

Representations and Relations

PETR KOŤÁTKO

Institute of Philosophy. The Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic
Jiřská 1. 110 00 Prague 1. Czech Republic
kotatko@flu.cas.cz

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ABSTRACT: The paper focuses on Uriah Kriegel's non-relational account of representation, based on the rejection of the widely shared assumption that "representing something involves (constitutively) bearing a relation to it". Kriegel's approach is briefly compared with another version of non-relational theory presented by Mark Sainsbury. The author discusses several reasons why the relational aspect of representation should stand in the center of our theoretical interest, despite the arguments of non-relationists. They concern (1) the origin of the very capacity to represent in our interactions with elements of our external environment; (2) the externalist arguments attempting to show that some of our states and acts are irreducibly embedded in our relations with external environment and these relations play an ineliminable role in the constitution of their content; (3) the fact that representations typically have conditions of satisfaction which relate the representing states or acts to the external world in such a way that if the conditions are not fulfilled, this counts as a representation-failure; (4) the fact that the representation ascriptions are often based relationally and the claim that two subjects think about the same often admits only relational interpretation. The author concludes by pointing to the wide variety of phenomena called "representation" and argues that there is no *a priori* reason to presuppose that all such cases admit, or even require a unified analysis.

KEYWORDS: Representation – proposition – truth-conditions – belief-ascriptions.

1. The relational account of representation rejected

Uriah Kriegel in Kriegel (2007) and Mark Sainsbury in Sainsbury (2012) have suggested their versions of the theory of representation which they

both label as *non-relational*: according to them, it does not belong to the nature of representation that it establishes a relation between the representing person or state or act and the represented entity. In both cases, the relational account of representation is introduced as an intuitively appealing view – which should be nevertheless given up in order to do justice to the fact that we can (and quite often do) represent non-existing entities. Uriah Kriegel demonstrates this conflict on a triad of apparently uncontroversial but jointly incompatible claims (cf. Kriegel 2007, 309):

- (a) One can represent non-existents.
- (b) One cannot bear a relation to non-existents.
- (c) Representing something involves (constitutively) bearing a relation to it.

To avoid inconsistency, we should, as Kriegel suggests, reject (c), and hence abandon the relational account of representation.

Correspondingly, Mark Sainsbury in Sainsbury (2012, 127) presents a conflict between our intuitions concerning representation (here in the specific form of “thinking about”) in two series of inferences leading to a contradiction:

- (1) We are thinking about unicorns (A).
- (2) We are thinking about something (from 1).
- (3) There is something (or there are some things) we are thinking about (from 2).
- (4) There are no unicorns (A).
- (5) Hence there are no unicorns we are thinking about (from 4).
- (6) Hence there is nothing we are thinking about (from 5).

The challenge exemplified by these series consists in the fact that the incompatible claims (3) and (6) seem to follow from indisputable assumptions (1) and (4). The solution is to give up (3) via rejecting the inference from (2) to (3). And this means to reject a general inferential principle which, like the claim (c) in Kriegel’s triad, is presented as a summary of the relational account of representation:

- (R) From “ x represents y ” infer “there is something such that x represents it”.¹

¹ The rejection of (R) corresponds to Quine’s rejection of relational (transparent) construal of ascriptions of attitudes, like “Ralph wants a sloop”. The relational construal

Clearly, Kriegel and Sainsbury suggest two ways of summarizing the same account of representation to be rejected: since accepting the claim (c) commits us to obeying the rule (R) in our inferences and accepting the rule (R) commits us to the claim (c).

The reason which should lead us to rejecting the relational account of representation, put in meta-theoretical terms, is in both cases the same: our theory of representation should reflect the fact that we can represent non-existing entities. It seems quite natural to conclude, with Kriegel and Sainsbury, that our general theory of representation should be indifferent to the existence or non-existence of what is represented. In other words, even if we know that X exists, the existence of X should not play any role in our explanation of what representing X consists in. Obviously, this is not the only way of doing justice to the possibility of representing non-existents. Another way is to admit that the term “representation” is used to refer to a variety of phenomena which need not require the same analysis, even if we insist that they have something in common.² We can decide to focus on particular cases we find important and explain their representational character from the specific frameworks within which they fulfill their functions – instead of trying to subsume them under some general (relational or non-relational) principle.

I will argue for the plausibility of this latter approach in the end of this paper. My main concern in the following chapters will be to point to several reasons why – despite the indisputable possibility of representing non-existents – the relational aspects of representation should stand in the center of our interest. But let me start with a few words about Uriah Kriegel’s non-relational account of representation.

has the form: $\exists x(x \text{ is a sloop} \ \& \ \text{Ralph wishes that Ralph has } x)$ and Quine rejects it because of the problems he finds in quantifying into referentially opaque contexts (contexts in which the substitutivity of co-referential terms *salva veritate* is not preserved) – cf. Quine (1956).

