

STUDIES AND ARTICLES

STUDIJE I ČLANCI



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## THE PROBLEM OF COGNITIVE SIGNIFICANCE – A SOLUTION AND A CRITIQUE

### ABSTRACT

In this paper I will deal with the solution to the problem of cognitive significance offered by the so-called new theorists of reference, as well as with the critique of that solution given by Howard Wettstein. I will claim that the answer to this critique provided by John Perry is not sufficiently convincing. First, I will clarify some relevant concepts in order to present the problem of cognitive significance in a clear manner. Then I will expose the solution to the problem offered by Perry and David Kaplan. After that, I will present Wettstein's critique of that solution. Subsequently, I will also analyze Perry's attempt to defend against this critique. Finally, I will discuss the extent to which Perry's attempt is successful. It will be shown that it is significantly not so.

### KEYWORDS

cognitive significance,  
proposition, referent,  
thought, sense,  
character, semantics,  
pragmatics

### The problem of cognitive significance

The concept of *cognitive significance* should explain the existence of the various *cognitive states* in which we find ourselves in, as well as the difference between them. When we speak of cognitive states, we will most commonly speak of *beliefs*. They are manifested in the subject's inclination to accept certain sentences as true in certain contexts. The content of cognitive states – the so-called *cognitive content* – we shall call a *proposition*. Hence John's belief that Socrates is mortal manifests itself in John's inclination to accept sentence "Socrates is mortal" as true, and that sentence expresses the proposition that Socrates is mortal.

A few remarks should be given here. First of all, for the time being, a proposition should be understood just as the content of our cognitive states – what we believe is the case for example, *i.e.* what we accept as true. We will soon talk more about what exactly is a proposition, and what is its relation with cognitive significance. Regarding the relation between propositions and cognitive significance, it should also be mentioned that we are not supposing here that propositions must be the *bearers* of cognitive significance. We will see that this presupposition is accepted by some, but not by all the philosophers who deal with the problem of cognitive significance. Finally, in this paper we will mostly focus on the cognitive significance of sentences which include *indexicals*, like personal and demonstrative pronouns, *etc.*

After these introductory remarks we can move on to the problem of cognitive significance itself. It is best to begin this by showing the three curious types of cases in which the concept of cognitive significance should have a major explanatory role. We get these types of cases once we describe what Wettstein calls *Frege's riddles*, or *Frege's data*, but without accepting an assumption which Gottlob Frege accepts, according to which propositions must be the bearers of cognitive significance (Wettstein 1986: 186, 188).

The cases which belong to the first type are those in which a subject sincerely and reflectively accepts as true – or is inclined to accept as true – a sentence which includes a certain indexical which, in that given context, has no referent. Let us take Wettstein's example. A soldier in an enemy's prison camp has a hallucination of a fellow soldier who has come to save him and he says – thinking that he is talking to that soldier – “You are wonderful”. In this context the term “you” has no referent, because the soldier to whom this term should refer is actually just a figment of imagination. However, we are inclined to say that the imprisoned soldier is indeed in a certain cognitive state in which he would find himself even if this fellow soldier would in fact exist. His utterance is a consequence of that very cognitive state. Because of this, it seems that we are required to find some semantic component of this sentence which would be present in the given context, and which would be the bearer of cognitive significance (Cf. Wettstein 1986: 187, 191).

