

PRONOMINAL AMBIGUITY*

Anders J. Schoubye
University of St Andrews, Arché

ABSTRACT The problem of pronominal ambiguity has divided philosophers of language and linguists alike into roughly two groups; those who regard pronouns as genuinely ambiguous between referential and bound uses, and those who argue that the ambiguity is systematic and that pronouns should be given a uniform treatment. In this paper, I discuss the problem of pronominal ambiguity by considering a recent proposal for a pragmatically unified account of pronouns, namely the proposal in [Recanati \(2005\)](#). Looking at this particular case, I argue that it's unclear what precisely the problem of pronominal ambiguity amounts to, and that because of this, it's unclear what it would take to solve it. Secondly, I argue that given a specific, but fairly intuitive, way of construing the problem, Recanati's pragmatic proposal fails. I conclude by demonstrating that the semantic revisions enforced by Recanati's proposal leads to severe over-generation problems.

1 Introduction

During the past five decades, philosophers and linguists have debated extensively how to explain the peculiar, indeed almost unpredictable, behavior of English pronouns. The astonishing amount of attention dedicated to this particular issue owes largely to important contributions by [Geach \(1962\)](#) and [Evans \(1977, 1980\)](#). Geach made famous the notorious problem of donkey anaphora and Evans drew the attention of philosophers and linguists alike to the existence of so-called E-type pronouns. These contributions launched an extensive amount of research, which today has significantly improved our understanding of pronouns and the phenomenon of pronominal anaphora. However, this research has also produced a host of mutually incompatible theories and in general pervasive disagreement about these theories comparative strengths. Today, there is a wide variety of positions to choose from, the most influential of which are probably the dynamic theories of e.g. [Kamp \(1981\)](#), [Heim \(1982\)](#),

* Work in progress. Thanks to...

Groenendijk and Stokhof (1991), the D-type theories of e.g. Neale (1990), Heim (1990), Heim and Kratzer (1998), Elbourne (2005), and the categorial grammar and variable-free approach of Jacobson (1999).¹

In this paper, I discuss Francois Recanati's (2005) recent and quite novel contribution to the present debate concerning pronouns. In short, Recanati sets out to resolve the the problem of pronominal ambiguity, viz. the thesis that pronouns in English are ambiguous across their many varied uses. Recanati's solution to this problem is to provide a uniform pragmatic analysis of pronouns and to make required but substantial semantic changes. I start by considering and discussing what exactly this 'ambiguity problem' amounts to, and I then proceed to discuss Recanati's pragmatic solution. I will argue that Recanati's proposal faces a number of quite acute problems, and that it therefore has no advantages over other existing proposals. More importantly, from the discussion of Recanati's proposal, I hope to shed some important light on the 'ambiguity problem' more generally. As it turns out, it's not clear what exactly the problem is nor what it would take to solve it. Through my critique of Recanati's account I hope to demonstrate why.

1.1 *The Varieties of Pronouns*

It's common to discriminate between three distinct uses of pronouns, namely *deictic* uses (also often labeled *indexical* and *demonstrative* uses), *anaphoric* uses, and *bound* uses. Crudely speaking, when a pronoun is used to refer to a discursively realized antecedent, it is an *anaphoric* use of the pronoun, whereas when it's used to refer to a non-discursively realized antecedent it's a *deictic* use of the pronoun. Both such interpretations (or readings) are available of the sentence below.

- (1) Guybrush_{*i*} loves his_{*i/j*} mother.

The indices above are used to indicate the pronoun's intended antecedent. On the co-indexed anaphoric reading Guybrush loves his own mother, whereas on the deictic reading Guybrush loves the mother of a contextually (but non-discursively) salient singular male individual. Also, a prototypical deictic use of a pronoun ordinarily requires that the speaker performs a demonstration of the intended referent, and this sharply contrasts the anaphoric uses, where the pronoun's indexed antecedent simply supplies the referent. However, notice that on both the anaphoric and the deictic reading of the pronoun in (1), it appears to function as a genuine referential term — viz. in both cases the pronoun refers to Guybrush. The use of the pronoun in (1) differs importantly from the

¹ Mixed accounts, which combine the dynamic frameworks with the existence of D-type pronouns, such as Chierchia (1995) also deserves mention.

so-called *bound* use, where the pronoun is ordinarily interpreted as the natural language counterpart of a variable in quantified logics. In other words, bound pronouns are non-referential. Consider (2) below.

- (2) Every boy_{*i*} loves his_{*i/j*} mother.

On standard co-indexed (viz. anaphoric) readings, the pronoun picks up its reference from its indexed antecedent, but since the pronoun's antecedent in (2) is a non-referential quantified noun phrase (QNP), this is not possible. The pronoun in (2) appears to be functioning as a variable, which is bound by the QNP. On the bound reading the value of the pronoun varies with the objects introduced by the QNP, and therefore the sentence is true just in case every boy in the relevant domain loves their own mother. As in the previous case, there is also a deictic reading available for (2) according to which every boy loves the mother of a contextually salient singular male individual. On this reading the QNP and the pronoun are not co-indexed.²

Lastly there is a notorious class of pronouns, made famous by Geach's cases of *donkey anaphora* and later grouped among what Evans labeled *E-type* pronouns. These pronouns have received an overwhelming amount of attention, because they appear to function neither as referential singular terms nor as bound variables. For example,

- (3) Every farmer who owns [a donkey]_{*i*}, beats it_{*i*}.
 (4) If Guybrush_{*i*} owns [a donkey]_{*j*}, he_{*i*} beats it_{*j*}.

Intuitively, the pronouns in (3) and (4) seem bound by their co-indexed antecedent QNPs and since the antecedents are QNPs, the pronouns cannot merely co-refer. But, it's typically recognized that the scope of an existential quantifier is clausally restricted. For instance, an attempt to formulate (3) using a first-order formula yields (5).

- (5) $\forall x[[\text{farmer}(x) \wedge \exists y[\text{donkey}(y) \wedge \text{owns}(x, y)]] \supset \text{beats}(x, y)]$

But (5) is not well-formed, because the variable *y* is outside the scope of the existential quantifier, and hence unbound.³ In other words, it seems that (3)

² Not all pronouns permit the aforementioned uses. For instance, reflexive and logophoric pronouns are always bound by an antecedent NP and therefore non-referential. Moreover, the orthodox view for several years was that there are no bound uses of the English first personal pronoun *I*. This has however been seriously questioned in Partee (1989). For further reference, cf. also Heim (1994)

³ Even if the existential quantifier could take wide scope over the conditional as in (6), the truth-conditions come out wrong.

