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The Grammar of the Attitudes

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In his recent essay 'A Perspectivalist Semantics for the Attitudes' (Edelberg 1995), Walter Edelberg aims to explain certain linguistic phenomena. I shall show in this paper that there is a much better explanation of them. For instance, Edelberg claims (op. cit. p319) that

> (1)   Arsky thinks someone murdered Smith, and Barsky thinks he is still in Chicago (but there is no such murderer.)

is true, in a certain 'home theory', iff according to that home theory (a) 'Arsky's theory' contains an object that, in Arsky's theory, murdered Smith, (b) 'Barsky's theory' contains an object that, in Barsky's theory is still in Chicago, (c) the two objects in Arsky's and Barsky's theories are counterparts, while not being counterparts of any objects in the home theory. By contrast I shall show there are no objects, or counterpart objects existing in theories.

Edelberg contrasts his approach with 'realist' treatments of the same kind of issue, claiming, for instance (op. cit. p336):

> A semantical realist metatheory rests on a more complex metaphysical framework than does the perspectivalist approach. *All* the theoretical resources of the perspectivalist approach are utilised in the realist assignment of truth conditions to (1)...: theories or belief systems, the objects they contain, and the counterpart relation. But the semantical realist framework distinguishes between *theories* or *belief systems*, and *possible worlds*. The realist framework also distinguishes *real* or *ordinary objects* that populate worlds from *intentional objects*, or *ideas* that populate theories or belief systems. (In the perspectivalist framework, we have only the latter, so we call them simply 'objects'). Finally, in addition to the counterpart relation we have the *based on* or *of* relation, which holds between intentional objects and ordinary ones.

Ockham's Razor, it seems, will allow us to reject the realist picture, by excising its needless complexities.

Ockham's Razor however, also allows us to reject the perspectivalist picture which Edelberg paints. Not only can it be used to pare down one complex metaphysical framework in favour of a slightly leaner and more efficient one; it can also be used to excise *all the metaphysics*, and leave us with a perfectly adequate *grammatical* explanation of exactly the same phenomena. There is no need for any counterpart relation, whether or not supplemented by a 'based on' relation. There is likewise no need for any 'intentional objects', to be distinguished from, or even preferred to 'ordinary objects'. There are simply those ordinary objects, which are characterised differently by different believers, with the (actual) world, as it is variously

believed to be, replacing any (reified) 'possible worlds'. We don't even need 'belief systems' to account for individual beliefs, merely (platitudinously) *beliefs*, and we can leave 'theories' to be what we need, instead, to account for (groups of) *thoughts*.

What we are left with is merely the proper grammatical construal of belief and thought reports, which gives us a clear resolution of both of Edelberg's 'problems about intentional identity' (op. cit. pp317, 318), and both of his 'problems about attitudes de re' (op. cit. pp317, 319). Remarkably, in his four described cases, Edelberg gives his detectives, Arsky and Barsky, opinions about 'Smith's murderer', amongst other things. If only he had remembered the other philosophical context in which this same character appeared large, the scales might have started to fall even from his eyes, too. For Donnellan, in 1966, reminded us that *Smith's murderer need not have murdered Smith* (and see also Slater 1963). As a result, we must realise that Smith's murderer is invariably a perfectly ordinary object, even if its description is fictional (i.e. if there is no such murderer), and I have shown, in many recent publications, than an epsilon term, like 'εxSx', is sufficient to formalise reference to such entities.

The major difficulty some people have with this stems from their view of the mind as an interior space invisible to other observers - a view, of course, celebrated in the Cartesian tradition. Having something on one's mind is not then being anxious about some worry in the world, with the object on one's mind being evident to all interested parties. Instead, thinking about something is seen as involving elements in a private theatre, the knowledge of which can only be gleaned by others from the subject's behaviour and utterances.

