

DISQUOTATION AND PROPER NAMES: BRANDOM ON KRIPKE'S  
PUZZLE

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My purpose in this paper is to discuss the way Brandom deals with Kripke's puzzle about belief.<sup>1</sup> I will try to show that although Brandom puts his finger on the weak link of the puzzle, his diagnosis of how this link creates the puzzle is flawed. Toward the end of the paper I will point out how Brandom's treatment of the puzzle should be supplemented.

## I

Kripke's puzzle about belief is the following. Pierre, a French monolingual, heard of a pretty city called “Londre”, and was disposed to assert “Londre est Jollie” (i.e., the French translation of “London is pretty”). Subsequently, he was taken to live in London, not knowing it to be that “Londre” he had heard of. The part he lived in was unattractive, and he was disposed to assert “London is not pretty”. Our ordinary principles of belief-ascription lead us to say both that Pierre believes that London *is* pretty, and that Pierre believes that London is *not* pretty. So, Does he or doesn't he believe that London is pretty? Kripke asks. What is puzzling is the fact that Pierre seems to hold contradictory beliefs without committing any logical mistake.

The two belief-ascriptions may be referred to as “the semantical data of the puzzle”. Kripke mentions two principles that lead to these data. The first is *the disquotational principle*: “If a normal English speaker, on reflection, sincerely assents to ‘*p*’, then he believes that *p*.” (Kripke 1979, pp. 112–13) Kripke says that ‘*p*’ can be replaced, inside and outside all quotation marks, by any appropriate standard English sentence. He clarifies what he means by ‘appropriate’, by saying that the sentence replacing ‘*p*’ should “lack indexical or pronominal device or ambiguities that would ruin the intuitive sense

<sup>1</sup>Brandom, R. 1994. *Making it Explicit*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press; Kripke, S. 1979. “A puzzle about belief”, in Margalit, A. (ed.), *Meaning and Use*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, pp. 239–283; reprinted in Salmon, N. and Soames, S. (eds.), 1988. *Propositions and Attitudes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 102–148. Page references are to the reprinted version.

of the principle." (*ibid.*, p. 113)<sup>2</sup> The principle also holds, he adds, for sincere affirmation or assertion in place of assent (*ibid.*). The second principle is the *principle of translation*: "If a sentence of one language expresses a truth in that language, then any translation of it into any other language also expresses a truth (in that other language)." (*ibid.*, p. 114)

The two principles lead to the semantical data in the following way. First, on the basis of Pierre's assent to "London is not pretty", applying the English disquotational principle yields "Pierre believes that London is not pretty." Second, On the basis of Pierre's assent to "Londre est Jollie," applying the French disquotational principle yields "Pierre croit que Londre est Jollie," and from this, by using the principle of translation, we get: "Pierre Believes that London is pretty." Following Kripke, Brandom (p. 575) acknowledges that the principle of translation is not essential to the case, since puzzling facts of the same kind may arise in cases that do not concern assents in two different languages. Kripke's Paderewski case (Kripke 1979, pp. 130–31) is precisely such: Peter learns of the pianist Paderewski, and consequently comes to assent to "Paderewski had musical talent." Then he learns of the Polish national leader Paderewski, and comes to assent to "Paderewski had no musical talent." (He assumes that he learned of two different people.) In this case the English disquotational principle alone leads to ascriptions of two contradictory beliefs.

We may then ignore the principle of translation in discussing the puzzle. But why are the semantical data in question puzzling? As Brandom says (on p. 576), there is nothing particularly paradoxical about having inconsistent beliefs in the *de re* sense: one can believe *of* Benjamin Franklin, as the inventor of bifocals, that he did not invent the lightning rod, and also believe *of* Benjamin Franklin, as the inventor of the lightning rod, that he did invent the lightning rod. There is nothing puzzling in these facts. Yet Kripke's puzzle is intended to be about *de dicto* ascriptions of beliefs. It concerns the facts that Pierre believes both *that* London is pretty, and *that* London is not pretty — he accepts both propositions. Why are *these* semantical facts puzzling? They are puzzling because of what Brandom calls the *transparency of inconsistency*: that anyone "is in principle in a position to notice and correct contradictory beliefs if he has them." (Kripke 1979, p. 122) So logic alone should teach Pierre that his beliefs are inconsistent, yet it cannot. No logical reflection can show him the inconsistency. So something must be wrong in the practice of belief-ascription that leads us to ascribe to Pierre the two contradictory beliefs. The principle which embodies this practice

<sup>2</sup> We shall later see examples of cases in which the principle does not work according to Kripke.

is the disquotational principle, and indeed, most of Brandom's discussion centers around this principle.

