Some concluding remarks are offered in §7.

2. Three Traditional Objections to Direct Reference

For the purposes of this paper, a Direct Reference (DR) theory of names may be defined as any one of the following four claims:¹

Direct Reference

DR1. The sole semantic function of a name is to refer to its bearer.²

DR2. A name does not have a meaning beyond the object to which it refers.

DR3. The truth-conditional value or contribution of a name is its bearer.

DR4. A literal utterance of a sentence containing a proper name expresses a "singular proposition" that includes the object referred to by the name as a constituent.³

DR faces three well-known difficulties. Though they are well known, it is worthwhile to quickly review them, in order to better introduce the solutions of Braun and Soames that we will be discussing shortly.

First, there is Frege's puzzle concerning the informativeness of identity statements. DR implies that a name does not have a truth-conditionally relevant meaning beyond the object to which it refers. So, if two names " N_1 " and " N_2 " refer to the same object, a sentence of the form " $N_1 = N_2$ " would seem to predicate the identity of the referent—the object bearing the name—with itself. The puzzle is how, despite seeming to express this triviality, the sentence can nevertheless be informative to someone.

For example, consider (1).

(1) George Orwell is Eric Blair.

¹ Braun (1993, pp. 449-50) identifies and endorses these four claims. Other writers espouse very similar claims, differing only slightly in terminology, e.g. Salmon (1986, p. 15) employs "information value" and Soames (2002, 2004, 2009) "semantic content" instead of "semantic value" or "truth-conditional value." The philosophical ancestor of DR is, of course, (Mill, 1872/1947).

² Compare (Kripke, 1971, p. 57; Kripke, 1979, p. 240).

³ Compare (Crimmins & Perry, 1989, p. 686).

According to DR, (1) would seem to predicate the identity of the object denoted by these two names with itself. Which is what (2) also predicates:

(2) Eric Blair is Eric Blair.

(1) and (2) are both true. But intuitively, (1) seems more informative than (2). Someone might affirm (2) but deny (1), for example.

Although in (1892/1997) Frege originally formulated the informativeness puzzle in terms of identities such as (1) and (2), the puzzle can be straightforwardly adapted to ordinary predications, as Dummett (1981, pp. 125-6) points out. Compare (3) and (4):

(3) George Orwell was a writer.

(4) Eric Blair was a writer.

For someone—say, A—who knows that George Orwell was a writer, but does not know that George Orwell and Eric Blair are (or were) the same individual, (4) would represent new information. A might affirm (3) but deny (4), for example. But how (3) and (4) may convey different and potentially new information is at first sight a mystery on DR, since according to DR, (3) and (4) would seem to say the same thing; they ascribe the same property to the same individual.

The second problem facing DR is Frege's other puzzle, also presented in (1892/1997), which concerns the failure of substitution of coreferential terms within non-extensional contexts. If a name's sole truth-conditional contribution is its referent, as DR says, then coreferential names should be substitutable for each other *salva veritate*. But substitution of coreferential names within the "that-clauses" that typically follow propositional attitude verbs such as "to believe" often fails to preserve the truth value of the sentence. For example, (5) may be true but (6) false:

(5) A believes that Eric Blair is Eric Blair.

(6) A believes that Eric Blair is George Orwell.

Specifically, (5) is true if A believes that Eric Blair is self-identical and (6) false if A doesn't know or believe that Eric Blair is George Orwell. It appears to follow from DR, however, that if (5) is true, so must (6), since "Eric Blair" and "George Orwell" are coreferential. In both cases, DR seems to imply that the sentences following "that" predicate the identity of the referent to himself. But simply from the fact that "Eric Blair" and "George Orwell" are coreferential it doesn't follow

that (6) is true, or that the belief that Eric Blair is George Orwell can be attributed to A.

The third problem is the problem of so-called empty names.⁴ An empty name is a name that has no referent. Three consequences follow from DR and the fact that some names are empty. First, DR would compel us to say that empty names such as “Winston Smith,” i.e. the name of the fictional character, are completely meaningless. Second, a sentence containing an empty name, such as (7),

(7) Winston Smith doesn't exist,

would also be meaningless, since one of its component expressions is meaningless. Third, a sentence containing an empty name, such as (7), would appear to be neither true nor false.

But, our intuitions are that “Winston Smith” is not entirely devoid of meaning; that (7) is perfectly meaningful; and that (7) has a determinate truth value. ([7] seems true.)

