

# Supervaluationism, Indirect Speech Reports and Demonstratives

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Abstract: This paper asks whether the supervaluationist theory of vagueness is undermined by considerations about indirect speech reports. It responds to Schiffer's objections that, on such a theory, the truth of an indirect speech report would require the speaker to have said a large number of precise things, considering a range of different problem cases including indirect speech reports involving demonstratives. The impact of such cases on other theories of vagueness is also explored.

## 1. Introduction

According to the supervaluationist theory of vagueness, a vague sentence such as "Bob is tall" is true iff it is true on every way of making it precise. In general, the truth-conditions of sentences containing vague terms involve quantification over different ways of making the various vague components of the sentence precise.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper I consider whether, as Stephen Schiffer argues, this popular theory of vagueness is undermined by considerations about indirect speech reports. As a very brief summary of the potential problem, consider the sentence "Carla said that Bob is tall". The worry is that this sentence will be true only if it is true on all ways of making precise its vague terms, including "tall", resulting in the condition that the speech report is true only if Carla said that Bob was over 6.0001 feet tall and said that he was over 6.0002 feet tall etc. But, the objection goes, she clearly didn't say any, let alone all, of those things.

I will argue that the supervaluationist can satisfactorily deal with indirect speech reports in general, and I will offer solutions to the various problems raised by cases such as Schiffer's. The most interesting cases involve demonstratives, I will argue, but these can be handled by the supervaluationist as well.

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<sup>1</sup> This is subject to penumbral constraints: we consider acceptable ways of making the whole language precise at once, respecting relations between different vague terms, such as the fact that nothing will count as both red and orange on a precisification of those two terms. On the supervaluationist theory of vagueness, see Fine 1975 and Keefe 2000.

## 2. Schiffer's objections

In his 1998, Schiffer sets up the problem as a dilemma.<sup>2</sup> With a vague sentence such as

[a] Harry is bald,

supervaluationists have to say one of two things about the propositional content expressed by that sentence. They can either say that propositions are precise and it is indeterminate which proposition is expressed by [a], or they can maintain that there are vague propositions and that [a] expresses one of them. If Harry is borderline tall then [a] will turn out neither true nor false on both options, either because of the divergence in truth-value of the precise propositions that [a] indeterminately expresses, or because the vague proposition that it (determinately) expresses is itself neither true nor false in the context. The problems Schiffer identifies for both options involve indirect speech reports.

Take

[b] Renata said that Harry was bald

The first option (involving indeterminate reference to many precise propositions) supposedly comes to grief because “in order for [b] to be true, according to the supervaluationist, it must be true under every way of precisifying the reference of its that-clause. Yet not one of those precisifications will be true, since, even taking into account the vagueness of ‘say’, Renata obviously didn’t say *any* precise proposition, let alone all of the precise propositions to which the that-clause partially, or indeterminately referred.” (Schiffer 1998 p.197). In relation to the second option (involving vague propositions), Schiffer focuses on “Al said that Ben was there”, where this can also be reported as “there is where Al said Ben was”, which, he says, is surely not true for each precisification of “there”.<sup>3</sup> We would equally expect this problem to arise with “Everest is

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<sup>2</sup> See also his 2000a, pp.246–8 and 2000b, pp.321–6, where the problems are presented differently.

<sup>3</sup> He also objects that we cannot make sense of a vague place to be the referent of “there”, but I think we can pass quickly over this problem. Indeed, Schiffer himself has dropped it by his subsequent presentations of the problem (2000a and 2000b), arguing that the greater Boston metropolitan area could be a vague place. Note that on a Fregean conception of propositions, there would be no need for a vague place as a component of the proposition.

what Al said Ben climbed”: the key feature is that the relevant singular term has wide scope, so I shall call this the de re problem.

Before proceeding, I will clarify why the above argument ignores the vagueness of “says”. Like most other English expressions, “says” is vague: there will be instances of “S says that p” that intuitively are borderline due to the vagueness of “says”; for example, it might not be clear whether or not S has said that p, because he was muttering. Schiffer’s objections, however, can be run on a case where there is seemingly no unclarity about whether, say, Renata said that Harry was bald (for example, she uttered the very words “Harry is bald” in appropriate circumstances). Then, assuming we are right about that intuitive classification of the report, it should be the case that, no matter how we make “says” precise, the indirect speech report comes out true.

