Book Review

C. Anthony Anderson and Joseph Owens, eds., *Propositional Attitudes: The Role of Content in Logic, Language and Mind*. CSLI Lecture Notes no. 20, Stanford, 1990. 342 pages.

This volume contains twelve articles on propositional attitudes and the logic and semantics of their ascription. At one end of the spectrum are two papers examining the relationship between intentionality and consciousness, by John Searle and Keith Gunderson. At the other end are papers on modality and discourse representation theory by Kit Fine and Hans Kamp. Tyler Burge, Robert Stalnaker, Joseph Owens, and the team of John Wallace and H. E. Mason contribute papers focusing on the basis for and the upshot of non-individualistic views of mental content. Keith Donnellan, Nathan Salmon, Stephen Schiffer, and (jointly) Ernest Lepore and Barry Loewer write on puzzles about belief and the semantics of belief ascription. C. Anthony Anderson and Joseph Owens organized the 1988 University of Minnesota conference where these papers were first presented. They provide a lucid introduction to the volume and a useful bibliography.

Of necessity, the path I take through the papers will be selective. I shall focus on a group of papers united by a concern with the representational intermediaries—concepts, senses, modes of presentation, meanings—which mediate cognition.

One of the most far-reaching and important papers in the volume is Stephen Schiffer's "The Mode-of-Presentation Problem." Schiffer contends that every theorist who sees belief as a relation to propositions needs to invoke modes of presentation and he challenges the propositionalist to say just what modes of presentation *are*. According to Schiffer, none of the familiar construals are acceptable, and so propositionalism is untenable.

All propositionalists need modes of presentation because of the inconsistency of some of our thoughts. Ralph feeds a dog at his door in the evening and names it "Fido." Unwittingly, he feeds the same dog in the morning and names it "Fifi." Ralph expresses a belief by saying "Fido is male" and another by saying "Fifi is not male." His beliefs have inconsistent truth conditions: for both beliefs to be true, one and the same thing would have to be both male and not male. In order to capture the fact that Ralph is not irrational, the propositionalist must say that (1) Ralph thinks of the two-named dog under two different modes of presentation, and (2) Ralph fails to recognize them as modes of presentation

of the same thing (this is an instance of what Schiffer calls "Frege's Constraint"). The appeal to modes of presentation leaves propositionalists with various options: Fregeans will see belief as a relation to propositions that *contain* modes of presentation; Russellians will see belief as a relation to singular propositions which are "grasped" *by means of* modes of presentation. Propositionalists can take various positions on whether and how modes of presentation enter into the semantic content of belief ascriptions.

According to Schiffer's "Intrinsic Description Constraint," it is not sufficient to characterize modes of presentation merely as *whatever* satisfies Frege's Constraint. So what *are* modes of presentation? Schiffer considers and rejects the idea that modes of presentation are individual concepts, stereotypes, words, "characters," or causal chains. The conceptual roles of mental sentences initially seem to be the most promising candidates for playing the role of modes of presentation, but Schiffer claims that this option fails too. His argument, slightly reconstructed and simplified, goes as follows: on any plausible account, "that"- clauses at least *sometimes* function as singular terms. He points to the validity of inferences like "Reggie believes that eating liver increases sexual potency, so there's something Reggie believes" (p. 267). Propositionalists who see "that"- clauses as singular terms can say they refer to propositions that contain modes of presentation, or to singular propositions devoid of modes of presentation. But neither option is workable, when modes of presentation are construed as conceptual roles.

When modes of presentation are taken to be conceptual roles, the Fregean option is problematic: when we assert that people have beliefs, we don't necessarily know enough about them to be saying anything about the conceptual roles of their mental sentences. That leaves us with the Russellian option, which has been defended, notably, by Nathan Salmon. According to Salmon, "Lois believes that Superman flies" says, of Lois, that she stands in a dyadic relation to a singular proposition containing Superman and the property of flying as constituents. Thus, (1) and (2) are flat-out inconsistent:

(1) Lois believes that Superman flies.
(2) Lois doesn't believe that Clark Kent flies.

