

Week 9 Notes

Ascriptions of Propositional Attitudes *De Dicto and De Re*

Finishing up from last week:

Quick recap.

Two things I did not get to talk about:

- a) So what, actually, *are* anaphoric connections (dependencies, “anaphoric reference”)?

MIE answer: inheritance of substitution-inferential significance.

The anaphoric dependent inherits its class of intersubstitutable expressions from its antecedent. (There is a potential circularity worry here, since tokening-recurrence is presupposed by substitution. But it can be finessed, because **we are using exactly the role it plays in substitution to offer a functionalist account of tokening-recurrence structures.**)

- b) How the proform-forming account of “...is true” works.

Under (b):

- i. Reminder about the way the truth condition in the scorekeeping version of JTB account of knowledge attributions works.
- ii. That is a *force* notion: an account of what one is *doing* in using the word ‘true’. It is couched in a *pragmatic* metavocabulary.
- iii. But what about the Frege-Geach point? ‘True’ does have a “descriptive” use by that standard, since truth-claims embed smoothly. Must do for the force-redundancy account of ‘true’ what second-wave metaethical expressivists (Blackburn, Gibbard) did for ‘good’ or ‘ought’.
- iv. Prosentential account does that. For prosentences embed, but have no more “descriptive” content than “it” does. So here is a concrete case of our being able to do what the Frege-Geach embedding argument requires to connect account in a pragmatic metavocabulary to notion of content as carved out by embedding (hence, substitution). Important point: This is because, and one manifestation of the fact that, **anaphora is not clearly on one or the other side of the pragmatic/semantic divide.**
- v. What *MIE* account adds to original prosentential account:
Propositional quantifier approach does not work well across sentences.
Can now use the whole expressive resources of the language to specify the anaphoric antecedent: quotation names (“[p] is true” [explain Quinean corner-quotes]), demonstratives (“that is true”), definite descriptions (“the wicked remark on page 35 is true”)....

1. Tense: “The President of the United States will be a woman by 2021.”

Two readings, depending on the order in which we i) fix the referent of term ‘PotUS’ and ii) apply the tense operator to the claim.

If we focus on the underlying claim (*dictum*), “The PotUS is a woman,” apply the tense operator to get “(In 2021) The PotUS is a woman,” and then fix the referent (whoever is PotUS in 2021—possibly Elizabeth Warren), then we get a *de dicto* reading.

If we focus on the referent of the term ‘PotUS’ (the *res*), namely Donald Trump and compute the claim from that “Donald Trump is a woman,” and then apply the tense operator, we get

“(In 2021) Donald Trump is a woman.” This is the *de re* reading.

(Trump would be disappointed either way, but this one might be even more upsetting to him.)

2. “Henry Adams believed the inventor of the lightning rod did not invent the lightning rod.

“Henry Adams believed Bob’s favorite Philadelphian did not invent the lightning rod.”

De re: “Henry Adams believed *of* (the inventor of the lightning rod, Ben Franklin, Bob’s favorite Philadelphian) that *he* did not invent the lightning rod.”

3. Quine on referential *opacity* and referential *transparency*:

Can one intersubstitute coreferential terms *salva veritate*?

- a) Ortcutt believes whoever left the note is a spy.
- b) The mayor left the note.
- c) Ortcutt believes the mayor is a spy.
- d) *Ortcutt believes *that* the mayor is a spy.
- e) Ortcutt believes *of* the mayor that he is a spy.
- f) Ortcutt believes the shortest spy is a spy.
- g) Rosa Kleb is the shortest spy.
- h) Ortcutt believes Rosa Kleb is a spy.

True *de re*, false *de dicto*:

- i) Ortcutt believe *of* Rosa Kleb that *she* is a spy.
- j) *Ortcutt believes *that* Rosa Kleb is a spy.

4. Quantifying in and out of belief contexts:

- a) In-quantification: There is someone Ortcutt believes is a spy.

Quine claims neither the mayor nor Rosa is someone whom Ortcutt believes is a spy. For that to be true, to 'm to have that relation to the *res*, he must *know who* the spy is—and he doesn’t. If the inspector believes only that whoever left the footprints under the window is the murderer, then it is not the case that there is someone whom he believes is the murderer. He believes some sentences (identities) are true, but is not connected to the *object (res)* in the way required to count as having a *de re* belief, a belief directed at the object in the special way required for this sort of *de re* description.

ICf. Kaplan (“On Quantifying In”) on “vivid names”: Must have demonstrative acquaintance, or a name anchored in demonstrative acquaintance.

Kaplan completes the conflation of denotational *de re* and epistemically strong *de re*.

b) Out-quantification (Edelberg):

Hob believes a witch cursed his cow, and Nob believes she blighted his sow.

Q: Could this be true

- i. even though there are no witches? and
- ii. even if Hob and Nob have never heard of each other?

A: Yes. If everyone believes there are 7 witches, and Hob and Nob both believe the purple one did it.