The construction of the argument as a dilemma looks misplaced, however. For the truth conditions of [b] turn on the truth-values that result when we make precise those components, *whatever* we decide about the nature of propositions. Even if “Harry is bald” determinately refers to a unique vague proposition, quantification over precisifications is still needed.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the de re problem is equally a problem for the supervaluationist who rejects vague propositions. The objection in relation to “there is where Al said Ben was” is that the supervaluationist must maintain that Al said of each of the relevant range of precise places that Ben was there. And this is so whether or not they accept vague propositions. In section 4, I will argue that the general de re problem can be solved by the supervaluationist. I will then go on to ask whether there is a particular problem with demonstratives in relation to indirect speech reports (though not specifically de re ones).

### 3. Indirect speech reports

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<sup>4</sup> By analogy, compare an unusual supervaluationist who maintained that there were vague properties, and that “bald” determinately referred to one of them, but that something counts as having that vague property iff it has all the precise properties appropriately related to it. Supervaluationist quantification is needed when there is vagueness, whether it is an indeterminacy of reference or determinate reference to a somehow vague entity.

12/9/08

The heart of Schiffer's objection involving the sentence "Renata said that Harry was bald", is summarised in the following quotation: "Renata obviously didn't say *any* precise proposition, let alone all of the precise propositions to which the that-clause partially, or indeterminately, referred." (1998, p.197).

Supervaluationists must indeed say that "Renata said that Harry was bald" is true on each precisification if it is to count as true simpliciter, as intuitively it should. But, as we'll see, that doesn't commit them to saying that she said any precise proposition. Consider a precisification,  $s_1$ , according to which "bald" means  $\text{bald}_1$ , for some precisification of bald, and "Harry is bald" says that  $p_1$  (for some precise proposition  $p_1$ ). When I use "bald" in reporting Renata's utterance, then according to precisification  $s_1$ , I mean  $\text{bald}_1$  by "bald". Now, Renata uttered the words that, according to  $s_1$ , mean  $p_1$ , so surely according to that precisification, she *did* say that  $p_1$  and my report to that effect is true on that precisification. More generally, according to precisification  $s_i$ , Renata said that  $p_i$  (where  $p_i$  is precise) and according to the same precisification I report her as having said  $p_i$ . According to different precisifications she said different precise things and is reported as having said different precise things. But it isn't true (i.e. true simpliciter) that she said  $p$  for any precise  $p$ , for there is no precise proposition that, according to all precisifications she said. What she said differs according to the precisifications. So, it certainly doesn't need to be the case that she said *all* of the precise propositions: that is clearly false on all precisifications, so false simpliciter.

If A says "a is F", and B says "A said that a is F", then B's report is true iff it is true on all precisifications. But, to put it somewhat loosely, whether B's utterance is true on a precisification depends on what, *according to that precisification*, A says. To demand, for the truth of the report, that it is true (so true on all precisifications) that A said all of the precise things is, in effect, to recognise the variation between precisifications over what B is reporting A as having said, without acknowledging the corresponding variation over the actual content of A's utterance according to those precisifications.

Analysing the supervaluationist's truth-conditions of indirect speech reports in further detail may require commitment to some particular account of indirect speech reports (which is typically determined by one's account of propositional attitudes more

generally). Alternative such accounts include sententialist accounts – according to which the truth of the speech report turns on whether the speaker uttered a sentence appropriately related to (e.g. saying the same as), the sentence attributed to them – and accounts of indirect speech reports as relations to propositions, where these may be Fregean, Russellian, sets of possible worlds or various other possibilities. I maintain, though I will not argue it here, that the above solution to the problem is available on any of these accounts.<sup>5</sup> For example, “A said that a is F” may express a relation between A and a different precise Russellian proposition on different precisifications (differing as to the precise property picked out by “F” on that precisification). But for each of those precisifications, the proposition which is the relata of this relation is also the content of A’s utterance according to that precisification. So the speech report can be true on all precisifications.

