

Complex Demonstratives

A Quantificational Account

Jeffrey C. King

A Bradford Book

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For my mother, Eleanor Mae Smith King

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Introduction

Since the seminal work of David Kaplan (1977), the orthodox view of complex ‘that’ phrases (e.g., ‘that man drinking a martini’—henceforth referred to as ‘*that*’ phrases) has been that they are contextually sensitive devices of direct reference.¹ According to this view, the propositional contribution of a ‘that’ phrase as it occurs in a context is an individual. This individual is picked out by the *character* of the ‘that’ phrase in question, where character is (or at least is represented by) a function from context to content or propositional contribution. The character of the ‘that’ phrase in turn is determined by the demonstration or accompanying intention associated with the ‘that’ phrase, together with the descriptive material combined with ‘that’ to form the ‘that’ phrase.

Though there may be some disagreements concerning the details of the proper direct reference story and though there have been some recent challenges to this orthodoxy, I think it is fair to say that most philosophers with any view on the matter subscribe to the orthodoxy.²

The goal of the present work is to challenge this orthodoxy. I shall show that direct reference accounts of ‘that’ phrases have real difficulties. I shall also show that quantificational accounts can be formulated that not only are as good as direct reference accounts on the data the

latter do best with, but go beyond direct reference accounts in handling a wider range of data than they do.

The plan of the monograph is as follows. In chapter 1, I lay out the arguments against direct reference accounts. Roughly speaking, these arguments fall into two categories. On the one hand, I cite uses of ‘that’ phrases that direct reference theorists apparently cannot handle (what I later call *NDNS uses*, *QI uses*, *NS readings* of certain sentences, and *Bach-Peters* type examples). And I claim that these uses suggest that a quantificational account of ‘that’ phrases is to be sought. On the other hand, I give syntactical arguments that ‘that’ phrases group with quantifier phrases rather than referring expressions when it comes to phenomena like antecedent contained deletion (ACD) and weak crossover effects. If they look like quantifiers, display weak crossover effects like quantifiers, behave like quantifiers in ACD constructions, then that is good reason to think they are quantifiers.

I begin chapter 2 by discussing what it is to be a quantificational theory of ‘that’ phrases. I then formulate three quantificational theories of ‘that’ phrases. I compare them in various ways and go on to argue in favor of one of the three. In so doing, I give the reader a fairly good feel for how this theory works.

In chapter 3, I apply the theory defended in chapter 2 to more complex data. In particular, I look at the interaction of ‘that’ phrases with modal operators, negation, and verbs of propositional attitude. If ‘that’ phrases are quantifiers, one would expect to find some evidence of scope interaction between ‘that’ phrases and other scoped elements. I argue here that there is such evidence.

Chapter 4 addresses a variety of issues that don’t fit neatly with the issues addressed in other chapters, but which are significant and interesting. The issues addressed here include semantic properties of ‘that’ and other deter-

miners; the possibility of extending our semantics for ‘that’ phrases to ‘that’ as a syntactically simple demonstrative; and a number of others.

Finally, chapter 5 argues against what I call *ambiguity approaches*. These are theories that hold that our various uses of ‘that’ phrases are not to be treated by a single semantical theory. They concede that I have shown that direct reference theories cannot handle all the uses of ‘that’ phrases I discuss. But they recommend holding onto direct reference theories for their favored uses and adopting some other account (perhaps even some version of the theory I defend) for the other uses. I argue that the theory I defend is superior to such an account.

The appendix contains a fairly simple, and in certain ways idealized, formal semantics.

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As mentioned in the introduction, the direct reference account of ‘that’ phrases, originally formulated by David Kaplan (1977), has the status of philosophical orthodoxy. Though I am concerned here to oppose this orthodoxy, I begin by noting a point of agreement with it. Throughout the present work, I shall assume that propositions are structured, sentence-like entities that have individuals, properties, and relations as constituents.¹ Thus, what is at issue here is the *nature of the contribution* made to propositions by ‘that’ phrases. Direct reference theorists claim that the contribution to a proposition made by a ‘that’ phrase (as it occurs in a context) is an individual. By contrast, I shall claim that ‘that’ phrases (as they occur in contexts) make contributions to propositions that are of the sort made by other quantificational noun phrases such as ‘Every skier’ and ‘Most swimmers’. In chapter 2, I discuss what sorts of contributions quantificational noun phrases make to propositions, and hence what a quantificational account of ‘that’ phrases must say about the kind of contribution such phrases make to propositions. For now, it is enough that we recognize that what is at issue here is whether ‘that’ phrases contribute to propositions the sort of thing that referring expressions contribute to propositions, individuals, or the sort of thing that quantifiers contribute to propositions. With this in mind and

before attempting to construct my alternative positive view, let me explain why direct reference accounts of ‘that’ phrases are problematic.