They say that Lois does and doesn't stand in a dyadic relation to the same proposition. Schiffer introduces a fellow named Floyd, who agrees to (1) and (2), but is cognizant of Superman's double life. Evidently, Floyd believes the contents of both sentences and thus has inconsistent beliefs. According to Frege's Constraint, Floyd must have appropriate modes of presentation. But Floyd's beliefs seem not to be covered by the conceptual role proposal. For the conceptual roles Floyd seems to need involve storing, in the way appropriate to belief, mental sentences corresponding to (1) and (2), as well as to (3):

(3) Superman is not Clark Kent.

But since Floyd knows about Superman's double life, Floyd does not have (3) in his "belief box."

Having rejected all construals of modes of presentation, Schiffer concludes that propositionalism, in any robust sense of the term, must be abandoned. What, then, is the function of "that"-clauses? Schiffer's view — which is equal

parts intriguing and perplexing — is a minimalist sort of propositionalism. In "Ralph believes that Fido is male," and "Ralph believes that Fifi is not male," we do not (intuitively) describe Ralph as having inconsistent beliefs. Thus, says Schiffer, it's reasonable to think that the sentences have "that"-clauses referring to *consistent* propositions. Since there is nothing that can play the role of modes of presentation, the consistency of the propositions cannot be explained by saying that "Fido" and "Fifi," in these contexts, refer to different modes of presentation. Schiffer simply says that a compositional explanation of what a "that"-clause refers to, deriving the reference of the whole from the semantic values of the parts, is not to be had. This doesn't bother him, for he argued in his [4] that natural languages do not *have* to have compositional semantics. Since one cannot say what the parts of a "that"-clause contribute to the reference of the whole, it would be at least odd to think that the referent of a "that"-clause is a robust entity with clear-cut constituents. Thus, for Schiffer, "that"-clauses refer to propositions, but only in an unusual sense of the word. About "propositions," he writes, "Their existence is in some sense a projection of linguistic and cognitive practices that are pragmatically very useful, perhaps indispensable" (p. 268). The propositions "that"-clauses refer to are mere shadows of our linguistic practice.

I believe it is possible to resist the reasoning that leads Schiffer to this unorthodox conclusion at various points. It is important to recognize that Schiffer makes the mode of presentation problem harder that it first appears to be because he implicitly imposes a constraint on any solution that goes beyond Frege's Constraint or the Intrinsic Description Constraint: whatever we say about modes of presentation has to mesh with some plausible theory of the semantics of belief ascription. A problem about *belief* has been subtly transformed into a problem about belief *sentences*. Schiffer does not have a straightforward example of inconsistent beliefs that cannot be explained by appealing to conceptual roles. Pretheoretically, we would not think of Floyd as an example of someone with inconsistent beliefs, and Floyd would be no counterexample to the conceptual role proposal. The Floyd problem surfaces only with Salmon's view of belief ascription.

Supposing we adopt Salmon's view, I am not in fact convinced by Schiffer's paper that Floyd stands in the way of construing modes of presentation as conceptual roles of mental sentences. I shall explain after taking a look at Salmon's contribution to the volume.

In "A Millian Heir Rejects the Wages of Sinn," Nathan Salmon summarizes his Russellian account of propositional attitude attributions. He offers support for his view that goes beyond the arguments in [2]. In particular he argues that a name should be thought of as a special kind of variable — a variable that does not vary. He attempts to defuse Fregean arguments that coreferential names do not have the same semantic values by claiming that the same arguments would show that strict synonyms like "ketchup" and "catsup" do not have the same semantic values. Those who do not take Salmon's position seriously are advised to have a look at these thought-provoking arguments.

