
Kaplan, Quine, and Suspended Belief

Author(s): Tyler Burge

Source: *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Mar., 1977), pp. 197-203

Published by: Springer

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4319126>

Accessed: 11-04-2017 04:06 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Springer is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*

KAPLAN, QUINE, AND SUSPENDED BELIEF*

(Received 29 March, 1976)

I

In 'Quantifying In', David Kaplan gives an argument that Quine's notation for representing relational contexts is inadequate for certain cases of suspension of belief. The argument has a general interest. For if it were sound, it would undermine any theory which did not represent relational (or *de re*) belief as a special case of notional (or *de dicto*) belief. I think that relational belief is *more* basic than notional belief. But I shall not argue that here. My present purpose is to show that Kaplan's argument is not sound.¹

Kaplan imagines a case in which Ralph has seen and has beliefs about a certain man (Ortcutt) as he appears in two different guises — wearing a brown hat in suspiciously seditious situations and lounging at the beach in his role as chairman of the chamber of commerce. Ralph does not realize that the man in the brown hat and the man at the beach are one and the same. He believes that the man in the brown hat is a spy. As for the man at the beach, although at first (say, at time t_1) Ralph believed that he was no spy, he has been beset by doubts so that now (time t_2) he does not believe that the man at the beach is a spy in the sense that he cannot make up his mind.

So at time t_1 we want to say both

- (1) Ralph believes of Ortcutt that he is a spy

and

- (2) Ralph believes of Ortcutt that he is not a spy

without imputing any inconsistency to Ralph. I shall assume that both Quine and Kaplan can adequately meet this desideratum. At time t_2 we want to say both (1) and something like

- (3) Ralph does not believe of Ortcutt that he is a spy

without involving ourselves in inconsistency. Apart from some qualification or equivocation, (1) and (3), of course, *are* inconsistent. And Kaplan's suggestion is that under one way of representing Ortcutt to himself (e.g., 'The man in the brown hat'), Ralph believes him to be a spy; whereas under another way of representing Ortcutt (e.g., 'The man at the beach'), Ralph does not believe him to be a spy. Thus Kaplan treats (1) as

$$(44) \quad (\exists \alpha)(R(\alpha, \text{Ortcutt}, \text{Ralph}) \wedge B(\text{Ralph}, \ulcorner \alpha \text{ is a spy} \urcorner))$$

and the relevant interpretation of (3) as

$$(46) \quad (\exists \alpha)(R(\alpha, \text{Ortcutt}, \text{Ralph}) \wedge \neg B(\text{Ralph}, \ulcorner \alpha \text{ is a spy} \urcorner)).$$

where '*R*' means 'name α represents Ortcutt to Ralph' and '*B*' means '(notionally) believes'. The construal of (3) that is inconsistent with (1) is simply the negation of (44).

Now Kaplan's claim is that the relevant distinction cannot be made out in Quine's notation, which does not contain any expression like '*R*' and does not derive relational belief from notional belief. But Ralph's suspension of belief with respect to the man at the beach can be expressed in Quine's notation as follows:

$$(4) \quad B_r(\text{Ralph}, \text{Ortcutt}, z(z = \text{the man at the beach})) \wedge \\ \neg B_n(\text{Ralph}, \text{that the man at the beach is a spy})$$

where '*B_r*' means '(relationally) believes' and '*B_n*' means '(notionally) believes'. So (1) and (3) (interpreted as consistent) are parsed as:

$$(5) \quad B_r(\text{Ralph}, \text{Ortcutt}, z(z \text{ is not a spy}))$$

and

$$(6) \quad (\exists \alpha)(B_r(\text{Ralph}, \text{Ortcutt}, z(z = \alpha)) \wedge \neg B_n(\text{Ralph}, \text{that } \alpha \text{ is a spy}))$$

Where ' α ' ranges over individual concepts – components of intensions. Quine himself does not anywhere quantify over individual concepts, but nothing in his view suggests that doing so is any worse than making reference to intensions (propositions) in the first place.

II

One can get a better sense of the relation between Kaplan's notation and

Quine's by translating (6) into Kaplan's language. The translation is

$$(7) \quad (\exists \beta)(\exists \alpha)(R(\alpha, \text{Ortcutt}, \text{Ralph}) \wedge B(\text{Ralph}, \ulcorner \alpha = \beta \urcorner) \wedge \neg B(\text{Ralph}, \ulcorner \beta \text{ is a spy} \urcorner)).$$

Kaplan's analysis of (3) is (46). How does (46) compare with (7)? They are logically independent. (7) would entail (46) if we were guaranteed that

$$(8) \quad B(\text{Ralph}, \ulcorner \alpha = \beta \urcorner) \rightarrow (B(\text{Ralph}, \ulcorner \beta \text{ is a spy} \urcorner) \leftrightarrow B(\text{Ralph}, \ulcorner \alpha \text{ is a spy} \urcorner)).$$

But if Ralph is Everyman, (8) cannot be guaranteed.

