

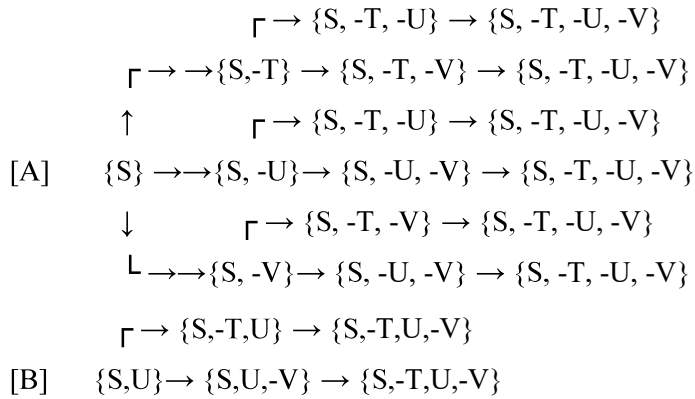
KNOWLEDGE, INTENTIONALITY AND LANGUAGE

RANJAN MUKHOPADHYAY

We take it that we possess knowledge of states of affairs. It is difficult to say what constitutes, for someone, to have such knowledge. It would, then, be worthwhile to investigate what we expect to happen when it is thought that someone, say, G (Gobordhan, the brother of Harshabardhan of the Sibram-stories), possesses such a piece of knowledge. First of all, what could be this, so-called *piece* of which G is having knowledge? For various reasons, especially of a practical kind, it is best to start with saying that the *piece* is a sentence describing a state of affairs of which G is supposed to have knowledge. Further, it would be again practical to say that for G to know the particular state of affairs, say *s*, is to hold a particular kind of attitude about a sentence describing the state of affairs *s*, say *S*.

Let us try to unravel what goes on when G holds this (knowledge-kind) attitude about a sentence *S*. Suppose, there are three other sentences *T*, *U*, *V* about which G does not have this kn-attitude which he has for *S*, and further, on the contrary, that G believes them to be false. Now, we can have various possibilities with respect to these four sentences where *S* is common in each possibility: {*S*}, {*S*,*T*}, {*S*,*U*}, {*S*,*V*}, {*S*,*T*,*U*}, {*S*,*T*,*V*}, {*S*,*U*,*V*}, {*S*,*T*,*U*,*V*}. We can think of extending the possibilities by considering negations of sentences as well. Let us take the symbol ‘-’ to stand for negation of sentences, i.e., for example, taking ‘-*T*’ to mean negation of *T*. We then have a further series of possibilities: {*S*,*-T*}, {*S*,*-U*}, {*S*,*-V*}, {*S*,*-T*,*U*}, {*S*,*T*,*-U*}, {*S*,*-T*,*-U*}, {*S*,*-T*,*V*}, {*S*,*T*,*-V*}, {*S*,*-T*,*-V*}, {*S*,*U*,*-V*}, {*S*,*-U*,*V*}, {*S*,*-T*,*U*,*V*}, {*S*,*-T*,*U*,*-V*}, {*S*,*-T*,*-U*,*V*}, {*S*,*T*,*-U*,*V*}, {*S*,*T*,*U*,*-V*}, {*S*,*T*,*-U*,*-V*}, {*S*,*-T*,*-U*,*-V*}. Let us allot consecutive numbers to these separate possibilities for future references. We can now say that G is related by his kn-attitude to the 1st, 9th, 10th, 11th, 14th, 17th, 20th, and 27th possibility, and not related to the rest of the possibilities.

If it is also the case that G is said to have knowledge of the state of affairs *u* which is described by the sentence *U*, then it can be said that G is similarly related to the 3rd, 12th, 18th and 22nd possibility, and not related to the rest of the possibilities. These two cases can be represented in the following two diagrams respectively.



What the diagrams involve is just this: (1) The relational directed edges which express an attitude (of believing) which G has, (2) the nodes which represent the objects (sets of sentences describing states of affairs) about which G has such an attitude, and (3) the specific members of the sets at the nodes which are the sentences which are either true (when lacking the symbol for negation) or false (when having the symbol for negation). What (3) represents is really nothing but the states of affairs which exist (--by sentences lacking the negation sign) and those which do not exist (--by sentences having the negation sign). In other words, (3) represents the true and the false sentences.

The nodes are the various possible combinations of true and false sentences. And the directed edges are the belief relation/attitude which G has towards the combinations of true/false sentences. In the first diagram the sentence S is present in every possibility. This reflects the fact that every combination that is possible for G to be related with (in the belief-attitude) is a combination where the sentence S happens to be true. The sentences T, U and V are not so in this regard. The diagram really says that with whatever possibilities G is related by the belief attitude, S happens to be true in that possibility. If we take the belief attitude to be also a justified one, then the diagram, really, is a case of justified belief in a true sentence S. Hence, by the traditional definition of knowledge, the diagram represents the case that G knows S.

In a similar way, the second diagram represents the cases that G knows S, and that G knows U. If we allow the standard truth-functional logic to be included in the sets of sentences at each node, then this diagram also represents the case that G

knows S&U, where ‘&’ is the symbol for logical conjunction of sentences.

