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WAYS

ABSTRACT

There is more than one way to kill a cat. What are ways? Very little has been written about them in general, but they appear at crucial places in many philosophical discussions. Clarity over the ontology of ways could help in several areas of philosophy. After indicating where ways have been mentioned, I discuss briefly the corresponding linguistic feature, adverbs of manner, before outlining three theories: a Platonistic one making ways a complex kind of function, a Davidsonian one in which ways are (mainly) properties of events, and finally the theory I prefer, a particularist one based on the concept of a higher-order trope. The latter is connected with the theory of truth-makers and avoids ontological commitment to corresponding general objects.

1 Introduction

I want to draw attention to a neglected ontological category, that of ways, and suggest why it is important that more notice be taken of it. My interest is frankly anti-platonist (I prefer 'particularist'): by using ways I want to help avoid ontological commitment to general objects. By 'way' I mean what is also called 'manner', and in other languages is called *modus, (Art und) Weise, façon, maniére*, and not *via, iter, Weg, voie* . It is in this sense of 'way' that there is reputedly more than one to kill a cat. I shall first list a number of areas in which ways have been and may in future be important for philosophy, and consider briefly the linguistic phenomenology before turning to candidate theories of ways, the last of which I find the most attractive.

2. Historical Hints and Areas of Application

The notion of a way has cropped up in a number of important places in the history of philosophy, and I mention several, both to outline possible fields of application and to suggest why we should be interested in ways.

(l) Modal logic has its origin and its name in the idea that things may be so or not so, and propositions may be true or false, in more than one way: necessarily, actually, contingently, and so on.

(2) From Aristotle onwards, many philosophers have claimed that not all entities are or exist in the same way: there are different modes or ways of being.

(3) The medieval speculative grammarians were known as *modistae* because their key theoretical concept was that of a way of meaning, *modus significandum*. These ways of meaning were variously linked with ways of being (*modi essendi*) and ways of understanding (*modi intelligendi*).[1] The question whether ways of meaning mirror corresponding ways of being was the chief issue in the ensuing dispute between modists and terminists, the latter taking their cue from Ockham in preferring an ontologically deflationary position which both denied the correspondence and also refused to reify ways themselves.[2] I want to see how far Ockham's deflation can be taken, and have used a slightly different notion of 'way of meaning' (corresponding to the medievel *function*) to try to give a nominalistically acceptable semantics for Leśniewski's logic.[3]

(4) A well-known modern theory of meaning likewise takes as its point of departure the observation that expressions mean their objects in different ways: "Es liegt ... nahe, mit einem Zeichen ... außer dem Bezeichneten, was die Bedeutung des Zeichens heißen möge, noch das verbunden zu denken, was ich den Sinn des Zeichens nennen möchte, worin die Art des Gegebenseins enthalten ist."[4]

(5) Early medieval accounts of states of affairs such as that of Abelard talk of a "way in which things stand to one another" (*quidam rerum modus habendi se*[5]). Similar locutions inform modern views on states of affairs: e.g. "Im Sachverhalt verhalten sich die Gegenstände in bestimmter Art und Weise zueinander"[6].

(6) Not only the ways in which things are, but the ways in which things might have been, have been subject to attention. For example, David Lewis says: "I ... believe in the existence of entities that might be

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1. Cf. Covington l984, pp.25–35.
2. See Adams 1984.
3. Simons 1985.
4. Frege 1892, p.26.
5. Abelard 1970, p.160.
6. Wittgenstein 1922, 2.031.

called 'ways things might have been'. I prefer to call them 'possible worlds'."[7]

(7) Ways things are or might be often figure, under such terms as 'outcome' and 'atomic event', in introducing fundamental concepts of combinatorics, game theory, action theory, probability and statistics. To take one example as representative of many: the probability of throwing a seven with fair dice is said to be the quotient

number of ways the dice may show 7/
number of ways the dice may turn up.

(8) The adverbial theory of perception and thought asssciated notably with Wilfrid Sellars[8] claims that analyses of sentences purporting to refer to objects of sensation or thought ought to be analysed "adverbially", so that apparent reference to such objects disappears. Put into the material mode, this means that sensing something or thinking of something is being minded in a certain way. There is clearly a connection between this issue and that raised by Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction. (In this case I think an adverbial theory is not right as an account of acts.[9])

(9) A somewhat deviant usage is that of several modern philosophers who follow Descartes in using 'mode' to mean the same as 'attribute' or 'quality'.

There are doubtless other areas where ways are important, but these suffice to show that some notion of way is invoked in the discussion of philosophically not unimportant issues like truth, being, meaning, states of affairs, possible worlds, probability, and intentionality. This suggests that clarifying the ontology of ways, even if the only result is to show there is no such thing, will pay dividends over a wide range of issues.

