

REPLY TO EROS CORAZZA

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

Corazza claims:

Bozickovic argues that our way of thinking of, e.g., days, is not guided by linguistic meaning (characters). Sense or modes of presentation are wholly independent of characters. Furthermore, these character-independent modes of presentation are what guide behavior (see pg. 79). These actions are circumstantial and cannot be systematically linked to the meaning (character) of indexicals (see pg. 117). I am not sure I follow Bozickovic here. For, Frege introduced senses with respect to language, to explain the difference in cognitive significance between different co-referring expressions. But this does not limit senses to being used for characterizing language. The same with characters. They can be used to characterize and classify different behaviors.

REPLY

The case that I was discussing is due to Prosser (2005) in which I keep track of a certain sheep and first form a belief

(1) That *black* sheep can run fast

and then

(2) That *white* sheep can run fast.

Supposing that I am frightened of white sheep but not of black sheep, given a suitable set of background beliefs and desires, (2) would, claims Prosser, result in my running away while (1) would not. Hence, (1) and (2) have different psychological roles. Prosser thinks that this can be easily explained in terms of the mode of presentation expressed by the nominal component without any need to deny that a singular mode of presentation of the given ship, based on trading on identity, is also retained. Prosser believes that this lends support to his claim that a difference in the indexical term is sufficient to give rise to a difference in action (Prosser 2005, 376).

It is in relation to this I said: What course of action one is going to take is circumstantial and cannot be systematically linked to the meanings of indexicals (p. 117). For, we can have all sorts of background beliefs that can prompt us to perform all sorts of distinct actions in assenting, respectively, to utterances of indexical sentences such as (1) and (2)

that cannot be read off the meanings or characters (roles) of ‘that black sheep’ and ‘that white sheep’.

This does not mean that characters cannot be used to characterize and classify different behaviours as Corazza suggests, or that in the “today/yesterday” case dynamic thoughts cannot be captured by what he calls “dynamic characters”.

Corazza also claims that the reflexive contents of ‘today’ and ‘yesterday’ could well classify the same dynamic mode of presentation, where an utterance of “Today is sunny” uttered on d , would have as its reflexive content: “There is a day d the speaker refers to using ‘today’ and said that it is sunny on d ”; while an utterance of “Yesterday was sunny” uttered on $d+1$ would have as its reflexive content: “There is a day d the speaker refers to using ‘yesterday’ and said that it is sunny on d ”. The two reflexive contents only differ in that in the first we have ‘today’ and the second ‘yesterday’ which belong to different meaning types (or inform two different characters in Kaplan’s sense).

REPLY

Unlike in the previous case in which dynamic thoughts can be captured by “dynamic characters”, Corazza now suggests how the same can be done in terms of the second-level reflexive contents in which, so to speak, characters are not used but mentioned.

As in the former case, there is nothing in the view that I have developed in the book that stands in the

way of invoking such reflexive contents. But so far, the kind of case that raised my suspicion concerning reflexive contents in chapter 2 of my book has slipped through the cracks. My concern there was with the cognitive uncertainties of ‘That dog₁ is that dog₂’ in the perceptual presence of a dog whose head is sticking out from one side of a pillar and whose tail is sticking out from the other side of the pillar.

To be sure, the reflexive contents of the two utterances of ‘that dog’ in ‘That dog is (not) that dog’ are:

*That dog*₁: the dog that the speaker of *that dog*₁ is attending to

*That dog*₂: the dog that the speaker of *that dog*₂ is attending to

Perry’s view is that ‘this difference is enough to explain the difference in cognitive significance’ (Perry 2001, 89, 2012, 102), not only in terms of the difference in the relevant reflexive contents, but also in terms of the difference in the subject’s psychological states, i.e. *beliefs*, related to the subject’s different perceptions of the same dog and critical to his action and behaviour.

I found this odd in that the suspecting subject is judging whether the two dog parts that he perceives are parts of the same dog, not whether the referent of the utterance of *that dog*₁ and the referent of the utterance of *that dog*₂ are the same. The subject who falsely believes that that dog₁ is not the same as that

dog₂ is making an error of fact in thinking about the states of affairs in the world, which suggests that this case is to be explained in terms of the first-order perception-based beliefs about the given dog and not in terms of their second-order spin-offs.

This by no means stands in the way of invoking the suggested reflexive contents for classificatory purposes. However, it should be noted that reflexive content is a proposition associated with an utterance of an indexical sentence in virtue of the meaning of the *type* of the sentence it is an utterance of which supplies an identifying condition for reference that an object must satisfy in order to be the referent of an indexical expression, derived from its meaning, i.e. from the rules of language. The meaning of an indexical amounts to a rule associating it with such an utterance-reflexive identifying condition which is itself the reflexive content of an utterance of the indexical (Perry 2001, 77f, 2012, 89f). This is all well and fine as far as the foregoing “today/yesterday” case is concerned where the two reflexive contents differ in that in the first we have ‘today’ and the second ‘yesterday’. However, in the present case we have two different utterances of the same indexical – ‘that dog’, which have the same meaning or character in Kaplan’s sense, which is not fixed at that (in the same way in which the character of ‘that day’ in the role of a memory-based demonstrative is not fixed the way the character of ‘yesterday’ is). This makes it difficult to see how the meaning of the indexical supplies the reflexive content of an utterance of it, but since this is of no consequence

for the view I have developed in the book, I shall not pursue this issue here.

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