² “Having something in common” is not necessary for justifying the application of the same term in all such cases: its applicability can be very well based on a “mere” family resemblance between them, or between the corresponding meanings of the term (Wittgenstein famously demonstrated this on the word “game”).

2. The adverbial account of representation

The question is what – if not the representation relation to some entity (understood as a standard relation with converse³) makes some act or state representational. As a reply, Uriah Kriegel suggests an adverbial account of representation. Cf. for instance:

Your thought of Bigfoot does not involve constitutively a relation to Bigfoot, on the present account, but rather the instantiation of a non-relational property of representing Bigfoot-wise. This is why your thought can represent a non-existent, even though it cannot bear a relation to a non-existent. Thus an adverbial account of intentionality solves the problem of intentional inexistence. (Kriegel 2007, 315)

Again, the question arises, what does the representation function of this “representing Bigfoot-wise” consist in – what makes it the case that thinking or imagining or fearing Bigfoot-wise can count as thinking *about* Bigfoot or imagining Bigfoot or being afraid *of* Bigfoot. Kriegel offers the following reply: the acts of thinking Bigfoot-wise include the feature of *intrinsic phenomenal directedness*,⁴ i.e. the “phenomenally constituted non-relational feature of being-directed-at-something” (Kriegel 2007, 322). If we want to explicitly indicate the intrinsic phenomenal directedness of a state which we would adverbially characterize as thinking *Bigfoot-wise*, we can say, with Kriegel, that this state is “*Bigfoot-ward-esque*.”⁵ The relation

³ That means that *A*'s being in a relation *R* to *B* implies that there is some *B* which is in a converse relation to *A*. A.N. Prior's characteristics of intentional relations as “relations without converse” can be viewed as a version of the non-relational account of intentionality – in that sense, that e.g. *A*'s thinking about *B* does not establish a standard relation between *A* and *B*. Cf., e.g., Prior (1971, 136).

⁴ “The picture we get is one where many conscious states involve something like *intrinsic phenomenal directedness*: some sort of phenomenally constituted non-relational feature of being-directed-at-something” (Kriegel 2007, 322).

⁵ Perhaps it is worth pointing out that thinking or imagining in a way which is Bigfoot-ward-esque does not amount to thinking or imagining a state of affairs without particulars in the sense of Strawson's idea of feature-stating statements – cf. Strawson (1959, Ch. 7). Thinking that Bigfoot is somewhere in the vicinity is not thinking that a Bigfoot-feature is present somewhere in the vicinity and, obviously, it is also not thinking that a fictitious creature called “Bigfoot” is somewhere in the vicinity, but thinking that a real, physical monster is somewhere in the vicinity. Another thing is

between the notion of representing *Bigfoot-wise* and being *Bigfoot-ward-esque* is made clear, e.g., in the following pair of sentences:

For phenomenally conscious representations of Bigfoot have a perfect candidate for constituting the property of representing Bigfoot-wise, namely, the property of being *Bigfoot-ward-esque*. That is to say, phenomenal directedness is a perfect candidate for constituting non-relational, adverbialized intentionality. (Kriegel 2007, 323)

Kriegel points out in Kriegel (2007, 335–336, note 51) that the phenomenally conscious representation, as understood by the adverbial theory, is not the same as the mode of presentation (Fregean *Sinn*) defined in opposition to what is represented (Fregean *Bedeutung*). Or with respect to another distinction (due to Brian Loar), it is not to be understood as *how-representation* in opposition to *what-representation*. What the adverbial theory suggests is a reduction of what-representation to how-representation;⁶ or assimilation of reference to sense.

Here is the corresponding Sainsbury's formulation:

What does 'London' refer to? London. What does 'Pegasus' refer to? Pegasus. This seems an unimpugnably correct answer, even in a context in which it is well-known that there is no such thing as Pegasus. A surprising moral: even reference, philosophers' preferred tool for describing

that we can think this in the *as if* mode, in other words, the modus of our thought can be make-belief, rather than belief.

⁶ The distinction between what-representation and how-representation (and hence the function of this reduction) is sometimes blurred due to Kriegel's terminological fluctuation. For instance, Kriegel points out that in his account the unconscious representation of non-existents is based on a relation to a conscious representation and hence is relational, though the relation in question is not a relation to what is represented (Kriegel 2007, 309). In this formulation, "what is represented" clearly means an external object of representation (in the same sense in which a Napoleon's portrait is supposed to represent the actual Napoleon). In other contexts "what is represented" is clearly supposed to mean the content of the representation itself. Cf. Kriegel (2007, note 8): "If we want to individuate representations in terms of what is represented, then given that the representations of Hesperus and Phosphorus are different representations, we must say that what is represented in those representations is different. Yet what exists is clearly one and the same. The converse case is presented by water and twin-water, where what is represented is in some good sense the same, yet what exists is certainly different."

word–world relations, is intensional, and so a non-relational notion. (Sainsbury 2012, 109)⁷

