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QUOTATION AND DEMONSTRATION

ABSTRACT. In "Quotation Marks: Demonstratives or Demonstrations?," Marga Reimer argues that quotation marks are demonstrations and that expressions enclosed with them are demonstratives. In this paper, I argue against her view. There are two objections. The first objection is that Reimer's view has unattractive consequences: there is more ambiguity, there are more demonstratives, and there are more English expressions than we thought. The second objection is that, unlike other ambiguous expressions, some expressions that are ambiguous on Reimer's view can't be disambiguated by using subscripts. This suggests that, contrary to her view, those expressions aren't really ambiguous.

1. INTRODUCTION

In "Quotation Marks: Demonstratives or Demonstrations?," Marga Reimer (1996) argues that quotation marks are demonstrations and that expressions enclosed with them are demonstratives. In this paper, I argue against her view. I present it in Section 2. In Sections 3 and 4, I present some problems with it.

2. REIMER'S VIEW

Let's start with normal cases of demonstration. Suppose that I utter

    (1)   I bought that from Emma.

while pointing at my copy of W.V.O. Quine's *Word and Object*. The token of 'that' in (1) is a *demonstrative*, and my pointing is a *demonstration*. Reimer (1996, p. 134) explains the distinction between demonstratives and demonstrations as follows: demonstratives are "linguistic expressions characteristically accompanied by demonstrations," whereas demonstrations are "devices of ostension (such as pointing) that serve to help fix the reference of demonstratives

by 'displaying' the intended referent (or something related to it)."
My pointing demonstrates my copy of *Word and Object*. Following
David Kaplan (1989, p. 490), let's say that the object demonstrated
by a demonstration is the *demonstratum* of that demonstration.
Let's also say that the object demonstrated by the demonstration
that accompanies a demonstrative is the demonstratum associated
with that demonstrative. For example, my copy of *Word and Object*
is the demonstratum of my pointing. It is also the demonstratum
associated with the token of 'that' in (1). In normal cases, the
referent of a demonstrative – that is, the object that it refers to –
is simply its associated demonstratum. For example, the token of
'that' in (1) refers to my copy of *Word and Object*. In normal cases
of demonstration, then, we have three things: (*i*) a demonstrative,
(*ii*) a demonstration, and (*iii*) a demonstratum-cum-referent. The
demonstrative is accompanied by a demonstration. The demonstra-
tion demonstrates a demonstratum. And the demonstratum is the
referent of the demonstrative.

But not every case of demonstration is normal. Suppose that I
utter

(2)   That was published in 1960.

also while pointing at my copy of *Word and Object*. As before, my
copy of *Word and Object* is both the demonstratum of my pointing
and the demonstratum associated with the token of 'that'. But,
unlike the token of 'that' in (1), the token of 'that' in (2) doesn't
refer to my copy of *Word and Object*. Rather, it refers to something
related to that object: namely, the book type of which my copy is a
token. This is a case of what Reimer (1996, p. 136) calls "deferred
reference." In normal cases of demonstration, reference and demon-
stration coincide: a demonstrative refers to the object demonstrated
by the demonstration that accompanies it. That is, the demonstrative
refers to its associated demonstratum. But, in cases of deferred
reference, reference and demonstration come apart: the demon-
strative refers to something other than the object demonstrated by
the demonstration that accompanies it. That is, the demonstrative
doesn't refer to its associated demonstratum. In ordinary cases of
deferred reference, then, we have *four* things: (*i*) a demonstrative,
(*ii*) a demonstration, (*iii*) a demonstratum, and (*iv*) a referent. The
demonstrative is accompanied by a demonstration. The demonstra-

tion demonstrates a demonstratum. But the demonstratum isn't the referent of the demonstrative. (This is what distinguishes cases of deferred reference from normal cases of demonstration.) Rather, the referent of the demonstrative is something related to (but not identical with) the demonstratum.

Now let's turn to quotation. Suppose that I utter

(3)   'Cat' has three letters.

