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Croatian Journal of Philosophy
Vol. VI, No. 16, 2006

Responses to the Rijeka Papers

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In Part I I respond to the papers on semantics by Nenad Mišćević, Dunja Jutronic and Božidar Kante. In Part II I respond to the papers on realism by Jacob Busch and Boran Berčić.¹

I. Semantics

1. Concepts: a Response to Nenad Mišćević

In "Devitt's Shocking Idea and Analyticity without Apriority" (this issue), Nenad Mišćević takes issue with "a shocking idea about meaning" that I presented in a paper of that name [2001], drawing on central ideas in my book, *Coming to Our Senses* [1996]:

THE SHOCKING IDEA The meanings of some words, including names and natural kind words, are causal modes of referring that are partly external to the head.

I use this idea, as Mišćević points out, against what I couldn't resist calling "four dogmas of semantics": the direct-reference dogma, the Cartesian dogma, the narrow dogma, and the rich dogma.

THE SHOCKING IDEA is a consequence of two other doctrines:

EXTERNALISM Some words, including names and natural kind words, refer in virtue of causal relations that are partly external to the head (and hence these words are to be explained by a theory that is not a description theory).

MEANINGS AS MODES The meaning of a word is its property of referring to something in a certain way, its mode of reference.

¹ All the papers in this issue except Jacob Busch's and mine were delivered at a conference, "Knowledge, Existence and Action", at the University of Rijeka in May 2003. I am grateful to the Philosophy Department of that University for organizing the conference and I am grateful to the editors of the *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* for inviting me to respond to these papers. Most of all I am grateful to my friend Nenad Mišćević who has been the driving force in all this. Finally, I thank the authors of these papers for their interesting discussions of my work.

EXTERNALISM is supported by familiar arguments provided by Saul Kripke, Keith Donnellan, Hilary Putnam, and others. Among the arguments against description theories, I give most weight to arguments from ignorance and error: the beliefs that speakers have about things that they refer to are often too meager or too wrong to meet the demands of a description theory. I support the Fregean thesis MEANINGS AS MODES with an argument that Mišćević quotes. It can be summarized very briefly as follows:

1. Meanings are supposed to explain behavior;
2. The folk and social scientists ascribe modes of reference for that purpose;
3. These ascriptions are mostly successful;
4. So, probably, modes of reference are meanings.

Now it is important to realize that Mišćević's main disagreement is really with EXTERNALISM. Indeed, EXTERNALISM alone is sufficient to refute his ingenious "moderate Frutnamian proposal", for that proposal is committed to *descriptivism* about natural kind concepts. So, in considering this proposal, we can set aside my MEANINGS AS MODES, and hence THE SHOCKING IDEA, and focus on EXTERNALISM. This should be of great concern to Mišćević because, as he well realizes, the familiar arguments for EXTERNALISM are very powerful. It is disappointing, then, that he never really confronts these arguments. As a result, his discussion often seems to beg the question. Let us see how.

First, I want to emphasize that the disagreement is *not*, as Mišćević sometimes suggests it is, over whether *there are* natural kind concepts; for example, I am alleged to believe that "there is no ordinary CAT or DOG sense or concept". I take concepts to be parts of thoughts. Since there are obviously ordinary natural kind thoughts then *of course* there are ordinary natural kind concepts. I go along with the popular Representational Theory of the Mind according to which concepts are mental representations. I am inclined to go even further, adopting the controversial Language-of-Thought Hypothesis according to which concepts are mental *words*.

Why does Mišćević sometimes, even if not always, misrepresent the disagreement in this way? Because, in his weaker moments, he just can't help taking for granted the traditional view that a concept must be descriptive and I certainly do reject that view. I allow that some concepts like BACHELOR may be descriptive but hold that natural kind concepts like CAT are not. Insofar as he takes for granted that natural kind terms must be descriptive Mišćević is of course begging the question.

So the disagreement is really about the *nature* of a natural kind concept. It is a consequence of THE SHOCKING IDEA that this nature is a causal mode of referring that is partly external to the head. This idea is certainly controversial, but we need not embrace it to see the problem with Mišćević's descriptivist proposal. The problem is that if EXTERNALISM alone is right—and Kripke, Donnellan, Putnam and company have

made it seem so—then a natural kind concept is *not* descriptive. It does not have a nature constituted by a definition or a set of beliefs *associated with it by all those who possess the concept*. Most people who possess the concept are simply too ignorant or wrong to make the required associations. The concept does not have, in Mišćević's terminology, an "epistemic sense". (Perhaps there are some exceptions but this is generally the case.)²

