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## *Research Statement*

My research is broadly centered on philosophy of language, in particular at the intersection of logic and the semantics of natural languages. The central idea of my dissertation has so far produced a paper that I have submitted for publication: “The Logic of Indexicals”. It is concerned with indexicals, words like “I” and “today”, which get their referent from the context of utterance in rule-bound ways. The framework which dominates contemporary discussions of indexicals was most influentially presented in David Kaplan’s “Demonstratives”, and that is also my starting point. In this paper, I challenge an assumption that is not justified by Kaplan and yet has remained largely uncontested in the literature: that logic must rein in an indexical’s ability to change its referent. While an indexical can get different referents in different contexts, it has been assumed that logic can only deal with arguments in which the context stays fixed, thus discarding the possibility of collaborative arguments, and of inter-personal disagreement. I present a logic which allows context variation within an argument.

The next project is more formally oriented, and it is made up of two parts. First, I will undertake a systematic inquiry into the properties of this logic. I have already found some interesting results. There are some sentences which, when placed in any context, generate a logical truth, such as  $((\forall x)x = x)$ . I call these “super-truths”, and they point to an interesting avenue of research: how extensive is the class of super-truths? More generally, given a sequence of sentences, we ought to be able to predict what sequences of contexts would make it a valid argument, which sentences lead to super-truths, and which sentences, when placed in a context, generate either a logical truth, or a logical falsehood, but never something logically contingent.

In the second part of the formal project I will embed the logic of indexicals into dynamic logic. Dynamic theories arose out of linguists’ interest in anaphora, and the basic idea is that each sentence can add something new to a discourse, such as a new object of discussion, a new time reference, and so on. The logic is dynamic because it looks at the way in which these changes occur, and differentiates between the order in which the sentences are added to the discourse. So far, however, dynamic logic has only dealt with changes *caused by the addition of sentences*, not with the brute, extra-linguistic changes I have been talking about, like the passing of days, or moving from one place to another. But both kinds of changes matter; consider, for instance, the fact that if you want to repeat what you said earlier, you may need to alter the tense, or the mood of the verb, exactly because of the brute changes the logic I developed is about. The task is made even more complicated, and more pressing, by the fact that, in general, linguists have paid less attention to questions of validity than to intuitions about truth values. The combined logic will thus account for more ways in which our conversations are structured than either of its components in isolation.

The third project is to develop another chapter of my dissertation into a self-standing paper about the difference between two kinds of indexicals. Pure indexicals, like “I”, get their referent from a particular feature of the context of utterance, determined by the word’s stable meaning. “I”, for instance, refers to the speaker of the context. True demonstratives, like “this”, are less constrained by word meaning. How exactly the latter get their referent is a live and widely debated question. I will start with a prior question: what exactly is the criterial difference? Several have been proposed, though it hasn’t been noticed that they are not equivalent. A clear sign of trouble is that “you” is sometimes included on one list, and sometimes on the other. I argue that most criteria so far proposed are mistaken, including Kaplan’s original distinction. My proposal starts from the idea that we should focus on typical utterances, rather than word meanings. When an utterance

is made, it is made by someone, whom we can call the speaker of that utterance. This fact is independent of what sentence is uttered, and it is a general fact about all utterances. Consider, for example, an utterance of “two times two equals four”. It has a speaker and it is made somewhere, at some time, by someone, to someone. But it has no demonstratum. In fact, the question “what is the demonstratum of that utterance” is inappropriate. What kind of utterance has demonstrata? Typically, utterances with demonstratives in them. If I say “that’s interesting”, you can ask: what is the demonstratum? And you can ask it, because typically when we use a demonstrative, it has a demonstratum. Demonstratives, then, are words which depend on contextual features that occur only when the sentence uttered contains demonstratives. The distinction between indexicals and demonstratives has been used in various areas of philosophy of language. For instance, Emma Borg has argued that the boundary between semantics and pragmatics lies exactly at the point where the speaker’s intentions need to come into the picture. Since it doesn’t look simply at the presence of intentions, my way of drawing the distinction makes it clear that Borg’s thesis is incorrect. On the positive side, my distinction makes it clear that a logic of natural language which includes demonstratives needs to look at real utterances (as Perry has claimed, though my argument is new), not just at sentences in a context, as assumed by Kaplan and many others.

The last project I’d like to mention is to develop an alternative to Kit Fine’s semantic relationism. His theory has many applications, but I will focus on his claims about proper names, since they are the most philosophically interesting. His central claim is that there is a single semantically important relation which, when it holds between several uses of a proper name, makes it the case that those uses are semantically required to be coreferential. By contrast, I argue that there are at least two relations at work: one that holds inter-personally, and one that holds intra-personally. The first sign that Fine is mistaken is his own claim that the relation is not transitive, as seen from looking at Kripke’s Paderewski puzzle. Peter, who doesn’t realize that there is one person called “Paderewski” who is both a pianist and a politician, may use the name in such a way that he doesn’t take it that the two uses are semantically required to corefer. Yet all those uses may well be connected to uses made by Saul, who does know the truth about Paderewski’s unusual abilities. So Peter’s uses are both related to the uses made by Saul, which are related to each other, and yet Peter’s uses are not related to each other. However, we are looking at semantically mandated coreference; and it is just implausible that such a relation could be intransitive. If there are in fact two relations, this anomaly can be explained away. But there is an even more direct argument to support the idea that there must be two relations at work here: in cases of confusion, which are the opposite of Kripke’s case, we want to say that the speaker takes it that two uses of a name corefer, but he is wrong about it. From an objective, or inter-personal, point of view, those uses are not semantically required to corefer; the speaker is just wrong about language. But if we want to describe the speaker’s beliefs, we will want to say that he takes it that those uses are semantically related; or, as one might put it, they are intra-personally related. Fine’s theory lacks the resources to account for confusion cases, since he can only say that those uses are either related, or that they are not. And yet, intuitively, what we want to say is that they are related by one relation, and not related by another. The project, then, is to provide an account of these two relations, and investigate whether more might be needed for other relations that deal with co-reference.