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## Justification and Ways of Believing

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## Justification and Ways of Believing

### Abstract

One of the issues that has been hotly discussed in connection with the direct designation theory is whether or not coreferential names can be substituted *salva veritate* in epistemic contexts. Some direct designation theorists believe that they can be so substituted. Some direct designation theorists and all Fregeans and neo-Fregeans believe that they cannot be so substituted. Fregeans of various stripes have used their intuition against free substitution to argue against the direct designation theory. Some direct designation theorists have used the same intuitions to argue against the view that belief reports of simple declarative sentences can be accounted for with singular propositions. This paper has two main goals; first, to show that the discussion of the issue has tended to treat all epistemic contexts equally, and second, to argue that we should not treat substitutions in contexts that involve justification (and hence knowledge) in the same way as we treat substitution in simple belief contexts, i.e., contexts that just involve the belief relation.

### Disciplines

Epistemology | Other Philosophy | Philosophy | Religion

### Comments

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## JUSTIFICATION AND WAYS OF BELIEVING

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One of the issues that has been hotly discussed in connection with the direct designation theory is whether or not coreferential names can be substituted *salva veritate* in epistemic contexts. Some direct designation theorists believe that they can be so substituted. Some direct designation theorists and all Fregeans and neo-Fregeans believe that they cannot be so substituted. Fregeans of various stripes have used their intuition against free substitution to argue against the direct designation theory. Some direct designation theorists have used the same intuitions to argue against the view that belief reports of simple declarative sentences can be accounted for with singular propositions.<sup>1</sup> This paper has two main goals; first, to show that the discussion of the issue has tended to treat all epistemic contexts equally, and second, to argue that we should not treat substitutions in contexts that involve justification (and hence knowledge) in the same way as we treat substitution in simple belief contexts, i.e., contexts that just involve the belief relation.

### I.

Much of the recent discussion on substitutivity has conflated all epistemic contexts and often indiscriminately shifts between one *believing* that  $a=b$  and one *knowing* that  $a=b$ . This, I contend, can result in our strong intuitions that names cannot be substituted freely in *knowledge* contents transferring to

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<sup>1</sup> Most notable of these are Mark Richard and Mark Crimmins. Both argue that we cannot account for our intuitions regarding substitution (among other things) while using singular propositions. Both then go on to introduce propositions that contain elements in addition to the object referred to and the property attributed to it. See M. Crimmins, *Talk About Beliefs* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), and M. Richard, *Propositional Attitudes: An Essay on Thoughts and How We Ascribe Them* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

*simple belief* contexts. But, as I will argue, it is not the case that what goes for the goose goes for the gander.

In his highly influential discussion on belief attribution and substitutivity, Nathan Salmon writes:

Now, there is no denying that, given the proper circumstances, we say things like ‘Lois Lane does not realize (know, believe) that Clark Kent is Superman’ and ‘There was a time when it was not known that Hesperus is Phosphorus’.<sup>2</sup>

Here Salmon clearly indicates that the same goes for ‘realize’, ‘know’, and ‘believe’, so he, at the very least, treats knowledge contexts and simple belief contexts in the same way. Further, since it is evident that one cannot realize that Hesperus is Phosphorus without acquiring a justification of Hesperus being Phosphorus Salmon seems to be implying that one can freely substitute coreferential names in all epistemic contexts. This is further supported when he says that

...anyone who knows that Hesperus is Hesperus knows that Hesperus is Phosphorus, no matter how strongly he or she might deny the latter.<sup>3</sup>

Even more recently R.G. Heck, Jr. switches from belief to knowledge when discussing deficiencies of what he calls the Hybrid View.

Suppose that Tony does not know that George Orwell is Eric Blair and that Alex asserts, in Tony’s presence, “Eric Blair is Eric Blair”. Suppose further that, in reaction to Alex’s assertion, Tony forms the belief she would express as “George Orwell is Eric Blair”. This belief does concern the correct objects. Reference is preserved. Truth is preserved. Has Tony then come to know that George Orwell is Eric Blair? Obviously not.<sup>4</sup>

And later in the same article

It is part and parcel of the Hybrid View that one can believe (or know) that George Orwell is F, yet not believe that Eric Blair is F...<sup>5</sup>

But as I will argue, one cannot argue against substitutivity in simple belief contexts by arguing against substitutivity in knowledge contexts.

