For the final draft, see the Oxford link.

Simple Sentences, Substitution, and Intuitions, by Jennifer Saul. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Pp. xiv+176.

According to orthodoxy in semantics, if a term in a sentence is not within the scope of an intensional device (such as 'necessarily' or 'believes') and not in a quotation context, then it can be interchanged with a co-denoting term _salve veritate_ (preserving truth value). In this book, Jennifer Saul sheds light on a class of disarmingly simple examples that challenge this orthodoxy. For each of the following pairs, many people have the intuition that only the first sentence is true, even though one sentence is gotten from the other via substitution of co-denoting terms. Saul calls these intuitions, 'anti-substitution intuitions'.

(1)  Superman leaps more tall buildings than Clark Kent.

(1*) Clark Kent leaps more tall buildings than Superman.


(2)  Clark Kent went into the phone booth and Superman went out.

(2*) Superman went into the phone booth and Clark Kent went out.


(3)  Superman flies.

(3*) Clark Kent flies.


(4)  Shostakovich always signaled his connections to the classical traditions of St. Petersburg, even if he was forced to live in Leningrad.

(4*) Shostakovich always signaled his connections to the classical traditions of

Leningrad, even if he was forced to live in St. Petersburg.

This book contains a sharp and skillful study of anti-substitution intuitions and how they connect with various issues in semantics and cognitive science. The work has important implications for the treatment of singular terms, and it is innovative in the positive theory it advances. While many philosophers of language might try to accommodate the anti-substitution intuitions by arguing that they track what is semantically expressed or pragmatically communicated by the sentences in question, Saul defends a fresh approach. Her view is that the anti-substitution intuitions are due to a type of performance error, and this error is attributable to features of our cognitive architecture. In my view, Saul is successful in developing arguments that establish the plausibility of her position. However, I have yet to be fully convinced that her approach, as stated, would work.

The book begins by arguing that whereas anti-substitution intuitions concerning co-denoting names in intensional contexts have been thought to favor Fregean theories of names over Millianism, anti-substitution intuitions concerning sentences such as (1-4) are trouble for both theories. Moreover, the sorts of moves often advanced by the Millian and the Fregean to account for these problems don't extend to the cases Saul offers. Hence, Saul makes a good case that her project should be of interest to those involved in the classic debate about names and substitution.

Saul spends much of the book considering and refuting various accounts of anti-substitution intuitions. These can be roughly divided into semantic and pragmatic approaches. According to the semantic accounts, 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' in

sentences like (1-3) (in effect) denote distinct 'aspects' of the same individual (person stages, egos, modes of personification, etc.). For example, ordinary uses of (1) and (1*) say the same things as the true (5) and the false (5*), respectively:

   (5)  Superman/Clark Kent's Superman-aspect leaps more tall buildings than

        Superman/Clark Kent's Clark Kent aspect.


   (5*) Superman/Clark Kent's Clark Kent-aspect leaps more tall buildings than

        Superman/Clark Kent's Superman's aspect.


Hence the ordinary 'anti-substitution' intuitions are fully vindicated at the semantic level.

Pragmatic accounts of the intuitions hold that (1) and (1)*, for example, semantically express false propositions. Yet, typical uses of (1) implicate true propositions like what (5) expresses (Saul also discusses variations where talk of implicatures is replaced with talk of implicitures or assertions). This view would then promise to explain why some of us have the intuition that (1) is true. In those cases, we are focusing on the pragmatically associated true proposition (5).

Saul raises two main problems with these sorts of proposals. First, there is the 'Aspect Problem'. This is a difficulty in saying precisely what these 'aspects' are and how we manage to communicate about them. Second, there is the 'Enlightenment' problem. The views under consideration say that (1), for example, semantically expresses or is pragmatically associated with a proposition about aspects only when the speaker is aware of Superman's secret identity (that is, the speaker is 'enlightened'). Otherwise,

there would be no good reason to say that the expressions 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' would refer to anything but the person who is both the superhero and the reporter. Hence when those that aren't enlightened utter (1), they would neither say nor pragmatically express a true proposition. The problem arises, Saul claims, because when we ordinarily intuit that (1) is true, we don't consider whether or not it was uttered by an enlightened person. Moreover, if we were to consider an unenlightened person's utterance of (1), we would presumably still intuit that it is true. This is some evidence that the views under consideration fail to account for our intuitions.

