

ABSTRACT - "Ellipsis, Wide Scope and Demonstrative Quotation"

In this paper I propose and defend an original ellipsis strategy view of fictional discourse, which explains fictional discourse as involving mechanisms similar to those described by the demonstrative theory of quotation (Cappelen & Lepore (1997), Davidson (1979), Garcia-Carpintero (1994), Predelli (2008)). In the first part of the paper, I discuss some arguments against any ellipsis strategy view. In the second part, I present my own ellipsis strategy view.

First, I defend my ellipsis strategy view from Kroon's (2004, 2009) arguments against any ellipsis strategy view. And, in particular, in so doing, I argue against his related and more ambitious claim that contrarily to what is widely accepted, true negative existentials involving definite descriptions should be interpreted with negation taking narrow scope over the existential quantifier. I think that the examples that Kroon discusses accept readings in accordance with the usual Russellian treatment of them (according to which negation takes wide scope over the existential quantifier instead), which seem to be the intended readings. And these are precisely readings that arise when these cases are interpreted as having something like 'alleged' elided as part of the definite descriptions involved. Hence, I conclude, against Kroon's claims and arguments, that an ellipsis strategy gives the right interpretations and that the usual Russellian treatment of negative existentials involving definite descriptions is the correct one. Contrarily to what Kroon argues, then, none of this gives further support to Kroon's positive account, which appeals to pretense and belongs to a broad family of views according to which sentences containing empty names do not semantically express any proposition, but we use them, and pretend them to be true, in participating in games of make-believe. This is in a nutshell the proposals of Gareth Evans (1982) and Kendall Walton (1990).

Secondly, I propose an original theory about the semantics of the fictional discourse that defends that the fictional discourse works through mechanisms that are also involved in quotation according

to some version of the demonstrative theory of quotation. In particular, although on this proposal fictional names do not refer to anything at all, descriptive phrases in which they sometimes occur (such as ‘the fictional character Sherlock Holmes’ or ‘the alleged extraterrestrial E.T.’) do have denotation and we manage to make true claims about the fiction by using them. The proposal presented here is, in part, that we manage to do this by using fictional names as demonstrations within the descriptive phrases in which they occur. Ostensive demonstration would be at work here. Fictional names are sometimes used as demonstrations that contribute the demonstration of the phrase’s denotation. This proposal naturally extends to an account of descriptive phrases in which ordinary proper names occur in general, descriptive phrases such as ‘the President Barack Obama’ or ‘our son John’. The idea of this extension is that not even ordinary proper names that usually have a referent behave as usual in this context, that is, by referring. On the contrary, when ordinary proper names appear in descriptive phrases like these, they do not refer, but work as demonstrations that contribute the demonstration of the phrase’s denotation.

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