The failure of equivalence between (46) and (7) stems from the fact that Kaplan takes relational belief to be defined in terms of notional belief, whereas Quine's notation treats relational belief as primitive. Within Quine's viewpoint, one may regard ' $B_r(\text{Ralph}, \text{Ortcutt}, z(z = \alpha))$ ' as playing the role that ' $R(\alpha, \text{Ortcutt}, \text{Ralph})$ ' plays in Kaplan's. But from Kaplan's viewpoint, relational belief is a special kind of notional belief. So in order for the relational ' $B_r(\text{Ralph}, \text{Ortcutt}, z(z = \alpha))$ ' to be true, there must be some notionally complete name β such that β represents Ortcutt to Ralph and such that Ralph believes (notionally) $\ulcorner \beta = \alpha \urcorner$. (Cf. the first two clauses of (7) and the first clause of (6).) Quine's viewpoint requires no such name β . It is the requirement of this extra representing (in Kaplan's sense of 'representing') name together with the failure of (8) that makes (7) and (46) non-equivalent. Now an obvious candidate for fulfilling the role of β is α itself. If we approve the candidate, and assume that Ralph believes $\ulcorner \alpha = \alpha \urcorner$, then (7) and (46) indeed become strictly equivalent.

In my view, this way of interpreting the Quinean analysis within Kaplan's theory obscures the interesting difference between the two viewpoints. The claim that everyone believes the self-identity statement for each 'representing' singular expression in his repertoire is fairly plausible. Even more plausible – and equally adequate in yielding equivalence between (7) and (46) – is the Frege-like view that everyone believes *some* identity statement for each representing singular expression in his repertoire. The trouble with taking Quine's analysis as thus equivalent to Kaplan's is that Kaplan's analysis is committed to there being a singular expression in the believer's repertoire that *denotes* the object which the *de re* belief is about: A necessary condition for a name β to *represent* an entity for a person, in Kaplan's theory, is that it denote the entity. Kaplan takes representing names to be symbol-types (broadly construed to in-

clude conglomerations of images, and the like, as well as linguistic items) or, alternatively, abstract meanings. For a symbol type or abstract meaning to denote an entity, it must individuate the entity in a context-independent manner. If the represented object is not fully determined or individuated by concepts, symbols, or image-types in the believer's cognitive repertoire, then the object is strictly speaking not denoted.²

Clearly, the assumption that the believer has a name that denotes the relevant object in all cases of *de re* belief is a strong one. Indeed, I think that it is surely false. I shall not argue this here. My purpose is served by pointing out that Quine's approach, which takes *de re* belief to be primitive rather than defined, is not committed to the assumption. (Whether Quine is himself committed to the assumption on other grounds is, of course, another question.)

One might protest that Kaplan did not intend for his notion of denotation to be taken so strictly. We might hold that the requirement is that there be a singular symbol that denotes the relevant object in the relevant context: The relativity to context might be regarded as simply suppressed. A full answer to this defense involves more discussion of the *de re* – *de dicto* distinction than I will undertake here. But a short answer is that suppression of the relativity to context can hardly be justified in a project intended to define *de re* notions in terms of *de dicto* notions. For insofar as the believer's conceptual resources only incompletely individuate the relevant object and depend on context to pick out the object in a way analogous to the way we refer with demonstratives, the believer's belief is not clearly *de dicto*. For intuitively a *de dicto* attitude is one whose content is completely *expressed* (dictum). Insofar as the content of the attitude must be partly *shown*, as opposed to expressed, the attitude is not purely *de dicto* at all.

(6), our Quinean representation of (3), assumes that the 'representing' name occurs in a notional belief. We can eliminate this assumption by revising (6) to

(6') $(\exists \alpha)(B_r(\text{Ralph, Orcutt}, z(z = \alpha)) \& \neg B_r(\text{Ralph, Orcutt}, z(\alpha \text{ is a spy})))$.

Here ' α ' ranges over intensional entities expressed by singular expressions like 'that man' whose whole scope is governed by a demonstrative construction. (The variable ' z ' picks up the demonstrative element in α .) Such entities differ from individual concepts in that their associated denotation is only partially

determined apart from context. The important point for present purposes is that Quine's notation can represent Ralph's suspension of judgment while maintaining that relational belief is not to be defined in terms of notional belief.

