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Voldemort phrases in generic sentences – seemingly impersonal uses of 3rd person singular pronouns

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Introduction

Voldemort phrases: third person singular pronouns modified by restrictive relative clauses
(Lord Voldemort = *He Who Must Not Be Named*, Harry Potter Series)

(1)   a. **He who walks out of negotiations** *loses.*
        b. **He who goes cautiously**, *goes safely and goes far.*
        (Europarl Parallel Corpus)

Observation:
the sentences in (1) express statements about people who walk out of negotiations / people who who go cautiously, **in general**
→ they are **generic sentences**

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Voldemort phrases: third person singular pronouns modified by restrictive relative clauses
(Lord Voldemort = *He Who Must Not Be Named*, Harry Potter Series)

(1) a. **He who walks out of negotiations** *loses.*
     b. **He who goes cautiously**, *goes safely and goes far.*
     (Europarl Parallel Corpus)

Puzzle:
How does the generic interpretation of these sentences arise? Specifically, what is the role of the Voldemort phrase (a referential expression!) in deriving this interpretation?

Note: Voldemort phrases are **archaic expressions** nowadays found only in Bible texts, proverbs, and proverb-like sayings (cf. Curme 1912).

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Connection to impersonal *you*?

English *you* allows for an impersonal use, in which it behaves like the impersonal pronoun *one*:

(Kitagawa & Lehrer 1990, Malamud 2006)

(2)   a. *If **you** walk out of negotiations, **you** lose.*
       b. *If **you** go cautiously, **you** go safely and far.*

Possible connection:

He in (1) and *you* in (2) both do not seem to contribute their standard meaning: *he* does not refer to a salient, male individual, *you* does not refer to the addressee

(1)   a. ***He** who walks out of negotiations loses.*
       b. ***He** who goes cautiously, goes safely and goes far.*

He in (1) is not used impersonally!

- ▶ the generic interpretation observable for (1) arises **only** when *he* is modified by a relative clause

  (3)　　*He loses.*　　　　　　　　　　(extensional/*generic)

- ▶ *he* and *you* cannot be substituted for each other *salva veritate* in sentences like (1)

He in (1) is not used impersonally!

- ▶ the generic interpretation observable for (1) arises **only** when *he* is modified by a relative clause
- ▶ *he* and *you* cannot be substituted for each other *salva veritate* in sentences like (1)

  (4)   a. **He** who walks out of negotiations loses.
         b. **You** *(,) who walk out of negotiations *(,) lose.

  (4-b) only has an (odd) addressee-referential interpretation

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He in (1) is not used impersonally!

- ▶ the generic interpretation observable for (1) arises **only** when *he* is modified by a relative clause
- ▶ *he* and *you* cannot be substituted for each other *salva veritate* in sentences like (1)

But: genuine impersonal uses of personal and impersonal pronouns do not require a relative clause to be present and are freely interchangable (modulo pragmatics)
(Kitagawa & Lehrer 1990, Zobel 2012)

(5)   a. *If **you** walk out of negotiations, **you** lose.*
      b. *If **one** walks out of negotiations, **one** loses.*

      c. *If **he** walks out of negotiations, **he** loses.*

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Outline of the talk

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English vs. other European languages – I

The use of Voldemort phrases in general statements about people who share a certain property seems to be an idiosynchratic property of English.

Comparison: English vs. German

(6) ??**Er**, **der** *sich   aus Verhandlungen zurückzieht*, *verliert*.
   he who himself out negotiations   pulls-out   loses

(7) **Wer** *sich   aus Verhandlungen zurückzieht*, *verliert.*
   who himself out negotiations   pulls-out   loses

(8) **Der(jenige)**, **der** *sich   aus Verhandlungen*
   dem/def   who himself out negotiations
   zurückzieht, *verliert*.
   pulls-out   loses

English vs. other European languages – II

Result of a small-scale cross-linguistic study: (Europarl Parallel Corpus)
for other European languages, the expressions used as
counterparts to English Voldemort phrases in generic
sentences form two general classes

- ► free relatives
- ► "demonstrative/definite + restrictive relative clause"

(9)　　a. **He who** goes cautiously, goes safely and goes far.
　　　　b. **Celui qui** avance avec prudence va sûrement et va loin. (F)
　　　　c. **Chi** va piano va sano e lontano. (I)

(10)　　a. **He who** sows the wind shall inevitably reap the whirlwind.
　　　　b. **Qui** sème le vent récoltera sans doute la tempête. (F)
　　　　c. **Wie** wind zaait zal storm oogsten. (D)

Alternatives to *he who* in English? - I

Alternatives: *anyone who*, *everyone who*, *the one/person/man/woman/... who*, *those who*

A similar set is also found in modern Bible translations:

(11)   a. ***He*** *who abides in love abides in God.*   (NKJV)
        b. ***The one*** *who remains in love remains in God.* (HCSB)
        c. ***Anyone*** *who leads a life of love shows that he is joined to God.*   (NIRV)
        d. ***Everyone*** *who lives in love lives in God.*   (ERV)
        e. ***Those*** *who live in love live in God.*   (EXB)
        (1 John 4:16)

Alternatives to *he who* in English? - II

In addition: *-ever* free relatives

(12)   a. **He** who abides in love abides in God.   (NKJV)
       b. **Whoever** abides in love abides in God.   (ESV)
       (1 John 4:16)

Note 1) Simple free relatives introduced by '*who*' are degraded in subject position

(13)   *Who Glenn married didn't make much money.
       (Patterson and Caponigro 2014:1)

Note 2) '*He who*' is modernized ME '*he that*', which is derived from OE demonstrative based constructions; so maybe, '*he who*' is in fact a variant of "demonstrative/definite + restrictive relative clause" (cf. Curme 1912)

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The closest variant to '*he who*' is '*the one who*'

- ▶ **Quantificational Variability Effects:** (QVE)
  only *he who*, *the one who*, and *those who* show QVE with
  adverbs of quantification

  (14)   a. *He who blames others is **often** full of blame himself.*
              ≈ Many people who blame others . . .
          b. *The one who tells the lie is **rarely** its originator.*
              ≈ Few people who tell a lie . . .
          c. *Those who leave are **often** shunned by the group.*
              ≈ Many people who leave . . .

  (15)   *Whoever/Anyone who comes from Southern Italy is **rarely**
          tall.* ≉ Few people from Southern Italy are tall.
          (Caponigro 2003:156)

- ▶ '*He*' and '*the one*' are both singular definite expressions

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Interim summary

'*He who*'...

- ▶ is idiosynchratic for English
- ▶ seems to be a modernized variant of "demonstrative/definite + restrictive relative clause"
- ▶ has modern alternatives; the closest alternative: '*the one who*'

and its interpretation in generic sentences is not a genuine impersonal use

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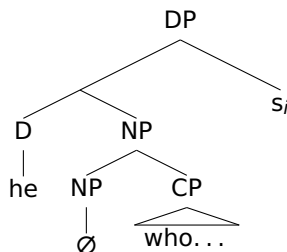## Quantifying over the pronoun's situation variable - I

Preliminary assumption: third person singular pronominal forms are part of a complex structure that forms a DP
(cf. Elbourne 2013)

General structure of pronouns: [[*pronoun* NP] s$_i$]

(16) $[\![he]\!]^g = [\![she]\!]^g = [\![it]\!]^g = [\![the]\!]^g =$
$\lambda f_{\langle e,st \rangle}.\lambda s : s \in D_s$ & $\exists!x[f(x)(s)]. \iota x[f(x)(s)]$
(Elbourne 2013:193)

Quantifying over the pronoun's situation variable - II

Structure of Voldemort phrases:

Elbourne's (2013:207) suggestion:

The generic operator *Gen* binds the situation variable s_i to induce generic quantification over male individuals that have the property denoted by the relative clause.

Quantifying over the pronoun's situation variable - III

Undesirable predictions:

- ▶ *Gen* should in principle be able to bind the situation variable of bare third person singular pronouns

  (17)   *He loses.*   ≉ *People lose.*

  → the relative clause is necessary!

- ▶ Generalizations made with Voldemort phrases should exclusively state generalizations about men

  (18)   a. *He who goes cautiously, goes safely and goes far.*
          b. *He who laughs last laughs best.*

  → *he* is a generic masculine expression

Licensing by modification - I

Observation: English definite plural DPs can only get a generic interpretation if they are modified by a relative clause
(Dayal 2004a)

(19)   a. *The students work hard.*   (ex/*gen)
       b. *The students who work hard are successful.*   (ex/gen)
       (Dayal 2004a:221)

But: Not any relative clause will do; the verb has to carry aspectual marking that is compatible with a generic interpretation

(20)   *The students who are working hard are successful.*
                                                               (ex/*gen)

       (Dayal 2004a:227)

Licensing by modification - II

Proposal: (Dayal 2004a:228)

- ▶ the "right" kind of relative clause contributes an embedded quantificational structure

- ▶ the familiarity presupposition triggered by a definite plural DP interpreted in the embedded structure can be accommodated in the restrictor of the higher structure

Gen $s, x[C(s)$ & students-in-$s(x)$ &

  Gen s' $\exists y$[students-in-$s'(y)$ & work-hard-in-$s'(y)$ & $y = x$][$s < s'$]]

  [successful-in-$s(x)$]

Suggests:
"right kind" = denoting a habitual/dispositional property

Licensing by modification - III

Observation: not all of the relative clauses inside
Voldemort phrases denote a habitual/dispositional property
in the context of the generalization that is expressed