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<sup>2</sup> Salmon, Nathan, *Frege’s Puzzle* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1986): p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Salmon, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> Heck, Richard G., Jr., “The Sense of Communication,” *Mind* (1995): 79-106, pp. 94-95.

<sup>5</sup> Heck, p. 99.

The examples show clearly that there is a tendency to treat all epistemic contexts equally. This, I will argue, is a mistake. With the introduction of singular propositions and ways of believing we should distinguish sharply between simple belief contexts and contexts that involve justification. One more example, where Ralph Kennedy uses our intuition that we cannot freely substitute in knowledge contexts to raise a problem for the naïve Russellian, will serve as a foil for the discussion.

## II.

In “Salmon versus Kripke on the A Priori”<sup>6</sup> Ralph Kennedy raises a problem for direct designation theorists. The set-up of Kennedy’s problem is as follows:

Someone we’ll call ‘Claudia’ has just found a stick that looks in every way like a measuring stick except for lacking any numerals or other markings. The stick is in fact exactly one meter long. Claudia says to herself: ‘This is certainly not a yard stick: it is too long. Perhaps it is a meter stick. No, I’m sure it’s not long enough for that.’ It would seem safe to say that Claudia ... does not know that the length of the stick is exactly a meter.<sup>7</sup>

Given the above it seems clear that Claudia does not know that the stick is one meter long. But, as Kennedy points out, that can quickly change, for Claudia can change her epistemic situation by engaging in a baptism ritual. “She could say: ‘I think I’ll call the length of this stick, which is certainly more than a yard and less than a meter, a ‘schmoo’.”<sup>8</sup> Claudia would now know that the length of the stick is one schmoo. But, as Kennedy points out, the proposition that the length of the stick is one schmoo is the same as the proposition that the length of the stick is one meter, since ‘schmoo’ and ‘meter’ are coreferential. So, Kennedy concludes, since the objects of knowledge and beliefs are propositions and Claudia knows that the length of the stick is one schmoo, she knows that the length of the stick is one meter. And that, he claims, is simply absurd. (Kennedy adds to the absurdity by adding to this Kripke’s view that as a result of the baptism Claudia would know *a priori* that the length of the stick is one meter, but I will leave issues related to apriority out of this discussion.<sup>9</sup>)

<sup>6</sup> *Analysis* 1987 pp. 158-161.

<sup>7</sup> P. 159.

<sup>8</sup> P. 159.

<sup>9</sup> For my take on contingent *a priori* truths, see “The Contingent *A Priori*: Kripke’s Two Types of Examples,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 1991, pp. 195-205.

The problem Kennedy raises is not limited to baptism situations. We can, for example, easily imagine the following situation. Archibald meets the chess player Kasparov. Upon seeing Kasparov Archibald sees a striking likeness with him and a young prodigy, Weinstein, whom he met years ago at the Botvinnik Chess Academy. Archibald says to himself: ‘There certainly is a strong resemblance between Kasparov and young Weinstein. Perhaps Kasparov is Weinstein. No, I’m pretty sure he isn’t. After all, they don’t even have the same name.’ Given this it is safe to say that Archibald does not know that Kasparov is Weinstein. But then Archibald goes on, proud of his knowledge of identity statements: ‘One thing I am sure of is that Kasparov is Kasparov, but I wonder what became of Weinstein, for he was very promising.’ As before, since the objects of knowledge are propositions and ‘Kasparov is Kasparov’ and ‘Kasparov is Weinstein’ express the same proposition, then since Archibald knows that ‘Kasparov is Kasparov’ we get the absurd conclusion that Archibald knows that ‘Kasparov is Weinstein.’

We have the following pair of sentences;

1. Stick S is one meter long.
2. Stick S is one schmoo long.

And

3. Weinstein is Kasparov
4. Kasparov is Kasparov.

Archibald knows, without doubt, the proposition expressed by (4). It certainly appears that he does not know that Weinstein is Kasparov (the proposition as expressed by (3)), for Archibald consciously went through the reasons for and against accepting that Weinstein is Kasparov and concluded that he had insufficient reasons for believing it true. That is, it is true that Archibald does not know that Weinstein is Kasparov. Also, Claudia knows the proposition expressed by (2) although she does not know that the stick is one meter long. How can we account for the difference in epistemic status with regard to the proposition?

