

two views of the *de re*

PLUK, Leeds, 2014

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1 *de re* in attitudes

Basic assumption: semantic values in attitude reports present certain problems not present for other intensional contexts (such as metaphysical modals).

A reasonable subset of the data to be captured, for the use of a term α in an attitude context.

a) attitude about α does not require the attitude holder to think of α under the predicative content expressed by α . So substitution of co-extensive terms:

(1) John thinks *the mayor/the man in the corner* is tall.

b) double vision. at least across different conversation contexts, but perhaps in one context, incompatible attributions are possible when term is *de re*.

(2) a. Ralph thinks Ortcutt is a spy.
b. Ralph thinks Ortcutt is not a spy.

c) Hesperus/Phosphorus. Whatever our account of *de re* is, must be compatible with (or possibly yield) a solution to Frege's puzzle.

d) solution must extend to quantificational cases:

(3) Most people think some lookalike is a famous actor. (not a single guise?)

(4) Everyone thinks the mayor isn't a murderer. (doesn't mean there isn't some guise on which someone thinks the mayor is a murderer)

e) scope paradoxes:

(5) John thinks at least two men in the room are spies. (John is not thinking of them as the men in the room)

2 neo-Fregean orthodoxy

Kaplan [1986], building on Quine [1956] sets the standard for accounts of the *de re*.

(6) (x believes α is a drunk and α denotes y) iff (\exists guise g (satisfying some conditions that could make reference to x), the $g = y$ and x believes the g is drunk.)

Covers a), b) be modified to handle c), d) and e)

a) we do not require that x think about y as α .

b) we can make the with two different guises x can think y is drunk and is not drunk.

Kaplan puts no contextual restrictions on what guises (his 'names') can be, he just quantifies over them and requires them to be vivid, be an acquaintance relation for the attitude holder of the referent. But if we add contextual restrictions, we can handle more data.

c) is now handled (even if we are Russellian about de dicto uses of names) by contextually restricting guises.

(7) John thinks there exists a guise g (of morning star sort) such that Hesperus is g .

d) quantificational cases are basically treatable, but depend on restrictions *and* existential quantification over guises.

More on this: seems we don't need a contextually determined guise (out of blue attributions) We also need guises to vary with quantifiers over attitude holder and *de re* object.

e) sophisticated linguistic version of the Kaplanian approach sever the link between wide-scope and *de re* ness.¹

¹See for instance Aloni [2001] and Percus and Sauerland [2003], and

3 a Russellian alternative?

A natural thought when one view is described as Fregean is to think there is a natural alternative which we could call Russellian.

The Russellian view commits us to the idea that referential singular terms (like names, and maybe certain resolutions of descriptions) refer to their bearers. Thus we have no introduction of guises into the semantic values.

We can perfect well capture the ambiguity in (1) by either scope or world variables, one implying a belief in Russellian proposition about a particular man (the mayor) the other the *de dicto* belief about whoever the mayor is.

However, it is not by itself anything like an answer to b) without reference to significant pragmatic resources which might just recreate (at the level of pragmatics) what the neo-Fregean puts in semantically. Hard to see what this gets us.

4 Stalnaker's strategy

My goal here is modest, just to sketch out a package of answers to the problem of the *de re* that Stalnaker [2009, 1988] has developed and see whether it constitutes a genuine, viable alternative to the neo-Fregean orthodoxy (rather than, say, a simple relocation of that orthodoxy in pragmatics).

4.1 semantics

Propositions . . . are the objects of belief; *de re* belief is belief with a distinctive kind of proposition as its object: a singular proposition. To believe of Ortcutt that he is a spy is to believe the singular proposition that ascribes spyhood to Ortcutt. [Stalnaker, 1988]

When we have a *de re* use satisfying substitution of co-extensional terms, as in α is tall where α denotes α the attitude attributed is just the propositional function is tall applied to the reference of α . (Effectively the same

the generalization to predicates from singular terms is not particularly challenging technically.

assumptions as Russellian, but compatible with a possible world account what is interesting is the rest)

4.2 failed ascriptions and shifting belief

Here is Stalnaker's description of his solution to double vision:

Suppose we are discussing Ralph's beliefs in a context in which it is mutually recognized that Ralph believes there are these two distinct individuals, one of which he sees on the beach, the other of which he has glimpsed in a brown hat, but nothing is presupposed about what Ralph thinks about either of them being involved in espionage. In this case, the derived context set will contain possible situations in which both are spies, situations in which neither are, situations in which the first man is a spy and the second not, and situations in which the second man is a spy and the first not. These are the possible situations that might, for all that is presupposed, be compatible with Ralph's beliefs. The speaker's job, in attributing a belief to Ralph, is to cut this set down in a determinate and correct way. It is clear that saying "Ralph believes Ortcutt to be a spy" just won't do the job, nor will saying "Ralph believes Ortcutt not to be a spy." It's not that Ralph isn't intimately enough acquainted with Ortcutt. Rather, the problem is that in the relevant context, no proposition is determined by applying the propositional function expressed by "is a spy" to the individual Ortcutt. [Stalnaker, 1988]

Surely the last sentence is misleading: after all, there is the singular proposition that Ortcutt is a spy. Rather the suggestion seems to be that there is a failure here to use this proposition to update the common ground assumptions about Ralph's beliefs.