III

The analyses of (3) that we have so far discussed have a certain air of artificiality about them. (6), (6'), and (46) are longer and conceptually more complex than (3) itself. The source of this incongruity is the fact that the two analyses state matters that (3), on the relevant construal, presupposes. One may simplify the representations of (1) and (3) as follows:

$$(9) \quad B_r(\text{Ralph, Orcutt, } \lceil x_1 \text{ is a spy} \rceil)$$

and

$$(10) \quad \neg B_r(\text{Ralph, Orcutt, } \lceil x_2 \text{ is a spy} \rceil)$$

The free variables in the belief content are distinguished to mark different modes of demonstrative presentation of Orcutt to Ralph. (9) and (10) are mutually consistent. There is on this approach no need to quantify over the relevant representing name, or individual concept, or other mode of presentation. Of course, in the case of (3), Ralph will have a suspended belief involving the relevant mode of presentation: He will suspend belief about whether *the man at the beach* is a spy. But (3) does not actually make reference to this belief. So its analysis need not. Similarly, (10) does not say that Ralph has any relational beliefs about Orcutt. But then neither does (3). Obviously, these presuppositions may be made explicit in other sentences if the need arises.

Close attention to the role of free variables in the analysis of belief would have simplified another issue between Quine and Kaplan. Quine claimed that the kind of exportation that leads from

$$(11) \quad \text{Ralph believes that Orcutt is a spy}$$

to (1) should be viewed 'in general as implicative'. Kaplan noted that although this particular exportation required only that 'Orcutt' denotes Orcutt, the exportation from

- (12) Ralph believes that the shortest spy is a spy

to

- (13) Ralph believes of the shortest spy that he is a spy

requires more than that 'the shortest spy' denote the shortest spy. Kaplan went on to provide a general theory of exportation in terms of the notion of representation.

I do not wish to dispute the obvious interest and fruitfulness of this theory. But I do want to suggest it blurs a distinction between cases in which exportation is justified (virtually) on the basis of logical form and cases in which it is not. 'Orcutt', 'The man at the beach' and 'The man in the brown hat' all differ from 'The shortest spy' in containing an indexical construction which governs the whole scope of the expression: Proper names contain implicit demonstratives, and the 'the' beginning the two definite descriptions is playing the role of a demonstrative. On the other hand, the 'the' in 'the shortest spy' functions as a uniqueness operator. Indexical constructions are properly represented as containing free variables, and 'the shortest spy' contains none.³ We can account for Quine's intuition by noting that terms in a belief content that involve an indexical expression (free variable) governing the whole scope of the term can be exported if (a) the indexical construction is referentially (as opposed to anaphorically) used and (b) the referred-to object satisfies the predicative condition contained in the term.⁴ In effect, these two conditions amount to requiring that the term (relative to a context of use) denote the object. For terms, like 'the shortest spy', which contain no indexical constructions governing their whole scope, exportation cannot be justified on the basis of form. Certain epistemic conditions of the sort sought by Kaplan must be met. But this, I think, is to say that exportation of these terms is not in general 'implicative'.

*The University of California
at Los Angeles*

NOTES

* I have benefitted from conversations with David Kaplan.

¹ W. V. Quine, 'Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes', *The Journal of Philosophy* 53 (1956); David Kaplan, 'Quantifying In', *Words and Objections*, in Davidson and Hintikka

(eds.), D. Reidel, Dordrecht, Holland, 1969. Other articles on the issue discussed here are Herbert Heidelberger, 'Kaplan on Quine and Suspension of Judgment', *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 3 (1974), 441–443; Michael Devitt, 'Suspension of Judgment: A Response to Heidelberger on Kaplan', *ibid.*, (forthcoming). I shall not discuss these latter two articles. In brief, my view is that Devitt's reply to Heidelberger on behalf of Kaplan is correct, except in its assumption that Kaplan's argument is sound.

² Of course, non-conceptual contextual relations enter into Kaplan's analysis of representing names, but they are additional to and independent of the relation of denotation.

³ For discussion of indexical expressions represented by specially indexed free variables, see my 'Reference and Proper Names', *The Journal of Philosophy* (1973), 425–439 and 'Demonstrative Constructions, Reference, and Truth', *ibid.* (1974), 205–223.

⁴ A fuller discussion of this point would show that exportations thus valid on the basis of logical form are always exportations from one relational belief context to another—never exportation from a purely notional context to a relational context. Further discussion of the notional-relational distinction will appear in 'Belief *De Re*', *The Journal of Philosophy*, forthcoming.