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For the purpose of this paper I will assume that one can acquire knowledge of the length of the stick via baptism. Whether the resulting knowledge is *a priori* is not relevant for the issues addressed in this paper. In “Justification and Relative Apriority,” *Ratio* XII (1999): 148-161, I present arguments to the effect that a priori knowledge of singular propositions should be relativized to how the given proposition is believed.

Before going on I will make the following assumptions. First, the numbered sentences above express singular propositions, that is, propositions that contain the object referred to as a constituent, as well as the property attributed to the object. The proposition expressed by (4) contains, accordingly, Kasparov and the property of being identical. Second, I will assume that the following Russellian view about the metaphysics of belief is correct. Believing is a binary relation between a person and a proposition. But the relation is mediated so that one believes a proposition in virtue of having some psychological relation to a third entity, namely a mode of presentation (often called “way of grasping,” “way of taking,” “representation,” or “propositional guise” by Russellians). On this view the binary belief relation can be analyzed into a ternary relation between a person, a proposition, and a way of believing the proposition. So, roughly, A believes p iff A believes p in some way or other.

Further, Russellians deny that utterances of belief sentences express propositions about ways of believing. Instead, the utterances of belief sentences only report what proposition is believed. That is, utterances of belief sentences semantically reveal the binary relation that obtains between the believer and a proposition believed.<sup>10</sup> With this basic mechanism in place let us go on and look at Claudia’s and Archibald’s epistemic situations.

So far, the most common Russellian response to the type of situation Archibald finds himself in is to bite the bullet and say that Archibald knows that Weinstein is Kasparov. The problem, the story goes, is that he does not recognize the proposition when believed in one way as being the same as the proposition when believed in another way. For example, Archibald does not recognize that (3) expresses the same proposition as does (4). In spite of that, the reply goes (as exemplified by, e.g., Salmon), since (3) expresses the

<sup>10</sup> At this point there are at least two tracks one can choose from. One track relies on pragmatic implication where, in addition to the semantic information a report may reveal, it pragmatically conveys information not contained in the report itself. For example, if I utter ‘Hesperus is Phosphorus’ then the utterance could pragmatically convey that I believe the proposition in such a way that I recognize that the morning star and the evening star is one. This track is advocated by Salmon and Soames and has recently been developed in Jennifer Saul’s “The Pragmatics of Belief Ascription,” *Philosophical Studies* (1998), 363-389. Another track, advocated by David Braun in “Understanding Belief Reports,” *The Philosophical Review* (1998), 555-595, provides an alternative to the pragmatic account while relying simply on ways of believing. I provide an account that relies on ways of believing in “Partial Propositions and Cognitive Content,” *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 21 (1996): 117-128.

same proposition as does (4) and Archibald knows that Kasparov is Kasparov, Archibald also knows that Weinstein is Kasparov.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, so far the Russellian has argued that if Claudia knows that stick S is one schmoo long, then she knows that stick S is one meter long. Claudia just does not recognize the proposition when believed in one way as being the same as the proposition when believed in another way.

The Russellian reply is deeply counterintuitive, and the virtue of Kennedy's example is that it is even more counterintuitive to accept the Russellian explanation in Claudia's case than it is in Archibald's case. It seems evident that Claudia does not know that S is one meter long. To say anything to the contrary seems plainly wrong. In fact, puzzles like the ones above are usually included as motivating factors behind neo-Fregean (and anti-Russellian) views, and the Russellian type of explanation of Archibald's and Claudia's epistemic situation given above have not proved satisfactory to those that are skeptical of the Russellian view.

Given that the most prominent Russellian explanation of Claudia's and Archibald's epistemic situations is less than satisfactory my goal is to provide a more satisfactory explanation of their epistemic situation while retaining the Russellian account of the metaphysics of belief.

Russellians use ways of believing to account for different cognitive roles the same proposition might play. Since a singular proposition can be believed in more than one way, as when Archibald believes the proposition expressed by (3) and (4) in different ways, Archibald can be in different belief states while believing the same proposition, where we take a belief state to be determined by the proposition believed together with the way in which it is believed. Consequently, we cannot individuate his belief states only by reference to the proposition believed. We need both the proposition and the way in which it is believed in order to individuate Archibald's belief state. So, for Russellians it is ultimately ways of believing a singular proposition that explains and accounts for differences in cognitive role. The problem is that they have as of yet not developed an account of justification that acknowledges this. Once we acknowledge that it is ways of believing that explain differences in cognitive role, then it is apparent that it is *how* one believes a proposition and not simply that one believes it that should be subject to epistemic appraisal, such as whether the subject is justified in believing the proposition in that way. What I will argue is that one can be justified in believing a proposition in one way while not being justified in believing it in a second way.

