Notes from Ben Nelson  2012-04-05


Here are some bits I found relevant, especially the last quotation (pages numbers correspond to the pdf document, not the pagination of the text)

12: “It is useful for many purposes to see these possibilities as centered worlds: worlds marked with a ‘center’, which is an ordered pair of an individual and a time. We can think of the center of the world as representing the perspective of the speaker within the world”

22: “For any scenario, it is epistemically possible that the scenario is actual. Intuitively speaking, for any qualitatively specified centered world W, it is epistemically possible that W is actual. Here the center represents a hypothesis about my own location within the world. In entertaining the hypothesis that W is actual, I entertain the hypothesis that the actual world is qualitatively just like W, that I am the subject at the center of W, and that now is the time at the center of W.”

22: “When we think of a world as an epistemic possibility in this way, we are considering it as actual. On the epistemic understanding, to consider a world W as actual is to consider the hypothesis that W is one’s own world. When one considers such a hypothesis, in effect one considers the hypothesis that D is the case, where D is a statement giving an appropriate description of W.”

28: “The first is the way we have already sketched: as centered possible worlds. The uncentered part of the world corresponds to a hypothesis about the objective character of one’s world. The centered part is needed to handle indexical claims, such as ‘I am in Australia’.”

33: “To characterize a centered world, semantically neutral terms must be supplemented by some indexical terms, to characterize the location of a center. The best way to do this is the following. We can say that a statement is in canonical form when it has the form D & ‘I am D1’ & ‘now is D2’, where D, D1, and D2 are all semantically neutral, and D1 and D2 are identifying predicates relative to the information in D (that is: D implies ‘Exactly one individual is D1’ and ‘Exactly one time is D2’). We can say that a neutral description of a centered world is a statement in canonical form such that D is true of the world, D1 is true of the subject at the center, and D2 is true of the time at the center. (If the center of a centered world includes entities other than an individual and a time, then one can extend similar treatment to these entities.)”