3. Braun's Psychological Strategy

In (1998) and (2001a), Braun put forth a proposal for defeating these objections to DR.⁵ The basic idea of Braun's proposal is that there is a distinction to be made between the proposition semantically expressed by a sentence containing a name and the ways a person may understand, entertain, or believe that proposition.⁶ A person may believe one and the same proposition in different ways; as a result, different beliefs, represented as different belief reports expressing the same proposition, may or may not be attributable to someone (depending on whether or not the person believes in the proposition in ways that correspond to the reports), and moreover, a person's believing a proposition in different ways would explain the informativeness, to that person, of multiple sentences expressing the same proposition. There are thus two essential components to Braun's solution to the informativeness and substitution problems: the notion of a singular proposition and the notion of a way of believing a proposition. Braun's solution to the empty names problem requires an additional ingredient, which we will introduce and discuss once we have reviewed Braun's understanding of propositions.

⁴ A more specific variant of the empty names problem, the problem of empty names in “negative existential sentences” (a sentence like [7] above) was first presented in (Russell, 1905).

⁵ Braun's proposal is similar to the account presented in (Crimmins & Perry, 1989). This paper will not consider Crimmins and Perry's account. Our discussion assumes with Schiffer (2006, pp. 365-6) that Braun's version represents the best version of the psychological strategy.

⁶ Braun articulates his account in terms of belief; this summary of his account does so as well.

Braun, like other DR advocates,⁷ endorses Russellianism about propositions.⁸ According to Russellianism, well-formed sentences express propositions; a proposition is the truth-conditional content of a sentence. A Russellian proposition is a complex, structured entity: the constituents of a proposition might include objects, properties, relations, functions, and other propositions. If a sentence contains a singular term such as a name, the sentence is said to express a “singular proposition;” and one of the constituents of the proposition will be a single object. Thus, a singular proposition may be represented as an ordered pair $\langle o, F \rangle$, where o is the object referred to by the name and F is some property predicated of it by the expressions making up the rest of the sentence. For example, the proposition expressed by (3) is represented as $\langle \text{Eric Blair, being a writer} \rangle$. And this proposition is also the proposition expressed by (4).

Braun explains his notion of a way of believing via the notion of a belief state. A belief state is a psychological state, “a state of the brain or soul.” (1998, p. 573) Braun doesn’t characterize exactly the relation between a belief state and a believed proposition, but he assumes that it’s plausible to distinguish between the two. Once this distinction has been made, he says, it is also plausible to think that one and the same proposition may be related to different belief states. (pp. 573-4) He justifies the plausibility of these assumptions by suggesting that belief states can be characterized independently of the propositions to which they are related, through the different causal roles such belief states might play. For instance, A’s being in the belief state of *knowing* that George Orwell is Eric Blair may dispose him to accept the assessment that Eric Blair is a good writer. And A’s being in the belief state of *wondering* whether George Orwell is Eric Blair may cause him to begin looking for information that would decide the question. Differences in causal roles point to differences in ways of believing propositions. On the basis of these two assumptions about belief states, says Braun, “we could then plausibly say that each of the belief states is a *distinct way* to believe [a] proposition P.” (2001a, p. 6)

Braun suggests that this explanation could be fleshed out further by appealing to the notion of a mental sentence and Schiffer’s (1981) metaphor of a “belief box.” Braun, like other philosophers, such as Fodor (1975, 2010), believes it’s plausible to assume that thinking occurs in a kind of mental language, a “language of thought.” Mental sentences, he supposes, are similar to natural language sen-

⁷ See, e.g., Kaplan (1989, pp. 494, 496), Soames (2002, pp. 55-6), and Récanati (1993, pp. 26-44).

⁸ The “Russellian” view of propositions that is described here is based on Kaplan’s (1989) interpretation of Russell.

tences in that they possess syntax and certain semantic properties.⁹ (1998, p. 574) In particular, like natural language sentences, mental sentences express propositions. For a subject to be in a mental state involving¹⁰ a mental sentence is for her to have the sentence in her belief box. To say that a person has a mental sentence in her belief box is supposed to be a colorful way of saying that she has a belief (understood as a mental sentence), whether the belief be consciously held or not.

A way of believing a proposition can then be characterized as a mental sentence expressing that proposition which one has in one's belief box. Just as different natural language sentences may express the same proposition, suggests Braun, different mental sentences may also express the same proposition:

[T]here might be distinct mental sentences that have the same propositional content, just as there are distinct natural language sentences that have the same propositional content. (2001a, p. 7)

So, to believe the same proposition in different ways is to have different mental sentences expressing the same proposition in one's belief box.

The explanation is supposed to work as follows. Braun would say, for instance, that in virtue of having different mental sentences in his belief box, A may believe the proposition expressed by (1) and (2), namely, <Eric Blair, Eric Blair, Identity> in different ways. In the same fashion, proposes Braun, we can explain how A may rationally believe this proposition and its negation. For example, this would be the case if A had in his belief box the mental equivalent of (2) and the equivalent of the negation of (1).