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<sup>11</sup> See for example Salmon's *Frege's Puzzle*.



Assuming that the belief relation is binary, all it takes to believe a proposition is to stand in an appropriate relation to it. Consequently, since (3) and (4) express the same proposition and Archibald stands in a belief relation to the proposition expressed by (4), Archibald stands in a belief relation to the proposition expressed by (3). Archibald may believe the proposition in two different ways, but that does not change the fact that he does believe the proposition. So, Archibald does believe that Weinstein is Kasparov.

The distinction we are faced with when dealing with *belief* and *believing as* or *believing in a way* is somewhat analogous to the familiar distinction between *seeing* and *seeing as*. Suppose that a police officer is being questioned in the shooting death of a child who had wielded a water pistol. The officer is asked whether he saw the object the boy was holding, and he answers yes, he did see it. All the officer is indicating is that he stood in a perceiving relation with the object the boy held. The next question is, did you see the object as a water pistol? It is the answer to this question that is crucial to whether or not the officer's actions were justified, for if he saw the object as a water pistol he is not justified in shooting the boy, while if he saw it as a gun he may be justified in doing so. The fact that the officer *saw* the object is not very helpful in determining whether or not the officer acted appropriately. The fact that the officer *saw it as* a gun is helpful in determining whether or not he acted appropriately.

Similarly, when we say that Archibald *believes* the proposition, then that only tells us that he stands in a belief relation to the proposition. It gives us the content of his belief and not his belief state, or the way in which he believes it. As the seeing relation, it doesn't carry with it much information, and it carries with it no information about *how* he believes the proposition. As long as we focus *just* on the belief relation I do not find it to be very counterintuitive that Archibald believes that Kasparov is Weinstein if he believes that Kasparov is Kasparov, for here we are only saying that Archibald stands in a belief relation to the proposition. It is only when we turn our attention to justification and knowledge that our intuition is truly tested. It is instructive to see that when these types of examples are used to make the Russellian look bad they tend to focus on *knowledge* contexts instead of simple belief contexts, e.g., the example is that Claudia *knows* that the stick is one meter long.

The way in which a proposition is believed becomes more significant once we turn to justification. It is evident that, when thinking about Garry

Kasparov, Archibald is justified in believing that Kasparov is Kasparov. It is equally evident that Archibald is not justified in believing that Kasparov is Weinstein. He sees some resemblance between the grandmaster and the young chess prodigy but, on reflection, concludes that they are not the same person.

One plausible way of explaining the difference in Archibald's justification, and what I think is the right way of explaining it, is to point out that he believes the proposition in two different ways and that justification is tied to how a proposition is believed. The most plausible way of accounting for him believing the proposition in two different ways is by him representing the object in the proposition in different ways. When he thinks of Kasparov as being identical with himself, i.e., when he believes that Kasparov is Kasparov, then he has one representation of Kasparov (although it may be a complex representation). When he thinks of Kasparov as being identical with Weinstein, then he has two representations of Kasparov that he takes to be of different persons. Typically, when we have two representations they represent different objects, and so Archibald suspects that Kasparov and Weinstein are two persons. So, it is the difference in how Archibald represents Kasparov as a grown man and Kasparov (Weinstein) as a child that translates into him believing the proposition in two different ways. That, in turn, explains how he can be justified when believing the proposition in one way and not justified when believing it in a different way. For Archibald needs further evidence to justify his belief that Kasparov is Weinstein when he believes the proposition in a way in which Kasparov is represented in two different ways, as indicated above, while he does not need further evidence to justify the belief that Kasparov is Kasparov when he believes the proposition in a way that employs a single representation of Kasparov. Consequently, since justification is required for knowledge, Archibald can know that Kasparov is Kasparov, as when he thinks that Kasparov is identical to himself, and at the same time not know that Kasparov is Weinstein, as when he wonders whether Kasparov is the same as young Weinstein.

