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Reply to De Brabanter

François Recanati

Philippe De Brabanter's survey of my work on quotation is terrific and I am really glad that we agree on all the basics. Here I will concentrate on two pieces of criticism he offers. One pertains to an internal contradiction he spotted in my analysis of mixed quotation; the other criticism targets the move I make in *Oratio Obliqua*, *Oratio Recta* and in 'Open Quotation Revisited' towards a semanticization of the context-shift at work in hybrid quotation.

I. CAN FREE ENRICHMENT BE DRIVEN BY QUOTATIONAL POINT?

I claim that quotational point belongs to 'the most pragmatic layer of interpretation', and at the same time I say that, in mixed quotation, quotational point affects truth-conditions via free enrichment. From these claims, and my distinction between primary vs secondary pragmatic processes, De Brabanter derives a contradiction. Since free enrichment is a primary pragmatic process operating at a sub-personal level,

We have a situation in which something that is reputed to belong to "the most pragmatic layer of interpretation" has already been processed locally at a level of interpretation that requires no availability (and no genuine inference). As far as I can judge, there is no manifest solution for the meaningful articulation of those two processes.¹

The two processes De Brabanter is talking about are: the primary process of free enrichment, and the grasp of the speaker's intention in quoting ('quotational point'). Grasp of the speaker's intention results from a reflective process that seems impossible unless the availability condition is satisfied. This suggests that quotational point recognition may be a secondary process (i.e. a pragmatic process that presupposes some antecedent grasp of what is said, rather than a pragmatic process that contributes to the interpreter's grasp

of what is said). The contradiction comes out as follows:

On the one hand, Recanati writes that, in grasping that the speaker is ascribing the string *has a certain anomalous feature* to Quine, the interpreter understands a quotational point [Recanati (2010), p. 249], i.e. the speaker's intention. On the other, this ascription is described as a primary pragmatic process of enrichment. Do these two descriptions capture one and the same interpretive event? Strictly speaking, that is impossible, since we are dealing with processes that the theory says are different in nature. However, Recanati (2010), p. 255, may seem to be saying so much when he states that this "aspect of the interpretation of the utterance, relating to the point of the demonstration [letting the addressee know that "Quine used those very words in the speech episode which the utterance reports"], is utterly pragmatic, yet it affects the intuitive truth-conditional content of the utterance".

How can I get out of the contradiction? One option would be to deny that grasp of quotational point is a secondary process or one that requires satisfaction of the availability condition.² Arguably, grasp of quotational point can be subserved by diverse mechanisms. One can take a reflective route and assess the reasons behind the speech act. Or one can proceed automatically if the context is of a type that standardly triggers a particular interpretation of quotational point. Ascription sentences, such as speech reports, are one such context: in ascription contexts it is *given* that the speaker is reporting someone's speech, so the interpretation of quotational point as 'ascriptional' (and targetting the reportee) is natural in such contexts and may be automatically provided as the default interpretation. This is compatible with the availability condition's *not* being satisfied. As De Brabanter puts it in the draft I mentioned,

The identification of quotational points should not always be understood to belong to the "most pragmatic layer of interpretation". The idea would be that in certain cases — that would include most cases of mixed quotation — identification of the point is simply made redundant by processing that has taken place at a lower level.

Taking this on board, my analysis of Davidson's standard example of mixed quotation ('Quine says that quotation "has a certain anomalous feature"') could be revised as follows. Quotational point is assigned by default because the context is explicitly ascriptional. So an ascription of the quoted words to the reportee is generated. That is a second proposition which comes in addition to the proposition compositionally expressed by the utterance. In Davidson's example, the proposition compositionally expressed by the utterance is the proposition that Quine said that quotation has a certain anomalous feature, while the second proposition — that which is pragmatically generated through grasp of quotational point — is the proposition that Quine used the

quoted words in the speech episode which the utterance reports. Since both propositions can be integrated as a description of one and the same event, free enrichment is licensed [Recanati (2010), pp. 277-78]: an additional truth-condition is generated for the utterance, corresponding to the second proposition. This gives us the intuitive truth-conditions of the mixed-quoting utterance (Quine said that quotation has a certain anomalous feature, and he said so using the words ‘has a certain anomalous feature’).