On Reimer's view, the token of 'cat' in (3) is a demonstrative, and the quotation marks that enclose it are a demonstration. The quotation marks are a demonstration, because they demonstrate (or display, or point to) the token of 'cat' enclosed within them. Reimer (1996, p. 134) takes there to be some intuitive appeal to the idea that the quotation marks "are literally *pointing to* or (in other words) *demonstrating*" the token enclosed within them (original emphases). And that token is a demonstrative, because its reference is fixed in part by the demonstration that accompanies it: namely, the quotation marks. The token of 'cat' in (3) refers, not to its associated demonstratum (namely, itself), but rather to something related to it: namely, a linguistic type of which it is a token. This is a case of deferred reference. But it is not an ordinary case of deferred reference. In ordinary cases of deferred reference, as in normal cases of demonstration, the demonstrative and its associated demonstratum are distinct. For example, in (1) and (2), the demonstrative is the token of 'that', and its associated demonstratum is my copy of *Word and Object*. By contrast, in quotation the demonstrative *is* its associated demonstratum. For example, the token of 'cat' in (3) is doing double duty as both the thing that refers and the object demonstrated by the demonstration associated with the thing that refers. In cases of quotation, then, we have *three* things: (*i*) a demonstrative-cum-demonstratum, (*ii*) a demonstration, and (*iii*) a referent. The demonstrative is accompanied by a demonstration. The demonstration demonstrates a demonstratum. The demonstratum is the demonstrative. (This distinguishes quotation from ordinary cases of deferred reference and from normal cases of demonstration.) And the referent of the demonstrative is something that is related to (but not identical with) the demonstratum. (This is what makes quotation a case of deferred reference.)

We need to be careful in saying which linguistic type the token of 'cat' in (3) refers to. Reimer (1996, p. 137, n. 9) talks about a "demonstrative reading" and a "*non-quotational reading*" of a token enclosed within quotation marks (original emphases). This suggests that, on her view, the token enclosed within quotation marks in (3) is *ambiguous* between a reading on which it is a demonstrative and a reading on which it is not. For example, on the reading it has in (3), the token of 'cat' is not a token of the noun type that we are familiar with, a token of which occurs in

(4)   Never trust a cat in a hat.

Rather, on the reading it has in (3), the token of 'cat' is a demonstrative. In general, a token enclosed within quotation marks is given a demonstrative reading. The quotation marks demonstrate that token on its demonstrative reading. The token refers to something related to what the quotation marks demonstrate: at least typically, the token refers to the linguistic type of which it is a token, not on its demonstrative reading, but rather on its nondemonstrative reading. For example,

(5)   'Cat' is a nondemonstrative noun.

is true. The token enclosed within quotation marks refers to the linguistic type of which it is a token, not on the demonstrative reading it has in (5), but rather on the nondemonstrative reading it has in (4). And that linguistic type is a nondemonstrative noun.

One of the motivations for Reimer's view is that it explains why, as Corey Washington (1992, pp. 588, 590) points out, quotation marks can be omitted in quotation in spoken and written language. It is easy to omit quotation marks in quotation in spoken language. To see this, say

(6)   Cat has three letters.

out loud to yourself (without tracing quotation marks in the air with your fingers). Quotation marks can also be omitted in quotation in written language: for example, when a token of a linguistic type is italicized, as in

(7)   *Cat* has three letters.

or when a token of a linguistic type is displayed, as I've done with (1)–(7) themselves. The explanation, on Reimer's view, is simple.

Just as there are various ways of demonstrating a book (I can point at it, stare at it, take advantage of its being the only book on the table, etc.), there are various ways of demonstrating a token (I can enclose it within quotation marks, italicize it, display it, etc.). In quotation, we need to demonstrate a token. But we don't need quotation marks to do that. So they can be omitted.