5. Botanization of possibilities:

There are three overarching choices to make, determining a flowchart:

- i) Focus on *denotational de re* (as above) or *epistemically strong de re*?
- ii) Does the *de re/de dicto* distinction most fundamentally distinguish kinds of *belief* or kinds of *ascription* of belief (saying...)?
- iii) If either of *de re* (of either kind) or *de dicto* (beliefs or ascriptions) is to be explained in terms of the other, which is more basic in the order of explanation?

Tradition and current conventional wisdom says:

- i) Focus on epistemically strong *de re*. Denotational *de re* ignored as trivial.
- ii) *De re* beliefs are a special kind of belief,
- iii) That kind of belief is basic in the order of explanation—a kind of nonconceptual content (by acquaintance) that is more fundamental a point of contact of our beliefs with the world of things than the conceptual content of *de dicto* beliefs.

MIE view:

- i) Denotational *de re* is basic phenomenon. Epistemically strong *de re* dealt with as a special, late-coming, optional phenomenon: expressing object-involving belief.
- ii) *De re/de dicto* distinguishes kinds of *ascription*. (Searle, Dennett, and Davidson agree.)
 - Argument from iteration: not just two kinds, but a recursively generated indefinite multiplicity. See (12) below.
 - But there is a special kind of belief: object-involving belief (such that one cannot have that kind of belief unless the object exists and one is appropriately connected to it)
- iii) *De dicto* ascriptions more basic, *de re* ascriptions are formed from them.

6. Step 1: De Dicto Ascriptions

From Direct to Indirect Quotation:

Direct discourse, *oratio recta* (quotation):

Quine said “To be is to be the value of a variable.”

Wittgenstein said “Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.”

Tom said “Your best friend is hungry.”

Ben said “I am angry.”

Varieties of quotation (McDowell: “Quotation and Saying That”):

Little Richard said “Wopbopalooobopawopbamboom.”

Tarski said “Ja.”

If $\lceil p \rceil$ then it is true that $\lceil p \rceil$. Quinean corner quotes.

“Scare” quotes. (Treated semantically in (11) below.)

Indirect discourse, *oratio obliqua* (paraphrase):

Quine said that to be is to be the value of a variable.

Wittgenstein said that about that of which we cannot speak, we must remain silent.

Tom said that John is hungry.

Ben said that he himself is hungry. (Indirect reflexives. Castaneda’s he*.)

Attributing use of token-reflexives generally.

From Practically Implicit Attribution to Explicit Ascription:

1. The task: specify the content of the attributed claim.

Note that this only becomes necessary with explicit ascription. In implicit attribution case, can wait for some need for disambiguation of what one attributes to arise.

2. Practical suggestion:

What is needed for ascriptions, on the side of content-specification, is a relation between

- i. A *reporting* sentence, in the ascription, and
- ii. A *reported* sentence, which would, in the mouth of the one to whom the commitment is ascribed, express the content expressed.

Indirect discourse.

3. Note that “says that” is as much an ascription as “claims that.”

The difference will come out in the range of reported sentences that one can correctly use the same reporting sentence to ascribe.

In these terms, one could hope to botanize the possible relations between *reporting* and *reported* sentences.

The botanization-generating question is: what set-theoretic relations can there be between *classes* of reported sentences and *classes* of reporting sentences.

This might not be interesting, because everything of interest falls in one box of the botanization.

For a contrary instance, is it the case that, fixing a reported sentence, every reporting sentence that is OK for a “says that” ascription is OK for a “claims that” ascription? (This would clearly *not* hold for direct discourse ascriptions “says” followed by a quote-name.)

- a) Consider (for the paradigmatic case) relations between the singular term tokenings in *reported* and *reporting* utterance.

If in the *reported* utterance we have a term-tokening of a tokening-recurrence structure (TRS) that is a cotypicality equivalence class (e.g. ideal proper name) then everything is easy. *Reporting* sentence can just use another tokening from that same TRS equivalence class.

But if *reported* sentence uses a demonstrative, indexical, or anaphor, one would like to pick that up in the *reporting* sentence by some anaphoric dependent on it, in the same anaphoric chain (asymmetric TRS).

But this might not always be possible.

One of the expressive powers granted by the presence of anaphorically indirect definite descriptions, formed from some analog of “refers”, is that it make this *almost* always possible. “Almost” because one might not be in a position (epistemically or semantically) to single out the utterance in the *reported* sentence-tokening.

Then one would have to do with establishing a relation of *coreference* between singular term tokening in *reporting* sentence and singular term tokening in *reported* sentence. This is *much* weaker than co-membership in a TRS.

That weakness shows up in the fact that we have to ask after the governing substitution-inferential commitments. For what is coreferential according to one such set might not be according to another. And here is the crux: there are two sets relevant. There are the substitutional commitments of the ascriber and the ascribee, the author of the *reporting* utterance and of the *reported* utterance.

b) Here the interesting issue is anaphoric connections between *reported* utterance (which *would* express the claim being attributed) and *reporting* utterance.

