

**More Questions on Intensions and the Semantics of “Believe”**

**(1) On a Purely Intensional Semantics (Carry Over From Last Homework)**

Assume that we are employing a purely intensional semantics, of the kind sketched under (15) on the handout ‘Towards an Intensional Semantics, Part 2’.

Please provide lexical entries for the words in (a) – (e), and show that they can correctly derive the truth conditions of the sentence in (f).

- a. Obama
- b. Joe
- c. smokes
- d. dances
- e. and
- f. Obama smokes and Joe dances.

Given your experience in creating and employing such a system (as well as any other relevant facts you might wish to add), please evaluate the following claim:

*It is always more elegant to simply assume that the semantic valuation function “[[ ]]” yields intensions, rather than employ a ‘mixed’ system of the kind developed in our lecture notes.*

**(2) The Puzzle of Pierre**

As I mentioned in class, the problems surrounding the semantics of “believes” get a lot more complex in the philosophical literature. How complex? Well, meet Pierre! Pierre is a rather famous character in the philosophy of a language and the philosophy of mind (originating in the work of Saul Kripke). He’s famous for a perplexing set of properties his ‘beliefs’ seem to have.

Here’s the deal: Pierre is French. As a boy, he grows up exclusively in the French countryside, and never wanders beyond its borders. As he’s growing up, though, people tell stories about this wonderful, far-off city known as *Londres*. Of course, *Londres* in French simply means London. One thing that all his friends and family emphasize to him, though, is that *Londres est jolie* ‘London is pretty’.

So, pretty clearly, Pierre grows up believing that London is pretty, right?

OK, now one day many years later, Pierre (now an adult) winds up by accident in London. He has no idea that this is indeed the same ‘magical’ city that his relatives referred to as *Londres*. All he knows is that the local people call this place ‘London’.

He shows up in London penniless and helpless. He’s stuck and can’t leave. Consequently, he spends the next few years of his life living on the streets of London, trying to scrape by.

Over time, he learns more and more English from the other folks on the street. None of them speak French, he just picks up English from absolute scratch. Consequently, he never does learn that the city he currently occupies – London – actually *is* the same city *Londres* that all his family and friends once described to him as pretty.

However, he does learn one thing after years living on the streets of London: London is *not* pretty. London is ugly. It’s awful. If there’s one sentence of English Pierre would reject it would be: “London is pretty”. In fact, imagine (if you like) that every morning Pierre says to himself “God, London is *not* pretty.”

Indeed, London is *so* awful that Pierre sometimes fantasizes about that beautiful city of *Londres* he heard so much about as a boy. How he wishes he could go there! Every morning, after muttering to himself in English “London is not pretty”, Pierre mutters to himself in French “Ah...*mais Londres est jolie!*”

Here’s the puzzle: *Does Pierre believe that London is pretty?*

Here’s your homework questions:

- a. What (if anything) does the semantics we’ve developed in class predict regarding the truth of the following sentence in the context described above: “Pierre believes that London is pretty.”
- b. How well do the predictions of the theory match to your own intuitions, regarding the truth of the sentence in the context above? If they diverge, how might you amend the semantics of “belief” to produce more accurate predictions?
- c. Consider that the French translation of the English verb “believes” is *croit*. Should the following two sentences, then, be treated as having the same intension?
  - (i) Pierre believes that London is pretty.
  - (ii) *Pierre croit que Londres est jolie.*

For More on Pierre:  
Kripke, Saul (1997) “A Puzzle about Belief.” In Ludlow, Peter (ed) *Readings in the Philosophy of Language*. MIT Press.

(3) **Some Problems Relating to Propositions**

Recall from class that we can think of propositions as being *sets* of possible worlds.

Recall as well the following notation:  $\cap\{S_1, S_2 \dots S_n\} = S_1 \cap S_2 \cap \dots \cap S_n$

a. Please state whether the following two sets are equivalent **and why**:

(i)  $\{w' : \text{everything that we know in } w \text{ is true in } w'\}$

(ii)  $\cap\{p : \text{we know that } p \text{ in } w\}$

b. Please state whether the following two sets are equivalent **and why**:

(i)  $\{w' : \text{everything that } \textit{Dave} \text{ knows in } w \text{ is true in } w',$   
and  $\text{everything that } \textit{John} \text{ knows in } w \text{ is true in } w'\}$

(ii)  $\cap\{p : \text{Dave knows that } p \text{ in } w \text{ or John knows that } p \text{ in } w\}$