

THE FOUR PUZZLES

A. The Problem of Apparent Reference to Nonexistents

1. The sentence 'The present King of France is bald' is meaningful.
2. That sentence is a subject-predicate sentence.
3. A meaningful subject-predicate sentence is meaningful only in virtue of picking out some individual thing and ascribing it a property.
4. So by 1-3, the sentence 'The present King of France is bald' must pick out some individual thing and ascribe some property to it.
5. But 'the present King of France' does not pick out a thing that exists.
6. Thus, by 4 & 5 'the present King of France' must pick out a *nonexistent thing*.
7. But there are no "nonexistent" things.

4 follows from 1-3, 5 is obviously true, and 6 follows from 4 & 5. But 7 contradicts 6. So 1, 2, 3, or 7 is false; *which one* is it and *why* is it false?

B. The Problem of Negative Existentials

1. The negative existential sentence 'The present King of France does not exist' is *true*.
2. If a singular term such as a definite description fails to refer, then any sentence containing that singular term is not true (since there is nothing that the sentence talks about).
3. By 1 & 2 'the present King of France' refers.
4. But 'the present King of France' does not pick out a thing that exists.
5. Thus, by 3 & 4 'the present King of France' must pick out a *nonexistent thing*.
6. But there are no "nonexistent" things.

3 follows from 1 & 2; 5 follows from 3 & 4. But 6 contradicts 5. So 1, 2, or 6 is false; *which one* is it and *why* is it false?

C. Frege's Puzzle about Identity

1. The sentence 'Elizabeth Windsor is identical with the present Queen of England' is informative.
2. That sentence is only contingently true.
3. The sentence contains two singular terms that refer to the very same individual.
4. Thus, from 3 it seems that the sentence is saying that one thing is identical to itself.
5. But if 4 is right, then 1 & 2 are wrong.

4 seems to conflict with both 1 and 2, so there's some mistake somewhere in the 5-step argument; *where* is it and *why* is it mistaken?

D. The Problem of Substitutivity

1. If two singular terms have the same referent, then we can substitute them for each other without changing the truth-value of the sentences they are parts of.
2. The singular terms 'the author of *Huckleberry Finn*' and 'the offensive cynic in Hannibal, Missouri' have the same referent.
3. So from 1 & 2 we can substitute those singular terms for each other without changing the truth-value of the sentences they are parts of.
4. Thus, from 3 the two sentences
 Jazmine believes that the author of *Huckleberry Finn* is a great wit
 Jazmine believes that the offensive cynic in Hannibal, Missouri is a great wit
 have the same truth-value.
5. But they don't.

3 & 4 follow from 1 & 2; but 5 contradicts 4. So 1, 2, or 5 is false; *which one* is it and *why* is it false?