

**Eros Corazza: Reflecting the Mind**  
 Indexicality and Quasi-Indexicality  
 Clarendon Press, Oxford 2004, xiv + 368 pages

Indexical expressions, their semantics and pragmatics are at the very centre of current discussions in philosophy of language and mind. What is less frequently discussed is the phenomenon of quasi-indexicality and the sort of expressions labeled quasi-indicators (to use Castañeda's notorious term). Eros Corazza wrote a book filling this gap. And it is a very good book. He offers us an exciting journey through regions of indexicality, quasi-indexicality, reference, thought, anaphora and many others.

In the Introduction and Chapter 1 Corazza discusses several important topics and presents his general viewpoint. To put it concisely, his position is one of direct referentialism coupled with contextualism. Corazza is a contextualist with respect to propositions expressed by utterances involving indexical phrases. He defends a kind of *situational contextualism* according to which an utterance expresses what he calls *minimal proposition* (p. 12) and the context of the utterance determines the *situation* with respect to which the proposition is to be evaluated as true or false. What is important is that the situation does not enter the proposition expressed. The resulting position Corazza labels *The Slim Proposition View*.

This position is quite appealing for various reasons and Corazza presents some of them. However, the central notion, that of minimal proposition, seems to me rather murky. The first thing to be highlighted is that this notion of proposition is very different one from the standard notion according to which a proposition is a function from possible worlds to truth values: once the possible world is fixed, the truth value of a proposition is completely determined. A minimal proposition cannot be a function of this sort because it does not suffice to fix a possible world in order to get a truth value. Standard propositions are unstructured logical entities, while minimal propositions must be structured: for, otherwise it would make no sense to say that there is something missing in the minimal proposition in order for it to become a full-blooded proposition. Anyway, propositions, either standard or structured, are usually taken as bearers of truth values; this cannot be said concerning minimal propositions. So, what is their logical status?

Let us move to another important question Corazza discusses: Which kinds of expression must be taken as contextually dependent? Corazza argues that there are two categories of contextually dependent phrases: *indexicals* (e.g., "I", "you", "here", "now", "last week", "that man", etc.) and *contextuals* (e.g., "local", "foreigner", "small", "enemy", etc.) (pp. 3 – 4). Following David Kaplan, indexicals are further divided into *pure indexicals* and *demonstratives*. Indexicals are singular terms, either simple or compound, while contextuals are general terms. The latter contribute some property or relation to the proposition expressed by an utterance involving a contextual, while the former contribute an individual therein. Concerning indexicals Corazza is a Kaplanian: indexicals are directly referring expressions and, irrespective of them being simple or compound, their semantic content is an individual contextually

determined. Hence, Corazza disagrees with present tendencies taking (at least) compound indexicals as a sort of quantifier expression.

What is further important is that Corazza presents an anti-indexical view of proper names. According to him, "proper names cannot be reduced to, or explained away in terms of, indexicals" (p. 35). I have to applaud him for this position because it is quite widespread today to take proper names as a sort of indexical expressions. The main datum usually mentioned to support this view is that several individuals may possess the same name and, therefore, it depends on context which individual has been referred to by a given utterance. Corazza rightly points out that this is incorrect. "The contextual features we appeal to in these cases are better understood as helping us decide *which* particular term/name is used rather than determining which referent is picked out by a single context-sensitive word" (p. 43). And, again, "in the [...] case [of indexicals] we need context to *determine the referent*, while in the [case of proper names] we need context to *determine which name* is being used" (p. 46).

There are also other important reasons Corazza presents against the indexical treatment of proper names. Firstly, indexicals, unlike proper names, can be used anaphorically (and deictically) (p. 4). Secondly, proper names, unlike indexicals, can be used in a deferential way (p. 46). Thirdly, "unlike indexicals [...], proper names can be used to refer to an object even if the speaker and hearer are not and have never been 'in contact' with the referent" (p. 39). (Of course, there are some other reasons but the above ones are, as far as I can see, crucial.)

