1. The Essential Indexical

Perry’s examples:

The Careless Shopper: “I am making a mess.”
The Tardy Professor: “The meeting starts now.”
The Lost Hiker: “This is the Mt. Tallac trail.”

According to Perry, if we replace the indexical (‘I’, ‘now’, ‘this’) with another, non-indexical, term with the same referent (in that context), we get a sentence that does not capture what the subject has come to believe.

Locating beliefs: beliefs that are about where one is, when it is, and who one is.

These beliefs are essentially indexical, as Perry puts it.

2. The Doctrine of Propositions

Propositions: are abstract objects; they are the objects of belief. They are also the bearers of truth values.

Three clauses:

i. Belief is a relation between a believer and a proposition.

ii. Propositions have absolute truth-value. (I.e., the truth-value of propositions is not context-dependent, does not vary from context to context.)

iii. The individuation (the separateness; the ‘telling apart’) of propositions is ‘fine-grained’ and involves more than just truth-values. It also involves something like Fregean sense.

So, what’s the problem with the Doctrine of Propositions and indexicals?

Let’s consider one of the examples again: The Careless Shopper.

John started out believing that the shopper with the torn sack was making a mess.

He did not believe that he was making a mess. But he comes to believe the sentence ‘I am making a mess’.

But this sentence does not have an absolute truth-value. Therefore, it can’t express a proposition.

But propositions are the objects of belief.

So, the advocate of the Doctrine of Propositions must identify the “missing conceptual ingredient”.

But none of the candidates for this missing component are plausible.

So, the Doctrine of Propositions cannot account for locating beliefs.

Responses:

1. Communicative shortcuts.

2. No general replacement.

Perry: there is something lacking in the propositions offered in response.