Here is then how Saul explains the anti-substitution intuitions. She starts with the idea that (1) and (1*), for example, are both false. Yet, there are facts about our cognitive architecture which cause us to mistakenly think that (1) is true. Hence the anti-substitution intuitions reflect a type of performance error. The explanation here has two main components. First, even if an agent is aware of Superman's true identity, they will organize information about Superman/Clark Kent into two mental nodes. Some information characteristically associated with the name 'Superman' will be stored in one node, and information characteristically associated with 'Clark Kent' will be stored in a different node. Crucially, the information in these nodes will be distinct. Saul cites some empirical evidence that this is the case. The second component of the explanation says that even if agents are aware of Superman's true identity, they might still fail to fully integrate or put together the information from the two nodes. This may cause agents to have the anti-substitution intuitions since they will temporarily treat Superman/Clark Kent as if he were two people.

These are the main components of the explanation. The most pressing challenge for it (that Saul addresses) is that many fully reflective agents who are plainly aware of Superman's identity still want to hold on to the anti-substitution intuitions (including the philosophers who try to come up with analyses that vindicate them). For example, such agents should be able to infer from (2), whose truth is uncontroversial, and 'Superman is Clark Kent' to the truth of (2*). Doing so should then preclude them from making the judgment that (2*) is false. But then why do they still have the intuition that (2*) is false? Saul responds that not all agents will accept this reasoning. After all, the strength of the initial belief that (2*) is false might lead them to reject the soundness of the inference. This seems to be what is happening with theorists who hold that (2) but not (2*) is true.

I would like to press Saul here on a related issue. Let us look at how a reflective, competent and rational speaker would judge that (1) is true (recall that even philosophers make this judgment). Presumably, her 'Superman' node will include information to the effect that Superman/Clark Kent performs great physical feats (like leaping tall buildings). However, the 'Clark Kent' node will include information that he doesn't perform great physical feats. But something has gone wrong here. Since we are supposing that our agent knows Superman's secret identity (she is not in a 'Frege' case), the agent would be attributing contradictory properties to the same person. And if this amounts to having contradictory beliefs that she can easily catch by being careful, it doesn't sit well with the assumption that our agent is fully rational and reflective. In fact, Saul's view appears to saddle ordinary speakers with a fairly severe error. Moreover, this error should be a pervasive feature on Saul's account, and not just a feature limited to those who ultimately accept the anti-substitution intuitions. For even if most speakers

eventually settle on the idea that (1) is false, there is often the initial impulse to say that its true. Presumably the explanation for this would also have to appeal to nodes in the way that Saul suggests. And so even those people (including me) would have assigned incompatible information across the two nodes.

Perhaps then we should reject the idea that assigning incompatible properties across the nodes in question amounts to assigning incompatible properties to a single person. Maybe these properties are instead assigned to person stages. We should then revisit the idea that 'Superman' and 'Clark Kent' sometimes denote person stages whose attributes are associated with the corresponding information in the nodes. As we saw, however, Saul's main argument against this view is the Enlightenment problem. On one construal, it was assumed that an unenlightened person would have no reason to refer to person stages at all, yet we have the intuition that even in their mouths (1) would be true. But it is not obvious that we have this intuition. For suppose that after unenlightened Lois Lane sincerely utters (1), Clark Kent (in an attempt to woo her) tells her about his true identity. We think that Lois Lane might very well take back what she said with (1). This is evidence that we judge that what she said with (1) was false all along. If this is right, then our intuitive judgments might very well be sensitive to whether or not the sentences were uttered by enlightened speakers. And this throws a wrench on (at least) this version of the Enlightenment problem.

Saul's book constitutes a fresh and incisive contribution to the philosophy of language. It is certainly a must read for anyone interested in the classic substitution puzzles and also anyone interested in questions about the methodology of semantics and

philosophy of language. The book will do a lot to help steer the debate towards a new direction.

Philosophy Department                                    N. Ángel Pinillos

Arizona State University

PO BOX 874302

Tempe, AZ 85287

USA