Braun's psychological account answers the informativeness objection to DR by showing how one and the same singular proposition may be believed in different ways by a subject. It aims to translate the loose, intuitive notion of informativeness into the more precise notion of a way of believing. Thus, someone may find (1) more informative than (2), in the sense that he may believe them in different ways. However, Braun insists, the two sentences express the same singular proposition.

Essentially the same account explains the substitution problem. For example, suppose B hears the reports (8) and (9).

(8) A thinks that George Orwell is a writer.

⁹ More on Braun's conception of mental sentences in §4 below.

¹⁰ As noted, Braun doesn't characterize exactly the relation between a mental sentence and the mental state which "involves" it.

(9) A thinks that Eric Blair is a writer.

She may believe the first and not the second, even though the two reports express the same proposition, since she believes this proposition in two different ways.

In believing that (8) is true and that (9) is false B would not be guilty of irrationality, according to Braun. She merely believes the proposition expressed by the two sentences in different ways. She is in different belief states involving the same proposition. As in the identity case, such belief states may be further characterized as mental sentences expressing the same proposition which figure in B's belief box.

To account for the empty names problem, Braun first modifies the standard Russellian picture of propositions. Elaborating upon an idea due to Kaplan (1989, p. 496, fn. 23), Braun (1993) introduces the notion of a "gappy" proposition, which he describes as a structure possessing an unfilled position. For example, the gappy proposition expressed by (10),

(10) Winston Smith is a clerk,

consists of the following structure: $\langle _ , \text{being a clerk} \rangle$. " $_$ " represents the slot normally occupied by the referent of a name. "Winston Smith" has no referent so in this case the slot is unfilled.

Braun's gappy proposition account, coupled with his notion of a way of believing a proposition, would explain our intuitions regarding the meaningfulness of empty names and the meaningfulness and truth-evaluability of sentences containing empty names. (10) would seem meaningful and truth-evaluable for someone, for example, were this person to have a mental equivalent of the sentence in her belief box. The mental sentence, like the English sentence (10), expresses a gappy proposition. Such a combined account would also explain how someone may rationally believe (11) but deny (12), for example.

(11) Zeus lives on Mt. Olympus.

(12) Jupiter lives on Mt. Olympus.

Someone who believes (11) but denies (12) believes the same gappy proposition in different ways.

4. Problems with Braun's Psychological Strategy

There are two sorts of problems with Braun's account, those having to do with the notion of a singular proposition, on the one hand, and those having to do with the notion of a way of believing, on the other. Here the problems having to do with the notion of a singular proposition will be set aside, since they involve thorny metaphysical issues that would take us too far afield of our main concerns.¹¹ This section discusses problems relating to Braun's notion of a way of believing.

The main problem with Braun's notion is its dubious explanatory value. On the face of it, his explanation in terms of belief states (or mental sentences in a subject's belief box) seems weak, since the explanandum—the phenomena of informativeness, failure of substitutivity of coreferential names, and meaningful though empty names—seems intuitively clearer than the explanans he proposes. (As a side point, DR is a semantic theory of names, so one would expect that its adequacy should be entirely assessable by empirical linguistic methods, and not by a consideration of controversial psychological and metaphysical matters.) Most importantly, however, Braun's account of the three objections in terms of ways of believing seems merely to push the objections back one (or perhaps more) level(s); the account doesn't offer a definitive answer to them.

What follows concentrates on Braun's explanation of the informativeness objection. The substitution objection can be safely ignored, since his explanation of this issue is not fundamentally different from his explanation of the informativeness objection. The empty names issue can also be set aside, since the notion of a way of believing a proposition is independent of the question of which sorts of propositions one may believe. The notion is supposed to hold for both gappy and regular propositions; as we saw, a subject may also believe the same gappy proposition in different ways.

One difficulty with Braun's notion of a way of believing a proposition is that it depends on a particular, and disputable, view of mental sentences.¹² Namely, it explicitly presupposes a "public language" view of mental sentences. The public language view holds that thinking occurs in a language identical or very similar to one's public language, i.e. a natural language such as English.¹³ Braun writes:

¹¹ I refer the reader to (Plantinga, 1983) for a critique of the notion of a Russellian proposition.

¹² Braun does say that one does not have to accept the mental sentence picture of ways of believing in order to accept his psychological explanation (1998, p. 576); however, since Braun nevertheless *relies* on this picture to articulate his account, it is fair to point out some of its defects.