## II

Brandom (p. 577) takes Kripke's formulation of what he (Kripke) calls "the disquotational principle" to involve two principles with quite different functions. According to the first of them, the best evidence (or very strong evidence, or *prima facie* evidence that is hard to override) for ascribing a belief with a certain content is a sincere affirmation or avowal with that content. Brandom does not dispute this principle. The second principle is the *real* disquotational principle (hereafter to be referred to as "the disquotational principle"). According to it, the same expressions that are used to avow a belief are the expressions to be used in reporting or ascribing it in indirect report (that is, by means of *that*-clauses). "The relation between direct discourse quotation of what was said and indirect discourse reporting of what was claimed is that of lexical cotypality." (*ibid.*) Brandom strongly objects to painting this relation with such a broad brush. The disquotational principle ignores many subtleties which specifying this relation involves.<sup>3</sup> Brandom then asks why shouldn't we conclude from the puzzle that the (real) disquotational principle does not apply to proper names, at least under some circumstances.

## III

I think that Brandom is correct to reject the disquotational principle (as a universal principle). I also agree that applying this principle to the case of proper-name-involving beliefs is the problematic link that leads to Kripke's puzzle, so that in order to resolve the puzzle this application should be rejected. But it would be better not to be satisfied with rejecting the universal applicability of the disquotational principle, or with taking the fact that it leads to the puzzle as showing its inadequacy in the case of proper names. First, it is not absolutely clear that we can rule out the idea that this fact may be explained by the falsity (in general, or only in some cases and among them the case of proper names) of the principle of transparency of inconsistencies (I will later say a few words to this effect). This possibility blocks the inference that it is the disquotational principle that is inapplicable in the case of proper names. And perhaps we fail to see other possibilities that may explain that fact. Second, we should certainly ask for an explanation of why the disquotational principle fails in the case of proper names, if it does. In

<sup>3</sup>Brandom discusses such subtleties in chapter 8 of *Making it Explicit*.

the absence of such an explanation, any dissolution of the puzzle would be lacking. Brandom's discussion does not suggest such an explanation. We shall see this also in discussing the more specific ways in which he deals with the puzzle.

Brandom mentions Kripke's example of 'Cicero': Some of Arthur's tokenings of that name are intended to refer to the Roman orator, and others are intended to refer to a spy from World War II. On some occasions he would assent to 'Cicero was a spy', and on some to 'Cicero was not a spy'. Kripke does not take this case to involve an inconsistency and therefore a paradox: the dual use of 'Cicero' prevents this. This case is similar to the Paderewski case in involving lexical identity (in the two uses of 'Cicero'), but differs from it in not involving coreference. But Brandom claims that this difference is insufficient for explaining why the Paderewski case but not the Cicero case is taken to involve a puzzling inconsistency. For nobody suggests, he argues, to take "The inventor of bifocals is F" and "The inventor of lightning rod is not F" to involve a puzzling inconsistency, in spite of the coreference of the grammatical subjects of these two sentences (pp. 578–79).

I have two comments on this point. The first is that Brandom does not show *why* the Paderewski case should not be taken to involve a puzzling inconsistency. The fact that coreference does not yield a puzzle in the case of definite descriptions does not show that it does not yield a puzzle in the case of proper names. Indeed, that fact shows that coreference does not, in itself, suffice for making a case of attributing F and not-F a puzzling inconsistency; and the Cicero case indeed shows that lexical identity of the proper name(s) involved does not, in itself, suffice for this either. But it is still possible that coreference *and* lexical identity of the proper name(s) *together* suffice for making such a case a puzzling inconsistency.

My second (and related) comment is that in this case too Brandom suggests no explanation for the inapplicability of the disquotational principle in Paderewski-type cases but not in Cicero-type cases or in cases of definite descriptions. I believe that when we shall see why the disquotational principle is inapplicable in the case of proper names, we shall also see how the combination of coreference and lexical identity of the proper name(s) underlies the puzzle. Now let's continue with Brandom's discussion.

