Kaplan vs. Frege on Demonstratives

Frege’s Theory of Demonstrations

A demonstration is much like a description — it has both a sense and a denotation.

**Denotation**

The denotation of a demonstration is the *demonstratum* — the object demonstrated.

**Sense**

The sense of a demonstration is the *manner of presentation*.

Thus, two different demonstrations could have the same denotation but different senses. Cf. “Hes” and “Phos” on pp. 514-15.

Frege’s Theory of Demonstratives

“An occurrence of a demonstrative expression functions rather like a place-holder for the associated demonstration” (p. 516).

So **demonstratives themselves have senses**, which are **constituents in the propositions** expressed by sentences containing demonstratives.

The Counter-Example

\[\text{He now lives in Princeton}\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{David} & \quad \text{Delta} \\
\text{Paul} &
\end{align*}\]

\[\text{Pat} = \text{the content of David’s utterance} = \text{the proposition expressed} = \langle \text{Paul, } t_0, \text{ living in, Princeton} \rangle\]

- In the actual world, \(\text{Pat}\) is true.
- If Paul had moved to Santa Monica a week before \(t_0\), \(\text{Pat}\) would have been false.
• What if Paul and Charles had switched places? Pat would still be true.

Why? Because Pat is not the proposition that would have been expressed if David had been pointing at Charles.

Compare these two sentences:

• “He [Delta] now lives in Princeton”
• “The male I am now pointing at [Delta] now lives in Princeton”

The proposition expressed by (1) is true in the actual world, and true in the case in which Paul and Charles switch places.

Reason: Paul is a constituent of Pat, the proposition expressed. Charles is a constituent of a different proposition, Mike, that (1) would have expressed in the case of the switch.

The proposition expressed by (2) is true in the actual world, but false in the case in which Paul and Charles switch places.

Reason: it is not Paul, but rather the sense of Delta, that is a constituent of the proposition expressed. And Delta has a different denotation in the two different circumstances: it denotes Paul in the actual world, and denotes Charles in the case of the switch.

Conclusions

• The only “sense” of an indexical is its character.
• The character of an indexical is a semantical rule—a function from context to content—that tells you how to fix its denotation.
• The character of an indexical is not synonymous with it. E.g., ‘I’ is not synonymous with ‘the person who is speaking’.
• “In general, for indexicals, it is not possible to find synonyms” (p. 521).

Content and Character as Objects of Thought

The sentence “I am getting bored” has the same character no matter who utters it, but different content for different speakers.

• Principle 1: Objects of thought (Thoughts) = Contents
• Principle 2: Cognitive Significance of a Thought = Character
Corollaries

Corollary 1

Even two persons in exactly the same cognitive state will often disagree in their attitudes toward some object of thought (p. 531).

Clearer way to put it: Even two persons who agree in their attitudes toward some object of thought may be in different cognitive states.

Examples (Perry’s bear, Kaplan’s pants, pp. 532-3) show that it is not content but character that is cognitively significant (i.e., explains behavior).

Corollary 2

Ignorance of the referent does not defeat the directly referential character of indexicals (p. 536).

Corollary 3

The bearers of logical truth and of contingency are different entities. Characters are logically true (produce a true content in every context). Contents (propositions) are contingent or necessary (p. 539).