¹³ For a clear statement of the public language view, and comparison with other views on the nature of thinking, see (Devitt & Sterehly, 1999, Ch. 7).

To simplify matters, let's assume that the mental sentences in a person's belief box are sentences in that person's natural language. (1998, p. 575)

Bound up with this assumption are two additional ones: 1) that the syntax of a mental sentence mirrors that of an English sentence (since the mental sentence *is* an English sentence) and 2) that mental sentences possess the same semantic properties as English sentences. In particular, mental sentences express propositions. Also, mental names refer to objects. This is in effect what Braun holds:

These mental sentences express propositions because of their structures and because their constituents refer to individuals and express properties and relations. (The constituents might do this because they stand in appropriate causal or historical relations to individuals and instances of properties and relations.) (p. 574)

The conflict between the public language view assumed by Braun and the alternative view, represented by Chomsky's "I-language," is simply too broad to be considered here.¹⁴ I, for one, accept Chomsky's hypothesis according to which underlying our production and understanding of language is an I-language substantially *different* from the language in which we speak and write.¹⁵ This assumption plays no part, however, in the following critical comments on the explanatory role Braun assigns to mental sentences.

The trouble with assuming that mental sentences are in a public language, e.g. English, is that the informativeness, substitution, and empty names problems would seemingly apply to these mental sentences as well. To see this, consider Braun's explanation of the fact that (1) appears informative to A but (2) does not. According to Braun, (1) appears informative to A but (2) does not because A believes the proposition expressed by them in different ways; that is, he has the different mental sentences (1m) and (2m) in his belief box.

(1m) George Orwell is Eric Blair.

(2m) Eric Blair is Eric Blair.

(1m) and (2m) include the public language (English) names "George Orwell" and "Eric Blair." Like the names in (1) and (2), they refer to the same individual.

¹⁴ All sorts of obvious questions arise concerning the idea that thought is carried out in a public language. For example, what does "to refer" mean for a "name" of this mental language? Is it the same as for natural language names? (Braun seems to think so.) Are then mental names *directly* referential expressions? If so, Braun's account would be in danger of being viciously circular.

¹⁵ See (Chomsky, 1986, §2.3; 2000, Chs. 2 and 6) for an explanation of the notion of an I-language.

Suppose now that A thinks about (1m). Is (1m) informative to A? If it is (and it should be, since its English counterpart is informative to him), it must be because there are two other, distinct mental sentences (1m*) and (2m*) also in his belief box (or perhaps in a second belief box).

(1m*) George Orwell is Eric Blair.

(2m*) Eric Blair is Eric Blair.

Suppose A reflects on these. Is (1m*) informative to him? If it is, then this is because there are two other mental sentences (1m**) and (2m**) also in his belief box (or perhaps in a third belief box).

(1m**) George Orwell is Eric Blair.

(2m**) Eric Blair is Eric Blair.

It seems that this process could go on forever, so long as a subject may reflect on the mental sentences in his belief box.¹⁶ (And why shouldn't this be allowed, since they are supposed to be English sentences?) Now, Braun could avoid this infinite regress scenario simply by giving up his richer characterization of a way of believing in terms of mental sentences plus a belief box. Presumably, then, he would fall back on the coarser notion of a belief state and the many-to-one relation he assumes exists between belief states and propositions.¹⁷ But, it would seem that the notion of a belief state stands in need of greater precision for it to accomplish the theoretical work Braun hopes to derive from it. Aside from the general conjecture that belief states may plausibly be distinguished on account of their differing causal roles, Braun has very little to say regarding the nature and structure of belief states. Not enough, it would seem, to serve as the basis for a comprehensive and convincing answer to the three objections presented in §2.

¹⁶ By definition, a subject's "belief box" consists of her consciously *accessible* beliefs; the beliefs need not be occurrently and consciously held at any given moment, but they *could be*.

¹⁷ Alternatively, he could adopt a different, non-public view of mental sentences. But then he'd have to explain in some detail how sentences in this non-public mental language express propositions. Chomsky, for example, explicitly denies that internal linguistic representations possess the semantic properties that have historically interested philosophers, in particular, reference. See, e.g., (Chomsky, 2000, p. 42). Other theorists who work within, or accept the basic assumptions of the generativist tradition concur that internal linguistic representations are not fully propositional, and are not the type of thing that may be evaluated for truth or falsity. See, e.g., (Levinson, 2000, Introduction), (Sperber & Wilson, 1986/1995, p. 193), and (Neale, 2004a and 2004b).