- (6) $\forall x \exists y [[\text{man}(x) \wedge \text{donkey}(y) \wedge \text{bought}(x, y)] \supset \text{beats}(x, y)]$

On this first-order formalization, the sentence is true in a model where e.g. a farmer owns one donkey and one pig, but beats neither of them.

cannot be captured using a first-order formula.⁴ The genuine puzzle with respect to the donkey anaphora in (3) and (4) is that in order to capture the intuitive truth-conditions, the indefinite article must be interpreted as a universal.

$$(7) \quad \forall x \forall y [[\text{man}(x) \wedge \text{donkey}(y) \wedge \text{bought}(x, y)] \supset \text{beats}(x, y)]$$

In other words, the intuitively correct truth-conditions for the donkey sentences are captured in first-order logic by using two universal quantifiers rather than one. But, indefinites cannot in general be interpreted as having universal force, so the problem becomes providing a systematic method for translating natural language pronouns into first-order logic. There's a superabundance of research on this topic to which I confer the interested reader. In the remainder of this paper, not much will be said about donkey anaphora.

2 Pronominal Ambiguity

2.1 Promoting Ambiguity

Given the flexibility of pronouns and their highly varied uses, a debated issue in linguistics and philosophy of language is whether pronouns are ambiguous between referential and bound uses. There is a clearly noticeable difference between referential and bound uses of pronouns, but explicating the details of this difference is far from a trivial matter. It's not immediately obvious how to characterize the ambiguity in question. One famous proponent of the view that natural language pronouns are ambiguous is David Kaplan (1989b; 1989a), who in 'Afterthoughts' writes the following.

Pronouns in natural language have often been analogized to variables. Pronouns are lexically ambiguous, having both an anaphoric and a demonstrative use. An anaphoric use of a pronoun is *syntactically bound* to another phrase occurring elsewhere in the discourse. In meaningful discourse, a pronoun not used anaphorically is used demonstratively. As I saw the matter, a demonstrative use of a pronoun was simply a *syntactically free* use. Like a free occurrence of a variable, it requires something extralinguistic, a *demonstration*, as I then termed it, to assign it a value. Demonstrative and anaphoric occurrences

⁴ Interestingly, we get a similar result in the binding theory of generative grammar. In a phrase marker, *A* c-commands *B* if, and only if, neither *A* dominates *B* nor *B* dominates *A*, and every node that dominates *A* also dominates *B*. It's generally assumed that the structural relation of c-command is required for syntactic binding, but the antecedent of the pronoun in (3) is embedded in a relative clause. This is a syntactic island which prohibits the quantifier from raising to a position from where it will c-command the co-indexed pronoun. A bound reading of the pronoun is therefore predicted to be unavailable.

of pronouns can thus be seen to corresponded [sic] to free and bound occurrences of variables. (Kaplan 1989a: p.572)

Kaplan uses the analogy between pronouns and variables to support the thesis that pronouns are *lexically* ambiguous between bound and referential pronouns. However, when Kaplan states that anaphoric uses of pronouns are syntactically bound to *another phrase occurring elsewhere in the discourse*, he seems to suggest that pronouns are bindable across sentences. This is a clearly non-standard assumption, which implies that Kaplan has some non-standard notion of binding in mind. Moreover, it's not quite clear how Kaplan's proposed distinction between syntactically bound and demonstrative pronouns justifies the conclusion that the ambiguity in question is *lexical*. Or rather, it's unclear what Kaplan takes *lexical ambiguity* to mean. The seemingly most straightforward way to cash out the notion of lexical ambiguity is in terms of differences in lexical meaning. But Kaplan neglects to discuss differences in meaning and focuses exclusively on structural differences. It's clear that bound and referential pronouns have distinct functions, but how to explicate a difference in meaning (given the assumption that pronouns function as variables) is not clear.

Nevertheless, there might be other arguments supporting Kaplan's conclusion, namely empirical data. It has for instance been observed (cf. Neale 2004, 2006) that Scandinavian languages provide some cross-linguistic evidence for the lexical ambiguity thesis.

(...) it is arguable that each [*he, him, his*] corresponds to two distinct words in English, one that is bound and another that is not, an idea that appears to gain some plausibility when we consider languages like Icelandic where a related distinction is lexicalized. (...) Of course if /he/ and /the/ really are ambiguous, the ambiguity in question will have to be more systematic than the sort found with /pen/ and /bank/. (Neale 2004: fn. 22, p.86)

The lexicalized distinction mentioned by Neale is manifested in the possessive third person singular pronouns in Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic. These languages contain what appears to be phonologically and orthographically distinct pronouns for the bound and referential uses respectively. For instance, in Danish (1) is translated in either of two ways depending on the intended interpretation.

- (8) a. Guybrush elsker sin mor.
b. Guybrush_i loves his_i mother.
- (9) a. Guybrush elsker hans mor.
b. Guybrush_i loves his_j mother.

The problem for the lexical ambiguity view is that the empirical data seems insufficiently systematic. Only the possessive form of the third person singular pronouns have distinct lexical entries for bound and referential uses. Furthermore, it turns out that the pronoun 'hans' in (9a) functions in certain contexts as a bound variable, rather than a referential term.⁵ The pronoun therefore appears to exhibit a similar type of ambiguity as that of the pronouns in English. Had the lexicalized distinction been more systematic, i.e. had it generalized across every grammatical case and person, it would have provided more convincing support for the ambiguity thesis.

Another point in favor of the ambiguity view is the alleged perspectival feature of indexicals. The idea is that indexicals signal that the content of the sentence must be evaluated from a particular subjective perspective, namely the perspective of the speaker. When speakers use indexicals, they convey information about their own privileged location in relation to the subject matter under discussion. Consider for instance the difference between deictic uses of 'this' and 'that'. As McGinn puts it,

[...] the use of indexicals involves treating oneself as somehow a *centre*, as a privileged coordinate; [...] Indexicals flout this requirement of objective centreless description because they are semantically relative in their interpretation. (? p.16).

Deictic uses of pronouns contrast bound uses of pronouns, because in bound uses of pronouns the distinctive perspectival aspect of pronouns is lost. For instance, when a third person pronoun is bound by an antecedent QNP, the pronoun loses its perspectival force and behaves more or less like a bound variable. This understanding of indexicals is also manifest in ?

