

RELEVANT SITUATIONS

One of the main goals Barwise and Perry pursue in *Situations and Attitudes* (SA) is to account for the so-called propositional attitudes – and their objects – in terms of situations or courses of events in the world. On the other hand, the structures which standard model theory resorts to are not appropriate to this purpose, for they exceed our cognitive capacities. This is the reason why Barwise and Perry try to build up a more refined semantic paradigm. The idea is that by analyzing a model into its *partial* components (situations) we can recover that semantic “innocence” which got lost since Frege introduced intensional entities like thoughts, individual concepts, and so on. Needless to say, if this attempt should succeed the benefits would not be negligible. The semantic treatment of the attitude reports (which nowadays is admittedly a crucial test for any theory of meaning) would improve in elegance and simplicity and, at the same time, a deep-rooted ambition of the philosophical realism would be accomplished: to reconstruct mental events or contents in terms of “external” objects and properties. (‘Meaning’s natural home is the world’: this is one of the most provocative statements in SA.) Now, in the present paper I will try to hint at some difficulties this theoretical approach has to overcome in my opinion, and I will do so in a quite general way: in fact the formal framework presented in SA is not yet definite enough (in particular, it contains some suggestions which are in contrast with previous papers by Barwise and Perry), and, moreover, the points I will touch on seem to depend upon general philosophical issues.

1. INNOCENCE

I must confess I feel some reluctance to accept the idea that – in reconstructing the notion of reference or denotation for a given class of expressions – some solutions are *absolutely* more intuitive than others. Accepting it would be tantamount to presupposing that in our untutored view of language there is a reliable intuition about what is,

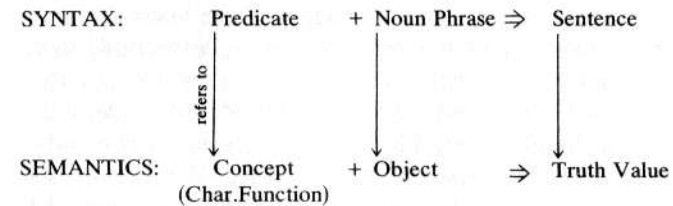
for instance, the reference of a sentence, which is quite questionable. It may be safer to say that some solutions are more natural than others *within* a given theoretical framework, and this does not prevent of course the possibility of evaluating their explanatory power with respect to a corpus of empirical data (which is, in this case, the class of attitude reports). Nevertheless I shall stick to the rules and try to develop some brief reflections about the arguments Barwise and Perry present in SA in this respect. (As usual, when it is a matter of picking out a competing theory to oppose one's own, the historical reconstruction is a little bit oversimplified. In SA the appointed victim is the Fregean paradigm.)

Barwise and Perry focus their attention on the following points of the theoretical model they bring back to Frege:

- (a) The reference of a sentence is its truth value.
- (b) Since the principle of compositionality is a "working assumption", one should expect that if in a context like 'a believes that φ ' we replace the embedded sentence φ by a sentence φ' with the same truth value (i.e. with the same reference), the reference of the whole sentence does not change. But of course that is not the case, so one establishes that in contexts like that the embedded sentence φ does not have its ordinary reference (a truth value, precisely), but it refers to what is usually its sense, a thought.

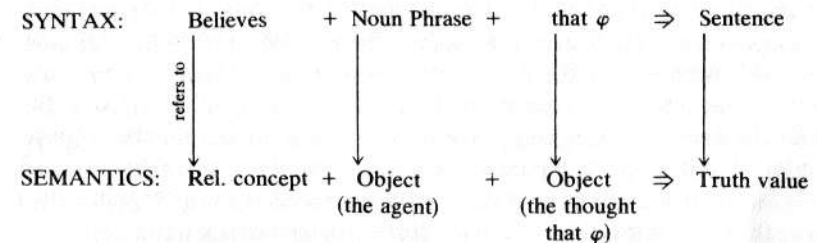
According to Barwise and Perry this paradigm is doubly unnatural, for it identifies references with truth values and, what is more, it is obliged to assign to sentences references ad hoc in some particular context. The point is that they find here an inconsistency between the choice mentioned in (a) and the principle of compositionality. But this is at least questionable, if we take into account the fact that it is *precisely* the assumption of the principle of compositionality which induces Frege to identify the reference of a sentence with its truth value and which makes this choice quite natural within this theoretical framework.

