

Raclavský vs. “Notorious, Chameleonic Deceivers”

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It is quite understandable that many Czech & Slovak logicians seek inspiration in the writings of Pavel Tichý. After all, he was a philosophical logician of international stature, and developed a logical system with some remarkable features. However, since Tichý's death, TIL has become, due to the unceasing activity of its partisans, so labyrinthine that it can be easily misused to generate problems (or better „problems“), which are wholly internal to the framework, or, when applied to real problems, to obscure rather than clarify them.

A particularly glaring example seems to me to be the relentless activity of Jiří Raclavský, who launched a heavy attack on David Miller's criticism of Tichý's concept of verisimilitude (both texts appeared in *Organon F*, No. 4, 2008). David Miller together with Miloš Taliga give a very clear and concise summary of their standpoint: according to them, what Tichý proposed as a definition of verisimilitude delivers a magnitude the value of which depends on whether we base our framework on strict inequality or on its non-strict version. As these two relations are clearly interdefinable (given equality), this result seems to be a *reductio ad absurdum* of the proposal. Now I am not qualified, and have no intention, to judge whether they are right w.r.t. Tichý. But it seems clear to me that if somebody wants to disagree with them, then (s)he must either deny that this is what Tichý proposed, or explain how such a *prima facie* flawed definition of verisimilitude can be defended. In particular, (s)he should do it in a way comparably clear and concise as Miller and Taliga.

Insofar as I understand Raclavský's reaction (which I am not quite sure about, for some of his sentences are convoluted to the point of unintelligibility), he does not take either of these two paths, but tries to convince the reader that in fact the theory of strict order and that of the nonstrict one cannot be, as a matter of principle, compared. For either they are theories in two different languages and hence they can-

not be compared at all (I am totally perplexed by Raclavský's justification of this: „we have no 'translation rule'; even if we have had it, we would not apply it"), or they are theories in a single language and hence they are not really two theories. Personally, I would take this result as indicating that there is something rotten with the framework he employs.

Besides this, Raclavský discusses an ambiguity of the term „theory“, and accuses his opponents of using the term in the ambiguous way: he derides their views using the marvelous word „chameleonic“. True, the term „theory“ is ambiguous. Usually it is used in the sense that different linguistic objects can count as the same theory (for example a theory of arithmetic can be couched in different languages and/or different axioms), but in formal logic a theory is sometimes identified with a class of sentences of a particular language. This is indeed an ambiguity; but usually it is harmless. And, what is important, nothing said by Miller and Taliga hinges on this ambiguity.

Raclavský says many other remarkable things. Just one example. Responding to Miller's and Taliga's claim that he fails to distinguish between formalized and formal languages, he writes: „they seem to presuppose that Tarski suggested a semantic definition of truth for both natural and formal languages“. This indicates that Raclavský (a) does not pay attention to what his opponents really say (for what they say in no way presupposes what he takes it to presuppose) and (b) does not pay attention to what Tarski says either, for the distinction Miller and Taliga cite is indeed at the heart of Tarski's approach.

This nevertheless does not prevent Raclavský from claiming that his opponents „notoriously deceive their readers“. I, for one, do not feel deceived at all – I find their articulation of their standpoint admirably clear; and if they are not correct, then I would expect a comparably clear refutation. Instead of this I get a text that is truly embarrassing, for it is not only full of obscurities, but tries to compensate weakness of arguments by strength of words. I regret that the journal, the editorial board on which I have the honor to sit and which I think should aspire to an internationally renowned status, does not have mechanisms to prevent printing texts which so obviously violate standards such a journal should maintain. It is embarrassing to see somebody whose logical skills are apparently far below those of his

opponents behaving in this way, and I do not think this journal should print contributions of this kind.

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