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Speech act pluralism, minimal content and pragmemes☆

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ABSTRACT

As speech acts in contexts, pragmemes serve to illustrate speech act pluralism. What is less clear is whether they play an important role in determining primary truth conditions of sentences. Semantic contextualism is the view according to which word meaning or sentence meaning cannot be detached from a conversational practice. The presence of the context of utterance is a necessary condition for sentences to express semantic properties. The true meanings are those that are expressed by verbal or mental occurrences. According to this view, pragmemes do play a role in determining the primary truth conditions of sentences. Semantic minimalism suggests another way of conceiving the relationship between truth conditions and pragmemes. Sentence-types enjoy a certain semantic autonomy relative to their occurrences in particular conversational contexts. According to this picture, some sentence-types express minimal propositions and do not require a verbal event in order express primary truth conditions. Other sentence-types may express only "proposition-radicals", as suggested by Kent Bach. Pragmemes in this case serve to determine the missing ingredients in the primary truth conditions. However, these sentences are not counterexamples for minimalism, if the recourse to contextual features is prescribed by the very semantic rules of the sentence. Are there pragmemes that determine primary truth conditions and that are not prescribed by the very semantic features of the sentence? Carston and Recanati both argue that there are. There are cases of enrichment, loosening and transfer. They argue that pragmemes are cancelable. However, cancelability reveals the presence of a minimal content that could be expressed without these additional features. Are there pragmemes determining primary truth conditions that are not prescribed by semantic features and that are not cancelable? In this paper, I argue that there are no such examples. Pragmemes may contribute to the determination of the content of certain assertions, but they do not contribute to the determination of minimal content of the sentence-types used in these utterances. I conclude that a proper appreciation of the role of pragmemes forces us to accept speech act pluralism and bifurcationism, the idea that there are two levels of content: minimal and maximal. That is, different pragmemes produce different inferential augmentations of a minimal level of linguistic meaning. But this is precisely what semantic minimalism is all about.

1. Introduction

As speech acts in contexts, pragmemes play a major role in the pragmatics of language and they serve to illustrate what Hermann Cappelen and Ernest Lepore call speech act pluralism (Lepore and Cappelen, 2005). That is, a speaker may assert many different things by using the very same sentence in different contexts. What is less clear is whether pragmemes play an

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important role in determining the primary truth conditions of sentences. Lepore and Cappelen (2005) are eager to recognize that a very large quantity of propositions may be asserted with a sentence in the context of particular utterances. This is because that which is asserted depends upon factors that vary greatly and that may differ from the semantically expressed proposition. They accept that speech acts potentially express a very large and indeterminate quantity of propositions with a single sentence. Furthermore, they agree that in many cases we can express a full proposition only if the context of use comes into play. This happens when the sentence used contain indexical expressions. Their semantic minimalism must be understood as the claims that (i) the meanings of words are in general not determined by the context of utterance, (ii) sentences that are determined by context are grammatically sensitive to it and (iii) this sensitivity is explained by the presence of words belonging to a basic set of indexical expressions. (iv) In these cases, context is understood in the limited sense implying nothing more than time, place, speaker, and proximal or distal features.

In opposition to that view, semantic contextualism stipulates that nothing or almost nothing can be meant with language independently of conversational practice. The presence of the context of utterance is a necessary condition for sentences to express their full semantic potential. The true meanings are those that are expressed by verbal or mental *occurrences*. There is a moderate version held by Carston (2002) and Recanati (2004) according to which these contextualist claims apply only to sentences but not to words, since words do in general have conventional meanings apart from the context of utterance. But there are also radical versions such as those of Sperber and Wilson (1995) and Travis (2001) in which the very same claims are said to apply to words as well. Words have, at best, a "semantic potential," but their full and complete meaning depends upon the context of utterance. Despite the important differences between moderate versions and more radical versions, proponents of these two views agree that pragmemes play a role in determining the primary truth conditions of sentences. In this paper, I consider only the moderate version and concentrate on sentence meaning only. I ignore the issue of pragmatic intrusion into word meaning.