Modes of presentation are integral to Salmon's conception of rational belief. Salmon claims that (on analysis) x stands in the dyadic belief relation to proposition p if and only if x stands in the ternary BEL relation to p and some mode

of presentation. The explanation why Ralph believes, inconsistently, that Fido is male and that Fifi is not male, is that he has two modes of presentation of the dog with two names. Modes of presentation are also integral to Salmon's account of the way we speak. Though Salmon's semantics does not mesh with our intuitions about the truth values of belief sentences, he wants to explain those intuitions. One explanation he offers here (and expands on in his [2] and [3]) is that belief sentences impart (but do not semantically convey) information about modes of presentation. We are prone to accept "Ralph believes that Fido is male," but reject "Ralph believes that Fifi is male" *despite* their identical semantic content because the sentences impart different information. They impart the information that Ralph stands in the BEL relation to a certain proposition when he grasps that proposition under *different* modes of presentation. Our misguided intuitions are the result of our confusing the semantic content of belief sentences with this additional merely imparted information.

For Salmon's sake, Schiffer had better not be right that no construal of modes of presentation is workable. Let's now return to the Floyd case. The problem was that Salmon's semantics seems to force us to see Floyd's acceptance of (1) and (2) as acceptance of inconsistent propositions. But even the best of the mode of presentation options, the conceptual role proposal, doesn't seem to supply Floyd with an excuse for his apparent irrationality.

Elsewhere Salmon has conceded to Schiffer that Floyd is an example of someone with inconsistent beliefs, and he has endeavored to characterize the modes of presentation involved in Floyd's beliefs (see his [3]). In a nutshell, Salmon's strategy is to say that Floyd would need two modes of presentation of Superman only if his beliefs were *de re*, with respect to Superman. That is, only if Floyd believed Superman to be someone Lois believes to fly, and also believed Clark Kent to be someone Lois doesn't believe to fly. But — for reasons I can't go into here — Salmon claims that Floyd's beliefs are only *de re* with respect to the whole *proposition* that Superman/Clark Kent flies. Floyd believes the proposition that Superman flies to be something Lois believes, and also believes the proposition that Clark Kent flies to be something Lois doesn't believe. Salmon claims that Floyd must have (and could have) two modes of presentation of the proposition that Superman/Clark Kent flies without having two modes of presentation of Superman/Clark Kent (see his [3], pp. 267–272).

I think Salmon's theory suggests, and in fact demands, a different solution to the Floyd problem. The pragmatic story Salmon tells to explain the way we speak prevents him from making the initial concession to Schiffer that Floyd has inconsistent beliefs. Salmon's explanation for Floyd's agreeing to both (1) and (2) is that he mistakes what the sentences only pragmatically impart for their semantic content (see his [3], pp. 252–253). This story is very difficult to reconcile with the notion that what Floyd is *agreeing* to, in accepting the sentences, is their literal semantic contents. Compare a less tendentious case of confusing semantic content and pragmatic impartations. John says, of his wife Mary, "Mary didn't get pregnant and get married," and goes on to insist that the marriage came first. What belief has he evinced? Surely just the belief that Mary didn't first get pregnant and then get married, not the belief that Mary didn't both get pregnant and get married. Floyd's agreement to (1) and (2) is evidence for his believing that Lois stands in the BEL relation to the proposition that

Superman can fly, when she thinks of it in the "Superman can fly" way and that she doesn't stand in the BEL relation to that proposition when she thinks of it in the "Clark Kent can fly" way. Floyd's *linguistic* behavior — as interpreted by Salmon — provides no evidence that he believes the literal content of (1) and (2).

Contrary to Schiffer's contention, Salmon's semantics turns out to be one form of propositionalism that does not give rise to an insoluble problem about modes of presentation. If I am right, then on Salmon's view of belief sentences we have no reason to think Floyd's beliefs are inconsistent and they do not create any puzzle about modes of presentation. The view that modes of presentation are conceptual roles is still in the running and we can avert the conclusion that propositionalism founders on the mode of presentation problem.

