

Week 10 Notes  
Phil. 2421: Philosophy of Language

The order of topics I want to discuss is:

Intro:

Traditional account is in 3 parts:

1. True/false as status of claimables.

Claimables are expressed by (uses of-- "statements") declarative sentences.

To invoke "propositions" is already to be deep in theory.

This status is independent of relation to persons.

Compare complementary (along subjective/objective dimension) Cartesian view of content as world-independent: representational purport to subject could be just as it is independently of how the world it represents is, ie independently of relation to world.

2. Taking-true/taking-false as attitude of interlocutors towards claimables.

3. Truth *conditions* as content and definition of claimables.

When does something that by having those T-conditions counts as as claimable count as having the status?

I'll make a distinction within each of those dimensions.

There are three orthogonal distinctions I make where the tradition has single items.

1. I have two normative statuses, commitment and entitlement. The tradition has only one: truth.

Each of these is dyadic: committed/not-committed, entitled/not-entitled, true/not-true.

And they are “statuses” in somewhat different senses: all are statuses of claimables, but commitment and entitlement are person- or interlocutor-*relative* statuses of claimables, and truth is not person- or interlocutor relative.

Taking the status of flammable contents to be interlocutor-relative is a kind of pragmatism.

Insofar as *justified* is another traditional status, it is taken that semantics must *choose* between these, understanding meaning *either* (exclusive ‘or’) in terms of *truth*, or in terms of *justification* (“assertibility”).

Justification is relegated to epistemology (cf. Fodor on not mixing them: The Great Bad, for him, is running together *semantic* and *epistemological* issues, as he takes it that Quine, Davidson, and Dummett do.), partly because justification is taken to be person-relative.

Rationalists and assertibility theorists take justification as fundamental semantic notion, by contrast to truth, but don’t person-relativize it. For Leibniz, what there is Sufficient Reason for is a perfectly objective matter. Dewey, Sellars, and Wright don’t relativize “semantic” (or “super”) assertibility to who something is assertible *for*.

When Tim Williamson understands asserting in terms of putting something forward as *known*, hence as involving commitments both to truth and to justification, I take it the inclusion of the latter makes it a more than purely *semantic* issue.

Truth and justification are combined in my account even though they are inside attitudes (commitment and entitlement). One way to see this is that the *inferences* I take to articulate *content* include, in effect, truth preserving and justification preserving inferences or implications.

2. I have two attitudes towards those statuses, which are distinguished by their social perspective: acknowledging (oneself) and attributing (to others). The tradition has only one: *taking*-true.

Think of this in terms of the distinction between monological calculi, modeled on the artificial languages of math, and the dialogical practices of natural languages.

The mathematician only cares about his beliefs (commitments) and his dreams (inferences, constructions). I care about *you*, and *your beliefs* (commitments) and dreams (inferences, constructions).

These two distinctions (corresponding to Hegel’s) are at the level of *pragmatics* (Fregean force). In *semantics* there is a third:

3. *Circumstances* of appropriate application (upstream) and appropriate *consequences* of application (downstream). Tradition has only *truth conditions*, which are thought of as being individually necessary (corresponding to consequences of application) and jointly sufficient (corresponding to circumstances of application). The dyadic perspective leaves room for these two not to coincide, so that a substantive inferential *move* is codified in the circs and cons. This is the inferentialist move in semantics (again, two two-element--premise and conclusion--from a one element account). The role of *modality* is telling here: subjunctive robustness of implication/ incompatibility, rather than necessary or possible truth. The lower levels of inferentialist semantics, substitution and anaphora,

will come back in in (III) and below. Entries and exits (broadly inferential--strong vs hyper-inferentialist) come in for (IV).. The distinction between inferential and noninferential circs and comprises here as it does not for TCs, because those notions are interlocutor-relative, arising from the use of expressions by people on occasions.

These yield an 8-fold botanization, of, e.g., circumstances licensing attribution of an entitlement to  $p$ , or consequences of acknowledging a commitment to  $p$ .

Table.

Circs Upstream	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Entitlement</b>
Cons Downstream		
<b>Attributed</b>		
<b>Acknowledged</b>		

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I. Appeal to the distinction of social perspective in (2) above to connect

a) Ascriptions are perfect place to look for making explicit what is implicit in this distinction. For in ascribing, one is doing two things: *attributing* one commitment (the one ascribed) and *undertaking* or *acknowledging* another (the ascribing).

This comes out now *semantically* because according to inferentialism, the *content* of any claim is a matter of its inferential role, and what follows from and is evidence for or against a claim depends on the inferential context of collateral premises (auxiliary hypotheses) one conjoins it with to extract them.

In the case of the content of the ascribed claim, there are two candidates: collateral commitments of the ascribee and collateral commitments of the ascriber. That is, one can use either collateral commitments that are *attributed* or those that are *acknowledged*. This difference is now made explicit in the ‘of’/‘that’ regimentation of *de dicto/de re*. And we see that we can use different backgrounds for different parts of the ascribed claim.