[...] a non-indexical expression is one whose meaning specifies a contribution to propositional content that is constant across different uses; an indexical is one whose meaning specifies only a relation to the user that is constant across different uses, different entities capable of serving as the specified relatum and hence as contributions to propositional content, on different occasions of use. The indexicality of an expression is thus explained in terms of a perspective it signals. (? p.7)

If the perspectival aspect of indexicals is considered an essential component of the meaning of indexicals (as is clearly indicated), there is an important difference between deictic pronouns and bound pronouns. Insofar as the idea

⁵ I owe this observation to Andri Hjálmarsson

that this aspect of deictic uses of pronouns is essential to their meaning is maintained, there appears to be no straightforward way of reconciling deictic and bound pronouns. To this, Neale adds that ambiguity shouldn't always be avoided, since in a variety of cases, ambiguity plays an important explanatory role.

The fear of being assailed for postulating ambiguities has driven philosophers to heroic lengths in preserving unitary semantic analyses. But ambiguity is a tricky notion: some forms (by whatever fancy name) are seemingly less expensive than others; some may result in theoretical simplification elsewhere; and some may make more sense if seen from the perspective of more than one language (...) (Neale 2006)

In the above quote, Neale has in mind the debate about referential vs. attributive descriptions, but it's quite conceivable that similar considerations hold in the debate about pronouns. However, it might be true that ambiguity should on occasion be welcomed, i.e. when it aids in problem-solving, but it's less clear whether it should be welcomed in the case of pronouns. Indeed, it's not clear what the ambiguity thesis for pronouns amounts to. In particular, what kind of ambiguity it is.

2.2 *Resisting Ambiguity*

A number of researchers in philosophy of language and linguistics persistently reject that pronouns should be classified as lexically ambiguous. These researchers maintain that the alleged ambiguity is too systematic to count as ambiguity. It's too systematic in the sense that it generalizes across every grammatical cases and persons, and across several other languages. For instance, a pronoun such as *he* has different grammatical cases, and if pronouns are genuinely ambiguous, there must be two distinct lexical items *he*¹ and *he*², both of which have different grammatical cases (*him*¹, *him*², *his*¹, *his*²). And so, a consequence of the ambiguity view is that English must have developed in such a way as to contain a whole class of pair-wise distributed, yet distinct, lexical items, which by sheer coincidence are perfectly equivalent as regards morphology, phonology and (surface-) syntactic properties. It's hard to deny that this a fairly implausible consequence and opponents of the ambiguity view therefore maintain that bound and referential pronouns of English should not be analyzed as distinct lexical items. Still, the obvious problem for the non-ambiguity view is that there are two obviously non-equivalent ways to assign values to pronouns, and that these values appear to be rather different in nature. The assumption that the ambiguity (whatever it is) is merely apparent certainly requires an explanation. Angelika Kratzer writes,

Referential [deictic and non-bound anaphoric pronouns] and bound variable pronouns tend to look the same. The English 3rd person pronouns *he*, *she*, and *they* can all be referential or bound, for example. Referential pronouns refer to salient individuals in the utterance situation. Bound variable pronouns are interpreted by assignment functions. This looks like ambiguity. The apparent ambiguity is systematic, though, and this is why most existing accounts propose a unified semantics for both types of pronouns. (Kratzer 2007)

In other words, according to Kratzer, the systematicity of the phenomenon suggests that pronouns in general should receive a uniform treatment. Kratzer mentions, as examples of such uniform semantic treatments, the dynamic approaches of Kamp (1981) and Heim (1982), and also the approaches of Heim & Kratzer (1998) and Elbourne (2005). Kamp's and Heim's dynamic approaches provide a uniform semantic treatment in the sense that both referential and bound pronouns are treated as variables, which are all anaphoric on antecedently introduced discourse referents. Heim & Kratzer (1998) also propose to treat referential and bound pronouns as individual variables, but interpret these by either variable assignments or, in the case of binding, lambda abstraction.⁶ Elbourne (2005) treat pronouns quite generally as Fregean definite articles, and uses NP-deletion evidence to argue for a descriptive analysis of pronouns. These proposals diverge in important respects, but each proposal is in a sense an attempt to provide a uniform semantic analysis of pronouns. On each of these accounts, pronouns are treated as single lexical items (with a minimal descriptive content), which, given an occasion of use, receives either a referential or a bound interpretation. On the dynamic approaches, all uses of pronouns are essentially anaphoric, namely anaphoric on discourse referents already available in the context. In contrast, on e.g. Heim & Kratzer's approach all uses of pronouns are handled by a single semantic rule of interpretation (the pronouns and traces rule).

On Kratzer's view, a unified treatment consists in positing a single sophisticated semantic rule of interpretation which captures both referential and bound uses of pronouns. Pronouns are assumed to be single lexical entities, i.e. variables tout court, and particular uses of these entities will be either referential or bound uses respectively. Thus, in order to interpret and use pronouns, language users are required to learn only a single semantic rule. Crudely, the reasoning proceeds in the following way. Pronouns are ambiguous between referential and bound uses and this ambiguity is systematic both language-internal and

⁶ The correct mappings from indices to individuals is assumed to be supplied by the context, or in the binding cases by the rule of predicate abstraction, cf. (Heim and Kratzer 1998: p.186).

across other languages. Because the ambiguity is systematic, it's different from standard cases of lexical ambiguity. Therefore, pronouns should be treated as single lexical items (with a slightly more complex semantics). And that's really all there is to say.

But, this approach to the ambiguity problem appears to disregard what in fact prompted the problem, namely the interesting bifurcation of pronouns into referential and bound pronouns. It's certainly questionable whether any ambiguity is resolved simply by providing a single semantic rule of interpretation, which captures both referential and bound uses. To convince a spirited proponent of the ambiguity view, a stronger argument is required. If one thinks that the ambiguity problem originates in an inherent difference in meaning between referential and bound pronouns and that that fact alone mandates a treatment according to which referential and bound pronouns are distinct lexical items, the reasoning behind the above approach doesn't look attractive.

Francois Recanati (2005) has recently voiced a concern similar to Kratzer's regarding the analysis of pronouns. Recanati writes,

(...) it is unlikely that the pronouns which allow for the three types of use are merely ambiguous: the phenomenon is too systematic to count as a crude ambiguity. There obviously is something common to the different uses — something which we must attempt to capture within a unified framework. [Recanati \(2005\)](#).