Of course, Salmon's account of belief sentences is not unproblematic. I have suggested a solution to the Floyd problem which I think Salmon must accept. But the solution has unappealing consequences. Consider sentences (4) and (5):

(4) Floyd believes that Lois believes that Superman flies.
(5) Floyd believes that Lois doesn't believe that Clark Kent flies.

What the Floyd sentences *say*, on Salmon's view, is that Floyd believes the semantic content of the embedded belief sentences. But we've just seen that at least Floyd's linguistic behavior gives no evidence that this is true: *both* (4) and (5) seem to be false. Salmon must explain why we are inclined to accept (4) and (5), just as he had to explain why Floyd accepted (1) and (2). It is an open question whether pragmatics can bear the weight placed on it by Salmon's theory.

Let's set aside belief puzzles (for the moment) and turn to the group of articles concerned with externalism about mental content. Anyone familiar with Tyler Burge's anti-individualistic view of the mind and his work in the philosophy of language is likely to wonder about the connections between the two. If "mental semantics" is non-individualistic and social, should we say the same for linguistic semantics? Burge takes on the question in his contribution to the volume, "Wherein is Language Social?" Not surprisingly, he argues that the semantic properties of an individual's idiolect depend on goings-on in his linguistic community. Had my community used language in different ways, the semantics for my idiolect could have been different from what it is, even if my community had physically impinged upon my body in just the way it actually did.

Burge draws a distinction between the way an individual explicates a word in his idiolect, the reference of the word, and the "translational" meaning of the word. Meaning and reference are not to be confused: "The empirical referents of an individual's word are obviously not themselves part of the individual's psychology, or point of view" (p. 118). In contrast, meaning, sense, concepts — all are constitutive of the individual's point of view. They are "what an individual understands and thinks in the use of his words" (p. 118). Burge argues that not only the references, but also the meanings or senses of one's words are socially non-individualistic.

Why is reference non-individualistic? Burge argues (with Kripke and others) that the way a person explicates some word does not determine the reference of the word. Even if I explicate "carburetor" merely as "some part of an engine," "carburetor" in my idiolect refers to carburetors, and not to pistons or camshafts.

My word refers to carburetors, despite my meager explication, because of the way more knowledgeable people apply the word. It's not that the experts get to foist "some foreign, socially authorized standard" on the rest of us (p. 126). Rather, it's part of my understanding of words that I am committed to there being a certain range of legitimate examples, possibly more accurately identified and better understood by others. But if all of this is correct, reference is non-individualistic: had linguistic usage in my community been different in relevant ways, "carburetor" in my idiolect would have referred to something else, even if my internal physical properties had been just what they are.

What is the argument that even meaning is socially non-individualistic? One premise of the argument is that reference is socially non-individualistic. The other premise is that non-indexical words with different referents must have different meanings. Because of differences in our linguistic communities, I may use "carburetor" to refer to one sort of thing, while on Twin Earth my twin uses "carburetor" to refer to a different set of things. But then my twin and I do not use the word with the same meaning. Meaning is socially non-individualistic. (See pp. 122 and 128 for this argument.)

This article leaves it quite unclear what Burge means by "meaning." For Burge, the meaning of "carburetor" is *not* its *reference*, as some Millians would say. As we have seen, meaning does and reference doesn't capture a person's point of view. "[T]he meaning or concept should not be identified with the referent, since a meaning or concept is a way of speaking or thinking about the referent" (p. 122, n. 8). Nor is the meaning of "carburetor" the same thing as my *explication* of "carburetor," for my twin and I would explicate "carburetor" in the same way; yet the references, and therefore the meanings, of the words diverge. I take it that Burge would also deny that the meaning of "carburetor" in my idiolect is the explication that some expert in my community might provide (see p. 129, n. 14). For the meanings of my words capture my point of view, and (surely) the way I think of a carburetor is not captured by a mechanic's explication of the word.

