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Attitudinal Objects and the Distinction between Actions and Products

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1. Motivations for Propositions or Proposition-Like Objects

Roles of propositions:

[1] Objects of propositional attitudes

- (1) a. John believes that Mary like Bill.
b. believe(John, [*that Mary likes Bill*])

[2] Semantic values of prosentential variables or terms

*special quantifiers and pronouns (everything, nothing, the same thing, that),
free relative clauses what was said, what John thought:*

- (2) a. John believes that Mary likes Bill.
John believes something.
b. Mary believes everything Bill believes.
Bill believes that it is raining.
Mary believes that it is raining.
c. John believes that he might have to resign. Mary believes that too.

The argument: propositions are needed to account for such inferences

[3] (Primary) bearers of truth

connection to [1] and [2]:

- (3) a. What John believes is true.
b. John believes something that is true.

[4] ‘Meanings’ of sentences

[5] Entities that sentential (modal, temporal, spatial) operators operate on

Properties of propositions

- are abstract objects (as abstract as properties and relations)
- have truth conditions inherently
- are mind- and language-independent

Conceptions of propositions

[1] Sets of circumstances, function from circumstances to truth values (Lewis, Stalnaker)

[2] More plausibly: structured propositions (Carnap, Cresswell, Soames, King, ...): sequences of properties / concepts and objects (and modes of presentation)

[3] Objects sui generis (Bealer, Moore)

Conceptual problems for propositions

[1] The problem of arbitrary identification (the Benacerraf problem) (Jubien, Moore): choice of formal object to be identified with a proposition is arbitrary,

Problem for [1], [2]

[2] The representational status and truth-directedness of proposition

Problem for [1] – [3] (Jubien)

[3] The problems of the unity of propositions (Gaskin, Hanks, Soames, ...):

What distinguishes a mere sequence of properties and objects from a proposition?

A crucial problem for structured propositions:

A structured proposition $\langle P, a, b \rangle$ does not have inherent truth conditions; truth conditions need to be externally imposed; whatever external condition one might impose the choice of such conditions remains arbitrary.

[4] The problem of cognitive accessibility (Soames 2010)

2. Attitudes as Intentional Predication Relations

Russell's Multiple Relations Analysis:

An attitude verb does not express a relation between agents and propositions, but specifies multiple relations; in a given syntactic context (in the presence of a particular *that*-clause) an

attitude verb specifies a particular (n+1)-place relation between an agent and n propositional constituents

The Neo-Russellian view of attitude reports (Jubien 2001, Moltmann 2003a, b, to appear)

Attitude verbs taking *that*-clause complements are multigrade predicate in their second *place*, an argument place with an unlimited number of *positions* (Oliver / Smiley 2004)

(4) a. John believes that Mary likes Bill

b. believe(John; the property of liking, Mary, Bill)

The multigrade attitudinal relation

- allows dispensing with propositions in the analysis of simple attitude reports
- provides the link, ‘glue’ among propositional constituents
- is responsible for the truth-directedness of attitudinal content

Soames (2010), Hanks (2007, 2010)

Attitudes as predication relations, providing the glue among propositional constituents

What proposition-like objects are still needed for:

- As truth bearers, as what can be shared by different agents, as what prosentential quantifiers range over ...
- For an account of embedded clauses (coordination, subordination) within the neo-Russellian account ...

3. Conceptions of the Corresponding Propositional Objects

3.1. Not explicitly specified

Russell: ??

Jubien (2001): --

3.2. Hanks (2007, 2010)

Structured propositions as **action types**

Attitude verbs express relations between agents and unspecified action types
 Sentences with a particular sentential mode (declarative, interrogative, infinitival/imperative) express type of actions of predicating in a particular attitudinal mode (assertive interrogative imperative) a property of an object (a relation of objects).

Problem (Soames 2010)

Action types are not true or false

3.3. Soames (2010)

Sentences and propositions as event types / fact types

Sentences: types of utterances,

Propositions: types of events (facts) of an agent predicating a property of an object (or alike)

Instances of such event types: events of an agent in a particular context predicating a property of an object

3.4. The problem for the event (fact)-based approach

Events, facts, actions and are intuitively not true or false:

(5) a. ?? John's claiming that S is true.

b. ?? John's act of claiming is true

(6) a. ?? John's believing is true.

b. ?? John's belief state is true.