Mišćević takes my anti-descriptivist view to be at odds with commonsense. He gives no reason for thinking this and I very much doubt that it is largely so and, insofar as it is so, that we should be bothered. On the one hand, if we consider what the folk say deploying the concept CONCEPT, my guess is: not very much. And of the little that they do say, I don't think we have any reason to suppose that it casts much light on the very tricky semantic matter of the nature of concepts. On the other hand, if we follow my advice in *Coming to Our Senses* ([1996], ch. 2) and consider the circumstances in which the folk are prepared to ascribe thoughts to their fellows using sentences of the form 'x believes/hopes/etc. that...k...', where 'k' is a natural kind term like 'beech', 'echidna' or 'atom', then our findings count heavily against descriptivism. Now, the folk are unlikely to think of what they are doing with these sentences as "ascribing the concept K" to people, for that thought would require deploying the concept CONCEPT. Still, that is what they are partly doing because they are ascribing thoughts about *ks* that involve the concept K. And the key point against descriptivism is that the folk are prepared to make these ascriptions to people who believe very little about *ks*—for example, only that beeches are deciduous trees, that echidnas are weird Australian animals, that atoms are small—and even to people who's central beliefs are false—for example, that beeches are threatened by some Dutch disease, that echidnas are marsupials, that atoms are the smallest particles. The moral is that people ascribe the concept K to people who do not associate anything with the concept that could be a plausible candidate for constituting its nature (its "epistemic sense"). So if Mišćević is looking to the folk for support for descriptivism, he is looking in vain. This is, of course, a version of the argument from ignorance and error.

EXTERNALISM has a very good explanation of how people can possess a concept even though ignorant or wrong about its reference: they can *borrow* its reference from others in communication situations without getting much in the way of accurate information about the reference.

Next, Mišćević finds anti-descriptivism "a drastic measure" having "high costs" because he sees it as in some sort of "tension" with the history and philosophy of science and with cognitive science. He points out that, over the years, there has been a great deal of development in

² In section 3, Mišćević seems to want to *define* the concepts he is interested in as things with epistemic senses. I would have to say, of course, that there are no (perhaps few) natural kind concepts of that sort. But there would still be concepts of another sort: there would still be parts of thoughts.

our thinking about whales, atoms, and the like. This “epistemic progress’ consists in changes in what competent and well-informed speakers take to be the guiding features an item has to have, in order to be considered a whale, or an atom.” Clearly there is a lot of truth in what Mišćević says here. But the issue is whether the development he alludes to amount to changes in the *concepts* WHALE and ATOM rather than simply changes in our theories, or *conceptions*, of whales and atoms. He assumes that the development does but he offers no argument. So he has not established that this development creates any “tension” with anti-descriptivism.

Finally, Mišćević thinks that there is an “important theoretical consideration” against anti-descriptivism arising from a consideration of scientific definitions. I am unclear what that consideration is supposed to be but let me just emphasize that I have no problem with scientific definitions. I take them to be theories about the natures of scientific kinds; for example, that water is H₂O. What I do have a problem with is the idea that such definitions must be “mirrored” by semantic definitions at the cognitive level, with the result that everyone with the concept WATER must associate the concept of H₂O with it. This descriptivist idea is of course precisely what externalists reject.

2. Reference Borrowing: a Response to Dunja Jutronić

A theory of reference for a term must include a theory of reference fixing, a theory of in virtue of what the term ultimately picks out its reference. If the term can be borrowed, the theory must also include a theory of borrowing (or deference). Influenced by Kripke and company, Kim Sterelny and I have offered a causal (sometimes descriptive-causal) theory of reference fixing and a causal theory of reference borrowing for proper names and natural kind terms (Devitt and Sterelny [1999]; see also my [1974], [1981]). Dunja Jutronić’s interesting collection of criticisms in “Is Reference Borrowing a Causal Process?” (this issue) have pushed me to develop this theory of reference borrowing a bit.³

Reference borrowing takes place when a term is used in a communication situation. Now it is obviously true that many objects present in such a situation cannot borrow reference; clearly a dog or a tree cannot. Talking about a name, we put the point like this: “hearers of the conversation, *if of suitable linguistic sophistication*, can gain the ability to use the name to designate the object” (p. 67; emphasis added). Even someone of suitable sophistication who *could* borrow a name’s reference may fail to do so: she might hear the conversation yet fail to attend or fail to understand what is going on. So what is required for understanding a communication situation sufficiently to borrow a reference? We don’t say because we don’t think enough is known to say (pp. 73–4; see also Devitt [1981], 28–9).

