QUOTATION APPOSITION
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ABSTRACT

Analyses of quotation have assumed that quotations are referring expressions while disagreeing over details. That assumption is unnecessary and unacceptable in its implications. It entails a quasi-Parmenidean impossibility of meaningfully denying the meaningfulness or referential function of anything uttered, for it implies that:

'Kqxf' is not a meaningful expression

'The' is not a referring expression

are, if meaningful, false. It also implies that ill formed constructions like:

'The' is 'the'

are well formed tautologies. Such sentences make apparent the need for what is commonly explicit, a genuine referring expression, a noun phrase, usually a description, to which the quotation is appositional. A quotation is not itself a word, though it may contain such. The markers signal that the enquoted material is like a sentence-embedded color patch, material displayed to facilitate reference to something identifiable by/with it specified by the noun phrase it subserves.

QUOTATION APPOSITION

From Frege's first fussing over quotations, debate on their analysis has focused on three questions:

I. What kind of referring expression is a quotation? Is it a name, a (definite) description, a demonstrative or some *sui generis* singular term?

II. What in a quotation does the referring? Is it the quotation marks (hereafter, the *markers*), or what they enquote (hereafter, the *enquoted*), or their combination, the quotation as a whole (hereafter, the *enquotation)*? (Hereafter, 'quotation' will refer to the enquotation or some proper part thereof.)

III. What is the referent of a quotation? The possibilities are myriad. Is it something concrete such as a token or replica of a shape, expression or lexeme? Can it be something abstract like an expression type, equivalence class, meaning or proposition?

All these questions presuppose that a quotation is a referring expression. The assumption is understandable, but actually there's no real need to construe quotations as referring, and good reason not to. One such reason is that after trying every imaginable answer to the first two questions and finding each wanting, it's worth worrying whether we've been snark hunting. Perhaps we, *speakers*, use quotations in our referring to things identifiable with them, without the quotations themselves being referring expressions.

Before entering the debate, lest it be prejudiced by its terms, we'd best be rid of the entrenched jargon of 'use' and 'mention'. Quine's gift for the *mot juste* here fails him and us. As oft noted, the (so-called) mentioning of words is a species of use of words, so the intended contrast is between (so-called) mentioning and other ways of using words. More, the so-called mentioning of words contrasts with using words to mention their denotations. Most mentioning is of the latter sort. Even when we say things like, 'When you speak to so-and-so, please do mention my name to him (but don't you tell him where I've been)', we rarely request a reference to our name rather than to ourselves.

Bad enough the contrast with 'use' is useless. Worse, here talk of *mentioning an expression* may be misleading or flatly incorrect. Elsewhere, 'Lara mentioned Jasper' standardly says that Lara *referred to Jasper*, typically by uttering a name of Jasper (e.g., 'Jasper'). In saying a quotation *mentions* an expression we imply that (a) the enquoted expression itself **,** and not something identifiable with but distinct from it **,** is the referent, and (b) the quotation is a name of the referent.

Implication (a) wrongly prejudges our question III above. Buckets of dust swirl round the assumption that in sentences of the form, '"p" is true' we mention the enquoted sentence (type or token) and not its translinguistic content. The referent may be the sentence, but it needn't be and normally isn't. As a matter of standard usage, 'The proposition (belief, etc.), "Neon is inert" is true', is not in any way deviant or defective, and (absent contextual counterindicators) '"Neon is inert" is true' is standardly taken as an ellipsis of it. That's the default construal of '"Neon is inert" is true' because (among other

things) that legitimates the standard construal of it as equivalent to 'It is true that neon is inert' and 'That neon is inert is true', which are ellipses of 'The proposition that neon is inert is true', and not of *'The sentence that neon is inert is true', which is ungrammatical.

The other unhappy feature of talk of mentioning the enquoted expression is the suggestion that the quotation is a name of its referent. That may make us misconceive the whole matter from the word 'go' (and not least if the enquoted is 'go'.)