One may object that for Archibald to believe that Kasparov is Kasparov is just for him to believe that Kasparov is Weinstein and that since I have not identified two different beliefs I cannot argue that Archibald is justified in holding one belief and not justified in holding the other.<sup>12</sup> But the objection

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<sup>12</sup> This objection was raised by a referee of the journal.

fails to take into account that one is not justified in believing singular propositions simpliciter; one is justified in believing singular propositions *as they are believed*. So, while I have not identified different propositions that Archibald believes, I have identified different ways in which Archibald believes the same proposition, or different belief states. Since it is how one believes a proposition that is salient to epistemic appraisal, such as justification, he can be justified in believing the proposition when believed in one way and not justified in believing it when believed in a second way.

The object of belief, the proposition Archibald believes, is a singular proposition. But the proposition can be apprehended in different ways which explains the different cognitive role it may play in a person's belief. A Russellian can, as Salmon does, analyze the belief relation as a ternary relation. What I am doing is making the third element in that analysis, the way of believing, epistemically salient without it affecting the object of belief or the proposition believed. The analysis I am proposing is therefore compatible with Russellianism about beliefs of singular propositions.

We can explain Claudia's epistemic situation in a similar way. Claudia believes that S has the property of being one schmoo long, while she does not believe that S has the property of being one meter long. Still, one schmoo is one meter. Claudia represents one schmoo as being the length of S. She does not represent one meter as being the length of S. Consequently, she has different representations of a schmoo and a meter, which means that she believes the proposition expressed by (2) (which is the same as the one expressed by (1)) in two different ways. As a result of the different representations, Claudia can be justified in believing the proposition in one way and not justified in believing it in a different way.

The view that a person can be justified in believing a proposition when believing it in one way and not justified in believing it when believing it in a different way fits very well with the view that justification and evidence are intimately connected. Suppose, for some proposition L, that person P believes that L, that L is true, and that P has no evidence for believing that L is true. P, then, believes that L as a result of a lucky guess, but she nevertheless believes that L. In order for P to turn her belief into knowledge she needs *evidence* for L's truth, for justification and evidence are intimately related.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> How tight the connection between one's justification for L and one's evidence for L needs to be is a matter of some controversy. Some philosophers say that P is

It seems clear that the evidence Claudia needs to possess to be justified in believing that stick S is one schmoo when she represents the stick as being one schmoo long is different from the evidence she needs for believing that stick S is one meter when she represents the stick as being one meter long. For the former, all she needs is her stipulative definition of ‘schmoo’ as naming the length of stick S. For her to be justified in believing that stick S is one meter, she needs an appropriate measuring device and a measurement. The evidence needed for justification, in Claudia’s case, depends on how she believes the proposition, and it is clear that just as the measuring device cannot give her evidence for the stick being one schmoo long, the stipulation of the stick being one schmoo long does not provide her with evidence for the stick being one meter. Since Claudia needs different evidence for the truth of her belief depending on how she believes the proposition in question, she can be justified in believing the proposition in one way while not being justified in believing it in a different way.

Same goes for Archibald. When he thinks to himself, proud of his understanding of identity statements, that Kasparov is Kasparov (that Kasparov is identical to himself), then his belief is justified. When he wonders whether Kasparov is Weinstein then he needs to carry out empirical investigation, perhaps consisting of finding out from someone connected to the Botvinnik Chess Academy what became of young Weinstein. So, how Archibald believes the proposition determines the nature of the evidence he needs for its truth.

The account of a propositional belief being justified depending on the way in which one believes it goes against philosophical tradition, for traditional treatments of justification do not make justification dependant on ways of believing. There is a reason for the popularity of the traditional view. One can make the case that recent work on justification was done with Fregean propositions in mind; propositions that one either believes or does not believe, and propositions that do not admit of ways of believing. Once one accepts Fregean propositions one either believes the proposition or one does not believe the proposition, and the proposition believed fully discloses the content of one’s belief. It wasn’t until with the reemergence of singular

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justified in believing that L if, and only if, believing L fits P’s evidence. Other want a stronger connection and require that one has adequate evidence for L and that one believes that L because of that evidence.

propositions in the context of the direct designation theory of names that we have propositions that admit of ways of believing. The problem is that it appears that epistemic accounts of justification have not adjusted to developments in the philosophy of language. In particular, philosophers have approached singular propositions in the same way as Fregean propositions when it comes to justification and assumed that one either is or is not justified in believing a given singular proposition, even though these propositions admit of ways of believing. But once we admit that justification of singular propositions is relative to how one believes the proposition, a number of belief puzzles that have troubled direct designation theorists can be explained away.

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