³ We are rather more tentative about reference borrowing for other terms than Jutronić’s discussion in section IV suggests.

However, we might have said a little more. Clearly reference borrowing is in some sense an intentional act. This is not to say that the borrower forms an intention deploying a concept of reference borrowing or deference: that would be far too intellectualized a picture of the process. Still the borrower must process the input supplied by the situation in whatever way is appropriate for gaining, or reinforcing, an ability to use the name to designate its referent. The borrower must intentionally set in motion this particular sort of mental processing even though largely unaware of its nature and perhaps not conscious of doing so. Reference borrowing is not just any old causal process in the communication situation: it is a special one involving that particular mental process. But it is a causal process nonetheless.⁴

There are various other things, mentioned approvingly by Jutronić, that we certainly would not have said. First, consider Thomas Blackburn’s idea that “antecedent or communal usage is relevant to the current user’s reference with a name, insofar as he somehow recognizes or acknowledges that relevance” ([1988], 184). This is quite contrary to our view (p. 69), and insufficiently motivated. If a person’s current use of a name is to designate its bearer that use must be caused by an ability with that name that is, *as a matter of fact*, grounded in the bearer whether via reference borrowing or directly by the person herself: *the efficacious mental state must have the right sort of causal history*. If it has the right history, that is sufficient. We do not have to require a borrower to recognize or acknowledge this history. And this is just as well because it is natural for borrowers to lose track of the history: the ignorance and error problem once again.

Second, according to Jutronić, Adele Mercier [1999] takes a person’s successful use of a borrowed term to require that her “intention to repeat (or to defer)” be successful. But there is no need for any such intention and so, *a fortiori*, no need for it to be successful. It is enough for a successful use of a borrowed term that that use is appropriately caused by an ability that is, *as a matter of fact*, causally related via reference borrowing to the referent. The speaker intentionally exploits an ability that is, *as a matter of fact*, borrowed but the speaker need not intentionally defer to the lender. Indeed, the speaker need not know who the lender was or even that she *has* borrowed the term. There is no need for her to have any semantic thoughts about the term at all. Use of language does not require any thoughts about language.⁵

I have always preferred the expression ‘reference borrowing’ to ‘deference’ to capture the way in which speaker *x*’s use of a term can depend for its reference on speaker *y*’s. My reason is implicit in the above

⁴ It is not clear to me whether the view that Jutronić attributes to Andrew Woodfield [2000] is at odds with this account. The view is that my borrowing from you “is underpinned by the desire to speak in accordance with the norms that determine objectively correct use. If I defer to you, it is because I trust you as an interpreter of them”.

⁵ This is a central theme of my book, *Ignorance of Language* [2006].

discussion. If x borrows the reference of a term from y then that is an intentional act at the time of receiving y 's communication. In contrast, if x defers to y 's use of a term then that is likely to be an intentional act at the time of x 's using the term herself to communicate. In my view, x 's dependence on y *must* involve an act of the former sort but *need not* involve one of the latter sort. A communication involving a borrowed term need not involve any intention that looks back to the occasion of borrowing.⁶

Finally, in her concluding remarks (section VI), Jutronić claims that borrowers need to have some true beliefs about the referent. We should all agree, of course that borrowers of a term must entertain some thoughts involving the term but I can see no reason why these thoughts have to be *beliefs* let alone *true* ones. The claim that the beliefs must be true faces an “ignorance and error” problem of the sort that has been so catastrophic for many description theories. Aside from that, the claim seems unmotivated.

3. Fiction: a Response to Božidar Kante

As part of a solution to the problem of empty names, I propose ([1981], ch. 6) that some utterances are implicitly, if not explicitly, accompanied by a story-telling operator, “S”, meaning, roughly, “let us pretend that”; and that some others, designed to talk about a fiction, are implicitly, if not explicitly, accompanied by a fiction operator, “F”, meaning roughly, “it is pretended that” or “in fiction” (filled out perhaps with a reference to a particular fiction like *Tom Jones*). The speaker's intentions determine whether or not an utterance is implicitly governed by an S-operator, an F-operator, or neither. Utterances preceded by an S-operator are not true or false because they are not really assertions. Utterances preceded by an F-operator are true or false (perhaps truth-valueless) according as things are in the fiction. Utterances preceded by neither operator are true or false in the usual way, according as things really are in the world.

