Venice, November 3, 2020

**Attitudinal and Modal Objects**

Friederike Moltmann

CNRS and Ca Foscari

1. **Introduction**

Aim of the talk

Give an outline of a semantics for attitude reports and modal sentences, based on a novel ontology of attitudinal and modal objects, entities like claims, requests, beliefs, judgments, assumptions, intentions, decisions, obligations, permissions, invitations, need, dispositions, possibilities, laws, impressions.

* The ontology of modal and attitudinal objects is well-reflected in natural language and our language-independent intuitions.
* The semantics accounts for a range of philosophical and linguistic problems for the standard accounts of the semantics of attitude reports and modal sentences.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1. **The standard view of attitude reports and modal sentences**

Ontology involved in attitude reports

Two sorts of objects associated with propositional attitudes and illocutionary acts:

[1] Mental acts or states and illocutionary acts

[2] Propositions as the objects of mental attitudes or illocutionary acts

The Relational Analysis

(1) a. John thinks that Mary is happy.

b. think(John, [*that Mary is happy*])

Apparent support for the Relational Analysis

Special quantifiers in sentential position:

(2) a. John thinks that Mary is happy.

John thinks *something.*

Reports of sharing:

(2) b. Mary believes *everything* Bill believes.

Bill believes that it is raining.

Mary believes that it is raining.

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1. **The new semantics attitude reports and modal sentences**

**3.1. The new ontology**

The semantics of attitude reports is based on a third category of objects: attitudinal objects. Attitudinal objects consist in:

[1] act-related attitudinal objects:

- cognitive and illocutionary products(judgments, decisions, claims, requests, promises), in the sense of Twardowksi’s 1911 notion of a (non-enduring) product

- ‘results’: conclusions, recognitions, persuations

[2] state-related attitudinal objects:

beliefs, desires, hopes, intentions

Similarly, the semantics of modal sentences is based on modal objects, which belong to the same category as attitudinal objects:

obligations, permissions, needs, abilities, possibilities, dispositions, essences, …

Modal objects share the same characteristic properties as attitudinal objects:

* Satisfaction conditions
* Similarity relations based on shared content
* Part structure based on partial content
* Features of concreteness (to an extent)

Attitudinal objects (and modal objects) display three ccontent-related properties that together distinguish them from both propositions and acts or events as well as states

[1] Truth- and satisfaction conditions (and falsehood/violation conditions)

(3) a. John’s claim that that S is true / false.

b. ?? John’s claiming that S is true / false.

c. ?? John’s speech act (of claiming) is true.

(4) a. John’s request to be promoted was fulfilled.

b. ?? John’s act of requesting was fulfilled.

(5) a. John followed Mary’s advice.

b. ? John followed Mary’s activity of advising.

(6) a. John complied with the instruction.

b. ??? John complied with the act of instructing.

(7) a. John ignored the command.

b. John ignored the act of commanding.

(8) a. John fulfilled the obligation / the need.

b. John took up the permission,

[2] Similarity relations based on shared content only

(9) a. John’s thought is the same as Mary’s.

b. ??? John’s thought is the same as Mary’s remark.

c. ??? John’s thinking is the same as Mary’s.

(10) a. John’s hope is the same as Mary’s hope.

b. ??? John’s hope is the same as Mary’s claim.

c. ??? John’s hoping is the same as Mary’s hoping.

[3] Part-whole structure based on partial content

Parts of attitudinal (and modal) objects: always partial contents, never temporal parts

‘Part of John’s decision’ cannot be ‘part of the action of deciding’.

‘Part of John’s claim’ cannot be ‘part of the speech act of claiming’.

‘Part of John’s answer’ cannot be ‘part of John’s answering’.

Part of John’s belief: partial content

Part of John’s belief state ???