3. Linguistic Phenomenology

In the presence of an apparently fundamental category, it always helps to withdraw initially to examine the linguistic facts. The linguistic counterpart of a way is the adverb or adverbial of manner, most typically attached to a verb describing an action, event or process: 'He walked *quickly*', 'She parried the blow *with both fists*', 'It is raining *heavily*', 'The cortege pulled *slowly* away from the cathedral'. An adverb may also modify a copula with adjective complement: 'They are *happily* married', 'That 2+2=4 is

necessarily true'. Use with a noun complement is however rare. A number of languages have more or less regular morphological devices for forming adverbs of manner from adjectives and nouns: English *-ly* (Anglo-Saxon *-lice*), Ger. *-lich*, *-erweise*, Latin *-iter*, Fr. *-ment*. Several of these devices show the etymological connection between the two meanings of 'way' (manner/path) mentioned at the outset.

A prima facie indication of the categorial status of ways is their having unitarily lexicalized interrogatives, demonstratives, quantifiers, etc. of their own (for brevity I mention just English and Latin, the latter being rather richer): 'how', *qua(m)* , *quomodo* , *quemadmodum*; 'so', 'thus', *sic, ita, tam*; 'somehow', *aliqua*; 'likewise', *item*; 'otherwise', *aliter*. Another indication that we are on the track of something fundamental is that relevant dictionary entries for 'way' and 'manner' circle back on themselves very swiftly, so for example the *OED* for 'way': "manner in which something is done or takes place", and for 'manner': "way in which something is done or takes place".

4 Two Theories

Since there has been little or no explicit discussion of the ontology of ways, our first recourse is to existing theories of adverbial modification, and we shall in the first instance simply read the ontology off in the usual way from these theories. There are two principal candidates. The first is a Davidsonian theory to the effect that ways are properties of events. I shall come back to this. The second applies a theory propounded by various philosophers such as Parsons, Clark, and Montague, to the effect that adverbs of manner are a certain kind of predicate modifier, so ways are something like functions from predicate-intensions to predicate-intensions. A standard account of this will be then that a way is a function from a function from possible worlds to sets of individuals in the domain of the respective world to another function from possible worlds to sets of individuals in the domain of the respective world. Since whatever is or does something in a certain way is or does this thing, this is usually subject to the restriction that the extension of the modified predicate in each world is a subset of the extension of the unmodified predicate.

I have two comments to make on this kind of theory. Firstly, it is ontologically extravagant, and a good deal of the attraction of an ontology of ways is that such extravagance could perhaps thereby be circumvented. Roughly speaking, if that's what talk of

7. Lewis 1973, p.84.
8. Cf. Sellars 1969.
9. Cf. Mulligan / Smith 1986.

ways amounts to, then there is not much point in taking a special interest in them. Secondly, and very briefly, it strikes me as vastly implausible, if that's what ways are, that we can ever, but especially as children learning to use adverbs, discriminate different ways of doing things or comprehend the words for different ways. This objection applies indeed to much model-theoretic semantics, but in this case the remoteness of the putative denotata of adverbs from any experience makes the case particularly poignantly.

Consider then the Davidsonian alternative. To say that John is running noisily or loves Mary passionately is to say that John's present running is noisy, his present love for Mary is passionate, and so on. Using Broad's term 'occurrent' to subsume not only events but also processes and states, ways turn out to be certain properties of occurrents, namely those of a qualitative (rather than relative or comparative) nature. Since we clearly perceive many occurrents, the ability to discriminate ways amounts to the ability to qualitatively classify occurrents of a kind: runnings into heavy, light, fleet, clumsy, noisy, etc., all of which appears to be within our power. The apparent (near-) equivelence of sentence-pairs like

John is running noisily ::

John's present running is noisy

trades nicely (in English at least) two morpho-syntactic derivations: on the one hand we have an adverb, morphologically derived from the adjective, on the other hand we have a nominalization, 'John's running', syntactically less fundamental than a simple clause 'John run'. Neither sentence is thus obviously closer to "grass roots" than the other, which adds to the appeal of the Davidsonian analysis. Ways would then not form a basic category. The difference between ways and other kinds of property would be explained in terms of the fact that ways are properties of occurrents, not continuant things like John, that other adverbs and adverbials are relative ('away from the cathedral'), frequentative ('twice'), etc. The theory would also account for the fact that there has been a tendency to use the terminology of ways, how things are, modes of being etc., to apply to continuant things as well, so that to say that John is blond is to ascribe to him a certain way of being, which, without frills, simply amounts to ascribing him a property, as in the case of occurrents.