Further, *anaphora* plays an essential role: the interpersonal anaphora between ascribee and ascriber is reflected and expressed in the intrasentential ascription-structural anaphora.

b) How prosentential account uses anaphora to solve Frege-Geach embedding problem. "That's interesting--and it's true.". Are agreeing, but embeddable content (if that's true...) is inherited.

- c) deontic scorekeeping JTB account of *knowledge* attributions, in particular, the *truth* clause
- d) what is expressed by *de re* ascriptions,
- e) as offering **information**, usable as premises for one's *own* inferences.
- f) *De re* ascriptions.

These are not about truth, but reference or representation.

Claim that the home language game of nontechnical representational idioms is *de re* ascriptions is the claim that what they express is the distinction of social perspective between attributing and acknowledging.

That is what forges the connection between truth and representation-reference.

- g)
- h) The way *interpersonal* anaphoric connections between reported utterance and *de dicto* reporting utterance become *intrsentential* with ascription-structural anaphora. Example of "He claims of the first sentence on p. 452 that it is true." That uses "it is true" as an ascription-structural *sentential* anaphoric prosentence.

Look at the relation between ascription-structural intrasentential anaphora in *de re* ascriptions (successor concern to "quantifying in") and interpersonal anaphora connecting the reported utterance and the reporting utterance.

II. Response to a challenge: If your basic status is person-relative, can you semantically distinguish, as truth-conditional semantics can, between claimables about the world and those about people's attitudes? Appeal to commitment and entitlement—(1) above—(hence to the three kinds of broadly inferential relations, including incompatibility) to yield the *Objectivity Proofs*. Here there is a connection to circs and cons, because some of the same distinctions of content between *p* and "S is committed/entitled to *p*" that can be made with incompatibility can be made already with consequences of application.

Q: What is the common root of these phenomena? Is it just that one needs to make more distinctions than truth-conditional folks do, and almost *any* further distinctions will do?

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The topic of *epistemically strong de re beliefs*, as opposed to *denotationally de re* was left for this week.

Kaplan's "frankly inequalitarian attitude" toward different ways of referring to or picking out objects evolves into two lines of thought: modal rigidity of some expressions and essentially of indexicals. (C.f.. thoughts God can't have.). These are both about behavior of singular terms in *modal* contexts. (Compare different attitudes towards modality of extensionalist TCs and Kant-Sellars thesis inferentialists.)

The two phenomena that mark off the “object-dependent beliefs” (my even more noncommittal version of Evans’s, and following him, McDowell’s characterization—they actually say “object-involving”) are the uses of singular terms that tempt people to “direct reference” or “Russellian” semantics, according to which the object referred to is the whole of the semantic interpretant, and no conceptually articulated sense is involved. These are:

4. Proper names, as construed by post-Kripkean “causal-historical” theories in order to explain their *modal rigidity* (by contrast to definite descriptions, thought of as paradigms of having [being? Is there a conceptual confusion here?] senses, and
5. Indexicals and demonstratives, having the features that Perry and Lewis discover as the “essential indexical,” or permitting “attitudes *de se*.”

III. Proper names (in (4) as anaphoric tokening-recurrence structures. Their behavior in modal contexts (when anaphora crosses into or out of modal contexts—cf. “Quantifying In”) is what modal rigidity is: an anaphoric phenomenon.

Modal rigidity. Proper names and indexicals. Obama might not have been the 44th President, but it is not the case that *he, that very man*, might not have been Obama. *He, the one referred to as ‘Obama’*, might not have been named ‘Obama.’

That man might not have been President, and I might not have been able to refer to him demonstratively, but *he, that man*, could not not have been *that man*.

This is an essentially *anaphoric* connection. It is a matter of anaphora in modal contexts. Need a tight tokening-recurrence structure to speculate about counterfactual situations, to *suppose*. Identity claims won’t do, since different identity claims *could have been* true.

To specify other possible situations, we need some language that lets us track things through possible situations: anaphora.

Can rigidify *any* referring expression, using Kaplan’s “dthat” operator.

“Dthat  $\iota x[Dx]$ ” follows whatever object is  $\iota x[Dx]$  in *this* world, across worlds. It acts as an anaphoric dependent with that antecedent.

“Dthat” means “the one *actually* referred to as ‘ $\iota x[Dx]$ ’”.

IV. Essential indexical is about epistemic modal contexts. What matters there is the immediate hook-up to motivational structure. This is clearest with “I.” We approach that through Anscombe and her “A” language. Indexicals are shown to play a unique *epistemic* and *motivational* role.

a) Kaplan: “I am making a mess on the grocery floor.” “I am about to be eaten by a bear.”

Anscombe: immunity from errors of mis-identification, and non-observational knowledge of our own doings.

b) Anscombe’s ‘A’ language: chest and back names, ‘A’ on wrist. Use ‘A’ observationally. William James story.

c) Let ‘A’ speakers keep score, and use ascriptions: “S claims that p,” “A claims that p.”

d) Now for noninferential reports. Can say “S perceives that p,” “A perceives that p.”

