

Course: The Ontology of Predication

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Friederike Moltmann

Handout 5

Attitudinal Objects and Quantification into Sentential Position

1. Propositions and their problems

roles of propositions:

- ‘meanings’ of sentences

- objects of attitudes:

(1) a. John believes that Mary arrived.

b. believe(John, [*that Mary arrived*])

- values of prosentential variables / terms (‘special quantifiers and pronouns’):

(2) a. John believes that Mary arrived.

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.

- represent ‘what is said’, what is communicated’

- are what modal / temporal operators operate on

(3) a. It must be the case that John is at home.

b. It will be the case that John is at home.

conceptions of propositions:

- sets of circumstances, function from circumstances to truth values

circumstances: possible worlds (Lewis, Stalnaker), situations (partial possible worlds (

- more plausibly: structured propositions: sequences of properties / concepts and objects (and modes of presentation)

basic problems for propositions and structured propositions in particular:

1. the Benacerraff problem (Jubien):

Benacerraff: choice between $\{\{\emptyset\}\}$ or $\{\{\emptyset\}, \emptyset\}$ for representing 2 is arbitrary

For propositions: choice between function or set is arbitrary choice between $\langle H, \text{John} \rangle$ or $\langle \text{John}, H \rangle$ seems arbitrary for representing the proposition that John is happy

But: the same problem affects all formal conceptions of meaning, not just that of sentences

2. the representational status and truth-directedness of proposition

3. the unity of propositions:

The problem of the 'interpretation' of the relation between the propositional constituents
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.

2. Attitudinal objects and special quantifiers

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

the Substitution Problem

(4) a. John believes / proved that S.

John believes / proved the proposition that S.

b. * John remembered that S.

John remembered the proposition that S.

c. * John wishes that he will win.

John wishes the proposition that he will win.

d. * John fears S.

John fears the proposition that S.

(5) * 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.

(6) * John knows that he lost the game.

John knows the fact that he lost the game / some entity.

(7) a. John remembered / wishes / fears / claimed something / that.

b. John knows / wishes / fears / claimed something / that.

reification effect:

(8) a. John expects that Mary will win.

John expects the proposition that Mary will win.

b. John imagined that Mary was alive.

John imagined the proposition that Mary was alive.

c. John remembers that Mary won.

John remembers the proposition that Mary won.

(9) a. John expects Mary.

b. John imagined Mary.

c. John remembers Mary.

(10) a. John expects (imagined / observed / heard / recognized) something.

b. John expects (imagined / observed / heard / recognized) that.

(11) The semantic function of a clausal complement of an attitude verb is to specify the propositional content of the propositional attitude that is described; the function of a referential NP complement generally that of specifying the object the attitude is about or directed toward

special quantifiers (wh words, pronouns): *something, everything, what he said / thought, that*

- not substitutional:

(12) a. John imagined something I never thought about.

b. John promised everything I ever dreamed of (namely that S, that S', that S'', ...).

- evaluative predicates:

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

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

c. John imagined something exciting.

- causal predicates:

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

perceptual predicates:

(14) John whispered something Mary could not hear.

- sharing of 'intentional objects' – same constraints as on corresponding attitudinal objects:

(15) 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.

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

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

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

(17) a. # John believes what Bill asserted, namely that S.

b. # John remembered what Mary noticed (namely that Bill had shut the door).

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

3. Attitudinal Objects

examples:

John's thought that Mary likes Bill.

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

properties of attitudinal objects:

- contingent, mind- and / or language- and agent-dependent objects

- have truth conditions, aboutness conditions:

(18) a. John's belief that S is true / is about Mary.

b. John's desire to become a king was fulfilled.

c. John's imagination to be a king turned out to be correct. (?)

Attitudinal objects have truthconditions inherently:

attitudinal or illocutionary mode ensures aim for truth / fulfillment / correctness

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

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

properties of concrete objects:

- perceptual properties:

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

- causal properties:

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

- agent-specific:

(22) *John's thought that S also occurred to Mary.

- attitude / speech act type-specific:

(23) a. *John's thought S is also his remark that S.

b. * John's that it will rain is his hope that it will rain.

- evaluative predicates: evaluate also attitudinal / illocutionary mode:

(24) a. John's thought that S is unusual.

b. That S is unusual.

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

(25) John's belief that it will rain is stronger than Mary's belief that it won't.

(26) a. * John's believing that it will rain is stronger than Mary's believing that it won't.

b. * John's belief state is stronger than Mary's.

Attitudinal objects: individuated both by propositional content and attitudinal or illocutionary mode – but in what way?

two possibilities:

1. using propositions:

John's thought that S = the proposition that S qua being thought by John

The Fregean view:

Separate propositional content (mind-independent ‘thought’) from illocutionary force.

Propositional content is constituted by concepts or other entities only, is a nonintentional object.

2. without propositions:

an older view of truth-bearing content:

truth-bearing content is constituted not only by objects and concepts, but also by intentional acts → pre-Fregean views

assertion: involves predicating properties in the assertion-way of objects

belief: involves predicating properties in the belief-way of objects

Kant: separate ‘judgment’ and belief (moreover content of judgment)

But still: judgment involves intentional predication as an (intersubjectively sharable) act

More recent related views:

Austin:

Different sub-acts involved in a speechact: phatic act, rhetic act, locutionary act, illocutionary act, perlocutionary act

Searle:

- referential and predicational acts
- illocutionary act, with illocutionary force

the problem for speechact-related views: (locutionary) acts are not true or false

the older view:

NeoRussellian view (Jubien 2001, Moltmann 2003):

think as a multigrade predicate in its second ‘position’:

(27) a. John thinks that Mary likes Bill

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

John’s thought that Mary likes Bill: constituted by the multigrade think-relation and its arguments

The multigrade attitudinal relation:

- allows dispensing with propositions (avoids Benacerraff problem)
- provides the link, ‘glue’ among propositional constituents

- is responsible for the truthdirectedness of attitudinal content

accounting for the sharing of contents of attitudes:

- (28) a. John thought the same thing as Mary.
 b. John and Mary share the same thought.

1. (exact) similarity of attitudinal objects
2. kinds of attitudinal objects

Kinds of attitudinal objects:

John's thought that S: an instance of the thought that S

- (29) a. The thought that Mary likes Bill.

agent-unspecific:

- b. John and Mary share the thought that S .

'kind reference':

Greg Carlson: Bare plurals and mass nouns stand for kinds, trigger particular instance-related readings of predicates of different types

Generalize to certain definite NPs: the thought that S, the claim that S etc

'individual-level predicates:

- (30) a. Gold is shiny.
 b. The thought that S is strange.

stage-level predicates:

- (31) a. John has never found gold.
 b. John has never encountered the claim that S.

instance-distribution predicates:

- (32) a. Insomnia is widespread among such people.
 b. The belief that S is widespread.

existence predicates:

- (33) a. Green gold does not exist.
 b. The thought that S has never occurred to anyone.