
Structured Individuals

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Concealed questions are DPs that can be replaced by an interrogative clause both syntactically and semantically.

- (1) Ann knows [Bill's age]
= Ann knows [what Bill's age is].

Yet not every DP can serve equally well as a concealed question.

- (2) *Ann knows Bill's cloud/stick/triangle.

Which factors determine which DPs make good concealed questions? How do verbs and other expressions make use of them? And what do those factors tell us about the semantics of DPs and about question meanings in general?

On some accounts (e.g., Heim, Romero, Frana), concealed questions denote individual concepts, that is, functions from worlds to individuals. But it is not obvious how to make such theories sensitive to the internal semantics of the DP in a way that allows us to distinguish between (1) and (2). Likewise for theories that propose shifting DPs into properties (Aloni and Roelofsen).

In other words, concealed questions exhibit a form of hyperintensionality, a problem familiar from propositional attitudes:

- (3) Ann knows [that 7 is the successor of 6].
(4) Ann knows [that 7 is the square root of 49].

The embedded clauses in (3) and (4) are true in the same set of worlds. Nevertheless, (3) can be true at the same time that (4) is false. A parallel observation applies to concealed questions:

- (5) Ann knows [the successor of 6].
(6) Ann knows [the square root of 49].

Philosophical approaches to hyperintensionality contemplate structured propositions (e.g., Soames, King). Although structured propositions are not strictly compositional, they provide a way to distinguish intensionally equivalent propositions.

If we allow structured individual-denoting descriptions, the denotation of *Bill's age* might be represented as $\langle 30, \langle \mathbf{bill}, \mathbf{age} \rangle \rangle$. If so, we have the means to account for the contrast in (1) and (2). Among the generalizations I will propose are the following: in order to be suitable to serve as concealed questions, the structured descriptions denoted by DPs must be non-trivial (structurally complex in a certain way); building on work of Löbner, they must be functional concepts, though not quite in the sense of Löbner; and they must not depend on pragmatic enrichment for their functional content.

Additional empirical support for the proposal comes from unembedded copular questions and from specificational copular sentences.