COUNTERFACTUAL DOUBLE LIVES

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Counteridenticals & Double Lives

Counterfactuals whose antecedents involve apparent statements of identity between actually distinct individuals:

(1)   a.  If I were you, I’d bring an umbrella.
      b.  If I were Shaq, I’d be 7 ft tall.
      c.  If you were me, you’d have done the same thing.
Lots of interesting things about counteridenticals, some of them discussed in


More sustained attention has come only recently:

- Kauf (2017)
- Kocurek (forthcoming)

Related literature: counterfactual attitudes, dream reports
Counteridenticals & Double Lives

* A and B, discussing the slides for B’s talk. A says…

(2) If I were you, I would email them to myself.
Counteridenticals & Double Lives

A and B, discussing the slides for B’s talk. A says…

(3) If I were you, I would email them to me.

A seems to lead a counterfactual double life, making distinct appearances in the same counterfactual scenario.
Not just for advice:

(4) If I were Shaq, I could easily dunk on me.

Not just subject/object:

(5) If I were you, I would make sure I already sent you my slides.
Counteridenticals & Double Lives

Not just with first person pronouns:

(6)  
  a. If you were me, you wouldn’t have waited for you either.
  b. If he were her, he would have told him the same thing.
  c. John would have borrowed John’s car without asking, too, if he were Mary.
So: counterfactual double lives can occur in various uses of counteridenticals, with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person pronouns as well as names.
Main Claim: The existence of counterfactual double lives means that indexicals and names are not rigid designators, even with respect to metaphysical modality. More generally, we should use something more flexible than transworld identity in accounting for de re modal predication, like counterpart theory.
If I were you, I would email them to me.
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Double Lives in Counteridenticals

Why the Kripke/Kaplan Theory Can’t Cope…

… But Counterpart Theoretic Accounts Can

Objection: Impossible Antecedents

Double Lives Outside Counteridenticals

Takeaway
Plan

Double Lives in Counteridenticals

Why the Kripke/Kaplan Theory Can’t Cope. . .

. . . But Counterpart Theoretic Accounts Can

Objection: Impossible Antecedents

Double Lives Outside Counteridenticals

Takeaway
The Problem for the Kripke/Kaplan Theory

The theory:

(i) Kripke (1980): names are *weak de jure* rigid designators. Kaplan (1989): so are indexicals.

(ii) Identity is necessary.

(iii) No monsters! (among metaphysical modal operators)
The Problem for the Kripke/Kaplan Theory

Suppose $A$ says

(7) If I were a police officer, I would arrest someone.

- Assumption: in this context, unembedded $I$ refers to $A$.
- So by the rigidity of $I$, it refers to $A$ in all circumstances of evaluation.
- And by the lack of monsters, will do so in even when embedded.
- So (7) will be true iff in the closest worlds where $A$ herself is a police officer, $A$ arrests someone in those worlds.

✓
The Problem for the Kripke/Kaplan Theory

Suppose $A$ says

(8) If I were you, I would arrest me.

- Assumption: unembedded $I$ and $me$ refer to $A$
- Assumption: $I$ and $me$ of the consequent must not corefer.
- By rigidity and lack of monsters, $I$ and $me$ of the consequent refer to $A$.
- By necessity of identity, $A$ is not distinct from $A$ in any circumstance of evaluation.
- So the $I$ and $me$ of the consequent do corefer.

$\times$
The Problem for the Kripke/Kaplan Theory


(ii) Identity is necessary.

(iii) No monsters! (among metaphysical modal operators)

Replacement: in other circumstances, names and indexicals refer to counterparts of their actual referents.

Dropping (ii) or (iii) instead would have a similar effect.
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Takeaway
The Counterpart Theoretic Alternative

Counterpart functions: $c_1, c_2, c_3, \ldots$

Take an individual $a$ and a world $w$ the individual is in, takes another world $v$, and returns an individual $b$ which (in $v$) is similar in certain respects to $a$ (in $w$).

$$c_1(a, w, v) = b$$

$b$ is the $c_1$-counterpart in world $v$ of $a$ in $w$. 
The Counterpart Theoretic Alternative

\[ [I]^{k,w}_w = \text{speaker}(k) \]

Now we index pronouns (and other referring expressions) to contextually provided counterpart relations:

\[ [I]^{k,w}_{c_n} = c_n(\text{speaker}(k), \text{world}(k), w) \]

We allow multiple counterpart relations in a single utterance.
For a familiar illustration of the need for counterpart relations stressing different respects of comparison, take ‘If I were you . . . ’. The antecedent worlds are worlds where you and I are vicariously identical; that is, we share a common counterpart. But we want him to be in your predicament with my ideas, not the other way around. He should be your counterpart under a counterpart relation that stresses similarity of predicament; mine under a different counterpart relation that stresses similarity of ideas.
(9) If I were you, $I_{c_1}$ would arrest $me_{c_2}$.

$c_1$-counterpart of the speaker arrests the $c_2$-counterpart of the speaker.

(10) If I were you, $I_{c_1}$ would arrest $myself_{c_1}$.

$c_1$-counterpart arrests the $c_1$-counterpart.
How do expressions get assigned their counterpart functions?

Much work remains to be done to prevent overgeneration.

