

Situated reference to objective entities

Here's a task that seems to me to have been a central motivation for CP's views for quite some time: formulate a theory of the possession-conditions and reference of concepts on which

- (1) The concepts are "situated", or involve in their possession conditions aspects of the current situation of one who grasps them, such as one's current visual experience, one's tendencies to call up a certain mental file, or one's location;
- (2) Their referents are -- determinately -- objective entities.

Some objective entities:

- The property of being red
- The property of being oval
- The person Bill Clinton
- The city of Toronto

Some subjective entities:

- The property of at some time causing my visual field to go red'
- The property of at some time being nonconceptually represented as oval
- The "recognitional object" Bill Clinton' (which is essentially composed of those stages which are disposed to call up a certain mental file in me)
- The "A-location" "here" (which is such as to essentially be, at a time, that region at which I am located)

From paleo-neo-Fregeanism to neo-neo-Fregeanism

Here's a "paleo-neo-Fregean" shot at this task, for the observational concept RED (from *A Study of Concepts*):

- The observational concept RED is

That concept *C* to possess which a thinker must meet these conditions:

(a) He must be disposed to believe a content that consists of a singular perceptual-demonstrative mode of presentation *m* in predicational combination with *C* when the perceptual experience that makes *m* available presents its object in a red' region of the subject's visual field and does so in conditions he takes to be normal, and when in addition he takes his perceptual mechanisms to be working properly. The thinker must also be disposed to form the belief for the reason that the object is so presented.

(b) He must be disposed to believe a content consisting of any singular mode of presentation *k* not meeting all the conditions on *m* above when he takes it to have the primary quality ground of the disposition of objects to cause experiences of the sort mentioned in (a). (Quoting loosely from SoC 7--8)

- Reference is determined by a sort of "principle of charity" (once again cadged from SoC: p. 20): assign referents to concepts in a way that makes beliefs true.

In a nutshell, clause (a) is in charge of tackling condition (1); clause (b) in charge of (2). But clause (b) seems to require one to accept some pretty heavy duty metaphysics, perhaps well-beyond the ken of ordinary folk. (And maybe even then it won't work, for familiar Kripkensteinish reasons.)

Fortunately, CP's "neo-neo-Fregean" theory of identity-involving observational concepts points to the way out. Drawing on material from yesterday afternoon, I take it the idea is that to grasp the observational concept OVAL is to understand it as being satisfied by anything that has the same property as is represented in an experience which nonconceptually represents that something is oval. (Similarly, I grasp my recognitional concept BILL CLINTON by tacitly thinking of it as denoting the same person as the person who is disposed to call up a certain mental file; I grasp my locational concept HERE by tacitly thinking of it as denoting the same place as the place I am located now.) The bit about being represented in a certain kind of experience takes care of (1); identity takes care of (2).

Is *identity* really driving the train?

I wonder if *identity* is less what's at work in extending reference beyond the situated case than are various *metaphysical categories*. What I grasp when I grasp the FRRs above could be easily recast as follows: I grasp my perceptual concept OVAL by tacitly thinking of it as the *shape* represented by nonconceptual content as oval; I grasp my recognitional concept BILL CLINTON by tacitly thinking of it as denoting the *person* who is disposed to call up a certain mental file; I grasp my locational concept HERE by tacitly thinking of it as denoting the *place* I am located now. Something under the rubric "identity" is involved, but it's more identity in the sense of essence or definition than numerical identity.

(Recall also that we're helping ourselves to an ontology of properties here. So nothing stops us from saying that what it is for an object *o* to satisfy OVAL is just for *o* to instantiate the referent of OVAL: we don't need a special satisfaction rule.)

The picture would then be something like this: the "rails to infinity" needed for determinate reference to objective entities are constructed out of a stock of metaphysical categories like *shape property*, *person*, and *city*; the role of the "situated" aspect of conceptual understanding is to select specific members of these categories.

If this is right, the neo-neo-Fregean theory would seem to need a theory of tacit grasp of concepts of metaphysical categories. (Or so it seems -- I'm not quite sure what grounds tacit knowledge of an FRR. Indeed, this has been puzzling me, and I'd like to hear more about it.) I wonder what the theory would look like. Would it be more neo- or more paleo-neo-Fregean? Are there worries about indeterminacy? Certainly many traditional theories of category take categories to be sparse, though eg Hawthorne describes a view on which they are abundant, in which case the worry might re-arise.

Other pains

Obviously, aspects of consciousness are available for situated conceptualization by their

subjects. And it certainly seems as if aspects of consciousness are more on the "objective entity" than the "subjective entity" side of the fence (surely some pain is not essentially tied to my situation). So there should be a theory of concepts of aspects of consciousness, such as the reflective concept FOOT-PAIN, which satisfies (1) and (2); the natural approach would be to straightforwardly extend the identity-involving approach to aspects of consciousness. A concept of a metaphysical category, the *consciousness property*, provides the "rails to infinity"; a particular situated way of focusing selects pain in one's foot from among all the consciousness properties.