2. Secondary truth conditions

The question we want to ask concerns the argument for the suggestion that the literal meaning of sentences is determined by the intentions of speakers in a context of utterance. Semantic minimalism sees literal truth conditions and pragmemes as involving two different layers of meaning. Word-types and sentence-types enjoy a certain semantic autonomy relative to their occurrences in particular conversational contexts. According to this picture, a very large class of sentence-types express minimal propositions and do not require a verbal event in order to express minimal truth conditions. The only exception to this general rule is provided by sentences containing expressions belonging to the basic set of indexical expressions. According to this account, when the sentence expresses a minimal proposition, pragmemes may serve to determine secondary truth conditions, but not primary ones. Pragmemes behave in this case like conversational implicatures, that is, as intended meanings that add up to the minimal truth conditions of sentences. So they do not determine primary truth conditions. Why do we say that the implicated content is added up to a first layer of content? The reason is that the very same act of saying could be associated with a quite different conversational implicature. To put it differently, conversational implicatures are cancelable.

Capone (2009) has argued recently that some particularized conversational implicatures were not cancelable, but he reached that conclusion while considering very specific conversational situations. However, if he is right this only means that conversational implicatures cannot be cancelled from a specific conversational context, and it does not imply that they could not be cancelled from a specific act of saying. So for instance, in the context of writing a letter of recommendation for a candidate to become professor in a university department, it is impossible not to infer a particular negative implicature if I merely write that the candidate has a good handwriting. There seems to be no way of suggesting anything else. So in such a case, it looks as though sentence meaning were determined by pragmemes. But in the context where the same person would be applying for a job involving essentially writing abilities, the very same act of saying could become quite positive. So the fact that an implicature cannot be cancelled from a particular context of utterance does not imply that it is not cancelable. Cancelability should suppose the consideration of different contexts of use. The fact that a particular implicature cannot be cancelled from a particular context of use is compatible with its cancelability within different contexts of use. Particularized conversational implicatures may be difficult to avoid in a particular context of utterance, but the very same act of saying involved in them could have been made in quite a different particularized context of utterance, and this is all we need to argue that conversational implicatures are cancelable.

3. Are there propositional radicals?

So pragmemes very often determine secondary truth conditions. These truth conditions are on top of the ones that are expressed by the sentence itself, or by the sentence and the context if the sentence contains indexical expressions. But could they determine primary truth conditions of sentences that are devoid of indexical expressions? It seems that there are cases that can illustrate this thesis. Some sentence-types may perhaps express only "proposition-radicals," as suggested by Bach (2005), although they do not contain indexical expressions, on the surface at least. Pragmemes, according to this view, serve to determine the missing ingredients in the primary truth conditions. However, these cases are not clear counterexamples for minimalism, and not only because of the existence of a constant propositional radical. The reason is that the recourse to contextual features may be prescribed by semantic rules attached to the sentence. Minimal content is indeed not clearly

threatened if the requirement of context must be imposed by some semantic conditions associated with the sentence type. The requirement of context in determining content is taking place only because semantic rules tell us that we must look at the context of utterance in order to determine content.

This is perhaps the main motivation behind Lepore and Cappelen's wish to restrict context sensitive expressions to the basic set of indexical expressions (e.g. 'I', 'you', 'we', 'they', 'that', 'this', now, tomorrow, here, there, etc.). Indeed, the semantic character of an indexical such as 'I' is expressed by "the utterer of the this token." This does not force us to draw a contextualist conclusion, since it is an autonomous semantic rule associated with the word-type 'I' that prescribes a recourse to the context of utterance. In Kaplan's (1989) sense, the 'characters' that are attached to words themselves are not determined by context. As function from context to content, characters are autonomous and are not themselves determined by context. Since the indexical expressions belonging to the basic set do have characters, it seems that by restricting context sensitive sentences to those containing expressions belonging to the basic set, we avoid the pitfalls of contextualism.