The language with which we express ourselves is certainly important, for the specific difficulty some philosophers have in this area arises from their too frequent, casual use of it, in particular through not taking care to discriminate referential from predicative expressions. Using the epsilon calculus we can easily separate

a is identical with the murderer of Smith,

i.e. 'a = εxSx', in which 'the murderer of Smith' is a referential term, from

a is the murderer of Smith

i.e. 'a = ιxSx', or '(y)(Sy ⊃ y=a)', in which 'is the murderer of Smith' is a predicate. The attempt by Russell to conflate the two forms, in his Theory of Descriptions, does not help the learned to disentangle the two expressions; but there is a broader and more ancient philosophical prejudice which is a hindrance as well. That is the childlike belief that an object must have the character we attribute to it. But the Fountain of Youth, like Snake Oil, may easily turn out to be no real source of longevity, just as Dartmouth, to take an example of Mill's, in fact turns out to be not at the mouth of the Dart. Meinong, amongst many others, would have expected otherwise, since he took the gold mountain to be necessarily both made of gold and a mountain, and, contradictorily, the round square to be necessarily both round and square. But the rite of passage, which takes one out of this trusting and credulous conflation of

appearance with reality, requires bumping into the banal and everyday fact that things are not always as they seem. What is on one's mind in fact has an identity, possibly quite distinct from the character one attributes to it.

The epsilon calculus gives formal expression to this difference, as above, and as a result sentence (1) becomes

(1')   Ta($\exists$x)Sx.TbCϵxSx.($\neg$($\exists$x)Sx).

The cross-referencing pronoun 'he' is then captured by the epsilon term, since, by definition

($\exists$x)Sx $\equiv$ SϵxSx.

And that means we have already solved Edelberg's 'simple problem of intentional identity'. In what follows I will give epsilon transcriptions of Edelberg's eleven other sentences, as they relate to his four detailed cases, to clarify further the grammar of these affairs.

1

Edelberg describes his 'case 1' as follows:

> Smith dies of drowning. Detectives Arsky and Barsky jointly conclude that Smith was murdered by drowning, and that this explains his current condition. Neither detective has anyone in mind as a suspect, but Barsky thinks that Smith's murderer is still in Chicago, where the body was found. But Smith was not murdered, he drowned by accident.

In this case Edelberg says (1) is true, but (2) false, because its first conjunct might be untrue:

(2)   Someone is believed by Arsky to have murdered Smith, and Barsky thinks he is still in Chicago.

Certainly neither detective might have any specific person in mind as a suspect, but that does not mean there is not simply *something* they (each) have in mind. 'Smith's murderer', for instance, might be the branch that fell onto him, pushing him into the water, in which case the detectives' quest is for this agent, whatever character they initially attribute to it. The analysis of (2), with 'person or thing' in place of 'one', and 'he, she or it' in place of 'he' is therefore as follows:

(2')   ($\exists$x)BaSx.TbCϵxBaSx.

So we see that (2) might indeed be false, though not essentially as Edelberg thinks, because its first conjunct is untrue. It is the second conjunct which centrally might be untrue, since only TbCϵxSx is given, i.e. 'Barsky thinks that Smith's murderer is still in Chicago' - and there is no proof that who murdered Smith is who Arsky believes murdered Smith. Certainly, in the case in question, 'Sx' entails 'Px', i.e. 'x is a person', and 'Ba($\exists$x)(Px.Sx)' does not entail '($\exists$x)(Px.BaSx)' any more than it entails '($\exists$x)(Sx.BaSx)'. But the first conjunct, with the pronoun generalised, is true, since Ba($\exists$x)Sx entails BaSϵxSx, and so ($\exists$x)BaSx (see Slater

1992(a) in particular). Presumably Edelberg is reading 'neither has anyone in mind as a suspect' to contradict '(∃x)BaSx' or '(∃x)(Px.BaSx)'. But Arsky's being able to identify Smith's murderer, by name and address, or any other characteristic, is not required by '(∃x)BaSx', merely that there be some object Arsky has his belief about.

2

Edelberg describes his 'case 2' as follows:

> Smith died of drowning. This is explained by the fact that someone intentionally drowned him. Detective Barsky, who is investigating the case, sees Smith's condition and on that basis comes to believe that Smith was murdered by drowning. Barsky believes the murderer is still in Chicago.

In this case Edelberg says (3) is true:

(3)   Someone murdered Smith, and Barsky thinks he is still in Chicago,

and its analysis is

(3')   (∃x)Sx.TbCɛxSx.

But there is no difficulty about the cross reference, because of the definition of the quantifiers, given before. Hence there is not a *counterpart* of Smith's murderer in Barsky's thought, as Edelberg thinks, but Smith's murderer himself. And notice that even a gendered pronoun, like 'himself', does not carry into an attitude locution any descriptive implication, since it provides 'direct reference'. Thus in, for example,

There was a man in the room, but Celia believed he was a woman,

the 'he' is in the language of the reporter. So the whole is

(∃x)Mx.BcWɛxMx,

and what is implied by Celia's belief, namely '¬MɛxMx' is quite consistent, since it is just equivalent to '¬(∃x)Mx'. Hence we have solved Edelberg's 'simple problem about attitudes de re'.