The second type of cases includes those circumstances in which a subject is inclined to accept as true just one out of the two given sentences. These sentences differ from each other only insofar as they include different indexicals. Those indexicals, however, have the same referent in the given context. Hence these sentences express the same proposition. Wettstein provides the following example. Let us imagine that a certain person finds herself in a room full of mirrors which are so arranged that a person has an illusion that she sees some other person when in fact she sees herself. Next, Wettstein humourously adds that this person notices that the person she sees in such a way is about to be mugged by a prominent philosopher of language. In this case, the person in question will be inclined to accept as true the sentence “She is about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean”, but not the sentence “I am about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean”, thinking that there are two different persons involved in this situation. In other words, the inclinations to accept these two sentences as true are expressions of different cognitive states, so these sentences must have different cognitive significance (Wettstein 1986: 187–8).<sup>1</sup>

In the end, there is the third type of cases. It is quite similar to the previous one, but now the key fact is not that a subject can be inclined to accept as true just one out of the two given sentences, but that the beliefs that are manifested in these inclinations typically lead to different actions. Let us again take the example from the previous paragraph. The beliefs expressed by the acceptance of sentences “She is about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean” and “I am about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean” as true, typically lead to quite different sorts of behaviour. For example, in the second case we will be much more prone to act as swiftly as possible, as a result of the perceived danger than in the first case – that is unless we are exceptionally altruistic. Given that invoking certain cognitive states is a basic

1 Similar example can be found in Kaplan 1989: 537.

explanatory strategy in elucidating human action, cognitive states in which a subject finds herself when accepting these sentences as true can not be the same (Wettstein 1986: 188).

With this in mind, for our current purposes the problem of cognitive significance could be formulated as the following question – what are the bearers of cognitive significance? Besides that the previously discussed types of cases provide us with a motivation for this question, they also show us that a certain, at least *prima facie* solid candidate for an answer to that question, is unacceptable. That candidate is a proposition, or to be more precise, a proposition understood in a specific way. According to this way of understanding propositions – which is in essence the *Russell-Kaplanian view of propositions* – the constituents of the proposition expressed by a certain sentence are the *referents* of the referring terms of that sentence. These referents are understood to be the *objects* to which we attribute something by means of accepting the given sentence as true, as well as the *properties* which are attributed to these objects in the same manner. For example, if we look at a traditional philosophical sentence such as “Socrates is a human being”, the proposition expressed by this sentence would have the actual human being Socrates and the property of being human as its constituents. If, however, a sentence contains certain indexical – as is the case with the sentence “I am a human being” – the constituents of proposition expressed by that sentence will depend on the context in which that sentence is uttered. If I would be the one to utter it, than I – a human being by the name of Filip Čukljević – would be among its constituents (Wettstein 1986: 186–7).<sup>2</sup>

Why is a proposition understood in such manner not a good candidate for the bearer of cognitive significance? Firstly, it does not pass the test set for it by the initial type of cases. Namely, given that in the sort of cases we are presented by a sentence which includes certain indexical with no referent, that sentence will not express a *complete* proposition. If, however, a proposition is to be the bearer of cognitive significance, a subject could not express any *determinate* cognitive state by accepting the given sentence as true, since it expresses no complete proposition. That is, the sentence should have no cognitive significance. But, since a subject *does* express certain determinate cognitive state by accepting this sentence as true, then it must have cognitive significance. In short – there is no (complete) proposition, but there is cognitive significance, and that is a big problem (Cf. Wettstein 1986: 187).

The remaining types of cases also present a problem for someone who would accept the assumption that a Russell-Kaplanian proposition is the bearer of cognitive significance. The pairs of sentences from these two sorts of cases differ from each other only insofar as the indexicals they contain are not the same – given that these indexicals have the same referent – *ergo*, (Russell-Kaplanian) propositions expressed by these sentences will be identical. However, we have seen that these sentences should have distinct cognitive significance, in order to explain the possibility of accepting one of them as true but not the other – *i.e.* in order to explain typically different action that stems from accepting one of these two sentences as true. If a proposition is the bearer of cognitive significance, however, these sentences must have the same cognitive significance. The problem here, essentially, is

<sup>2</sup> A bit more information regarding this conception of propositions can be found in Kaplan 1989: 500–7, 523–4.

the identity of expressed propositions accompanied by the difference in their cognitive significance (Cf. Wettstein 1986: 187–8).