There are indeed sentences that do not contain expressions belonging to the basic set but that are still incomplete in some sense. A sentence like "Rowan is Mr. Bean" may itself be context sensitive although it does not contain indexical expressions, but this may simply be because of an institutionalized use of proper names according to which they are meant to vary in different contexts. Like indexicals, proper names may have a 'character' expressing a function from context to content. This function may often be constant but it can also determine a different content in different contexts. Proper names may partly be assimilated to the set of indexical expressions. A proper name such as 'Rowan' is a shorthand for the definite description "The individual named 'Rowan'," and the definite article may refer to a unique individual in the context. Similarly for "It is raining." This sentence contains a covert location variable that can be saturated by means of an overt locative phrase.

In more controversial cases like "Mary has had enough" and "John is ready," Montminy (2006) argues that the best minimalist move would have been to treat them as saying something like "Mary has had enough of something or other" and "John is ready for something or other." If that were the correct account, then "A is not ready" would be a shorthand for "A is ready for nothing at all," which is absurd in most if not all contexts. But the sentence is perhaps to be completed by a reference to some specific thing (an event, action or another kind of specific thing).

We must perhaps acknowledge the fact that "A is ready" has to be completed in some sense. It looks almost like a proposition-radical. But at the same time, it is available for logical inferences like

All those who are ready won't be surprised

A is ready

A won't be surprised

So are there minimal truth conditions for "A is ready"? Or is the sentence a proposition radical?

I for one would tend to argue that the sentence implicitly contains a demonstrative. This seems to follow from the fact that it is all at once in some sense incomplete, in need of completion by a reference to something specific, and available for logical inferences, just like:

All those who are ready for this won't be surprised

A is ready for this

A won't be surprised

One could perhaps agree to assimilate a sentence like "A is ready" to a 'proposition radical,' if that were to mean only to a property of its syntactic surface, but we should then assimilate what is expressed by that sentence to the linguistic meaning of a sentence containing a demonstrative expression. This is perhaps a controversial move that Bach would not approve. So how are we to justify this assimilation? Perhaps along the following lines. The utterance of "A is ready" with the intention to refer to a particular food plate is semantically equivalent to an utterance of "A is ready for this", where 'this' is used as a demonstrative to be completed by a demonstration in which the utterer is pointing to the same food plate. Now in "A is ready for this," we have a semantically constant sentence, for the demonstrative itself expresses a semantical rule that prescribes saturation. A sentence containing a demonstrative expression may be described as incomplete, but it is only in a very mild sense. "A is ready" is incomplete in a more radical way, but only on the surface syntax, for the utterance of such a sentence can be seen as an elliptical way of saying "A is ready for this". And when we reach that level, the sentence is no longer incomplete in some radical sense. It is of course in some sense still incomplete, but just as any old sentence containing context sensitive expressions belonging to the basic set.

If someone asks you out of the blue if you are ready, you will be inclined to answer: "for what?" This shows how incomplete the sentence is. But its incomplete character is explained by the elliptical and therefore implicit presence of a demonstrative expression like 'this', so that the sentence should read "John is ready for *this*" (or "Mary has had enough of *this*"). Here I follow Capone's minimalist explanation of the nature of such incomplete propositions (Capone, 2008). If they could be interpreted as implicitly containing empty slots that can be interpreted as demonstratives or discourse-deictic

anaphoric expressions, sentences expressing incomplete propositions would indeed be harmless for minimalism, for they would be analysed as implicitly involving expressions belonging to the basic set.

Similarly, "John is tall" and "Mary is rich" would also contain implicit semantic empty slots calling for completion by a particular reference class. These sentences should perhaps be analysed as "John is tall (relatively to *this* reference class)," and "Mary is rich (relatively to *this* reference class)." Quantified statements like "All came for breakfast" would be an elliptical form for "All of *them* came for breakfast" (or "*They* all came for breakfast"), and would thus also be implicitly containing expressions belonging to the basic set of indexical expressions.