The reduction of what-representation to how-representation or of reference to its intensional parameter provides us with a universally applicable way of speaking about representation without presupposing any relation between the representing state or act and something existing independently on it in the external world. The relationalists should be expected to object that this, if presented as a general principle, is a reduction which makes the real nature of representation inaccessible to the theory. So, let us consider several possible forms of the *relationalist challenge*: objections presenting various reasons why we should think about representation in terms of relations between the representing subject and the external world, or why this dimension of representation is at least in some cases ineliminable.⁸

3. External determinants of content

Externalists like Burge, Putnam or Kripke have made well-known radically relationist claims about the constitution of the content of what we think or communicate. They have pointed out that our thoughts and communicative acts are embedded in our external relations with elements of our environment and that at least in some cases these relations play an ineliminable role in the determination of the content of our beliefs, desires, assertions, promises etc.⁹ The externalist arguments focus on particular components of our thoughts or communicative acts which are supposed to

⁷ An objection which immediately suggests itself concerns indexicals. When I say (with a pointing gesture) “This man is coming to kill me”, will you insist that I have made a claim and expressed a thought about something (about a man!), even if in fact there is nobody in the direction in question? There should be no difference here from the Pegasus’ case: my thought has an aboutness structure, in which nothing is missing, even though there is no man such that my thought could be about him. The direct reference theorists will argue that in such a case I do not express a complete proposition, although I may (falsely) suppose that I have made a singular statement about particular person and that I have a singular thought about that person.

⁸ Mark Sainsbury opens this topic in Sainsbury (2012) when considering contexts in which the “wordly-side” of representations is in the center of our interest in belief ascriptions.

⁹ Some of the following formulations are adopted from Kořátko (2012).

mark gaps in the internal determination of their contents, and hence function as channels through which these external interventions into the content take place. These components include indexicals, proper names, natural kind terms and all those general terms which are subject to the division of linguistic and intellectual labour. John Searle has suggested an internalist reply to some of these arguments which I find efficient and generally applicable. The idea, as I would put it, is to take seriously the externalist claim that the subject himself relies on the external factors involved in the determination of the content of his thoughts and communicative acts and to include this reliance into the construal of content. Let me introduce some examples and then generalize them in a way which I find relevant for our present discussion.

(1) Tyler Burge, already in his early writings, argued for the priority of the beliefs which are irreducibly *de re*, which means that they include ineliminable (inconceptualizable) indexical components relating the beliefs directly to some elements of the believer's environment.¹⁰ These *relations* are supposed to make the beliefs being *about* these elements. Consider a belief based on a visual experience in which the believer is directly (*en*

¹⁰ Cf. Burge (1977, 51): "A *de re* belief is a belief whose correct ascription places the believer in an appropriate nonconceptual, contextual relation to objects the belief is about. The term 'nonconceptual' does not imply that no concepts or other mental notions enter into a full statement of the relation. Indeed, the relation may well hold between the object and concepts, or their acquisition or use. The crucial point is that the relation not be merely that of the concepts' being concepts *of* the object – concepts that denote or apply to it. For example, although concepts may inevitably enter into the acquisition of a perceptual belief, the believer's relation to the relevant object is not merely that he conceives *of* it or otherwise represents it. His sense organs are affected by it. Perceptual contact is, of course, not present in every *de re* belief. But it illustrates the sort of element independent of semantical or conceptual application that is essential to the notion."

Cf. Burge (1977, 51): "A sufficient condition for a belief to be *de re* (on the vague, 'neutral' epistemic construal, as well as on our favored semantical and epistemic construals) is for it to contain an analog of an indexical expression used deictically, and pick out a *re*. The first sentences that children actually use or understand are invariably keyed to their immediate, perceptually accessible surroundings. Attitudes that accompany such assertions are clearly *de re*. These developmental matters are closely related to the question of conditions for attributing language use and understanding. I shall argue that if an entity lacks *de re* attitudes, we would not attribute to it the use or understanding of language, or indeed propositional attitudes at all."

rapport) confronted with somebody coming from a distance in a swirling fog, without being able “to describe or image him in such a way as to individuate him fully” (Burge 1977, 55). Nevertheless, the perceptual relation itself is enough for the subject to be able to have a fully determinate belief about that man, which he can express e.g. by saying “This man is wearing a red cap”.

In his reply to this externalist challenge, Searle suggests an internalist construal of the content of this belief, exploiting his reflexive account of perceptual beliefs. According to this account, the believer represents the object of his belief in terms of its causal relation to his experience. In our case the result will be: “The man causing this experience is wearing a red cap.” It should be clear that the demonstrative “this” included in this construction need not disturb the internalist at all, since it plainly refers to something internal.