In contrast to aforementioned theories, Recanati argues that the semantic content of a pronoun, including bound pronouns, *always* relies on the context of use. Recanati maintains that the characteristic property manifested across various uses of pronouns is an inherently pragmatic property, a reciprocal reliance on context. Furthermore, Recanati claims that both bound and referential pronouns are governed by the same pragmatic procedure for resolving their reference. In contrast to Kratzer, Recanati therefore thinks that the proper strategy for resolving the apparent ambiguity problem is constructing a pragmatic theory of anaphora. While this pragmatic theory, according to Recanati, provides a unified treatment of pronouns, it also leads to some fairly heavy-weight revisions of the semantics of binding. In the following, I present and discuss Recanati's novel proposal for a unified pragmatic treatment of pronouns and evaluate its semantic implications. I will argue that Recanati's unificatory project fails and that its consequences for semantics are intolerable. There are of course a plethora of additional problematic issues related to the ambiguity problem, but in the present paper, I restrict myself to a discussion of Recanati's proposal.

3 Unification

3.1 *Salience Relations and Free Uses of Pronouns*

Recanati's principal contention is that both deictic, anaphoric, and bound uses of pronouns should be assimilated by a broader pragmatic phenomenon conveniently labeled 'free uses'. He writes,

(...) pronouns are like variables in logic. Variables are not ambiguous, yet they have two uses: they can be bound or they can remain free, depending on the syntactic environment in which they occur. With pronouns the situation is similar. A pronoun can be bound by a quantifier or it can be contextually assigned a value. Such contextual assignment is what I call a 'free' use for a pronoun. Recanati (2005: p.288)

Recanati's first and foremost task is therefore to demonstrate in what sense the use of anaphoric and, in particular, bound pronouns are *free* uses.⁷

Now, Recanati differentiates three distinct types of contextual salience, namely *perceptual salience*, *discursive salience*, and *associative salience*. An object is perceptually salient when it's perceptually accessible to the interpreter and perception of it is aided by e.g. a speaker's pointing (or similar gestures). An object is discursively salient when it's cognitively accessible simply because it has already been mentioned in the conversation. Finally, an object is associatively salient when it's accessible simply by association to other objects already salient in the context. Associative salience is less intuitive than the other types, but the idea is something like this: suppose that a speaker A shows to an interlocutor B a painting painted by A's 5-year-old son. Even though A's son is neither perceptually nor discursively salient, we can easily imagine that if B asserted a sentence such as 'he's certainly talented', B would often succeed in referring to A's son. The intended connection underlying Recanati's classification of salience types and the uses of pronouns should be obvious. The prototypical use of a pronoun which exploits perceptual salience is a deictic use, whereas a prototypical use of a pronoun which exploits discursive salience is an anaphoric use. Recanati aspires to demonstrate that pronouns quite generally rely on such contextual salience relations for their contents and that this shared reliance on context is what pronouns in general have in common. But, in order to cash out the idea that the contents of deictic, anaphoric, and in particular, bound pronouns rely on some aspect of the context, Recanati adopts, and subsequently attempts to augment, Nunberg's (1993) theory of indexicals. According to

⁷ Note that Recanati and Kaplan use the analogy between pronouns and variables to draw precisely opposite conclusions.

Nunberg's theory, an indexical term (i.e. a pronominal) has an associated index, and in order to determine the content of the indexical term, this index must be identified. The index functions as a route to the content. For example, the index associated with an indexical such as 'tomorrow' is the time of utterance, the index associated with the indexical 'we' is the speaker in the context, and the index associated with a demonstrative such as 'that' is a physical location as indicated by the speaker. The semantic contents of indexical expressions are then determined in relation to their identified indices. For instance, the semantic content of the indexical 'tomorrow' is the day after the time of its index (viz. the time of utterance), the semantic content of the indexical 'we' is a group containing the index (viz. the speaker), and the semantic content of a complex demonstrative such as 'that bottle' is a physical location containing the bottle, which licenses the interpretation 'the bottle which is there' (Recanati 2005: p. 303).

3.2 *Extending the Analysis to Anaphoric Pronouns*

Anaphoric pronouns are characterized by their dependence on co-indexed antecedent terms for their semantic contents, and it seems that there is no obvious way to extend Nunberg's analysis of indexicals (viz. non-anaphoric pronouns) to standard anaphoric uses. The semantic contents of anaphoric pronouns seem to depend on something fundamentally different than deictic pronouns. Nonetheless, Recanati argues,

I suggest we apply the same sort analysis to anaphoric and bound uses of pronouns. Anaphoric pronouns, I will argue, have an essential feature in common with deictic pronouns: in both cases, the pronoun indexes something, and its semantic contribution is determined in relation to the index. (Recanati 2005: p.302)

If Nunberg's analysis is to be extended to anaphoric and bound uses of pronouns, determining the semantic contents of such pronouns should thus begin by an identification of the relevant index. The principal question is therefore what exactly that index is supposed to be. Given that anaphoric pronouns require antecedents which are merely salient in the discourse, these pronouns do not appear to index something in physical space. So, what does an anaphoric pronoun index? In response to this question Recanati replies that an anaphoric pronoun indexes an argument position in *linguistic space*. More precisely, it indexes a thematic role, which is articulated by the grammatical structure of the sentence. For example, consider (10) below.

- (10) a. Guybrush gave the treasure map to Elaine
 b. ()_i gave ()_j to ()_k
 c. (THE GIVER)_i gave (THE GIFT)_j to (THE RECIPIENT)_k

Inspired by the research in event semantics (Davidson 1967; Parsons 1990), Recanati assumes that a sentence such as (10a) posits the existence of what we might call a *giving-event-e*. The main verb in (10a) has three argument places, cf. (10b), and elicits a unique thematic role to each of these argument places, cf. (10c). Recanati maintains that sentence verbs always determine uniquely the relevant number of thematic roles, and furthermore that two distinct NPs never play identical thematic roles. Here, Recanati is in effect following θ -theory as found in Chomsky (1981). In simple cases, an argument position has an associated and uniquely determined thematic role and in (10a) the relevant thematic roles are occupied by Guybrush, Elaine, and the treasure map respectively.

What is the semantic content of an anaphoric pronoun? Typically it will be the value of the indexed role, when that role is fed as argument the action described by the antecedent sentence. The value in question is the referent of the term occupying the indexed position. (Recanati 2005: p.305)

Thus, the semantic content of an anaphoric pronoun is determined by identifying the indexed antecedent role and ascertaining what the value of that role is. The process is presumably something along the following lines. Suppose that (10a) is followed by an utterance of (11a).

- (9) a. Guybrush gave the treasure map to Elaine
 b. ()_i gave ()_j to ()_k
 c. (THE GIVER)_i gave (THE GIFT)_j to (THE RECIPIENT)_k

- (11) a. He_i hopes she_k will appreciate it_j.

