**Workshop on the Semantics of Embedded Sentences**

NYU, Department of Philosophy

May 17, 2017

Sponsored by the New York Philosophy of Language Workshop and Cian Dorr (NYU)

**Program**

10.45 Coffee

11.00-11.45 Jane Grimshaw (Rutgers): Systematic properties of nominal complements to

“attitude” predicates

11.45-12.00 Coffee

12.00-12.45 Friederike Moltmann (CNRS): Infinitival clauses: possible worlds and truth

maker approaches

12.45-14.00 lunch

14.00-14.45: Martin Abreu: Indirect speech reports

14.45-15.00: Coffee

15.00-15.45: Peter van Elswyck (Rutgers): Embedding propositional anaphora

15.45-16.00: Coffee

16.00- 16.45: Sam Carter (Rutgers): 'Now' and subordinate clauses

17.00-18.00: General discussion

**Abstracts**

Martin Abreu: *Indirect Speech Reports*

Abstract: Indirect speech reports can be true even if they don't attribute to the speaker the saying of a proposition she in fact expressed. For example, if Anna utters `I painted my wardrobe scarlet', we could report her truly as having said that she painted her wardrobe some shade of red. The report attributes to Anna the saying of something weaker than what she in fact expressed, but it is true nevertheless. Yet not all weakenings of what the speaker expressed yield true reports: we could not truly report Anna as having said that either it rains or it doesn't, or that she either painted her wardrobe red or she dyed her hair blue. This talk will explore two potential analysis of this phenomenon: one based on the notion of content-parthood developed by Fine and Yablo, and another based on a newly defined relation of relevant entailment. If there is time, I will present some more challenging observations which neither view can account for.

Sam Carter: *'Now' and subordinate clauses*

\*'Now' is widely recognised to exhibit anaphoric uses in addition to its deictic use. In this paper we investigate a novel use of 'now', in which it instead takes a not-at-issue subordinate clause. In such constructions 'now' functions non-indexically, fixing the reference time of its main clause relative to eventualities introduced by the VP of its subordinate complement. Building on Altshuler & Stojnić (2015,2016) we propose a unified analysis of deictic, anaphoric and non-indexical uses, on which the latter is taken as basic and the expression is assigned the type of a determiner. We conclude with a comparison with other subordinate clause taking temporal determiners, such as 'while', 'before' 'after', &c..\*

Peter van Elswyck: *Impersonal propositions: propositional anaphora as a window into the properties of pronouns*

Suppose we want a uniform semantics for third-person pronouns. Then the neuter pronoun *it* presents difficulty. Unadorned with the φ-features that limit what *she* and *he* can denote, *it* can denote many different kinds of objects including abstract ones like propositions. Elbourne (2013) claims that proposition-denoting uses of *it* pose the strongest challenge to his account of pronouns as definites. To meet the challenge, he proposes that *it* has the same semantics as *the proposition that…* where the noun *proposition* and the *that*-clause are deleted. As evidence, Elbourne notes that factives verbs embed *it that* structures like (1).

(1) I hate it that Trump is still president.

In this talk, I argue that proposition-denoting uses of *it* still pose a sizable challenge for D/E-type accounts like Elbourne’s. I will begin by offering an alternate explanation of embeddings like (1). Then I will present a battery of other proposition-denoting uses of *it* in embedded contexts that are mishandled. I will conclude with some lessons about what propositional anaphora teaches us about the semantics of pronouns.

Jane Grimshaw: *Systematic properties of nominal complements to “attitude”predicates*

My prior research supports the hypothesis that verbs which combine with clausal (CP) complements fall into definable, but not always obvious, sub-types, each having predictable complement options. Here I extend the analysis of the say verbs to nominal (DP) complements, showing that each sub-type of verb combines with DPs in a principled fashion. The factors that play a role include the semantic field of the lexical head, the Force associated with the DP complement, and the anaphoric status of the DP.  This study supports the hypothesis that the well-formedness of verb-complement combinations follows from general principles and does not need to be stipulated by “subcategorization” or “selection”.

Friederike Moltmann (CNRS): Infinitival clauses: possible worlds and truth maker approaches

I will briefly outline the view according to which sentences (embedded under modal or attitude verbs) act as predicates of modal or attitudinal objects, specifying their satisfaction conditions. I will point out that a particular difficulty arises if this is combined with a possible worlds account of satisfaction conditions, a difficulty that is avoided on a truthmaker approach to the content of modal and attitudinal objects.