But let us look closer into the matter. If, for the sake of simplicity, we deal only with one-place predicates, we can express in the following way (for atomic sentences) the parallelism between syntax and semantics which inspires the principle of compositionality:



Notice that the "concept" the predicative expression refers to is a characteristic function and, since the connectives too can be associated to functions which take truth values as values, the principle of compositionality (for sentences) expresses nothing but the idea that the reference of a sentence is what we get when we apply the reference of the functional expression to the references of the argument expressions: i.e., a truth value. And this is of course an essential part of the way Frege accounts for the recursive structure of language. In other words, since there is no clear naive intuition about what is a reference of a sentence, there seem to be no reasons to find this move "sinful".

Now, contrary to what Barwise and Perry seem to think (pp. 173-74), it is quite misleading to maintain that, to cope with the questions concerning intensional contexts, Frege gives up the idea that the principle of substitutivity holds in these contexts. In this case he would give up also the general and systematic idea that the reference of the whole sentence is a function of the references of its parts, which, as we have just seen, is a hardly dispensable idea. Actually Frege chooses a different way out. On the one hand he wants to preserve the general applicability of the principle of substitutivity, on the other he realizes that we come to absurd results if we maintain that also an *embedded* clause has a truth value as its reference. The pattern he proposes, for example, in the case of belief sentences is the following:



Once more, it is the principle of compositionality which leads Frege to choose the sense (a thought) as the reference of an embedded sentence. Is that so “unnatural”? After all Frege does not assign two different references to the same expression (a sentence, *Satz*) depending on circumstances: he gives two different references, respectively, to a sentence and a *that*-complement (*Nebensatz*). (We should not forget that, according to Frege, in the case of natural languages the principle of compositionality must be integrated by the “structural” principle: look at [the logical form of] the whole to determine the meaning of a constituent expression.)

The point is that, when the inadequacy of Frege’s way out is at issue, what people have in mind is the interpretation of the Fregean intensional concepts in terms of a possible world semantics, following an exegetic style introduced by Carnap since *Meaning and Necessity*. And it is quite obvious that, in *these* terms, Fregean concepts are inappropriate to deal with attitude reports, for the problems concerning epistemic modalities exceed in principle the usual treatment of logical modalities. For example, two sentences, which according to Frege would express *different* thoughts because they present in different ways some property of a mathematical entity (e.g., by introducing this entity under different descriptions) are usually considered as expressing the *same* intension in a possible world semantics. It is of course possible to object that, in Frege, the notion of thought is not made explicit from a formal point of view and that it serves to pick out a problem instead of solving it. Nevertheless there are some general requirements, in Frege’s approach, which are hardly dispensable. Take for instance his distinction between thought (*Gedanke*) and representation (*Vorstellung*), which rests on the objective character of the former and the subjective, idiosyncratic character of the latter. Now what Frege intended to suggest is, among other things, that only a thought, not a representation, can be introduced as the “object” of an attitude in a report. The fact is that, since in this report a subject *a* is speaking in some language of a mental attitude an agent *b* has, what is *expressible* here is only the intersubjective content of this attitude, i.e., what can be referred to through the concepts or rules we find in the *public* dimension of language. Representations, as unrepeatable psychological states, are inseparable from their bearers: they literally are in the head of the agent and can be experienced only by him. In this sense, they are not communicable. But representations have common