3. SOME SURPRISING CONSEQUENCES

Reimer's view is not without its attractive features. But it is not without its problems either. Any view on which tokens enclosed within quotation marks are ambiguous between demonstrative and nondemonstrative readings has several surprising consequences. First, ambiguity is far more widespread in English than we might have suspected. Every token of any English expression type can be enclosed within quotation marks in an English sentence. For example,

(8)   'Cat' is an expression of English.

is an English sentence. It's even true. On the reading it has in (8), the token of 'cat' is a demonstrative. But the token of 'cat' doesn't have only a demonstrative reading; it also has a nondemonstrative reading. (To give the token of 'cat' in (8) its nondemonstrative reading, erase the quotation marks and the token of 'is an expression of English'. Then add tokens of 'Never trust a' and 'in a hat' before and after it.) So the token of 'cat' in (8) is ambiguous between demonstrative and nondemonstrative readings. The same goes for every other token of any English expression. So every such token that has a nondemonstrative reading turns out to be ambiguous.

Reimer explicitly says that the token of 'cat' in (8) has two readings: one on which it refers to a linguistic type, another on which it refers to a species of animal. But she doesn't explicitly say that the token is *ambiguous* between these two readings. Perhaps she would deny that the relation between the token and its readings is ambiguity. But it is hard to see what else that relation could be. It is not *polysemy*, in which an expression (for example, 'mouth') has distinct but related meanings. The linguistic type and the species of animal that tokens of 'cat' refer to just aren't related in the way that,

say, the mouth of a cave, the mouth of a person, and the mouth of a bottle are. Nor is it *generality*, in which an expression (for example, 'Jane's book') has a meaning that can be made more specific in different ways. The linguistic type and the species of animal just aren't related in the way that, say, the book that Jane owns, the book that she wrote, and the book that she picked for the book club are. And it isn't *context-sensitivity* either, in which an expression (for example, 'I') has a meaning that determines different referents in different contexts. There isn't a single meaning that determines the linguistic type in one context and the species of animal in another – at least not in the way that there is a single meaning, given by 'the speaker', that determines me in a context in which I'm speaking and you in a context in which you're speaking.

The second, related consequence, which Mario Gomez-Torrente (2001, pp. 125–126) mentions, is that there are far more demonstratives in English than we might have suspected. For example, on the reading it has in (8), the token of 'cat' is a demonstrative. The same goes for every other token of any English expression type. So every such token turns out to be a demonstrative (at least on one reading). To put the first and second points together, for every token of any English expression type, there is at least one reading of that token on which it is a demonstrative. For example, there is at least one reading of any token of 'cat' on which it is a demonstrative.

Is Reimer really committed to the claim that, on the reading on which it refers to a linguistic type, the token of 'cat' in (8) is a demonstrative? Why doesn't she say, as Washington (1992, p. 586) does, that it's a nondemonstrative noun, as it normally is? Reimer (1996, p. 137) argues that, on the reading it has when it is enclosed within quotation marks, a token can't always belong to the semantic category it normally belongs to. Otherwise, on the reading it has in

(9)   'Hit' is a verb.

the token of 'hit' would be a verb. But (9), which is grammatical, wouldn't be grammatical if its subject were a verb. So, on the reading it has in (9), the token of 'hit' can't be a verb. Reimer (1996, p. 137, n. 8) does say that she is open to the possibility that, on the reading it has when it is enclosed within quotation marks, a token belongs to some *sui generis* semantic category. But, aside from worries about what this *sui generis* semantic category might

be, if tokens enclosed within quotation marks aren't demonstratives, then Reimer's proposal to treat quotation marks as demonstrations makes less sense. We know that demonstrations characteristically accompany demonstratives. But we have no reason to think that they characteristically accompany expressions of some other, *sui generis* category. If tokens enclosed within quotation marks aren't demonstratives, then the answer to Reimer's title question – "Quotation Marks: Demonstratives or Demonstrations?" – should simply be "No."