The important point from Recanati's perspective is simply that the procedure for determining the semantic content of the pronoun in (11a) includes an intermediate step in which the relevant thematic roles are identified. Determining the semantic content of the pronoun is therefore not merely a matter of identifying its co-indexed antecedent. Rather, the procedure is to identify the indexed thematic role of the pronoun, and subsequently, by ascertaining the value of that thematic role, determine the semantic content of the pronoun. We assumed that the sentence (10a) describes a *giving-event-e* which contains three distinct thematic roles. The pronoun 'he' in (11a) is indexed to the thematic role of THE

GIVER and this thematic role is occupied by Guybrush. Similarly the pronoun 'she' is indexed to the thematic role of RECIPIENT, the value of which is Elaine. Finally the pronoun 'it' is indexed to the thematic role of THE GIFT, the value of which is the treasure map. Following this procedure we eventually ascertain the semantic contents of all the pronouns in the sentence and this allows us to determine that the semantic content of (11a) is (11b).

- (9) b. Guybrush hopes that Elaine will appreciate the treasure map.

As Recanati explains.

In this way anaphoric pronouns inherit the reference of their antecedents, yet they do not do so in virtue of a brute 'rule of anaphora', but in virtue of being a variety of indexical expressions which (i) index an argument position and (ii) contribute the value of the thematic role articulated at that position. (Recanati 2005: p.305)⁸

3.3 Extending the Analysis to Bound Pronouns

Up to this point Recanati has only considered NPs anaphorically linked to non-quantificational antecedents, and maintained these to be referring terms. However that will obviously not work when the antecedent is a quantified NP. Recanati is therefore well aware that the critical question is how prototypical bound uses are supposed to be compatible with this picture. Keep in mind that the ultimate purpose of these maneuvers is unification of the uses.

When the indexed position is occupied by a quantifier, rather than a referential expression, the semantic content of the pronoun cannot be the value of the role articulated at the indexed position, since the antecedent sentence does not ascribe a particular value to that role (but only a course of values). I assume that, in such a case, the semantic content of the pronoun is the role itself. [...] Thus I distinguish two varieties of anaphora: *referential anaphora*, where the semantic content of the anaphoric pronoun is the value of the indexed role (i.e. where the pronoun inherits the reference of its antecedent); and *descriptive anaphora*, where the content of the anaphoric pronoun is the role itself. (Recanati 2005: p.306)

⁸ Evans (1980) argued that anaphoric pronouns acquire their semantic contents in virtue of a linguistic rule, 'a brute rule of anaphora'. Thus, Recanati takes his proposal for a uniform analysis of pronouns also to function as a response to Evans.

Since pronouns cannot pick up their reference from non-referring antecedent terms, it follows that if a pronoun indexes a position occupied by a quantified NP, it will be non-referential. Be that as it may, such a pronoun still indexes a position in linguistic space, namely the position occupied by the antecedent QNP. It is therefore an anaphoric pronoun proper — viz. it's dependent for its content on the indexed antecedent term. But, what then is the content of the pronoun on Recanati's view? As stated in the quotation above, since the antecedent is a QNP and that is a non-referring term, Recanati contends that the semantic content of the pronoun indexing the position of the QNP is simply the role articulated at that position. In other words, the semantic content of the pronoun is a description. For example, consider (12) below.

- (12) a. [Every decent pirate]_i guards [his_i pirate ship]_j
 b. ()_i guards ()_j
 c. (THE GUARD)_i guards (THE GUARDER)_j

When a pronoun is indexed to a thematic role, which is occupied by a non-referring term, the semantic content of the pronoun is simply this role itself (and not the value, because it has no value). In (12), the indexed antecedent of the pronoun 'his' is the thematic role THE GUARD. This thematic role is occupied by a QNP and thus has no specific value, which the pronoun can take. Therefore, the pronoun takes as its value the thematic role itself. This yields something like the following result.

- (10) d. [Every decent pirate]_i guards [THE GUARDER's pirate ship]_j

According to Recanati's suggested analysis of quantifiers, sentences such as (12) are evaluated by considering substitution instances. When a particular substitution instance is under consideration, the antecedent of the pronoun is no longer a non-referring QNP, but instead a bona fide referring term. Accordingly, the anaphoric pronoun goes from taking the thematic role itself as its value to taking the value of the thematic role, that is, it's transformed from a description into a referring term. However, Recanati remarks that pronouns need not be transformed. In fact, on some occasions the semantic content of anaphoric pronouns will be their indexed thematic roles (rather than the value of these thematic roles), even when the indexed thematic role has a particular value (viz. is occupied by a referring term). Even though the semantic content of a pronoun ordinarily is the value of its indexed thematic role (at least on the most salient readings), there is nonetheless another reading available. This distinct reading is brought out clearly when considering cases of verb phrase ellipsis.

- (13) Guybrush_i loves his_i mother, and LeChuck does too.

Two anaphoric readings of (13) are available, which are typically labelled the 'strict' reading and the 'sloppy' reading. I've paraphrased below the content of each reading.

- (14) a. Guybrush_i loves his_i mother. LeChuck_j does too. (strict)
 b. Guybrush_i loves his_i mother. LeChuck_j loves Guybrush's mother too.
- (15) a. Guybrush_i loves his_i mother. LeChuck_j does too. (sloppy)
 b. Guybrush_i loves his_i mother. LeChuck_j loves his [own] mother too.

When the indexed antecedent is a QNP, there is no choice for the pronoun, i.e. there is no referential reading of the pronoun. When the indexed antecedent of a pronoun is a referring term, there is typically a choice; the-thematic-role-itself reading (a descriptive content) in contrast to the-value-of-the-thematic-role reading (a singular content). On Recanati's theory, (15a) would actually be analysed along the following lines.

- (16) Guybrush loves THE LOVER's mother. LeChuck loves THE LOVER's mother too.

And given that Recanati recognizes the need for a co-existence of two distinct interpretations of pronouns (to account for e.g. VP-ellipsis cases), he draws the plausible conclusion that in substitution instances, the role-as-value reading stays fixed. He thereby avoids having to posit a mysterious pronoun-transformation in substitution instances — a transformation from a descriptive content to a referential content.

(...) the pronoun which we find in a given substitution instance is the same pronoun we find in the quantified statement, and there is no reason why it should not carry the same semantic content. Since, in the quantified statement, that content is a role, I will assume that it is a role also in the substitution instances. (Recanati 2005: p.308)

3.4 V-roles, N-roles, and S-roles

Now, Recanati recognizes, anaphoric relations are highly context-sensitive, and exactly what anaphoric relations obtain depend crucially on the intentions of the speaker. Recanati therefore acknowledges that the thematic roles, which are articulated by the verb of the sentence, are sometimes inadequate. In some cases, the content of the anaphoric pronoun depends on a different aspect of the intended antecedent. The thought is that in (17) below, the thematic role THE GIFT is occupied by the QNP 'a treasure map', which consists of a quantifier, an adjective and a noun. This Recanati labels a 'complex role', because it consists of both the adjective *treasure*, the noun *map* and the thematic role THE GIFT.