Still, we need to be on guard for a confusion to which Wittgenstein fell prey.

Suppose I feel a pain in my right foot. Here the phenomenal character is complex, involving both the quality *pain* and the apparent bodily location *right foot*. We could represent the argument structure of the situation as follows: Pain(me, right foot). Two monadic properties emerge from this situation by lambda-abstraction:

- (P) $(\lambda b)\text{Pain}(\text{me}, b)$
- (Q) $(\lambda s)\text{Pain}(s, \text{right foot})$

If we think of the first argument as specifying the subject whom the pain is *for*, and the second argument place as specifying the felt location in the body image the pain apparently occupies, then property (P) is the property of *being such that pain for me is felt there*, and property (Q) is the property of *being such that pain for one is felt in one's right foot*.

Which of these properties does the "situated" component of FOOT-PAIN refer to?

On the Wittgensteinian view CP discusses, it refers to (P). But if so, the identity-involving approach can't be extended to bring your foot pain into the extension of FOOT-PAIN: the referent of FOOT-PAIN is a property which can only be instantiated by experiences I own. The closest I can come to ascribing pain to your right foot describes the situation Pain(me, right foot over there) -- that is, my pain in a very weird body image position.

Further absurdities or at best strange consequences follow: such as a behaviorism or at best a Lewis-Armstrong style functionalism, on which the only concept of pain I have which applies to you is the fully unsituated concept of a property with characteristic causes and effects.

Still, these difficulties can be avoided, since, as CP notes, perhaps the situated component of my concept refers to (Q). Then, taking the identity-involving approach, the concept extends to refer to any instance of (Q) -- and (Q) is not tied down to any subject, being a feature that can potentially be instanced in any experience.

Rails for consciousness?

As I'm understanding the theory, grasp of an identity-involving concept involves knowledge of an FRR appealing to a fundamental metaphysical category: for instance, the FRR for OVAL appeals to the category of shape properties; the concept of FOOT-PAIN appeals to the category of a consciousness property.

Developing an account of our grasp of that category seems to be the purpose of CP's "interlocking account". Here are the crucial remarks:

There is a metaphysical interdependence between conscious states and their subjects. This metaphysical interdependence is captured in two principles that aim to state what makes something conscious, and what makes something a subject:

(E) [A] conscious [state is] such that there is something it is like to be in that state, more specifically something it is like for the subject of that state.

(S) Subjects are things capable of being in conscious states.

The dependence of mental states and events on subjects was famously and sharply formulated by Frege: "Secondly: ideas are something we have. [. . .] Thirdly: ideas need an owner. Things of the outer world are on the contrary independent".

[B]ecause of [. . .] this interdependence, of experience and subjects, [. . .] we have to treat grasp of conscious states and grasp of a potential multiplicity of subjects in a single principle, a principle that treats them as interlocking notions. We can say:

For x, distinct from me, to be in pain, is both:
for x to be something of the same kind as me -- a subject;
and is also
for x to be in the same state I'm in when I'm in pain.

We can call this 'the interlocking account'.

I'm not sure I'm getting the interlocking account. Granted that only subjects can have consciousness properties. This provides a necessary condition on the notion of a consciousness property. But it doesn't provide a sufficient condition. If we think subjects are organisms, then they can also have organismal properties, like having arms; if we're dualists, then they have derivative organismal properties like *driving around in a body with arms*.

If I understand the situation correctly, the account seems to be open to the following difficulty. Suppose that just when I'm in pain, part of me is some firing C-fibers (if we're dualists, then I drive around in a body part of which is some firing C-fibers). It's a familiar point that pain is multiply realizable, and that the realizers of pain in me needn't realize pain in everyone: the madman's C-fibers fire due to tickling, and cause him to stand on his head (the phenomenal character is, let's suppose, not pain). Since pain is distinct from having a part which is some firing C-fibers (or driving in a body with such a part), which of these properties does FOOT-PAIN, if it works in accord with the interlocking account, refer to? I don't detect remarks in the paper which bear on this question. Although CP says much that is very interesting about tacitly understanding the category of a *subject*, if I am understanding the dialectic right, that's not the point where a theory is needed: rather, what is needed is a theory of tacitly understanding a certain sort of property a subject might have, a consciousness property.

A final question

An issue that has been significant for quite some time in the study of concepts of consciousness is the status of "epistemic rigidity" -- whether anything other than actual pain could have turned out to be pain (whether pain, like other natural kinds, could be "mimicked" by some distinct feature). The negative answer has played a central role in Saul and Dave's cases for property dualism. I wonder what CP's view on this is.