The fact that a Russell-Kaplanian proposition can not be the bearer of cognitive significance does not necessarily mean that a proposition *as such* can not be the bearer of cognitive significance. Frege for sure would not accept such a judgement. He would rather suggest that this failure of a Russell-Kaplanian proposition provides us with a reason to discard such view of the nature of propositions. Unlike those who think that a proposition is constituted by the referents of the referring terms which are the parts of the sentence that express the given proposition, Frege claims that the real constituents of a proposition are not the referents of the appropriate referring terms, but the *senses* of these terms. We will not pursue Frege's conception of a sense in more detail here. There will be more discussion about it in the next section. Currently, it suffices to say that according to Frege the true bearer of cognitive significance is a *thought* – the term he uses for the proposition – and it is in fact the sense of a sentence (Cf. Wettstein 1986: 188).

We will not specifically discuss whether a proposition thus conceived is the true bearer of cognitive significance. Here we are not primarily interested in Frege and his views on the matter, but in the new theorists of reference, such as Kaplan and Perry. These theorists base their theory to a significant extent on the explicit rejection of Frege's understanding of propositions and the acceptance of the aforementioned Russell-Kaplanian theory of propositions (Wettstein 1986: 186–7). However, we have seen that a Russell-Kaplanian proposition itself can not be the bearer of cognitive significance. A Fregean proposition at least initially seems like a better candidate, but that path is not open for the new theorists of reference. That being said, if they are of an opinion that the problem of cognitive significance presents a genuine problem of philosophical semantics, these theorists must find some other candidate for the bearer of cognitive significance.<sup>3</sup>

### Kaplan's and Perry's solution to the problem of cognitive significance

Kaplan and Perry claim that the true bearer of cognitive significance is what they call a *character*. Similarly to Frege's sense, the character of a term is a certain *mode of presentation* of the referent of that term (Kaplan 1989: 530; Wettstein 1986: 190; Wettstein 1988: 23–4).<sup>4</sup> A character of an indexical is a certain mode of presentation

3 Some of these theorists, like Kaplan and Perry, openly regard this problem as a genuine problem of philosophical semantics. Cf. Kaplan 1989: 529–40, Perry 1988: 3–5. On the other side, Wettstein – for example – in some places claims that it does not present a problem for philosophical semantics, but that it might be a problem of some other philosophical discipline. Cf. Wettstein 1986: 196–204. However, even Wettstein eventually provides a solution to this problem that is, at least in part, the product of his considerations about philosophical semantics. Cf. Wettstein 1988: 22–8. More is to be found about Wettstein's conception of the problem of cognitive significance in the final section of this paper.

4 Certain philosophers, like Gareth Evans, consider this talk about modes of presentation of a certain object to be too metaphoric. As a consequence, Evans suggests that instead of speaking about different *modes of representation of a certain object* we should speak about *particular ways of thinking about certain object*. Cf. Evans 1982: 15–7. I think that for the purposes of this paper the second way of speaking does not bring considerable benefits compared to the first one, so I will stick with the original.

of an object, while a character of a sentence is a certain mode of presentation of a proposition. The relation between a character and a proposition is such that a character of a sentence, together with a context in which that sentence is uttered, *determines* the proposition that is expressed by the given sentence (Kaplan 1989: 505–6).

In contrast to Frege's sense, a character of some term does *not* determine its referent independently of context, by the means of certain qualitative description which is satisfied only by the referent of that term. The character of the term "I", *e.g.*, is expressed by the *linguistic rule* according to which this term refers to the person uttering it. This means that this term, independently of the context, does not refer exclusively to one object. That is, this term represents in the same way different objects in different contexts, and refers to the specific object only given the specific context (Kaplan 1989: 505; Wettstein 1986: 190). That being said, the sentence "I am hungry" – uttered in the context in which I am the one uttering it – expresses the proposition that Filip Čukljević is hungry, due to its context and character. However, when uttered by John Perry, it expresses the proposition that John Perry is hungry. It should also be mentioned that, unlike Frege's senses, characters are not the constituents of propositions. Referents of the terms which form the given sentence constitute the proposition expressed by it. The constituents of the previous propositions are the property of being hungry and myself in the case of the first one, and the same property and John Perry in the case of the second proposition.