- (17) a. LeChuck gave a treasure map to Elaine
 b. ()_i gave ()_j to ()_k

c. (THE GIVER)_i gave (THE GIFT)_j to (THE RECIPIENT)_k

Now speakers will occasionally intend for an anaphoric pronoun to locate its antecedent in the semantic content of the noun rather than in the thematic role given by the verb. In other words, speakers can intend the semantic content of the pronoun to be the content of the nominal. To give an example, suppose I responded to (17) by saying ‘it’s not a gift’. In order to avoid the seemingly contradictory semantic content that the gift is not a gift, Recanati allows for the possibility that my use of the pronoun ‘it’ picks up on the content of the DP rather than the argument role itself. Recanati therefore distinguishes between what he calls *V-roles*, which are the thematic roles supplied by the verb, *N-roles*, which correspond to the content of the particular noun, and *S-roles*, which is the result of joint contributions of the verb and the nouns.

3.5 Summary

Summarizing Recanati’s proposal thus far, unification of the uses involves two separate steps. First, Recanati has argued that pronouns in general exploit contextual salience, namely one of the salience relations previously mentioned. Second, the semantic content of a pronoun depends on its index and what index is relevant depends on the use of the pronoun. While deictic pronouns index positions in physical space and exploit perceptual salience, anaphoric (incl. bound) pronouns index positions in linguistic space and exploit discursive salience. The semantic content of a pronoun is thus always determined using effectively identical procedures: first determine the index, then determine the content. This procedure can however only be carried out in context, because context (i.e. a speaker’s intentions) determines the relevant index. Given this analysis, according to which all pronouns exploit some type of contextual salience for their semantic contents, all pronouns are thus proper instances of *free* uses — that is, terms with contextually assigned semantic values.

4 Problems

4.1 *Thinking (sic) about Pragmatic Unification*

Recanati refrains from discussing what exactly is required in order for an analysis of pronouns to constitute a unified treatment. Recanati’s describes the relevant problem by stating that ‘the phenomenon is too systematic to count as crude ambiguity’ and that there ‘obviously is something common to the different uses—something which we must attempt to capture within a unified framework’ (Recanati 2005) But, what shared aspect of pronouns must a unified treatment capture in order to properly resolve the ambiguity? That question has no clear answer, because it depends on how the relevant problem is characterized. It often

seems that it's simply taken for granted that observations about the systematicity of the ambiguity mandates an assumption that we're dealing with single lexical items. It's assumed that the only remaining work is specifying a semantic (or pragmatic) rule of interpretation. Meanwhile the question concerning what kind of ambiguity we're confronted with is largely being ignored.

Suppose you thought that the relevant problem here is the variations in either the structure of the semantic content or the semantic content itself given by referential and bound pronouns respectively. You might also think that to resolve this kind of ambiguity, bound and referential pronouns should supply in some sense homogeneous kinds of contents. In other words, to resolve the ambiguity, bound and referential pronouns must share, in some essential way, the same meaning. So, if a semantic analysis of pronouns ignores the alleged perspectival feature of indexicals, an argument is required. Namely an argument which supports the conclusion that this particular feature of indexicals is semantically inert. And, if the perspectival feature of indexicals are assumed to have semantic import, resolving the ambiguity would require that this particular feature could be shown to apply even in the cases of bound pronouns.

The above seems a fairly plausible construal of what it would take to resolve the ambiguity. But, given this construal it's fairly unclear whether the ambiguity is resolvable using Recanati's proposed strategy. Recanati's argument proceeds roughly as follows. Both referential and bound uses of pronouns are subject to a pragmatic procedure required for determining their contents. First, the index of the pronouns must be located, and, for anaphoric pronouns in particular, their antecedent thematic roles must be determined. When the index is located, determining the content of the pronoun is (typically) a trivial matter. This procedure, Recanati argues, is common to all pronouns. In this respect, anaphoric pronouns (incl. bound pronouns) turn out to be equivalent to deictic pronouns in the sense that a feature of context is required in order to determine the content. The relevant feature of the utterance situation might be the physical space surrounding the utterance or the discourse space in which the utterance takes place. In conclusion, this shows that all uses of pronouns are essentially *free* uses of pronouns, and Recanati's pragmatic theory thereby captures a seemingly systematic and common feature of pronouns.

This is a story about resolution of reference, or resolution of semantic contents. Given the view I sketched above, is this sufficient to resolve the ambiguity? Here's an argument to the effect that it's not. Consider a paradigm case of lexical ambiguity, *bank*. The word-form *bank* denotes two distinct lexical items, namely a financial institution (*bank*₁) and a river bank (*bank*₂). When confronted with occurrences of the word-form *bank*, how do speakers in general disambiguate? This is a difficult question to answer, but it's undeniable that some kind of pragmatic process is involved. In particular, it seems that on any plausible story of disambiguation-processes, pragmatic factors such as speakers' intentions

must be part of the story. Suppose that there is a particular pragmatic process by which speakers disambiguate in various contexts. Suppose further that this disambiguation crucially involves considering the speakers' intentions, the discursive common ground, the goal of the particular discourse etc. In that case, given Recanati's line of argument it would turn out that *bank* isn't ambiguous. Since there is a fully specifiable pragmatic procedure by which an interlocutor determines the meaning of a particular word-form, we have unified account of the particular word-form. As a consequence, *bank* is not ambiguous.

This story is incredible and the reasoning appears to be clearly defective. Since *bank* is the paradigm case of lexical ambiguity, the above argument looks like a *reductio* of Recanati's proposal. If Recanati's argument was sound, any lexical ambiguity (and probably structural too) could presumably be given a unified treatment, but the question is whether this solves or even relevantly addresses the problem. In a sense, the problem with Recanati's argument is that it presumes that pragmatics of reference resolution is sufficient for adjudicating on questions of lexical ambiguity and that seems, at least, a highly contentious assumption. We've seen that there's some cross-linguistic evidence supporting an ambiguity view, but Recanati could respond that there is also cross-linguistic evidence supporting the non-ambiguity view. Moreover, he might argue that there is a robust intuition that pronouns are not ambiguous (which should probably be granted) and therefore that bound and referential pronouns shouldn't be treated as distinct lexical items. Given these considerations, Recanati might argue that he provides a framework in which a shared aspect of pronouns is captured, namely the influence of context on the semantic content of pronouns, and that this, in a nutshell, just is what is required to unify bound and referential pronouns.