contents which, as such, can be describable in *language*. Saying that through representations we grasp objective thoughts means in this context that it is possible to refer to “shareable” features of these representations. In Fregean terms this is the “object” of *b*’s attitude (a belief, for example) *a* refers to by the embedded *that*-clause in the report. So it is quite clear why Frege appeals to a “third” realm between representations and wordly events and objects, in spite of Barwise and Perry’s allusion to the lost innocence. In fact his main purpose here is to account for *both* the “partiality” of thoughts (for they are bound to particular ways of presenting things: to particular descriptions of individuals, for example) and their intersubjective role. The former aspect is required to explain why thoughts are conceived by agents within a particular conceptual perspective, the latter to explain why they can be spoken of in language. Now, to this purpose the notion of an “objectivity” of the thought is deeply connected with this possibility of a public reference to common features of mental events. In fact, what is objective, in this sense, is identified with what can be shaped by suitable rules, in particular the constitutive rules of language. In the *Grundlagen* there is a very significant passage on this point: ‘I distinguish what I call objective from what is handeable or spatial or actual What is objective it is what is subject to laws, what can be conceived (*Begriffliche*) and judged, what is expressible in words. What is purely intuible is not communicable The word “white” ordinarily makes us think of a certain sensation, which is, of course, entirely subjective; but even in ordinary everyday speech, it often bears, I think, an objective sense It is in this way that I understand objective to mean what is independent of our sensation, intuition and imagination, and of all construction of mental pictures out of memories of earlier sensations, but not what is independent of the reason, – for what are things independent of reason?’ (Section 26, trans. by J. L. Austin). Coming back to attitude reports, what Frege calls the objectivity of the thought (of the sense, in general) is the answer he gives to the question: *how can we publicly speak of such a private event as a psychological state or attitude?* According to Barwise and Perry it is the worldly nature of situations, as objects of attitudes, which warrants the possibility of a public referring to attitudes. But for Frege what is crucial here is a background of concepts or rules. In this sense, the reference to the “reason” to justify, as we have just seen, the objectivity of the thought is perhaps in order to remind us that one

of the fundamental purposes of *Sinn und Bedeutung* is to show the relevance of the notion of thought for epistemic issues. From this point of view, the intentional structures Frege refers to can hardly be reconstructed in terms of the standard intensional structures Barwise and Perry have in mind in their criticism.

The problem, anyway, is not whether the image they present of Frege's way out is appropriate. From a theoretical point of view it is more interesting to consider the reasons why they propose an alternative model, which is meant to give up abstract entities like thoughts and individual concepts (as constituents of a dispensable intermediate level between the agents and the reality, according to Barwise and Perry), in favour of situations and events in the world. Now the treatment of the attitude reports is a crucial test for the realist theory of meaning they propose. So, a more constructive way to vindicate the "innocence" of the Fregean resort to intentional notions is perhaps to pick out some difficulties the approach suggested in SA seems to bring. My guess, in fact, is that, however much we complicate and refine the image of an *external* reality, it is in principle hard to find in it all we need to account for mental events and structures.

2. ATTITUDES

The formal semantics Barwise and Perry present in SA (in a tentative and incomplete way, anyhow) will be here assumed as known. So I shall focus my remarks on a couple of distinctive features of their theory.

Let us start from attitude reports like '*a* believes that φ ', '*a* knows that φ ', '*a* sees *b* φ -ing', etc. Now, the philosophical question raised by this kind of report concerns the need of accounting for the object of these attitudes in a systematic way, i.e., what *a* believes, knows, sees, and so on. For instance, one of the fundamental characteristics of Husserl's phenomenology is that what an intentional attitude aims at can not be reconstructed in terms of external objects and properties (including psychological events), since it presents peculiar and irreducible characteristics. (On the other hand, independently of these philosophical justifications – or even in contrast with them – Frege himself emphasized that senses must be distinguished from both psychological representations and objects in the world.) So it is quite natural to think that, if such a framework is assumed, the semantic

