

Hazel Pearson
Queen Mary University of London
h.pearson@qmul.ac.uk

Semantics and Philosophy in Europe 2018

On De Se Binding

I will consider a particular class of attitude report known as ‘counteridenticals’ – reports involving predicates such as *imagine*, *pretend* and *wish* where the attitude holder puts herself in the shoes of someone else, as in the following example.

1. Yesterday, Margaret was imagining that she was Helen. She imagined that **she** was going to marry Mr Wilcox.

The bolded pronoun is ambiguous. On the *counterfactual-self* reading, it is Helen who is going to marry Mr Wilcox, whereas on the *belief-self* reading, it is Margaret. I identify two constraints on the availability of these readings: (i) the counterfactual-self reading is not available when the verb is anchored to the belief worlds of the attitude holder; (ii) the belief-self reading is not available when the pronoun or anaphor is unambiguously read de se (eg PRO, shifted indexicals, long-distance reflexives) and the verb is anchored to the counterfactual worlds of the attitude holder (cf Pearson 2018).

These findings have implications for the analysis of de se construals: I show that approaches that treat de se as a special case of de re struggle to account for the data (eg Reinhart 1990). By contrast, they can receive an elegant analysis if we assume that the expressive resources of the grammar include a mechanism of ‘de se binding’, as originally proposed in Chierchia (1990). The data thus provide a means to resolve a long-standing debate in linguistics and philosophy about the proper analysis of de se phenomena.