The Semantics of Reported Speech
Beyond the Direct – Indirect Distinction

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Formal semantics is the study of meaning as given by reference and truth conditions. The goal is to describe meanings of complex expressions as functions from the meanings of the parts. As noted already by Gottlob Frege (1892) in the paper that marks the birth of this discipline, constructions of reported speech and thought pose a significant hurdle to this endeavor. The problem with these constructions is that they can create an opaque context, i.e., within a report complement we cannot always substitute coreferential or even synonymous terms for each other *salva veritate*.

Semanticists have spent the next century working on a satisfactory semantics of attitude reports, treating indirect speech as just a particular example thereof, and neglecting quotation and direct discourse entirely. Meanwhile, in philosophy, work on quotation continued, but concentrated on pure quotation (e.g. *the word "cat" has three letters*), rather than constructions of reported speech.

Over the past 15 years, linguistics and philosophy have finally started to join forces to study (i) various issues relating to perspective shifting in indirect discourse across languages, including *de se* reports, logophoricity, and indexical shift, and (ii) the ubiquitous phenomenon of mixed quotation:

Quine said that quotation "has a certain anomalous feature"

These phenomena pose severe challenges to the classical view implicit in most previous work dealing with the semantics of reported speech, viz. that there is a strict distinction between direct and indirect discourse. According to the classical view, direct discourse involves pure quotation, i.e. reference to a linguistic entity, while indirect discourse is a kind of attitude report, i.e. a modal operator.

Further challenges to the classical dichotomy include Free Indirect Discourse in certain forms of literature, and Role Shift in Sign Languages. In this talk I focus on yet another challenge: reported speech in ancient Greek. The central observation is that Greek authors from Homer to the New Testament can switch freely from indirect to direct discourse, even within a single report complement, and without any overt marking.

I argue that mixed quotation is the basic semantic phenomenon underlying both traditional direct and indirect discourse, and the various nonstandard cases, including recitative *hoti* and indirect-to-direct switches in Greek, and even Role Shift and Free Indirect Discourse.