proposal which can be associated to it will involve a reference to notions of a suitable kind (Husserl's noemata, Frege's senses); and this seems to fit well what in this framework is meant to be the "object" of the attitude in the de-dicto reading, for example, of a belief-sentence (where what the agent "has in mind" must be described *as such*, apart from its connections with actual things or events). On the contrary, Barwise and Perry maintain that all we need to account for attitudes and their objects can be found in the world itself, provided we have a rich and articulate view of it. What is fundamental, here, is then the concept of *situation*, i.e., a settlement of primitive entities of the domain like, in particular, individuals and relations. Formally we can consider these situations as substructures of bigger structures or, more interestingly, of a maximal structure: the world. (But the existence of this maximal structure is no more presupposed in SA, unlike in previous papers.) According to Barwise and Perry, the fact that situations are only *partial* structures (not complete states of affairs like possible worlds) makes them reliable candidates to account for the "objects" of attitudes. Take for example the essential narrowness of a visual perspective: it is intuitive to assume that, in a statement like '*a* sees that φ ', what is involved as the aim of *a*'s intentional attitude is something limited and partial. In this respect, an interesting contribution made by SA is the discussion about the inadequacy of those semantic models which treat epistemic modalities as a simple extension of logical modalities. (Although it is not true that possible worlds have always been assimilated to maximal states of affairs: see for example the semantic considerations Prior developed for tense logic. On the other hand, the Hintikka sets are another good example of "partial" structures.)

The problem I intend to deal with now is the following. The resort to partial structures is maybe a necessary condition to account for the limits of what people have in mind when they believe, know, or see anything. But it is not a sufficient condition. What is missing in this picture is the epistemic origin of situations. The point is that in the metatheoretic interpretation – in virtue of the philosophical realism Barwise and Perry present as a working assumption – these partial structures are nothing but portions of other more complex structures (of the maximal one, if any), which are identified with some *external* reality. So it is hard to see how situations, in this sense, can be suitable tools to deal with the peculiarity of the mental contents (if you accept such an idea). And I will try to illustrate this point by referring to a

couple of problems which, following the presentation of the theory in SA, seem to arise from such a semantic proposal. Now, the first question concerns the truth conditions Barwise and Perry associate to what they call an epistemically neutral perceptual report. This is a kind of quasi-extensional context, since it does not involve the reference to knowledge or information which can influence the agent's cognitive state. In this sense a sentence like 'John sees the dean practise Yoga' can be a suitable description of a situation where John sees the intended scene although he does *not* know who is the person he sees nor what practicing Yoga is. From a syntactic point of view, epistemically neutral reports embed sentences which are in a naked infinitive form (NI) or in a gerundive form. Furthermore, semantically, I used the expression 'quasi-extensional contexts' because in this case the principle of substitutivity holds: according to Barwise and Perry there would be here a causal relation between the subject of the perception and some portion of the world (a situation or scene). To drastically simplify things (and to avoid the suitable formalism), let us say that Barwise and Perry associate, for example, to the epistemically neutral use of the verb *to see* – with the embedded sentence φ in the NI form – the following truth-condition:

- ' a sees φ ' is true iff
- (i) there is a situation s such that $s \in [\varphi]$;
 - (ii) a sees s .

(If φ is a sentence, $[\varphi]$ is the set of situations which validate φ , while $[[\varphi]]$ is the set of situations which refute it. Notice that, since situations contain only partial information, for some situation s and some sentence φ it is possible that $s \notin [\varphi]$ and $s \notin [[\varphi]]$.)

Now, I guess that *even* at the quasi-extensional level of these NI-reports we get some questionable result if we refer only to the "nature" of the situation itself (p. 184), without incorporating, as an essential part, the peculiarity of the agent's mental contents. Consider for instance the following well-known example.

In Figure 1 there is a hexagon like that represented in Figure 2. Nevertheless it would not be very appropriate to say that a subject a sees a hexagon when he looks (innocently ...) at Figure 1. (The fact is that he fails to pick out such an individual, although it is a constituent of the intended situation in the sense of SA.) Let us suppose now that

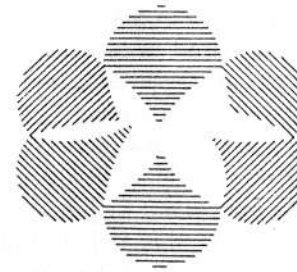


Fig. 1.