Standardized or default pragmatic interpretations have often been discussed in the pragmatics literature [Bach and Harnish (1979); Levinson (2000)], starting with Grice’s introduction of *generalized* conversational implicatures [Grice (1989)]. Default interpretations have a significant level of systematicity, and for that reason many theorists consider they belong to semantics rather than pragmatics [Asher (2011)]. This I take to be for the most part a terminological issue. Be that as it may, what De Brabanter’s discussion suggests is that a pragmatic approach to mixed quotation such as the one I have developed may need to appeal to the idea of default interpretation. The gap between the pragmatic approach and semantic approaches à la Cappelen and Lepore is thereby somewhat diminished.

There is another option, however. It consists in giving up the claim that the ascription of the quoted words to the reportee is a matter of free enrichment. That seems to be the option which De Brabanter now favours. He writes:

I feel reluctant to accept that we are dealing with a primary pragmatic process. The main reason is that it seems clear that identification of the quotational point must be ‘available’. (...) This... makes it sufficiently different from other cases of enrichment described in TCP to question its status as a primary pragmatic process. Though I am not sure how to sort out the above difficulty, I believe it needs to be recognised. A primary pragmatic process that *must* be available is not a proper primary pragmatic process [[this issue, pp. 00](#)]

Is there a third option? Well, yes – one may deny that there is a genuine problem in the first place. I think the difficulty emphasized by De Brabanter arises because the interpreter’s grasp of quotational point (which I say belongs to the “most pragmatic layer of interpretation”, a level at which one tries to understand the reasons behind a speech act) is construed as *the same process as* the primary pragmatic process of free enrichment which I invoke to account for the intuitive truth-conditions of mixed-quotational utterances. But these are actually distinct processes, and the problem vanishes, or at least deflates, when one realizes that they are.

Grasp of quotational point is ‘utterly pragmatic’ (I maintain) because it is not a matter of deciphering the linguistic signal but involves making sense of the speech act: the speaker has ‘demonstrated’ some aspect of the linguistic

material (the quoted words), and the interpreter's pragmatic task is to understand *why* the speaker has done so. This is not different in nature from understanding why the speaker has said what she has said in contexts in which what she has said is mutually known to be false. This is what I mean when I say that grasp of quotational point belongs to the most pragmatic layer of interpretation.

Still, there is a significant difference between the interpreter's grasp of quotational point and the interpreter's grasp of irony. In the case of irony, the speech act which is being made sense of is the locutionary act of saying that *p* (where *p* is mutually known to be false), so the interpretive process — the search for the reasons behind the act — cannot start unless the interpreter understands that the speaker has said that *p*. In the other case, the speech act which is being made sense of is *the quotational act of demonstrating the words one is using*. To understand why the speaker has said what she has said, we need to grasp what she has said; but to understand the speaker's echoic intention underlying his quotational act, there is no need to have fully grasped what the speaker is saying: the act the interpreter is trying to make sense of when assessing quotational point is the act of demonstrating the words 'has a certain anomalous feature', not the act of saying that *p*. The interpretation of the quotational act actually *parallels* the interpretation of the spoken words as expressing a certain proposition, and on my account, far from presupposing an antecedent grasp of what is said, the interpretation of the quotational act itself *contributes to* the truth-conditional interpretation of the spoken words. So it is not a secondary pragmatic process.

