

行政院國家科學委員會專題研究計畫 成果報告

威廉森論「宣稱」

計畫類別：個別型計畫

計畫編號：NSC92-2411-H-002-030-

執行期間：92年08月01日至93年07月31日

執行單位：國立臺灣大學哲學系暨研究所

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報告類型：精簡報告

處理方式：本計畫可公開查詢

中 華 民 國 93 年 11 月 3 日

# WILLIAMSON ON ASSERTION\*

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## 中文摘要

威廉森(1995)論證,任何企圖將模態邏輯中的S4公設應用到一個素樸的「宣稱」概念上,都將無法令人滿意地說明在(A4)  $Ap \rightarrow AAp$  中的「宣稱」概念。尤其是,就知識的原初性與重要性而言,(A4)會造成一個無法接受的結果,就是有名的KK原則:  $Kp \rightarrow KKp$ ,這不是一個合理的知識概念所能允許的原則。威廉森(1996, 2000)進一步指出,宣稱的知態規則就是如果主體S宣稱語句 $p$ ,則S知道 $p$ ,即(AK)  $Ap \rightarrow Kp$ 。因此,如果我們接受(AK)而拒絕(KK),那我們就必須拒絕(A4)。而威廉森認為這是可以反駁反實在論之意義理論的論證。

我首先論證,就威廉森對宣稱所做的知態說明,宣稱是一個強的規範性概念,(AKA)  $Ap \rightarrow Kap$ ,也就是當一個主體宣稱 $p$ ,主體不僅知道 $p$ ,也知道他正在宣稱 $p$ 。如同威廉森(2000)指出,在知道與宣稱之間有一規範性關係,做宣稱時必須基於某些宣稱規則,而這些規則是由知道概念來說明的。尤其是,宣稱是一個語言行為,是傳遞知識的載體:我們藉由宣稱表達並傳遞我們的知識。(2000:238)這也說明了知道與宣稱間的強規範關係。因為我們有某些型態的行為具有某些規範,即只要表現該行為,就知道自己在做什麼。宣稱就是這樣型態的行為。因此,當' $Ap$ '成立時,不會有任何的理性主體會不知道自己在宣稱 $p$ 。這就證成了(AKA)。同時,(AKA)不會蘊含KK原則,雖然會蘊含弱的KK原則,即(AKK)  $Ap \rightarrow (Kp \rightarrow KKp)$ ,但這並無損害。

甚者,因為宣稱的主要目的是傳遞知識「我們需要宣稱來傳遞知識」也因為宣稱是語言行為,當主體宣稱 $P$ ,其所傳遞的知識不僅是宣稱的內容,還包括宣稱這個行為。因此我們可以說能夠成為被傳遞的知識一定是透過宣稱才行。因此,如果' $Ap$ '就是被傳遞的知識,' $AAp$ '就成立。我相信這樣對宣稱的說明可以說明(A4)中的' $A$ '。事實上,我們可以證出,(AKA)和(AKK)都是由(A4)和(AK)導出。因此,我們可以給宣稱醫滿意的書名而不致導出錯誤的結果。

## 英文摘要

Williamson (1995) argues that any attempt to apply the S4 axiom of normal modal logic to a naïve notion of assertibility would fail to find a satisfactory account of the notion of assertibility to serve as the intended interpretation of 'A' in the desired characteristic formula (A4)  $Ap \rightarrow AAp$ . In particular, granted the primitiveness and primacy of knowledge, (A4) would render some undesirable consequences, notably the KK principle:  $Kp \rightarrow KKp$ , which could hardly hold in any reasonable notion of knowing. Williamson (1996, 2000) further proposes the knowledge rule for assertion, a constitutive rule in character, according to which an agent S asserts that  $p$  only if S knows that  $p$ , in symbols, (AK)  $Ap \rightarrow Kp$ . It follows that if we accept (AK) and reject (KK), then we would be forced to reject (A4). And Williamson takes this as an argument against anti-realist's programme for a theory of meaning.

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\* This report was presented at, as a contributed paper to, *The 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science (LMPS03)* August 7-13, 2003 Oviedo (Spain), Section C.5 Philosophy of Linguistics. A full version has been completed but some refinement is ongoing.

In this talk, I shall firstly argue, based on Williamson's knowledge account of assertion, that assertion is a strong normative concept in that (AKA)  $Ap \rightarrow KAp$  holds, that is, when an agent  $S$  makes an assertion that  $p$ ,  $S$  would not merely know that  $p$ , but also know that she/he is making an assertion that  $p$ . As Williamson (2000) rightly points out, there is a special normative relationship between knowing and asserting, in that the speech act of assertion must be based on certain rules of assertion, which are essentially constitutive and should be characterized in terms of the notion of knowing. In particular, assertion is a kind of speech act, which is to be taken as the vehicle for transmitting knowledge: 'We express and communicate our knowledge by making assertions.' (2000:238) This also suggests a strong normative relation between knowing and asserting as (AKA) shows. For we have some type of acts with a certain norm in that whenever one performs an act of this type, one knows clearly what one is doing. And strikingly, assertion, taken as overt speech act, belongs to such a type. Accordingly, when ' $Ap$ ' holds, it would never happen to any rational agent that she/he does not know that she/he is asserting that  $p$ . This would justify (AKA). Meanwhile, it can be argued that (AKA) would not imply the KK principle, though it will imply a weak version of the KK principle, i.e., (AKK)  $Ap \rightarrow (Kp \rightarrow KKp)$ , which is harmless.