In other cases, the components of thoughts or communicative acts supposed to provide a space for the participation of external factors in the constitution of content are natural kind terms, proper names and those general terms which are subject to the division of linguistic labour. The connected externalist theories, and arguments in favour for them, are notoriously known: hence I will confine myself to the internalist re-interpretation of these cases in John Searle’s style:¹¹

(2) The internalist construal of the meaning of the term “water”, accommodating Putnam’s essentialism and his account of intension as “extension involving”:

- (a) *anything that shares the essence with the stuff which causes this experience (given that the sample of water is picked out demonstratively);*
- (b) *anything that shares the essence with the stuff which satisfies D (given that the sample of water is picked out by means of the description D).*

(3) The internalist construal of the meaning of the name “Jan Novák”, as uttered by particular speaker on particular occasion, accommodating (some aspects of) the causal theory:

the man baptized by the name “Jan Novák” at the beginning of the chain to which this utterance belongs.

¹¹ The following suggestions are either adopted from or inspired by the analysis presented in Searle (1983, Ch. 9). Details and discussion can be found in Kořátko (2012).

(4) The internalist construal of the content of a belief, accommodating the believer's deference to an expert concept he has not mastered:

Bert: "I have arthritis in my thigh."

(a) *I have in my thigh the disease referred to by experts as 'arthritis'.*

(b) *I have in my thigh the disease which satisfies the expert notion of arthritis.*

In all these cases, the internalist construal of content is based on a principle which can be, with respect to our present discussion, put as follows: we should approach the thinking or communicating subject as not only *related* to elements of his external environment but also as *relying on* these relations and *exploiting them* in the articulation of the content of his thoughts and communicative acts. This kind of the construal of content does not *eliminate* the role these external relations play in the constitution of content, nor does it *bracket* their external character, nor does it *reduce* or *convert* them into the subject's *directedness* to them. The subject's *directedness* to these external relations and his reliance on them is presented here as a way in which he allows these external factors play a crucial role in the specification of content of his thoughts and communicative acts. What makes this account of the construal of content *internalist* is that it approaches the thinker or speaker himself as the source of articulation of his thoughts and communicative acts and hence as their real *subject*: it is the thinker or speaker himself who involves the external relations into the content specification. The role of the external relations in the determination of content is not any more interpreted as an internally unmediated *inter-venance* from the outside: the relations to the external environment play precisely the role assigned to them by the subject himself in the specification of the satisfaction conditions of his thoughts and communicative acts. In short, this suggestion concerning the construal of content is *internalist*, but it is *not anti-relationist*. It reinforces rather than eliminates the role of external relations in the constitution of content and of its representational functions.

4. Satisfaction conditions and their fulfillment in the external world

But even if we deny that the subject's relations with elements of his external environment participate in the constitution of content of his thoughts and communicative acts in the specific way just described, we face

a general relationist challenge. It consists in the plain pointing out that the subject himself experiences the directedness of his thoughts and communicative acts as something which relates him to the external world. For instance, he approaches the satisfaction conditions of his belief as something which is fulfilled in the external world. If it comes out that they are not fulfilled, the subject is disposed to evaluate this as a *failure*. The relationist will insist that we should respect the aspirations attached to the conditions of satisfaction of the subject's beliefs. That means to admit that they *relate* the subject to the external world (contrary to what Kriegel claims e.g. in Kriegel 2007, 322) and that this is how the subject himself approaches the content of what he believes. The relation, to repeat, is such that if the truth conditions of the belief (or satisfaction conditions of any other attitude) are not fulfilled, the subject evaluates this as a failure.

The same holds for the representation function of, let us say, the singular term "Megan" or of the corresponding element of the belief, specifiable e.g. by means of the description "the woman baptized with the name 'Megan' at the beginning of the chain which I am just joining" (cf. section 3.3). If it comes out that there is no individual meeting the satisfaction conditions of such a representation, the believer evaluates this as a failure – since the function with which he introduced that representation into the content of his belief (the role it has been designed to play) was to pick out an individual in the external world. These parameters of our beliefs are ineliminably relational since they establish relations between beliefs and the state of the world (rather than a concept of the state of the world or our thoughts about the world). At the same time it is phenomenal in the sense of being transparent to introspection (cf. Kriegel's criterion of being phenomenal – Kriegel 2007, 322). It would hardly make sense to deny that the believer takes himself as being related to the external world in such a way that if Megan does not exist, he is wrong about how things are in the world.

So, if we exclude the subject-world relations from our point of view, we are likely to miss the very nature of the phenomenal directedness of (many of) our states or acts. Fulfillment of the satisfaction conditions of representation cannot be reduced to distinctness or determinateness of the representing act or state nor to its being "filled in" with the required kind of experience.¹² Nothing can replace the facts in the role of the factors which make satisfaction conditions of representations fulfilled and hence

¹² In sense of Husserl's term "Erfüllung"; cf. e.g. Husserl (1974; 120, 151, 169, 176).

make the representation enterprise successful or accomplished.¹³ And this is how the representing subject himself approaches the conditions of satisfaction of his performance – it is an ineliminable part of his aspirations. Even the most vivid experience counts *for him* as an *evidence* that the representation is successful rather than as that factor which *makes it* successful – since he is always ready to admit that the experience may deceive him.