In Kaplan's and Perry's view, characters are simply specific *cognitive perspectives* from which we grasp the given propositions (Kaplan 1989: 530; Wettstein 1986: 190–1; Wettstein 1988: 24). The same proposition can be grasped from different cognitive perspectives, and from the same cognitive perspective – in different contexts – different propositions can be grasped (Cf. Kaplan 1989: 524). For example, the proposition that Filip Čukljević was born in Belgrade can be grasped by John Perry from the particular cognitive perspective if he accepts as true the sentence "The author of the paper "The problem of cognitive significance – a solution and a critique" was born in Belgrade", and from another cognitive perspective if he accepts as true the sentence "You were born in Belgrade" in the context in which he is speaking directly to me, having met each other in the street perhaps. The perspectives are different because Perry does not need to know that the person he is talking to in the street is the author of this text, so here we are faced with sentences having different characters while expressing the same proposition.

Having clarified the concept of a character, we must ask in what way do Kaplan and Perry use this concept in order to explain the three enigmatic types of cases from the previous section. In the first type of cases we have a sentence which expresses no (complete) proposition. However, it does have a certain character. Uttering a sentence like "You are wonderful" is an attempt to represent in a certain way an object, or, to be more precise, a person to who we purport to speak to. This mode of presentation is present independently of the fact whether the object it purports to present actually exists. In this manner, there is a bearer of cognitive significance because there is a character (Wettstein 1986: 191).

Concerning the two remaining types of cases, sentences like "She is about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean" and "I am about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean", express the same proposition, however they have different characters. Using the

terms “she” and “I” obviously goes hand in hand with quite different cognitive perspectives. Because of this, these sentences also have different cognitive significance. The character of the former sentence represents the given proposition in a way that a person accepting that sentence as true (more or less) asserts that the female person pointed to in that context is about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean. The character of the latter sentence does the same thing, in a way that a person accepting that sentence as true asserts that the speaker, *i.e.* she herself, is about to be attacked by a neo-Fregean (Wettstein 1986: 191–2). In this manner, Kaplan and Perry claim that they, as well as the other new theorists of reference, can indeed offer a satisfactory solution to the problem of cognitive significance.

### Wettstein’s critique of the Kaplan’s and Perry’s solution

Wettstein’s critique of the solution to the problem of cognitive significance provided by the new theorists of reference, Kaplan and Perry, consists of – roughly speaking – two parts. In the first part Wettstein claims that a Russell-Kaplanian proposition can not be an adequate bearer of cognitive significance. We have already discussed the reasons behind this claim in the first section, so we will not repeat them here. In the second part Wettstein criticizes the Kaplan’s and Perry’s solution, as it is laid out in the previous section. It is important to emphasize that Wettstein does not infer from this (alleged) inability of the new theorists of reference to offer an adequate solution to the problem of cognitive significance, to the conclusion that their entire semantic theory is completely wrong. What he does infer is that the (originally Frege’s) assumption that all of these theorists share, and according to which the problem of cognitive significance belongs to the domain of philosophical semantics, is wrong (Cf. Wettstein 1986: 200–4). In the last section we will see exactly in what way this Wettstein’s claim is to be understood. Before doing that, Wettstein’s argument in favour of this claim should be completely exposed. That is, his critique of the Kaplan’s and Perry’s solution must be presented.