Let us, now, consider our sentence S and another sentence S' which happen to be equivalent (in a sense) to each other. Let us take “Narendra Modi is a gujrati” to be our sentence S, and “The young man of age x who visited Belur wanting to be a sadhu of the Ramakrishna Mission on date y is a gujrati” to be S'. Now, the name ‘Narendra Modi’ and the definite descriptive phrase ‘the young man of age x who visited Belur wanting to be a sadhu of the Ramakrishna Mission on date y’ are taken to be intersubstitutable, because of some actual events in history. S' can be seen to be obtained from S by substituting the co-denotational/co-extensional descriptive phrase in place of the name occurring in S. Then, S and S' are equivalent. That is, saying that the young man of age x who visited Belur wanting to be a sadhu of the Ramakrishna Mission on date y is a gujrati, is the same as saying that Narendra Modi is a gujrati. The two sentences say the same thing extensionally. In case we need to revise or sharpen our understanding of extensionality, let us pause for a while to do that for a restricted (--but adequate for our purposes--) use of the term ‘extensionality’. We

shall say that a linguistic context – generally, sentences – is treated extensionally, if it is allowed to substitute one for the other, from names or definite descriptive phrases having the same denotation without any consequent changes in the truth-value. Our obtaining S' from S was a case of treating S extensionally. For, we allowed a substitution in a true sentence S to obtain S', on the strength of an identity, viz.,

Narendra Modi = the young man of age x who visited Belur wanting to be a sadhu of the Ramakrishna Mission on date y without consequently effecting any change in the truth-value of the sentence obtained. We could have obtained S from S' in a similar manner as well. In that case too, S' would have been said to have been treated extensionally. The cases where such extensional treatments are not allowed, i.e., where such substitutions are not allowed without also changing the truth-values are cases which are said to be having *intensional* treatments. We can, now, get back to our trail of discussion.

Let us now suppose, in case of the first diagram, that the rules of identity are included in the sets of sentences occurring as the nodes. Then, to say that G knows S is to say that G knows S'. That is, the first diagram not only represents 'G knows S', but also represents 'G knows S'

[We can again, digress a little to remind ourselves of the crucial rule for identity. It says: If $a = b$, for some term 'a' and for some term 'b', and if a is F, then *it is derivable* that b is F.

Hence, in our case, since,

(1) Narendra Modi = the young man of age x who visited Belur wanting to be a sadhu of the

Ramakrishna Mission on date y

And

(2) Narendra Modi is a gujrati. (S)

It is derivable that

(3) The young man of age x who visited Belur wanting to be a sadhu of the Ramakrishna Mission on date y is a gujrati. (S')

So, for G, to know S is also to know S'.]

Is there any problem here? If we keep following the bearings we have set so far, then there should not be any problem. But if we want to shift to a different set of

bearings then we would start seeing problems from this point onwards. Let us shift to one such new set of bearings.

Let us consider asking G himself whether he is ready to concede that he knows S' as well, when he knows S. It is very unlikely that G will answer in the affirmative. G will answer in the affirmative only when G *knows* the identity:

Narendra Modi = the young man of age x who visited Belur wanting to be a sadhu of the Ramakrishna Mission on date y. If G does not know this identity – which is very likely for G (Gobordhan) – G will not concede that he knows S' as well, apart from knowing S. So, in this latter case, for G, the first diagram represents only 'G knows S', and does not represent 'G knows S'. But, for us, the first diagram represents both 'G knows S' and 'G knows S'. This discrepancy is occurring only because of the possibility that G may not be knowing the identity mentioned above.

We can further note the following. If it is also a possibility that G may not be knowing the rules of standard truth-functional logic, then G, again, may not concede that G knows S&U as well, when he knows separately both S and U.

But we are ready to concede that the first diagram represents that G knows S', and the second diagram represents that G knows S&U. That G, however, is not ready to concede, as in the above two cases, that he knows S', and that he knows S&U, are consequences of our setting a different set of bearings after proceeding with an earlier set of bearings up to a point. Let us try to be clear about this shift in bearings.

The analysis of knowledge that we have done, through the diagrams above, is that of a notion of knowledge which can be said to be a notion which we apply in case of *others*. That is, the analysis is that of a case where we (or I) identify that somebody else – in our example, G – knows a state of affairs. Even, it can be said that this analysis is the analysis of a third person ascribing knowledge of a state of affairs to someone else. Or, even more simply, that it is an analysis of an ascription of knowledge on someone from nowhere, i.e., from no particular point of view (ours, mine, or even the third person's). A typical impersonal exercise claiming to be hallowedly objective was undertaken in the above analysis.

On the contrary, there can be, and there indeed is, a different notion of knowledge which is ascribed from the first person's point of view to one's own self: G identifies what G knows or does not know, and not we/no-particular-one identifies what G knows or does not know. The notion of knowledge that is used in such a case

will definitely deviate from the earlier notion. For example, G will track what he knows by focusing on the *means* that he has used to know some particular state of affairs. G will not be (*re-*)*identifying* his piece of knowledge by means of something which he has *not used* in knowing it. That is why, when G has known S by using the name 'Narendra Modi', it will not be possible for G himself to claim also that G has known S', where an extensionally co-denotational definite descriptive phrase ('the young man of age x who visited Belur wanting to be a sadhu of the Ramakrishna Mission on date y') is used in place of the name in the sentence S to obtain S'. The extensional co-denotation of expressions makes contexts transparent, whereas the use of a particular expression in knowing a piece of knowledge blocks such transparency. And so, replacement by *unused* means of knowing a state of affairs in one's actual way of knowing it will result in one's denial about knowing that state of affairs. This feature of this alternative notion of knowledge – that *knowledge is characterized by, among other things, which expressions are used in knowing a state of affairs* makes this notion an *intensional* one, rather than an extensional one – which, incidentally, we have found in the analysis through the diagrams.

Given that these two are different notions of knowledge – one extensional and the other intensional, it would definitely be a case of shifting our set of bearings if we start with an extensional analysis of knowledge, and then expect that everything will remain fine when we search for the understanding of the intensional notion of knowledge within such an analysis. Inattention to the differences between the two different notions of knowledge will surely give rise to various kinds of confusion.