

1. The messy shopper

I once followed a trail of sugar on a supermarket floor, pushing my cart down the aisle on one side of a tall counter and back the aisle on the other, seeking the shopper with a torn sack to tell him he was making a mess. With each trip around the counter, the trail became thicker. But I seemed unable to catch up. Finally it dawned on me. I was the shopper I was trying to catch. (p. 366)

When “it dawned on him”, what about his beliefs changed? Something must have changed, because he stopped following the trail.

This psychological question is important to us because psychology and semantics seem to be interrelated thus (the “doctrine of propositions”, p. 367):

- i) our beliefs explain our behavior
- ii) the things we believe are propositions
- iii) “ S believes that p ” is true if and only if S believes the proposition expressed by ‘ p ’.

2. Kaplan: singular propositions

Perhaps the change is that the shopper comes to believe the content of ‘I am making a mess’, relative to the context in which he utters it. This is a singular proposition according to Kaplan. Problem: the shopper might have already believed this singular proposition (mirror; amnesia).

3. Frege: thoughts

Perhaps the change is that the shopper comes to believe a Fregean thought, of the form “the α is making a mess”, for some α corresponding to how he thinks of himself. Problems: the shopper needs to think “I am α ”; and the shopper might be mistaken about himself.

4. Kaplan again: characters

Perhaps the change is that the shopper comes to believe the character of 'I am making a mess'. Perry in effect considers this, and objects:

Once we have adopted these new-fangled propositions, which are only true... for persons, we have to admit also that we believe them as true for persons..., and not absolutely. (p. 372)

This misconstrues the proposal. Still, there is a problem: it rejects clause iii) of the doctrine of propositions. When I say 'You believe that I am sitting', this is *not* true if and only if you believe the character of 'I am sitting'.

5. Perry: beliefs versus belief states

Perry: the change is not a change in what the shopper believes. It's a change in his *belief state*. A belief state is not given by the proposition one believes. It's given by *how* one believes that proposition.

Is "how" one believes a proposition given by a character? If so, what's the real difference between this and the previous proposal?