Wettstein considers the Kaplan’s and Perry’s solution to the problem of cognitive significance, as displayed in the previous section, to be inadequate solution to that problem. Wettstein’s critique of this solution consists of two parts. In the first one he criticizes the Kaplan’s and Perry’s solution when applied to the sentences which contain *proper names*.<sup>5</sup> Since in this paper we have focused on the sentences in which indexicals occur, we will not elaborate upon this part of Wettstein’s critique.<sup>6</sup>

In the second part Wettstein criticizes the Kaplan’s and Perry’s solution when applied to sentences which include indexicals. It is interesting to notice here that Perry, whose defense from Wettstein’s critique will be the topic of the next section, almost completely ignores this second part of Wettstein’s critique. Namely, it seems that Perry is suggesting that Wettstein’s critique of the new theorists of reference is completely based on their inability to explain the possibility of difference in cognitive significance by using the concept of (expressed) proposition (Perry 1988: 2–3). Wettstein, however, besides this principled critique of the new theorists

5 Proper names are those terms which pick out a unique object in the world to which they refer. Some examples are personal names, names of places, *etc.*

6 More about this part of critique can be seen in Wettstein 1986: 192–5.



of reference, explicitly criticizes the Kaplan's and Perry's solution to this problem which makes use of the concept of character. According to Wettstein, the key problem with this solution is the case of synonymous sentences (sentences with the same linguistic meaning, *i.e.* character) which have different cognitive significance.

Let us take a slightly modified Wettstein's example with the sentence "She is about to be attacked". Suppose there is a certain person who finds herself at the rock concert. From a certain angle at the spot where the concert is taking place, that person sees unusually dressed rock singer (a reader can choose her or his favourite). After awhile, the person gets lost in that strange place and, thinking that she ended up at some different rock concert, she just changes a point of view from which she sees the same rock singer. However, from this new angle the singer appears like a completely different person, due to her unusual costume and makeup. Moreover, from this new angle the lost concertgoer sees that an unknown person is getting ready to attack our beloved rock singer.

This scenario presents a serious problem for the Kaplan's and Perry's solution to the problem of cognitive significance. The person, before she gets lost, is not inclined to accept as true the sentence "She is about to be attacked" while pointing to the rock singer. However, after she gets lost and again sees the singer – now from a different point of view – she will be inclined to accept that sentence as true while pointing to the same singer. It is crucial to emphasize that this person – the lost fan of rock music – does not know that in both cases she is seeing the same singer. So she did not lose her initial belief that the singer is not about to be attacked (due to circumstances seeming completely normal and her having no reason to believe something like that is likely to happen), but she retained it while forming another belief – that the singer she currently sees, and who she believes is different from the first one, is about to be attacked.

The main problem which this example presents, according to Wettstein, is not the fact that two different utterances of the given sentence express the same proposition while they have different cognitive significance, as Perry understands it (Cf. Perry 1988: 2–3). The real problem is that this sentence in these two cases has the same character but different cognitive significance. If the given person would be inclined to accept that sentence as true in both cases, she would do it by means of the same mode of presentation of the proposition which that sentence expresses. In both cases by the means of uttering the sentence "She is about to be attacked" she would (more or less) claim that the female person pointed to is about to be attacked. The disposition to accept different utterances of this sentence as true could also lead to different action, if our scenario were enriched in an adequate way. So the Wettstein's point is the following – the Kaplan's and Perry's solution does not actually explain certain possible circumstances which fall under the second and third type of problematic cases, which means that a character can not be the bearer of cognitive significance (Cf. Wettstein 1986: 195–6).

### **Perry's answer to the Wettstein's critique**

Perry begins his answer to the previous critique by enumerating certain conditions which, according to him, Wettstein holds that the bearer of cognitive significance

must satisfy. There is no need to enlist these conditions here, because they will not play an important role in evaluating how successful Perry's answer is.<sup>7</sup> The main point of the enumeration of these conditions is that – and Perry agrees with Wettstein here – they can not be satisfied by the concept of proposition which is expressed by a certain sentence, or, to be more precise, by the utterance of that sentence (Perry 1988: 5–6). However, Perry thinks that Wettstein infers directly from this fact that the problem of cognitive significance does not belong to the domain of philosophical semantics (Perry 1988: 3). As we have already seen, this is simply not the case, because Wettstein also considers adequacy of the solution to this problem which makes use of the concept of character, not of the concept of proposition. But let us stay with the Perry's reading of Wettstein's critique for now.

