

CRITICAL NOTICES

The Fine Line

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1. Introduction

One of the virtues of Kit Fine's *Semantic Relationism* is that he states its guiding idea early on, and clearly. '[T]he fact that two utterances say the same thing is not entirely a matter of their intrinsic semantic features; it may also turn on semantic relationships among the utterances or their parts which are not reducible to those features' (3).¹

And he provides a useful analogy with corresponding conceptions of space: a substantialist believes that a fundamental account of spatial facts will include an assignment of *location* to every object. Accordingly, on the most natural development of this view, spatial relations among objects will be determined by spatial relations among their assigned locations. Whether objects are coincident, a foot apart, or equidistant from the Eiffel Tower, will all be settled by whether their locations are the same, a foot apart, or equidistant from the location of the Eiffel Tower, respectively. It is the analogue of that view for semantics that Fine rejects. Even after we have given a fundamental semantic value to each expression, questions about semantic relations between them remain open. Even after each of a pair of expressions has been given a meaning, for example, whether they are synonymous has not been determined. On Fine's view, then, for two terms to be synonymous is, strikingly, not simply a matter of their individually having the same meaning.

The purpose of Fine's book is to show how the guiding idea, the 'semantic relationism' of the title, helps with deep puzzles in philosophy of language and mind. Russell's antinomy of the variable, Frege's puzzle in both a linguistic and a cognitive version, and Kripke's puzzle about belief are said to be solved adequately only by adopting his relationism. But the book is also a defence of 'referentialism' in philosophy of language. Fine holds that the fundamental semantic relations that need to be added to the assigned intrinsic values in our overall semantic theory, especially the relation he calls 'coordination', can do much of the work of sense. A relationist referentialism 'can secure many of the advantages of the Fregean position without being committed to the existence of sense' (5).

In this selective review, I will not evaluate how Fine's line on these matters fares overall. There's a risk of unfairness in that, since part of any view's success can be measured only holistically, by balancing whatever disadvantages it might have with such emergent features as its unifying power and generality, and the consistency of its successes (as against its failures). Having signalled this, however, I will focus on just a few specific passages, and raise some corresponding issues and concerns.

1 *Semantic Relationism*, by Kit Fine (Blackwell 2007) viii + 146 pp. £45.00.

A main goal, to preview, will be to recommend a discriminating reaction to Fine's central idea: while semantic relationism is an attractive option for the semantics of first-order logic, and an interesting proposal for the semantics of natural language, it seems less adequate as part of a theory of the intentionality of thought. Accordingly, while the idea is most attractive as a way to respond to Russell's antinomy and may be a viable proposal for how to address one interpretation of Frege's puzzle, it is much less attractive in connection with Frege's puzzle on another interpretation and (though I will be unable to extend this review to incorporate the book's Chapter 4) in connection with Kripke's puzzles about belief. The reasons for this variety are, as we will see, general, having to do with the very nature of the semantic relations involved.

2. *Relationism About the Semantics of Variables*

In Chapter 1 Fine examines the semantics of first-order logic and the 'antinomy of the variable', arguing that far from possessing a good understanding of how variables work in the symbolism of logic and mathematics, as is generally supposed, we in fact confront 'deep problems concerning the role of variables that have never been properly recognized, let alone solved' (6). The main such problem is a supposed antinomy produced by conflicting attitudes toward the role of the variable: do any two variables (ranging over a given domain) have the same semantic role or different semantic roles? When we consider ' $x > 0$ ' and ' $y > 0$ ' we say that they have the same role. But when we consider ' $x > y$ ' we say that their roles are different (since ' $x > x$ ' would be a very different statement).

Fine's response, after he rejects the adequacy of several extant semantics ('autonomous', 'instantial', 'algebraic' and Tarskian approaches) for predicate logic, is to find a way, even while allowing that any two variables x and y have the same semantic role, to deny that the *pairs* (x,x) and (x,y) always have the same role. Informally, the idea is this: while the semantic role of the individual variable is effectively given by the range of values the variable can assume, nevertheless fixing the range of possible values for the variables does not itself settle whether several variables can assume any value *together*. That requires an independent specification. While *each* of x and y might be apt to assume any value from the domain, it might or might not be that *both* can assume any particular value simultaneously.

