

# Philosophical Papers

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Volume I

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## *Postscripts to* "General Semantics"

### A. INDEX AND CONTEXT<sup>1</sup>

An index is an  $n$ -tuple which serves as a package of the various features of context on which extensions may depend. But my packages were far too small. There are ever so many relevant features of context besides the ones I listed. For discussion of a few more of them, see "Scorekeeping in a Language Game" (in this volume).

We could wait for the end of linguistic inquiry, and define our indices then. But the less patient of us may prefer another solution. Let the features of context mostly be given implicitly. Once we have world, time, and speaker, what can be lacking? The place is the place where that speaker is at that time at that world; the appropriate resolutions of vagueness are (under)determined by the pragmatic forces present in the conversation that has been going on around that speaker just before that time at that world; and so on for other features of context, however numerous and however recondit.

So perhaps my packages were not too small after all, but rather were too big. Why not stop with world, time, and speaker? Or, as I would prefer, with all three in one: a world-bound time-slice of a (potential) speaker. Call this a *context*.<sup>2</sup>

A context gives us a world, time, and speaker that are suitably related: the speaker is present at that time at that world. If we take world-bound time-slices, the relatedness is automatic. If we take world-time-speaker triples, the relatedness is not automatic, but we must nevertheless demand it: without it, our method for recovering the other features of context makes no sense.

Then, sad to say, contexts cannot replace indices. For we must often consider an index whose world, time, and speaker are *not* suitably related, as witness the truth of "I was not here yesterday, and I might not have been here now". To evaluate this sentence as true, we must shift first time and then world in ways that destroy the relatedness. Likewise we may need to shift other coordinates in ways that destroy their relation to world, time, and speaker, as witness the truth of "No matter who you are, you'd better understand double indexing". It is a good ques-

<sup>1</sup>For a fuller discussion, see my "Index, Context, and Content," in Stig Kanger and Sven Öhman, eds., *Philosophy and Grammar* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1981). I am much indebted to Robert Stalnaker, "Pragmatics," *Synthese* 22 (1970): 272-89, and to David Kaplan's unpublished study of demonstratives.

<sup>2</sup>It will not escape the reader of "Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*" (in this volume) that these "contexts" are the same as the "subjects" that self-ascribe properties, and that sets of them are the self-ascribed properties. This agreement might well be exploited in the semantic analysis of *de se* attitude-sentences. Arnim von Stechow has put forward proposals to this effect in his contribution to a symposium held at Konstanz University in September 1981.

tion which, and how many, features of context are subject to such shifting. Certainly, far from all of them. I think it reasonable to hope for a short list of all the shiftable features of context, well before the end of inquiry.

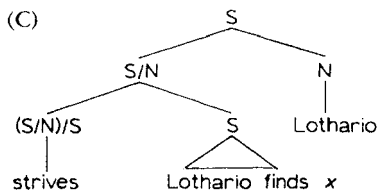
Given that short list, the thing to do is to define an index so that its first coordinate is a context, and its remaining coordinates correspond not to all the relevant features of context but only to all the shiftable features. Then we must distinguish two sorts of indices: *Original indices*, in which the shiftable features are as determined by the context which appears as first coordinate; and *shifted indices*, in which that is not so. Truth in a context is truth at an original index, and this is the semantic notion that is directly relevant to truthful speech. Truth at indices generally is an auxiliary notion: truth of a sentence at an original index may be determined by the extensions of its constituents at shifted indices, and more generally by the structure of Carnapian and compositional intensions involving the full range of indices.

## B. VARIABLES AND BINDING

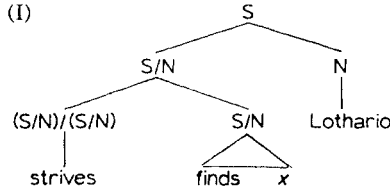
I was able to make provision, within a purely categorial grammar and its system of intensions, for individual variables and for abstraction operators to bind them. But my method cannot be extended to provide variables and binders throughout the employed categories, lest we fall afoul of the *Fundierungssaxiom* of standard set theory. The utility of bound variables in many categories has been shewn in the work of M. J. Cresswell, so I now think it best to follow his example and invest in the means for variable-binding outside the categorial framework.<sup>3</sup>

## C. INFINITIVES VERSUS CLAUSES

Although my framework did not require it, in several examples I went out of my way to transform surface infinitives into underlying sentential clauses. Thus "Lothario strives to find *x*" came out as (C) instead of (I).



<sup>3</sup>See his *Logics and Languages* (London: Methuen, 1973).



But (I) would have been better, for several reasons. (1) It is closer to surface structure. (2) It treats "strive to find *x*" as a genuine constituent. (3) It meshes with my proposal in "Attitudes *De Dicto* and *De Se*" that the objects of attitudes should be taken in general as properties rather than propositions. For instance, an appropriate object of (the attitudinal part of) striving would be a property such as the property of finding a certain individual *x*. (4) If Lothario does not realize that he himself is Lothario, striving that he himself find *x* might differ from striving that Lothario find *x*. If so, it is the former, rather than the latter, that we call "striving to find *x*".

Similarly, I would now prefer that the performative meaning underlying "Be late!" be taken as follows, so that it will include as a constituent the meaning of the transitive verb phrase "command to be late".