These *intersentential* anaphoric connections will be represented by *intrasentential* anaphoric connections that cross from *de re* scope to *de dicto* scope.

Importantly, facts that are *not* anaphoric facts about antecedent anaphoric connections, but are mediated by, in effect, identities endorsed by the ascriber, are expressed by anaphoric dependents in the *reporting* sentence.

Forming ascriptions requires taking the relations between *reported* sentential utterance and *reporting* sentential utterance, from indirect discourse generally, and putting it into *one* sentence.

The connections between (paradigmatically) singular term tokenings that were canvassed there now become crucial.

One *wants* anaphoric connections, between tokenings drawn from the same tokening-recurrence structure.

But sometimes (shy of using anaphorically indirect definite descriptions) all one can arrange is coreferential ones.

Then the issue of whose substitutional commitments govern the coreference arises: those of the issuer of the *reported* uttering or of the *reporting* utterer.

That is what is marked by the *de dicto/de re* distinction.

7. Step 2: Denotational *De Re*

Proposal: Think in scorekeeping terms. In making an ascription that specifies content *de re* one is doing two things: *attributing* one commitment (an assertional one) and *undertaking* another commitment (an identificatory, substitutional commitment).

S: Φt .

A: S claims that Φt . (*De dicto*)

A: $t=t$ '

A: S claims of t ' that $\Phi(it)$. (*De re*)

Compare: Scorekeeping version of JTB account of attributions of knowledge: one *attributes* assertional commitment (belief condition), *attributes* entitlement to the commitment (justification condition, and *undertakes* assertional commitment to that content (truth condition).

8. Sly prosecutor: "Defense counsel claims an habitual liar is a credible witness."

Defense Counsel: "I claim N.N. is a credible witness. *You* claim N.N. is an habitual liar."

Perspicuous *de re*: "Defense counsel claims *of* an habitual liar that *he* is a credible witness."

This makes clear who is committed to and responsible for what aspects of the claim attributed.

9. Claim: The home language-game of 'of' and 'about' when they express intentional directedness (as opposed to their other uses) is their use to form (denotational) *de re ascriptions* of propositional attitude—as in our light disambiguating regimentation of *de re* and *de dicto* ascriptions. This is what distinguishes representational uses: the 'of' of "I'm thinking *of* a number" from "the pen *of* my aunt," "I'm talking *about* numbers," from "The book is *about* 800 pages long. Talk of *de re* ascriptions in terms of social perspectives is a *pragmatic metavocabulary* for representational vocabulary. It is *saying* what one is *doing* in *saying* what one is talking *about*.

10. Specifying the content of another's belief in *de re* terms is how we extract *information* from it, that is, put it in a form where *we* can use it as a premise in *our* inferences (those *we* use to form our own beliefs). *De re* specifications depend on what is *really* (according to us) coreferential, and what is *true*. In *de re* ascriptions, *interpersonal* anaphora is made propositionally explicit in *ascription-structural* anaphora. That is *why* they are critical to navigating across social differences in doxastic perspective.

11. **Scare quotes** are the expressive dual of *de re* specifications of content: one *undertakes* the doxastic commitment and *attributes* the identificatory one.

A: The lawful authorities re-established order in the rebellious village.

B: Those 'lawful authorities' executed half the inhabitants.

B asserts that someone executed half the village inhabitants, and that it is whoever A referred to as "lawful authorities." Responsibility for picking them (the *res*) out that way (substitution-inferential commitment) is attributed to A, while assertional responsibility for the *dictum* is undertaken by B.

12. Iterated mixed *de dicto* and *de re* ascriptions:

- a) *<de dicto, de dicto>* S: S' believes that S'' believes that $\Phi(t'')$.
S: S': S'': $\Phi(t'')$
- b) *<de dicto, de re>* S: S' believes that S'' believes of t' that $\Phi(it)$.
S: S': S'': $\Phi(t'')$
S: S': $t'=t''$
- c) *<de re, de dicto>* S: S' believes of t that S'' believes that $\Phi(it)$.
S: S': S'': $\Phi(t'')$
S: $t=t''$
- d) *<de re, de re>* S: S' believes of t that S'' believes of it that $\Phi(it)$.
S: S': S'': $\Phi(t'')$
S: S': $t'=t''$
S: $t=t'$

Can compute the commitments underlying *arbitrary* iterated mixed *de dicto/de re* ascriptions: e.g.,
<de re, de dicto, de re> A: S believes of t that S' believes that S'' believes of it that $\Phi(it)$.

13. Two perspectives on *agency*:

- i) S intends *that* she shoot a deer.
 - ii) S intends *of* a cow that she shoot it.
- (i) Predicting/explaining what agent will *try* to do: *De dicto*.
(ii) Predicting/explaining what agent will *succeed* in doing: *De re*.
Both of these correspond to important senses of “explaining behavior.”

14. “Theories of Meaning and Hermeneutic Practices”:

De dicto readings and *de re* readings of texts.

Hegel believed of Kripkenstein’s skeptical puzzle that he had a straight solution to it.