5. Soames's Pragmatic Strategy

In (2002, 2004, 2009), Soames has proposed a different strategy for handling the three objections. His proposal is similar to one put forth by Salmon (1986, 1989),¹⁸ in that it is based on a distinction between the information “semantically expressed” by a sentence and the information “pragmatically asserted”¹⁹ by an utterance of the sentence in a context. Unlike Salmon’s account, however, Soames’s does not appeal to Grice’s (1967/1989) notion of implicature to explain the notion of pragmatically asserted information.

According to Soames, the information semantically expressed by a sentence *S*, or the “semantic content” of *S*, is the information that would be expressed in all normal contexts in which *S* is used by competent speakers with its literal meaning (without irony, sarcasm, or defeating conversational implicatures), and once all ambiguous and indexical elements in *S* have been disambiguated and assigned referents. (2002, pp. 105-6 and 2004, p. 360) However, in many cases, argues Soames, a speaker who utters *S* asserts more than just the semantic content of *S*:

[N]ormally the semantic content of the sentence uttered, relative to the context of utterance, is *one* of the propositions asserted by an agent’s assertive utterance. (2002, p. 131, emphasis added)

[A]n assertive utterance of a sentence ... by an agent in a context *c* often results in the assertion not only of the semantic content of *s* with respect to *c*, but also of other, sometimes stronger, propositions as well.” (2002, p. 133).

Soames notes that the semantic content of *S* might be quite poor; indeed, *S* might even fail to express a complete proposition:

Semantic contents of grammatically complete sentences (relative to contexts) are not always complete propositions; sometimes, they are incomplete propositional matrices, together with partial constraints on how to contextual information may be used to complete them. (2004, p. 357)

Soames argues that in actual contexts of utterance the proposition or propositional matrix expressed by *S* is “pragmatically enriched” with various sorts of in-

¹⁸ Salmon’s account will not be discussed in this paper; see (Green, 1998) and (Récanati, 1993, pp. 332-47) for powerful criticisms against it.

¹⁹ Soames’s somewhat peculiar use of “to assert” and “assertion” will be interpreted as referring not to the performance of a speech act, but to the content of the speech act: a proposition evaluable for truth or falsity. In alternative but equivalent vocabulary, Soames’s “assertion” or “asserted proposition” is *what is said* by the utterance of a sentence in a context.

formation.²⁰ As a result, one and the same sentence may be used to assert different propositions from one context to the next, even though the sentence will express one and the same semantic content in all contexts. According to Soames, it is the diversity of information that utterances typically convey in ordinary communicative situations that is the source of our divergent intuitions about the informativeness, substitution and empty names cases.

Soames presents various examples to illustrate how sentences having the same semantic content may in different contexts be used to assert different, pragmatically enriched, propositions.²¹ Here we will go over just one of them, which appears in all three works (“The Party,” 2002, pp. 75-7; 2004, pp. 360-5; 2009, pp. 282-3), and which specifically concerns the question of the informativeness of sentences containing different coreferential names.²²

The setting is the Princeton Philosophy Department party held at the beginning of the academic year. A professor, Paul, asks a new graduate student, Mary, “Have you been introduced to Peter Hempel?” Mary then asks, “Who is Peter Hempel?” Paul responds by gesturing in Carl Hempel’s direction and saying:

(13) Peter Hempel is Carl Hempel.

Later, Mary reports to another student that Paul said (asserted) the following:

(14) The man, Peter Hempel, who is standing over there, is the famous philosopher of science Carl Hempel.

Soames argues that Mary’s report is correct, in virtue of the following facts and assumptions manifest in the conversation between Paul and Mary: (a) Mary could see that Paul was gesturing at a man and referring to him as “Peter Hempel;” (b) Paul and Mary both associate the name “Carl Hempel” with the information that its bearer is a famous philosopher of science; (c) Paul knows that Mary knows that Carl Hempel is a famous philosopher of science (and Paul knows that Mary knows that he knows this); and (d) that Mary will, as a result, associate that specific bit of descriptive information with the name.

²⁰ Bach (2006) has defended a very similar view. What Soames calls a “propositional matrix” Bach calls a “propositional radical.”

²¹ See, e.g., (2002, pp. 74-86).

²² Here I focus only on Soames’s solution to the informativeness puzzle, since the solution is basically the same for the substitution and empty names problems: according to Soames, one must distinguish between what a sentence literally expresses—its semantic content, in Soames’s terminology—and what may be pragmatically asserted or conveyed by an utterance of the sentence in a context. A failure to distinguish these two things in ordinary conversational situations is what supports the intuitions behind the three objections, in Soames’s view.

Now, such descriptive information is not part of the semantic content of the name. For Soames, a sentence of the form " $N_1 = N_1$ " and a true sentence of the form " $N_1 = N_2$ " express the same proposition; they have the same semantic content. Thus (13) has the same semantic content as (15),

(15) Carl Hempel is Carl Hempel.