Brandom mentions that Kripke himself did not take the principle to apply to sentences containing expressions like indexicals or pronominal constructions, and claims that the view that it is inapplicable in the case of proper names seems to him especially plausible in light of the fact that demonstratives, indexicals, and tokenings that are anaphorically dependant upon them are the paradigm of object-involving singular-terms usage, and that Kripke sets up the problem about proper names by appealing to the very features of

their use that have made direct reference theories attractive (p. 578). Brandom does not specify these features, and there is more than one option. One feature of “directly referential” expressions is their semantical rigidity — their referring to the same object in every possible world. The view that proper names are rigid designators is perhaps Kripke’s central thesis about proper names. (In fact, Kaplan’s definition of directly referential expressions and Kripke’s definition of rigid designators are very similar.)<sup>4</sup> But it is difficult to see how this modal feature is relevant to the question of the applicability of the disquotational principle. Perhaps Brandom views rigidity as relevant to this question since (in chapter 7 of *Making it Explicit*) he takes rigidity to be an anaphoric phenomenon, and he treats proper names on an anaphoric model. I will discuss the connection between his anaphoric model and that question below.

Another feature of directly referential expressions is that their referent is supposed to completely determine their meaning.<sup>5</sup> But this feature surely cannot explain the inapplicability of the principle. To the contrary, if one accepts that all there is to the meaning of a proper name is its reference, then one seems to have a good reason for assuming that the principle of disquotation *does* apply to proper-name-involving beliefs, since in that case the use of a name by an ascriber seems to provide the meaning of this name as used by the believer.<sup>6</sup> (Of course, the name the ascriber uses must be the same name that the believer uses, in the sense of being the name of the same object.)

One feature of demonstratives and indexicals which prevents (at least the automatic) applicability of the disquotational principle in their case is the fact that what objects they refer to depends on the context of using them — the context, that is, of uttering the sentences or thinking the thoughts containing them. The ascriber’s ‘this’ is not necessarily the believer’s ‘this’, so the ‘disquotational’ ascription (the one we get by applying the disquotational principle) is not an ascription of the belief’s content.<sup>7</sup> This cannot be the

<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, D. 1989. “Demonstratives: An Essay on the Semantics, Logic, Metaphysics, and Epistemology of Demonstratives and other Indexicals”, in Perry J. and others (eds.): *Themes from Kaplan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Kripke, S. 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

<sup>5</sup> Sometimes direct reference theorists take the referent to *be* the meaning, but this point is irrelevant to the present issue.

<sup>6</sup> Kripke says he does not commit himself to the view that “only the referent of the name contributes to what is expressed” (Kripke 1980, p. 20), but he does not elaborate on this issue.

<sup>7</sup> This claim presupposes the view that the content-identity of indexical and demonstrative beliefs depends on the identity of the objects the beliefs are about. Many seem to hold this view, but I will immediately argue that its truth is irrelevant to our present concern.

problem in Kripke's puzzle, since the names in the puzzle *are* coreferential, and this fact plays a crucial role in creating the impression of inconsistency.

This brings us to Brandom's suggestion of assimilating usages of proper names that are puzzling if they are assumed to fall under the disquotational principle to the pronominal cases. When the expression of a belief contains an anaphoric dependent, the disquotational principle is inapplicable, and Brandom suggests to view the Kripkean chain of communication by means of which tokenings of proper names inherit their referent from earlier elements in the chain as an anaphoric chain, and thus to explain why the principle does not work with respect to some usages of proper names. According to him,

Sometimes distinct anaphoric chains of proper-name tokenings are anchored in antecedent picking out different object, as in the 'Cicero'/'Cicero' case. Sometimes distinct chains are anchored in a single object, as in the 'Paderewski'/'Paderewski' case. Both of these structure can also occur with ordinary anaphoric dependent, such as 'it'. Just as one cannot tell 'by pure logic and semantic introspection' whether the two chains that one is continuing are anchored in one object or two for ordinary anaphoric dependent, so one cannot for the anaphoric chains that govern the use of proper names. Just as for canonically pronominal expression types such as 'he' or 'it', cotypicality is no guarantee of coreference — one must consult the anaphoric chain to which a tokening belongs in order to determine its reference. This is just the situation in which the disquotational principle is not applicable. The cases Kripke presents do not generate a puzzle; they just show that proper names can be used in such a way that the disquotational principle does not apply to them. Kripke's own approach to proper-names reference in terms of chains of tokenings suggests exactly why. The result is that these case presents good reasons for treating proper names on an anaphoric model. (p. 581)

I agree with most of what is said in this passage. I do not agree only with the last sentence, and with the implicature of the claim that proper names can be used in such a way that the disquotational principle does not apply to them — the implicature, namely, that proper names can also be used in such a way that the principle does apply to them.<sup>8</sup> I will get to these points immediately.