Let me put the same point in another way. In his paper (2007, note 51) Kriegel quotes Horgan's and Tienson's characteristics of phenomenal directedness: "a conscious state's phenomenal directedness at a state of affairs is a matter of the state presenting apparent objects apparently instantiating apparent properties and apparently bearing apparent relations to each other". But this is at most one part of the matter: it belongs, on the *phenomenal* level, to the mode of presentation of objects that they are presented not *as* merely apparent but *as* real and *as* really bearing certain properties. If it comes out that the objects or their having certain properties are merely apparent, the subject evaluates this as a failure.

Kriegel (2007) draws the following lesson from what we have just quoted from Horgan and Tienson: "Talk of what is represented via phenomenal directedness in appearance terms may thus afford us a way of talking of what is represented without committing to any existents." Clearly, this does not apply to the attitude of the thinking subject himself. It is only the reporter about another subject's belief, wish, assertion etc. who can choose a kind of report which does not impose existential commitments *on him*.¹⁴

This point, concerning ways of belief ascriptions, deserves some attention in our present context. If we want to identify the content of the belief

¹³ In particular, reference to the world and its facts cannot be replaced by any specification of experiences which would verify our claim that the conditions of satisfaction of some representation are fulfilled. No matter how carefully you specify the set of experiences e.g. in Bigfoot's case (experiences individuated purely phenomenally, i.e. without reference to their external causes – since our aspiration is to avoid any references to the external world), it can still be the case that you have all these experiences and Bigfoot does not exist. A complete match between a fact (e.g. existence of Bigfoot) and a set of experiences is an ideal limit we can only approximate.

¹⁴ The availability of this kind of specification of the content of other people's beliefs is rather limited. Quite often the *de re* – i.e. relational – content specifications are the only option open to us, as I will point out later (in section 5).

which John expressed by saying “Megan is married”, we have a choice between the *de re* and *de dicto* mode of belief ascription:

(a) *De re*: John believes about Megan that she is married.

Here the identification of the belief’s content includes relating John to particular person as *the* person his belief is about. We commit ourselves to the existence of that person and leave open the way in which she is being represented in John’s belief: even if it comes out that John does not know about Megan’s being called “Megan”, this will not make our ascription wrong.

(b) *De dicto*: John believes that Megan is married.

Here it is the other way round: in particular we do not commit ourselves to the existence of Megan.¹⁵

John Searle has argued that this kind of distinction is applicable only to belief ascriptions, i.e. to the way in which *we* identify the content of John’s belief – while it would not make sense when applied to the content of John’s belief itself. It would be plainly absurd to ask John whether he believes *about* Megan, an inhabitant of the external world, that she is married, or “merely” believes *that* Megan is married, without adopting any assumption concerning her existence in the external world. In his polemics with Quine, Searle has used this argument to show that the *de re* – *de dicto* opposition has only a limited distinctive function with respect to beliefs (cf. Searle 1983, 208 f.). Searle’s conclusion may seem to be compatible with Kriegel’s and Sainsbury’s anti-relationist account of representation. Any singular belief includes certain mode of presentation of an individual: in this sense (as Searle has put it) we can say that all beliefs are *de dicto*. In some cases this mode of presentation picks out a certain individual in the world, or in other words, the conditions of satisfaction of a singular representation are met by something in the world – and in that case we can say that the belief is also *de re*, in addition to and *on the basis of* its being *de dicto*. But this is not the whole story. It is not enough to specify the con-

¹⁵ In such a kind of ascription the Megan-representation introduced into discourse by the utterance of the name „Megan“ is not used to represent a person but to identify certain component of John’s belief. In Mark Sainsbury’s terminology, representation is here just “put on display”, rather than exercised. In Uriah Kriegel’s terms we can put the same by saying that the *de dicto* ascription does not include any *Megan-ward-esque* representation: it just ascribes such a representation to John, as a component of his belief.

tent of a representation in terms of its satisfaction conditions, if we do not take into account that these conditions are approached by the believer *as fulfilled in the actual world* (i.e. if we do not properly unpack the term “satisfaction”).¹⁶

The situation will not change if we analyze away the name “Megan” in a way adopted from Russell’s theory of descriptions. For this purpose, let us (following Quine) eliminate the name by means of the predicate “is Meganic” (plus the apparatus of quantifiers, variables and logical connectives). Then we get the following Russellian–Quinean analysis of the proposition expressed by the sentence “Megan in married”:

$$\exists x (\text{Meganic}(x) \ \& \ \forall y (\text{Meganic}(y) \rightarrow y=x) \ \& \ \text{married}(x))$$

Here our commitment to something being the case in the external world (in particular to the existence of such and such individual) included in the application of the Megan-representation is made fully explicit in the existential quantification.¹⁷

