

Alessandro Rossi

University of St. Andrews: Arché Philosophical Research Centre for Logic, Language, Metaphysics and Epistemology

## HOMOPHONIC AND HETEROPHONIC TRANSLATIONS BETWEEN ALLISM AND NONEISM

**§1. Outline** Noneists such as Priest [2; 3; 4] believe that quantification without existential import is possible. Allists such as Van Inwagen [6] believe it to be impossible. This is a philosophical disagreement *about* logic. Logic though reflects the disagreement quite clearly. Noneism typically requires two sorts of quantifiers. One includes absolutely everything the logic quantifies over; this quantifier, called *neutral*, is insensitive to the existence of the things falling under its domain. The other quantifier, called *loaded*, is properly included in the neutral quantifier; its domain is populated by all and only the things held to exist. Since some things in the domain of the neutral quantifier are *not* in the domain of the loaded quantifier, quantification without existential import becomes available. Allism instead comes with just one existential quantifier; its domain includes all and only the things that are taken to exist. Existence-free quantification is thus ruled out.

Lewis [1] famously claimed that the allist should not translate *homophonically* from the noneist. That is, the allist should not be tempted to take her existential quantifier as equivalent to the noneist’s loaded quantifier. Otherwise, the cost is loss of mutual intelligibility. The allist is better off taking her existential quantifier as equivalent to the noneist’s neutral quantifier. This I call translating *heterophonically*. By translating heterophonically, the noneist suddenly becomes intelligible to the allist. The noneist now, Lewis argues, is just an allist in disguise.

The heterophonic translation has been later defended by Woodward [7]. Instead of appealing to mutual intelligibility considerations, Woodward appealed to a striking consequence of the heterophonic translation. Suppose the allist joins the noneist in adding a restricted quantifier, reading ‘is concrete and actual’. Then consider this heterophonic translation. The noneist’s ‘*x* exists’ is equivalent to the allist’s ‘*x* is concrete and actual’. Since the translation is logicity-preserving, Woodward [7, p. 191] concludes that “there is a good case for thinking that the dispute is merely verbal in character”. The two sides would simply be talking past each other.

Priest [5] convincingly rebutted that on Woodward’s reading of the restricted allist quantifier, the translation fails to preserve alethicity. However, there might be other readings of such quantifier capable of meeting Priest’s objection. Yet, Woodward’s translation is affected by another crucial flaw. If I am right, this flaw finally undermines the heterophonic translation. Advocates of the homophonic translation will find this delightful, especially if the assumption is made that there *must* be a translation between allism and noneism (which is either hetero or homophonic). In §2 below, I will not take a stand as to whether this assumption is actually available to the homophonic translation side, but will instead sketch how my objection to Woodward’s heterophonic translation can be construed.

**§2. Against Heterophony.** First, when the allist adds a restricted quantifier, the two sides can work with the same logic, call it  $\mathcal{L}_T$ . The language of  $\mathcal{L}_T$  is recursively defined as follows.

$$\varphi ::= \neg\varphi \mid \varphi \wedge \psi \mid \varphi \vee \psi \mid \varphi \rightarrow \psi \mid \varphi \leftrightarrow \psi \mid \exists x\varphi \mid \forall x\varphi \mid \mathfrak{A}x\varphi \mid \mathfrak{S}x\varphi$$

Let  $R$  be the domain of the  $\exists/\forall$  pair and  $U$  that of the  $\mathfrak{A}/\mathfrak{S}$  pair. Then, let  $R$  and  $U$  invariantly be such that  $R \subset U$ , and the satisfaction clauses be the obvious ones.  $\mathcal{L}_T$  is sound and strongly

complete with respect to the semantics. Moreover,  $\mathcal{L}_T$  is heterophonic, as every  $\mathfrak{S}$ -quantified formula will sound existentially *loaded* to the allist but existentially *neutral* to the noneist.

My first claim is that if  $\mathcal{L}_T$  is the working logic for the allist and the noneist, then the allist incurs topic neutrality problems that do not threaten the noneist. For if  $R \subset U$ , then  $\mathcal{L}_T$  is necessarily non-inclusive. That is, necessarily,  $\mathcal{L}_T$  does not admit models where  $U$  is empty. If so, the consequence for the allist is that the existence of at least one thing is a logical truth. However, this flatly contradicts the widespread belief that logic should not yield substantive philosophical truths of its own. The concern is plausible here, as it is far from clear that the existence of nothing is a contradiction. The objection does not threaten the noneist. To her, any model where  $U$  includes one thing and  $R$  is empty simply yields that one thing is non-existing. Hence, contexts where nothing exists are logically available to the noneist, but logically unavailable to the allist. Therefore, given  $\mathcal{L}_T$ , noneism is in a better standing with respect to topic neutrality.

My second claim is that the allist incurs onerosity problems that do not threaten the noneist. We just learned that the smallest models of  $\mathcal{L}_T$  commit the allist, though not the noneist, to the existence of one thing. This can now be generalised. For every finite  $n$ , if  $|U| = n$ , then  $|R| = m$  for some  $m$  such that  $0 \leq m < n$ ; then, since  $R$  is the set of things noneism requires the existence of, insofar as  $m$  and  $n$  are finite, noneism will always require the existence of fewer things than allism. So given  $\mathcal{L}_T$ , noneism is in a better standing also with respect to existential onerosity.

Surely some forms of allism might be more onerous than some forms of noneism. However, there surely may also be cases where noneism is more onerous than allism, as well as cases where the two theories are on a par. To catch these cases, Woodward needs to correct his account and let the allist opt for another logic, call it  $\mathcal{L}_A$ , where the relation between  $R$  and  $U$  is turned into the following *improper* subsethood relation:  $R \subseteq U$ . However, if a heterophonic translation is now set between  $\mathcal{L}_T$  and  $\mathcal{L}_A$ , such a translation cannot secure logicality. Indeed, one can easily show that

$$\models_{\mathcal{L}_T} \mathfrak{S}x \neg \exists y(x = y) \text{ and } \not\models_{\mathcal{L}_A} \mathfrak{S}x \neg \exists y(x = y).$$

The following dilemma is thus my final claim. Woodward's heterophony cannot reach the intended level of generality; and when this is reached, heterophony comes at the expenses of logicality. I conclude that either way, homophony-driven strategies are undermined.

## References

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