Knowing About Things

Talk for van Benthem Festival

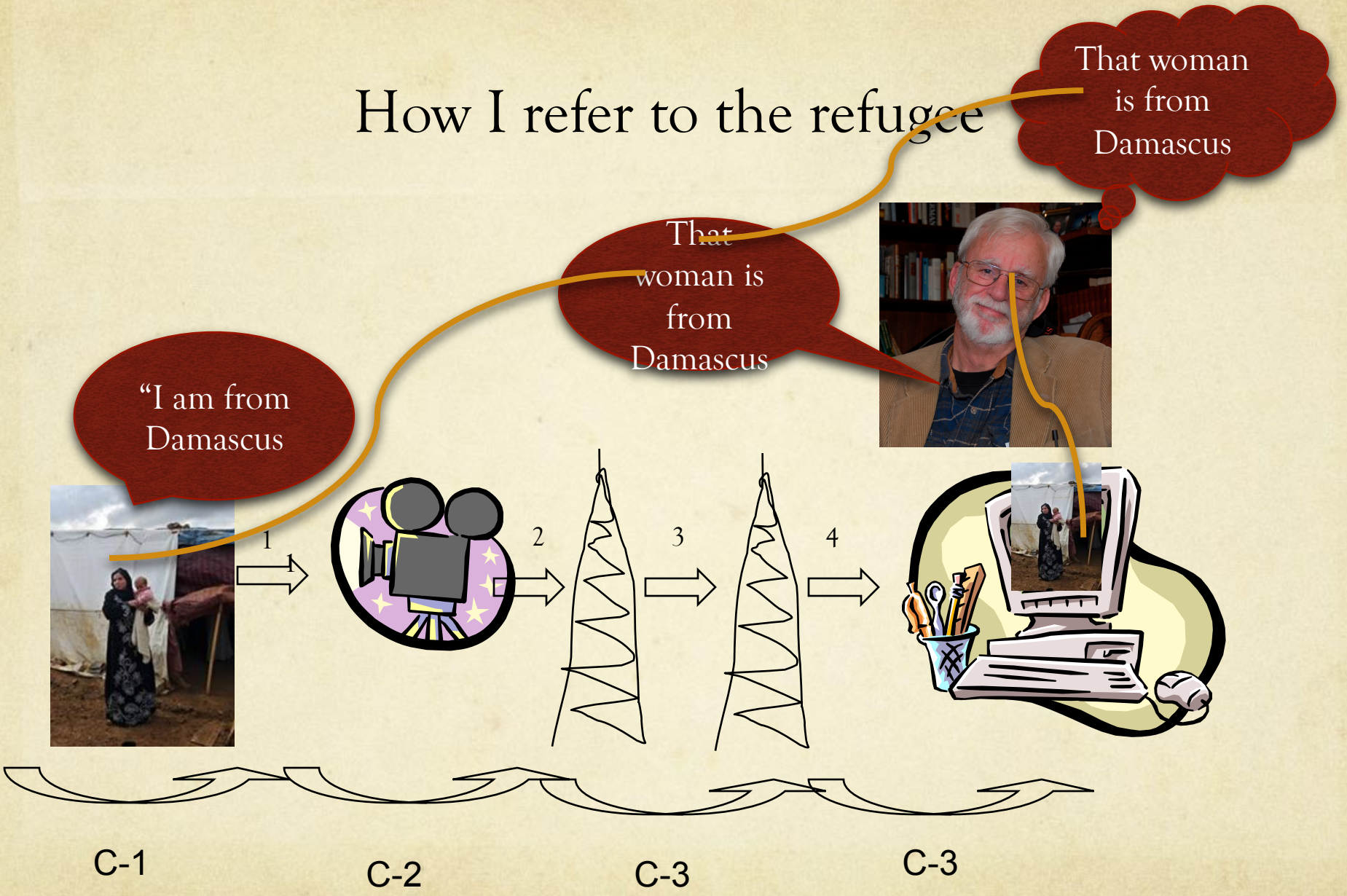
John Perry

Professor Emeritus, Stanford University and the University of California, Riverside

The Miracle of Reference

- "Aristotle had a mole on his back"
- "She is from Damascus"

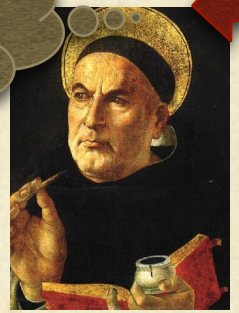
How I refer to the refugee

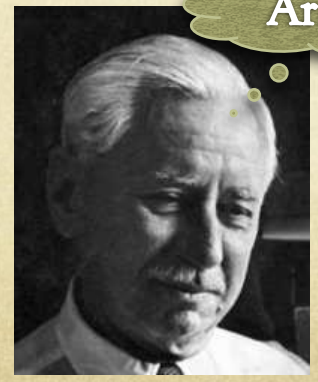


How I refer to Aristotle

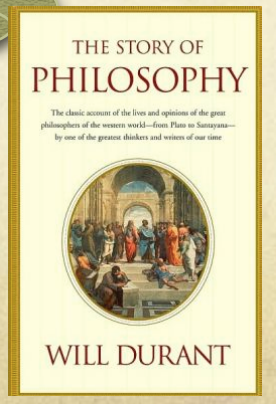
أرسطو

Aristoteles





Aritotle



Aristotle had a mole....

