

Predicates of Personal Taste and *De Re* Construal

Pranav Anand	Natasha Korotkova
panand@ucsc.edu	n.korotkova@ucla.edu
UCSC	UCLA

Across the various treatments of the anchor for judgment in predicates of personal taste (PPTs), be it a parameter of the index of evaluation (Lasersohn 2005), null pronominals (Stephenson 2007), or generically bound elements (Moltmann 2002, Pearson 2012), one mainstay has been a focus on data where the PPT is in “main predicate position” (i.e., the main predicate of a clause, either embedded or not). As (1a) attests, conflicting PPTs in main predicate position seem to trigger a contradiction, suggesting that PPTs within a clause need to be evaluated from the same perspective, per Lasersohn (2005). And yet, (1b) shows that that when one of the PPTs is placed inside a nominal argument of the main predicate, it may select a distinct judge, as might be expected by Stephenson (2007).

- (1) Context: Mary says, “Sue loved the cake, but I hated it.”
- Sue: #Mary said that the dish was delicious and disgusting.
 - Sue: Mary said that the delicious dish was disgusting.

We argue here for the null hypothesis: judge-independence is the result of *de re* construal. Thus, *delicious* is amnestied from the same judge in (1b) because the DP is being read *de re*.

The Facts We argue that contradiction in (1b) is avoided only if the DP is read *de re*. (2) supplies a first argument. In (2a), Sue cannot be the judge of *beautiful* without her also committing to the item being a poncho; in sharp contrast, an overt pronominal co-referential with Sue does not require this commitment (2b). (Similarly, if she said *Mary thought a hunk was ugly* she is committed to evaluating the referent as a hunk.)

- (2) *Mary and Sue are debating several items of clothing in a catalog. They happen on an item that Sue believes is a beautiful dress and Mary an ugly poncho.*
- Sue: Mary thought that a beautiful^{Sue} {#poncho, dress} was ugly.
 - Sue: Mary thought that a {poncho, dress} beautiful to me was ugly.

As a second argument, consider cases where *de re* construals of DPs have been argued to be impossible (3-4). Sharvit (2008) shows that Free Indirect Discourse blocks *de re* construal of DPs. In turn, as (3a) shows, the judge of the PPT *beautiful* can only be Mary, while an overt pronominal yields the unavailable judge:

- (3) a. Sue: A beautiful^{*Sue, Mary} item was on sale right now, she thought.
b. Sue: An item beautiful to me was on sale right now, she thought.

Keshet (2008), building on Musan (1997), argues that the pivots of existential *there* sentences must be interpreted *de dicto*. Again, there is a contrast between whether Sue can be the judge with (4b) and without (4a) the pronominal.

- (4) a. Sue: Mary thought there was a beautiful^{*Sue, Mary} item on sale.
b. Sue: Mary thought there was an item beautiful to me on sale.

PPTs in unembedded contexts show the ability to change the time of evaluation of judgment (5a). Musan’s simultaneity constraint on existential pivots and codas thus predicts that a pivot is tied both to the attitude holder and the time of their attitude; (5b) confirms this.

- (5) a. When I was child, all dresses were ugly. Now they can be beautiful.
 b. Once, when I was a baby, I believed there was a beautiful^{*t@} dress in my closet.
 c. Once, when I was a baby, I believed a beautiful^{t@} dress was in my closet.

The Approach The facts outlined in (2-5) suggest that the possible judges of a PPT correlate precisely with grammatically possible worlds and times of evaluation for predicates. This is unexpected if judges are, in principle, separable from an evaluation index, as is possible in many theories (Pearson 2012, Stephenson 2007, Saebo 2009). We assume a) that the judge is a component of the index of evaluation (Laserson 2005) and b) that evaluation indices are instantiated by situation variables in LF. Then the possible judges for a PPT are governed by general situation variable constraints:

- (6) a. The situation pronoun that a verb selects for must be coindexed with the nearest λ above it. (Percus 2000)
 b. Two predicates composed via Predicate Modification may not be evaluated at different situations from one another. (Keshet 2008)

These constraints predict precisely the constellation of facts above. Consider the LF for (2a):

- (7) λs_0 Mary ... think [λs_1 T_{past} [_{DP} a [[s_k beautiful] [s_m poncho]]] [s_1 be ugly].

(6a) requires that the situation variable for *ugly* is bound at the clausal level; with the assumption that the JUDGE(s_1) corresponds to the attitude holder (8a), *ugly* will be from Mary’s perspective obligatorily. In turn, (6b) will require that $s_k = s_m$, meaning that *poncho* and *beautiful* are evaluated with respect to the same situation, matrix or not. Correspondingly, the world of evaluation for the nominal tracks the judge (and world, and time) of the PPT (8b).

- (8) a. $[[\text{think}]]^c = \lambda s_s \lambda p \lambda x. 1$ iff $\forall s' \in \text{Dox}(x,s) [p(s') = 1]$,
 if $s' \in \text{Dox}(x,s)$, then JUDGE(s') = x' , the *de se* counterpart of x in s'
 b. $[[\text{beautiful}]]^c = \lambda s_s \lambda x. 1$ iff x is beautiful to JUDGE(s) in s .
 c. $[[\text{poncho}]]^c = \lambda s_s \lambda x. 1$ iff x is a poncho in s .

Outlook The analysis above raises several questions. One is whether all perspectival expressions show a similar *de re* effect. At least for epistemic adjectives, it appears that the answer is no; (9) is intelligible without committing Sue to there being vampires.

- (9) Sue: Mary is certain that two potential/possible [for x] vampires aren’t vampires.

But Sue does seem committed to Mary assessing some (possibly non-existent) group’s epistemic state (DeRose 1991). We don’t see a necessary *de re* effect here. It suggests that the mechanism tracking groups for group-relative expressions is distinct from that of PPT judges (which seem more grammatically constrained). More provocatively, the incorporation of PPT judges into situations raises the possibility that we can eliminate mention of judges entirely

from our theory, so that (8b) has no invocation of JUDGE *per se*. One suggestive piece of evidence for this is that (4a) can allow a non-Mary “judge” precisely in acentric cases — when the dress is (conventionally) beautiful in her doxastic situations, despite Mary not considering it beautiful herself. Important challenges loom for such an account (e.g., providing accounts for the faultlessness of PPT disagreement and the peculiar selectional requirements of embedders such as *find* discussed by Saebo (2009)), but it has the salutary promise of not simply deriving the contrast in (1), but making the fact that judges and worlds align all the more unremarkable.