What the case of indirect speech reports brings out is that sometimes the truth-value of a sentence on a precisification depends on the values of other sentences on that precisification. This is a kind of penumbral connection and is unproblematic for the supervaluationist.<sup>6</sup>

Someone might object to the above solution that “Renata said that Harry is bald<sub>1</sub>” should come out determinately *false* (where bald<sub>1</sub> is a precisification of “bald”), whereas on the above treatment, it comes out indeterminate. (Schiffer, 2000, p.248, suggests something like this objection.) But, this intuition, if there is one, is far less strong than the intuition that “Renata said that Harry is bald<sub>1</sub>” should not be determinately true. If it is indeterminate whether “Harry is bald” means that Harry is bald<sub>1</sub>, it is reasonable to

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<sup>5</sup> García-Carpintero (2000) defends supervaluationism against Schiffer’s objection by adopting what he calls a syncretic account of propositions, in which modes of presentation play a role even though the constituents of propositions are entities, as on a Russellian picture. See Schiffer 2000b for his response, where he argues that adopting this account of propositions does not solve the problem. See García-Carpintero 2009 for further discussion. For a brief argument that Schiffer’s problem does not arise on Davidson’s paratactic account of indirect speech (Davidson 1968), see Keefe 2000, p.158.

<sup>6</sup> Weatherson 2003 tackles the de re problem and similarly appeals to penumbral connections. For more discussion of Weatherson, see below.

12/9/08

maintain that it is indeterminate whether Renata said that Harry is bald<sub>1</sub>, when she uttered “Harry is bald”.

It might then be thought that since according to each precisification, there is some precise  $p$  such that Renata says that  $p$ , (albeit a different one according to different precisifications), then it will come out true simpliciter (since true on all precisifications) that she says something precise. But this putative consequence does not in fact follow, given the supervaluationist treatment of sentences involving “precise”, “vague” etc. A sentence such as “‘bald’ is precise” does not come out true on all, or indeed on any precisifications, despite the fact that “bald” receives a precise interpretation on all those precisifications. For “‘bald’ is precise” is a metalinguistic claim and whether it is true on a precisification depends on what is true on other precisifications, not just at the precisification in hand (see Keefe 2000, pp.186–187; and compare the way that the truth of a modal sentence at a world depends on the truth of sentences at other worlds). Similarly, then, for a sentence such as “Renata said something precise”: the differences in what she said on the different precisifications are enough to ensure that this comes out false, just as the differences in the values of  $p$  at different worlds makes “ $p$  is contingent” come out true.

So, Schiffer’s objection fails and the supervaluationist can accept normal, vague speech reports without being committed to the absurd consequences he claims. It needn’t be determinately true that Renata said any of the relevant range of precise propositions for the speech report to be true.

As an analogy to Schiffer’s objection, consider an objection to supervaluationism centring on the compelling claim “‘Harry is bald’ means that Harry is bald”. On each precisification the second “Harry is bald” gets some precise interpretation (e.g. Harry has less than 2003 hairs on his head). We can parallel Schiffer’s objection as follows: “Harry is bald” does not mean any of these precise things, let alone all of them. Again, this objection would be misguided. It needn’t be true simpliciter that “Harry is bald” has any of the relevant precise meanings for the meaning claim to be true. Rather, it is true according to each precisification that it has some such meaning. On  $p_1$ , “Harry is bald” means Harry is bald<sub>1</sub>, while on  $p_2$ , it means Harry is bald<sub>2</sub>. So, according to each

12/9/08

precisification, “Harry is bald” has some precise meaning, but there is no precise meaning that it is true that this sentence has.