On Fine's account, then, we can see how the following two theses are compatible:

SS' there is no cross-contextual difference in semantic role between the variables x and y

SD' there is a cross-contextual difference in semantic role between the pairs of variables x,y and x,x

This bids fair to resolve our antinomy: the difference in semantic role between the pairs of values is a function of the relations that will have to be specified in the overall semantic theory, relations that are not themselves determined by the intrinsic semantic values of the individual variables themselves, which values are the same.

Fine closes part of his discussion here with a useful analogy to Max Black's (1960) counterexample to the identity of indiscernibles. Just as in Black worlds, though there is no intrinsic spatial difference between the two spheres (assuming a relational

conception of space itself), spatial relations between pairs of such spheres vary independently (in one Black world they might, unless we ruled it out, be spatially coincident, in another 17 feet apart), similarly on Fine's scheme, though there is no intrinsic semantic difference between the variables x and y , still semantic relations between pairs of such variables vary independently (one pair of intrinsically semantically-indiscernible variables might have the same value, another might not). Chapter 1 closes with a relational semantics for first-order logic.

I will not engage critically with Fine's discussion of semantic relationism for variables. I am not unsympathetic with his view, though I'm not sure its advantages over the Tarskian approach, in particular, are as significant as he suggests, relying as heavily as those advantages do on the significance of a distinction between what is conventional, 'having to do with the actual symbols or words used' as Fine says, and what is non-conventional, 'having to do with the representation function' (7).

On the Tarskian view, there is after all a difference between the variables x and y that accounts for the semantic difference between the pairs x,x and x,y : but Fine objects that this difference is not on that approach a *semantic* difference, since it 'simply turns on the difference between the variables x and y themselves' and thus secures only a *typographic* difference (11). I'm not sure that Fine is right to see a great advantage, as he does, in avoiding 'having to incorporate the variables themselves (or some surrogate thereof) into the very identity of the entities that the semantics assigns to open expressions of the language'. But this is just to register a location for further consideration, not to argue against Fine's theoretical choices.

3. *Relationism About the Semantics of Names*

Semantic relationism as a theoretical strategy is redeployed in Chapter 2 as a response to Frege's puzzle. Fine usefully emphasizes that puzzle's analogies with the antinomy about variables discussed in the first chapter, and then refines Frege's puzzle into an inconsistent set of four assumptions, taking the relation of 'Cicero=Cicero' and 'Cicero=Tully' as his case in point.

- (1) *Semantic Difference*: The two identity sentences are semantically different.
- (2) *Compositionality*: If the sentences are semantically different, then the names 'Cicero' and 'Tully' are semantically different;
- (3) *Referential Link*: If the names 'Cicero' and 'Tully' are semantically different, they are referentially different;
- (4) *Referential Identity*: The names 'Cicero' and 'Tully' are not referentially different.

The puzzle is to say which assumption is to be given up and why.

Fine sees the two main existing responses to the puzzle as Fregean and referentialist, and as giving up Referential Link and Semantic Difference, respectively. In what he admits explicitly is an all-too-brief review of some of the considerations for and against those views, Fine claims that it is a major mark against the referentialist view that it does not respect the strong intuitions we have about the difference in meaning between the sentences.

Moreover, Fine holds that there is an *argument* in favour of Semantic Difference, which challenges referentialism. Semantic Difference can itself be seen as the product of these two more fundamental principles:

- 1a. *Cognitive Difference*: The two identity sentences are cognitively different;
- 1b. *Cognitive Link*: If the two sentences are cognitively different, then they are semantically different;

While ‘it barely seems possible to reject the intuitive evidence in favor of Cognitive Difference’, it is according to Fine ‘hard to see how to account for this possible cognitive difference except in terms of a semantic difference’ (35).