⁶ Where did the idea first come from that a causal theory of reference borrowing must involve a backward-looking intention? Indeed, where did the talk of “deference” first come from? Kripke follows Strawson in talking of “borrowing the references” ([1980], 90). He does not talk of the speaker “deferring” at the time of usage, nor mention any backward-looking intention. Rather, he says, a person in borrowing a name “must, I think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference” (p. 96, emphasis added). Nor does Putnam talk of “deference” or backward-looking intentions in his introduction of the “division of linguistic labor” ([1973], 705). Later, however, he does talk in ways that might be taken to suggest such intentions: “my denotation may be, by general consent, the denotation assigned by persons distant from me in space and even in time, but linked to me by relations of cooperation”; he thinks he is thus “giving up my right to be the authority on the denotation of my own words” ([1975], 274). The first talk of “deferring” in this context seems to have been by Gareth Evans [1973] in the process of criticizing the causal theory and presenting his own. (Thanks to James Dow and Joshua Livingston for scholarly help.)

Božidar Kante's first concern in “Devitt on Empty Names” (this issue) is that my account “has a difficulty preserving the intuitive distinction between a narrative's *being fictional*, and its being *treated as or believed to be fictional*”. He entertains the idea that the author's intent determines whether something is fictional and rightly rejects the idea. Janet Cook did not intend her Pulitzer-Prize-winning story of heroin addiction to be taken as fiction but fiction it was. What made it so was that it was not in fact true. Since its sentences did not contain an S-operator—they were not presented as a fiction—they were truth-evaluable, and the valuation was a resounding “false”. So that is my account of one side of Kante's distinction. My account of the other side falls straight out of the book's discussion. A person treats some narrative as fictional if her remarks about it are, implicitly or explicitly, accompanied by an F-operator. We can fail to treat something as fiction that is fiction, as we all did Cook's story. And we can treat something as fiction that is not: we can wrongly take it to be preceded by an S-operator, as many did Dryden's slanderous poem about MacFlecknoe.

Kante mentions David Lewis' similar account and quite rightly points out that our accounts can be generalized to any document, whether presented as fiction or not. But this is no criticism of the accounts. Statements about Cook's story that are now preceded by an F-operator will be true or false according as things are in the story even though the story was not presented as a fiction.

In a rough first stab at explaining the truth conditions of an F-sentence containing a name I suggest that we might see its truth as depending on what the name “F-designates”, on something in the fiction out of which the use of the name arises. Although such a name F-designates, there will typically not be anything in the real world that it *designates* and so it will be empty or vacuous. However, names governed by an F-operator may not be empty: real entities like London and Napoleon often appear in fiction. Still, when a nonempty name is governed by an F-operator, it is what the name F-designates not what it designates that is relevant to truth conditions.

This generates another concern for Kante. He calls nonempty names in fiction—for example, ‘Napoleon’ in *War and Peace*—“connected names” because they are connected to actual objects. He raises the question, “Do the connected names refer to their ordinary or fictional referents?”, and insists that they refer to their ordinary referents. The implication seems to be that I disagree, but I don't. Thus, I claim that Henry Fielding's uses of ‘London’ in *Tom Jones* “designated the city” ([1981], 184). But, according to the rough first stab, those uses *also* F-designate something in the novel and the truth of an F-sentence containing ‘London’ depends on that referential relation not on designation. ‘London’ in that F-sentence does indeed designate London, just as it usually does, but that it does is irrelevant to the truth of the sentence.

So far as it goes (not far), this works well enough with statements that are simply about a fiction. But, as I point out (*ibid.*), it cannot be straightforwardly applied to statements like the following that are partly about a fiction but also partly about the real world:

Oscar is more indecisive than Hamlet.

The real Brutus was less noble than Shakespeare's.

No more can it be straightforwardly applied to Kante's statement about his delightful fantasy:

I envy Devitt because he's living the life of a jet-setting secret agent.

Having raised the problem of these sorts of sentences, I set it aside (*ibid.*).⁷

But let us consider now what Kante has to say on the matter. He thinks that the problem with his sentence is not with his envying Devitt but with his *reason* for envy. This is surely not so. Set the fantasy aside for a moment and suppose that Kante considers me as I really am. He decides he does not envy me at all. Indeed he rather pities me having to live under the Bush Administration. So he would be speaking truly if he expressed this attitude by saying "I do not envy Devitt". But he would also be speaking truly if he responded to his fantasy by saying simply, without bothering to give any reason, "I envy Devitt". Yet he has not contradicted himself. So there *is* a problem with his envying Devitt as a result of the fantasy. We have to distinguish somehow between the roles of 'Devitt' in these two simple sentences *as they stand*. Giving reasons for attitudes is not, after all, linguistically obligatory and doing so here distracts from the semantic problems of the simple sentences. The solution to this problem clearly requires that we capture somehow the intuition that the first sentence is made true by the way I really am, the second, by the way I am fantasized to be.