Next, consider the situation with propositional attitude reports. Consider “Simon believes that Harry is bald”. On a given precisification, “bald” will get a well-defined extension and, putting it loosely, that extension will figure in the content of Simon’s belief according to that precisification. Now, it might seem strange that well-defined extensions get into the content of beliefs, even on precisifications. An opponent might argue as follows: why should the content of Simon’s beliefs depend on how a particular *expression* is made precise? To say that the belief ascription is true on a given precisification,  $s_1$  – where “Harry is bald” means  $p_1$ , say – is to claim that it is true that Simon believes that  $p_1$  according to  $s_1$  (ignoring precisifications of “believes”). And, the opponent might continue, Simon’s belief – his state of mind – does not change with change in how expressions are made precise, so it seems as if it should thus also be true on precisification  $s_2$  that Simon believes that  $p_1$ . This would mean that if it is to be true on all precisifications that he believes that  $p$ , then it must be true (i.e. true on all precisifications) that he believes all the precisifications of  $p$ .

To see how the supervenientist can reply, consider first what the epistemicist says about Simon’s belief. According to epistemicism, there will be a single precise interpretation of “Harry is bald” and Simon’s belief will have the content given by that interpretation. The contents of our beliefs, according to the theory, depend on the meanings of our words, which are, in turn, determined by the use of those words in the community.<sup>7</sup> This means that the content of Simon’s belief could have been slightly different if the meaning of “bald” had been different, and Simon may not have noticed this. The situation for the supervenientist can be similar in relation to each precisification. What Simon counts as believing on  $s_1$  depends on the meaning of “bald” according to  $s_1$ , and if “Harry is bald” means that  $p_1$  on  $s_1$ , then on  $s_1$  it is true that Harry believes that  $p_1$  and this does not imply that on  $s_2$  he believes that  $p_1$ . So, the belief report can be true without it being true at all precisifications that he believes each precisification

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<sup>7</sup> See Williamson 1994, chapter 7.

of “Harry is bald”. We will return to the comparison between the supervaluationist and epistemicist later.<sup>8</sup> Next, I turn to the de re problem.

#### 4. Vague singular terms and demonstratives

Recall the de re problem with “there is where Al said Ben was”. Since I will argue that there are distinctive issues surrounding demonstratives, I shall start by considering the example “Everest is what Al said Ben climbed”. The worry, recall, is that the supervaluationist will have to say that it is true of all precise delimitations of Everest that Al said that Ben climbed them. I will argue that the supervaluationist can solve the alleged problem with this example in the same way that the previous version of the problem was solved. On precisification  $s_1$ , “Everest” names  $O_1$ , say. Al utters the words “Ben climbed Everest” and on  $s_1$  this is true iff Ben climbed  $O_1$ . On  $s_1$ , then, it is true that  $O_1$  is what Al said Ben climbed. On  $s_2$ , though, it is true that  $O_2$  is what Al said Ben climbed and false that  $O_1$  is what Al said Ben climbed. So, the sense in which it is true of all precise delimitations of Everest that Al said that Ben climbed them, is that of each of those objects, according to some precisification, Al said that Ben climbed it. And this does not have the unwanted consequence that Al said something about a huge quantity of precise objects. There is no precise object,  $O_i$ , of which it is true that Al said Ben climbed it, for of no such object is this true on all precisifications. The de re presentation of the issue poses no additional problems.

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<sup>8</sup> One kind of influential objection to the epistemicist has centred on the question “how are the exact extensions to our vague predicates determined”, where the thought is that “they are determined by use” is not sufficiently specific and remains problematic (see e.g. Keefe 2000, pp.76–83). Now, the opponent might suggest that since the supervaluationist needs to say exactly the same about extensions on particular precisifications, then they face the same objection with respect to each precisification (so they face it many times over!). But, the supervaluationist, unlike the epistemicist, can still maintain that use does not determine a unique well-defined extension to a vague term: for the supervaluationist, each of the precisifications is compatible with use and there is nothing that selects between them. We don’t have to pick out a precise interpretation and what is true at it: no unique one is singled out by our use. So, the supervaluationist, here and below, is not simply appealing to an unattractive feature of epistemicism to solve their problem.