3

Edelberg describes his 'case 3' as follows:

> Arsky and Barsky investigate the apparent murder of Smith, and they conclude that Smith was murdered by a single person, though they have no one in mind as a suspect. A few days later, they investigate the apparent murder of a second person, Jones, and again they conclude that Jones was murdered by a single person. At this point, however, a disagreement between the two detectives arises. Arsky thinks that the two murderers are completely unrelated, and that the person who murdered Smith, but not the person who murdered Jones, is still in Chicago. Barsky, however, thinks that one and the same person murdered both Smith and Jones. However, neither Smith nor Jones was really murdered.

In this case Edelberg says (4), (6) and (7) are true, but (5) is false:

(4)   Arsky thinks someone murdered Smith, and Barsky thinks he murdered Jones.

(5)   Barsky thinks someone murdered Jones, and Arsky thinks he murdered Smith.

(6)   Barsky thinks that someone murdered Smith, and Arsky thinks that *he* did *not* murder Jones.

(7)   Barsky thinks that someone murdered Smith, and Arsky thinks that he is still in Chicago.

The epsilon analysis straightforwardly supports Edelberg's judgements here, as I have explained at length, with respect to (4) and (5), elsewhere (Slater 1988(a)). For the analysis is

(4') $Ta(\exists x)Sx.TbJ\epsilon xSx$,

(5') $Tb(\exists x)Jx.TaS\epsilon xJx$,

(6') $Tb(\exists x)Sx.Ta\neg J\epsilon xTbSx$,

(7') $Tb(\exists x)Sx.TaC\epsilon xSx$.

Note in particular that the 'he' in (4) and (7) is replaceable by 'who murdered Smith', but the 'he' in (6) is replaceable by 'who Barsky thinks murdered Smith', in line with Edelberg's special emphasis, and this is reflected in the epsilon analysis. Of course we also may have without difficulty $\neg S\epsilon xSx$ and $\neg J\epsilon xJx$, as before. As a result Edelberg's further 'asymmetry problem about intentional identity' is solved.

4

Edelberg describes his 'case 4' as follows:

> Smith and Jones are dead. A single person murdered both of them. Detective Arsky investigates both cases, and comes to believe that someone murdered Smith and that someone murdered Jones, but he doesn't have anyone in particular in mind as a suspect. Arsky does not believe that Smith's murderer and Jones's murderer are the same person. He believes, for instance, that Smith's murderer, but not Jones's, is still in Chicago.

In this case Edelberg says (8) and (9) are false, while (10, (11) and (12) are true:

(8)   Someone murdered Smith, and Arsky thinks he murdered Jones,

(9)   Someone murdered Jones, and Arsky thinks he is still in Chicago,

(10)   Someone murdered Smith, and Arsky thinks he is still in Chicago,

(11)   Someone murdered Jones, and Arsky thinks he is no longer in Chicago,

(12)   Someone murdered Smith, and Arsky thinks he didn't murder Jones.

Here the epsilon analysis does not immediately support Edelberg's judgements. For since these are stated without any special emphasis, sentences (8) to (12) have the following analyses:

(8') $(\exists x)Sx.TaJ\epsilon xSx$,

(9') $(\exists x)Jx.TaC\epsilon xJx$,

(10') $(\exists x)Sx.TaC\epsilon xSx$,

(11') $(\exists x)Jx.Ta\neg C\epsilon xJx$,

(12') $(\exists x)Sx.Ta\neg J\epsilon xSx$,

and the identity of who murdered Smith (ϵxSx) and who murdered Jones (ϵxJx), would generate, in the first two cases, a second clause which Edelberg would want to say was true, but in the remaining cases a second clause which he would want to say was false. The substitution of identicals is lawful, when one is dealing with directly referential expressions like epsilon terms; but Edelberg would not want to say Arsky thinks either that the murderer of Jones is in Chicago, or that the murderer of Smith is not in Chicago, or that the murderer of Jones did not murder Jones.

On the other hand, if we relativise the epsilon terms, to '$\epsilon xTaSx$' and '$\epsilon xTaJx$', in the manner of (6), then we get formal expressions which are in accord with Edelberg's intuitions in the latter three cases. For we must remember that even if $\epsilon xSx=\epsilon xJx$, that does not guarantee that $\epsilon xTaSx=\epsilon xTaJx$, i.e. that who Arsky thinks murdered Smith is who Arsky thinks murdered Jones. Hence Arsky, in connection with (10) and (11), for example, might well think something about who he thinks murdered Smith without thinking the same thing about who he thinks murdered Jones.