Those who espouse a directly referential semantics for ‘that’ phrases tend to focus on certain very particular uses of such phrases. They tend to consider only those uses in which a ‘that’ phrase is employed, along with a demonstration, to “talk about” something or someone in the (physical) context of utterance.² Though the direct reference account is plausible as applied to such uses, there are other uses of ‘that’ phrases for which the account seems problematic. In particular, I shall discuss three sorts of uses of ‘that’ phrases that direct reference accounts have problems with. I shall discuss two reasons for thinking that the first sort of use is problematic for direct reference theorists. A variety of strategies have been suggested to me that the direct reference theorist might employ to deal with the first reason for thinking that these uses are a problem for her. Thus, I shall describe the sort of use in question; explain the first reason I think it poses problems for the direct reference theorist; and consider strategies to which a direct reference theorist might appeal to get around the apparent problem and show why these strategies fail. I shall then discuss a further, perhaps more definitive reason for thinking direct reference theorists cannot handle the uses in question. Finally, I shall move on to two other uses that are more straightforwardly problematic for a direct reference account.

To begin with, then, there are uses of ‘that’ phrases in which they are not accompanied by any demonstration, need not be used to talk about something present in the physical context of utterance, and in which the speaker has no particular individual in mind as “the thing she intends to talk about by means of the ‘that’ phrase.” Suppose, for example, that Greg has just gotten back a math test on which

he scored very poorly. Further, suppose that Greg knows on completely general grounds that exactly one student received a score of one hundred on the exam (e.g., suppose that Greg's evil but scrupulously honest teaching assistant told Greg this as he tossed Greg his failing effort). Reflecting on the difficulty of the exam, Greg says:

(1) That student who scored one hundred on the exam is a genius.

Let us call uses of this sort *no demonstration no speaker reference* uses, or *NDNS* uses for short. I take it that it is clear that the three conditions mentioned above are satisfied in the case as I have described it. Greg employs no demonstration, need not be talking about something present in the physical context of utterance (who knows where "the genius" is?), and has no one in mind as the individual he wants to talk about by means of the 'that' phrase.

Of course, nothing said to this point precludes holding that NDNS uses of 'that' phrases are directly referential. One could hold that the 'that' phrase in (1) contributes the individual satisfying the descriptive material attaching to 'that' to the proposition expressed by (1).³ However, a further phenomenon involving NDNS uses is much harder for direct reference theorists to accommodate. Suppose that a classmate of Greg's hears Greg's teaching assistant tell Greg that exactly one student received one hundred on the exam, overhears Greg's (sincere) utterance of (1), and on that basis says to another of Greg's classmates:

(2) Greg believes that that student who scored one hundred on the exam is a genius

where the classmate's use of the 'that' phrase is itself an NDNS use.⁴ The belief ascription seems clearly true in such a case. But how can the direct reference theorist explain this? According to the direct reference theorist, the

embedded sentence in (2) expresses a singular proposition that has as a constituent the person the 'that' phrase in it refers to. So on this view, (2) asserts that Greg stands in the belief relation to this singular proposition. But it seems clear that Greg does not stand in the belief relation to the singular proposition in question. Greg, after all, appears to have only *general* beliefs and has no idea who scored one hundred percent on the examination. Thus it is hard to see how the direct reference theorist can explain the intuition that (2) is true in the situation described.

There are a number of maneuvers a direct reference theorist might make at this point to attempt to show that the intuition that (2) is true in the situation as described is not a problem for her. First, there is a strategy that would allow the direct reference theorist to say that Greg *does* stand in the belief relation to the singular proposition that she thinks is expressed by (1) and so hold that the belief ascription in (2) is true.⁵ The direct reference theorist would note that Greg does possess a uniquely identifying description picking someone out in this case. Now according to the direct reference theorist, the 'that' phrase in (1) is directly referring. What Greg has done in uttering (1) is to introduce a term that directly refers to "the genius" by using the uniquely identifying description to fix the reference of the directly referential term. Having done this, Greg *does* stand in the belief relation to the singular proposition in question, and so (2), which according to the direct reference theorist asserts that Greg stands in the belief relation to the singular proposition in question, is literally true.

The underlying idea here is that whenever one has a uniquely identifying description, one can come to stand in the belief relation to singular propositions containing the individual satisfying the description by introducing a directly referential term whose reference is fixed by the

description. I take it that the view is that to stand in the belief relation to a singular proposition in such a case, one must *actually introduce* a directly referential term whose reference is fixed by the description in question. It isn't enough merely to *possess* the uniquely identifying description. Otherwise, (assuming 'the *F*' has a denotation) there would never be a case in which a belief ascription containing a definite description 'the *F*' is true on the narrow scope reading of the description (where it ascribes a general belief to the effect that the *F* is *G*) and false on the wide scope reading (where it ascribes a belief in a singular proposition).

But then we can slightly alter our example so that the direct reference theorist cannot use this strategy to explain the intuition that (2) is true. Suppose that the situation regarding Greg is exactly as I described it previously except that instead of (1), Greg utters 'The student who scored one hundred percent on the exam is a genius'. Further suppose that Greg simply does not introduce a directly referential term (even in mentalese!) whose reference is fixed by his uniquely identifying description. Then even the direct reference theorist would have to hold that Greg believes only a general proposition in this case (the proposition expressed by the sentence 'The student who scored one hundred on the exam is a genius'). But if we imagine Greg's classmate uttering (2) in this situation (again, where the 'that' phrase has an NDNS use) we still have the intuition that (2) is true. And now the direct reference theorist has no explanation of this intuition! On the direct reference theorist's account, (2) asserts that Greg bears the belief relation to a singular proposition containing the student who received a score of one hundred on the exam. But in the case as described, Greg does *not* believe the singular proposition in question, and so (2) is false on the direct reference theorist's view. So the direct reference theorist