



HAL
open science

Reply to Brabanter

François Recanati

► **To cite this version:**

François Recanati. Reply to Brabanter. Maria-José Frapolli. Saying, Meaning, and Referring: Essays on François Recanati's Philosophy of Language, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004. ijn_00000637

HAL Id: ijn_00000637

https://hal.science/ijn_00000637v1

Submitted on 20 Oct 2005

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Reply to Brabanter

Philippe de Brabanter notes that paradigmatic singular terms, namely proper names, 'canonically' refer to individuals ; he therefore finds it strange that quotations, insofar as they act as singular terms, should always refer to types, i.e. to abstract objects or classes of individuals, as most theorists of quotation think they do. There is, he points out, no a priori reason why closed quotations should have a single, homogenous kind of reference. He therefore tentatively endorses the 'referential diversity' thesis.

On this issue I am quite open-minded. I hold that closed quotations refer to the type they demonstrate, but that view, which I maintain, is not « necessary for the consistency of [my] framework », contrary to what Brabanter says. I would be happy to accept the thesis of 'referential diversity' if sufficient evidence was adduced in its favour. Does Philippe de Brabanter provide such evidence in his paper ? I do not think so.

Let us start by laying out my framework, within which Philippe de Brabanter sets up his own discussion. I distinguish three sorts of thing one does in quoting : one displays a token, one demonstrates a type, and one (optionally) depicts a target. Token-display is something that takes place in all instances of quotation (whether open or closed) but also in many forms of language use that are not quotational. A token is displayed when the speaker who produces it specifically draws the hearer's attention to it, and that is something that also happens whenever one stresses a particular word or phrase. What is distinctive of quotation is the fact that the token is displayed not e.g. in order to contrast it with some other expression which might have been used in its place (contrastive stress) but *in order to demonstrate – illustrate by exemplification – some property or complex of properties which it instantiates*. This property or complex of properties is the 'demonstrated type'. So what distinguishes quotational displays from other linguistic displays is the speaker's demonstrative intention.

The demonstration itself has a (higher-level) purpose. Sometimes, one demonstrates a type in order to picture (or, as I say, 'depict') something that is of that type, through some form of mimicry. In other cases ('flat mention') one demonstrates a type in order to communicate something directly about that type, without attempting to depict a particular token — or anything else — as being of that type. Whenever there is an attempt at depicting something through the demonstration, I call the object of the depiction the 'target' of the quotation. (See below for qualifications)

The distinction between the three components is common to open and closed quotation. What distinguishes closed from open quotation is the fact that, in closed quotation, something additional happens : the demonstration is recruited as a singular term and endowed with a linguistic reference. In open quotation, one displays a token and thereby demonstrates a type, without referring to either the token or the type (let alone to whatever one is attempting to depict through the demonstration). Thus when, in *Hôtel du Nord*, the character played by Arletty says

- 'Atmosphère', 'atmosphère'... Est-ce que j'ai une gueule d'atmosphère ?

she mimicks her interlocutor's use of the word 'atmosphère' (target) by producing two tokens of the same type, but she refers neither to the tokens which she herself produces, nor to the token which her interlocutor has just produced and which she imitates, nor to the type which all these tokens instantiate. In contrast, if I say

- 'Atmosphère' is a word which has been made famous by Arletty

then my demonstration of the word 'atmosphère' (a token of which I display) is recruited as a singular term referring to that word, and filling the role of subject in the sentence.

So far, so good. Now the question arises : what exactly does the closed quotation refer to ? Does it refer to the displayed token, to the demonstrated type, to the target (if there is one), or to anything else ? Does it always refer to the same sort of thing, or is its reference variable, as Brabanter claims?

Before answering these questions, I should say something more about the notion of depicted target. Brabanter rightly notes that, for me, the notions of target and of mimicry are interdependent, and I must explain why that is so.

Imagine that the speaker is reporting Arletty's speech. He says :

- (1) And then she uttered the famous sentence 'Est-ce que j'ai une gueule d'atmosphère'.

It is pretty clear that the speaker is talking about Arletty's utterance and conveying information about it. So Arletty's utterance is the speaker's target, as it were. But it is not — or not necessarily — the 'target' of the quotation in the technical sense in which I use the term. For a quotation to have a target in this narrow sense, it must have mimetic properties in virtue of which it evokes something, namely, that thing which it pictures or depicts. If the speaker pronounces the quoted words 'Est-ce que j'ai une gueule d'atmosphère' with Arletty's accent, for example, the quotation will be understood as mimicking Arletty's utterance, and the latter will acquire the status of target. But if there is no mimicry — and, like Brabanter, « I do not see why it should be impossible to simply report someone's words without the slightest amount of mimicry » — then it is unclear that my restricted notion of target applies, even though the speaker talks about Arletty's utterance and attempts to characterize it.