So it may be necessary to enlarge the set of context sensitive sentences beyond those explicitly containing words belonging to the basic set. But it would by no means ruin the main claims made by minimalists, for these sentences could be in need of saturation, not modulation. Minimalists need not be claiming that there are minimal truth conditions associated with each and every indicative sentence of the language not containing indexical expressions. In addition to sentences expressing minimal propositions, there may perhaps also be sentences expressing proposition radicals that implicitly contain expressions requiring the presence of context. All of this is perfectly compatible with semantic minimalism.

4. Can pragmemes determine primary truth conditions?

Contextualists argue that an innumerable amount of sentences not containing indexicals are dependent on context. They claim that there is an unlimited dependence of the meaning of different linguistic items on other sentential elements showing that the scope of items needing indexes is much larger than commonly accepted. A classic situation serves to illustrate the point. It concerns the use of color words. I stated at the outset that I would not discuss pragmatic intrusion concerning word meaning, but let us consider for a moment the use of color words. If someone says that red grapefruits are on sale at the department store, it seems that the truth conditions of the sentence cannot be determined without knowledge of speaker's intentions. Is the speaker referring to fruits that are red on their surface or red inside their surface? The minimalist answers that the truth conditions of the sentence make reference to grapefruits that are red, whether on their surface or inside their surface. A similar situation occurs in the case of the sentence "Pierre went to the gym." For the minimalist philosopher, minimal truth conditions suppose that Pierre either went inside the gym or in the vicinity of the gym. Of course, the speaker may with her use of the word 'red', intend to refer to those grapefruits that are red inside as opposed to those who are yellowish inside and outside. But this is relevant only for determining what the speaker means in the course of saying what she is saying, not for determining the content of the sentence itself. My diagnosis is that contextualists very often confuse what is expressed by the sentence with what is expressed by an utterance of the sentence in the context of an illocutionary act. They take for granted that we must be looking for contextual utterances in order to determine the literal content and truth conditions of sentences, but context is relevant only for determining the content of her illocutionary act.

We have seen that pragmemes do not play a role in determining the primary truth conditions of the sentences expressing minimal propositions. When we use these sentences, pragmemes involve conversational implicatures and determine secondary truth conditions. We have also seen that pragmemes can determine primary truth conditions for other sentences, as long as these are interpreted as grammatically sensitive to context and as long as they do so because of the explicit or implicit presence of expressions belonging to the basic set. But in these last examples, the pragmatic features are not optional, since they are semantically called for. So we still do not have a strong case for contextualism.

We must now ask whether pragmemes can sometimes determine primary truth conditions for sentences that call for modulation and not for saturation. We are wondering whether pragmemes can sometimes involve explicatures, that is, speech acts involving a pragmatic intrusion in the determination of literal content that determines optional primary truth conditions. Carston (2002) and Recanati (2004) both argue that there are many cases like this. Recanati's contextualism stipulates the existence of a relation of dependence between literal meaning and pragmemes such that the literal truth conditions would all at once be (i) primary, (ii) optional and (iii) intentional.

(i) The pragmatic factors concerned are *primary* in the sense that they play a part in the determination of the literal truth-conditions of what is said with a sentence. They can be distinguished from secondary pragmatic factors that add an additional layer of (pragmatic) meaning to the literal meaning. As primary factors they are not to be confused with irony, metaphor, conversational implicatures and indirect speech acts. All of these presuppose statements that already have a literal meaning. But we are more interested in phenomena that play a part in the specification of literal or primary truth-conditions. (ii) The relevant pragmatic factors are also *optional* in the sense that they do not stem from semantic rules associated with expressions. Indexical and demonstrative expressions, for example, have functioning rules that semantically enforce a recourse to the context of utterance. The context allows us to complete the statement, which then expresses full and complete truth-conditions. This would be the phenomenon of saturation that minimalists are in a position to accept. It should not be confused with the phenomenon of modulation that contextualists are postulating, in which facultative pragmatic factors play a useful role for determining the literal truth-conditions of a given statement. In order to show that the primary truth conditions that pragmemes determine are not prescribed by the literal meaning of the sentence, Recanati argues that they are optional, which is another way of saying that they are cancelable. If indeed the intended meanings are optional, then they are not imposed by the very semantics of the sentence and they seem to offer a clear case of intrusion of pragmemes in the very content of the sentence. (iii) Finally, the pragmatic factors concerned are also described as *intentional* in the sense that it does not suffice to refer to a limited notion of context that implies nothing more than time, place, speaker, and proximal or distal features. We must also bring in the intended meanings and the beliefs of the speakers.