A final consequence is that there are more English expression types than we might have suspected. Every token of any expression type of some natural language other than English can be enclosed within quotation marks in an English sentence. For example,

(10) 'Omelette avec jambon et fromage' is an expression of some natural language other than English.

is an English sentence. It's even true. On the reading it has in (10), the token of 'omellette avec jambon et fromage' is a demonstrative. And, presumably, that token is a token of an English expression type. Otherwise, English sentences would contain tokens that are not tokens of any English expression type. And the same goes for every other token of any expression type of some natural language other than English. So every such token turns out to be a token of an English expression type.

Indeed, every token of any expression type of no humanly possible language can be enclosed within quotation marks in an English sentence. For example,

(11) 'Rtslbid' is an expression of no humanly possible language.

is an English sentence. It might even be true. On the reading it has in (11), the token of 'rtslbid' is a demonstrative. And, presumably, that token is a token of an English expression type. The same goes for every other token of any expression type of no humanly possible language. So every such token turns out to be a token of an English expression type. It seems obvious that we can refer to expression types that aren't English expression types. But it doesn't seem at all obvious that we do so by turning tokens of those types into tokens of English expression types.

These consequences might not be unacceptable in principle. I am not offering transcendental arguments for the claim that, given that language-acquisition is possible, there just couldn't be that much ambiguity, that many demonstratives, or that many expression types in any natural language. But the consequences do make Reimer's view unattractive. For example, it is a general methodological maxim in the philosophy of language that, wherever we can, we should avoid positing ambiguities. This is what Paul Grice (1978, pp. 118–119) calls "Modified Occam's Razor." Modified Occam's Razor doesn't tell us to reject Reimer's view outright. But it does give us reason to prefer other views of quotation, according to which there isn't such widespread ambiguity.

4. DISAMBIGUATING DIFFICULTIES

On Reimer's view, most tokens are ambiguous between demonstrative and nondemonstrative readings. For example, the token enclosed within quotation marks in

 (5) 'Cat' is a nondemonstrative noun.

is ambiguous between demonstrative and nondemonstrative readings. The quotation marks indicate that, in (5), the enclosed token is given its demonstrative reading. But there are other ways of disambiguating tokens. For example, we could add subscripts. To indicate that a token is given a demonstrative reading, let's subscript it with a token of 'd', as in 'cat$_d$'. And, to indicate that a token is given a nondemonstrative reading, let's subscript it with a token of 'nd', as in 'cat$_{nd}$'. We can combine subscripts and quotation marks. The results are contrary to what we would expect if Reimer's view were true. This suggests that Reimer's view isn't true.

The quotation marks in (5) indicate that the enclosed token is given its demonstrative reading. We can also add a subscript to indicate this. At worst, we would expect the result to be redundant, since that the token is given its demonstrative reading would be "over-indicated" by the quotation marks and the subscript. But the result of adding a subscript to indicate that the token is given its demonstrative reading is not redundant. Rather, adding a subscript changes a true English sentence into a false one. For (5) is naturally interpreted as true, whereas

(12)　'Cat$_d$' is a nondemonstrative noun.

is naturally interpreted as false (assuming that, as Reimer supposes, there really is a demonstrative reading of 'cat').

The quotation marks in (5) indicate that the enclosed token is given its demonstrative reading. To be perverse, we could add a subscript to indicate that the enclosed token is given a *different*, nondemonstrative reading. We would expect the result to be incoherent, since that a token is given its demonstrative and nondemonstrative readings would both be indicated. But the result of using a subscript to indicate that the token is given its nondemonstrative reading is not incoherent. Rather, the result – namely,

(13)　'Cat$_{nd}$' is a nondemonstrative noun.

– is naturally interpreted as true.

Reimer can explain why (12) is false. Adding the subscript changes the demonstratum: in (5), the demonstratum is the token of 'cat', without the subscript; whereas, in (12), the demonstratum is the token of 'cat$_d$', with the subscript. Because of this change in demonstratum, there is a change in what the demonstrative refers to: in (5), the demonstrative refers to the linguistic type that the demonstratum (namely, itself) is a token of on the reading it has, not in (5), but rather in (4); whereas, in (12), the token of 'cat$_d$' refers to the linguistic type that the demonstratum (namely, itself) is a token of on the reading it has in (12). This is why (5) is true and (12) is false.