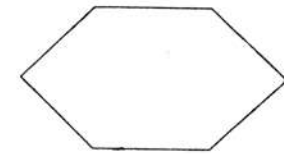


Fig. 2.

the first figure is moving whilst a is looking at it and let us consider the sentence ' a sees a hexagon move', or ' a sees b move' (with ' b ' as a name for the hexagon, if you prefer to avoid examples with indefinite descriptions). Since there is a situation s such that: (i) in s a hexagon is moving and (ii) a sees s , then our sentence would be true according to the semantics presented in SA. I think that this is a questionable result, although we are dealing with NI-perception statements. The point is that, even if only *limited* portions of an external reality are referred to here, this small part of the world (including the spatial location of the agent, the conditions of light, etc.) is not appropriate to determine the perceptual contents of the agent. On the contrary, a reference to these contents is required to pick out the relevant situation.

To this remark one might raise the following objection. What characterizes an epistemically neutral report is exactly the fact that if for instance a sees a certain animal b move, and if b is a panda, then the NI-perception report ' a sees a panda move' is acceptable although a does not acknowledge b as a panda (he might even mistake it for a toy). Why not argue in the same way with regard to Figure 1, by saying that the report ' a sees a hexagon move' is acceptable since it is not required that a recognizes b as a hexagon? The fact is that, in our example, not only does a fail to recognize b by a hexagon, but he fails to pick it out as an individual: i.e., he simply does *not* see it. In general, what is assumed as a constituent of a situation in our semantic metatheory of attitudes – namely, an individual – would depend upon a particular cognitive framework. One might then object that, since

the essential ingredients of the semantics developed in SA are *abstract situations* (i.e., mathematical entities which are used to represent *real situations*), one does not need to assume the hexagon at issue as a constituent of such a situation, as a (perceptual) individual. That is true, but it remains that the only justification for this move is an implicit reference to some perceptual pattern – which would mean that, from this point of view, situations are conceived in function of their cognitive relevance, and not conversely. If this is how things stand, a “realist” characterization of situations – which is presupposed by the aim of reconstructing mental events in terms of their “external significance” – seems to be misleading here. So, strictly speaking, I am not saying that the case I discussed is in principle a counterexample to the semantic treatment suggested in SA; it is probable that a more refined version of the theory can deal with it in an appropriate way. What is at issue here is the possibility of accomplishing this task within the philosophical framework Barwise and Perry refers to in SA.

The second point I would like to illustrate concerns the treatment Barwise and Perry propose for a wide range of “epistemically positive” attitude reports, i.e., statements ‘that tell us not just what the situations the agent has an attitude toward are like, but also about the agent’s state of mind’. In other words, what is relevant for the appropriateness of these reports is also the way in which the agent characterizes the constituents of his experience: in particular, the way he refers to a given individual in his cognitive space. From a linguistic point of view, these are contexts determined by verbs like ‘to believe’, ‘to know’, ‘to see’, etc., followed by a *that*-complement. I will use ‘*a V that φ*’ as a paradigm for these contexts, where *a* is the agent, *V* the verb at issue and *φ* the embedded sentence. For the sake of simplicity, let us suppose now that the embedded sentence contains only one-place predicates and that the only noun phrases which occur in it are proper names and definite descriptions (in particular, I shall ignore quantifiers, which would make the discussion much more complicated). The set of the *constituents* of a sentence *φ* ($\text{Con}(\varphi)$) is defined as the set of the singular terms occurring in *φ*, so that the set of the constituents of a complex sentence is the union of the sets of the constituents assigned to the component sentences. (Actually a more refined characterization of this notion is required here, in order to prevent the possibility, for instance, of considering the noun phrase ‘John’ as a constituent of the sentence ‘Bill saw John’s daughter’.) In short:

If *φ* is an atomic sentence, i.e. of form ‘Pt’, then $\text{Con}(\varphi) = \{t\}$;
 if *φ* is of form $\sim\psi$, then $\text{Con}(\varphi) = \text{Con}(\psi)$;
 if *φ* is of form $\psi \vee x$, then $\text{Con}(\varphi) = \text{Con}(\psi) \cup \text{Con}(x)$; and so on.