Let me summarize the position I have argued for in this chapter by relating it to Uriah Kriegel’s characteristics of the phenomenal directedness:

To be sure, there is something perplexing about the notion of intrinsic phenomenal directedness. Is not saying that phenomenal experience presents us with the external world precisely saying that it is inherently relational? The short answer is *No*: to say that phenomenal experience presents us with the external world is to say that it is inherently *directed* at the external world, not that it is inherently *related* to the external world. The former would entail the latter only if directedness at the external world involved a relation to it. The claim made here is that there is a kind of phenomenal directedness that does not involve a relation to the external world. (Kriegel 2007, 322)

¹⁶ Analogically, Michael Dummett has pointed out that it is not enough to specify the truth conditions of an assertion, in order to understand the assertive utterance in question. We have to add that these conditions are presented as fulfilled, in accordance with what Dummett calls “convention of assertion” – cf., e.g., Dummett (1973, 298). Similarly we do not understand the game of chess if we just specify what counts as winning; we have to add that it belongs to playing the game that the players want (or at least present themselves as wanting) to win.

¹⁷ Since our formula represents a transcription of our original sentence in the Quinean “canonical notation”, it is supposed to make explicit the ontological commitments imposed by the assertive use of that sentence on the speaker.

The relationist's reply may go as follows: The directedness of representation is (typically) directedness towards external world as that sphere in which the conditions of satisfaction of the intentional conscious state are to be fulfilled. If they are fulfilled, the directedness of the state hits its target, otherwise it misses it, is not accomplished (or consummated) and the aspiration of the intentional state fails. We can *identify* the content of the state without knowing the outcome (or score) of the kind just mentioned. But we will not understand the function of that content, its role in our mental life, if we do not take into account that it consists in specifying conditions of satisfaction and approaching them as being fulfilled in the external world. So the conditions of satisfaction of a representation relate the subject to the external world, more specifically, to certain parameter of the state of the world, identified e.g. by the question "Does Megan really exist?". Or, if you wish, to certain place in the structure of the world (certain instance of reality) identified by that question – a place which is either occupied by the fact that Megan exists or by the fact that Megan does not exist. The relation is such that something's being the case in the actual state of the world will make the subject's act or state in question satisfied.

5. The relational basis of belief ascriptions

An interpreter ascribing to an interpreted person beliefs, desires etc. (and thereby also their components like singular representations) often does so on the basis of relating that person's behaviour (linguistic as well as non-linguistic) to particular elements or aspects of his environment. He could not achieve his goal (to identify the contents of the interpreted person's attitudes in a way which will enable him to make sense of that person's overall behaviour) without respecting the subject's specific perspective. Akeel Bilgrami has attempted to incorporate this respect into the general externalist (and hence relational) principle of identifying conceptual components of contents of thoughts in the following way:

(C) When fixing an externally determined concept of an agent, one must do so by looking to indexically formulated utterances of the agent which express indexical contents containing that concept and then *picking that external determinant for the concept which is in consonance with other contents that have been fixed for the agent.* (Bilgrami 1992, 5)

The holistic clause in the second part of this principle (in italics) is supposed to play the role of an individualist constraint imposed on the externalist determination of concepts. As Bilgrami emphasizes, this constraint is not supposed to function as a kind of an internalist filter: since the contents we have already ascribed to the subject in question are themselves composed of externally determined concepts. Bilgrami also points out that although the principle (C) applies to the concept ascriptions, the externalist position voiced in (C) is not restricted to the *epistemological* problem of detecting other subjects' concepts and propositional contents of their beliefs. The way of determination of concepts specified in (C) is supposed to reflect the *external constitution* of concepts which makes them public items.

The reference to Bilgrami has been meant as an example of a consequently relationist account of concept (and content) ascriptions which nevertheless includes a systematic respect to the subject's idiosyncratic position or point of view. No matter whether we accept Bilgrami's version of "individualist externalism", the fact that concept and content ascriptions have often relational basis is, I suppose, indisputable. And those who, like Akeel Bilgrami, believe that it is essential for contents of our thoughts that they are public items, cannot separate the question of constitution of contents from the basis on which we ascribe them to one another. Since for the contents of thoughts to be public is to be justifiably ascribable to other subjects.

Now let me proceed to a special case of ascriptions which I find particularly challenging for anti-relationists: namely claims of identity of the contents of two or more subjects' thoughts. Consider the following statement:

(1) John is thinking about Brigitte Bardot and so does Mary.

The anti-relationists are committed to reject the inference from (1) to:

(2) There is something such that John and Mary are thinking about it.

But it should be absurd for anybody to reject the inference from (1) to:

(3) John and Mary are thinking about the same.