Van Benthem Fset

9/26/2014

The Dilemma: Reference and Content

- JP believes that Aristotle had a mole on his back.
- Plato believed that Aristotle had a mole on his back.
  - JP believes *the same thing* Plato did: that Aristotle had a mole on his back
  - This is the *content* of our beliefs
  - But we have/had completely different ways of thinking of Aristotle
  - How we have the same belief, when what is going on in our minds when we think about Aristotle are so different?

The Dilemma: Reference and Content

- The refugee knows that she is from Damascus
- JP knows the refugee is from Damascus
  - The refugee: "I am from Damascus"
  - JP: " That woman is from Damascus."
- Same content, same thing known, but radically different thing going on in our minds.

INUS Conditions
Example: The Derailed train

Insufficient but

Necessary part of a

Unnecessary but

Sufficient condition

==========

a) The wheels fell off

b) The train was moving

INUSTS

- Insufficient but Necessary parts of Unnecessary but Sufficient Conditions for *Truth*
- Given that the network I am exploiting has Aristotle as its origin, what ELSE has to be the case for my belief to be true:
  - Aristotle has a mole on his back.
- Given that the person he is looking at is Aristotle, what ELSE has to be the case for Plato's belief to be true:
  - Aristotle has a mole on his back

INUSTS

- Insufficient but Necessary parts of Unnecessary but Sufficient Conditions for *Truth*
- Given just what is going on in my head, what ELSE must be the case for my belief to be true?:
  - That the network that feeds into my use of `Aristotle' had someone as its origin, who had a mole on his back.
- Given just what was going on in Plato's head, what ELSE must be the case for his belief to be true?
  - That the person he was looking at had a mole on his back.

Object-INUST Conditions

Given the facts about which objects the subject is connected to object in the world, what to those objects need to be like for the belief to be true.

The Object-Conditions for the truth of my belief and Aristotle's are the same.

Information networks are designed to preserve Object-conditions, in spite of increasingly complex connections..

The Aristotle name-notion network.

The connection between the refugee and I

Subject INUST Conditions

Given only the kinds of connections --the *roles* involved in referring and thinking, what does the world have to be like for the belief to be true?

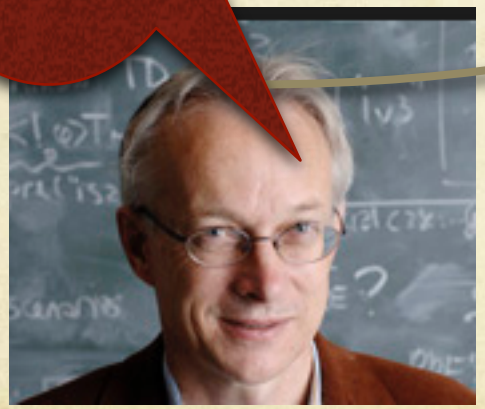
The Subject-conditions for Plato's belief and mine are different:

Plato: There is someone he is perceiving, and that person has a mole on his back.

JP: There is someone at the origin of the network I exploit, and that person had a mole on his back.

Van Benthem and Ortcutt

That man is a spy. That man is not Orccutt.

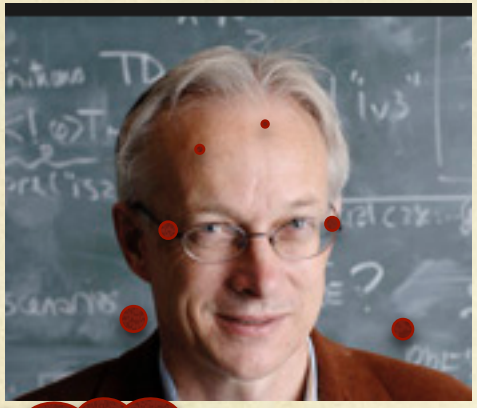


Obvious Bolshevik

Ortcutt

Two Roles

Ortcutt



Being the man seen and attended to

Ortcutt

That man

Being the man associated with VB's use of `Ortcutt"

Representing van Benthem's Beliefs

- "That man is a spy"
- This belief is true in all world in which the person who plays the role, *person-seen-and attended-to* is a spy.
- "Ortcutt is not a spy"
- This belief is true is all worlds in which the person that VB uses `Ortcutt' to think about and refer to is not a spy.

Doxastic Logic

- Divide and Conquer

- Van Benthem believes Ortcutt is a spy!
  - i) van Benthem think about Ortcutt (expliict)
  - ii) via the ` `that man" role (implicit)
  - iii) In all world compatible with vB's belief, the man he is looking at is a spy (Subject-Content)
  - And, given i), this requires that Ortcutt be a spy (Object-Content)

Doxastic Logic

- Divide and Conquer

- Van Benthem believes that Ortcutt is not a spy!
  - i) vB is thinking about Ortcutt (explicit)
  - ii) via the name 'Ortcutt' and the assoc. network (implicit)
  - iii) in all worlds compatible with vB's belief, the origin of the `Ortcutt' network is NOT a spy (Subject-content)
  - And, given i), this requires that Orcutt is NOT a spy. (Object-content)

Conclusion

- vB's beliefs are internally consistent (the Subject-Contents can both be true)
- Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Object-contents cannot both be true.
- In general, Great Logicians,
  - Can be wrong due to unforseen circumstances,
  - But never because of logical error!