Though indeed brief, Fine’s discussion highlights an important element in this set of issues. 1a, unlike 1 itself, is a principle about *cognitive* differences among sentences. But the very idea of sentences’ exhibiting cognitive relations is obscure. Certainly interactions with those sentences, by speakers or hearers, might involve cognitive states and relations. One might *use* them interchangeably or not, associating them with different cognitive contents or with the same cognitive contents – and circumstances (testimony, for example) might lead one to change which of these conditions one is in. But it is not straightforward to see the sentences themselves as intrinsically cognitively valued.

So the argument against referentialism is a better argument against what Fine calls the ‘cognitive version’ of Frege’s puzzle and which he takes up in Chapter 3. But remember that Fine will in the end defend a version of referentialism anyway.

‘The main problem with the Fregean position’, in Fine’s view, ‘is to say, in particular cases, what the difference in the meaning or sense of the names might plausibly be taken to be’ (35). Because Fregeans have been ‘very resourceful’ in coming up with possible differences in problem cases, Fine offers a case that he sees as resistant to the standard sorts of Fregean counterexamples (cf. Austin 1990, 20–25). The example is very important, because it reappears briefly later in Chapter 2 (42) and then again in Chapter 3 (70–1) in order to rebut also a Fregean response to the cognitive version of Frege’s puzzle.

While I myself think Fregeanism is an attractive theory of the semantics of intentional states of mind, I am not so confident it is required to account for the semantics of linguistic expressions; but I also do not think Fine’s example is decisive. In fact I think the preferability of referentialism to Fregean theories of linguistic semantics cannot be a matter of the refutation of the latter by examples but of more general theoretical considerations concerning the metaphysics of language, its point and role, and the mechanisms that might serve the purposes for which it develops. Of course this is not the place even to sketch those broader considerations. But I will review the example and raise a number of problems.

[I]magine a universe that is completely symmetric around someone’s center of vision. Whatever she sees to her left is and *looks* qualitatively identical to something she sees on her right (not that she conceptualizes the two sides as ‘left’ and ‘right’ since that would introduce an asymmetry). Now suppose she is introduced to someone, Bruce, but, seeing him ‘double,’ takes him to be two people. She takes herself to have met two people, indistinguishable to her, named ‘Bruce’. Now, she begins ‘using a left token of ‘Bruce’ for the left twin and a right token of ‘Bruce’ for the right twin’. She might use different

tokens of the name to assert her belief that the ‘two’ Bruces are not identical. According to Fine, ‘by considerations of symmetry, there is no purely descriptive difference in the referents. And this in itself is enough to refute a view that takes sense to be a purely descriptive means of identifying a referent (36).

A first issue is whether the example is so much as coherent. In fact I’m doubtful that a subject can conceive entities as distinct without distinguishing them in some way. If the mind finds them utterly indistinguishable (even perspectival), then it cannot distinguish them. Of course, it might be unable to distinguish them except through some self-referential aspect. But one cannot conceive a world presenting itself as symmetrical, but also *not* presenting itself as symmetric with respect to any particular axis. Once an axis presents itself as the line of symmetry (and what would it be like to have a field present itself as symmetrical without presenting any axis as the line of symmetry?), then the subject *can* conceptualize the two halves of her visual field and will accordingly have an asymmetry to which to appeal: the one in *that* half of the visual field and the one in *the other*. This indeed seems the only way to conceive the example, notwithstanding Fine’s parenthetical effort to block it: the only relevant difference is *perspectival*, but not for all that absent.

Fine seeks to forestall a different response, though one also based on ‘a more liberal view of sense, one that allows it to be partly nondescriptive’ (37). He sees only two plausible candidates to be these different ways of picking out the objects: they could be ways the objects are *currently* picked out, so that the sense of a name would somehow be tied to the use of that very token, or else they could be the ways the objects were *originally* picked out, so that the sense of the name would somehow be tied to the original identification of the relevant objects.

If we just focus on his first option for the moment, Fine argues that on that approach ‘the sense of the name would vary from one moment to the next; and . . . surely it should be possible for our subject to use consecutive tokens of the name in the very same way and hence with the very same sense’ (37). But a Fregean who takes seriously a token-reflexive conception of sense and sees the value of that approach for responding to Fine’s example is unlikely to feel threatened by Fine’s objection that on their approach, every new token suffices for a new sense – that was of course the central tenet of their view.