The question (for anti-relationists) is: what precisely is supposed to be identical in John's and Mary's thought? Uriah Kriegel's reply should be that they both are representing some person BB-wise or that they both have BB-ward-esque thoughts (cf. section 2). But what does that feature shared by their thoughts consist in if we are not allowed to identify it relationally, i.e. by referring to the represented person? Nobody should deny that we

can justifiably claim (1) and (3) even if we have no reason to suppose that John and Mary share the same representation of BB (representation with the same conceptual or imaginary elements). Honestly speaking, such a sharing is in normal situations extremely unlikely – which does not prevent us from making claims like (1) and (3) quite frequently.

In general, it would be highly counter-intuitive (and it would contrast with our practice of belief ascriptions) to insist that there is a set of non-relationally specifiable conditions which have to be fulfilled in order to admit that somebody is thinking about BB. Let us imagine that John has heard about BB as the most powerful sex symbol of 60's, does not know anything about her present activities and has even forgotten her name, while Mary knows her as a fan of dogs and the most passionate admirer of Putin in France. And Jane has just heard conversation in which the name "BB" has been used and thinks that the person spoken about must have been a great film star. What justifies us in claiming that they all are thinking about the same person if the representations involved in their thoughts are so radically different? In Jane's case it will be some parasitic description like "The women referred to as 'BB' by my parents", in Mary's and John's case two totally different non-parasitic descriptions. I suspect that the only possible justification for our claim that John, Mary and Jane are thinking about the same person (or, if you wish, that their thoughts are BB-ward-esque) can be relational. It can hardly be anything else than the fact that these radically different modes of presentation are satisfied by (and hence pick out) the same person in the external world – since this is the only thing they have in common. Obviously, an anti-relationist will be right in insisting that in all these cases the thoughts can relate the thinkers to BB only because these thoughts are BB-ward-esque. But the other side of the coin is that these thoughts can be evaluated as being BB-ward-esque only on relational basis, namely because the singular representations they include pick out BB in the external world.

Now let us consider a case in which this relational principle of solving the question of identity or non-identity of objects of representations is not applicable. Both Tom and Ann believe that there is a president of Bhutan and that that person invented perpetuum mobile. Ann has a thought which she would express by saying "The president of Bhutan must be a genius" while Tom would express his thought by the sentence "The inventor of perpetuum mobile should do business rather than politics". Would we say that they are thinking about the same man? They would conclude so if

they have a conversation and both utter the sentences mentioned. If they have the beliefs we have ascribed to them, they would agree that both modes of presentation pick out the same person. But we would, I suppose, comment the way in which they are mistaken about the world by saying that the question whether they are thinking about the same man is pointless because there is no president of Bhutan and no inventor of perpetual mobile. Here the fact that no *relation* of somebody's being represented by somebody has been established, has the consequence that the question of identity should be rejected: we are entitled to say that *things being as they are*, the question *in fact does not arise*. If you find this evaluation of the situation intuitively plausible, as I do, it should be considered as another challenge to the anti-relationist account of representation.

6. Modalities of representation

Let me summarize the reasons why I think that the relational aspects of representation should stand in the centre of interest of any theory which declares the aspiration to explain what is going on when our acts or states represent something:

(1) The very capacity to represent develops in our interactions with elements of our external environment and many representation acts either take place within these interactions or are based on them.

(2) Externalist arguments have drawn our attention to the fact that some of our states and acts are irreducibly embedded in our relations with external environment and these relations play an ineliminable role in the constitution of their content, including its representational functions. The proper internalist reaction on these arguments is, I believe, to include the subject's reliance on these relations (as involved in the constitution of content) into the internalist construal of content, without eliminating (or "bracketing") their external character.¹⁸ Hence this defence of internalism cannot work as a defence of the non-relational account of representation against the externalist challenge.

(3) Representations typically have conditions of satisfaction which relate the representing states or acts to the external world in such a way that if the conditions are not fulfilled (in the external world), this counts as a rep-

¹⁸ For detailed discussion see Koťátko (2012).

resentation-failure. This relation cannot be reduced to mere “intrinsic phenomenal directedness”.

(4) The representation ascriptions are often based relationally and the claim that two subjects think about the same often admit only relational interpretation – since there is no reason to suppose that they exploit the same mode of presentation.

Nevertheless, we are invited by non-relationists to abstract from these things in order to get a general theory which will be applicable also to representations of non-existents. The question is whether we should aim at such a theory and whether we can hope that if we succeed in identifying a feature or a set of features present in all the cases of (what we are used to call) representation, this will help us to explain how the representation function works in these cases.

Here are some of the cases I have in mind:

- (a) thinking about an object based on (and in reaction to) a direct perceptual contact with it;
- (b) thinking about Cicero;
- (c) thinking about Homer as a person whose existence is uncertain;
- (d) thinking about Pegasus as a mythological creature;
- (e) thinking about Emma Bovary while (and as part of) reading Flaubert’s novel.

