

Objectivity, Intersubjectivity and Realism

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Brandom on objectivity

"Assertibilist semantic theories seek to understand propositional content by associating with sentences as their semantic interpretants assertibility conditions: circumstances under which the sentence in question is appropriately assertible." (2000, 196)

On the face of it, assertional speech acts are subject to two central sorts of normative appraisal. One asks whether the speech act was appropriate in light of the attitudes of the practitioners: [...] The other sort of appraisal swings free of the attitudes of the practitioners and looks instead to the subject matter about which claims are made for the applicable norms. Here the central question is: Is the claim correct in the sense that things really are as it says they are? (197)

I-Thou intersubjectivity

"According to the I-thou construal of intersubjectivity, each perspective is at most *locally* privileged in that it incorporates a structural distinction between objectively correct applications of concepts and applications that are merely subjectively taken to be correct. But none of these perspectives is privileged in advance over any other. [...] What is shared by all discursive perspectives is *that* there is a difference between what is objectively correct in the way of concept application and what is merely taken to be so, not *what* it is—the structure, not the content." (1994, 600)

Incompatibility-(in)equivalence

“[T]wo assertible contents are *incompatible* in case *commitment* to one precludes *entitlement* to the other”
(2000, 194)

"[Two claims, (1) and (2)] would be incompatibility-equivalent (in the sense that they incompatibility-entail each other) just in case everything incompatible with (1) were incompatible with (2), and vice versa." (2000, 198-9)

(1) Grass is green.

(2) It is assertible to me that grass is green

(3) Rational creatures never evolved (see 2000, 199).

Rorty's concerns - and Price's relief

Rorty: "My fear is that countenancing these dangerous idioms will be taken as a concession by the bad guys: the people who still use perceptual experience as a model for "hard facts," and who think that photon-talk is somehow harder than talk about comparative aesthetic worth [...] These bad guys are the people I think of as "authoritarians." These guys do not agree with Brandom and myself that increased freedom and richness of the Conversation is the aim of inquiry, but instead think that there is the further aim of getting Reality right." (2000, 187)

Price: "Without truth, the wheels of argument do not engage; disagreements slide past one another. This is true of disagreements about any matter whatsoever. In particular, it is true of disagreements about warranted assertibility." (2003)

Problems with Brandom

(4) The earth is no older than 6,000 years.

(5) The Holy Writ proclaims that the earth is no older than 6,000 years.

- Not incompatible from the fundamentalist perspective!

(6) Murder is wrong.

(7) All agents under conditions of full rationality would desire us not to murder (under our conditions).

- Not incompatible from the Princeton perspective!

- Even with I-Thou intersubjectivity at play, it is not the case that all perspectives incorporate objectivity as captured by incompatibility

- Brandom's account cannot cover all of linguistic communities, unlike he claims

- The nature of objectivity downplayed (as if trivially there for all speakers)

Peirce and different notions of objectivity

Peirce: "The Fixation of Belief"

- 1) Tenacity, truth what I think
- 2) Authority, truth what the authority ordains
- 3) A priori, truth as consensus
- 4) Science, convergence truth

Objectivity:

- 1) non-subjectivity
- 2) intersubjectivity (I-Thou)
- 3) consensus (I-We)
- 4) convergence (realism)