<sup>8</sup> As we saw earlier, Brandom suggests that the disquotational principle does not apply to proper names *at least* under some circumstances. He does not commit himself to the view that the principle never applies to proper names.

The more significant problem I find in this passage is that, again, it does not really dissolve the puzzle, for it does not explain *why* the disquotational principle is inapplicable in the cases in question.

Actually, what Brandom explains in this passage is simply why Pierre and Peter fail to know that the names they use are coreferential. Indeed, in order to know this they should "consult the anaphoric chains." The real problem of the puzzle, we may say, is how this failure to attain the knowledge, a failure that has nothing to do with *logic*, seems to lead to *contradictory* beliefs. There is nothing philosophically interesting in the mere fact that such a failure has occurred. This is one of the data of the puzzle, and for dissolving the puzzle we should look forward and not backward. We should attempt at discovering what goes wrong *given* that the error of taking the names to refer to two objects rather than to one has occurred. Certainly, to explain how this error has occurred is not to explain why the semantical principle of disquotation is inapplicable, since the application of this principle enters the picture after this error has occurred and the error's origin is irrelevant. Further, the one who uses the disquotational principle, namely *the ascriber* of the beliefs in question, may "consult the anaphoric chains", and if the phenomenon seems puzzling to her, surely this has much to do with this "consultation" — with the fact that the result of her "consultation" is her knowing that the names in question are coreferential. So even if proper names may rightly be said to function anaphorically, this fact cannot be what gives rise to the inapplicability of the disquotational principle, and exposing it cannot be considered a dissolution of the puzzle. If so, we cannot also accept Brandom's claim (expressed by the last quoted sentence) that the puzzling cases in question present good reasons for treating proper names on an anaphoric model. Whether we have other reasons for treating them on such a model is a question that goes beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>9</sup>

I said that I do not agree with the claim implied by Brandom's words that the disquotational principle may sometimes be applicable to proper-name-involving beliefs. Since Brandom does not really explain why the principle does not apply in the cases Kripke discusses, we cannot know when, according to him, the principle applies and when it does not. But we should note that if the principle is inapplicable in cases like that of Peter, for example, then certainly it is inapplicable with respect to *the two* assertions of Peter ("Paderewski had musical talent," and "Paderewski had no musical talent."), and not only to one of them, since nothing distinguishes these two assertions in this respect. And each of these assertions of Peter's, considered on its own, is a regular name-involving assertion, with no peculiarities. It would be a mystery if name-involving assertions generally gave rise to

<sup>9</sup> See Brandom's further discussion of this issue in chapter 7 of *Making it Explicit*.

belief-ascriptions in accordance with the disquotational principle, but these two assertions do not give rise to it.

I think that the disquotational principle is never applicable with respect to name-involving assertion. Cases of coreferential names only expose the general problem of applying it to such assertions. I agree with Brandom that the disquotational principle ignores many subtleties which specifying the relation between direct discourse quotation of what was said and indirect discourse reporting of what was claimed involves, and that this relation is not in general that of lexical identity. I think that in the case of proper names it always ignores subtleties. This is what happens in the case of Kripke's puzzle, and this is what gives rise to the puzzle.

The subtleties the principle ignores in the case of proper names can be noticed by considering Brian Loar's discussion of Kripke's puzzle.<sup>10</sup> Loar considers a variant of Kripke's example, which differs from the original only in that Pierre's English assertion concerning London is "London *is* pretty." How many belief-types Pierre has? he asks. Two, he replies, and they are as distinct in content as one's belief that Paris is pretty and one's belief that Rio is pretty. These beliefs of Pierre involve "differences in how Pierre conceives things, in how he takes the world to be, in what he regards the facts as being — that is, differences in some semantic or intentional dimension." (*ibid.*, p. 570)

If Loar's claim that the beliefs in his variant of Kripke's example differ in content is correct, this must of course be due to a content-difference between "London" and "Londre" in Pierre's thought. So if we accept this claim, we can see why the disquotational principle is inapplicable in this case (and in all other cases of proper names): the relevant belief-ascriptions that its application yield are sensitive only to the reference of the names, and so beliefs like those of Pierre in Loar's variant are type-identical (and beliefs like those of Pierre in the original example contradict each other) according to them; yet they are not really type-identical. Since reference is everything for such ascriptions, they are blind to the beliefs' content-difference.