Moreover, since the primary purpose of asserting is to communicate knowledge - 'We need assertion to transmit knowledge' (2000:267; 1996:520), and since assertion is essentially a kind of overt speech act, it can be further argued that when an agent  $S$  asserts that  $p$ , not only the content of what she/he asserts (i.e., ' $p$ ') but also the making of this assertion (i.e., ' $Ap$ ') become transmitted knowledge. Now it would perfectly make sense to claim that to be a transmitted knowledge only if it is asserted. Therefore, if ' $Ap$ ' is understood as a transmitted knowledge, then ' $AAp$ ' holds. I believe that this account of assertibility would provide a sensible interpretation for ' $A$ ' in (A4). In fact, it can be shown that both (AKA) and (AKK) can be derived from (A4) and (AK). We then have a satisfactory account of assertibility without rendering fallacious consequence.

### 計畫緣由與目的

Williamson (1995) argues that Dummett's objections to truth-conditional theories of meaning also apply to any assertibility-conditional theory unless the following schema holds:

$$(A4) \quad Ap \rightarrow AAp, \text{ (where 'A' intends to stand for the concept of 'assertibility')}$$

which is essentially an application of the well-known S4 axiom in normal modal logic, namely,

$$(4) \quad Mp \rightarrow MMp, \text{ (where } M \text{ is a modal operator)}$$

to the notion of assertibility, a typical cognitive attitude.

But, he further points out that (A4) would fail to hold for any reasonable notion of assertibility. In particular, granted the primitiveness and primacy of knowledge, (A4) would imply the KK principle:

$$(KK) \quad Kp \rightarrow KKp,$$

which could not hold in any reasonable notion of knowing.

Recently, in his book *Knowledge and Its Limits* Williamson further proposes a knowledge account of assertion:

$$(AK) Ap \rightarrow Kp$$

It is striking that if we accept (AK), and reject (KK), then it seems that we would be forced to reject (A4) as well.

The main objective of this research is to provide an acceptable notion of assertion to buttress (A4). But before we go into a detailed examination of Williamson's knowledge account of assertion, a brief review of his program is called for.

### 結果與討論

The objective of this research is to provide a philosophical notion of assertion to show that (A4) can be reasonably accepted. In the meantime, I shall offer an argument for a weak version of the KK principle, namely,

$$(AKK) Ap \rightarrow (Kp \rightarrow KKp).$$

which states that if some agent S asserts that  $p$ , then if S knows that  $p$  then S knows that S knows that  $p$ . I shall then argue that the acceptance of (A4) will imply (AKK), rather than (KK), hence should be harmless.

In ordinary discourse, the primary purpose of making an assertion for some agent is to let the hearer (her/his audience) know of the content of one's assertion. That is to say, asserting is a kind of linguistic performance, which intends to provide one's audience with information through recognition that this is one's intention. Clearly, this intention includes the intention that the audience should know that the speaker himself knows that he is asserting. This indicates that

$$(AKA) Ap \rightarrow KAp.$$

It is important to bear in mind that when ' $Ap$ ' holds, that is to say, when ' $p$ ' is asserted, it would become a communicated knowledge. Therefore, the knowledge rule (KA) not merely says that the speaker knows that  $p$ , but also indicates that the hearer(s) would know that the speaker knows that  $p$ . Accordingly, whenever  $Ap$  holds for some  $p$ , the (KK) principle would hold for  $p$ . The reason is that ' $Ap$ ' is objective in that it is a public linguistic practice, so it would never happen to any rational agent that she/he asserts that  $p$  without knowing that  $p$ . This implies (AKA). But then the knowledge rule, together with the distribution of knowledge to conjuncts, indicates that  $Ap \rightarrow KKp$ .

By contrast, it can be argued that based on the assumption that (A4) holds, we have a weak version of (KK) principle. The argument may run as follows:

Assume

$$(A4) Ap \rightarrow AAp$$

Also, we take (KA) for granted, that is,

$$(KA) \quad Ap \rightarrow Kp$$

Then, applying (KA) to 'Ap', we have

$$(1) \quad AAp \rightarrow KAp$$

From (1) and (A4), by the transitivity of implication, it follows

$$(2) \quad Ap \rightarrow KAp$$

Now, applying the distribution of conjunction of knowledge to its conjuncts, from (KA), we have

$$(3) \quad KAp \rightarrow KKp$$

And from (2), (3), it follows that

$$(4) \quad Ap \rightarrow KKp$$

Accordingly, from (4) we would have

$$(5) \quad Ap \ \& \ Kp \rightarrow KKp$$

which is equivalent to

$$(AKK) \quad Ap \rightarrow (Kp \rightarrow KKp)$$

I shall take this as a weak version of the KK principle, which should hold for all  $p$  that it is asserted.

A satisfactory account of the notion of assertion will be proposed, which should be able to buttress (A4) without having any problematic consequence. This would provide a more solid setting for anti-realist theory of meaning.

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