For a less tendentious substitute let's say that to enquote something is to *display* it, to produce and put it on display to refer to something identifiable with it. This contrasts with using an enquoted expression to *mean* whatever the unenquoted expression (token or type) means in the speech or language being quoted. This contrast is inapplicable to some quotations, for virtually anything displayable on a page, however meaningless, can be enquoted in a meaningful sentence, as in:

1. Jasper then wrote, 'Kqxf'
2. 'Kqxf' is not a meaningful linguistic expression.

The quoted material may be even less linguisitic than that, like a sentence-embedded color patch. So, the display-mean distinction applies to quotations of (linguistic) expressions in general, but not to quotations in general.

On the other hand, the display-mean distinction is not confined to enquoted expressions. People managed for millennia, in writing as well as speech, to display expressions without enquoting them. Quote marks came in only after the printing press, and even today their use is sporadic outside the literature of logic and linguistics. Their main (but not sole) function, much stressed by logicians like Frege and Quine, is disambiguation, making unmistakable that what they surround is on display. As such they have no semantic content themselves, nor are they implicit elements of sentences with displayed material. Quote marks aren't put around color patches or other matter that may be displayed but not meant, for no ambiguity is precluded. They are needed around linguistic expressions only when and because such matter could be meant instead of or in addition to being displayed. Absence of a disambiguator can only leave some unwanted and perhaps nonsensical reading unexcluded; it does not render a sentence incomplete, ungrammatical or meaningless.[1]

Like their usage, the form of the markers is dictated by considerations of utility. 'Quotation' and its cognates are often used generically to cover italicizing, boldfacing, line spacing, and other functional equivalents of quotation marks. Yet, few alternatives are functionally *fully* equivalent. For example, iterated quotation is impossible with italicizing and many alternatives, or impractical, as with underlining, boldfacing, and line spacing.

How much real confusion is precluded by quote marks, and how much is perpetrated by them is worth pondering. Not uncommonly, dubious philosophical theses get presented in the guise of an allegedly philosophically neutral notational necessity. A well known example is Quine's asseveration of nominalist/extensionalist predilections that

'when we say that one statement or schema implies another, . . . we are not to write 'implies' between the statements or schemata concerned, but between their names.'[2]

The facts of their history, usage and function are premises for powerful arguments that the markers are not themselves referential devices.[3] Positing some semantic content for these syntactic markers is unnecessary, for any impact on sentence meaning they might have may be explicable without it. Consider iterations of quotation which enable us to economically track talk about talk about talk about talk, etc., something that's *practically* impossible for us to do otherwise. For this the markers need no semantic content.[4] Enquoting is akin to framing a picture, setting it off from the surrounding wallpaper. Framing an already enframed picture may make the display be the enframed picture instead of the picture itself, and so altering the display may alter what is expressed or represented. The internal frame(s) may, but perhaps need not, take on a meaning by being in the display; in any case, the outer frame needn't have a meaning or referential function.

Now, why suppose a quotation is a referring expression? The question is rarely asked, so suggested answers are in short supply. Presumably the basic idea is that grammar (somehow) demands it. Consider:

3. 'Buffalo' has seven letters

4. Buffalo has seventy seven laundromats.

3 seems to have the same subject-predicate syntax as 4. As in 4, a property is predicated of a referent, the enquoted inscription, *Buffalo*. Without a subject term denoting that object, 3 could not be a complete sentence or express a truth evaluable proposition about that object. The only expression in sight for that role is the quotation.

All this seems reasonable, but need for a distinction becomes evident by considering cases like:

5. Buford said Buffalo 'has seventeen of the world's loveliest laundromats.'

Here the enquoted expression is both displayed and meant. As meant, grammar prohibits the quotation's being a noun phrase or any kind of referring expression.[5] Whether it must be a referring expression to fulfill its display function is a distinct issue. So too in 3, whether (so to speak) the grammar of the sentence demands that the quotation be the subject term is distinct from whether the grammar of a quotation demands that it refer for its display function.