That response won't convince a proponent of the ambiguity view. And one could reasonably complain that Recanati's theory renders pronouns ambiguous between referential and descriptive contents (in at least one sense of the word 'ambiguous'). So, if we assumed the primary problem to be an ambiguity between referential and bound uses of pronouns, that ambiguity is, on Recanati's proposal, merely replaced by a different ambiguity.

It's unclear how to settle these issues without a better understanding of what exactly the ambiguity in question is. It's equally hard to articulate exactly what a difference in meaning between bound and referential pronouns amounts to. But, as long as these issues are largely unresolved, it's not clear to me how the problem is to be addressed. Even if cross-linguistic evidence and considerations concerning language internal systematicity is taken to support a non-ambiguity view, it must still be specified somehow in what relevant way the meanings of bound and referential pronouns are related, and why having e.g. pronouns with descriptive contents and pronouns with referential contents doesn't amount to ambiguity.

In all likelihood, the decisive aspect of the ambiguity/no ambiguity debate will be the extent to which various proposals account for the data, i.e. how accurate the predictions of the theory are. Now, Recanati's proposal claims to make correct predictions about not only bound, anaphoric, and deictic uses of pronouns, but also about pronouns involved in cases of the notorious donkey anaphora and cross-sentential anaphora. If this is correct, Recanati's proposal is surely an important contender. This leads us to what I consider a dire consequence of Recanati's proposal, namely that it pays practically no attention to the restrictions, which must be imposed on cross-sentential anaphora in order to avoid over-generation.

4.2 *The Problem with Descriptive Binding*

A semantic theory which licenses binding across sentences (or something sufficiently similar) faces the complicated task of restricting these relations in precisely the right ways.⁹

(19) Guybrush_i explored Monkey Island. He_i forgot to bring the treasure map.

(19) is a prototypical case of cross-sentential anaphora. Recanati's treatment mandates that such anaphoric pronouns pick up their reference from the value

⁹ Interestingly, Recanati considers and rejects two distinct proposals according to which all pronouns are bound (Recanati 2005: p.288-289). On the first proposal, the standard analysis of natural language quantifiers is extended to include singular terms, such as proper names. This maneuver licenses an analysis according to which the antecedent proper name in (1) can bind the possessive pronoun. On the second proposal, pronouns are abstracted over and thus bound by a lambda operator. (1) is thus analysed as $\lceil \lambda x[x \text{ loves } x\text{'s mother}] (\text{Guybrush}) \rceil$, where the possessive pronoun takes an antecedent NP as argument. The acute problem for both these proposals is that many anaphoric pronouns occur in adjacent syntactic environments. The expanded quantifier approach faces a problem here because a quantifier is unable to bind variables outside its syntactic scope (i.e. across sentences). The problem for the abstraction operator approach is that the required input argument for the relevant λ -function gets stuck in syntactically detached environments. Both problems are neatly demonstrated in a sentence such as (18).

(18) Guybrush_i lost the treasure map. He_i was furious.

However, it's quite curious that Recanati neglects to mention the semantic frameworks of Kamp (1981) and Heim (1982) both of which effectively treat pronouns as bound variables and license cross-sentential binding. Applications and developments of dynamic predicate logics Groenendijk and Stokhof (1991) also go unmentioned. These approaches are also highly attentive to the complications engendered when cross-sentential binding is licensed. As Paul Dekker puts the worry '(...) it appears that it is not so much the dynamics of (existential) quantification and conjunction that stands in need of explanation, but, rather, the blocking effects which other connectives and quantifiers are generally assumed to have upon this.' (Dekker 2004) As we'll soon discover, Recanati is far less attentive to these problems, which causes quite serious problems his theory. Thus, Recanati provides no cogent arguments against (advanced versions of) the 'binding strategy'. However, that's not to imply that dynamic approaches face no difficulties — indeed they do — but these problems go unmentioned here. Let me illustrate the problem in detail by considering a case, which is straightforwardly explained by Recanati's theory.

of the role of their indexed antecedent. The role of the indexed antecedent is given by the lexical meaning of the verb ‘explore’, so let’s assume that (19) denotes an exploring-event e . Now, since Guybrush occupies the argument role of explorer in e , Guybrush is the value of that role. Since the pronoun in the second sentence is indexed to the role of explorer, it takes the value of that role, namely Guybrush. However, remember that Recanati maintained that the content of a pronoun doesn’t necessarily have to be the value of its indexed role. It can take the indexed role itself as value in which case its content is equivalent to a description. Recanati amends his theory in this particular way in order to enable explanations of binding and VP-ellipsis, i.e. (20) and (21).

- (20) [Every boy] _{i} hopes that he _{i} will explore Monkey Island.
 (21) Guybrush _{i} explored his _{i} favorite island, namely Monkey Island. LeChuck _{j} did too.

The content of the pronoun embedded in the complement of (20) must be the *role* of its indexed antecedent, because the antecedent QNP has no value, which the pronoun could take instead. Similarly, to enable the sloppy reading of (21), the pronoun in the opening sentence must take as its value the role of its indexed antecedent (rather than the value of the role). So far, so good.

The problem with Recanati’s theory is that the framework allows binding relations to obtain cross-sententially, but the framework imposes no restrictions on when such relations obtain. This is unfortunate, because there are many things that one simply cannot assert, which nonetheless are perfectly appropriate according to Recanati’s theory. For instance (22).

- (22) [Every boy] _{i} explored Monkey Island. #He _{i} forgot to bring the treasure map.

We’ve established that pronouns have a dual function in that they occasionally take the value of the indexed role, or instead the indexed role itself — and that this happens even cross-sententially (cf. (21) above). We’ve also established that pronouns indexed to a quantifier always take as their value the indexed role itself (cf. (20) above). This licenses a felicitous reading of (22), but that reading is clearly not available. Neither are the indicated readings of the sentences below, which nonetheless are perfectly appropriate, according to Recanati’s theory.

- (23) [Every boy] _{i} explored [every cave on the map] _{j} . #LeChuck wanted to kill him _{i} .
 (24) [No boy] _{i} explored Monkey Island. #He _{i} forgot to bring the treasure map.
 (25) No boy bought [a treasure map] _{i} . #It _{i} is marked with an ‘X’.
 (26) Guybrush didn’t own [a treasure map] _{i} . #It _{i} is marked with an ‘X’.