(21)   a. *He **who laughs last** laughs best.*
        b. *He **who sows the wind** shall inevitably reap the
        whirlwind.*
        c. *He **who goes cautiously**, goes safely and goes far.*

Tentative conclusion:
Voldemort phrases do not behave like definite plural DPs

Quantificational variability - I

Definite singular DPs show QVE with adverbs of quantification if certain requirements are fulfilled.
(Hinterwimmer 2005)

(22) *I love going to <u>jazz concerts</u>. The PIANO-player usually is INTELLIGENT.*   (Hinterwimmer 2005:111)

- ▶ the definite singular DP bears contrastive topic intonation
- ▶ the singleton set denoted by the NP-complement varies with the members of an independently specified set of situations (the domain of quantification)

(23) *#The PIANO-player usually is INTELLIGENT.*
       (Hinterwimmer 2005:111)

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Quantificational variability - II

Observation: Even though the Voldemort phrases in the given QVE cases are definite singular DPs, they do not need to satisfy the requirements identified above

(24)   *He who blames others is often full of blame himself.*

Intuition:
The definite singular DPs in Hinterwimmer's examples denote unique individuals relative to each situation; the Voldemort phrases denote different individuals that exemplify a certain "type of people"

Conclusion: Voldemort phrases are **not** "ordinary" individual-denoting definite singular DPs

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Outline

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The central idea

Proposal:
Voldemort phrases in generic sentences or that show QVE
denote **singular kinds**, i.e. a kind entity

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Support for this claim - I

On English definite singular DPs and singular kinds:
Any definite singular DP can denote a singular kind if its
"contrast set" is known/given.   (Dayal 2004b)

Any definite singular DP can denote a "natural kind" =
a type of entity to which "sufficiently regular behavior" can
be attributed.   (Chierchia 1998)

- ▶ Bible examples: Voldemort phrases are often used in
  contrast to one or more other Voldemort phrases
- ▶ Proverbs are conventionalized expressions that
  communicate an "established" generality
- ▶ Proverb-like sayings arise as generalizations from one or
  more specific cases that suggest a general pattern

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Support for this claim - II

Voldemort phrases occur in copular sentences with
kind-denoting definite singular DPs:

(25)   **The Artist** is he who detects and applies the law from
       observation of the works of Genius. **The Artisan** is he
       who merely applies the rules which others have
       detected.
       (Henry David Thoreau)

Support for this claim - III

Kind-denoting simple definite singular DPs also show QVE with adverbs of quantification:

(26)   *Ancient Malagasy legend states that the aye-aye is a symbol of death, and is viewed as a bad omen by many natives. Due to this unfortunate bad press, **the aye-aye** is **often** killed on sight by superstitious locals.*

Note: In these cases, the definite singular DP does not have to bear contrastive topic intonation, and no adequate set of situations has to be determined beforehand.

Creating a singular kind

Dayal's (2004b) kind-shift operation for singular NPs:

(27) $[\lambda x.\lambda s.\text{lion}(x)(s)] \Rightarrow [\lambda X.\lambda s.\text{LION}(X)]$

Given Elbourne's structure: $[[\textit{he}\ [_{NP}\ \text{NP}\ [\textit{who}\ldots\ ]]]\ s_i]\ldots$

- ▶ the full NP is shifted to a kind-property:

  (28) $[\lambda x.\lambda s.x$ is a person in s & $\text{RC}(x)(s)] \Rightarrow$
          $[\lambda X.\lambda s.\text{PERSON-WHO-RC}(X)]$

- ▶ and after combining the result with '*he*' and s_i, the DP
  denotes:

  (29) $\iota X[\text{PERSON-WHO-RC}(X)]$

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The final representation

(30)   **He who goes cautiously**, *goes safely and goes far.*

Final proposal for the representation of (30):
Gen s [∃y[member-of(y, ιX[PERSON-WHO-GOES-CAUTIOUSLY(X)], s)]
  [goes-safely(
      ιy[member-of(y, ιX[PERSON-WHO-GOES-CAUTIOUSLY(X)], s)]

Paraphrase:
All minimal normal situations that contain a member of the kind of person who goes cautiously can be extended to a situation in which that member of the kind goes safely and goes far.

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Summary

'*He who*'. . .

- ▶ is idiosynchratic for English
- ▶ seems to be a modernized variant of "demonstrative/definite + restrictive relative clause"
- ▶ has modern alternatives; the closest alternative: '*the one who*'

& its interpretation in generics is not a genuine impersonal use.

Proposal:

1) In generic sentences, Voldemort phrases denote a singular kind; the denotation is derived as for all other kind-denoting definite singular DPs.

2) The generic interpretation arises via generic quantification over members of the singular kind.

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