Now it seems to me that the first reason mentioned is based on a hasty generalization. Of course, many indexicals can be used anaphorically and no proper name can be used in this way. But there are some indexicals that are taking side with proper names in this respect. In particular, in spite of Corazza's theory, "I" and "you" (in singular) cannot be anaphorically dependent on some other phrase. Utterances of "I" and "you" refer to the speaker and the addressee, respectively. (I distinguish here between an addressee and a hearer: a hearer might be a third party that need not be directly involved in the discussion and addressed by the speaker.) Given that the speaker and the addressee must be present in communication situations (the limiting case is one in which the speaker and the addressee is one and the same person), it makes no good sense to say that my utterance of "I" refers to me *because* there is some other expression referring to me; my utterance of "I" refers to me because I myself have produced it. Analogously, my utterance of "you" (in singular) refers to you because you are my addressee, not just a hearer, and I have to address you directly, face to face, so to speak; given that you are my addressee and I take you *as* my addressee, I cannot address you indirectly, *via* some other expression my utterance of "you" is supposed to be anaphorically dependent on.

Concerning the anaphoric use of "I", Corazza offers the following example (p. 6):

(1) I think that I am rich.

He claims that the second occurrence of "I" is anaphorically dependent on the first occurrence (the second occurrence is to be interpreted as a quasi-indicator; see below). However, the example is by no means persuasive. If an expression is used

anaphorically, its referent varies with the variation of its antecedent. But if the first occurrence of "I" is replaced by any other singular term, the remaining "I" would constantly refer to the speaker:

- (2) Sally/Bob/he/she/... thinks that I am rich.

However, there is some evidence Corazza uses as a support for his view. In some exotic languages, e.g. Amharic (see p. 298), "I" (or its translation) varies with the variation of its antecedent and can be used anaphorically in the above sense. This observation may be correct but it is irrelevant. For what we are after is a semantical theory of a particular language, say English. So, as a theory of English, Corazza's position does not work. As far as I can see, we should devise theories explaining indexicality for a particular language, not for some (maybe non-existing) language mixed up from various languages.

Another reason against Corazza's view runs as follows: It seems to be an essential feature of any expression used anaphorically that it behaves as a singular referring term when dependent on a referring term, but it behaves either as a bound variable or as a definite description when it is anaphorically dependent on a quantifier expression (as has been persuasively demonstrated by Stephen Neale). Thus, in (3) "he" is referring to the same individual as "Bob", while in (4) the first occurrence of "he" is a variable bound by "every man" and the second occurrence of "he" must be interpreted as the definite description "the man over there":

- (3) Bob thinks that he is rich.

- (4) The man over there thinks that he is rich. But, in fact, he isn't.

It seems to me that "I" is short of this chameleonic nature: it is only a singular referring term and it directly refers to the utterer (or, agent) of "I" without any mediation of some other expression.

Thus it seems that anaphoricity of indexicals and non-anaphoricity of proper names is not a happy feature to appeal to. Other features Corazza mentions as a way of distinguishing these two kinds of expression seem to be unproblematic. However, there is another feature he did not mention, even though it is, to my mind, the most important one and can be regarded as a source of virtually any other difference between the two kinds of expression. What I have in mind here is the way proper names and indexicals are introduced into the language. When a proper name is introduced into the language, it is – so to speak – attached to an individual that becomes its bearer. Indexical expressions, on the other side, are not attached to particular individuals. Hence, if two individuals possess grammatically indistinguishable proper names, the names are in fact different from the point of view of semantics. My name is mine even though there may be other persons having similar name. And it is plain that for this reason proper names lack the chameleonic nature that is essential for almost all indexicals and, thus, cannot function as anaphoric phrases.

In Chapter 2 Corazza defends the idea that something can be an object of thought even though it is not linguistically represented in our utterances. Some utterances are syntactically complete but conceptually incomplete, as can be seen with respect to meteorological verbs: when one says "It rains", it conveys information

that it rains *here*, even though the place was not indicated in the utterance. The idea of implicit constituents in utterances and propositions expressed by them is quite up-to-date and is invoked with respect to various problems. Corazza's discussion is a valuable contribution to this strand.

