

## REPLY TO PETER LUDLOW

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### **Article info**

CDD: 401

*Received: 03.05.2022; Accepted: 14.05.2022*

<https://doi.org/10.1590/0100-6045.2022.V45N3.RP>

### **Keywords**

Indexicals

**Abstract:** The author's response to Peter Ludlow's contribution to the special issue on *The Indexical Point of View*.

\*In what follows I have copied the relevant passages from Ludlow's review of my followed by my (indented) reply to each passage separately.\*

The first concern revolves around the idea that an object *o* is deployed to bind the different expressions of sense. One can see the position potentially collapsing into a direct reference theory of some form. That is, if what holds everything together is the object under discussion, why not use that object as the interspectival content and forget about the sense content? The answer to that objection is that we still need the sense contents for all the usual reasons – explaining actions and emotions, etc – so we need sense contents. We just need to tie expressions of sense content

together somehow, and the object under discussion is the way to do that. We will come back to this.

REPLY:

In discussing the well-known ‘pants on fire’ case Kaplan has noticed that thinking the same Russellian content as our subject-matter content according to a direct reference theory is not sufficient for belief retention. In agreement with this, I have argued that the internal continuity in the subject’s belief needs to be accounted for in terms of the claim that can be extracted from Frege’s “yesterday/today” passage: that representing a certain day as the same from one occasion to the next is to think of it via the same sense, i.e. under the same mode of presentation, which makes the thought of which it is a constituent the bearer of cognitive significance. Cognitive significance is of a piece with the internal continuity of the subject’s belief, and we need to deal with it in accounting for belief retention. In making these claims, I hoped to have made it impossible for my theory to collapse into a direct reference theory, but, of course, I may be wrong.

The second issue is whether this view doesn’t turn the whole “sense determines reference” dictum on its head. It seems we need a prior grasp of our reference to  $o$  before we can construct the theory of sense for thoughts about  $o$ . This is because the only thing we have to glue expressions of sense content together is the unquestioned identity of the object under discussion. That isn’t really fatal, but it does seem to be giving up a part of the Fregean project.

REPLY:

The unquestioned identity of the object does not guarantee that there is an object. In discussing cases of thinking a confused thought, I ended up claiming that there can be a sense that determines no (single) object. This, I think, does not make it possible for me to turn the “sense determines reference” on its head, but, again, I may be wrong.

Something should also be said about the theory of reference necessary to get this idea to work. Reference needs to come pretty cheap. It can't involve acquaintance, because there isn't enough acquaintance to go around. We can have sense-mediated thoughts about future events, for example. The thought expressed by ‘Tomorrow is going to be awesome’ depends upon a day with which we have no acquaintance or causal connection yet. To avoid this problem Bozickovic adopts an approach to reference from Hawthorne and Manley (2012) according to which reference basically comes for free, in that no acquaintance or causal connection is required. Your mileage may vary on this approach. My only point here is to note that Bozickovic's position does appear to be tied to the idea of easy reference – necessarily so, since tying together multiple sense expressions into a single sense content often requires reference to an object that is outside our sphere of acquaintance.

#### REPLY:

I was permissive here just in relation to beliefs that are expressed by utterances featuring indexicals such as ‘tomorrow’ which seem to be singular beliefs without acquaintance. I hope this is supported by my arguments of section 4.7 of the book.

Still, even if reference comes for free (or nearly free), one wonders if this is enough. What about cases in which there is clearly no reference (cheap or otherwise) to anchor our thoughts? Consider the Geach (1967) example of the imagined witch that has Hob, Nob, and Cob distressed, and let's update that example. Suppose, for example Hob, Nob, and Cob all believe in a witch and they all believe that they are thinking and talking about the same witch. Hob says "I saw the witch today." The next day, Nob reports this to Cob as follows: "Hob said that he saw the witch yesterday." Surely Nob is faithfully reporting Hob's statement, expressing the relevant sense content. Obviously, Nob is expressing that sense content in a different way than Nob did because it is now a new day, but what is binding together these different expressions into a single sense content? It cannot be the object doing this work for us, because there is no witch. This would seem to be one of the dangers relying on an object to bind together the sense content.

#### REPLY:

Above, I claimed that in order for a belief about an object (or day) to be retained, it is required that the thinker's belief has the relevant internal continuity. Similarly, there is an internal interpersonal continuity between our present interlocutors' beliefs that binds these different expressions into a single sense content (which lacks reference) that accounts for the 'intentional identity' that Geach (1967), Edelberg (1986) and others have been concerned with.

Suppose that on Monday I put a bottle of wine in the fridge and say "that wine is supposed to be delicious." On Tuesday

I remind myself what I said and say “Yesterday I thought that wine is supposed to be delicious.”

On Friday I learn that my roommate has been changing things in my fridge, drinking things in the evenings and replacing them, so that I come to wonder if it was indeed the same bottle. Do the senses of my earlier two thoughts events now come apart? It would seem they have to because I am no longer in a position to express both thoughts in the same way, as I have doubts about the stability of the underlying referential contents. That is to say, whatever sense content I express on Friday with ‘I thought that wine is supposed to be delicious’, it cannot be the same as both the Monday thought and the Tuesday thought. On Friday I can express the Monday thought, and I can express the Tuesday thought, but I cannot express both at the same time, because the sense contents have retroactively come apart.

