ABSTRACTS

C5.8 Philosophy of the Humanities and the Social Sciences

Rejection of conceptual scheme relativism: A defense of Donald Davidson
Yuliya Fadeeva, Philosophy, Duisburg-Essen University, Essen, GERMANY

A common argumentation concerning conflicts based on cultural differences is that the conflicting parties do not share one common conceptual scheme: Their conflict, it is claimed, is due to a form of semantic incommensurability arising out of different ways of conceptual organisation of the respective input, leading to insurmountable differences in meaning and, thus, intranslatability. Davidson (1974) argued against this form of conceptual relativism that relies on the idea of conceptual scheme and offers a theory of interpretation that precludes radical conceptual difference. Glock’s criticism (2008) attacks Davidson’s whole project as it is directed against his positive argumentation based on the principle of charity as well as his critique of conceptual scheme relativism. Glock provides three connected arguments that are supposed to show that Davidson’s position is altogether unconvincing and, additionally, why radically differing conceptual schemes are possible. First, he argues that Davidson’s general claim that translatability is a criterion of languagehood is wrong and presents counterexamples of conceptual scheme differences and intranslatable languages. Second, Glock gives reasons why the intralingual version of conceptual scheme (analytic-synthetic distinction) should be maintained. Third, Glock offers reasons, why the principle of charity is a too strong and implausible precondition on interpretation.

I argue that Glock’s criticism does not succeed as his arguments either fail to provide enough detail to support his claim or are missing the point. His first argument is dealing with a form of conceptual difference that is not meant by Davidson, supported by counterexamples clearly missing Davidson’s point. Glock’s second argument remains too vague and fails to support his claim in detail, while his attack on the principle of charity uses a very implausible reading of the principle. I defend Davidson’s ideas against Glock’s criticism and show why the latter fails to defy Davidson’s rejection of conceptual scheme relativism.

THE MEANING OF PEJORATIVES: Dependent and Independent Semantics
Pasi Valtonen, Department of Philosophy, King’s College London, London, UNITED KINGDOM

There are two major views concerning racial and ethnic pejoratives. One is non-truth-conditional view and the other is truth-conditional view. According to the first view, the badness of pejoratives is something non-truthconditional. According to the other view, there is something wrong with the semantics of pejoratives. In this talk, I will assess Timothy Williamson’s non-truth-conditional view. His idea is that a pejorative has the same extension and the same intension as the neutral term. For example, a pejorative ‘the Boche’ is salva veritate substitutional with a neutral term, ‘the German’. However, you can see the offence in the conventional implicature of ‘the Boche’. It implies that all Germans are cruel. That is not only offensive but also false. I will go on to present linguistic evidence and argue that Williamson’s view cannot accommodate the evidence. The problem is the substitutability. It seems clear that xenophobes do not use pejoratives and neutral terms coextensionally.

The evidence suggests that while the extension of the neutral terms is fairly stable, the extension of pejoratives varies greatly from speaker to speaker. The invited conclusion is that there should be independent semantics for pejoratives which at the same time shows what is wrong with pejoratives. My proposal is based Mark Sainsbury’s and Michael Tye’s Originalism. First, they suggest that concepts are distinguished on the basis of their origin, not on the basis of their content. Secondly, they distinguish thinker’s reference from standard reference. On the basis of the latter claim Originalism can handle the presented linguistic evidence and on basis of the first claim, we see what is wrong with pejoratives. There is a cognitive mistake concerning the origin of pejoratives: No one is cruel because he is German.

Sense and reversed (retrograde) semiosis in the Humanities
Konstantin Skripnik, Institute of Philosophy and Social Studies, Southern federal university, Rostov-on-Don, RUSSIAN FEDERATION

It is perhaps trivial to say that the notion of sense plays the central role in any discourse about the Humanities, and the sense is really cornerstone in the liberal studies. If one accept this assumption, it needs to formulate the certain procedures for generating and analyzing the sense.

One model of sense generating is modified process of semiosis, primary relation of which is relation between signified and signifier. Then this relation becomes a new signified, and calls for a new signifier. So, the process
continues further and further. The sense which was the result of primary relation between signified and signifier is changed at the every stage of this process. Sense looks like an onion or cabbage-head. This model of sense-formation is in a very simplified version of Peirce’s process of “unlimited semiosis”. It is not too hard to illustrate this process in the various branches of the Humanities. The analysis of the sense may be represented as a process of reversed (retrograde) semiosis – when one is looking for adequate sense of the subject of the humanities studies she has to dismount layer-by-layer in this “sense onion”. It is well known that Peirce’s “unlimited semiosis” is inseparably linked with his triadic model of a sign, so the offered model may be extended. At every stage of generation and, especially, analysis of the sense we have to take into account “personal” (an interpretant’s point of view) and “temporal” aspects of this enterprise. It seems it is what exactly we do in the history of philosophy or in understanding of the different phenomena of the Humanities.