- e) Next, take RDRD that each one uses to report that p, and make “A perceives that p” an alternate noninferential response.
- f) Do the same for language-exits.
- g) Now have ‘A’ used to express “nonobservational knowledge” of one’s perceivings and doings, that is “immune to errors of misidentification.”

Handout is appended:

## Week 10 Handout

### Traditional Account:

*Semantic status of claimables:*

True/not-True

*Persons' attitudes towards claimables:*

Taking-true/Taking not-True

*Semantic content of claimables defined by:*

Truth conditions

So attitudes and content defined by the basic status: truth.

*MIE* has two elements for each item that tradition has one for: status, attitude, and content.

Status is *person-* or *interlocutor-relative*.

### MIE Account:

*Semantic status of claimables:*

Committed/not

Entitled/not

*Persons' attitudes towards claimables:*

Attribute status

Acknowledge status

*Claimables semantically defined by:*

Circumstances

Consequences

This last is inferentialism.

These yield an 8-fold botanization, of, e.g., circumstances licensing attribution of an entitlement to *p*, or consequences of acknowledging a commitment to *p*.

	Circs Upstream	Commitment	Entitlement
Cons Downstream			
Attributed			
Acknowledged			

I. The social-perspectival distinction between attitudes of attributing and acknowledging: is appealed to in

- a) Understanding the role of the **truth** condition in the deontic scorekeeping version of the JTB account of knowledge attribution.
- b) Explaining propositional attitude ascriptions. In asserting an ascription one is doing two things: *attributing* one commitment and *acknowledging* another.
- c) *Semantically*, according to inferentialism, the *content* of any claim is a matter of its inferential role, and what follows from and is evidence for or against a claim depends on the inferential context of collateral premises (auxiliary hypotheses) one conjoins it with to extract them.

In the case of the content of the ascribed claim, there are two candidates: collateral commitments of the ascribee and collateral commitments of the ascriber. That is, one can use either collateral commitments that are *attributed* or those that are *acknowledged*.

- d) This difference is now made explicit in the 'of'/'that' regimentation of *de dicto/de re*. And we see that we can use different backgrounds for different parts of the ascribed claim.

- e) This explicit ascriptional expression of the distinction of social perspective between attitudes of attributing and acknowledging statuses is the home language-game of **representational** idioms, which express it.
- f) This is the connection between truth and representation.
- g) Further, *anaphora* (a further structure in the ISA—*inference, substitution, anaphora—semantic structure*) plays an essential role: the interpersonal anaphora between ascribee and ascriber is reflected and expressed in the intrasentential ascription-structural anaphora.
- h) Note how prosentential account uses anaphora to solve *Frege-Geach embedding problem*. "That's interesting--and it's true.". Are agreeing (that is what one is *doing*), but embeddable content (if that's true...), what one is *saying*, is inherited from anaphoric antecedent.

II. The distinction of two *statuses, commitment and entitlement*:

- a) Is needed for anything recognizable as a practice of giving and asking for reasons.
- b) Underwrites 3 kinds of broadly inferential relations among claimables.
- c) As interlocutor-relative (dialogical, not monological), raise the question whether claims are given content that is about how things are, not about who is committed or entitled to what.
- d) Can *prove* that content articulated in terms of these statuses does not collapse to content concerning attitudes or statuses. These are the **Objectivity Proofs**.

Can appeal to incompatibilities, or to commitment consequences. These distinguish the contents of OED non-ascriptional claims from the contents of *any* ascriptions specifying what *anyone* or *everyone* is committed or entitled to. Contra Peirce and Wright, or Rortyan pragmatism.

***Epistemically strong de re beliefs, as opposed to denotationally de re ascriptions:***

Here there are two principle phenomena:

1. The modal rigidity that distinguishes the use of proper names from that of definite descriptions; and
2. The “essential indexical” argument of Perry, Lewis, and Anscombe.

III. Modal rigidity is an anaphoric phenomenon.

- a) Obama is the 44<sup>th</sup> President. He might not have been the 44<sup>th</sup> President, but it is not possible that *he*, Obama, that very man, not have been (identical to) Obama.  
Anaphoric chains that cross in and out of modal contexts. (Cf. “quantifying in”)
- b) Kaplan’s “dthat” operator as a modal rigidifier.  
It is possible that  $dthat(\iota x Dx) \neq \iota x Dx$ .  
“dthat” forms anaphoric dependents of anaphorically initiating tokenings of the type it is applied to.

IV. The “essential indexical” argument turns on non-intersubstitutability of indexicals with any non-indexical expressions in epistemic modal contexts. Indexicals are shown to play a unique *epistemic* and *motivational* role.

- a) Kaplan: “I am making a mess on the grocery floor.” “I am about to be eaten by a bear.”