Moreover, actions and states cannot be fulfilled or satisfied:

(7) a. ?? John's requesting was fulfilled / satisfied.

b. ?? John's desiring was fulfilled / satisfied.

But:

(8) a. John's claim is true.

b. John's belief is true.

c. John's request was fulfilled.

d. John's desire was satisfied.

4. Twardowski (1912)

4.1. The distinction between *actions* and *products*

Three types:

[1] Physical actions – physical products

walking – the walk, racing – the race, jumping – the jump, dancing - dance

walk, race, jump, dance:

‘do not bring to force the aspect of action, but bring to force a different aspect, the ‘phenomenal’ or ‘static’ aspect’ (Twardowski (1912))

‘in speaking of the shout, we do in fact abstract from the activity of shouting, treating the shout as an acoustical phenomenon’ (Twardowski (1912))

[2] Mental actions – mental products:

thinking – the thought, judging – judgment, intending – intention

[3] Psychophysical actions – psychophysical products

screaming – scream, speaking - speech, lying - lie

non-enduring products: exist only for as long as the activity that yields them:

walks, screams, thoughts, beliefs

enduring products: inscriptions, drawings, paintings, ...

4.2. Distinctive properties of products as opposed to actions (and states)

[1] Only products have truth conditions, satisfaction conditions or representational properties, or can be implemented

(9) a. John’s expectation was fulfilled.

b. * John’s (state of) expecting was fulfilled. (Twardowski)

(10) a. John’s resolution was implemented.

b. * John’s (action of) resolving was implemented. (Twardowski)

[2] Products enter ‘looser’ similarity relations

Distinct products may be (exactly) similar but the corresponding actions generally are not:

(11) a. ?? John did the same walking as Mary.

b. John took the same walk as Mary.

(12) a. ? Sue's thinking / Sue's act of thinking was the same as Mary's.

b. Sue's thought was the same as Mary's.

(13) a. ? John's screaming was the same as Mary's.

b. John's scream was the same as Mary's.

[3] Products bear an accidental relation to the time of their occurrence; actions bear an essential relation

(14) a. John could have taken this walk earlier than he did.

b. *? John could have done this walking earlier than he did.

(15) a. John's thought might have occurred to him earlier than it did.

b. ?* John's thinking might have occurred / taken place earlier than it did.

[4] Only products have 'gestalt properties' and are evaluated as a whole

(16) a. Mary's dance was unusual / interesting.

b. Mary's dancing was unusual / interesting.

5. Attitudinal Objects

5.1. Examples of attitudinal objects

John's thought that Mary likes Bill.

John suspicion / claim / denial / ... that Mary likes Bill

Intuitions about attitudinal objects are directly reflected in the semantic behavior of terms for attitudinal objects.

Kinds of attitudinal objects:

the thought that Mary likes Bill

the claim that Mary likes Bill

5.2. Properties of attitudinal objects

[1] Mind- and / or linguistic-act-dependent, agent-dependent

- (17) a. ?? John's thought that S occurred to Mary.
 b. ?? John's thought that S would exist even if John never thought that S.

[2] Attitude / speech act type-specific:

- (18) a. ?? John's thought that S is also his remark that S.
 b. ?? John's claim that it will rain is his hope that it will rain.

[3] Have truth conditions or fulfillment conditions, or more generally *satisfaction conditions*

- (19) a. John's belief that S is true.
 b. John's desire to become a king was fulfilled.

Truth (satisfaction) conditions also for counterfactual circumstances, in which the attitudinal object does not exist:

- (19) c. John's thought that S would be true even if John had never thought it.

Attitudinal objects involve truth *at* a world, not truth *in* a world (see Iacona 2003).

[4] Properties of concrete objects

Perceptual properties:

- (20) John heard Mary's remark that S.