There is no unnoticed semantic fact that would create a difference between (13) and (15). However, the information conveyed by them in different conversational situations can vary widely. According to Soames, it is this information we are sensitive to when we are asked whether (13) is more informative than (15) or have the same meaning.

In claiming that an utterance pragmatically conveys information distinct from the information semantically expressed by the sentence, Soames is not arguing that the richer information is implicated by the utterance of the sentence. Unlike Salmon (1989, pp. 275-6, fn. 11), Soames does not propose that names or propositional attitude verbs such as "to say" or "to believe" give rise, by virtue of their meaning, to specific conventional or generalized conversational implicatures that may diverge in truth value from the truth value of the proposition literally and semantically expressed by the sentence containing them. Nor is the richer information conveyed as a *particularized* conversational implicature: Soames does not construe "pragmatically asserted" information as a separate proposition derived through an application of Grice's (1967/1989) Cooperative Principle and Maxims of Conversation to the utterance of a sentence expressing a different proposition. Rather, it is the *very* proposition or propositional matrix, the semantic content, of the uttered sentence that is enriched in the context:

[T]he proposition asserted arises from the semantic content of the sentence uttered by adding contextually determined pragmatic content to one of its constituents. (2009, p. 286)

Soames, unlike Salmon, claims that *what is said*, the proposition semantically expressed by a sentence, can be pragmatically enriched in a context, which is something that a Gricean cannot admit.

6. Problems with Soames's Pragmatic Strategy

Soames's strategy at first sight appears more promising than Braun's. This section considers two objections to Soames's view of assertion, in particular to his idea that a sentence may be used in a context to assert propositions "stronger" than the semantic content expressed by the sentence.

The first objection, due to McKinsey (2005), looks at Soames's examples purporting to show that a sentence may be used to assert a proposition(s) stronger than its semantic content, and denies that this is in fact what occurs. With respect to the example reproduced above, McKinsey says the following:

Soames's claim [that in addition to the proposition semantically expressed by the sentence uttered, the speaker would have asserted and said something else] is false. Had Carl Hempel not really been a philosopher of science, or had the man standing over there at whom Paul gestured not really been Peter Hempel (perhaps he was wearing a Peter Hempel mask), Soames's claim implies that Paul would have said something false in uttering the true sentence [13]. But this is wrong. Given the context, Paul may have *conveyed* or *implicated* something false by uttering [13], since he may have conveyed or implicated the (hypothetically) false information expressed by [14]. But even so, Paul would have neither asserted nor said anything false in uttering the true sentence [13]. (2005, p. 156, emphasis in the original)

It would appear, however, that Soames's claim can be defended. Suppose that McKinsey's counterfactual hypothesis is right: suppose that Carl Hempel was never a philosopher of science and that he had cleverly fooled people into thinking that he was all of these years. Suppose further that Paul was the only person in on the secret. (Perhaps he wrote the works published under Hempel's name.) Let everything else about the party situation be as Soames described it. In particular, Paul knows that Mary thinks that Carl Hempel is a famous philosopher of science, and that she knows that Paul knows that she believes this. Then, if Paul utters (13) in this situation, does he say something true or false?

It would seem that only the strictest interpreter—one who, moreover, would already be persuaded by DR—would judge that Paul said something true, simply in virtue of the alleged fact²³ that (13) literally expresses the necessarily true proposition that Carl Hempel is self-identical. Most unprejudiced people would probably say that Paul deliberately misled Mary, if not flat-out lied to her. Suppose Mary later found out the truth and confronted Paul about the false information he “asserted” at the party. It would be a sorry defense indeed if Paul were to claim in response that all he literally said was that Carl Hempel is self-identical.

But McKinsey and many others are likely to remain unconvinced. For there are alternative interpretations of the party example that would appear to be better grounded than Soames's. McKinsey suggests, for instance, that the example illustrates the pervasive phenomenon that Bach (1987/1994, pp. 77-85) has labeled

²³ Frege (1892/1997) and present-day Fregeans, for example, would dispute this “fact.”