Parts of modal objects: always partial contents

Part of John’s obligation / the permission / John’s ability

Linguistic support for attitudinal objects

[1] The semantics of nominalizations

[2] The semantics of special quantifiers (‘nominalizing quantifiers’): *something, everything* etc

Attitudinal objects are no less important than events and states, sometimes even more important:

The attitudinal object may be ontologically prior to the event /state described by the verb (conclusion, recognition, belief, intention, judgment)

**3.2. The logical form of ‘simple’ attitude reports within object-based truthmaker semantics**

Davidsonian event semantics: events as implicit argument of attitude verbs

Function of *that*-clause complements of attitude verbs:

act semantically as predicates of the attitudinal object associated with the Davidsonian event (state) argument e (att-obj(e)):

(11) a. John claims that S.

b. John makes the claim that S.

c. ∃e(claim (e, John) & [*that* S](att-obj(e)))

(12) a. John believes that S.

b. John has the belief that S.

c. ∃e(believe(e, John) & [that S](att-obj(e)))

Philosophical motivations for the analysis

[1] Propositions are no longer treated as the objects of attitudes; rather sentential contents serve to characterize the contentsof attitudinal objects.

[2] Intentionality, the ability of represent, is treated as a property of mental entities(attitudinal objects), rather than of abstract meaning objects (propositions)

Consequence: Standard problems for propositions do not arise:

- no issue of the truth-directedness of an abstract object

- no issue of the unity of the proposition (the truth conditions of complex abstract objects)

Linguistic motivations for the analysis

Special (nominalizing) quantifiers range over attitudinal objects (or kinds of them)

(13) a. John claims / knows / fears *something.*

b. John imagines / expects *that.*

c. John claims *what* Mary claims.

(14) a. John said something nice (namely that S).

b. John said something that made Mary very upset.

Restrictions on reports of a shared content of different attitudes

(15) a. ?? John expects what Mary believes, namely that Sue will study harder.

b. ?? John’s expectation is Mary’s belief.

c. John expects what Mary expects.

d. John fears what Mary hopes. (shared future acceptance)

The logical form of attitude reports with special quantifiers

(16) a. John said something nice.

b. ∃e ∃e’(say(e, John) & nice(e’) & e’ = att-obj(e))

(17) a. John expects what Mary expects

b. ∃e e’e’’(expect(e, John) & e’ = att-obj-kind(e) & think(e’’, Mary) & e’ = att-object-

kind(e’’))

**3.3. The semantic role of modal objects**

The logical form of modal sentences

(18) a. John needs to leave.

b. John has a need to leave.

c. ∃d(need(d) & [*John to leave*](d))

(19) a. John is permitted to leave.

b. John has permission to leave.

c. ∃d(is permitted(d, John) & [*John to leave*](d))

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1. **How do clausal complements (sentential units) act semantically as predicates of attitudinal and modal objects?** 
   1. **Possible-worlds-based account**

Attitudinal (and modal) objects d are associated with a set of alternative worlds f(d):

(20) [S] = λd[∀w(w ∈ f(d) ↔ S is true in w)]

The difficulty

The account cannot apply to modal objects of possibility

(21) a. John is obliged to leave.

b. John is allowed to leave.

Problem also arises for attitude reports / illocutionary act reports:

(22) a. John forced Mary to leave.

b. John allowed Mary to leave.

Make sentential content dependent on embedding verb? – noncompositional semantics:

(23) [S] = λd[∃w(w ∈ f(d) & S is true in w)]

Difficulties for possible worlds-account as such:

inapplicable to explicit permissions (*John gave Mary permission to leave*)

* 1. **Truthmaker semantics**

Sentence-based truthmaker semantics: Fine (2014, 2017, 2018a, b)

Object-based truthmaker semantics: Moltmann (2017, 2018a, to appear a, b, c)

Exact truthmaking/satisfaction

A situation or action s is an *exact truthmaker/satisfier* of a sentence S or attitudinal object d (s ╟ S / s ╟ d) iff s is a truthmaker/satisfier of S/d and wholly relevant for the truth/satisfaction of S / d.

Truthmaking conditions for complex sentences:

(24) a. s ╟ S *and* S’ iff for some s’ and s’’, s = sum(s’, s’’) and s’ ╟ S and s’’ ╟ S’.

b. s ╟ S *or* S’ iff s ╟ S or s ╟ S’.

c. s ╟ ∃x S iff s ╟ S[x/d] for some individual *d*.

Truthmaker semantics assigns sentences both exact truthmakers (verifiers) and exact *falsifiers*, situations or actions that are falsemakers of a sentence and wholly relevant for the sentence being false.

