

PLING228 Semantics Research Seminar

de re reference and quantifying in

1 Kripke on Universal Exportation

Universal exportation: John believes the F is $G \rightarrow$ the F is such that John believes it is G .

Suppose John has false belief that there are 10 planets in solar system.

Let the F = the unique object that is John if there are 10 planets in solar system, and is the Eiffel tower otherwise.

2 Kaplan

- (1) $\exists x \exists \alpha [R(\alpha, x, \text{Ralph}) \text{ and Ralph believes } \ulcorner \alpha \text{ is a spy } \urcorner]$

Where, R means that “(i) α denotes x , (ii) α is a name of x for Ralph, and (iii) α is (sufficiently) vivid.” Being a name ‘of x for Ralph’ us meant to enforce a causal condition of acquaintance. Note names are not really names, and vividness is really a condition requiring a certain grain of descriptive information.

Kaplan notes as we did above that Quine’s view does not allow him a (de re) sense in which Ralph doesn’t believe of Ortcutt that he is a spy.

That is we have:

- (2) John believes₁ (y . [y is not a spy], Ortcutt)

But we cannot have:

- (3) NOT John believes₁ (y . [y is a spy], Ortcutt)

On pain of contradiction.

On Kaplan’s view there is a kind of lower scope negation without inconsistency, namely:

- (4) $\exists x \exists \alpha [R(\alpha, x, \text{Ralph}) \text{ and Ralph doesn't believe } \ulcorner \alpha \text{ is a spy } \urcorner]$

This isn’t inconsistent with

- (5) $\exists x \exists \alpha [R(\alpha, x, \text{Ralph}) \text{ and Ralph believes } \ulcorner \alpha \text{ is a spy } \urcorner]$

Since even if witness for x is same, witness for α may be distinct.

3 Questions on Kaplan

As Stalnaker notes about Kaplan, de re attitude ascriptions (even to individuals) are quantifications over beliefs.

- (6) $\text{Ortcutt} = x, \exists \alpha [R(\alpha, x, \text{Ralph}) \text{ and Ralph believes } \ulcorner \alpha \text{ is a spy } \urcorner]$

This doesn’t attribute a single belief to Ralph but rather says there is some belief of a certain form that he has.

We can try to question the plausibility of this analysis. (Here not following Stalnaker.) Here’s a scenario:

Ralph goes to an AA meeting thinking it is an APA meeting and looking for someone to talk to about Quine on modality. He doesn’t find anyone who he thinks suitable (though he also doesn’t realize the people he are all AA members). Amongst the AA members is Tom Thirst, disguised, who Ralph would very much like to find about Quine’s views on modality from.

- (7) From no AA member did Ralph believe he could find out about modality.

We get this sort of logical form:

- (8) No AA members x is such that Ralph believed he could find out about modality from x .

Intuitively this is true. But it turns out false on Kaplan’s semantics:

- (9) No AA member x is such $\exists\alpha[R(\alpha, x, \text{Ralph})$ and Ralph believed $\ulcorner$ he could find out about modality from $\alpha\urcorner$]

The problem is that Tom Thirst makes this fail. (Maybe this is just a scope paradox?)

Similarly, Suppose John knows the president of the astrological society from TV but runs into him at a cocktail party not recognizing him.

- (10) If John thinks the president of the astrological society will tell him about Neptune, he will ask him.

On the de dicto reading this does not properly express John's disposition towards the man he is talking to at the cocktail party, on the de re reading, it is too easily true.

Options here: we could replace existential quantification over guises with contextual specification of guises, so they are free variables in logical form, not quantified over. Or we can allow contextual restriction of existential quantification. Either of these options might also be used to replace Kaplan's two conditions on exportation (vividness and of-ness).

How do we get data to tell these options apart?

Argument that we need existential quantification over guises:

- (11) Everyone in Gainesville thinks Ortcutt is a spy.

Suppose everyone is in Ralph's state, but some think the man in the brown hat is a spy, and some think the pillar of the community is a spy. (Does this argument work? Isn't there a guise that might work, e.g. a very specific disjunctive one.)

4 Russelianism, Hesperus/Phosphorus and Quantifying In

Naïve Russellians (e.g. Scott Soames in some work) argue that belief attributions with proper names have a single, non-quantificational semantics without any scope ambiguity:

- (12) Ralph believes Ortcutt is a spy.

This means that Ralph bears the belief relation to the Russell proposition $\langle \text{Ortcutt}, \text{spyhood} \rangle$.

Double vision is not allowed, because (12) reports a contradictory belief from this report:

- (13) Ralph believes Ortcutt is not a spy.

However, many neo-Russellian's handle proper names in attitude reports by supposing some sort of descriptive guise gets into the report, thus leading to the same issues as faces a Kaplanian account where quantification over guises is the key to understanding the de re/de dicto report. Still it is unclear what difference the *scope* of a name makes if names themselves do not have descriptive material. (As opposed to a Fregean account where they are supposed to have senses.)