So the main strength of Chapter 2 is not in its criticisms of alternative views; but Fine warns us explicitly that his discussion there is compressed. The chapter’s main strength is and is intended to be the discussion of semantic relationism’s consequences for our understanding of Frege’s puzzle.

Fine’s view is that the principle he calls Compositionality should be rejected.

- (2) *Compositionality*: If the sentences [‘Cicero=Cicero’ and ‘Cicero=Tully’] are semantically different, then the names ‘Cicero’ and ‘Tully’ are semantically different;

That principle embeds an analogue of a presupposition he rejected for the case of variables in the first chapter. But Fine fairly points out that ‘the analogy with variables will only take us so far’ (39): while with variables their semantic role is to take any of a range of values, so that the issue of whether a pair takes the same value from that range can make sense, ‘in the case of names, the semantic role of each coreferential name is already fixed by its referent and so talk of ‘coordination’ or ‘independence’

would appear to be out of place' (39). How then to characterize the difference between the relation of 'Cicero' to 'Cicero' on one hand, and the relation of 'Cicero' to 'Tully' on the other?

Fine's solution is to distinguish between cases in which *it is a semantic fact that* two names co-refer and cases in which, although the names co-refer, that is not a semantic fact. In the former case Fine will say the names 'strictly corefer': and now we can say that the identity sentences differ semantically – because in one the two names strictly co-refer while in the other they merely co-refer – even while we insist that the semantics of the individual names is the same.

To clarify his suggestion, Fine has a substantial discussion of the notion of *semantic fact*. The discussion invokes a number of useful distinctions: (i) between facts that are semantic as to *topic* and facts that are also semantic as to *status*, (ii) between semantic *facts* and semantic *truths*, (iii) between a *semantics* and a *semantic theory*, and then, in connection with a discussion of a principle of *closure* for semantics (logical consequences of semantic facts are semantic facts) (iv) between *classical* and *manifest* consequence, (v) between a domain of *facts*, closed under classical consequence, and a domain of *information*, closed under manifest consequence, and finally (vi) between domains that are *subjectively* given (the phenomena) and domains that are *objective* (the noumena).

There is a great deal in all this discussion worth engaging; but it would be impossible to consider all of it here. Given the direction of this review, however, there is special interest in Fine's emphasis on the role of *manifest* consequence and of a domain of *information*, and in his prioritization of the subjectively given for semantics. An alternative, of course, is to maintain a more classical conception of the semantics of language, according to which closure holds.

Fine's more general motivation for the rejection of closure invokes the fact that on a traditional referentialist picture, an ideal cognitive agent will *not* be in a position to know every classical consequence of what he knows. Even an ideal cognizer 'may know, for example, that Paderewski is a brilliant pianist...and also that he is a charismatic statesman...', without realizing that it is the same person who is both.... So the referentialist cannot take knowledge, even for an ideal cognizer, to be closed under classical consequence' (48).

But there is a familiar presupposition in Fine's argument here. Notice that while the argument appears as part of his discussion of the semantics of *names*, it involves material mode claims about the implications of referentialism for what an ideal cognizer might *infer* or *know*. There must be some implicit operative thesis about the relation between the semantics of names and the contents of thought, something to the effect that if the agent knows that Paderewski is F and knows that he is G, then if he does not know that Paderewski is both F and G, then although the sentences 'the agent knows that Paderewski is F' and 'the agent knows that Paderewski is G' are true, the sentence 'the agent knows that Paderewski is both F and G' is false.

But if we think that Kripke's puzzle about belief (including its Paderewski variant) involves, fundamentally, issues about representation in *thought*, the topic taken up explicitly in Chapter 3, then it is hard to know what lessons to draw from the Paderewski case for the 'abridged, purely semantical version of [Frege's] puzzle' that is Fine's target here. What remains unclear, then, is whether we should not isolate the question of what an ideal cognizer might be in a position to know from our 'purely semantical' questions about names.