Burge frequently speaks about meanings as being "individuated by" reference. He writes,

> Since the referents play a necessary role in individuating the person's concept or translational meaning, individuation of an individual's concepts or translational meanings may depend on the activity of others on whom the individual is dependent for acquisition of and access to the referents. (p. 128)

The characterization of meaning as being *individuated* by reference is troubling, for many reasons. First, in Fregean fashion, Burge acknowledges that some words can have meaning, but no reference (p. 122, n. 8), and there can be words with different meanings, but the same reference (p. 128, n. 12). We won't get a general account of what meanings are by adverting to reference. Second, if meanings of words have their very identities in virtue of the references of words, then it would seem to be impossible for meanings to be part of the individual's psychology or point of view, while references "are obviously not" (p. 118).

Burge says many things about meanings—meaning and reference are related in Fregean fashion; meanings are not references or explications; meanings are individuated by reference; meanings are non-individualistic; meanings capture

a person's point of view. Despite all of these intimations about meanings, it is difficult to get a grip on what they are. It is interesting to plug Schiffer's candidates for modes of presentation into Burge's picture. None of the candidates — not individual concepts, not conceptual roles of mental sentences, not words, etc. — fits the bill. If it is misguided to press for more information about Burge's meanings, I would like to know why that is so.

Joseph Owens' article, "Cognitive Access and Semantic Puzzles," creates a bridge between the papers about belief puzzles and those about externalism. Owens claims that by rejecting Cartesian, individualistic assumptions about the mind, we can solve a number of puzzles about belief.

Owens provides a picturesque characterization of the "Cartesian model of cognitive access": on this conception, "[belief] contents supposedly parade naked before the inner introspective eye . . ." (p. 159). A person can not only detect the contents of her thoughts, but also whether two thoughts have the same or different contents. As a consequence of these abilities, a person also has the ability to tell whether two thoughts have consistent contents. Anyone who accepts the Cartesian model will be puzzled by Kripke's Pierre (see Kripke [1]), who appears to believe that London is pretty and also that London is not pretty, and by the characters we've met above — Ralph the dog-lover, and Lois Lane.

Owens argues that there is no cause for puzzlement, because the Cartesian model is misguided. Pierre cannot tell, just by introspecting, that the content he accepts when he says "Londres est jolie" (while living in Paris) is the same as the content whose negation he accepts when he says "London is not pretty" (while visiting London). Why can't Pierre introspect that the two contents are the same? Because content is non-individualistic, as is shown by Putnam's and Burge's well-known thought experiments. ". . . [P]ropositional content is, in part, a function of contextual factors. Consequently, sameness and difference in propositional content is, in part, a function of these same external, contextual factors" (p. 164). Owens goes on to say, "The subject's ability to detect such sameness and difference is contingent upon his knowledge of these external factors, and this undermines introspective access to sameness and difference" (p. 165). In order to recognize that his thoughts have inconsistent contents, Pierre would have to conduct an investigation of aspects of his physical and socio-linguistic environment. He might begin by tracking down the people who taught him the words "London" and "Londres." Sooner or later, his research will reveal to him that his "London" thoughts and his "Londres" thoughts (so to speak) are about the same city. Because Pierre does not conduct such an investigation, in Kripke's story, it's not the least surprising that he has inconsistent thoughts.

Owens is convincing on the point that anti-individualism is incompatible with introspective self-knowledge. He is the winner of a debate with Robert Stalnaker, who says just the opposite in his contribution to the volume, "Narrow Content." Stalnaker imagines Bert sitting in the tub, thinking that it's full of water. As far as Bert's phenomenological state is concerned, he may as well be sitting in a tub of XYZ on twin earth, thinking about XYZ. Still, if Bert just uses his water-concept in both his thoughts about what's in the tub, and his thoughts about those thoughts, he will succeed in having a correct belief about the content of his thought. Stalnaker goes on to say that Bert even *knows* that his thoughts are

about water, because he can correctly distinguish his thought about what's in the tub from thoughts he would have had in relevant alternative worlds. The relevant worlds, Stalnaker says, are ones in which there is gasoline or mashed potatoes in the tub. It's beside the point that Bert couldn't tell a thought about water from a thought about XYZ. Owens agrees that, in spite of externalism, we can have correct beliefs and even knowledge about our thought contents. But there is still a *type* of self-knowledge that is elusive: knowledge whether two of one's thoughts have the same or different contents. It's just this kind of knowledge that Pierre needs, but unfortunately lacks, in Kripke's story.

