

Week 9: Actualization

Modal contexts create ambiguities between *de dicto* and *de re* readings of definite descriptions – and one way of deriving the *de re* readings is to treat the descriptions, exceptionally, as **deictics**.

This can be done by **actualizing** their meanings.

Consider (1): if the definite description *our infiltrated agent* is read in the usual way – *de dicto*, that is – the Godfather is ascribed an irrational attitude.

(1) The Godfather believes that our infiltrated agent is totally reliable.

The sensible interpretation is that the Godfather believes that the value of the description in the actual world, the world of the situation of utterance, as opposed to the world of the shifted situation of evaluation, is totally reliable. There are different ways to derive this **de re** reading; here is one:

We saw that diagonalization can make a deictic meaning nondeictic.

Actualization is the mirror image: it can make a nondeictic meaning deictic.

Actualization is also an operation on characters (meanings; functions from situations to functions from situations to extensions), but this one makes the situation of utterance play the role of the situation of evaluation:

$$\textcircled{\lambda}(\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket) = \lambda i \lambda j \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^i(i)$$

If we take the argument proposition of $\llbracket \textit{believes} \rrbracket^i(j)$ to be

$$\lambda j^* \llbracket \textit{spy} \rrbracket^i(j^*)(\textcircled{\lambda}(\llbracket \textit{our infiltrated agent} \rrbracket)^i(j^*)) \text{ (and the time of } j^* \text{ is now)} = \\ \lambda j^* \llbracket \textit{spy} \rrbracket^i(j^*)(\llbracket \textit{our infiltrated agent} \rrbracket^i(i)) \text{ (and the time of } j^* \text{ is now),}$$

we get the right reading by turning the definite description into a deictic expression.



Discuss this data:

Goddess Parvati, wife of God Shiva, lonely during one of her husband's long absences, molds a son from mud. Ganesh grows up, and one day, Parvati tells him to guard the front door and not let anybody in while she bathes.

(2) Shiva returns home. Ganesh refuses to let his father in, and Shiva beheads him.

(3) Shiva returns home. Ganesh refuses to let the intruder in, and Shiva beheads him.

(4) We need to pray for the poor misguided folks out there who want to destroy the best nation on earth.

(5) The man in the white hat always wins, no matter who he is.

(6) The man in the white hat, Gene Autry, always wins.

(7) She would eat it later lying on her bed and dreaming of her future husband, wherever and whoever he might be.

(8) On Oct. 28, instructor Carolyn Tewari will appear as 19-year-old Clara Wieck, dreaming of her future husband, Robert Schumann, and playing "Le Sabbat".