#### REPLY:

This is quite right if we suppose that my roommate has not changed the bottles while I come to doubt that he has. My single thought has been split into two thoughts (as I have stated in the book on several occasions). But, if my roommate has replaced the bottles between my Monday and my Tuesday thought episodes such that in uttering “Yesterday I thought that wine is supposed to be delicious” on Tuesday I am expressing a confused thought as a result of confusing the two bottles [in that it fails to refer or is equivocal, as the case may be]. Come Friday when I become aware of the replacement, I come to think of each bottle under a separate memory-based sense (provided my memory serves

me well concerning my distinct encounters with the bottle on Monday and Tuesday, respectively). My confused thought has been disentangled into two different thoughts. One of these thoughts is my Monday thought, the other is a thought about the bottle that was in the fridge on Tuesday which is formed thanks to my memory of my Tuesday episode. Sense contents have retroactively come apart as a matter of correcting an error of fact that I have committed.

There is a corollary to the problem just raised: Are my current thoughts susceptible to future undermining? It would seem so. If the stability of a thought depends not merely on an object, but the unreflective assumption that it is the same object, future reflections may undermine that assumption and thus force the conclusion that I am currently entertaining different thoughts. In other words, if it will be the case that I question whether it was the same object *o* (e.g., that bottle of wine), it must be the case that I am now entertaining different thoughts, even though it has never occurred to me that a switch has taken place, and indeed, no switch has taken place.

REPLY:

Suppose the bottle has remained the same and I unreflectively take it for granted that it is the same bottle from Monday to Tuesday. The sense that I am entertaining is thereby the same throughout. Once I have abandoned this assumption, the senses split and are no longer the same. The fact that they will split in the future does not affect the fact that prior to this I keep thinking of the bottle via the

same sense. (To allow the future divisions of sense to affect my current state of mind is also to admit of senses a difference in which is not transparent which is at odds with the transparency thesis that I hold on to in the book.)

On the other hand, if the bottles were switched as above, my unreflective assumption that it is the same bottle that was in the fridge on Monday did not lead me to have a singular but rather a confused thought as of Tuesday. If what I said in the previous passage is right, my future reflection does not change the fact that on Tuesday I was thinking the confused thought though it enables me to correct the error of fact that I have committed, and thereby get rid of my confused thought.

There is an inverse version of this puzzle as well. Suppose that on Wednesday I question whether it is the same bottle in the fridge, but then later completely forget my Wednesday doubts about the identity of the bottle and just unreflectively believe it is the same bottle, and on Friday (recalling only my Monday and Tuesday thoughts) I utter 'For the third time this week I am thinking this wine is supposed to be delicious'. Is my current belief the same as either of the earlier beliefs? It is hard to see how, given that I was entertaining separate beliefs earlier in the week. Perhaps it requires some mereological union of the two earlier beliefs? If so does that mean my count of belief events was off? One needs to see details here.

REPLY:

The supposition here is that I was thinking about the same bottle via the same sense from Monday to

Tuesday before my Wednesday doubts set in. Since by Friday I have forgotten about my Wednesday doubts, I continue where I left off before these doubts set in, in accordance with my point of view which is one of taking it that the same bottle is in question which is the same on Friday as it was on Monday and Tuesday.

Have I not forgotten about my Wednesday doubts, my Wednesday point of view – one of taking the given bottle for two different ones, which makes me think of the same bottle via two different senses, has by Friday given way to the one of taking it to be the same bottle throughout. If it were the case that the two senses were shaped by the linguistic meanings of the expressions that I am using as in the case of the expressions ‘The Evening Star’ and ‘The Morning Star’, in learning that the Evening Star is the Morning Star I would continue to deploy the two different senses as a result of the difference in the meanings of these expressions. But, since in the present case we do not have similar constraints, once my Wednesday doubts have been dispelled and my error of fact corrected, the two Wednesday thoughts have simply been dispelled in favour of a single one thanks to my recovered assumption that the same bottle is in question.

One might think that the two senses (modes of presentation) have been merged here. But, as Kit Fine (2007, chap. 3) makes clear, in relation to mental files which play the mode of presentation role, it cannot be the case that a merger takes place here. I deal with this issue in section 9.4 of the book where I claim that in continuing to think of the



bottle as one and the same I may invoke some or many of the features that I have attached to it separately on Wednesday and no longer remember how I came to invoke them. But this is not to say that the modes of presentation (as mental files, or otherwise) have merged.

In the preceding concerns I have assumed that the notion of unreflective assumptions about identity is an unproblematic notion, but we can problematize the idea a bit. The general form of the problem is something like this: Reflectiveness is not a stable psychological state. We drift from unreflective states to reflective states and back. Can it really be that sense contents pop in and out of existence as we do so? And since our current states seem to play a role in determining the content of our past state, or at least how they can be described, it seems that the reflective/unreflective drift destabilizes our entire mental histories. I don't mean to suggest that there is no answer to these concerns. I merely mean to point out that there are interesting puzzles to be resolved here.

#### REPLY:

Presumably, the issue that Ludlow raises is whether in drifting from an unreflective state to a reflective state the former sense pops out of existence in favour of a different (kind of) sense, not that in the latter case I deploy no sense at all, which is preposterous. My answer is that the drift does not affect the identity of sense. Consider a case in which I decide to re-spray my front door with which I have been familiar since my birth. As I go through a whole set of reflective states about it in the process

of re-spraying it, it is part and parcel of the way in which I keep representing the door and its causal powers that I unreflectively take a continuity of my perceptual experience of the door to be the result of its continuing causal power. Hence, the sense via which I keep thinking about the door is left unchanged.

## References

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