“standardization.”²⁴ As Bach has amply documented, many expressions (words, phrases, whole sentences) are frequently (perhaps most frequently) used non-literally. For example, phrases of the form “can you...?” are standardly used to perform requests, even if the request is literally expressed only by the verb phrase that follows the construction (e.g. “pass the salt”). McKinsey proposes (p. 158, fn. 6) that identity sentences containing names, such as (13), are standardly used non-literally, to assert “partly quotational” propositions, such as *Peter Hempel is [named] “Carl Hempel.”*

Standardization cannot be disputed, but intuitively it would seem that the two cases, the case of requests performed by utterances of “can you VP?” and that of identity sentences containing names, differ. But this is only an impression. Against McKinsey’s “standardization argument” it may be replied that much more needs to be ascertained regarding the literal and non-literal uses of names in order to evaluate the merits of the argument. Without further empirical evidence, McKinsey’s argument risks begging the question, since, presumably, McKinsey’s reason for concluding that identity sentences containing names are standardly used non-literally to express metalinguistic information is the belief that the *literal* use of a name is to refer to an object. But this is precisely the idea that DR advocates need to prove.²⁵

McKinsey questions Soames’s notion of “pragmatic enrichment.” And indeed, one may ask, how exactly is it, according to Soames, that a proposition may be pragmatically enriched in a context? After all, (13) contains no expressions traditionally regarded as context-sensitive, such as demonstratives, indexicals, or temporal expressions. How, for example, does the information that Carl Hempel is a famous philosopher of science wind up in the proposition Paul supposedly asserted in uttering (13)?

This is the second and main problem presented by Soames’s pragmatic strategy: Soames provides no detailed account of how pragmatic enrichment is supposed to work. Soames himself admits that he has no detailed account to offer (2009, p. 281), and only glosses the matter over as follows:

In many contexts, the semantic content of S—whether it is a complete proposition or not—interacts with an expanded conception of pragmatics to generate a *pragmatically enriched proposition* that it is the speaker’s primary intention to assert. (2009, p. 280, emphasis in the original)

²⁴ See also (Bach, 1998).

²⁵ In (Baumann, 2010a; Baumann, 2010b, §5) I have argued that proper names admit of literal non-referential interpretations and that utterances containing proper names may have descriptive or non-objectual truth conditions.

There are available, however, a number of “expanded conceptions of pragmatics” (“expanded,” meaning, presumably, “non-Gricean”) which possess the theoretical resources to explain the phenomenon of pragmatic enrichment Soames has illustrated; one such conception is Sperber and Wilson’s (1986/1995) Relevance Theory, another is Récanati’s independent pragmatic framework. ([Récanati, 2011] is the most recent version of Récanati’s approach.) Until a detailed and principled account of pragmatic enrichment is provided, critics of Soames’s view of assertion and his account of the examples are likely either to reject the view and the account as insufficiently motivated or to seek a more traditional explanation of the examples.

In sum, the main problem with Soames’s pragmatic strategy is not necessarily the idea that the truth-conditional content of sentences (in this case, sentences containing proper names) may be pragmatically enriched with contextual information, or that a sentence may be used to assert propositions other and stronger than the information “semantically expressed” by the sentence, but that Soames fails to spell out the crucial notion of pragmatic enrichment. Soames owes us an account of exactly how it is that propositions in general may be pragmatically enriched with contextual information, in ways that are not traceable to indexical or ambiguous elements in a sentence.

7. Conclusion

I have argued that Braun’s and Soames’s recent defenses of the Direct Reference view of proper names are problematic for reasons internal to the two accounts. Braun’s strategy is based on the idea of a “way of believing a proposition,” a psychological notion. He argues that someone may believe one and the same proposition in different ways, just as two sentences may express one and the same proposition. Differences in informativeness, he proposes, should be understood as different ways of believing a proposition. The problems with Braun’s psychological proposal are the following. If a way of believing a proposition is understood as a mental sentence in a public language, as Braun articulates the notion, then the three objections would reappear at the level of the mental sentence. (Assuming that subjects may reflect on their beliefs.) In other words, the strategy leads to an infinite regress and is thus explanatorily unsatisfactory. If, on the other hand, the notion of a way of believing is interpreted more coarsely, supposing only that belief states may be distinguished on the basis of the different causal roles they may be said to play, then the notion simply becomes too vague to be of any interest. Braun does not describe belief states in any significant way.

Soames's different, pragmatic, strategy rests on a distinction between "semantically expressed" information and "pragmatically asserted" information. Soames's explanation of the three traditional objections is basically the same as the one antecedently offered by Salmon (1986): in ordinary communication, people mix up pragmatic with strictly semantic information. Unlike Salmon, however, Soames does not understand "pragmatic" exclusively in Gricean terms. In particular, he argues that non-linguistically realized contextual information may "pragmatically enrich" the context-invariant semantic content of a sentence. That is, according to him, *what is said*, the proposition expressed by a sentence uttered in a context, may be enriched in context. The richer content is not conveyed as an implicature. The main problem with Soames's proposal is that he fails to explain the crucial notion of pragmatic enrichment.