The essential idea of Carston and Recanati is that primary, optional and intentional pragmatic factors will at times intrude *between* the conventional meanings of words and the actual truth conditions of sentences. The literal truth-conditions of many utterances are determined in part by the conventional meaning of constitutive expressions, but also by these sorts of pragmatic factors. The truth-conditions that stem merely from the conventional meaning of words are not always relevant. The truth-conditions that are meant by the speaker – and which are accessible to hearers – are also at times the relevant determining factor. Recanati maintains that diverse pragmatic phenomena serve to illustrate this point of view. There are cases of enrichment like for example, "he took his key and opened the door," in which we understand that he opened the door *with* his key; cases of loosening like for example, "the bank machine swallowed my credit card," in which we understand that there is no actual phenomenon of swallowing; and cases of transfer like, for example, "the ham sandwich left without paying," in which we understand that it is the eater of the sandwich who took off without paying.

Finally, Recanati maintains that the intended meaning goes hand in hand with the idea of recognition by the addressee. Uptake must be secured. So the intended meaning is also the meaning to which a normal interpreter will have access. He therefore goes on arguing that sometimes, speakers and hearers have direct access to intuitive truth conditions that do not correspond to those that seem to be expressed by the sentence itself. He also claims that speakers and hearers do not even compute the truth conditions supposedly determined by the sentences themselves. This is why the intended truth conditions are said to be primary. They are not parasitic upon a minimal content that would be asserted by the speaker and grasped by the hearer.

How can we reconstruct the argument for contextualism? Here is a first attempt. Truth conditions constitute an important semantic ingredient. Now very often the truth conditions of *utterances* require for their specification the presence of pragmemes. There is therefore a close link between the literal meaning of those sentences and pragmemes, and this suggests that pragmemes are the primary vehicles of meaning. This version of the argument is not valid. The fact that the truth conditions of an *utterance* requires context does not prove that there is a close link between the literal meaning of the *sentence* uttered and the context of utterance. It establishes such a connection with the utterance of the sentence and not with the sentence itself. There is however a variant of the same argument that might look more sound. It is this variant that seems to be defended by Recanati. A missing premise in the first version of the argument helps establishing a close connection between the literal meaning of sentences and the utterances of those sentences. The availability principle provides the missing premise in the argument. The availability principle stipulates that the truth conditions of a sentence must be those that are available to both speaker and hearer (Recanati, 2004:20). Now the primary truth conditions that people have directly access to are very often the ones that are determined by pragmemes. From these premises, it seems we can draw the appropriate contextualist conclusion. Note that this view is compatible with the suggestion that there are truth conditions expressed by the sentence itself. It is just that the semantic content expressed by the sentence itself may not be directly available to those who are parsing the sentence in that context, and so it is not relevant in these contexts.

It is important to note also the analogy between the argument thus reconstructed and the thesis argued for by Dummett (1993) that a theory of meaning must also be a theory of understanding. This claim played a major role in Dummett's argument that the meaning of a sentence could not simply be correlated with a set of truth conditions. Speakers and hearers very often do not have a direct access to the truth conditions of sentences. So a theory of meaning as truth conditions falls short of determining what is understood by speakers and hearers. If truth conditions fall on the side of 'denotation,' there has to be a corresponding side of 'sense' that captures what is grasped both by speakers and hearers. Dummett thought that what is grasped is a verification procedure. Recanati's argument is somewhat similar, for he imposes a normative constraint on what is to count as literally expressed by the sentence. This cannot merely be the proposition expressed by the conventional rules associated with the sentence. Literal meaning has to include what is directly accessible to both speakers and hearers. And then Recanati claims that the intuitive truth conditions that are associated to a sentence often do not coincide with the official ones prescribed by the sentence itself.

