ABSTRACT. This paper consists of two main parts and a coda. In the first part I present the 'binding theory' of presupposition projection, which is the framework that I adopt in this paper (Section 1.1). I outline the main problems that arise in the interplay between presuppositions and anaphors on the one hand and attitude reports on the other (Section 1.2), and discuss Heim's theory of presuppositions in attitude contexts (Section 1.3).

In the second part of the paper I present my own proposal. To begin with, I define an extension of DRT in which attitude reports can be represented (Sections 2.1-2.3). I then argue that the verb believe triggers a certain presupposition and that, given the binding theory, this presupposition determines the projection behaviour of the verb (Section 2.3). This analysis yields predictions which are incomplete in the sense that they do not fully account for speakers' intuitions about presuppositions and anaphors in belief contexts. In Section 2.4 I suggest that this is as it should be because we may assume on independent grounds that there is a class of plausibility inferences which complement the predictions of the presupposition theory. Finally, the analysis is extended to the verb want (Section 2.5).

The paper concludes with a brief discussion of related phenomena in other domains: modals, quantifiers, and non-declarative speech acts (Section 3).

1. Setting the Stage

1.1. The Binding Theory

The theory of presupposition adopted in this paper was first proposed by van der Sandt (1989), and further developed by van der Sandt and Geurts (1991), van der Sandt (1992), and Geurts (1995), among others. For reasons that will soon become clear I call it the 'binding theory' of presupposition. I am aware that syntacticians have been using this term in a rather different sense, but their usage is so different from mine that my appropriation of the term is unlikely to engender confusion. In the following I will only provide a thumbnail sketch of the binding theory; see the references just cited for more details.

The binding theory's central tenet is that anaphora is a species of

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Most of the material in this paper is not new anymore. It was researched in 1992, written up in 1994, and released to the academic community in 1995 as chapter 4 of my doctoral dissertation. For their comments and advice at various stops along the way I should like to thank Nicholas Asher, Hans Kamp, Marc Römhild and the anonymous referees for Linguistics and Philosophy. In the final stage of my working on this paper I was supported by a grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), which I gratefully acknowledge.

presupposition. The distinctive trait of anaphora is that, by and large, anaphors must be bound to a suitable antecedent. Presuppositions in general, however, merely prefer to be bound. If on occasion a suitable antecedent is not available, a presupposition will generally be accommodated (Karttunen 1974, Stalnaker 1974, Lewis 1979). But accommodation is a repair strategy: ceteris paribus, if a suitable antecedent is available, the binding option is preferred.

The binding theory is a generalization of Discourse Representation Theory (Kamp 1981, Kamp and Reyle 1993): qua theory of anaphora it more or less coincides with DRT. The following analysis illustrates what I mean when I say that presuppositions may be bound like anaphors:

(1a) If anybody volunteered, then it was Wilma who volunteered (did so)

b. \([x: x \text{ volunteered}] \Rightarrow [z: z \text{ volunteered}, z = W]\]

c. \([x, z: z = x, x \text{ volunteered}, z \text{ volunteered}] \Rightarrow [z: z = W]\]

d. \([x: x \text{ volunteered}] \Rightarrow [x = W]\]

In the second half of (1a) the it-cleft triggers the presupposition that someone volunteered, which is represented in (1b) by the underlined material (at this stage I ignore any other presuppositions that (1a) may contain). This presupposition has access to a suitable antecedent in the first part of the conditional, and hence it is bound as shown in (1c), which represents the final interpretation of the sentence; this is equivalent to (1d). Note that it does not follow from (1c, d) that someone volunteered, and thus the presupposition that this is the case is in a sense ‘blocked’, which is as it should be.

A presupposition that cannot be bound will normally be accommo-

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1 Actually, van der Sandt’s (1982) claim is that presuppositions are anaphors, but this is just a terminological difference. I prefer to reserve the term ‘anaphora’ for referring to a subclass of presuppositions, and associate it with descriptive paucity and binding to discourse entities currently in focus. In van der Sandt’s vocabulary, the term appears to have lost such connotations.

2 The binding theory cannot be implemented as a generalization of most other ‘dynamic’ theories of interpretation, such as file change semantics (Heim 1982) or dynamic predicate logic (Groenendijk and Stokhof 1991), because it crucially involves the level of discourse representation which is absent in these dynamic theories. See Geurts (to appear) for further discussion of the differences between dynamic semantics and DRT.

3 Officially, I regard names as definite expressions; the name Wilma is more or less synonymous with “the person named “Wilma”” (see Geurts 1997 for discussion). However, for convenience, I will employ constants to represent names, as in (1) (although strictly speaking individual constants are not part of the DRS language).