Causal properties:

- (21) John's claim that S caused astonishment.

Evaluative predicates:

evaluate also attitudinal / illocutionary mode, not just an abstract propositional content:

- (22) a. John's thought that S is unusual.
 b. That S is unusual.
 c. The proposition that S is unusual.

Specificity:

Attitudinal objects are generally more specific than the content of their description, as opposed to facts, states, which are entirely constituted by the content of their canonical description:

- (23) a. John's belief that it will rain is stronger than Mary's belief that it won't.
 b. ??John's believing that it will rain is stronger than Mary's believing that it won't.
 c. ?? John's belief state is stronger than Mary's.

5.3. The Fregean worry

How can one account for the sharing of propositional content by different agents?

Two answers using intuitions about attitudinal objects:

[1] (Exact) similarity of attitudinal objects:

(24) a. John's thought is the same as Mary's. (the same as = is exactly similar to)

[2] Sharing of *kinds* of attitudinal objects

kinds of attitudinal objects:

John's thought that S: an instance of the thought that S, a kind of attitudinal object

(24) b. John and Mary share the thought that S

6. The Ontology of Attitudinal Objects

6.1. Differences between attitudinal objects and (mental or illocutionary) events

[1] Truth conditions/ satisfaction conditions

[2] Similarity relations

For two attitudinal objects to be 'the same' (i.e. be exactly similar), they need to share the same content and the same attitudinal or illocutionary force (but not the same agent)

[3] Accidental relation to the time of occurrence

6.2. Construing events in terms of tropes

First option

Events as instances of dynamic properties such as 'being P at t and Q at t' , for t' subsequent to t, P and Q incompatible properties.

Problem: gives wrong results concerning predicates applicable to events:

(25) a. John's becoming ill was sudden / unexpected / happened very quickly.

b. # John's healthiness and subsequent illness was sudden / unexpected / happened very quickly.

Second option

Events as instantiations of temporal transition relations involving tropes:

(26) The transition of John's healthiness to John's illness was sudden / unexpected / happened very quickly.

Events as second-level relational tropes

First option

The event that is the change from a being P to a being Q:

the instantiation of the transition relation by two tropes, the trope that is the instantiation of P in a and the trope that is the instantiation of Q in a.

Explaining event properties

- Why no truth conditions? Transitions are not true or false ...
- relation to time: temporal relations are constitutive of events

Problem: similarity relations

Similarity among events would require only that that same relation (transition) is instantiated, not that the bearers (the tropes involved) are the same.

Thus, all events would come out exactly similar!

Second option

Events as instances of transition relations involving particular property attributions, in times:

simple example: the event that is the change from a being P to a being Q:

the instantiation of $\lambda t t' [P^t(a) \ \& \ t < t' \ \& \ Q^{t'}(a)]$ in subsequent times t_1 and t_2 .

6.3. Attitudinal objects as complex tropes

The approach:

Attitudinal objects as first-level tropes instantiating the multigrade attitudinal relation, in *some* way

Additional motivation for attitudinal object as tropes:

Other trope-referring deverbal nominalizations:

(27) a. John smiled.

b. John's smile

(28) a. John weighs 100 pounds.

b. John's weight of 100 pounds

Two possibilities of conceiving attitudinal objects as tropes:First option

Attitudinal objects as relational tropes

John's belief that Mary likes Bill: the instantiation of the multigrade belief relation in John, the liking relation, Mary, and Bill

Problem:

Wrong result with respect to similarity relations:

Tropes instantiating the same (natural) property are (exactly) similar:

- (29) a. The color of the car is exactly the same as the color of the table.
 b. John's attitude toward Mary is exactly the same as Mary's attitude toward John.
 c. John's relation toward his teacher is the same as Mary's relation toward her father.

Similarity among attitudinal objects requires sameness of content:

- (30) a. * Sue's belief that it will rain is the same as John's belief that Mary likes Bill.
 b. John's belief is the same as Mary's belief (only if they both believe that S).

