

HARTLEY SLATER

## THE GRAMMAR OF THE ATTITUDES

In his recent essay 'A Perspectivalist Semantics for the Attitudes' 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 (1995, 319) claims 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 (1995, 336) contrasts his approach with 'realist' treatments of the same kind of issue, claiming, for instance:

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’ (1995, 317f), and both of his ‘problems about attitudes de re’ (1995, 317; 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 metaphysical scales might have started to fall even from his eyes, too. For Donnellan (1966, c.f. Slater 1963) reminded us that *Smith’s murderer need not have murdered Smith*. 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, that an epsilon term, like ‘ $\epsilon x Sx$ ’, is sufficient to formalise reference to such entities. For general survey articles on this matter see (Slater 1991, 1994a)

The major difficulty people like Edelberg 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 indirectly by others from the subject’s behaviour and utterances.

The language with which we express ourselves is certainly important, for the specific difficulty many philosophers have in this area arises, as above, from their inattention to Donnellan’s distinction, and thereby to not taking care to discriminate referential from attributive expressions. Using the epsilon calculus (for formal details, see Leisenring 1969) we can easily separate

a is identical with the murderer of Smith,

i.e. ‘ $a = \epsilon x Sx$ ’, in which ‘the murderer of Smith’ is a referential term, from

a is the murderer of Smith

i.e. ‘ $a = \iota x Sx$ ’, or ‘ $\forall y(Sy \equiv y = a)$ ’, in which ‘is the murderer of Smith’ is attributive. The attempt by Russell (1905) 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 human inclination which is a hindrance as well. That is the 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 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 (c.f. Slater 1987, 1988b).

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

$$(1') \quad Ta(\exists x)Sx \ \& \ Tb \ C\epsilon x \ Sx \ \& \ (\neg(\exists x)Sx)$$

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

$$(\exists x)Sx \equiv S\epsilon x \ Sx$$

And that means we have already solved Edelberg's 'simple problem of intentional identity'. Anaphoric cross reference is secured simply by identifying the term in the antecedent, and then repeating it at further occurrences. The point was first made in Slater (1986, 1988a, 1989a Chapter 5); for its fuller defense in connection with intensional constructions see, for instance, Slater (1989b, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b, also 1994b, and the two survey articles above). 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. Thus 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. Certainly, in the case in question, 'Sx' entails 'x is a person', i.e. 'Px', and 'Ba(∃x)(Px & Sx)' does not entail '(∃x)(Px & Ba Sx)'. But the first conjunct above, with the pronoun generalised, is still true, since Ba(∃x)Sx entails Ba Sεx Sx, and so (∃x)Ba Sx (c.f. Slater 1992a in particular). Maybe also Edelberg is reading 'neither has anyone in mind as a suspect' to contradict '(∃x)(Px & Ba Sx)'. But Arsky's being able to identify Smith's murderer, by name and address, or any other characteristic, is not required by '(∃x)(Px & Ba Sx)', or '(∃x)Ba Sx', merely that there be some person or object Arsky has his belief about. The analysis of (2), with the pronoun generalised, reveals more essentially why (2) does not follow, since it is:

(2')  $(\exists x)Ba Sx \& Tb C\exists x Ba Sx$

So we see that, in this form, (2) might indeed be false, though not because its first conjunct is untrue. It is the second conjunct which centrally might be untrue, since not  $Tb C\exists x Ba Sx$ , but only  $Tb C\exists x Sx$  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.

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')  $(\exists x)Sx \& Tb C\exists x Sx$

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 'he', 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

$(\exists x)(Mx \& Rx) \& Bc W\exists x(Mx \& Rx)$ ,

and what is implied by Celia's belief, namely ' $\neg M\exists x(Mx \& Rx)$ ' is quite consistent. Hence we have solved Edelberg's 'simple problem about attitudes de re'.

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 1988a). For the analysis is

$$(4') \quad Ta(\exists x)Sx \ \& \ Tb \ J\epsilon x \ Sx$$

$$(5') \quad Tb(\exists x)Jx \ \& \ Ta \ S\epsilon x \ Jx$$

$$(6') \quad Tb(\exists x)Sx \ \& \ Ta \neg J\epsilon x \ Tb \ Sx$$

$$(7') \quad Tb(\exists x)Sx \ \& \ Ta \ C\epsilon x \ Sx$$

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  $\neg S\epsilon x \ Sx$  and  $\neg J\epsilon x \ Jx$ , as before. As a result Edelberg's further 'asymmetry problem about intentional identity' is solved.

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:

$$(8') \quad (\exists x)Sx \ \& \ Ta \ J\epsilon x \ Sx$$

$$(9') (\exists x)Jx \ \& \ Ta \ C\epsilon x \ Jx$$

$$(10') (\exists x)Sx \ \& \ Ta \ C\epsilon x \ Sx$$

$$(11') (\exists x)Jx \ \& \ Ta \neg C\epsilon x \ Jx$$

$$(12') (\exists x)Sx \ \& \ Ta \neg J\epsilon x \ Sx$$

The identity of who murdered Smith ( $\epsilon x Sx$ ) and who murdered Jones ( $\epsilon x Jx$ ) 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,  $Ba \ C\epsilon x \ Ba \ Sx$ , and  $Ba \ \neg C\epsilon x \ Ba \ Jx$ , 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 ( $\neg Ba(\epsilon x Sx = \epsilon x Jx)$ ),

rather than

Arsky does not believe that Smith's murderer murdered Jones  
 ( $\neg Ba J\epsilon x Sx$ ),

or

Arsky does not believe that Jones' murderer murdered Smith  
 ( $\neg Ba S\epsilon x Jx$ ),

or

Who Arsky believes murdered Smith is not who he believes murdered Jones  
 ( $\epsilon x Ba Sx \neq \epsilon x Ba Jx$ )

For, in the stated case, one hardly wants to attribute to Arsky disbelief in a logical necessity,  $\epsilon x Sx = \epsilon x Jx$ , when what is true, instead, may be simply that  $\epsilon x Ba Sx \neq \epsilon x Ba Jx$  (c.f. Slater 1989c).

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 1994a), 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.

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 (1995, 319), for example, that 'Arsky's theory  $T_{\text{Arsky}}$  contains an object  $o_{\text{Arsky}}^S$  that in  $T_{\text{Arsky}}$  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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