As an analogy, consider the recognition of the speaker's referential intention in using a demonstrative or a free pronoun. If the speaker nods in a certain direction and says 'he is dangerous', the interpreter has to make sense of the demonstration by assigning a particular referential intention to the speaker. In other words, the interpreter must understand *who the speaker means*, and this, again, is a fully pragmatic matter. But the pragmatic process of intention recognition at work here does not presuppose a prior grasp of what is said; on the contrary, what is said cannot be grasped unless the speaker's referential intention is recognized (since what is said depends on the reference of the pronoun, and the reference of the pronoun itself depends upon who the speaker has in mind). In this case, a fully pragmatic process (recognition of the speaker's referential intention) yields an output which serves as input to the primary pragmatic process of saturation, whereby the semantic value of the pronoun is assigned. Exactly the same problem might seem to arise as previously, and De Brabanter might ask the same question: how is it possible that one and the same process (the recognition of the speaker's referential intention) is both a fully pragmatic process requiring availability and a 'primary' pragmatic process such that the availability condition need not be satisfied?

To answer the question, we need to clearly distinguish between the pro-

cess of intention-recognition (in both the referential and the quotational case) and the primary pragmatic process it feeds into. The former, but not the latter, belongs to the most pragmatic layer of interpretation of the speech act. Processes that belong to that layer ('outer pragmatic processes', for short) are personal rather than subpersonal processes and their inputs must be available to the interpreter. This condition is satisfied in both the quotational and the referential case. Recognition of quotational point or referential intention is an outer pragmatic process, so its input must be available, but here the input — what the interpreter has to make sense of — is not the locutionary act of saying that *p*, but the quotational act of highlighting certain words one is using or the referential act of demonstrating something.

Secondary pragmatic processes (e.g. the inference to conversational implicatures) are a *special case* of outer pragmatic process, namely the case in which the input to the process is the locutionary act of saying that *p*. In that special case, pragmatically making sense of the speech act requires one to have antecedently identified what is said. Recognition of quotational point or referential intention is also an outer pragmatic process, so its input must be available, but the input — what the interpreter has to make sense of — is no longer the locutionary act of saying that *p*. What must be 'available' to the interpreter who tries to understand the speaker's quotational/referential act is the quotational/referential act itself. Pragmatically making sense of that act does *not* require one to have antecedently identified what is said, so this is not a secondary pragmatic process, even though it is an outer pragmatic process.

To sum up: grasp of quotational/referential intention is an outer pragmatic process but it is not secondary. Not all outer processes are secondary: that depends upon the input they operate on. It is for that reason that the vague notion of 'the most pragmatic layer of interpretation' reveals the tension spotted by De Brabanter. If I am right, the tension only shows that we need a slightly more sophisticated apparatus. Besides the distinction between inner pragmatic processes involved in the blind computation of truth-conditions (so called 'primary' pragmatic processes) and outer pragmatic processes taking place at the personal level and requiring reflection on the speech act, there is a further distinction among outer processes between those which do or do not presuppose a prior grasp of what is said. Those which do are 'secondary' pragmatic processes. We also need a distinction, among the outer pragmatic processes, between those that do and those that do not feed into primary pragmatic processes (enrichment or saturation, as the case may be). And that is the key to solving De Brabanter's problem.

In mixed quotation, on my account, grasp of quotational point (an outer process) feeds into free enrichment (an inner, primary pragmatic process). The interpretation of quotational point runs in parallel to the truth-conditional interpretation of the sentence and yields what I called the 'second' proposition, to the effect that Quine used the words 'anomalous feature' in the

locutionary act which the utterance reports. That extra proposition is an aspect of ‘speaker’s meaning’. It can be grasped as soon as one understands that the utterance reports something Quine said about quotation, and before one grasps the full truth-conditions of the report. Free enrichment is the process whereby the second proposition in question, resulting from grasp of quotational point, is merged with the proposition compositionally expressed by the sentence (which need not be available — it is a matter of subpersonal computation). The merging operation yields the utterance’s intuitive truth-conditions.

Free enrichment proceeds blindly, as primary pragmatic processes do. That means, in particular, that *its* inputs (e.g. the proposition compositionally expressed) need not be consciously available for the process to operate. But to say that the inputs to free enrichment need not be available is not to say that they cannot be; and in the case at stake one of the inputs to free enrichment is the output of another pragmatic interpretation process (grasp of quotational point) which is an outer pragmatic process and must therefore be available.

