

Preface of second edition of *Rationality*

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In the spring of 1963, while trying to understand Kant's Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, I caught myself equating the capacity to *judge that P* with the ability to *say that P*. It dawned on me that I didn't believe this; but when I tried to settle what I *did* believe about how judgment or belief relates to linguistic capacity, everything went dark. Really dark: I put to myself this question:

When an amoeba oozes northward, away from a drop of acid in its saucer, why isn't it saying - or at least showing that it thinks - that there is acid to the south of it?

and I was stumped for an answer.

Throughout that summer I spent about twelve hours a day writing my way out into the daylight. The little that I didn't throw away was reshaped and reorganized by Michael Tanner and myself, after which Gilbert Ryle and other friends showed me how to improve it further. Next year it appeared as *Rationality*.

In the book I *stipulate* that 'rationality' is to stand for whatever human possession it is that creates a mentalistic difference of kind between us and other terrestrial animals. The trigger for this was the time-worn definition of 'man' as 'rational animal', echoed also in Ryle's Riddell Lecture

'Rational Animal', which appeared at about the same time. So my book has little to do with 'rationality' in any contemporary sense of that term.

Even its ostensible topic, the difference between man and beast, was an organizing principle rather than a driving force. What started me off was the question of what it takes for a creature to be able to judge, or to *think that P* for some values of P, and what I like best about *Rationality* is what it says about that. In the course of exploring the question, however, I had constantly in mind the then-popular idea, which still has some friends, that the ability to believe anything stands or falls with language. I didn't and don't agree with this, but in the course of writing the book I came to the conclusion that beliefs about the past and general beliefs cannot be *manifested* by creatures that don't have languages and, I thence inferred, cannot be *had* by such creatures. I also argued that beliefs of each of these kinds requires beliefs of the other kind. So what marks us off from the beasts, I concluded, is that we can cognitively escape from what is present and particular: from the present into the past, from the particular into the general.

The past-general doctrine seemed to help with Kant's Transcendental Deduction. The issue there was the ca-

capacity to accompany one's thoughts or experiences with the thought 'I think. . .', and that, I argued in my *Kant's Analytic* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1966), uses the concept of oneself, i.e. of something that stretches back into the past, and so (mind the bump!) it needs the ability to make judgments about the past. On the strength of *Rationality* I contended that creatures who can do *that* must have languages, which made it seem reasonable to understand Kant's classification of kinds of judgment as really a taxonomy of linguistic forms.

That line of thought was wrong, I now see. Granted that the thought 'I think. . .' involves the concept of something that does in fact stretch back into the past, it doesn't have to be a past-looking thought. So the whole Kantian side of the exercise came to nothing, so far as I can see. But my arguments in *Rationality* for the link between past-looking and general judgments, and between that pair and language, still seem to me to be worth considering. I was being too hasty when I criticised and retracted them in my *Linguistic Behaviour* (Cambridge University Press, 1976).

In all of this I was drifting through the territory of the question of how beliefs relate to language, but I didn't contribute anything to that except for the judgment that the relation is not one of absolute requirement. I had no chance of giving a good positive answer, I now think, without bringing Grice's theory of meaning into the story. I was at the time vaguely puzzled about why I wasn't using that, given how much I admired and agreed with it. Years later I saw what had blocked its entry: in *Rationality* I started with the honey-bees' general systems of behavior, whereas

what brings Grice's theory into play is the single meaningful action—the solitary gesture by which someone means that P. That seed could not grow in the soil I was tilling.

Anyway, what kept the work going through that summer, and what I hope keeps *Rationality* alive today, is less what it says about man/beast, and much less what it might imply for Kant or might show about judgment and language, than its opening up of the general question of how nonlinguistic behavior relates to the attribution of cognitive states. That is a more popular topic for philosophers now than it was in 1963, and *Rationality* can claim to have come on the scene early and unprompted.

In addition to the complex thesis about what is needed to break out, cognitively, from the prison of what is present and particular, some other things in the book have a chance of being worthwhile. The literature in the past two decades says a good deal about what makes it all right to attribute *any* beliefs and desires to an animal, and about what counts *against* specific attributions. There has been less discussion of the question of what kinds of behavior *support* this or that *specific* belief attribution. *Rationality* tackles the question head on, and I count that among its virtues. I still like the idea expressed late in Section 2, namely that whether a pattern of nonlinguistic behavior justifies attributing to the behaving animal a thought involving the concept C depends in part on whether C is needed to describe the pattern itself, i.e. to mark off the class of environments in which the relevant behavior occurs. I am building on this in some of my present work.