Appearing to have quickly abandoned the concept of character, Perry now holds that Wettstein's critique ignores the distinction between the two sorts of propositions. One sort consists of those propositions which are *expressed* by certain utterances, and Perry agrees that they can not be the bearers of cognitive significance. However, Perry is of the opinion that there exists another sort of propositions, whose specimens *do* in fact satisfy Wettstein's conditions for the bearer of cognitive significance. This sort of propositions Perry calls propositions which are *created* by utterance (Perry 1988: 8).

What is the difference between these two sorts of propositions? Propositions which are expressed by utterance are identical with – by now familiar – Russell-Kaplanian propositions. The utterance of the sentence “I am *F*” by the subject *S* expresses the proposition that *S* has the property *F*. On the other hand, a proposition which is created by a certain utterance *U* is the proposition that the truth conditions of the utterance *U* are satisfied (Perry 1988: 7–8). If we consider previous example, *S*'s utterance “I am *F*” creates the proposition that the truth conditions of the utterance “I am *F*” are satisfied in the context in which that utterance is uttered. These conditions are satisfied iff the context in which the given utterance is uttered is such that the utterance is uttered by a subject who has the property *F*. In this manner, unlike the proposition which is expressed by the previous utterance *U*, the proposition which is created by that utterance does not have subject *S* as its constituent, but the utterance *U* instead (Perry 1988: 7). That is, by the means of this created proposition we do not claim something about subject *S*, but about utterance *U*. Perry holds that the bearer of cognitive significance is, in fact, this created proposition of his (Perry 1988: 8).

In what way would Perry answer to the Wettstein's counterexample with the sentence “She is about to be attacked”, bearing in mind this theory of the bearers of cognitive significance? Although he does not say it explicitly, the following answer seems to be the only reasonable one. Namely, two different utterances of that sentence – despite the fact that in their respective contexts they *express* the same proposition – *do not create* the same proposition. The reason for this is quite simple – since these utterances are the constituents of the propositions they create, and these are *two different* utterances, as they are uttered at different times and places – the created propositions will be different.

7 These conditions can be found in Perry 1988: 6.

The reason for Perry's lack of enthusiasm about this type of response might be the following. It seems that this answer to the question – how is it possible for the two utterances of the same sentence, which in their respective contexts express the same proposition, to have different cognitive significance – at the bottom line comes to this. It is possible because these are *two different* utterances. This response obviously does not look especially satisfactory, due to its not being particularly informative. It appears that the difference in cognitive significance is explained by the difference in created propositions which are its bearers, while the difference in the created propositions in turn is explained by the (numerical) difference in utterances which create these propositions. Therefore, it is hard to see which explanatory role the concept of created proposition actually has. It is difficult to use it in providing sufficiently interesting answer to the question – why the difference in utterances is relevant to the difference in cognitive significance. Perry does not give any suggestions as to how we could manage this problem.

This might be the reason why Perry formulates his solution to the previous problem in a different way. He is quite concise about it – it is possible that these two utterances have different cognitive significance because the person who utters them, as well as the one who hears them, does not need to know that the term “she” in both cases refers to the same person (Cf. Perry 1988: 11). Perry argues that an analogous explanation can be offered for the problematic cases in which, instead of coreferential indexicals, there are coreferential proper names. This, he claims, is true of the classic case in which it is possible at the same time to accept as true sentence “Cicero is *F*”, but not to accept as true sentence “Tully is *F*”. Perry explains this by asserting that in order to be linguistically competent, *i.e.* to be able to understand and use these names – as well as the previously mentioned indexicals – we do not need to know that they have the same referent (Cf. Perry 1988: 12–5). This sort of explanation makes use of neither the concept of created proposition nor the concept of character, and it seems considerably more plausible than the explanations we have been dealing with in the previous paragraphs, which do use one or the other of these concepts. However, to what extent is such a response to the Wettstein's critique satisfying? We will deal with this question in the next, final section.