Owens' article provides ingredients for quite a fundamental attack on Schiffer's paper. Though I don't know whether he would want to put his point in this way, I think Owens *implicitly* makes a strong case that Frege's Constraint ought to be rejected. Frege's Constraint presupposes at least the prima facie plausibility of the Cartesian model of cognitive access. It assumes that whenever thoughts are inconsistent, this is something that cries out for explanation. It's *not* simply to be expected, given the sorts of facts that make it the case that a person's thoughts have their contents. Modes of presentation are brought in as a kind of obstruction blocking our view of the objects of thought and explaining our inconsistencies. In contrast, Owens' view is that it's in the very nature of thought content that people will sometimes fail to recognize the inconsistencies in their thought contents and will thus have contradictory beliefs. Once we appreciate the non-individualistic metaphysical underpinnings of content, we should no longer be surprised by the likes of Pierre and Lois. No special cognitive intermediaries have to be added to our conception of the mind to explain why contradictory belief occurs. Thus, propositionalists have no need for modes of presentation, at least in their accounts of rationality.

If Burge is opaque about linguistic meaning, Owens is just as opaque about the nature of non-individualistic mental content. He distances himself from Salmon's Russellian view of propositional content, leaving himself open to an analog of the question I put to Burge: what are the elements of thought content, if they are not ordinary objects, and neither are they "in the head"? But let's set such worries aside.

I am intrigued by the suggestion that externalism, in and of itself, can be used to solve puzzles about belief. The critical question is this: in every case of inconsistent belief, can the believer (in principle) extricate himself from contradiction through some sort of empirical investigation that illuminates relevant similarities and differences among his belief contents? Things look good for Owens' account in the case of Pierre, Lois, and Ralph. If Floyd's inconsistency is something we must countenance (as Salmon and Schiffer insist), Owens' story looks less promising. Suppose that Floyd does believe, inconsistently, that Lois believes a certain proposition, and also that she doesn't believe that proposition. It does not look as if Floyd could come to realize the error of his ways by conducting any kind of an empirical investigation into matters that pertain to his belief contents.

We have now seen four ways of responding to Schiffer's mode of presentation problem. Schiffer's response was to abandon propositionalism. Salmon's was to acknowledge Floyd as someone with inconsistent beliefs, and to argue that Floyd *has* the requisite exculpatory modes of presentation. My suggestion was

that Floyd is no puzzle at all, because his beliefs are perfectly consistent. Finally, we have Owens' deflationary perspective: the occasional inconsistency of our beliefs is fully explained by the non-individualistic character of belief content, so—this is the part that's only implicit in Owens' article—propositionalists don't need modes of presentation after all. It seems to me that careful consideration should be paid to Owens' attempt to solve—or rather "dissolve"—belief puzzles simply by invoking externalism.

My tour of this volume has had to be brief. Aside from the articles I have discussed, I especially recommend Lepore and Loewer's "compare and contrast" article on Fregean and Davidsonian treatments of belief ascription; Fine's ingenious discussion of Quine on de re modality; and Donnellan's paper, which asserts a surprising resemblance between Kripke's puzzle about belief and the ship of Theseus paradox. Anyone concerned with propositional attitudes and their ascription will find much of interest in this collection.

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With this issue we note the departure of Paul Young from the Editorial Board of the *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*. We thank Paul for his years of service to the *Journal* and wish him the best in his future endeavors at the National Science Foundation.

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