But with the counterpart theoretic approach there is hope, whereas with the transworld identity approach there is not.
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Double Lives in Counteridenticals

Why the Kripke/Kaplan Theory Can’t Cope…

… But Counterpart Theoretic Accounts Can

Objection: Impossible Antecedents

Double Lives Outside Counteridenticals

Takeaway
On the orthodox view, the antecedents of counteridenticals are impossible.

And counterpossibles are weird!
Impossibility Objection: Vacuous Truth Version

(11) If I Shaq, I’d be 7 ft tall.
\neg \Diamond (A = \text{Shaq}) \rightarrow (11)

(12) If I were you, I would arrest me.
\neg \Diamond (A = B) \rightarrow (12)

(13) If I were Shaq, I’d be 200 ft tall.
\neg \Diamond (A = \text{Shaq}) \rightarrow (13)

Non-semantic explanation of apparent falsehood (e.g., Williamson (2015))
Impossibility Objection: Non-Vacuous Truth Version

Use circumstances of evaluation that are impossible.

Maintain necessity of identity, but allow identicals to be distinct in some (impossible) circumstances.
Impossibility Objection: Non-Vacuous Truth Version

Suppose $A$ says

(14) If I were you, I would arrest me.

- Assumption: unembedded $I$ and $me$ refer to $A$
- Assumption: $I$ and $me$ of the consequent must not corefer.
- By rigidity and lack of monsters, $I$ and $me$ of the consequent refer to $A$.
- By necessity of identity, $A$ is not distinct from $A$ in any circumstance of evaluation.
- So the $I$ and $me$ of the consequent do corefer.
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Takeaway
In ‘ordinary’ counterfactuals:

(15) If I were a police officer, I would arrest me.

Acceptable, and the antecedent is possible.

(16) If I were a police officer, I would have a badge.
Counteridenticals in disguise?

(17)  
   a. If I were *that* police officer, I would arrest me.  
   b. If I were *x* (for some actual police officer *x*), I would arrest me.

No. Acceptable even with *de dicto* reading.

(18) If I were a police officer—not any particular actual police officer (for all I know there aren’t any police officers), just if I were police—I would arrest me.
Double Lives Outside Counteridenticals

Maybe impossible consequents anyways? But do we really want to give up this principle?

\[ \Diamond \phi \quad \phi \rightarrow \psi \quad \therefore \Diamond \psi \]
Double Lives Outside Counteridenticals

In modal subordination:

(19) I could have been a police officer. I would have arrested me for what I just did.
Implicitly:

*The speaker has robbed a bank, and is surprised at not having been caught*

(20) If I were a detective, I would have solved this crime ages ago! I would have realized that only I was capable of getting through the bank’s security.
Double Lives Outside Counteridenticals

So: counterfactual double lives occur outside counterpossibles. The impossibility objection fails.
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Double Lives in Counteridenticals

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Double Lives Outside Counteridenticals

Takeaway
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- Counterfactual double lives occur both in counteridenticals and in counterfactuals with clearly possible antecedents, and can involve both pronouns and names.
- This is incompatible with orthodox Kripke-Kaplan theory of how these terms behave with respect to metaphysical modality.
- Something more flexible, like counterpart theory, is the way to go. Though we’ll need to find ways to constrain it.
Thanks!

slides at mikedeigan.com
(comments/questions are appreciated!)
References I


Kocurek, Alex (forthcoming). “Counteridenticals”. In: Philosophical Review.

References II


- Reboul, Anne (1996). “If I were you, I wouldn’t trust myself”. In: *Acts of the 2nd International Colloquium on Deixis “Time, space and identity”*, pp. 151–175.


Monsters?

Problem for monstrous solution: context would have to shift back and forth.

From P. G. Wodehouse’s “Jeeves and the Impending Doom”:

(21) If you were your aunt, and you knew the sort of chap you were, would you let a fellow you knew to be your best pal tutor your son?
Indexicals aren’t always used referentially.

(22)  

a. I am traditionally allowed to order whatever I like for my last meal.  
   (Nunberg 1993, p. 20)

b. [pointing at Pope Francis] He is usually an Italian.  
   (Elbourne 2013, p. 202)
Descriptive Indexicals?

Also can happen with counterfactuals:

(23) If we had abolished the electoral college, he [pointing at Trump] would be a woman.

So maybe this is what’s going on with counterfactual double lives?
Descriptive Indexicals?

Suppose $A$ says

(24) If I were you, I would arrest me.

- Assumption: unembedded $I$ and $me$ refer to $A$.
- Assumption: $I$ and $me$ of the consequent must not corefer.
- By rigidity and lack of monsters, $I$ and $me$ of the consequent refer to $A$.
- By necessity of identity, $A$ is not distinct from $A$ in any circumstance of evaluation.
- So the $I$ and $me$ of the consequent do corefer.
Descriptive Indexicals?

Two ways to do it:

(25) a. If I were a police officer, I would arrest [the person who satisfies a salient description that in fact holds of the speaker].

b. If I were a police officer, [the person who satisfies a salient description that in fact holds of the speaker] would arrest me.

Problem for (25-b): what would this description be? Whatever description is picking out the referent of I seems to involve being a police officer. But no such description actually holds of me.
Problem for (25-a).

(26) a. He, Pope Francis, is usually an Italian.
    b. If we had abolished the electoral college, he, Donald Trump, would have been a woman.

Descriptive readings vanish.

(27) If I were a police officer, I would arrest me, Mike Deigan.

Same as before.
So: neither version works. The descriptive indexical objection fails.