II. SEMANTICIZATION OF CONTEXT-SHIFTS: A STEP BACKWARD?

De Brabanter criticizes the semanticization move I make in ‘Open Quotation Revisited’ (after *Oratio Obliqua*, *Oratio Recta*) and defends the more radically pragmatic approach in ‘Open Quotation’. But, I will argue, he conflates two distinct issues. One issue concerns the status of a particular interpretation: is it the interpretation of a linguistic item occurring in the uttered sentence (semantic option), or is it the interpretation of some aspect of the speech act over and above the properly linguistic material (pragmatic option)? De Brabanter and I agree that the pragmatic option is preferable. De Brabanter thinks I take ‘a step backward’ because of my treatment of a second issue, in ‘Open Quotation Revisited’. I argue that the context-shift induced by echoic quotations affect truth-conditions locally and therefore require a two-dimensional apparatus with a character/content distinction. The context-shift affects the character, though not necessarily the content. To say that the context-shift affects the character is to say that, as a result of the quotational act which induces the context-shift, a new character is generated. That character maps the context in which the echoic quotation occurs to the content expressed by the quoted material when interpreted in the shifted context. This is a ‘semanticization’ of the pragmatic process of context-shift, which is now represented as such in the character of the sentence hosting the hybrid quotation. De Brabanter objects that if one takes the quotation marks themselves to be an operator that conventionally encodes, and effects, the context-shift,

then open quotation is treated as a wholly semantic phenomenon. The spirit of the pragmatic approach is lost.

But, as I said, I think there are two orthogonal issues here. The semantization of the context-shift which I advocate has to do with the proper representation of the meaning of the hybrid. We must assign to the hybrid both a character and a content. The context-shift is built into the character. I maintain all these claims, but they do not entail that the character of the hybrid is necessarily determined by the linguistic meaning of the uttered material (and, in particular, by the conventional meaning of the quotation marks). It is possible to hold, with De Brabanter, that quoting is something the speaker does, not something the quotation marks do. What induces the context-shift, on this picture, is the speaker's quotational act. But the context-shift so induced affects the meaning of the utterance. We can therefore ascribe to the utterance (a complex entity involving *both* the linguistic material and the speaker's quotational act, similar in this respect to Kaplan's 'occurrences') a character which maps the context of utterance to the right content. This analysis uses tools from semantics, but the bearer of the relevant semantic property (here, the character) is the utterance, not the sentence. The speaker's quotational act belongs to the utterance, on this picture, and it contributes to the determination of its character.

It may seem strange that I assign the character to the utterance rather than to the sentence. But there is nothing new in this move. In the case of demonstratives, Kaplan taught us that what possesses a character is *not* the expression type (the demonstrative), but the expression type *together with an intentional act of the speaker*. A demonstrative without an associated 'demonstration' is semantically incomplete. In the quotational case, the character of the hybrid depends upon the speaker's quotational act just as, in the demonstrative case, the character of the demonstrative depends upon the speaker's demonstrative act.

There remains a difference between the respective roles of the speaker's demonstrative and quotational acts. That difference ultimately derives from the distinction between (mandatory) saturation and (optional) modulation [Recanati (2004), (2010)]. A demonstrative without a referential act is semantically incomplete, Kaplan says. But if we take a hybrid and subtract the quotational act, what remains is no longer a hybrid: it is just a regular, quotationless expression of the language, and as such it may well possess a character. The speaker's quotational act does not 'complete' what would otherwise be an incomplete character; rather, it maps the (presumably complete) character of the quoted expression to a more complex character embodying the context-shift. This is very much like predicate transfer [Nunberg (1995)], a standard form of modulation that also maps one character to another.

NOTES

¹ This citation and the next come from an earlier, longer draft from which the two papers by De Brabanter in this issue have been extracted.

² This is the option advocated by De Brabanter in the earlier draft where the above citation comes from.

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