If the only motivation for the rejection of closure and for the prioritization of *manifest* consequences, *information*, and the subjectively given involves considerations about relations among the contents of thought, that motivation may be inadequate. Should *linguistic* semantics be conceived as a body of information to be ‘found’ in the mind of speaker; or should that conception be reserved rather for what might be called *mental* semantics, with linguistic semantics conceived as a body of fact to be found in the world? Fine opts for the former without, it seems to me sufficiently considering the latter alternative.

Notice, as an *ad hominem* point, that Fine’s relationist solution has it that the sentences ‘Cicero is an orator’ and ‘Tully is an orator’ (unlike the sentences ‘Cicero is Cicero’ and ‘Cicero is Tully’) have the *same* intrinsic semantics. Although Fine says he is ‘unsure what to make of our intuitions on this score’ (52), remember that the main argument against the traditional referentialist reaction to Frege’s puzzle was that ‘it seems evident’ that ‘Cicero = Cicero’ and ‘Cicero = Tully’ *differ* in meaning, indeed that ‘the difference is not even of a slight or subtle sort’ (35). But it is hard to combine the thought that the difference in meaning between the identity sentences is obvious (neither slight nor subtle) with uncertainty about whether ‘Cicero is an orator’ and ‘Tully is an orator’ have the same meaning. The traditional referentialist gives a consistent answer.

So I think there are special issues for the application of the relationist idea to the ‘purely semantical’ version of Frege’s puzzle. While relationism seems an attractive (if perhaps not required) response to what Fine calls the antinomy of the variable, its redeployment in the semantics of natural language introduces new problems that, in the scheme of things, reduce its attractions. Here relationism helps only if we deny Closure; and the motivation for such a denial is questionable.

That is a mild criticism, however: while there are grounds for resisting Fine’s motivation for rejecting Closure, those grounds do not *require* that one resist the motivation or that one reject Closure itself. I don’t here offer independent reasons for preferring a conception of linguistic semantic fact for which Closure holds. I just don’t think Fine has done enough to make us prefer otherwise, either.

But a more thorough review, on this point, would have to confront what Fine says about Transparency (semantic facts are accessible to the understanding) at the end of Chapter 2. According to him, the rejection of Closure and consequent preservation of Transparency, ‘enables us to steer a middle course between a conception of semantics that is either unduly objective or unduly subjective’ (64). In the traditional picture that Fine accepts, language is Janus-faced: facing one direction, it represents things in the world even while, facing the other direction, it is something a speaker can ‘grasp’. By contrast with Fregeanism and traditional referentialism, each of which gives primacy to one of these faces over the other, Fine’s position ‘takes the meaning of language to be given by its representational relationship to the world’ but where those relationships are conditioned so that ‘the meaning of the language will in general be accessible to its speakers’ (65).

4. *Relationism About the Semantics of Thought*

The direction of my critique has been that our conceiving language as Janus-faced is in fact a mistake, deriving from an assimilation of features of mentality to

linguistic practice. The essentially social and external character of language makes our grasp of its representational relationships indirect, as on a traditional referentialist account. What we can grasp directly is only the intentional character of our own thoughts, since those do not depend for their intrinsic semantics on the activity of others and on relations that go beyond us. But don't all the same problems arise for the semantics of thought as arise for the semantics of language? Don't those problems demand the same sort of treatment?

In Chapter 3, Fine takes up the semantics of thought and argues that 'there are representational relations between the constituents of thought that are not to be understood in terms of intrinsic representational features' (66). According to him, semantic relationism is required for thoughts, too. And here, it seems to me, his approach is least persuasive.

Again, Fine does us a great service in refining the corresponding puzzle about thought to five jointly inconsistent theses:

- (1) *Doxastic Difference*: The belief that Cicero is an orator is not the same as the belief that Tully is an orator.
- (2) *Doxastic Link*: If the beliefs are different, then their contents are different.
- (3) *Compositionality*: If the contents of the beliefs are different, then so are the objectual components.
- (4) *Objectual Link*: If the objectual components are different, then so are the objects.
- (5) *Objectual Identity*: The objects of the two beliefs are the same.