I will refer now to a principle that, in my opinion, is likely to hold for most epistemically positive attitude reports. The idea is that, to ascribe truthfully to an agent *a* an epistemic attitude towards a state of affairs expressed by a sentence *φ*, a necessary condition is that *a* has somehow in mind the objects denoted by the constituents of *φ*, whether they are real or imaginary entities. (More specifically, the agent must have them in mind in the same way they are described or named in *φ*, if the whole report has a *de dicto* reading, or in some alternative way if the report has a *de re* reading.) Notice that it is not required here either that *a* has a privileged type of knowledge of these objects (for example an ‘acquaintance’ in Russell’s sense, or a ‘vivid’ information like in Kaplan, etc.), or that he must have them in mind in a particular moment: for instance, in the case of a non-punctual attitude like believing it is of course possible to say truthfully that *a* believes that *Pb* even if *a* is not thinking of *b* at the intended moment. Roughly speaking, what is simply required is that the objects which are involved in the state of affairs at issue are not extraneous to *a*’s cognitive space. In fact it seems hardly plausible to ascribe to *a*, for example, the belief that *Pb* if *a* has no idea of *b*, however improper or defective this idea can be. (A way of making more precise this notion would be for example to reconstruct the cognitive space of an agent *a* in terms of Kamp’s discourse representation structures and to require that the object *b* should be identified with some “reference marker” somewhere in those structures. Since, via the “conditions”, the reference markers are associated to growing information, I think this is possibly an interesting way to give a formal development to the idea of intentional object and “noematic” content.)

Now, if *M* is used to denote this relation between an agent *a* and a component *b* of a given state of affairs, it is possible to express this principle of epistemic relevance in the following way:

(PR) $a \vee \text{that } \varphi \ \& \ b \in \text{Con}(\varphi) \supset aMb.$

(I wonder whether this principle can be expressed in a more specific and binding way for “primary” visual reports: i.e., reports which

describe a direct acquisition of knowledge via perception, without resorting to extra-perceptual information, inferential reasoning, etc. In this case, the natural specification would be the following:

(PRP) a sees that φ & $b \in \text{Con}(\varphi) \supset a$ sees b .

If this is an acceptable specification of (PR), then inferring ' a sees that $\varphi \vee \psi$ ' from ' a sees that φ ' is in general a disputable move, for the same reasons Barwise and Perry have to question the principle of interchangeability of logical equivalents, as we'll see shortly. In fact, ' $\varphi \vee \psi$ ' may for instance involve individuals which are quite extraneous with respect to what is relevant for φ . But, as far as I can see from the current state of the theory, the inference at issue is licensed in situation semantics – apart from the restrictions concerning the contextual parameters, the "speaker's connections", etc. Anyway, the reason of my perplexity with respect to (PRP) depends upon the problems raised by negated sentences. For example, accepting (PRP) would entail that a statement like ' a saw that b was not in the hall' can be true only if it is not a "primary" visual report. Is that correct? In general, is the distinction between primary and secondary perception meaningful?)