II. Realism

4. Global Response-Dependency: a Response to Jacob Busch

Jacob Busch's paper, "Does the Issue of Response-Dependence have any Consequences for Realism?" (this issue), is concerned with my paper, "Worldmaking Made Hard: Rejecting Global Response Dependency", which, happily, is being published in English for the first time in this issue. My general aim in that paper, drawing on earlier work, is to defend

Realism: Tokens of most common-sense, and scientific, physical types objectively exist independently of the mental

and to reject

Worldmaking: The only independent reality is beyond the reach of our knowledge and language. A known world is partly constructed by our imposition of concepts.

⁷ I struggled with it at some length in my dissertation ([1972], 213–23).

The novel part of the paper, however, argues that, contrary to what Philip Pettit thinks, his global response-dependency doctrine—all our concepts are response-dependent—leads to the horrors of Worldmaking.

I claim that Pettit's doctrine leads to Worldmaking by the following argument:

(1) Global Response-Dependency of Concepts: All concepts, not just those of secondary properties, are response-dependent.

So, (2) Global Response-Dependency of Properties: All properties are response-dependent: they are dispositions to produce certain sorts of responses in normal humans in normal conditions.

So, (3) Worldmaking.

Busch rejects both steps in this argument. "I do not think that the step from (1) to (2) is valid".⁸ About the step from (2) to (3), he claims that "global response-dependence...will not give us worldmaking" (sec. 1). Indeed, he thinks that this part of my paper is "confused" (sec. 4).

Let me start by clearing up a misunderstanding. Busch quotes a part of my argument for the inference from (2) to (3) which ends with the sentence: "So not only have we lost the independent world that influences our experiences, we have lost the independent influence" (sec. II.4: point (iii)). He responds: "It is not at all clear what a loss of the independence dimension comes to here" (sec. 2). He quite rightly points out that global response-dependency does not lose us the independence of the noumenal world of Fig-Leaf Realism ("Something objectively exists independently of the mental"). But, as I point out, that is not a realism that is "worth fighting for" (sec. II.4: point (i)). What I am fighting for is Realism—the doctrine defined above—committed to the *known* world of stones, trees, cats, electrons, muons, curved space-time, and the like (sec. I.1). It is the independence of *that* world that we have lost with global response-dependence. The very next sentence after the passage Busch quotes makes this explicit: "The known world is all the result of our imposition."

My discussion of the inference from (1) to (2) in section II.5, "From Response-Dependent Concepts to Response-Dependent Properties", might have been better organized. I make three points but only the last, (c), is really concerned with the inference. In point (a), citing the history of response-dependency doctrines in general and Mark Johnston's doctrine in particular, I claim that we should *expect* (1) to be accompanied by (2).⁹ But, of course, an expectation is not an inference. So let us set that aside. In point (b), I argue that, given what Pettit says about the

⁸ I emphasize that although I think that this inference is valid, the main point of my paper is to reject, on Moorean and naturalistic grounds, any such argument from a semantic premise to a metaphysical conclusion. We should "put metaphysics first", arguing from metaphysical premises to semantic conclusions (sec. II.2). I think Busch agrees.

⁹ Cf. Busch's claim: "Devitt must think that response-dependence arises for concepts rather than properties" (note 5). I think that response-dependency can arise for either and that if it arises for a concept it arises for the corresponding property.

property of redness, he cannot be neutral, as he claims to be, about the nature of that property: he is committed to it being response-dependent just as he thinks the *concept* REDNESS is. When this view of redness is generalized to all properties it amounts to Worldmaking. So my point is concerned with the consequences of *what Pettit says about properties* not with an inference from *a view of concepts* to a view of properties. Busch has a great deal critical to say about point (b), to which I will turn in a moment. But it is important to note that he never addresses the argument in point (c) which really is concerned with the inference from (1) to (2). The argument is that a response-dependent view of any concept *K-NESS*, together with a “principle of reference”,

(P) Necessarily(x)(*K-NESS* applies to x iff x is *K*),

yields a response-dependent view of the property of being *K*. Busch has nothing to say that reflects on this crucial claim against Pettit.

I turn now to my point (b) and Busch’s criticisms, criticisms that are the basis for his view that response-dependency does not lead to Worldmaking. The key passage from Pettit, also quoted by Busch (sec. 3), is:

if to be red is to be such as to look red in suitable circumstances we may take the redness of a thing to be the higher-level state of having a lower-level state that produces the required effect on observers; we may take it as the lower-level state operative in the thing; or we may take it as the disjunction of the lower-level states that do the job required. ([1991], 614n)

So Pettit thinks we can take redness to be either a “role-property” or a “realizer-property” ([1998b], 116).¹⁰ In response, I argue that “it seems to follow from the claim that to be red is to be such as to look red that the nature of redness is to play a certain role, the role of looking red. So redness has to be a response-dependent role-property.” I shall start by elaborating on this argument a bit and will then consider Busch’s criticisms.