Let me, to get a maximal contrast, confront the first and the last case. We have already had opportunity to compare an externalist and internalist approach to an example of a perception based belief – one that the believer would express e.g. by saying “That man is wearing a red cup” (cf. section 3). In both cases the representation of the object of the belief has been construed as based on a direct perceptual relation to it. The internalist version is even more radically relational than the externalist one: in the former, the relation to the object is not only involved in the content determination. The internalist construal of the content includes *the believer’s reliance* on his being in certain (namely causal) external relation with the object as on that factor which will make his belief being *about* that object. As you may remember, the belief in question has, according to Searle, the following structure: “The man causing this experience is wearing a red cap.”¹⁹

¹⁹ Or, if we unpack the demonstrative in Russellian way: “There is precisely one man causing this experience and whoever causes this experience is wearing a red cap.”

Of course you may object that the believer can be hallucinating and then there is no relation between his experience and the external world such that it picks out the object of his belief. But this is a typical example of a radical failure, in which the believer is wrong both about the state of the world and, correlatively, also about the state of his own mind. The mechanism of representation on which the believer relies does not work: this is how he himself would evaluate the situation and this should be part of the description of the situation also from the point of view of the theory of representation. In other words, the theory should not be indifferent to the contrast between the hallucinatory and non-hallucinatory case, even if it is true that there is no difference between them detectable by introspection. If perception based representations rely on certain external circumstances and play the role they are designed to play only under those circumstances, we should try to explain their nature from the way in which they function *under these circumstances*.

Let me now apply the same principle to Emma Bovary case. I will attempt to explain what thinking about Emma as part of reading Flaubert's novel consists in from the function which thinking about Emma has in our getting access to the literary functions of Flaubert's text. In other words, the question concerns the requirements imposed by the literary functions of Flaubert's sentences (those including the name "Emma Bovary") on the reader: what kind of interpretation of the occurrences of such sentences within the literary text will allow the text to fulfill its literary functions for the reader? Here is the reply I am suggesting: the reader is supposed to interpret the occurrences of these sentences in the text of the novel as records of utterances of a real person, the narrator, in which the narrator speaks about that person, who has been in the actual world assigned the name "Emma Bovary" at the beginning of the chain (in Kripke's sense) to which these narrator's utterances belong.²⁰ It is important to add that the reader is supposed to approach Flaubert's sentences in this way in the *as if* (or: *make-belief*) mode. This includes that the reader supposes, in the *as if* mode, that "Emma Bovary" is a standard proper name used by the narrator with standard referential function based on the previous act of baptism and the chain anchored in it in sense of Kripke's causal theory. In this account, Emma Bovary is the person the reader has to assume (in the *as if* mode) as

²⁰ Defence of this approach can be found in Koťátko (2013).

a real correlate of the narrator's utterances – a correlate understood in sense of the referential relation established by the Kripkean chain.

The fact that the literary function of sentences including the name “Emma Bovary” requires such a reading, can be commented so that the occurrences of this name in these sentences indicate an aspiration at the referential function in a relational (more specifically: Kripkean) sense and that the reader is supposed to accept this aspiration (in the *as if* mode) as fulfilled, as part of his accepting (in the *as if* mode) the truth aspiration of the sentence as a whole as fulfilled. If this is right, then this specific case cannot be taken as a counter-example to the relational account of representation. Rather, it should be approached as parasitic (in the way just described) upon reference in relational sense. The act of representation which takes place here does not relate the reader to any entity, and hence is clearly non-relational: but representation in relational sense is *supposed* (in the *as if* mode) by the reader to take place here and this assumption is required by the literary functions of the text.²¹

The crucial point is that all this (including the reference to the narrator) belongs to the way in which the reader's thoughts about Emma represent their object: the mechanism of representation has the complex structure just described, in other words, the function of representation includes (and depends on) the moves just mentioned. The reader, in his Emma-thoughts involved in his reading Flaubert's text, represents Emma *via* approaching (in the *as if* mode) occurrences of the term “Emma” as records of the narrator's utterances and ascribing them (in the *as if* mode) the function described above.

Let us compare this with the preceding example: the mechanism of representation which is at work in case of a belief based on a direct perceptual contact with its object and includes the subject's reliance on the causal relation between that object and his current experience. According to my opinion, the moral to be drawn from such confrontations is that if we want to explain how representations work in particular cases, we should resist

²¹ A corresponding point from the author's (rather than interpreter's) perspective has been made by Saul Kripke: “...when one writes a work of fiction, it is part of the pretense of that fiction that the criteria for naming, whatever they are, are satisfied. I use the name ‘Harry’ in a work of fiction; I generally presuppose as part of that work of fiction, just as I am pretending various other things, that the criteria of naming, whatever they are, Millian or Russellian or what have you, are satisfied. That is part of the pretense of this work of fiction” (Kripke 2013, 17).

the temptation to subsume them under some general (relational or non-relational) principle. This would be just a way of avoiding the real work to be done: to analyze the cognitive or communicative contexts in which they are embedded, the functions they are designed to fulfill in these contexts, the mechanisms involved and the conditions of their doing properly their work.²²

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