This line of theory is I think very strong, perhaps correct. A reason for taking ways seriously as universals is that the distinguishing and counting of ways always seems to treat these as something general: if John and Mary cook coq au vin in the same way this means that each individual cooking of coq au vin by John or by Mary is performed in a manner relevantly like the other, but this way is not itself multiplied in the multiplicity of cookings.

5. A Trope Theory

Nevertheless we are not obliged (here or in general) to read ontological facts directly off linguistic facts. Without being able in the present short compass to offer all the arguments required to fully support it, let me pose an alternative view. Ontological facts sufficient to account for the possibility and success of predication are provided by particularist theories which take seriously the notion of individual accidents, moments or *tropes*.[10] On this view there is, as in Ockham, no isomorphism between words and things: ontology and grammar are skew to one another. All that is required for the truth of a logically atomic sentence is that there be something connected with the referents of its terms in virtue of which it is true: some truth-maker for it. So consider occurrents which essentially involve continuants, such as John's present cooking of this coq au vin. Ontologically speaking, the cooking (an extended event with various parts) is a trope, ontologically dependent among other things on John, the chicken, a quantity of red wine, and a suitable vessel and heat source for its occurrence. This trope will itself have both parts and tropes, for example the sautéing of the chicken will be part of the cooking, the particular order in which the ingredients are added or the deftness of John's manipulations will be tropes of it. Tropes of the cooking will serve to make true sentences about the way the chicken is cooked: e.g. the particular deftnesses of John's hand movements will make it true that his cooking of the coq au vin is deft, and this trope, together with the more complex trope on which depends, namely the cooking, will make it true that John cooked the coq au vin deftly. On this view (which I can here only sketch and whose details need to be clarified and defended) the adverbial sentence

John cooked the coq au vin deftly

has as its truth-makers the complex trope of the cooking together with its trope of deftness (corresponding to the verbal component 'cook deftly'), while the closely related event-predication

John's cooking of the coq au vin was deft

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10. See Mulligan / Smith / Simons 1984 and the literature there cited.

requires us to mention only the second-order trope of deftness (corresponding to the verbal component 'be deft'), at least as a shorthand for whatever this deftness consists of *in concreto*. That the one cannot be true unless the other is true is guaranteed ontologically by the formal-ontological law that a trope of a trope cannot exist unless the trope of which it is a trope exists: the deftness is *de re* necessarily the deftness of this individual cooking. Indeed, since the existence of this deftness entails the existence of the cooking of which it is a trope, the deftness alone will guarantee the truth of either sentence. In this respect the recognition of non-substantial individuals as truthmakers is more flexible than a standard correspondence theory of truth, since it allows both that the same item or items may make more than one sentence true (the deftness makes it true also that John moves his hands deftly), and the same sentence may be reckoned to have no unique truth-maker, but we may make a larger or smaller selection from the complex interwoven plurality of entities involved in making the sentence true.[11] Truth bearers and their truth-makers stand in a many-many relation.

The complexity of the configurations of individual entities which exist independently of our cognition offers us a rich field for drawing distinctions and recognizing similarities, and of these only few get distinguished and marked linguistically. Where we recognize similarities across cases, and these similarities relate second-order tropes, we have a term for a way. Whether this term finds adverbial, adjectival or nominal expression, or more than one (e.g. deft, deftly, deftness, with deft movements) makes no difference to the ontological facts, which are skew to the syntactic divisions. The richness of this field of enquiry ensures that the ways waiting for our recognition are countless. There is literally no counting the ways people have cooked coq au vin, or the ways one can do it, because 'way', like 'object', 'property', 'relation', is a *formal* term, lacking anything in its meaning which enables us to distinguish and count ways. Only in a context in which 'way' is put to work can we do this, and then usually only if we somehow restrict or specify what is to count. So the usual statements of problems of combinatorics and probability, where they do not lapse into incoherence, as in 'How many ways can four indistinguishable lions be put into three indistinguishable cages?', presuppose that almost all factors are neglected (e.g.

the method of insertion or the speed with which it takes place). Only in this way do we get neat manageable problems and clear ways of counting ways.

The view I have sketched is particularistic, in that the fundamental entities, higher-order tropes, are individual, not general. For these we already have or may construct general concepts. These concepts are a subclass of property-concepts in general, if by these we mean those corresponding to predications made true by (monadic) tropes, since there are tropes which are not higher-order (such as shapes). The attractiveness of ways for particularists such as Ockham may lie in the fact that natural terms for them are adverbial, and from here to nominal terms ('reification') there are *two* steps to be taken. But this would only matter if nominalization had any ontological significance.

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11. For further details, see Mulligan / Simons / Smith 1984.