12/9/08

This solution seems to turn on the way in which the reference of “Everest” in “Everest is what Al said Ben climbed” is guaranteed to be the same on a precisification as the reference of that name in Al’s report. This guarantee is provided simply by the use of the same expression. Whatever the reference is on a precisification will be the reference for any occurrence of the name. Next, consider a case where Al says “Ben climbed the highest mountain in the world” and, again, I report this with “Everest is what Al said Ben climbed”. Vagueness aside, there would be disagreement over whether this will be true – whether this change in manner of picking out the mountain is compatible with the report being accurate.<sup>9</sup> But such debates should be independent of one’s theory of vagueness. And the truth and falsity of the report could each be accommodated by the supervaluationist, if other features of one’s views on indirect speech reports allow it. For the reference on a precisification of my use of “Everest” to be guaranteed to match that of Al’s use of “the highest mountain in the world”, there must be some kind of penumbral connection. For example, Everest is definitely a mountain, and so any simultaneous precisification of “mountain” and “Everest” must make that true. On a given precisification, there is only one object in the right vicinity for Everest that counts as a mountain, and that is the same object that counts as Everest on that precisification. So, the use of different expressions in the speech report from those used in the reported speech act need not deliver the kind of problem Schiffer highlights. The details of the required penumbral connections have not been drawn out here, but such a story is needed to accommodate the truth of various other compelling sentences such as “Everest is the tallest mountain in the world”. Although on different precisifications the statement will be about different precise objects, the penumbral connection guarantees that the two sides of the identity claim refer to the same thing.

What about the cases with demonstratives? Again, to account for the truth of a speech report containing a demonstrative, the aim is to establish a connection on each

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<sup>9</sup> Cappelen and Lepore (2004), among others, would allow that the report can be true in this case – at least assuming that all parties involved know that Everest is the highest mountain in the world – since it is something a reasonable person might endorse as a correct report.

precisification between the referent of the speakers' demonstrative and the referent of the reporter's term (or, for the epistemicist, a connection between the actual referent of each). Here there are two kinds of cases. Suppose Al points at Everest and says "Ben climbed that" and the reporter similarly points at Everest and says "that is what Al said Ben climbed". We can reasonably take "that" to mean "that mountain" and the case can be solved. On any precisification, there will be but one object that counts as the mountain in the vicinity, and on that precisification, the same object will count as the mountain in assessing both Al's assertion and the reporter's report. So, the report will be true on all precisifications. (And, if your view of indirect speech reports allows the truth of "that is what Al said Ben climbed" when Al has said "Ben climbed Everest", then this can again be accommodated by the supervaluationist by taking into account the penumbral connections between "Everest" and "mountain".) For the first kind of case, then, the demonstrative is coupled (perhaps implicitly) with some sortal that does the job of ensuring a treatment of the above kind will work.<sup>10</sup>

The second kind of case involves a bare demonstrative, where Schiffer's "there" is one of the most forceful examples. Being a bare demonstrative, there is no sortal that could play the role "mountain" played in the previous example in ensuring co-reference across the utterances. Even if "there" means "that place", "place" is not the right kind of sortal to do the above job, since, for example, "place" will not get precisified in the way that "mountain" does such as to ensure that on a given precisification there are no two substantially overlapping places. Appeal to the community's use of the chosen expression (e.g. "there" or "that") will not help here either, given that such demonstratives can be

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<sup>10</sup> In fact, this may not work on all accounts of complex demonstratives. On a minimal theory, with "this F" the sortal, F, does not play a semantic role in determining the content of what is said, just a pragmatic role in helping the hearer pick up on the speaker's referent (see, e.g., Larson and Segal 1995). On such a theory, there may be no significant difference between the cases just discussed and the cases of bare demonstratives discussed below, depending on the exact details of the story.

used to refer to almost anything.<sup>11</sup> But appeal to use could still help, if we focus on the individual's use.

Consider the problem in relation to the epistemicist again. What, for the epistemicist, could make it the case that I refer to place  $P_1$  with "there" rather than a very similar, but slightly differently delineated precise place,  $P_2$ ? As usual, the epistemicist will surely say that this is determined by features of use (in particular the use by the speaker, but perhaps relevant utterances from other people). How this occurs is mysterious, but an epistemicist like Williamson allows that "meaning may supervene on use in an unsurveyably chaotic way" (1994, p.209). If you then report my utterance, also using the word "there", then the epistemicist can say that it is features of your use of that expression that determine its reference. A key feature of your use of "there" in that speech report, is that you intend it to have the same reference as my use of the expression. Perhaps that intention is enough (in suitable circumstances) to guarantee that it does have the same reference. If so, your speech report will come out true.