Fine claims that although this puzzle is roughly analogous to the linguistic version discussed earlier, 'referentialists (though not Fregeans) have tended to adopt very different lines of response to the two versions of the puzzle' (76). Whereas in the puzzle about linguistic semantics they have held that 'Cicero is Cicero' and 'Cicero is Tully' have the same semantics, thereby denying Semantic Difference, with the puzzle about thought, it has not seemed plausible to deny either Doxastic Difference or Doxastic Link (which would jointly produce the analogue of Semantic Difference).

The only plausible remaining candidate to be rejected is Objectual Link and it is striking that this is the principle that the Fregean rejects too. Many referentialists, says Fine, 'have felt obliged' to adopt a differential position on the content of thought and language: 'back-door Fregeanism' Fine dubs it, finding it 'quite bizarre' (76). Here, then we have a direct engagement with the main thrust of this critical notice.

While Fine claims that the 'simplest and most natural view is that there is no more to the content of my belief than there is to the content of my words' (76), I have been urging that independent general theoretical considerations recommend a distinction between intentional (or mental) and semantic (or linguistic) representation. If one begins with a Fregean view about intentional representation, then there's no sense of 'feeling obliged' to adopt a differential position about thought and language: with Fregeanism about thought in place, referentialism about language is much less threatening – the intuitions that would oppose it have already been accommodated in the theory of mental content.

Fine finds it 'odd to suppose that there should be any fundamental difference in the general representational character of language and thought' (77). It can sometimes seem that we in fact think in language. And even if we don't, 'how can the *vehicle* of

representation – be it speech or writing or thought – make any difference to its representational character?’ (77). But it is equally incredible that the significant meta-physical differences between thought and language should have no effect on their representational character.

Language is a matter of *convention*, it is an essentially *social* phenomenon, and its development depends on *external causal* circumstances. Mentality seems to be different in all of those ways: Fine himself admits that because of the conventionality of language, ‘we are free to adopt different conventions governing the meanings of our terms but we are not generally free to adopt different rules governing the contents of our thoughts’ (73). Thoughts do not seem to be social in the way that language is; and unless one has already accepted the extension of externalism from linguistic semantics to the content of thoughts, mental content seems intuitively to be independent of external causal circumstance.

Fine worries that unless there is no more to the content of my belief than there is to the content of my words, there would appear to be a serious failure of communication . . . the most natural attempt – to express my belief would always fall short of the full content of what I believe. But of course it is an extremely demanding standard for communication of my belief to require that you grasp just what I believe. An obvious weakening – I don’t claim it is ultimately correct – is that so long as what I say has the same extension as the content of my belief (and so long as your belief does too), then successful communication has been achieved.

Now Fine takes himself to have already refuted the Fregean position, with the Bruce-type example from the earlier chapter:

We imagine that the inhabitant of a symmetric universe sees Bruce ‘double’ and, taking him to be two people, starts to have simultaneous thoughts with identical content about what each of the supposed two people is like The Fregean must suppose that Bruce is given through one mode of presentation in one set of thoughts and through another mode or presentation in the other set of thoughts. But there is nothing sensible we can say as to what these modes of presentation might be. There can be no purely descriptive difference between them, since there is no purely descriptive difference in the way that our thinker conceives of the two Bruces; and there is no plausible non-descriptive difference in the two modes of presentation. (71)

It is this last claim that I have denied: to the extent we can conceive Fine’s example, it implicitly involves the subject’s making a distinction in thought. But minds cannot make a distinction without making it in some, perhaps perspectival, *way*. In Fine’s example, what’s most plausible is that the symmetric universe presents to the subject something like an axis of symmetry and that it is implicitly with reference to that that the subject distinguishes what she takes to be the two Bruces. We needn’t settle whether perspectival differences should be conceived as *qualitative*.

5. Conclusion

Let me close by, first, pointing to a misleading element of Fine’s presentation (in Chapter 3, §C) of the relation between the content of thought and linguistic content and then, second, developing a challenge for Fine’s own view.