My argument rests on what I would like to think are points made familiar by the rise of functionalism in the philosophy of mind. Suppose that everything that is *F* in the actual world *A* has a certain causal property *C*, a “causal power”; for example, everything that is fragile would break if struck sharply; everything that is red would look red to normal humans in normal circumstances. Suppose that the explanation of their having *C* in *A* is that they are *P*, where being *P* is some intrinsic physical property, perhaps a disjunctive one. Here are two very distinct views we might have about being *F*:

1. To be *F* is to have *C*

or, expressing this in property talk,

The property of being *F* is the property of having *C*;

¹⁰ Busch thinks that “a standard formulation of response-dependence” leaves open the possibility that “the concept red...applies to the phenomenal experience of the subject in question” (sec. 4). I don’t think this is so at all. Thus, Pettit is quite clearly taking redness to be a property “of a thing”, a piece of the external world, whilst claiming to remain neutral about whether it is a higher- or lower-level property of a thing.

2. To be *F* is to be *P*

or, expressing this in property talk,

The property of being *F* is the property of being *P*.

Clearly view 1 identifies being *F* with a role-property, and view 2, with a realizer-property. Many (including me) think that view 1 is right for fragility and redness, but many (including me) think that view 2 is right for many properties; for example, being gold is an intrinsic physical property, the property of having atomic number 79, whatever the causal powers of gold.

Now return to what Pettit says. The sentence, “to be red is to be such as to look red in suitable circumstances” seems like a clear statement of view 1 about redness. And since the causal role that is thereby identified with redness involves human responses, this is a clear statement of a response-dependent view of redness. (And if my argument in point (c) is right, his response-dependent view of the concept REDNESS *commits* him to this response-dependent view of the property redness anyway, whatever he says about redness.) Now redness cannot be *both* this view 1 response-dependent property *and* the view 2 lower-level property that, as a matter of fact, causes objects to look red in suitable circumstances. So, given what Pettit says, redness is *not* that lower-level property. He cannot remain neutral about whether redness is a role-property or a realizer property: it is a role-property.

In response to my argument, Busch makes much of the *contingencies* concerning being red. Let us consider such contingencies in general. Clearly, in another possible world *W*, the causal story might be very different from in *A*. Suppose that the explanation of why things have *C* in *W* is not that they are *P* but rather that they are *Q*, where being *Q* is some other intrinsic physical property. For example, the explanation of why things would break when struck sharply in *W* is very different from the explanation of why they do so in *A*; similarly, the explanation of why things would look red to normal humans in normal circumstances. To simplify, suppose further that in *W* things that are *Q* are not *P* and vice versa. Now what are the consequences of these contingencies, the consequences of *W* being thus different from *A*?

(i) Clearly the differences in *W* have an effect on what counts as an *F* thing according to our two views. According to view 1, *Q* things in *W* are *F* because they have causal power *C* but *P* things are no longer *F* because they do not. According to 2, in contrast, *Q* things in *W* are not *F* because they are not *P* whereas, of course, *P* things are *F* because they are still *P*.

(ii) But do the contingencies have any consequences for the nature of being *F*? *None at all*. If view 1 is right and being *F* is the role-property of having *C*, then it is still that property in *W* just as it is on *A*; it is *realized* by a different property in *W* but it is still the same property. If view 2 is right and being *F* is the realizer-property of being *P* then it is that property in *W* as it is on *A*. These are the consequences of the two views’ identity claims about being *F*.

(iii) And these consequences are not changed by another contingency. Suppose that view 2 is right for a certain *F*; for example, for being the metal gold. So humans in *A* named the property of being *P* “*F*”. But if things had the causal powers they have in *W* they would have named a different property “*F*”, the property of being *Q*. *But this would not have made Q things F. P things would still have been F, they just would not have been called “F”.* The property of being *F* would still have been the property of being *P*. Similarly, had the heavens been different a planet other than Hesperus might have risen in the morning and been called “Phosphorus” but Hesperus would still have been Phosphorus; it just would not have been called “Phosphorus” (Kripke [1980]). The moral is that, despite what the worldmakers say, *you can’t make things F by calling them “F”.* Finally, note that if view 1 were right, the move to *W* would not have affected what was named: there would still have been things having *C* in *W*, albeit *Q* things not *P* things, and humans would still have named the property of having *C* “*F*”. *W* would differ from *A* not in what was called “*F*” but in what realized what was called “*F*”.

