

Response

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Miller has offered us a solution to what we may agree, on the authority of Kripke himself, is a deep and genuine conceptual conundrum arising at the heart of the theory of reference. For the clarity of his analysis and to the extent that his proposed solution gives light to the nature of the problem, Miller's paper is to be commended. I am less than convinced, however, that his proposal can do the work he claims, and my reservation is centered about the strategy he borrows from Wettstein, the attempt, namely, to hold cognitive considerations to be independent of semantical concerns. My remarks shall be directed, then, toward revealing what I feel is a conceptual inadequacy in his account and, if I am correct in this, the proposed solution must be seen to fail.

We should be careful at the outset to note that the problem that Miller addresses has to do not with the substitutivity thesis itself but rather with certain cognitive considerations that arise where the Millian conception about reference which funds the thesis is taken as the explicative ground for the cognitive relationship between sentences and propositions. Our intuitions would urge us to accept a subject's assent to or dissent from a sentence as evidence to his belief state with respect to the proposition expressed by the sentence at issue. A puzzle arises, however, where two sentences expressing the same proposition elicit an assent from the subject to the first sentence and a dissent from the second. The substitutivity thesis provides the context for assuming that two sentences express the same proposition where distinct proper names are used to refer to a single person. In the case where our subject is unaware that the coreferring terms denote the same person shall we say that he does or does not believe the proposition expressed by the sentence? Miller's project is to attempt to answer this "puzzle about belief" without disturbing the Millian claim about the nature of reference as it pertains to proper names. He wants to claim, in other words, that the cognitive data supplied by the subject's belief reports are consistent with the substitutivity thesis, and the strategy is to show how we can answer questions

about belief without appealing to the details of the theory of reference which sponsors the substitutivity thesis.

In order for this strategy to go through it is necessary to suppose that questions of cognitive significance can be treated independently of considerations concerning the reference of proper names. A theory of reference, we are told, "has to do with a relationship between language and the world, whereas cognitive problems involve a relationship between the mind and language or perhaps between mind and the world" (Miller 24). The test of Miller's solution to the puzzle, therefore, is whether his analysis of the cognitive relationship between a person and a proposition can be made in terms consistent with the distinction just made. I want to argue that Miller's analysis of belief states cannot meet this requirement, that cognitive claims cannot be made out as a relation involving either of the two relations that characterize cognitive considerations, and so the alleged independence of semantics and cognition cannot be sustained.

Miller's response to the puzzle centers on the notion of a cognitive perspective that a subject assumes with respect to a given proposition. In the Paderewski example, the subject (Peter) accepts, that is, assents to, the sentence "Paderewski had musical talent" where he understands the proper name to denote a certain composer. We are given to understand, then, that by the disquotational principle Peter thereby believes that Paderewski had musical talent. But Peter is also inclined to assent to the sentence "Paderewski had no musical talent" where he understands the name as denoting a certain Polish statesman. It would appear, then, by a second application of the disquotational principle, that Peter holds contradictory beliefs in that he assents to both a particular sentence about Paderewski and its negation. The problem is how to harmonize our acceptance of the disquotational principle and regard Peter's assent to various sentences as evidence for his belief states with the apparent contradictions that lurk amongst Peter's various beliefs. Does Peter believe or does he not believe that Paderewski had musical talent?

In the solution that Miller develops, he wants to maintain the validity of the disquotational principle throughout and to accept as legitimate the cognitive data that we obtain upon Peter's belief reports, that is, his assenting to the two sentences. The objective is thus an interpretation of the cognitive data that is consistent with Mill's doctrine concerning the reference of proper names. By Mill's lights, the name "Paderewski" serves only to denote a certain individual without regard to that individual's various properties. We cannot hope to resolve the puzzle by augmenting the two sentences that elicit Peter's assent such that the

first sentence becomes "Paderewski the musician had musical talent" and the second "Paderewski the statesman had no musical talent." To do so would amount to a wholesale abandonment of Mill's position in that the name would serve to denote not the man Paderewski simpliciter, but only Paderewski under one and then again another of his qualitative aspects. But more plainly, the two sentences would not express the same proposition and Peter's beliefs would no longer appear contradictory. The puzzle about belief only arises where the proper name refers to Paderewski as Mill held that it did, and where the two sentences are understood as a sentence and its negation.