This case, therefore, points to a feature of attitude ascriptions which Edelberg's understanding of his explicit sentences does not always entirely respect: the simple fact, which we saw in the case of Celia, before, that they are all in the language of the reporter. It is, indeed, just this which allows attitude ascriptions, when including referring terms, to be transparent, and hence include attitudes de re, and straightforward, cross-referencing intensional identities. Instead, Edelberg thinks there might be a 'variable aboutness' with referential terms, which, in effect, would put the reporter into two minds - if not more - unless, of course, the reporter explicitly expressed the variable reference in his or her own speech, using terms like 'who Arsky thinks murdered Smith', rather than 'who murdered Smith', as above.

Natural language clearly allows for such delicacies, but users of it still have to be personally careful, if they want to say anything like the above

Arsky believes that Smith's murderer, but not Jones', is still in Chicago.

For if the intention is to present Arsky's point of view, this must, strictly, be put otherwise.

Certainly, in the given case, BaCεxBaSx, and Ba¬CεxBaTx, but then the referential terms bring up *who Arsky believes murdered Smith*, and *who Arsky believes murdered Jones*, not *Smith's murderer* (who is *Jones's murderer*.) Likewise one must take care if one is tempted to say anything like

> Arsky does not believe that Smith's murderer and Jones's murderer are the same person (¬Ba(εxSx = εxJx)),

rather than

> Arsky does not believe that Smith's murderer murdered Jones (¬BaJεxSx),

or

> Arsky does not believe that Jones' murderer murdered Smith (¬BaSεxJx),

or

> Who Arsky believes murdered Smith is not who he believes murdered Jones (εxBaSx≠εxBaJx).

For, in the stated case, one hardly wants to attribute to Arsky disbelief in a logical necessity, εxSx = εxJx, when what is true, instead, may be simply that εxBaSx≠εxBaJx (c.f. Slater 1989(b)).

Hence we solve Edelberg's final problem, about the 'variable aboutness of attitudes de re', by rigidly requiring there be no variable aboutness of any individual referential term (within the whole context), at the same time as providing a variety of referring terms, which adequately cover all the different objects we may want to talk about. I have written about this specific grammatical matter before (Slater 1994(a)), but the rigidity of epsilon terms is a central feature of all the intensional logics I have described in my many articles on the subject, in the literature.

5

In conclusion we see, as promised, that a proper conception of the grammar of attitude ascriptions dispels not only a realist, but also Edelberg's perspectivalist metaphysics. It was the opinion of Wittgenstein, of course, and his followers in the Vienna Circle, that all metaphysical theorising arose from misconceptions of grammar. Another difficulty, for some people, I suppose, is believing it really could be all so simple.

But another difficulty, for Edelberg, concerns the necessary *publicity* of his supposedly *private* objects. For when he says (Edelberg 1995, p319), for example, that 'Arsky's theory T_{Arsky} contains an object o^S_{Arsky} that in T_{Arsky} murdered Smith', on his own understanding he should relativise that object just to his own mind, since this is an object *in his theory*. By Edelberg's description of it, it is, of course, an object in everyone's theory - through the means of reference Edelberg himself provides. But, for his account to hold in general, his audience

must (contradictorily) merely have counterparts of the object in question in their minds - they cannot have *that object*, notwithstanding Edelberg's attempt to put it into their minds by means of the intersubjective description. Edelberg's situation, in other words, is rather like Tractatus 6.54; his propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands them eventually recognises them as nonsensical.

This trouble seems to me to be quite thoroughgoing in any counterpart theory. If we refer to a's counterpart of (public) object O, for instance, then that 'counterpart' is on everyone's mind, since we can all, by that means, talk about it. Of course, in natural language, as I have indicated, there is no trouble about making public what is on an individual's mind - which is one reason why epsilon terms, which formalise reference, are rigid.

The advantage of the present account of the attitudes is thus not just that it reduces the metaphysics in Edelberg's, and other accounts, returning us to a natural conception of grammar. There are also major theoretical difficulties with those other accounts, in trying to talk about, and yet, contradictorily, keep private, the objects on people's minds, which the present account has no trouble with, at all.

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