There is however an important difference between Dummett's argument and Recanati's argument. Dummet's verification procedures are themselves associated with sentence types and not with sentence tokens. Dummett is not a contextualist philosopher. Recanati's intuitive truth conditions are associated by speakers and hearers in particular contexts of utterance. The accessibility constraint applies to what takes place in a conversational context. The question should then be asked: why should we map the intuitive conversational truth conditions onto the sentence itself and draw conclusions concerning its literal meaning?

Dummett's claim that a theory of meaning must be a theory of understanding enables us to see a little more clearly what is involved in Recanati's own theory. But it does not do all the work needed for concluding that the intuitive truth conditions are part of the literal meaning of the sentence. In order to see this, it is important to note that the accessibility constraint may in principle be satisfied by the truth conditions expressed by the sentence itself even if these are not intuitively those associated by hearer and speaker in a given context. The accessibility constraint may be satisfied as long as in some context or other, both speaker and hearer can have access to the proposition expressed. Now if pragmemes are really optional, then there can be other contexts in which the semantic content of the sentence, that is, the minimal proposition (or its minimal truth conditions), is directly accessible to all the participants in the conversation. The literal content of the sentence is in those contexts part of the normal interpretation of the sentence. So the minimal content is accessible, and thus could be treated as the primary content expressed by the sentence, allowing for the presence of a secondary layer of intended meaning in other contexts. But this is not what Recanati is suggesting. He is rather arguing that the literal meaning of a sentence in a given context is determined by what is accessible *in that context*. So if in a specific context, the intuitive truth

conditions associated by the speaker and hearer are different from the ones expressed by the sentence itself, then in that context, the literal meaning of the sentence expresses a content that is determined by pragmemes. So the notion of accessibility is context relative. The fact that the primary truth conditions could coincide in some other context with those that are expressed by the sentence itself surely would show that these minimal truth conditions are accessible in that other context, but it has no implications for determining what is accessible to both speakers in a different context. The determination of primary truth conditions should always be a function from what is accessible in a context.

As we shall see, here one senses the danger of a circular argument. For if literal meaning is determined by what is accessible and if accessibility is context relative, then surely, literal meaning will be context relative. But why should the accessibility constraint be construed as context relative? Are we not cheating here a little bit? We want to determine whether literal truth conditions are context relative, and we are told that they must be accessible. But if it is implicitly stipulated that accessibility must be context relative, then the accessibility premise in the argument is doing all the work. I shall soon return to the circular character of the contextualist argument. For the moment, let us simply conclude that there appears at best to be contexts in which content is determined by the minimal proposition expressed by the sentence, and contexts in which the content is determined by pragmemes. But what is this content? Is it the content of an utterance or the content of the sentence itself? If accessibility is context relative, it seems that we can only conclude that it is the content of an utterance. So one may wonder whether pragmemes do indeed determine the literal meaning of the sentence. Are they not instead only determining the truth conditions of a sentence-in-a-context-of-utterance, and therefore determining the truth conditions of an utterance of the sentence, and not of the sentence itself? And if so, then where is the intrusion?