Reimer still needs to explain why changing the demonstratum changes the linguistic type that is referred to. After all, in both cases the demonstratum – namely, the token of 'cat' in (5) and the token of 'cat$_d$' in (12) – is a token that is given its demonstrative reading. But only in (12) does the demonstrative refer to the linguistic type that the demonstratum is a token of on its demonstrative reading. Why is that? Reimer could say that, while the token of 'cat' in (5) is ambiguous between demonstrative and nondemonstrative readings, the token of 'cat$_d$' in (12) is not; it has only the demonstrative reading. Adding subscripts disambiguates ambiguous tokens. It does this by creating new, unambiguous tokens. So the token of 'cat$_d$' in (12) has only a demonstrative reading. Although the token of 'cat' in (5) is ambiguous between demonstrative and nondemonstrative

readings, the nondemonstrative reading is a standard, default, or otherwise privileged reading. So the linguistic type that is referred to in (5) is the linguistic type that the token of 'cat' is a token of on its nondemonstrative reading. But the token of 'cat$_d$' in (12) doesn't have a nondemonstrative reading. So the linguistic type that is referred to is the linguistic type that the token of 'cat$_d$' is a token of on its demonstrative reading.

Reimer can thus explain why (12) is false, if she says that adding a subscript can create a new, unambiguous token – namely, the token of 'cat$_d$' in (12) – that has only a demonstrative reading. But, in that case, she can't explain why (13) is true. She can't even explain why (13) makes sense. If adding a subscript to a token that is ambiguous between demonstrative and nondemonstrative readings can create a new, unambiguous token that has only a demonstrative reading, then adding a subscript to that token can also create a new, unambiguous token – namely, the token of 'cat$_{nd}$' in (13) – that has only a nondemonstrative reading. But, on Reimer's view, a token enclosed within quotation marks has a demonstrative reading. So, on her view, the token of 'cat$_{nd}$' in (13) is unquotable; it can't coherently be enclosed within quotation marks. But, as (13) shows, it can.

Reimer could deny that adding a subscript can create a new, unambiguous token. But that would leave her without an explanation of why (12) is false. And it wouldn't give her an explanation of why (13) is true. To explain why (13) is true, she would still have to deny that subscripts can disambiguate tokens that are enclosed within quotation marks in the way that the quotation marks themselves do. She could say that subscripts can't disambiguate a token enclosed within quotation marks at all. Or she could say that subscripts can disambiguate a token only in the absence of quotation marks – that is, that quotation marks trump subscripts. For example, Reimer could say that, in (13), the subscripted token of '*nd*' doesn't indicate at all that the token of 'cat' is given its nondemonstrative reading. Or she could say that, to the extent that the subscript indicates that the token of 'cat' is given its nondemonstrative reading, this indication is overridden by an indication to the contrary provided by the quotation marks. But she would still need to explain *why* subscripts can't disambiguate tokens that are enclosed within quotation marks in the way that the quotation marks themselves do.

In ordinary sorts of ambiguity, ambiguous tokens can be dis-
ambiguated by adding subscripts. Reimer could say that subscripts
can't disambiguate tokens that are enclosed within quotation marks
(or at least that subscripts can't disambiguate tokens that are
enclosed within quotation marks in the way that the quotation marks
themselves do). But that would suggest that tokens enclosed within
quotation marks aren't ambiguous in any ordinary way. Reimer
could appeal to a different, *sui generis* sort of ambiguity, which
for some reason can't be disambiguated by adding subscripts. Or
she could appeal to a *sui generis* relation – other than ambi-
guity – between tokens, on the one hand, and their demonstrative
and nondemonstrative readings, on the other. There might not be
anything unacceptable in principle about appealing to such *sui
generis* relations. But, without saying more about what these rela-
tions are, Reimer won't have really told us what the relation is
between a token enclosed within quotation marks, on the one hand,
and the sort of reading it is given in that linguistic context, on the
other.

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