So an argument to the effect that such beliefs differ in content is the missing link of Brandom's case against Kripke's puzzle. Such an argument would show why the disquotational principle cannot be applied in the cases in question.<sup>11</sup> Still, a question arises in this context. It seems that even if the use

<sup>10</sup>Loar, B. 1988. "Social Content and Psychological Content", in Grimm, R.H. and Merriam, D.D. (eds.). *Contents of Thoughts*. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, pp. 99–110; reprinted in Rosenthal, D.M. (ed.), 1991. *The Nature of Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 568–575. Page references are to the reprinted version.

<sup>11</sup>Though Brandom does not make such a move in treating the puzzle, I believe that his approach to proper names is compatible with it. (He even takes the conceptual contents of proper names — which on his view "correspond to anaphorically structured constellations of



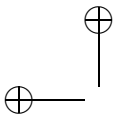
of the disquotational principle for proper-names involving beliefs is unjustified, our practice of ascribing contents in such cases *is* in conformity with this principle. We would judge, based on the story of Pierre, both that he believes that London is pretty and that he believes that London is not pretty. So it might be thought that Kripke's puzzle does expose a flaw in the practice of content ascription. Further, does it really make sense to say that content and standard content-ascriptions do not match with each other? Does it make any sense to say that the contents of names-involving beliefs are not what standard ascriptions of names-involve beliefs ascribe, even though we cannot say that such ascriptions are mistaken for some epistemic reasons?

I think the answer to these questions is rooted in the purpose that names are purported to serve. The very purpose of our using names in language is to refer to individuals — to pick them up in order to say whatever it is that we want to say about them. It is not that names do not refer to individuals *in virtue* of some properties of the individuals, or some events in which the individuals were involved, etc; and it is not that in using names we do not have some conceptions of the bearers of names. But all these facts do not typically interest us when we use names; only the identity of the names' bearers does. It is for this reason that ascriptions of name-involving beliefs are sensitive (as far as the name-components of such beliefs are concerned) only to reference. We do not typically care, in making these ascriptions, about these beliefs' full contents. The use of a name in the that-clause of a belief ascription does not purport to deliver more than what is of interest to the believer in expressing his belief. Thus, name-involving belief ascriptions do not necessarily indicate what the contents of the ascribed beliefs are. They do not purport to do this — strictly speaking, they are not ascriptions of content. And ascribing such contradictory ascriptions does not indicate the existence of a contradiction in the believer's doxastic system.

#### IV

But suppose that one is convinced, for whatever reasons, that the relevant belief ascriptions do indicate the full contents of the beliefs in question — that the contribution of the name-components to the propositions believed is fully determined by the identity of the bearers of the names. (On such

tokenings" — to be like Fregean senses in some respects (p. 582); but he does not connect this fact with his treatment of Kripke's puzzle.) Even his taking beliefs which contain proper names to be "strong *de re*" (p. 583) — such that their content-identity depends on the identity of the objects they are about — is compatible with this move, since the content-identity of such beliefs and of the proper names that they contain may depend also on other things. It is also worth mentioning that a central respect in which Loar takes Pierre's two beliefs to differ is their inferential roles, and Brandom is a strong advocate of inferential role semantics.



an approach, speakers' conceptions of the bearers of the names they use, the properties in virtue of which the names' bearers are referred to by the names, etc., are all irrelevant to this contribution.) Should one, then, find the semantical data of “Kripke's Puzzle” puzzling? I think one should not. Under that supposition, the principle of transparency of inconsistencies should not be regarded as self-evident. The intuitive appeal of this principle draws from the intuitive appeal of the idea that anyone is, in principle, in a position to know the contents of one's propositional attitudes. But certainly, in the framework of externalist semantics this idea cannot be taken for granted, and indeed it was questioned by various philosophers.<sup>12</sup> And of course, if this idea cannot be taken for granted, neither can the principle of transparency of inconsistencies. Under the externalist supposition that the contribution of the name-components to the propositions believed is fully determined by the identity of the bearers of the names, then, those semantical data should be regarded as puzzling only once a compelling argument for the validity of this principle in an externalist framework is suggested.

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<sup>12</sup> See, among others, Mckinsky, M. 1991. “Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access”. *Analysis* 51, pp. 9–16, and Boghossian, P. 1989. “Content and Self-Knowledge”. *Philosophical Topics* 17, pp. 5–26.