- (14) Ralph believes Hesperus is Phosphorus.

Similar issues?

5 Stalnaker

Stalnaker helpfully separates out the idea of singular thought from the Russellian project, by treating as singular a canonical result of applying a function from individuals to propositions. So we have a function that takes John to worlds where John is tall. (The 'is tall' function.) Stalnaker seems to think some attributions are of this sort (attributions of *singular propositions*) but some are not. Stalnaker writes (my boldface):

There is, of course, a daunting general problem of saying what it is for a way the world might be (or a set of such ways) to represent the way the world is according to some person. The problem of intentionality is the problem of saying how believers must be related to the objects, properties, and relations that are used to characterize the world according to them in order for the characterization to be

correct. But what is required for a believer to have a belief about a particular individual is not some very strong acquaintance relation with the individual, or some rich and detailed conception of it. This is neither necessary nor sufficient. As the familiar puzzle cases (the Babylonians and Hesperus/Phosphorus, Ralph and Ortcutt, Pierre and London/Londre, Lois and Superman/Clark Kent, etc.) bring out, one may be strongly acquainted with some object or person in different ways. In such cases, one cannot (at least without some special contextual clues) aptly and unambiguously characterize the world as it is according to that person as a function of the individual. It is clear from Quine's story, for example, that in the world according to Ralph, there are two different persons (the man on the beach and the man in the brown hat), one a spy and one not, both of whom are related to Ralph (in the world according to him) in ways that Bernard J. Ortcutt is actually related to Ralph. Which one of these men in the world according to Ralph is the real Ortcutt? **No plausible solution to the problem of intentionality will yield a determinate answer to this question, which means that one cannot unambiguously characterize the world according to Ralph as a function of Ortcutt.** On the other hand, there are cases in which one's conception of someone or something is thin and mainly inaccurate but is nevertheless a conception that uniquely connects the believer to a particular individual, at least in the relevant context. In this kind of case, a *de re* belief ascription, a belief ascription with a singular proposition as the content ascribed, may be apt, and correct, despite the believer's impoverished conception. Even if I know little about Uzbekistan, and even if some of my few beliefs about it are wrong, it is still Uzbekistan that I believe to be a former Soviet republic; in the world according to me, it is the actual Uzbekistan that used to be a Soviet republic.

Only if what propositional attitude an individual holds is itself contextually dependent (as Stalnaker may well think), can we reconcile these two judgments. Stalnaker writes:

But this assumption of that argument [Kaplan and Quine's effectively] was that Ralph does not lose any beliefs in the change from the divided stories to the combined story. But

this assumption is not enough when we recognize the context-dependence of belief attributions. In general, even when the state of the believer remains the same, the belief attributions that are appropriate or correct may change with a shift in the context of attribution.

Stalnaker takes *de re* belief attribution at face value: attribution of singular proposition. He denies though Quine's scenario: one cannot appropriately in the same context attribute to Ralph contradictory beliefs. Not quite data denial: as he might argue that the two sentences force accommodation of different contexts. But he must deny (at pain of mid-sentence context shifts):

- (15) Ralph thinks Ortcutt is a spy, and also thinks Ortcutt is not a spy.

Stalnaker thinks a context must pick out a unique (singular proposition) for a *de re* attribution. In particular 'A proposition must be determined, relative to the derived context set, as a function of the individual, which is to say that the individual determined must exist as a single individual in each of the possible situations in the derived context set.'

So context-sensitivity now goes to what beliefs can be appropriately ascribed not what descriptive guise individuals are picked out under.

Plausibility? Well we need to rule out (15), which doesn't seem like too high a cost.¹ Beyond this: well we might be able to translate some guise stories into Stalnakerian pragmatic stories? That is, contexts privilege a certain set of descriptions for picking out individuals *de re*, pragmatics forces these to not lead to contradictory beliefs.

6 Aloni [2005]

Kaplanian in spirit but departs in several respects. **i)** Not just *de re* quantification but quantification in general is mediated by concepts/senses: variables don't range over individuals but individual concepts. **ii)** As

¹We don't need to completely rule out (15), but we need to pragmatically take as expressing the impossibility of Ralph having a singular thought about Ortcutt.

such, Kaplan’s existential quantification over senses/individual concepts is superfluous. **iii)** Constraints are assumed on which of these are in the domain of a (*de re*) quantification, but much of the work is pragmatic – no general definition of acquaintance, etc. as part of semantics (of *de re* attributions).

(16) Logical forms for Ortcutt case

- a. $\exists x_n(x_n = o \wedge \Box S(x_n))$ = (60b)
Ralph believes that Ortcutt is a spy.
- b. $\exists x_m(x_m = o \wedge \Box \neg S(x_m))$ = (61b)
Ralph believes that Ortcutt is not a spy.

remember: variables here range over individual concepts such “the most handsome man in the room”. Subscripts indicate that these (may) be restricted to different domains of individual concepts, which are contextually determined.

