

SUBSTITUTIVITY AND PSYCHOLOGY

When criticizing the Referential Theory of Meaning we gave an argument that concluded that even for ordinary names there must be more to meaning than reference. Here's the argument again.

- (a) The two sentences 'Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly' and 'Lois Lane believes that Kent can fly' may easily differ in truth-value.
- (b) But if two sentences had the same meaning, then they'd have the same truth-value. So the two Lois Lane sentences must differ in meaning.
- (c) If two sentences differ only in the names in them, then any difference in meaning between the two sentences must be traced to the different names: the names must differ in meaning. So, the names differ in meaning.
- (d) But the names have the same referent (pretending the story is true!).
- (e) So there must be more to the name's meaning than its referent.

Question:

In this argument there doesn't seem to be any recognition that the whole problem with Lois has to do with her psychology, something having to do with her mind or knowledge. The problem isn't with words; it's with Lois. Clearly, if you want to solve the puzzle you have to examine Lois's lack of knowledge or understanding or something like that. But we haven't done that. All we focus on is reference when in fact the puzzle doesn't involve reference—it centres round knowledge or understanding. So what's going on?

Response:

The objection brings up a good point: the cause of the difference in the two belief sentences 'Lois believes that Superman flies' and 'Lois believes that Kent flies' must be traced to differences in the subject's psychology/knowledge. After all, the two sentences are *belief* sentences, sentences about her beliefs.

But that's not the problem we're focussed on. That's a philosophy of *mind* problem, and an important one too. However, we are focussed on a philosophy of *language* problem, one having to do *not* with the subject's mind but with the *sentences* used to express the subject's beliefs. If you like, we are looking at a problem about language that is *caused by* the problem about the subject's mind.

We can talk all day about why the subject's 'Twain' and 'Clemens' attitudes differ psychologically. That's great, but eventually we want to see what the situation implies for the meanings of names in sentences. Notice that the Lois argument is about sentences and words in sentences. There's nothing about the subject's psychology. Not because Lois's psychology is irrelevant to the problem! It clearly is; it is the reason why (a) seems true.