To see why that is so, consider a negative variant of the example :

- But she did not actually utter the sentence 'Est-ce que j'ai une gueule d'atmosphère'

Here it is obvious that the quotation is *not* offered as a picture of Arletty's utterance : on the contrary the speaker asserts that her utterance was not of the demonstrated type, and it would be contradictory simultaneously to offer a type as picturing the target while denying that the target is of that type. Still, *the speaker is talking about Arletty's utterance and attempts to provide information regarding it*. It follows that what the speaker is talking about (the speaker's target, as it were) is not necessarily the target of the quotation in my sense. The relation of a quotation to *its* target does not depend upon the rest of the sentence. The quotation itself, in virtue of its mimetic properties, is offered as a picture of the target, and whenever that is so it would be contradictory to deny that the target in question is of the demonstrated type. A good example is provided by the parenthetical 'he said' which, as Cornulier pointed out, can only be appended to a linguistic demonstration endowed with mimetic properties. In the schema

- p, he said

the quotation which the letter 'p' stands for is bound to be mimetic, so that negation is impossible :

- * p, he did not say

I admit that this is a rather complex and controversial story. For my present purposes, it suffices to point out that there is a distinction between what the speaker is talking about and the target of the quotation (in the restricted sense in which I use that term). For this distinction is enough to invalidate one of Brabanter's two arguments in favour of his view that quotations sometimes refer to a particular token.

Brabanter's argument runs like this. In many cases, like (1) above, it is clear that the speaker is talking about a particular token (e.g. Arletty's utterance). Yet I hold that the quotation refers to the demonstrated type. In my framework, Brabanter says, the distinction between target and demonstratum provides a way out : one may say that what is demonstrated is a type, while the target is a token. But this solution, Brabanter argues, is not available in a case like (1), for the following reason : since we assume that the report has no mimetic properties, the quotation can be ascribed no target. Hence the intuition that the speaker somehow 'refers' to Arletty's particular utterance is not accounted for. To account for it, he says, we must either give up the view that the quotation refers to the type (and admits that in that sort of case it refers to a token), or, in order to make a 'target' available, implausibly maintain that some form of mimicry is involved in all cases in which, intuitively, the quoter talks about a particular token.

In my view this argument bears no force. The intuition that the speaker somehow 'refers' to Arletty's utterance can be accounted for quite easily, simply by saying that the speaker is reporting Arletty's utterance and providing a characterization of it. Beside the displayed token, the demonstrated type, and the depicted target, a fourth notion is available : what the speaker is talking about (what earlier I called the speaker's target). That is all we need to take care of Brabanter's examples.

Brabanter's second argument in favour of the thesis of referential diversity appeals to the phenomenon of iterated quotation, illustrated by the following example :

- (2) In each utterance of the previous sentence [*'Boston' is a six letter word*], « 'Boston' » refers to an orthographic form.

Brabanter argues that, « for the subject of *'Boston' is a six letter word* to be able to refer to an orthographic form, it must be a token » (p. 13). Let us assume that he is right and that only tokens can refer. Does it not follow that the iterated quotation « 'Boston' » in (2) refers to a token ? Well, not necessarily. A token may be represented as a pair consisting of (i) a type and (ii) a context in which the type is tokened. Let us now assume that the iterated quotation « 'Boston' » in (2) refers to a type, in accordance with my view. Sentence (2) says that *in each utterance of the previous sentence*, this type refers to an orthographic form. Now the words 'in each utterance of the previous sentence' provide a context for the type; and once the type is paired with an appropriate context, it becomes a token and can refer. To sum up : we can accept that 'only tokens refer', while maintaining that in (2) the quotation refers to a type ; for the type in question is said to refer not by itself (*qua* type), but insofar as it occurs in a certain context (*qua* token).

I conclude that Brabanter has failed to establish the referential diversity thesis. This is not to deny that, in some (rather exceptional) cases, a quotation may perhaps refer to a token. Manuel Garcia-Carpintero described one such case during the Granada workshop. But such cases arguably involve a metonymy, similar to that in virtue of which one can refer to, say, a person by means of a quotation. (Thus François Mitterrand's son Christophe was referred to in Africa as '*Papa m'a dit*'.)