### The success of Perry's answer to the Wettstein's critique

Well, to what extent then is Perry's response to the Wettstein's critique satisfying? I believe that it is to large extent unsatisfying. First, we must consider a bit more carefully what is exactly the conclusion of Wettstein's critique, *i.e.* what does he actually mean by the claim that the problem of cognitive significance does not belong to the domain of philosophical semantics. I think that the best interpretation of this Wettstein's claim is the following one. For start, Wettstein does not claim that the problem of cognitive significance does not belong to the domain of philosophy of language. Philosophical semantics presents just one subfield of philosophy of language. This is a subfield which deals with, traditionally speaking, the relation between the language and the world. That is, with meaning. There are other subfields of philosophy of language, such as philosophical pragmatics for example, of which more will be presented shortly.

Therefore, Wettstein does not claim that the problem of cognitive significance does not belong to philosophy of language, but only that it does not belong to the one particular domain within it. However, what does it exactly mean to say that the problem of cognitive significance does not belong to philosophical semantics? I think that in Wettstein's view this means that the cognitive significance should not be identified with some semantic component of terms or sentences, at least not as an initial assumption. Russell-Kaplanian propositions, Fregean thoughts and Kaplan's and Perry's characters are concepts which are supposed to express certain part of the meaning of sentences and terms, and which are to be used to clarify the relation between language and extralinguistic reality. That is why all of these concepts are semantic components.

Wettstein, however, argues that the advantage of Kaplan's and Perry's solution over the initial Russell-Kaplanian and Fregean options consists in their rejection of Frege's assumption, which some of the new theorists of reference share, according to which the bearer of cognitive significance must be the proposition. Wettstein holds that this is the first step in the right direction, but that it should not be the last one (Cf. Wettstein 1986: 196–7). Since they think that the bearer of cognitive significance is a character, Kaplan and Perry retain the assumption that some sort of semantic component has to be the bearer of cognitive significance.

Wettstein rejects this assumption. It could be said that Wettstein would think that formulating the problem of cognitive significance in the form of the question – what are the bearers of cognitive significance – is misleading, because it presupposes that there must be something like a *bearer* of cognitive significance. And if there are certain bearers of cognitive significance, then it seems natural to seek for them inside the limits of the meaning of terms. Hence, in my opinion, Wettstein would be more prone to formulate the given problem in the following, more neutral, manner – how is it possible for a subject to be inclined to accept as true just one utterance out of the given two in the second type of problematic cases (due to simplicity we will not deal with the remaining types of cases at this point)? Wettstein's response to this question is essentially the same as the one which Perry eventually comes up with. A competent language-speaker can be able to understand and to use indexicals, proper names, *etc.* while not knowing whether they are mutually coreferential. Wettstein is here motivated by a more general story about the rejection of *representationalism* in philosophical semantics, which is a too broad topic to be dealt with here.<sup>8</sup>

In any case, in this type of explanation we make no use of any specific semantic component as the bearer of cognitive significance. Indeed, we would rather say that there are actually no bearers of cognitive significance. That is why this problem does not belong to philosophical *semantics*, but it rather belongs to philosophical *pragmatics*. Philosophical pragmatics deals with, traditionally speaking, the relation between the language and its speakers. *Inter alia*, it deals with the conditions which a speaker needs to satisfy in order to be able to understand and to use certain terms. These two subfields of philosophy of language are surely not completely mutually independent. In the case of Wettstein's solution to the problem of cognitive