These points are sufficiently clear from Miller's discussion, but I rehearse the details only to make explicit the fact that the proposed solution is developed solely in terms of cognitive considerations. We are told that Peter has assumed two distinct cognitive perspectives upon the man Paderewski, and that "these different perspectives on Paderewski give Peter different perspectives on the proposition expressed by 'Paderewski had musical talent'" (Miller 28). Such an arrangement is consistent with the characterization of cognitive matters as pertaining to a relationship between Peter's mind and the world. But the question we should ask is whether Peter has assumed two perspectives on the man Paderewski or rather that he has a single perspective on each of what he understands to be distinct individuals, namely a certain composer and a certain statesman. Miller implies that perspectives on propositions are contingent upon perspectives taken on individuals, and to the extent that his solution hinges on the notion of cognitive perspectives on propositions, we need to be clear on the nature of perspectives as they pertain to individuals.

If we should want to hold, with Miller, that Peter's cognitive perspectives on Paderewski are to be understood as Peter's apprehension of a single individual from distinct viewpoints, we need to find some criterion for distinguishing the various perspectives. To suggest that it is the several properties that attach to the individual which distinguish the perspectives seems implausible for the following considerations. Paderewski had the property of being a musician and also the property of being a statesman. Beethoven had the property of being a musician and the Kaiser Wilhelm the property of being a statesman. But Paderewski had the property of being both musician and statesman whereas neither Beethoven nor the Kaiser did. If musicianship and statesmanship define distinct perspectives, shall we say there is a third property defining a third perspective, namely musicianship and statesmanship conjointly? This seems problematical at best. But if the properties do not distinguish cognitive perspectives, what then? What is it that deter-

mines the fact that I, who know of Paderewski that he was both statesman and musician, hold a different perspective than Peter who knows only of this same individual that he was a musician?

The answer, I submit, can only be the beliefs that Peter and I hold. That we hold different beliefs will be manifest by Peter's willingness to assent to the sentence "Paderewski had no musical talent" on the one hand and my reticence so to assent on the other. Our cognitive states, that is, our perspectives, can only be made out on the basis of our belief reports. But belief, we are told, is characterized as a relation between a person and a proposition, not between a person and the individual about whom the belief may be held. The difference between my and Peter's beliefs should have to be explicated by appealing to one or the other of the terms in this relation. If the difference in the beliefs pertains to the persons who hold the respective beliefs, we are pressed into the counter-intuitive position that no two persons can hold the same belief. The difference between my belief and Peter's can only be understood, therefore, as a difference in the propositions we entertain.

If this argument is correct, then two points seem to follow. First, we cannot maintain that cognitive perspectives on individuals determine or even precede perspectives on propositions for the simple reason that perspectives on individuals depend upon propositions as their criterion for differentiation. But secondly, and more importantly, the notion of a cognitive perspective cannot be explained as a relationship between the mind and the world. This latter point has an important bearing on the criticism I am trying to secure against Miller's proposed solution to the puzzle about belief.

A brief summary may be in order. Miller's game plan was to provide an interpretation for certain cognitive data that would be consistent with the Millian conception of the reference of proper names. To accomplish this he required the independence of semantics from cognitive concerns, and his conception of cognitive perspectives should have to be explicated as a relation between either mind and language or mind and world if the semantical concern for the relation between language and the world is to be avoided. I have tried to show that the relation of mind and world won't provide a plausible context for developing the notion of a cognitive perspective. Will the relation of mind to language do the job?

My objection here is brief. Recall that the central feature of Miller's analysis is the notion of a cognitive perspective on a proposition, and that seemingly contradictory beliefs held by a given subject might be understood as consistent if the various beliefs are maintained from different perspectives. If the independence of semantics and cognitive considera-

tions is to be respected, our conception of a cognitive perspective on a proposition can only be expressed as a relation between mind and language. I am satisfied to point out that propositions cannot plausibly be taken to be linguistic entities on pain of rendering the distinction between sentences and propositions vacuous. And if the relation between mind and language is inadequate for the task of explicating cognitive perspectives, we may conclude that the semantics/cognition diremption is spurious. To the extent at least that Miller's project requires the independence of these two realms, his solution is inadequate.