Fine opposes differential treatments of the cognitive puzzle and the corresponding puzzle about linguistic semantics, but it can easily seem – inaccurately as it will turn out – that his own view results in such a differential treatment. In the case of the semantics of names, Fine rejects Compositionality (more specifically, he rejects Intrinsicity, which together with a weakened compositionality principle that Fine accepts, entails the full-strength Compositionality principle that he uses in giving the puzzle: see 38–9). There can be an intrinsic semantic difference between ‘Cicero is Cicero’ and ‘Cicero is Tully’ even if there is no intrinsic semantic difference between ‘Cicero’ and ‘Tully’. But in the case of the intentional version of Frege’s puzzle, he rejects Doxastic Link, which would correspond to the rejection of Semantic Difference for the semantic puzzle: ‘Applying these [relationist] considerations to the puzzle, we see how two beliefs might be different even though their intrinsic content is the same (in violation of Doxastic Link)’ (78). So Fine apparently thinks that the intrinsic *semantic* content of ‘Cicero is Cicero’ and ‘Cicero is Tully’ is different; but he thinks that the intrinsic *intentional* content of a subject’s beliefs that Cicero is an orator and that Tully is an orator is the same.

In fact, the issue here is *not* a differential treatment of language and thought, it is rather an issue we developed earlier, as an *ad hominem* point. Is there is any intuitive difference between (i) ‘Cicero is Cicero’ and ‘Cicero is Tully’ are semantically different and (ii) ‘Cicero is an orator’ and ‘Tully is an orator’ are semantically different? By using the relationship between ‘Cicero is an orator’ and ‘Tully is an orator’ in giving the intentional version of Frege’s puzzle, after having used ‘Cicero = Cicero’ and ‘Cicero = Tully’ in developing the purely semantic version of the puzzle, Fine risks making us think that he gives a differential treatment to the two puzzles. In any case, the problematic differential treatment of (i) and (ii) of course remains.

Finally, to develop a challenge to Fine’s view, recall that a central aspect of his solution to the cognitive puzzle is a distinction between when a proposition is merely added to a subject’s informational base and when it is not only added to that base but also *coordinated* with the propositions already in it.

For example if you already know that Cicero is Roman (but don’t represent Cicero and Tully as the same) and are told ‘Cicero is an orator’, then the proposition that Cicero is an orator – which is just the proposition that Tully is an orator – is added to your information base. Because the proposition is transmitted to you with a sentence containing ‘Cicero’ rather than ‘Tully’, the propositional content does get coordinated with the content you already have, enabling the inference that someone was a Roman orator. If you were by contrast told ‘Tully is an orator’, the content would not be coordinated and the inference would not be available to you.

But why? What *explains* the obtaining of the coordination or its absence? In virtue of what do contents of thought get coordinated?

In the case of names and variables, coordination is plausibly to be *given*, in the giving, or in the development, of the semantics of the language. One could understand conventions arising that would determine the coordination of, say, ‘Cicero’ with ‘Cicero’ in the sentence ‘Cicero is Cicero’ and the lack of coordination of ‘Cicero’ and ‘Tully’ in the sentence ‘Cicero is Tully’. There are no independent normative facts, concerning the adequacy of inferences, to which such conventions would have to be

responsive. All that's settled, finally, is whether *sentences* like 'Cicero is Cicero' mean the same as *sentences* like 'Cicero is Tully'.

But it is very hard to understand where the requisite analogous 'representation requirements' for *thoughts* would come from. Or rather: isn't it plausible that such requirements will be derivative, from something like relations among senses?

According to Fine, 'just as the meaning of a language is given by a body of semantical requirements, which specify how the language means what it does, the intentionality of thought will be given by a body of representational requirements, which indicate how our various thoughts represent what they do' (72). But it is not plausible that representation requirements for thoughts might be *conventional* in the way they might be for languages. If a given thinker represents an object as the same, and thereby satisfies a corresponding representation requirement, that must be because of *how* she represents that object. Whether hearing that 'Tully is an orator' will 'coordinate' with your belief that Cicero is Roman, depends on relations between how you think that Cicero is Roman and how you think that Tully is an orator.