One might discuss about the acceptability of (PR). Anyway, something like that seems to be one of the reasons which lead Barwise and Perry to reject the principle of interchangeability of logically equivalent statements in attitude reports (see for example p. 26). They remark in fact that, even in the case of epistemically neutral reports, to replace the embedded clause by a logically equivalent statement is something unsound. For instance, from the statement ' a sees Pb ' the principle of logical equivalence would licence to infer ' a sees $[(Pb \& Qc) \vee (Pb \& \sim Qc)]$ '. This is of course an unwelcome result, since from the simple statement, for example, that John sees Mary run we do not conclude that John sees Mary run and Bill walk or Mary run and Bill not walk – in fact, Bill can be quite extraneous to the scene John sees, i.e., the scene where Mary runs. To overcome this difficulty, Barwise and Perry point out that in situation semantics a *stronger* notion of equivalence is available:

ψ is a strong consequence of φ if $[\varphi] \subseteq [\psi]$;
 φ and ψ are strongly equivalent if $[\varphi] = [\psi]$.

Since situations are not complete states of affairs, it may happen that a situation contains information rich enough to validate (or to confute) a

given sentence but not a logical equivalent of it which involves more properties and individuals: in general two sentences can be equivalent in the classical sense without being strongly equivalent. So to avoid the above unnatural result Barwise and Perry suggest that strong equivalence is a more suitable condition to impose on the substitution of embedded sentences in NI-perception reports.

Let us go back now to the treatment they propose for contexts like ' a believes that φ ', ' a sees that φ ', etc. Taking up an important feature of Hintikka's approach, to a given agent a and a given attitude V they associate a set Va of situations: i.e., intuitively, the set of those situations which represent the "alternatives" admitted by the attitude V for the agent a . Roughly speaking, for an attitude V with a *that*-complement the relative truth condition is the following:

' a V that φ ' is true iff, for every situation s , if $s \in Va$ then $s \in [\varphi]$.

Let φ and ψ be two statements which are completely determinate with respect to all the relevant contextual co-ordinates (place and time of the utterance, "speaker's connections", etc.), so that, for example, a definite reference is uniquely assigned to each singular term. Now, since in this case $[\varphi \vee \psi]$ is defined as $[\varphi] \cup [\psi]$, if $s \in [\varphi]$ then $s \in [\varphi \vee \psi]$ and, because of the above truth-condition, in general we have that:

(PS) a V that $\varphi \supset a$ V that $\varphi \vee \psi$.

It is easy to see that this result is somehow in contrast with the principle of epistemic relevance (PR): ' $\varphi \vee \psi$ ' can obviously contain more constituents than φ , so that a may have a certain attitude V toward what is expressed by φ , but not toward what is expressed by ' $\varphi \vee \psi$ ', even if ' $\varphi \vee \psi$ ' is a strong consequence of φ . The fact is that the more complex statement may involve of course more data to process, so that the correspondent cognitive state may not be homogeneous to the other. Let us suppose, for example, that I utter the following true statement: 'My nephew believes that Paw is a dog'. On the other hand, he never heard tell of Carnap. So my question is: should we prevent the possibility of inferring from the above statement a statement like 'My nephew believes that Paw is a dog or Carnap wrote *Meaning and necessity*'? The principle of relevance suggests we should, in contrast with SA, where PS holds. This (tentative?) outcome of SA might

perhaps be justified by arguing that the "oddity" of the above inference is due to pragmatic reasons, which need not be accounted for on the semantic level. But if one accepts the principle that any semantic treatment always involves some "idealization", then Montague's approach too, for instance, is somehow justified when it "idealizes" the agent in order to preserve the principle of substitutivity of logically equivalent statements. But this is not the point. My brief (and informal) remarks meant to suggest another question: the question, I mean, whether the realist framework Barwise and Perry refer to in SA imposes unduly binding constraints on the semantic theory. A "central" claim of SA is that 'the mental significance of language, including the role of sentences embedded in attitude reports, is adequately explained by their external significance, properly understood' (p. 42). Really, the problems I mentioned here seem to depend upon a general philosophical option, which, as we have seen, is made explicit in SA: to classify mental states in terms of external situations. Possibly it is the complementary perspective that a proper treatment of attitudes appeals to: i.e., to pick out situations – the objects of attitudes – in function of the mental contents which make them relevant.

Dipartimento di Filosofia
Università degli Studi di Milano
via Festa del Perdono, 7
20122 Milano
Italy