Contrast this with what Busch has to say. He favors a “dispositional account” of redness: it is a disposition to “elicit response R in some standard subject”. This seems to be view 1, treating redness as a response-dependent role-property. He continues:

If we go by a dispositional account...whatever properties happen to be red (whatever we happen to name ‘red’), is contingent on how we are in our cognitive set-up. Had we been different these properties would not have qualified as being red (maybe some others would). (sec. 4)

This is not so. Had we been different, other properties might indeed have elicited response R. But, on his dispositional account these other properties would have been different *realizers* of redness not different *properties* of redness. Analogously, *realizers* of fragility, and *properties* of fragility. And if we give up the dispositional account in favor of view 2, treating redness as a realizer-property, then had we been different we might have *named* other things “red” but they would not have *been* red: redness would still have been a certain physical property, the one that happens in the actual world to cause things to look red. Analogously, what we might have *named* “gold”, and what might have *been* gold.

These are difficult matters but it seems to me that Busch is in a muddle about role-properties and realizer-properties. Consider the following, for example:

So it looks as if red can be realized by different properties. But this gives us the conclusion that we should not think that our concept of red necessarily applies to the same properties across the possible worlds. (sec. 4)

No it doesn’t give us that conclusion! A premise about the *realization* of the property—that it can be realized by different properties in different worlds—does not yield a conclusion about the *nature* of the property—that it *is* a different property in different worlds. Our concept of red applies to the property of being red in all possible worlds.

In sum, I stand by my argument that Pettit’s global response-dependency of concepts leads to the horrors of Worldmaking.

5. Moral Realism: a Response to Boran Berčić

The Realism I have been urging in section 4 is “realism about the external world”. There are other realism doctrines one might consider, many of which we should not believe; for example, realisms about gods, ghosts, or fairies. However, in “Moral Realism: A Naturalistic Perspective” [2002] I do argue in favor of realism about morality.

My argument starts by urging that, contrary to a common opinion, moral realism is a metaphysical doctrine about the nature of morality not a semantic doctrine about the meaning of moral language. In this respect, it is like many other realism issues (1997). Why believe moral realism? Briefly, it is *prima facie* plausible and its alternatives are not. But what about the familiar arguments against moral realism? The paper looks critically at the argument from “queerness”, the argument from relativity, the argument from explanation, and epistemological arguments. From my perspective, however, a major worry remains: How can moral realism be fitted into a naturalistic world view? I conclude with some brief and inadequate remarks on fulfilling this naturalistic project.

Boran Berčić’s lively paper “Devitt on Moral Realism” has a series of criticisms which I will respond to in turn.

1. I argue that moral facts are explanatory (p. 7). In response, Berčić rightly points out that one could claim that there is a “descriptive” component to moral terms like ‘cruel’ as well as an “evaluative” one and then claim that the explanatory power of moral claims comes from their descriptive component. But, first, we should wonder whether it is plausible that *all* of the explanatory power of claims about cruelty come from the alleged descriptive component. Aside from that, one cannot take this route with terms that are *entirely* evaluative; consider, for example, this explanation: The Holocaust occurred because Hitler was evil. According to the non-cognitivist ‘evil’ has no “descriptive” component: in using it we simply, say, express an emotion.

2. Berčić objects to the naturalist view that being good supervenes on some nonmoral property of being *N* on the ground that “we should in principle be able to find out whether *x* is good or not independently of the way we find out whether *x* is *N* or not” and “this is impossible”. It seems perfectly possible to me. In the absence of any knowledge of what goodness supervenes on, we have lots of ways of telling whether something is good: in fact we are telling this all the time in our moral life. And there would surely be no problem detecting *N*, whatever *N* may be, without any thought of morality. We pick up the signs of being good and being *N* quite independently, leaving open whether the one supervenes on the other. A similar point holds for the thesis that a mental state supervenes on some neurophysiological state.

3. One popular argument against moral realism is the argument from relativity, arising from the differences between people over moral matters. Accounting for this certainly is a problem for the realist but, I emphasize, there is an analogous problem for the anti-realist in accounting for the enormous *similarities* between people over moral matters (pp. 9–10). In any case, I suggest several realist defenses to the relativity argument. One of these, on which I would certainly not want to put much weight, is that there might be differences between cultures in the socio-economic facts on which moral facts supervene, leading to differences in moral facts. My example is of the differences between a hunter-gatherer society and a capitalist one (p. 10). Berčić wrongly takes this to involve a relativism that is incompatible with realism. The socio-economic differences, properly understood, would yield moral beliefs in one culture that, although different from, are not inconsistent with, those in another. So there is no objectionable relativism here.