The idea of semantic relations between linguistic items that are not reducible to their respective intrinsic semantics is not as troubling as the corresponding idea of semantic relations between thoughts. But our conception of inference does not permit an interpretation according to which a thinker associates the same intrinsic content with 'Cicero' and with 'Tully' but is *not* disposed to infer from 'Cicero is Roman' that 'Tully is Roman'. Claiming otherwise, and explaining the supposed possibility in terms of a difference in *coordination* between 'Cicero' and 'Tully' and other elements of thought is not as plausible: we reasonably understand the emergence of differences in coordination in terms of prior intrinsic intentional differences.

Fine, at one point, very much in passing, admits that 'another significant difference between semantic and intentional representation is that semantic requirements [which ground coordinations] are for the most part "up to us" while representational requirements are not.... [T]he representational character of thought is something that imposes itself upon us rather than being something we impose on it' (73–4). While Fine does not think that difference stands in the way of providing a relational treatment of thought that's largely analogous to that provided for language, I'm sceptical.

Because the coordination of thought, unlike coordination in language, is derivative and cannot be understood as effectively brute – the product of unconstrained convention or stipulation – we need to account for the basis of the coordination. Indeed, Fine's framework has the virtue of helping us to understand better a main motivation for Fregean views. The postulation of sense as the intrinsic semantic value for objectual elements of thought enables us to explain why some of an agent's inferences would be rational and would enable us to explain when thoughts are, in Fine's sense, coordinated.

Though I cannot here take fully adequate critical notice of Fine's Chapter 4, in which he refines and then provides a relationist response to Kripke's puzzle about belief, let me say that, to the extent that chapter is about 'coordination' between two subjects' languages, between one subject's thought and another's language, and between two subjects' thoughts, the materials for the alternative non-relationist responses should by now be intelligible. Traditional referentialism might be maintained,

without relationism, for linguistic semantic content; Fregeanism accounts for intentional mental content.

Also, a central but insufficiently articulated concept of Chapter 4 is that of *deriving* a use of a name from another. Fine thinks he can pose a special difficulty that demands a relational treatment by imagining situations in which our use of a name is derived from a subject who then in turn derives another, different, use from *our* use. In such a case, the subject would not reproduce what she says with her first use when she says the corresponding thing but invoking the other use. Again, if we accept traditional referentialism for linguistic semantic content, we can, first, locate resistance to the fact that the subject in fact has *said* the same thing (assuming the uses are co-referential) in the correct (but compatible) point that the subject *associates different mental contents* with the two uses. And then we can deny that ‘derivation of use’ necessarily preserves sense. But again, this is just to say a few words about how the thrust of this discussion might extend to a more adequate treatment of the last chapter of the book.

Semantic Relationism is I think a significant book. It takes a refreshingly fresh look, emphasizing general considerations, at a set of topics and issues that are sometimes treated with too much attention to detail. Fine develops an interesting and, in some applications, attractive conception of semantics. His presentation is virtuously philosophical throughout, exploiting analogies with relational conceptions of space and with Black’s counterexample to Leibniz’s Law, among others; the book avoids unnecessary technicality and is admirably clear. It provides another perspective on long-standing problems about semantics and intentionality.

I’ve tried to show that in rejecting Fregeanism, Fine puts too much weight on a difficult example: the example of a subject’s seeing Bruce ‘double’ cannot bear the load. On many occasions throughout the book, Fine mentions how Fregeanism would have no problem explaining a phenomenon by which traditional referentialism is especially troubled (and then relationist referentialism captures the Fregean advantages). But to whatever extent the acceptance of irreducible semantic or intentional relations should be seen as a disadvantage, and in the case of mental content I think our intuitions about inference bring that out, Fregeanism might have an advantage over relationism. And once we accept Fregeanism for intentional mental content, then the main considerations opposing traditional referentialism about linguistic semantic content can be deflected – ‘back-door referentialism’, if you will.²

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2 Thanks to Kent Bach for taking critical notice of this critical notice.