Truthmaking for negations:

(24) e. s ╟ *not* S iff s ╢ S.

Complex sentences are assigned both truthmaking and falsemaking conditions

Fine (2017): A sentence S has as its meaning a pair <*pos(S),* *neg(S)*> consisting of a *positive denotation*, the set *pos(S)* of verifiers of *S*, and a *negative denotation*, the set *neg(S)* of falsifiers of *S*.

Partial content (Yablo 2015, Fine 2017)

(25) For sets of situations or actions A and B, B is a *partial content* of A iff every satisfier of

A contains a satisfier of B and every satisfier of B is contained in a satisfier of A.

Object-based truthmaker semantics

Difference between obligations and permissions (and other modals objects with different forces):

Obligations have both satisfiers and ‘violators’; permissions have only ‘satisfiers’

An attitudinal or modal object d: also have a positive extension (pos(d)) and possibly a negative extension (neg(d)) (if its force is that of necessity).

(26) Sentence meanings as properties of attitudinal and modal objects of either modal force

λd[pos(S) is a partial content of pos(d) & ∀s(s ╢ S → s ╢ d) in case neg(d) ≠∅]

Motivation for (26):

Underspecification of the satisfaction conditions of desires, hopes, and needs:

(27) a. Fiona wants to catch a fish (that she can eat). (Fara 2007)

b. John hopes to get a coat (that keeps him warm).

c. Bill needs to hire an assistant (that speaks French)

The speaker uttering (27a) need not know what the exact constraints are that Fiona’s desire may impose on what satisfies it.

Strong vs weak permissions (Moltmann 2018a):

Strong permissions: illocutionary products: satisfiers determined by illocutionary product

(28) a. John has permission to leave

Weak permissions: states of permissions: satisfiers determined by weak obligation: as the situations / actions that are not violators of the obligation

(28) b. John is permitted to leave.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1. **The logical form of more complex attitude reports**
   1. **Response stance verbs**

(29) a. John repeated that it will rain.

b. John confirmed / denied that it was raining.

c. John agreed that Bill is lazy

d. John reminded Mary to return the keys.

Further evidence against the Relational Analysis of attitude reports: the semantics of *partly*

(30) a. John partly ate the chicken.

b. ??? John partly claims that Mary is incompetent.

c. ??? John partly thinks that that the students are talented

Response-stance verbs (Cattell 1978)

(31) a. John partly confirmed / denied that the students failed the exam.

b. John partly agreed that Bill is lazy.

Formal semantics:

*Agree* as a three-place predicate taking the contextually given attitudinal object as a third argument:

(32) a. ∃e(agree(e, John, d) & [*that S*](att-obj(e)) & [*that* S](d))

Support for (31): response-stance verbs more easily allow for substitution:

(32) b. John agreed with the request to leave.

*Partly* expressing a relation between events and types of events:

Part structure of the event inherited from the part structure of the object arguments.

(33) a. ∃e’(partly(e’, ê[eat(John, d)])

b. ∃e’(partly(e’, ê[agree(e, John, d)] & [*that S*](att-obj(e)) & [*that* S](d))

* 1. **Factive verbs**

Factive verbs pattern with response-stance verbs in various syntactic respects (Cattell1978),

They also behave the same with respect to *partly*:

(34) a. John partly recognizes that he failed.

b. John partly recognizes the fact that S.

Clausal complements of factive verbs also have a double function:

- They characterize the described cognitive product / epistemic state

- They give the content of a (non-worldly) fact

Non-worldly facts characterized by a sentence S as modal objects whose satisfiers are situations that are part of the actual world and truthmakers of S.

f a world-relative operator mapping the positive semantic value pos(S) of a sentence S onto the corresponding factive modal object fw(pos(S)):

(35) ∃e(realize(e, John, fw(pos(S))) & [that S](att-obj(e)) & [that S]( fw(pos(S)))

Clausal subjects

*Is true* gives the content of a contextually given content-bearer (a claim, rumor, or suggestion) (Moltmann 2018b):

(36) a. That S is true.

b. true([that S](d))

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Conclusion**

With an ontology of attitudinal and modal objects, truthmaker semantic can be extended to attitude reports and modal sentences, addressing a range of issues that standard semantic theories have or or would have difficulties with.