Now, the supervenientist can say exactly the same in relation to a given precisification without having to say that there is some unique precise referent for Al's term. According to some particular precisification,  $s_1$ , when Al says "Ben was there", he refers to a particular precise place. But my use of "there" when I report "there is where Al said Ben was" gets to pick out the same place, due to the key feature of my use (which will hold for all precisifications) that I intend to pick out the same place as Al. My intentions ensure the existence of penumbral connections.

This is, then, at least the beginning of a way out of the apparent problem with demonstratives for both the epistemicist and the supervenientist. But the viability of this solution depends on the treatment of demonstratives offered, and that is questionable. In

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<sup>11</sup> The above treatment could, however, be used for a case where the speaker and the reporter each seek to refer with "there" to a vague place which can be picked out independently, for example the greater Boston metropolitan area. Here, the relevant place will be a different precise area on different precisifications, but each speaker's use of "there" will pick out, on a precisification, whatever is the referent of the associated term on that precisification. Note that the problem with demonstratives here is not dependent on the de re formulation of the reporter's utterance: it would equally arise if I say "Al said Ben was there".

general, for my use of a demonstrative to refer to the same thing as yours, it is not enough that I intend it to. For, I can have several referential intentions which conflict. For example, suppose I point to John and say “you said he was F” intending to refer to the same person you were talking about when you pointed to Mark and said “he is F”. In Kaplan’s terminology, my “directing intention” here picks out John, and it is plausible to contend that this intention trumps my intention to co-refer with you out and that I thereby incorrectly report you as having said something about John. Once directing intentions are considered central, the above solution is questionable: in the reporter’s context, “there” will be associated with some set of precise interpretations and in the speaker’s it will be associated with another set and there will be no penumbral connection between them.<sup>12</sup> (Or for the epistemicist, the reporter and reportee will not count as picking out exactly the same place.) In other words, the reporter’s intentions cannot piggyback on the speaker’s to guarantee co-reference, as was assumed in the solution above.<sup>13</sup>

I find this general story about demonstratives rather compelling. But vagueness poses a problem. It isn’t merely supervaluationism that faces it: it may be that no theory of vagueness is any better placed.

Consider the Epistemic View. Al’s intentions determine an exact referent of his utterance of “there”, but this is by no means guaranteed to coincide with what my intentions determine as the referent of my use of “there” when I report his speech. It is thus highly likely that my utterance of “there is where Al said Ben was” will be false. A theory such as a Degree Theory or other many-valued theory surely offers no new way out of the problem. Allowing degrees of truth for sentences is of no help in guaranteeing

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<sup>12</sup> See also Bach 1992, who maintains that you refer to the thing that you intend and expect the audience to recognise as your referent. When I say “there is where Al said Ben was”. my intention to refer to whatever Al referred to cannot be the intention by which I intend my audience to pick up on my reference, since they have no independent grasp on that – they are expected to realise what I am referring to from my demonstration.

<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, the fact that a speaker has conflicting referential intentions, such as in the John/Mark case above could be taken to render the report neither true-nor-false since there is no unique thing being talked about. On that picture, then, the vague demonstrative case is equally messy and we should not be discouraged by a verdict of neither true nor false in such a case, seeing this as a problem which is not due to vagueness.

12/9/08

the truth of the various reports. Schiffer himself, who advocates a view of vagueness involving vague partial beliefs that come in degrees, does not tackle speech reports involving demonstratives within his own framework, and the way of dealing with them is equally unclear. There is no advantage for the currently popular contextualist theories of vagueness either. The context clearly changes between the reportee's original utterance and the reporter's report, and with it the referent of terms like "there" is liable to change. (For wider problems with indirect speech reports facing the contextualist, see Keefe 2007.)