Chapter 3 is crucial for the whole book. Corazza formulates here a multiple proposition theory of utterances involving kinds of proper names and complex demonstratives. There is a kind of proper names, so-called description-names, that originate from descriptions; e.g., "Sitting Bull" or "United States of America", etc. Qua proper names, these expressions are directly referring to something and contributing their referent to the propositions expressed by utterances involving them. However, there should be made some space for their original descriptive content, as Quine's "Giorgione" example and some anaphoric constructions seem to show. Suppose the example (p. 106):

(5) The Evening Star is Jane's favourite one.

"The Evening Star" is a description-name for Corazza and "one" is anaphorically dependent on "Star". Since "one" inherits its semantic content from "Star", the latter must contribute somehow to the meaning of (5). According to Corazza's multiple proposition theory, an utterance involving a description-name expresses what he calls an *official proposition* (that is singular and involves the name's referent) and another one – a *background proposition* – that involves the descriptive information mentioned; the descriptive information is a sort of parenthetical remark that is not truth-conditionally relevant. So, official propositions, unlike background propositions, are relevant for evaluation. A similar story can be said, according to Corazza, with respect to complex demonstratives as well. Complex demonstratives (e.g., "this rabbit", "this rabbit with a pink tail", "this furious rabbit with a pink tail", etc.) are quite puzzling because they should be treated as directly referring terms but at the same time their descriptive content is semantically important (as can be seen from the above examples). It is quite popular today to treat such examples, in a non-Kaplanian fashion, as a special kind of quantified phrases. However, Corazza is a Kaplanian and he utilizes his multiple proposition theory here. The referent of a complex demonstrative enters the official proposition expressed by an utterance, while the descriptive content enters the background proposition and is, therefore, truth-conditionally inert. The result is that the proposition expressed by "This furious rabbit with a pink tail is chasing a fox" can be true even though the rabbit referred to is peaceful and has a red tail.

Corazza's position has a strong intuitive appeal. I would be happy to accept it as the right solution to various problems, but some formal drawbacks force me to express much hesitation with respect to it. It looks like an arbitrary stipulation to say that there are two kinds of proposition expressed by some kinds of utterances and that only one of the propositions is truth-conditionally relevant. It seems that one is forced to adopt this stipulation because one accepts the direct referential picture of complex demonstratives (and description-names). But such a reason would be purely ideological. Moreover, it is unclear what sort of logical connection (if any) exists between the two propositions. Is it possible to represent a connection between them

as a conjunction? Probably not. But why? Anyway, it seems that if some logical connection would be admitted, both propositions should be (or should not be) truth-conditionally relevant. Perhaps, this would be a reason for taking the two propositions as having different status. But that cannot work because the background proposition plays role in some inferences (as has been observed by Corazza, as well); and if one infers a conclusion from the background proposition conveyed by a premise, then this proposition must be truth-conditionally relevant. So the idea of two propositions with different status is doubtful from the logical point of view, even though it might be intuitive and might solve several semantical problems.

Chapter 4 offers an extensive discussion on demonstratives and pure indexicals. The most important consideration deals with the problem posed by Quentin Smith. Smith claimed that some linguistic data speak against Kaplan's single character theory (an indexical is said to possess a single character regardless of the context of its appearance: the character of "now", for example, picks out the time of its utterance whenever it is used). Smith argues that in the case of historical present and some other contexts, "now" cannot possess the same character as it does in usual contexts. Smith's conclusion is that each indexical is capable to possess various characters with respect to various contexts of utterance. Corazza offers another solution to the challenge that works successfully in the problematic cases. He suggests that the occurrence of "now" in historical present, for example, is to be viewed as an anaphoric phrase dependent on some tacit antecedent, i.e., an implicitly conveyed information stemming from the context of utterance (p. 156 ff). Given that a teacher of history speaks to her students about World War II, and utters "Now Hitler begins his invasion of the USSR", the occurrence of "now" is anaphorically dependent on some implicitly conveyed antecedent, say, "World War II," or "1941".