**Extensions**

Intensional transitive verbs: *look for, buy, hire, owe, recognize*

Intensional objects: searches, purchases, hirings, debts, recognitions

Belong to the same class as attitudinal and modal objects, share the same characteristic features (with realization conditions, representational adequacy conditions or alike)

**-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------**

**References**

Austin, L. (1962): *How to do Things with Words?.* Harvard UP, Cambridge, MA.

Braun, D. (2015): ‘Desiring, desires, and desire ascriptions’. *Philosophical Studies* 172.

Cattell, R. (1978): ‘On The Source of Interrogative Adverbs’ Language 54, 61-77.

Graff Fara, D. (2013): ‘Specifying Desire’. *Noûs* 47(2), 250--272.

Fine, K. (2014): ‘Truthmaker Semantics for Intuitionistic Logic’*. Journal of Philosophical*

*Logic* 43, 549–577.

---------- (2017a): ‘Truthmaker Semantics’. In B. Hale et al. (eds.): *A Companion to the*

*Philosophy of Language* V, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 556–577.

---------- (2017b): ‘A Theory of Truthmaker Content I: Conjunction, Disjunction, and

Negation’. Journal of Philosophical Logic 46, 625-674.

----------- (2017c):’A Theory of Truthmaker Content II: Subject Matter, Common Content,

Remainder, and Ground’. Journal of Philosophical Logic 46, 675-702.

---------- (2018a): ‘Compliance and command I’. *Review of Symbolic Logic* 11(4), 609–633.

---------- (2018b): ‘Compliance and command II”. *Review of Symbolic Logic* 11(4), 634–664.

Moltmann, F. (2017 a): ‘Cognitive Products and the Semantics of Attitude Reports and

Deontic Modals’. In Moltmann / Textor (2017).

---------------- (2017b): '[Partial Content and Expressions of Part and Whole. Discussion of Stephen Yablo: *Aboutness*](http://friederike-moltmann.com/uploads/Yablo%20discussion-proofs-2016(1).pdf)'. *Philosophical Studies* 174(3), 2017.

----------------- (2018): '[An Object-Based Truthmaker Theory for Modals](http://friederike-moltmann.com/uploads/Truthmaker%20Semantics%20for%20Modals-June%202018(2).docx)'. *Philosophical*

*Issues* 'Philosophy of Logic and Inferential Reasoning', edited by C.F. Juhl and J.

Schechter.

------------------- (2018b): 'Truth Predicates, Truth Bearers, and their Variants'. Special issue

'Truth: Concept meets Property', edited by J. Wyatt, Synthese. online first.

--------------- (to appear a): ‘Clauses as Semantic Predicates. Difficulties for Possible-Worlds

Semantics’. In R. Bhatt/I.Frana/P. Menendez-Benito (eds.): *Making Worlds Accessible.*

*Festschrift for Angelika Kratzer*, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, online, 2018.

------------------ (to appear b): 'Truthmaker Semantics for Natural Language: Attitude Verbs,

Modals and Intensional Transitive Verbs', target article, with commentaries and replies, to

appear in *Theoretical Linguistics*.

Moltmann, F. / M. Textor (eds.) (2017): *Act-Based Conceptions of Propositions:*

*Contemporary and Historical Contributions.* Oxford UP, Oxford..

Thomasson, A. (1999): *Fiction and Metaphysics.* Cambridge UP, Cambridge.

Twardowski, K. (1911): ‘Actions and Products. Some Remarks on the Borderline of

Psychology, Grammar, and Logic’. In J. Brandl/J. Wolenski (eds.): *Kazimierz*

*Twardowski. On Actions, Products, and Other Topics in the Philosophy*. Rodopi,

Amsterdam and Atlanta, 1999, 103-132.

Ulrich, W. (1976): ‘An Alleged Ambiguity in the Nominalizations of Illocutionary Verbs’.

*Philosophica* 18.2., 113-127.

Yablo, S. (2014): *Aboutness*. Princeton University Press.