It is tempting to say that this is not a problem of vagueness; it is a problem of a reporter matching demonstrative reference with the reportee, or of giving an account of demonstratives that accounts for this. Given the prevalence of vagueness and other necessary features of the example, it is hard to come up with a suitable problematic example in which there is no vagueness, but that doesn't make it a task for a theory of vagueness.

Is there anything other than intentions that could guarantee co-reference between the speaker's and the reporter's use of "there", thereby ensuring the truth of the speech report "Al said Ben was there"? Weatherson (2003) offers a proposal that would fill the gap. He draws on Lewis' notion of naturalness (e.g. Lewis 1983). In the case of some terms – natural kind terms, for example – the referent or extension of our term is determined by our use of the term in conjunction with the world. Our term gets to pick out the most natural candidate that is compatible with its use. Now, with a vague predicate such as "bald", there is no most natural candidate property to be its referent. All the various candidate precisifications are equally natural or unnatural and nature does nothing to choose between them. Weatherson's suggestion is that associated with each precisification is a complete ordering with respect to naturalness, so that there is always an answer to which of two properties is most natural. Then, according to a given precisification, "bald" picks out whatever is the most natural candidate according to the naturalness well-ordering associated with that precisification. And different precisifications will have different well-orderings and so different chosen extensions for "bald". The same, Weatherson assumes, will go for objects or places or whatever are the

12/9/08

referents of singular terms, including demonstratives: the naturalness ordering for each precisification selects, for example, some exact area of space as the referent of an utterance of “there”. The thought is that this can then explain the penumbral connections – between the reportee and reporter’s use of “there”, for example – which will guarantee the truth of the kinds of indirect speech reports in question. For, on a given precisification, Al’s use of “there” will pick out what counts as the most natural of the candidate regions according to that precisification. And in reporting Al’s utterance, my use of “there” will pick out that same region, since that will be the most natural of the candidates again.

Can Lewisian naturalness really be employed for this purpose? One problem is that naturalness is, for Lewis, a feature of properties, while Weatherston needs it equally to be a feature of whatever entities are the referents of singular terms and other terms, including objects and regions of space etc. For Lewis, the feature of naturalness lines up with qualitative duplication between things sharing the property: perfect qualitative duplicates share all their perfectly natural properties. So, for example, two chairs can be qualitatively the same without sharing the non-natural property of being my favourite chair. Perhaps the naturalness of an object *o* can be smuggled in by considering the naturalness of the property “is identical to *o*”. But this will not do, partly because all instances of any property of the form “is identical to *x*” will automatically completely resemble each other in the relevant respect, so all such properties seem to be on a par as regards to naturalness. A second problem for Weatherston’s purposes is that Lewisian naturalness is not a vague notion subject to complete sharpening via imposition of a complete ordering. Even if there is some vagueness that could be resolved in different ways on different precisifications, no precisification should result in a complete ordering. For, there are ties for naturalness, such as ties between all the perfectly natural properties, of which none are more natural than the others. Imposing a complete ordering on candidates for naturalness is not simply resolving vagueness in the idea of naturalness, but revising the idea in more radical ways. Dropping the requirement of a complete ordering and allowing ties within the ordering will not do either. For, then there would be no guarantee that there was just one most natural candidate region to be the referent of

12/9/08

Al's utterance of "there", for example. As long as several candidates can be equally natural, the problems will all re-emerge.

Now, perhaps Weatherson can accept the deviation from Lewis's own notion of naturalness and deny that his precisifications of the language are giving a *precisification* of "natural" in the ordering they are committed to. We could just stipulate that there is a complete ordering of entities on each precisification, which preserves certain relations in the naturalness ordering. But then it isn't clear what we are being offered in addition to a claim that the required penumbral connections do exist. It is simply a picture according to which on precisifications, truth-conditions are given as if certain objects (or regions of space etc.) are privileged, independently of the intentions of speakers. Certain exact regions of space are singled out above others to be semantic values on a given precisification, for example, and they will be the privileged one among the candidates for various different, apparently independent uses of "there". This will generate penumbral connections where you might think there should be none; e.g., where there are two completely unrelated uses of "there" pointing in roughly the same direction.