Second option**Attitudinal objects as quasi-relational tropes**

attitudinal objects as instantiations of properties involving propositional constituents , e.g. the property of believing that Bill likes Mary ($\lambda x[\text{believe}(x; \text{liking, Mary, Bill})]$)

The difference between relational tropes and quasi-relational tropes:

- (31) a. the relation between John and Bill
 b. John's relatedness to Bill

Explaining remaining properties of attitudinal objects

Similarity relations:

Exact similarity requires same attitudinal relation involved as well as same propositional constituents

Accidental relation to the time of occurrence:

Attitudinal objects are instantiations of a complex property in an agent, at whatever time the property may be instantiated.

6.4. Extending the account of attitudinal objects to other products, i.e. physical products

Walking, dancing, screaming:

temporal transitions: instantiations of relation among times, in times:

R_1 in t_1 and T_2 , R_2 in t_2 and t_3 ,

Walk, dance, scream:

instantiation of the property of an agent to have particular properties at subsequent times, in a particular agent :

a very simple example: $\lambda x[\exists t \exists t'(P^t(x) \ \& \ Q^{t'}(x) \ \& \ t < t')]$

similarity relations, relation to time: explained as with mental products

7. Attitudinal Objects and the Semantics of Attitude Reports

The neo-Russellian analysis:

Propositions do not act as arguments of an attitude verb, only propositional constituents do.

Support for the view:

Problems for propositions acting as objects of attitudes and as values of special quantifiers and pronouns:

The Substitution Problem (Prior, Bach, Moltmann 2003a, b, Rosefeldt, Schiffer, King, ...)

(32) a. valid: John believes / proved that S.

John believes / proved the proposition that S.

b. invalid: John claimed that S.

John claimed the proposition that S / the content of the sentence S / the object that is also the object of Mary's claim / some entity.

Verbs not accepting NPs syntactically:

(33) a. John complained that S.

b. * John complained that / something.

Special quantifiers and pronouns and free relative clauses:

are not subject to the Substitution Problem or the Objectivization Effect:

(34) John claimed something / that / what Mary claimed.

Additional semantic role of attitudinal objects, besides acting as referents of terms like *John's thought that S*:

Attitudinal objects (and kinds of them) provide the semantic values of special quantifiers and pronouns and free relative clauses like *what John thought*, *what was said*.

Observations about special quantifiers, pronouns, free relative clauses in sentential position:

- Evaluative predicates understood as with attitudinal objects:

(35) a. John said something nice (namely that S).

b. John thought something very daring (namely that S).

c. John imagined something exciting.

- Causal predicates applicable as with attitudinal objects:

(36) John said something that made Mary very upset.

- Sharing of the objects of attitudes: same constraints as on the corresponding attitudinal objects:

(37) a. # John mentioned what Mary believes, namely that Bill was elected president.

b. # John expects what Mary believes, namely that Sue will study harder.

c. # John said what Mary believes, namely that it will rain.

(38) a. # John's mention was Mary's belief.

b. # John's expectation is Mary's belief.

c. # John's claim is Mary's belief.

Special quantifiers as nominalizing quantifiers (Moltmann 2003a, b):

Special quantifiers range over the same things (almost the same things) as are the referents of nominalizations: attitudinal objects or kinds of them

formally: take scope and a 'nominalization domain':

(39) a. [something interesting]_{ik} [_iJohn [_k claimed _{t_k}]].

b. $\exists x \exists n \exists C_1 \dots C_n (x = f(\text{John}; \lambda y [\text{claim}(y, C_1, \dots, C_n)]) \ \& \ \text{interesting}(x) \ \& \ \text{claim}(\text{John}; C_1, \dots, C_n))$

(40) a. John claimed what Mary claimed.

b. $\exists x \exists n \exists C_1 \dots C_n (x = (f_{\text{kind}}(\lambda x [\text{claim}(x; C_1, \dots, C_n)]) \ \& \ x = [\text{what Mary claimed}] \ \& \ \text{claim}(\text{John}; C_1, \dots, C_n))$

(41) The proposition that Mary likes Bill = $f_{\text{kind}}(\lambda x [\text{accept}(x; \text{the property of liking, Mary, Bill})])$

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