What are R's beliefs? S writes: "...the propositions believed are not constituents of belief states but simply ways of characterizing them, and . . . belief states themselves—the sets of possible worlds compatible with a persons beliefs—are defined relative to a context of relevant alternatives."

Later "the belief relation itself—the relation between the believer and the propositions which are the content of his beliefs—can be defined only in

terms of parameters which may be influenced by the context in which questions about the believer's beliefs arise."

Instead of what propositions belief attributions attribute being relative to context (common Russellian strategy) what propositions believed actually are. A genuine non-Fregean option.

In Quine's Ortcutt case one idea is that common ground either has two Ortcutts in each world or no Ortcutt so belief attribution fails. More contextual information though can allow for successful *de re* updates in double vision cases: as long as it is clear from context which individual in belief world the belief attribution is about.

4.3 back to Fregeanism

For classic Fregean cases Stalnaker [1987] relies on the diagonalization story that he developed in "Assertion" [1978].

On this strategy we interpret:

- (8) Aristotle believes Hesperus is Phosphorus.

As Aristotle believing the diagonal proposition determined by Hesperus is Phosphorus. This proposition is constructed by the ways we (not necessarily Aristotle!) think of 'Phosphorus' and 'Hesperus' as names picking out their referents across Aristotle's belief worlds.

Note that this gives us a second *de re*: the diagonal *de re*. Here only some coextensive terms can be substituted, as long as we associated the same reference fixing mechanism with each. Aristotle does not have to know the names or have beliefs about them however himself.

A worry: diagonalization seems incapable of dealing with quantificational cases:

- (9) John thinks every girl is the same person as her twin. (Every girl x is such that John thinks x is identical to her twin). [where 'her twin' is read *de re*]

Given that diagonalization depends on metalinguistic devices ordinary quantifiers don't deliver what is needed.

5 evaluation

Successes of S's approach (besides its simplicity):

- a) explanation of referential transparency (by singular propositions)
- b) seemingly adequate treatment of double vision cases without introduction of guises.

Ortcutt case is now explained as infelicitous. We cannot in one context say:

- (10) Ralph thinks Ortcutt is a spy and Ralph thinks Ortcutt is not a spy.

We might say either conjunct though in the right context (which can be accommodated in various circumstances.

- c) Compatible with an explanation of Hesperus/Phosphorus cases (though different theoretical resources employed and those dubious).
- d) and e) do not seem problematic.

Can we get empirical differences? A major difference in logical form is the existential quantification over guises in Kaplan but not Stalnaker. This should lead to empirical difference, even if sometimes we can restrict that quantification

Simple cases:

- (11) John thinks the mayor is his lawyer.

(Stalnaker just says lack of ambiguity means this is fine with the mayor *de re*, Kaplan says existential quantification over guises.)

More complex cases:

- (12) SITUATION: Zelig as a master of disguise and parades around the town as a) plumber John, b) Yoga instructor Adam, and c) washed-out ex-hippy Fred. Bill knows Zelig under all three guises, but doesn't know that they are all the same person.

- (13) Bill thinks Zelig is a member of a cult.

This seems to me (and my one informant) a bit infelicitous. Without further background information it is not really clear what is meant. (Does Bill think Zelig is a member of a cult under all guises, under some guise? Further specification of the scenario could make this felicitous, clearly.)

Argument: Kaplan's neo-Fregeanism (and its modern variants) would seem to make perfect sense of this. Existential quantification over guises gives a reasonable logical forms:

(14) g , g refers to Zelig, Bill thinks that the g is a member of a cult.

Stalnaker by contrast, would take this to be a case where the attitude report fails to fully specify how to update the (contextual) representation of beliefs of the attitude holders.

What is important here is not that we *can* get felicitous readings when we accommodate a certain context: all Kaplan and Stalnaker both predict that. Rather it's that we *need* to add this contextual information to get the felicitous reading, something only Stalnaker predicts.

Neo-Fregean, theory, might be further refined, but at the cost of getting something even more more complex. Dilemma: can't require that the context supply a guise (as that is implausible in normal cases), but also can't existentially quantify (as that makes too many examples felicitous).

Anyway, that's the best I can do for Stalnaker.

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