

WORKSHOP ON SEMANTIC CONTENT AND CONVERSATIONAL DYNAMICS

MONDAY 13 MAY 2013

Venue: room 412

15.00-17.00h Symposium with Stephan Torre and Max Kölbel

“Two Models of Communicating with Centered Contents”

Max Kölbel: “Communicating centered content without multi-centering”

Stephan Torre: “Communicating with Multi-centered Contents”

17.15-18.45h Dan Zeman: “Can the Operator Argument support relativism?”

TUESDAY 14 MAY 2013

Venue: Seminari de Filosofia

10.30-12.00h Seth Yalcin: “Semantics and Metasemantics in the Context of Generative Grammar”

12.15-13.45h Manuel García-Carpintero: “De Se contents and Immunity to Error through Misidentification”

LUNCH

15.15-16.45h Josep Macià: “Derived contexts”

17.00-18.30h Bryan Pickel: “Variables and Attitudes”

20.30h WORKSHOP DINNER

Wednesday 15 May 2013. Venue: Seminari de Filosofia

11.00-13.00h Project meeting, organizational (only for project members)

MONDAY 13 MAY 2013

Venue: room 412

15.00-17.00h Symposium with Stephan Torre and Max Kölbel

“Two Models of Communicating with Centered Contents”

Max Kölbel: “Communicating centered content without multi-centering”

Abstract: I propose a model of conversation in which the conversational score is supposed to contain only propositions that are acceptable for the sake of the conversation by all participants. This triggers some presuppositions regarding the relative locations participants are assumed to occupy for the purpose of the conversation, namely when the update content is a non-portable (=non-boring) centered content. The default update content is simply the semantic content. But some expressions, for example indexicals, effect a different update content, namely a suitable, at least locally portable, surrogate content. On this model, there is no need to introduce multi-centered contents in order to account for communication with centered contents.

Stephan Torre: “Communicating with Multi-centered Contents”

Abstract: I will raise some questions for Max Kölbel's recent account of communicating with centered contents. I will attempt to show that it doesn't adequately accommodate the centered information gained from certain utterances. I will then sketch and motivate an alternative account that makes use of multi-centered contents.

17.15-18.45h Dan Zeman: “Can the Operator Argument support relativism?”

Abstract: The focus of this paper is an argumentative strategy that aims to show that the operator argument cannot support relativism (understood as the view that context has a circumstance-determinative role; or, equivalently, the view that endorses feature-neutral contents as the semantic content of utterances). First I present David Kaplan's original formulation of the argument. Then I prepare the terrain for the strategy considered by distinguishing between two general views about semantic content: semantic value pluralism and semantic value monism. I then illustrate the strategy by looking into a recent argument given by Dilip Ninan. Next I modify the operator argument so that to escape Ninan's objection, and consider some criticisms. I close with showing that even if the modified operator argument is not convincing, there are other ways in which the original version can be relevant for (some forms of) relativism.

TUESDAY 14 MAY 2013

Venue: Seminari de Filosofia

10.30-12.00h Seth Yalcin: “Semantics and Metasemantics in the Context of Generative Grammar”

Abstract: I frame some basic foundational questions for natural language semantics as pursued in the broadly "model-theoretic" tradition informed by generative grammar. On the viewpoint developed, the questions at the core of metasemantic inquiry have less to do with issues about content than is often assumed. Rather, these questions are better framed in terms of the notion of semantic value, 'semantic value' being a term of art of semantic theory. They are not questions of supervenience or cause, but of the ground of certain properties, properties articulated—in the current state of understanding, anyway—largely using the notion of semantic value. Specifically they concern the ground of an aspect of a certain mental state postulated in linguistic theorizing, one we could informally describe as the state of knowing a language. They are questions whose answers are heavily constrained by the assumption of compositionality. Finally, they are questions barely on the horizon of systematic inquiry, and ones probably best pursued at present simply by pursuing semantic theory.

12.15-13.45h Manuel García-Carpintero: “De Se contents and Immunity to Error through Misidentification”

Abstract: In the 1960s and 1970s Castañeda, Perry and Lewis argued that, among de re or singular thoughts, thoughts about oneself “as oneself” – de se thoughts – raise special issues. Perry and Lewis offered contrasting accounts: while Lewis aims to account for de se thoughts by taking the subject away from their contents, which are thus properties instead of complete traditional propositions, Perry offers an alternative account compatible with traditional views on propositions. In this paper I question Recanati’s recent arguments for a subjectless view of the content of de se thought, on the basis that we can thus better explain the phenomenon of immunity to error through misidentification; I’ll argue that they fail, and that in fact a Perry-like view provides a better account of the phenomenon.

LUNCH

15.15-16.45h Josep Macià: “Derived contexts”

Preliminary abstract: I will explore how we can use the notion of “derived context” (Stalnaker(1988)) to shed light on some semantic phenomena that go well beyond the phenomena that the notion was originally intended to help account for. I will consider, among others, phenomena regarding the restrictions that syntactic structural relations in a sentence place on anaphora (binding theory).

17.00-18.30h Bryan Pickel: “Variables and Attitudes”

Abstract: The phenomenon of quantification into attitude ascriptions has haunted broadly Fregean views, according to which co-referential proper names are not always substitutable *salva veritate* in attitude ascriptions. Opponents of Fregeanism argue that a belief ascription containing a proper name such as ‘Michael believes that Lindsay is charitable’ is equivalent to a quantified sentence such as ‘there is someone such that Michael believes that she is charitable, and that person is Lindsay’. They conclude that the semantic contribution of a name such as ‘Lindsay’ is the same as the semantic contribution of a variable under an assignment, which these opponents suggest is merely the object assigned to that variable. However, renewed interest in variables suggests that they make a more complicated contribution to the semantic processing of sentences that contain them. In particular, a variable contributes both an assignment unsaturated and an assignment saturated semantic value. I use this dual role of the semantics of variables to develop a response to the argument from quantifying in. I take as my point of departure Cumming’s (2008) view that an attitude ascription relates the subject of an attitude to the assignment-unsaturated semantic value of an open sentence. I argue that this approach fails. I propose an alternative, according to which the truth of a belief ascription depends on both the assignment-saturated and the assignment-unsaturated semantic value of an open sentence. This approach reverses standard assumptions concerning the relation between quantification and substitution.

20.30H WORKSHOP DINNER

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