However, semantic constraints are imposed on possible domains. A domain must be a “conceptual cover”: a set of concepts such that, in every (relevant) world, every individual is picked out by exactly one of them, though not necessarily rigidly. Essentially, a conceptual cover is a domain of “individuals”, “specified in a determinate way”: concepts rich enough to be in one-one correspondence with the domain, in every relevant circumstance. This allows *all* quantifications to be over individual concepts, not just *de re* ones in some ad hoc way as in Kaplan’s theory: the “type” problem is solved by generalisation to the worst case as it were. Without restriction to domains that are conceptual covers, counting problems would arise (there are more individual concepts than individual) and there would be a risk of too much contextual restriction (which could e.g. lead to unwanted failures of existential generalisation).

On the other hand, we have neither a guarantee that non-contradictory beliefs are attributed in “double vision” cases, nor that exportation is blocked – i.e. no absolute fix to shortest spy problem. It all depends on the choice of cover. For example if n includes “the man seen at the beach” and m includes “the man in the brown hat” we get non-contradictory beliefs, but not if $m = n$, for they may include only one of the latter two concepts, or else they wouldn’t be a cover. This, Aloni claims, is desired and a better fit to data than Kaplan’s theory, based on the following kinds of considerations:

Odette’s Lover. Consider the following situation described by Andrea Bonomi.

Thanks to some clues, Swann has come to the conclusion that his wife Odette has a lover, but he has no idea who his rival is, although some positive proof has convinced him that this person is going to leave Paris with Odette. So he decides to kill his wife’s lover, and he confides his plan to his best friend, Theo. In particular, he tells Theo that the killing will take place the following day, since he knows that Odette has a rendezvous with her lover. [. . .] Unknown to Swann, Odette’s lover is Forcheville, the chief of the army, and Theo is a member of the security staff which must protect Forcheville. During a meeting of this staff to draw up a list of all the persons to keep under surveillance, Theo (who, unlike Swann, knows all the relevant details of the story) says:

(39) Swann wants to kill the chief of the army.

meaning by this that Swann is to be included in the list.

The head of the security staff accepts Theo’s advice. [. . .

] Swann is kept under surveillance. A murder is avoided.

(Bonomi, 1995, pp. 167-168)

The problem for Kaplan, A says, is that if his semantic requirements for acquaintance are weak enough to make “Odette’s lover” a “vivid” name, such that (39) is correctly predicted true, then it will also come out true, contrary to intuition, that:

(40) Swann believes of the chief of the army that he is Odette’s lover.

Thus the claim is that if there were a general semantic constraint on *de re* belief as Kaplan proposes, it is either too strong (to account for (39)) or it is too weak (to solve the shortest spy problem). A says (before giving her proposal), “A natural way out of this impasse would be to accept that one and the same representation can be suitable in one occasion and not in another.” Thought is that the choice of conceptual cover (hence of “guises”) is determined by general pragmatic principles of salience, coherence, etc. In the case at hand “Odette’s lover” is apparently the only relevant concept Swann has, and using it for (40) leads to a trivial truth, whose utterance would be pragmatically pointless.

On the other hand it’s not clear that Kaplan can’t appeal to this same idea – presumably asserting his truth conditions would also typically imply that

one had non-trivial grounds for assertion? Perhaps a better way to make Aloni's point is this. In the Ortcutt case, we might want to say that there is a sense in which 'Ralph believes that Ortcutt is a spy' is true, and a sense in which it is false. On Kaplan's semantics it's one or the other.

Still as shown above we might want variability of guises with quantification over attitude holders ((11)). So a more complex version of Aloni would be needed even if otherwise plausible. The situation is reminiscent of other cases in the literature (tense, implicit domain restriction, etc.).

Other (probably related) worry: Is it really necessary to describe all *de re* beliefs that there be a contextually given cover? Suppose John tells you an Ortcutt story, but it's a complete fabrication. Ralph saw nobody at the beach, nor in a brown hat. In this context, the following can truly report John's (false) beliefs that Ralph has the relevant *de re* beliefs. But there appears to be no (salient) cover in either case, since neither of the two descriptions actually refers and they are all that the context provides explicitly.

- (17) a. John believes that Ralph believes that the man in the brown hat is a spy.
 b. John believes that Ralph believes that the man at the beach is not a spy.

7 Options

- Neo-Kaplanian views: contextually restricted relation R restricting what descriptions allow exportation. *De re* thought is always under a descriptive guise (though some subset may have a trivial description: i.e.
- Aloni: all quantification is quantification over individual concepts relative to a conceptual cover of the domain. We probably also need quantification over conceptual covers?
- Stalnaker: which singular propositions are accessible is determined by context of attribution not context of belief. *De re* quantification is just as it looks on surface. (Russellian can help himself to this).
- Pragmatic Naïve Russellian: Neo-Kaplanian but as pragmatics not semantics.

References

Maria Aloni. Individual concepts in modal predicate logic. *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 34:1–64, 2005.