4. Following in the footsteps of Nicholas Sturgeon's response to Gilbert Harman, I point out how we can test moral claims. Thus the claim that we live in a morally decent neighborhood is tested by the behavior of its inhabitants. Berčić rightly points out that in making this test we are looking for the presence of whatever criteria we think there are of decent neighborhoods. But that does not undermine the claim that we are testing for such a neighborhood. Similarly, for example, if we are testing whether someone is jealous or whether something is water.

5. In my brief comments on the naturalistic project, I mention Peter Railton's work as an example of the way we might hope to fulfill this project, Berčić comments as follows:

I doubt it is realist in its nature. For, according to this approach, morality is *nothing but* collective rationality, and every nothing-but-theory is essentially eliminativistic....Behaviorists argued that mental states are nothing but dispositions for behavior. Although they were realists about dispositions for behavior, they were certainly not realists about mental states. Irreducibility about *x* seems to be essential ingredient of realism about *x*.

This is way off base. A person who explains *x* as nothing but *y*, where *y* clearly exists, is thereby committed to the existence of *x* and hence not an eliminativist about *x*. Behaviorists are indeed eliminativists about, say, beliefs because they think there are none. In contrast, Railton is committed to moral properties and facts because he thinks that they can be explained naturalistically in non-moral terms. Perhaps Railton would not come out a "moral realist" according to some definitions of that expression—given the chaos of these definitions one cannot rule this out—but he is a paradigm moral realist according to my definition.¹¹

6. I claim that observations of moral facts are theory-laden like observations of all facts (p. 12). Berčić thinks that such theory laden-

¹¹ A similar confusion about reduction and elimination seems to underlie Berčić's claim that an "antirealist might accept MR3", where MR3 is my definition of moral realism.

ness is compatible with realism about the posits of a theory only if the observations used to test the theory are laden with a *different* theory. Otherwise, he thinks, we end up in a "Hanson-Kuhn" view, the sort of worldmaking that I have just found horrifying (sec. 4). My view ([1997], 155–79) is that beliefs based on observation are partly the result of the independent nature of what is observed and partly of the background theories and assumptions (I am not drunk, the light is normal, etc) without which the experiences of that independent nature would not have led to the belief. It does not matter that one of these background theories may be the very one that the belief is used to test. What matters is the involvement of the independent world in the belief-forming process. That is what stops this sort of theory ladenness from leading to worldmaking, in morality as in science.

7. Berčić gives a somewhat misleading impression of my discussion of moral motivation. First, I emphasize that although awareness of a moral fact necessarily *gives a reason for* action, it does not necessarily *motivate* action. Having that motivation is not constitutive of the awareness. Many in the philosophical tradition have, of course, claimed otherwise. Second, I point out that, despite this constitutive independence, there are good scientific reasons for the realist to expect that "genetically normal well-brought up people tend to respond in the appropriate way to moral facts" (p. 8). In other words, despite the independence, the naturalistic realist expects the awareness and the motivation to mostly go together. So, contrary to what Berčić claims, the realist can explain the "universality" of moral motivation.

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Croatian Journal of Philosophy
Vol. VI, No. 16, 2006

Discussion

Appropriating A Priori

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The novel approach of Mišćević [2005] in disentangling the issues of *a priori* from analyticity certainly marks a significant step in the debate about sources of knowledge and powers of the human intellect. I find his arguments that show how conceptual analysis fails to yield strong results for a defender of *a priori* rather persuasive. Nevertheless, several important questions about his project remain to be answered, some of them rather fundamental. In this polemical reply I come forward with three comments/objections that any account purporting to shed a light on the complicated nature of conceptual analysis has to respond to. The first one has to do with the very premises of the debate. It deals with the notion of conceptual analysis and embraces some consequences of the current treatment of this supposed strategy on concept constitution. The second point focuses on concept individuation and transcendental criteria for what it is to have a concept. Finally, in my third comment I will have something to say on what is left for *a priorism* and will introduce some intriguing examples involving propositions with empirical concepts that are clearly known *a priori* in a strong sense.

1. Let us look at some fundamental issues first. One thing has to be stated clearly at the very beginning: there is a great difference between myself and Mišćević on what is the constitution of concepts. Nevertheless, all my comments will touch upon topics that any theory of conceptual analysis has to answer. My sympathies lie with the view that stays in clear opposition to that of Mišćević. I tend to side with the