- (27) [Every boy]_i found a gold coin and kept it_i. #It_i disappeared.¹⁰
 (28) [Every boy]_i forgot to bring [his_i passport]_j. #It_j is green.

So, the costs of giving up orthodox binding is that Recanati's theory ends up licensing anaphoric relations, which are not borne out in natural language. The above readings are not available and any utterance of either of these sentences would be infelicitous. This is of course a quite unfortunate consequence of Recanati's view, which severely impairs its plausibility. To circumvent the problem, restrictions of some sort are required, but determining exactly which restrictions is notoriously difficult problem. Also, as it stands, the advantage of Recanati's theory is that it's fairly simple, but the restrictions which are required to solve the above problems would therefore seem completely ad hoc.

Although I suspect that Recanati would resist this option, it's instructive to reflect on the consequences of imposing the binding conditions of standard binding theory on Recanati's theory (it's not entirely implausible that that would be possible). Why is that instructive? Because it demonstrates how Recanati's theory is simply a worse version of several other theories on the market. What good would it do to impose standard binding conditions on Recanati's theory? Well, it would straightforwardly rule out all the aforementioned problematic cases.¹¹ But the problem is that this is a quick way of eviscerating all the virtues of Recanati's theory. This solution salvages Recanati's theory from various over-generation worries, but instead brings back old problems. For instance, without the syntactic restrictions, Recanati's theory could elegantly explain the felicity of the following piece of discourse.

- (29) [A man]_i walks in the park. He_i whistles.

I'm assuming that Recanati would want to treat the antecedent indefinite NP as an existential quantifier, and if so, the pronoun in the second sentence must take the role of its antecedent as value. But, such anaphoric relations are now ruled out by syntactic constraints. In other words, simply reenforcing syntactic binding conditions to avoid the unwanted anaphoric relations ends up preventing certain benign cross-sentential anaphoric relations. Of course, this problem isn't restricted to indefinites and singular pronouns. The problem returns with a vengeance for quantifiers which function as the co-indexed antecedents of *plural* pronouns.

- (30) _____

¹⁰ Adapted from Heim (1982)

¹¹ It's not clear how Recanati's theory would fit this picture, but what I have in mind here is to impose syntactic restrictions, viz. c-command restrictions on the binding domain (or something sufficiently similar to such restrictions), because that, per definition, restricts variable-binding to the c-command domain, and hence rules out the anaphoric relation exhibited in (22). In particular, in (22) the pronoun *he* is outside the syntactic c-command domain of its indexed antecedent quantifier. Cross-sentential binding is ruled out.

- [Most students]_i cheered. They_i had finally graduated.
 (31) [Many students]_i cheered. They_i had finally graduated.
 (32) [Exactly three students]_i cheered. They_i had finally graduated.

The above sentences are clearly all perfectly felicitous, yet these anaphoric relations are prohibited if the syntactic criteria are invoked to restrict cross-sentential binding.

Finally, if the standard syntactic constraints are reimposed on Recanati's theory, the familiar problems of donkey anaphora resurfaces. In particular, the old problem of deeply embedded antecedents now becomes as much as a problem for Recanati as it is for every other account of pronouns, which respects the standardly accepted c-command restrictions on binding.¹²

5 Summary and Conclusion

In this paper, I've argued for two main points. The first point is that it's unclear whether the problem of pronominal ambiguity, i.e. the dispute between the researchers who accept an ambiguity thesis, and the researchers who resist it, is resolvable. In the end, the arguments which are put forward in favor of a non-ambiguity view is that the ambiguity is systematic and that this mandates a particular semantic or pragmatic treatment of pronouns. On the other hand, we've seen that there's some cross-linguistic evidence mitigating, to some extent, the strength of the claim about systematicity. Also, if one thinks that the ambiguity problem essentially concerns an important difference in the semantic content of bound and referential pronouns, many frameworks which purport to provide a uniform treatment fail to address this issue in any substantial sense. This problem is demonstrated in Recanati's proposal by the fact that an ambiguity between descriptive and referential pronouns persists, but this concern applies to a number of other proposals for unified treatments. Moreover, as I argued in the previous section, if the ambiguity problem concerns variations in semantic content, it's not clear how a pragmatic theory about reference resolution is supposed to help.

The second claim is that if Recanati's theory is accepted at face value, it over-generates, and that if standard syntactic restrictions are reimposed on the framework, no problems are solved. Interestingly, as regards capturing the relevant data, the genuine strong point of Recanati's pragmatic proposal lies in the fact

¹² In cases such as (33), the relevant pronoun's indexed antecedent is embedded in a relative clause, a syntactic island, from which position it's unable to raise to a c-command position. Similarly, in the conditional (34) the pronoun's indexed antecedent is not in a position to c-command the pronoun.

- (33) [Every man]_i who owns [a donkey]_j beats it_j.
 (34) if [a man]_i owns [a donkey]_j, he_i beats it_j.

that it abandons standard binding conditions and adopts what I labeled ‘descriptive binding’.¹³ This particular move lets Recanati explain a range of benign and quite interesting cases involving bound and anaphoric pronouns. These cases typically cause severe headaches for other accounts. But this move is also the direct source of a major, if not devastating, problem for Recanati’s proposal, namely over-generation. It’s sort of ironic that the standard binding conditions simply have the effect of reintroducing old well known problems. This seems to demonstrate quite clearly that very little progress is being made here.¹⁴ Where does this leave us? Well, we’re left with a pragmatic proposal for a treatment of pronouns, which faces either old or new problems (cf. above), requires a quite elaborate machinery of theta-roles, which may or may not turn out to be problematic, and since the proposal is essentially a D-Type account it faces a number of problems related to D-Type accounts in general (which I haven’t touched on here). Finally, Recanati’s proposal leaves out any mention of reflexive, and logophoric pronouns, and it’s certainly not clear how these terms are to be integrated into the story. So, compared to other contemporary theories (e.g. those mentioned in the introduction), there are almost no, if any, advantages to adopting Recanati’s theory.

Anders J. Schoubye
Arché, University of St Andrews

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¹³ This term, ‘descriptive binding’, is perhaps a bit misleading, because nothing is in any sense bound on Recanati’s analysis of pronouns. Nonetheless, the motivation for the particular term should be fairly obvious.

¹⁴ This is not to claim that there is no possible remedy for the problems caused by adopting descriptive binding. That might be possible. Yet, how to handle the problems, which are caused by licensing cross-sentential binding, have been explored in detail by several researchers in dynamic semantics, and it’s far from straightforward how to do it. I certainly see no reason to be confident that Recanati’s theory is better suited to address these problems than various dynamic frameworks.

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