In either case, granting a need for some referring expression, why suppose it's the quotation? That the quotation is the only candidate in view might be reason enough, if it were really a viable candidate. But it's not.

First, while the apparent syntactic similarity of 3 and 4 is arguably illusory, 3 must surely have the syntax of 2, which has the syntax of unmarkered 2d:

2d. Kqxf is not a meaningful linguistic expression

If quotation marks are nothing but disambiguators, 2d is a meaningful sentence if 2 is, and 2 is if 3 is. But if the string of marks heading 2d is a meaningful linguistic expression, then

2d, and thus 2, must be false. If 2 is false, how can *any* putative denial of meaningfulness be true? More, how could we deny a referential function to any referent, as in:

6. 'The' is not a referring expression

6d. The is not a referring expression

The Parmenidean puzzle of how we can meaningfully deny the *existence* of something we speak of has a parallel puzzle of how we can meaningfully deny the *meaningfulness* or *referential function* of anything uttered.

Although 2d and 6d here serve simply to vivify a point that should be plain with 2 and 6, a stubborn sceptic might take their rhetorical utility as evidence that (a) the markers are or create a referring expression, and (b) implicit markers must be posited for displayed material not explicitly markered. However, that response is both independently implausible and also incapable of coping with an allied conundrum. The one grammatical construction that absolutely requires a referring expression is that of a self-identity statement, like

7d. Buffalo is Buffalo

Put aside the dubious claim that an identity statement can't be meaningful and true unless the ostensible referent exists. However that may be, certainly the structure isn't a sentence, let alone grammatical, meaningful or true, if the identity sign is flanked by something other than referring expressions, as in:

8d. Kqxf is Kqxf

9d. The is the

Now consider flanking an identity sign with bare quotations:

7. 'Buffalo' is 'Buffalo'

8. 'Kqxf' is 'Kqxf'

9. 'The' is 'The'

On any previously proposed analysis of quotation, all of which regard quotations as referring expressions, 7-9 should all be impeccably respectable tautologies like 7d, but, I take it, 7-9 are just as much gibberish as 8d and 9d, or an 'is' flanked by identical color patches.

(If, as I assume, only identity sentences don't allow elision of a quotation's referring expression, that may be evidence of and explained by the fact that '=' is a syntactic marker, like '&', not a relative term. '=' signals a sentence with a nonpredicative syntax formed from a pair of coaffirmed names or other pure referring expressions. The proposition expressed by the acceptable sentence:

9i: 'The' is one and the same expression as 'the'

is that of:

9a: The word, 'the', is the word, 'the'.

but 9i's syntax is predicative, unlike 9a. My suggestion is that 9 is unacceptable because the 'b=c' structure is nothing but a pair of coaffirmed pure referring expressions, so their

elision eliminates an essential element without which the sequence lacks determinate sense.)[6]

 If we're troubled by these puzzles, and we want a referring expression in 3 and perhaps 5, so we seek an implicit one to posit, the obvious candidate is some noun phrase to which the quotation is appositional, as in 9a and:

 2da. The string of marks, Kqxf, is not a meaningful linguistic expression

 6a. The English word, 'the', is not a referring expression

7-9 can look like genuine sentences only because interpretation so readily imports the required apposition.

 This explicit appositional construction, shamefully neglected by previous theories, is altogether common and natural in every language (it's no modern typographical invention), so there's no strain in supposing it implicit when absent, as in 1-3.6 Nor is there much stretch extending its presence to places where expressing it sounds somewhat awkward. Iterated quotation is readable as something like: *The name of ... the name of the expression, '...'.* That's cumbersome but hardly unnatural. In cases like 5 where the quotation has a dual display-mean function, the underlying structure may be something like:

 5a. Buford said Buffalo has seventeen of the world's loveliest laundromats (and he did so)by saying of Buffalo the words, 'has seventeen of the world's loveliest laundromats'.