8 More about this can be found in Wettstein 1988: 22–8.

significance, philosophical pragmatics is motivated right by philosophical semantics itself. One of the basic reasons why a speaker does not need to know whether the terms she uses are mutually coreferential is the fact that these terms refer directly to their referents, not indirectly by the means of some specific cognitive perspective, like Frege's sense for example.<sup>9</sup>

Once we have in mind what has been said in the last couple of paragraphs, Perry's defense from the Wettstein's critique seems quite unconvincing. First, it appears that he identifies philosophical semantics with philosophy of language *tout court*, which leads to – as we have seen – the misguided and incorrect interpretation of Wettstein's conclusion (Cf. Perry 1988: 3–5). Next, Perry's claim that the created propositions are the bearers of cognitive significance is problematic for a couple of reasons. One reason is that such an explanation is not informative, as we have already discussed. The second reason is the following. If the created propositions are the bearers of cognitive significance, it should not be possible for a case in which there are two different utterances which have the same cognitive significance to exist. Any two utterances, just by the fact that there are *two* of them, are different from each other, hence they create different propositions. However, in this case any two different utterances of a sentence like "Belgrade is the capital of Serbia" or "I was born in Belgrade" would have different cognitive significance for one and the same subject. This looks highly improbable. If in normal circumstances a subject (me, for example) accepts as true utterances of one of these sentences which are uttered in an interval of just a few seconds, how are we to explain their having different cognitive significance for that subject? Perhaps this might not be necessarily impossible to do, but Perry offers no suggestions as to how to do this, at least in principle.

Ultimately, as we have already noticed, Perry himself does not explain either the second or the third type of problematic cases by using the concept of created proposition. Rather, he appeals to the fact that a speaker does not need to know almost anything concerning the referent of a term she uses in order to be able to understand that term. To say it again, this explanation is essentially the same as the one given by Wettstein. It makes no use of the concepts of (expressed) proposition, created proposition, character, *etc.* Therefore, Wettstein's solution appears as superior when compared to Perry's, in so far as it has (at least) the same amount of explanatory power, while it makes no use of the concepts which have no real explanatory role – which is the main problem of Perry's explanation.

Because of all the mentioned reasons, I argue that Perry's response to the Wettstein's critique is not convincing. Looking at it more broadly, I am of the opinion that Wettstein is right when he suggests that the solution to the problem of cognitive significance should not be searched for in the framework of philosophical semantics. Semantic considerations are relevant, but the area in which the ultimate solution to this problem is to be found is, in the first place, philosophical pragmatics. Nevertheless, more earnest consideration of this topic has to be the subject of some other research.

<sup>9</sup> Wettstein himself nowhere says that the problem of cognitive significance belongs to the domain of philosophical pragmatics, not semantics, but I strongly believe that his attitude towards the given problem is best expressed in this way. Cf. Wettstein 1988: 22–8.

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## Filip Čukljević

### Problem saznanje vrednosti – jedno rešenje i jedna kritika

#### Apstrakt

U ovom radu baviću se rešenjem problema saznanje vrednosti koje nude takozvani novi teoretičari referencije, kao i kritikom tog rešenja od strane Hauarda Vetstajna (Howard Wettstein). Tvrdiću da je odgovor na tu kritiku koju pruža Džon Peri (John Perry) nedovoljno ubedljiv. Najpre ću razjasniti neke relevantne pojmove, da bih onda na jasan način predstavio sam problem saznanje vrednosti. Potom ću prikazati rešenje datog problema koje nude Peri i Dejvid Kaplan (David Kaplan). Nakon toga, izložiću Vetstajnovu kritiku tog rešenja. Zatim ću analizirati i Perijev pokušaj odbrane od ove kritike. Naposljetku, razmotriću u kojoj meri je Perijev pokušaj uspešan. Pokazaće se kako on to u značajnoj meri nije.

**Ključne reči:** saznanje vrednosti, propozicija, referent, misao, smisao, karakter, semantika, pragmatika