In Chapter 5 the semantics of "I" is discussed in detail. According to Corazza, "one comes to master the use of 'I' when one considers oneself to be an individual amongst others" (p. 242). Corazza defends a Kaplanian semantics for "I" but with a proviso. To simplify things a bit, according to Kaplan, the pronoun possesses some character, which can be represented as a function from contexts to referents, and refers to the utterer. However, the well known answering machines and post-its paradox undermines this version of the theory. To solve the paradox it is required, according to Corazza, to break the identity between the utterer and the referent of "I". Utterances of "I" refer to agents that are sometimes identical to their utterers but sometimes they are identical to someone else. Which person is referred to by a given utterance of "I" is secured by special "social or conventional setting" (p. 196); the setting is part of the context of the utterance.

In Chapter 6 Corazza argues against the idea of object-dependent thoughts. He views thoughts as situated; the same thought can be about different things when situated in different situations (p. 203); therefore, thoughts must be object-independent. According to Corazza, perceptual thoughts are dependent on properties rather than objects having these properties. I find this position very attractive, even though there must be preserved some room for object dependent thoughts; thoughts represented by utterances involving proper names must be object-dependent.

Some psychological questions connected with attitude ascriptions are discussed in Chapter 7. “[A]n attitude ascription is an empathetic act. As such, [...] it rests on our capacity to imagine ourselves in someone else’s shoes” (p. 239). This position is supported by extensive empirical evidence. Another idea that is defended here is that sentences can be taken as thought classifiers (p. 256). It will be important for Corazza’s semantical analysis of that-clauses in Chapter 9.

Chapter 8 presents a thorough discussion about quasi-indexicality and quasi-indicators. Corazza claims that the ascription of an “I”-thought to someone is possible only using quasi-indicators. It means that *de se* ascriptions cannot be reduced to *de re* ones: “[t]he first person pronoun cannot be explained away or replaced by a coreferring term without destroying the cognitive impact its use conveys” (p. 277). When Ben says “I am rich” and Bob ascribes him the respective “I”-thought by uttering “Ben said that he is rich”, Bob’s locution should be understood quasi-indexically as “Ben said that *he himself* is rich”. Quasi-indicators are a sort of attributive anaphors, according to Corazza; he analyzes quasi-indicators along logophoric pronouns, a special sort of pronouns used in some languages exclusively to attribute indexical thoughts. Here we may see the origin of the idea discussed above that “I” can also be used anaphorically. For, following Castañeda, it is claimed that “‘I’ can also work as a quasi-indicator” (p. 296); and if this is possible, then “I” can be used anaphorically. Well, even though Castañeda’s idea is correct, it does not follow that “I” can be used anaphorically because of the reasons mentioned previously.

In the final chapter Corazza argues that “in an attitude ascription, we relate the attributee to a proposition *and* a sentence. The latter is the sentence the reporter uses to classify the attributee’s mental state” (p. 308). Hence, the semantics of verbs such as “to believe” is represented as a three-termed relation between the attributee, the proposition he or she is said to believe and the sentence best classifying his or her mental state. Corazza’s version of this theory seems to be immune to various objections based on translation (as he himself demonstrates; see p. 321 ff.). However, one thing seems to me doubtful, even though it is widespread; it is supposed that propositions are the right sort of objects people are related to in their belief states. But propositions are not fine-grained enough. This can be seen from the fact that they do not suffice to individuate one’s mental states (and there are also some logical reasons). This lies at the bottom of the idea that sentences are to be taken as another argument for the belief-relation. Perhaps, when one did choose more fine-grained objects (e.g., Tichý’s constructions), the appeal to sentences would be superfluous.

In this review I have alluded only to some of the topics Corazza discusses in his rich and illuminating book. I have preferred to talk about a few ideas I cannot fully agree with instead of the abundance of others I feel sympathetic to. This book should be read by everyone who is keen on questions related to philosophy of language and mind.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Eros Corazza for valuable discussions concerning some topics his book is concerned with.