STATE

AN INTRODUCTION TO SCHIFFER'S 'MEANING-INTENTION' PROBLEM[1]

Mark LOVAS

> Be warned gentle reader that what follows is, in large measure, a very summary summary of recent discussions of belief contexts. It is neither scholarly nor thorough. Its chief purpose is to introduce the basic moves and a few of the most important players in this important combat.

Frege [1] argued that a semantical theory must recognize, in addition to objects in the world, an additional possible semantic value for our words: namely the sense (*Sinn*) of linguistic expressions. Thus, Frege argued against what has since come to be known as the 'direct reference' view of singular terms, the view that singular terms contribute only their referents to the sentences in which they occur.

Kripke [3] argued in favor of the thesis of direct reference. But one possible interpretation of Kripke's argument says that Kripke only showed that senses could not be the mechanism of reference. My use of the singular term 'Kripke' couldn't be connected to the actual individual by what I know or believe about Kripke because what I know or believe might be largely incorrect or it might even fit someone other than Kripke. And even if what I know or believe is all wrong I might still manage to refer to Kripke, roughly because I belong to a community which has been referring to Kripke for some time now, and the right sort of causal relationship has been established between myself and Kripke. Even if Kripke were right about the mechanism of reference, perhaps senses are needed to give an account of belief. Thus, to appeal to the tragedy of Sophocles, we can't understand Oedipus's actions toward his mother unless we understood that it is possible to believe that Jocasta is very marriageable without believing that Mom is marriageable, even if Jocasta happens to be one's mother. In a more Fregean parlance, we may say that the sense of the expression 'Jocasta' differs from the sense of the expression 'my mom'. So, even if we don't need senses to account for how reference is established, we need them to understand belief, and especially the role of belief in causing action. (Cf. Heck [2])

Into this context let us introduce Kripke's ([4], 108) skeptical objection. Kripke's objection is straightforward: there is no common conceptual content, (no community-wide sense associated with e.g., 'Jocasta') which users of any proper name must associate with that name.

The bulk of Kripke's famous "Puzzle about Belief" [4] is devoted to the case of Pierre who seems to believe both that London is pretty and that London is not pretty. The case hinges upon what Pierre believed while he was a monolingual French speaker living in Paris, and what he later came to believe about London when he was trapped in one of its seedier suburbs. The key to the example is that Pierre once believed what he would have very naturally expressed as "Londres est joli", and later comes to believe what he would have, with equal naturalness, expressed as "London is not pretty." The problem for us is that, as Kripke shows, we seem to wind up attributing to Pierre a contradiction if we rely upon two quite plausible principles, one allowing us to translate 'Londres est joli' as 'London is beautiful', and one connecting sincere assent with belief. Kripke himself did not offer a solution to this puzzle. He thought it raised doubts about the coherence of our belief reporting practices.

Among the responses to Kripke's puzzle was Perry and Crimmins' version of the hidden-indexical theory. They suggested that Kripke cleverly manipulated the context so that different ways of thinking of London are highlighted in each context. (This is not their terminology.) So, there is no real contradiction.

Schiffer's 'meaning-intention' problem can be viewed as a more detailed version of Kripke's skeptical objection fine tuned to devastate the theory of Perry and Crimmins. Schiffer begins by assuming a plausible picture of content: content is what is both grasped by a speaker and communicated to an audience. This starting assumption allows Schiffer to make a pincer movement against Perry and Crimmins. He argues that neither the content directly available to a speaker nor that available to an audience need fit the description given by Crimmins and Perry.

My disagreement with Schiffer centers about the question whether we should accept a speaker's claim to mean exactly what a particular sentence means and no more. Crimmins and Perry want to say that a person need not, at the time of making a belief attribution, explicitly express a particular mode of presentation. But Schiffer argues that they need not have any such thing in mind, even implicitly. To make this point he imagines someone rejecting a Perry-Crimmins style paraphrase of their original utterance with the claim, 'that's [referring to the sentence originally uttered] all I mean'.

I argue that this possibility is misconceived. I also make a few positive suggestions about how speakers manage to refer to modes of presentation, but nowhere do I endorse the simplest model for this process, one which would suppose that every sense is expressed uniquely by a particular term independently of specifying a context, and that every thought is associated with a unique sentence in no-matter-what context the sentence is uttered. (On the other hand, I am unsure to what extent my own view means departs from Schiffer's minimalist view of propositions. The solution to the uniqueness problem which I offer in my paper seems to me to be in the spirit of Schiffer's minimalism.)

REFERENCES

[1] FREGE. G. (1892): Ueber Sinn und Bedeutung. **Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik**, 100 (1892), 25-30. English translation, "On Sense and Reference" in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed., Peter Geach and Max Black (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), 56-78.

[2] HECK. R.G. (1996): The Sense of Communication. **Mind**, 104, 779-106

[3] KRIPKE, S. (1972): **Naming and Necessity.** Originally appeared in **Semantics of Natural Languages** (D. Reidel: Dordrecht), 253-355, but has also appeared as a separate volume, with a helpful Preface by Kripke (Blackwell, 1980)

[4] KRIPKE, S. , (1979): A Puzzle About Belief. **Meaning and Use**, edited by A. Margalit, (Dordrecht, D. Reidel), 239-83. (reprinted in Salmon and Soames, eds.) (My reference is to the pagination in Salmon and Soames.)

[5] SALMON, N., and SOAMES. S. (eds.) (1988): **Propositions and Attitudes**. (Oxford: Oxford University Press) This is a useful collection of papers including Kripke's 'Puzzle'.