Consider whether an approach like Weatherson's would help out the epistemicist, where there would be a unique complete ordering of naturalness among objects, properties and other entities. Nature surely doesn't pick out a precise privileged area to the referent of Al's "there", and it is natural to think that it is entirely Al's intentions that determines such an area if, as the epistemicist maintains, one such is determined. On the Weatherson approach, however, nature does determine the referent, in conjunction with speakers' intentions. That seems, at best, very surprising and properties such as "big animal" and "zebra" come out as much more on a par than expected. It was an advantage of the details of Williamson's epistemicism that he could explain the existence of sharp boundaries to our vague predicates without metaphysical commitment to implausible privileged boundaries in nature; but this advantage is lost on the Weathersonian approach in question. As argued above, the approach cannot merely maintain that it is simply employing a notion of Lewisian naturalness which is sharp but about which we are ignorant, so the epistemicist would seem to be saddled with a highly significant metaphysical commitment to an implausible counterpart to Lewisian naturalness.

Is there another approach available to deal with demonstratives in indirect speech reports? When Al says “Ben was there” and I say “Al said Ben was there”, on some precisifications, the place Al denotes will diverge from the one I denote, if there is no penumbral connection between them. But on other precisifications, the referents will coincide, and the reporter’s utterance will come out true. Being true on some precisifications and false on others, the utterance will count as neither true nor false overall. Maybe this is an acceptable consequence. We might informally describe the case as one where the original speaker and the reporter have each picked out a rough place, where they were only *roughly* the same place. There may then be a further pragmatic story to be told about why such indirect speech reports appear true and/or are useful to make – assuming they do and are – but I won’t enter into this in detail here.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, a response to the problem that trumpets the fact that the problematic reports will come out neither true nor false, rather than false, is not available to the epistemicist. If the reporter’s directing intention is all that is relevant to determining the referent of the demonstrative, then the (unknown) exact referent for the original speaker and the reporter is likely to be different (albeit only slightly). The report would thereby come out false rather than neither true nor false. On the other hand, a pragmatic story may be shared, where for the epistemicist, this would be a matter of explaining why a false – not indeterminate – utterance is useful or compelling.

On the vexed issue of demonstratives within reported speech (where vagueness is not identified as the key issue), see Sainsbury 2004 and Altham 2004. One aspect of the problem, as they see it, is that accurately to report speech involving demonstratives, it is not enough to indicate the same thing: it must be indicated in the same way. So, considering a case where Jill says “there’s a bird on that post”, Altham writes, “Tom cannot properly report what Jill said in indirect speech by saying “Jill said that there was

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<sup>14</sup> According to the standards required for truth on various accounts of indirect speech reports, many such apparently true reports are strictly false (e.g. if the reporter uses a different but co-extensive expression). Such accounts will naturally be combined with a pragmatic explanation of such speech reports, and many of the devices used there could be transposed for our purposes here.



12/9/08

a bird on that post” ... “that post” ... refers from Tom’s perspective rather than Jill’s and so, even if it refers to the same post, does not do so as Jill did”. (2004, p.237). This suggests that reports of speech involving demonstratives will typically not be true, regardless of vagueness and that vagueness raises no new problems that didn’t already face a theory of demonstratives.

To summarise: supervenience can allow the truth of most intuitively compelling indirect speech reports, whether they involve vague predicates or vague singular terms, de dicto or de re. For the reports can be true on all precisifications because of penumbral connections with the reportee’s terms. The most challenging cases involve demonstratives, specifically bare demonstratives. The account of these cases turns more on one’s account of demonstratives and indirect speech reports than on one’s theory of vagueness. For example, if one’s account of demonstratives allows a reporter’s reference to be determined by his/her intention to co-refer with the reportee, then the reports come out true. Or if one requires that a speech report involving a demonstrative exactly matches the perspective of the reportee, then the truth of such speech reports will be hard to come by, regardless of vagueness. In the hard cases, a supervenience may accept that speech reports are strictly neither true nor false, where apparent truth can be explained. There is, then, a range of options compatible with supervenience; and the options are also compatible with other theories of vagueness, for which the issues surrounding demonstratives within speech reports arise as much – or as little – as for supervenience.<sup>15</sup>

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