Since Braun's and Soames's separate defenses of Direct Reference are probably the two most important currently on hand, the troubles with each identified in this paper warrant pessimism about the viability of the doctrine.

Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras

References

- Bach, K. 1987/1994. *Thought and Reference*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 1998. "Standardization Revisited", in A. Kasher (ed.), *Pragmatics: Critical Concepts, Vol. IV* (pp. 712-22). London: Routledge.
- _____. 2006. "Regressions in Pragmatics (and Semantics)", in N. Burton-Roberts (ed.), *Pragmatics* (pp. 24-44). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Baumann, P. 2010a. "Are Proper Names Rigid Designators?", *Axiomathes* 20: 333-346.
- _____. 2010b. "Kripke's Critique of Descriptivism Revisited", *Principios, Revista de Filosofía* 27: 167-201.
- Braun, D. 1993. "Empty Names", *Noûs* 27: 449-69.
- _____. 1998. "Understanding Belief Reports", *Philosophical Review* 105: 555-95.
- _____. 2001a. "Cognitive Significance, Attitude Ascriptions, and Ways of Believing Propositions", presented at the Pacific APA meeting in San Francisco on March 31, 2001. Retrieved from <http://www.ling.rochester.edu/~braun/Papers/cogsig.pdf>.
- _____. 2001b. "Russellianism and Explanation", in J. Tomberlin (ed.), *Philosophical Perspectives* 15, *Metaphysics* (pp. 253-89). Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Company.

- Chomsky, N. 1986. *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use*. New York: Praeger.
- _____. 2000. *New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crimmins, M. and Perry, J. 1989. "The Prince and the Phone Booth", *Journal of Philosophy* 86: 685-711.
- Devitt, M. and Sterelny, K. 1999. *Language and Reality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Dummett, M. 1981. *The Interpretation of Frege's Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fodor, J. 1975. *The Language of Thought*. New York: Cromwell.
- _____. 2010. *LOT 2: The Language of Thought Revisited*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Frege, G. 1892/1997. "On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*", trans. by M. Black, in M. Beaney (ed.), *The Frege Reader* (pp. 151-71). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Green, M. 1998. "Direct Reference and Implicature", *Philosophical Studies* 91: 61-90.
- Grice, H.P. 1967/1989. "Logic and Conversation", in his *Studies in the Way of Words* (pp. 22-40). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kaplan, D. 1989. "Demonstratives", in J. Almog et al. (eds.), *Themes from Kaplan* (pp. 481-564). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kripke, S. 1971. "Identity and Necessity", in M. Munitz (ed.), *Identity and Individuation* (pp. 135-64). New York: New York University Press.
- _____. 1979. "A puzzle about belief", in A. Margalit (Ed.), *Meaning and Use* (pp. 239-83). Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Levinson, S. 2000. *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- McKinsey, M. 2005. "Critical Notice of Scott Soames, *Beyond Rigidity*", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 35: 149-68.
- Mill, J.S. 1872/1947. *A System of Logic*. London: Longmans.
- Neale, S. 2004a. "This, That, and The Other", in M. Reimer and A. Bezuidenhout (eds.), *Descriptions and Beyond* (pp. 68-182). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 2004b. "Pragmatism and Binding", in Z. Szabó (ed.), *Semantics vs. Pragmatics* (pp. 165-285). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Plantinga, A. 1983. "On existentialism", *Philosophical Studies* 44: 1-20.
- Récánati, F. 1993. *Direct Reference: from Language to Thought*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- _____. 2011. *Truth-Conditional Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Russell, B. 1905. "On Denoting", *Mind* 14: 479-93.
- _____. 1986. *Frege's Puzzle*. Cambridge, MA: Bradford Books/MIT Press.
- _____. 1989. "Illogical Belief", *Philosophical Perspectives* 3: 243-85.
- Schiffer, S. 1981. "Truth and the Theory of Content", in H. Parret and J. Bouveresse (eds.), *Meaning and Understanding* (pp. 204-22). New York: de Gruyter.

- _____. 2006. "A Problem for a Direct Reference Theory of Belief Reports", *Noûs* 40: 361-8.
- Soames, S. 2002. *Beyond Rigidity: The Unfinished Semantic Agenda of Naming and Necessity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 2004. "Naming and Asserting", in Z. Szabó, (ed.), *Semantics vs. Pragmatics* (pp. 365-82). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 2009. "The Gap between Meaning and Assertion: Why What We Literally Say Often Differs from What Our Words Literally Mean", in his *Philosophical Essays Vol. I* (pp. 278-97). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sperber, D. and Wilson, D. 1986/1995. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, Second Edition. Malden, MA: Blackwell.