The precise details of this need not detain us. The general idea of an appositional account of quotation is compatible with various specific proposals on such matters.

 On this Appositional Theory of Quotation, the enquoted (qua enquoted) is a sense-perceptible object, like a sentence-embedded color patch, produced and put on display to facilitate reference to something identifiable by and with it specified by the noun phrase. The markers are syntactic devices, without semantic content, signaling that the enquoted is being so displayed. Marked or unmarked, the enquoted may be a mere visible thing without meaning or membership in a grammatical category. But, unlike a color patch, the enquoted can be more than that. Nothing here precludes our simultaneously using the enquoted to mean whatever, if anything, it means or meant extraquotationally.

 This modest mini-theory seems boringly obvious and crassly commonsensical, but it might nonetheless be true. Quite apart from our two new puzzles and their neat dissolution, our account has the advantage of avoiding all the familiar failings of its competitors, not the least of which is sheer artificiality. Absent Tarskian/Quinean ambitions, every Davidsonian motive for deporting the enquoted from the embedding sentence and making the markers demonstratives is better satisfied by including the enquoted appositionally, and *letting the explicit noun phrases do what they manifestly must be doing on any account* (that deigns to notice their presence.)[7] Inferring unexpressed noun phrases here is no riskier than with 'Great!' and 'Go!'. Inferring implicit typographical

devices foreign to most human speech is hardly comparable.

Moreover, only an appositional account says anything substantial and natural about the last of our initial three questions, the one regarding the nature of the quotational referent. A theory of quotation should help explain how the quotational referent can be any manner of thing identifiable with the enquoted, anything from a particular phoneme to a translinguistic truth-evaluable proposition. Other theories are embarrassed by this diversity or helpless before it. Either they implausibly strain to explain how (or perversely delight in denying that) the referent could be something other than the enquoted concrete particular inscription, or they blandly assure us that the speaker's intentions can (somehow) make an expression represent all manner of thing. Our proposal says that a quotation is like a picture or color patch used adjunctively with some (explicit or implicit) referring expression. That expression is normally a definite description made more definite by adverting to and through the quotation. The description specifies the category or kind, and the quotation is a display of (something identifiable with) an individual of that kind. By specifying the relevant category, the description implicitly indicates the internal structure (if any) of the referent and thus the possible relations (e.g. anaphora) between the components of the enquoted and those of the embedding sentence.

NOTES

1. *Pace* W.V.O. Quine: 'It would be not merely untrue but ungrammatical and meaningless to write:

Dreary rimes with weary'

(*Methods of Logic*, New York, Henry Holt, 1959, p. 38.)

2. *Ibid.*

3. The positing of implicit markers suggested by Manuel Garcia-Carpintero ('Ostensive Signs', *The Journal of Philosophy*, (91), 1994, pp. 253-64) seems far fetched and not well motivated. For criticisms, Cf. Corey Washington, 'The Identity Theory of Quotation', *The Journal of Philosophy* (89) 1992, pp. 582-605, and Paul Saka, 'Quotation and the Use-Mention Distinction', *Mind*, (107) 1998, pp. 113-135.

4. *Contra* Saka (1998).

5. Cf. Herman Cappellen and Ernie LePore, 'Varieties of Quotation', *Mind*, (106), 1997, pp. 429-450.

6. Cf. my 'Identity: Logic, Ontology, Epistemology', *Philosophy*, April (73), 1998, pp. 179-93

and 'Identity Syntax', *Proceedings of the 20th World Congress of Philosophy, Vol II, Metaphysics*, 1999.

7. Donald Davidson, 'Quotation' in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford, Oxford University Press) 1984, pp. 79-82. [Originally published in *Theory and Decision*, 1979.] Davidson has no cause for complaint against an appositional theory **,** other than its inhospitality toward his theory of indirect discourse.