5. One last refuge

Recanati ran into trouble because he thought that pragmatic features had to be optional, and he thought they had to be optional because they should not be prescribed by the grammatical sensitivity of the sentence itself to context. The problem with that solution, as we have seen, is that it implies that the truth conditions expressed by the sentences themselves will also be accessible in some other contexts and that they look very much like the minimal truth conditions that contextualists are trying to avoid. The only way out is to contextualize the accessibility constraint, but apart from the fact that the conclusion of the contextualist argument seems to be contained in such a premise, there is also the problem that intuitive truth conditions are associated with utterances, and not with sentences. Are there however pragmemes determining primary truth conditions that are not prescribed by the semantic features and that are not cancelable? Burton-Roberts (2006) and Capone (2006) argue that there are. For example, "Pierre shrugged and left" means (via explicature) "Pierre shrugged and *then* left," and cannot be interpreted otherwise although nothing in the sentence is grammatically sensitive to context. But it is not clear why we could not read the sentence as describing two simultaneous events. And if so, interpreting it as describing a sequence of events can be cancelled (Pierre shrugged and left *all at once*). Similar remarks apply concerning the example discussed by Carston (2002:138). The explicature of "Pierre ran to the edge of the cliff and jumped" is something like "Pierre ran to the edge of the cliff and jumped over the edge of the cliff." For Carston, this explicature can be cancelled by saying that Pierre ran to the edge of the cliff and jumped but stayed on the top of the cliff. It is simply false to suggest that Carston is playing on two different meanings attached to the word 'jump': a directional meaning and a transitive meaning. The fact of the matter is that the sentence initially contains an intransitive occurrence of the verb. When the sentence is uttered, the speaker and hearer can parse truth conditions that go beyond the literal meaning of the sentence, in accordance with a transitive use of the verb 'jump'. But since someone may also in other contexts use the same sentence in accordance with the directional meaning of the word 'jump', the usual explicature can be cancelled. Additional elements not contained in the initial proposition indicate that the tragic interpretation need not be the good one.

A more interesting case is the following:

(*) If the king of France died and France became a republic I would be happy, but if France became a republic and the king of France died, I would be unhappy,

This sentence 'prima facie' appears to contain a contradictory hypothesis entertained by the speaker, but the contextualist philosopher argues that it is not really so. Since one cannot imagine someone intentionally accepting a contradiction, the contradictory reading, if Capone is right, is simply not in the cards. There is only one possible interpretation that avoids the contradiction and it is one in which the conjunction is read as involving an ordered sequence of events. We should parse (*) as saying that if the king of France died and *then* France became a republic I would be happy, but if France became a republic and *then* the king of France died, I would be unhappy.

Here is another possible context of utterance. The speaker has mixed feelings concerning the complex state of affairs involving a revolution and the death of the king. As a matter of fact, she has contradictory emotions of happiness and unhappiness. In her assertion of (*), she is expressing these contradictory feelings by referring twice to the complex state of affairs, and the order in which the facts are mentioned is not relevant. The point here is that when it comes to emotions, contradictions are quite possible. We live our lives full of contradictory emotions and mixed feelings about our personal and social environment. A third possible context of utterance is the situation where the teacher in a classroom intends to show that from a false premise one could infer a true proposition as well as a false proposition. Let us assume that the conjunctive proposition "The king of France died and France became a republic" is false, and that the sentences "I would be happy" and "I

would be unhappy'' are respectively true and false. She then proceeds in uttering (*) to illustrate the point. In these two alternative cases, we need not explicate what is going on by appealing to an ordered sequence of events.

Of course, if the context of utterance were described in details, some explicatures would not even arise. It is not that they would be cancelable. They could not even be considered. But I claim that this would be so only in relation to a given context. And as I have shown in the case of conversational implicatures, cancelability is a notion that should be applied to different contexts of utterance and it should not be construed as indexed to a context. I agree that some utterances performed in certain contexts are to be explained by a specific explicature and that all others should be excluded in that context. So some explicatures do not even arise in these contexts. But explicatures should not be indexed to a context, unless of course we stipulate at the outset that they must be context relative. But this once again builds contextualism in the very notions we are using. The substantial conclusions is already contained in these fiats.

6. Saying and asserting

Let me now move to considerations that diagnose the confusions leading one to embrace semantic contextualism. The first problem stems from the usual failure to distinguish between locutionary acts of saying and illocutionary acts of asserting. I believe Austin was right and Searle was wrong on the distinction between locutionary acts and illocutionary acts. The locutionary act is an act of saying something meaningful while uttering something. The speaker says something that is the meaning expressed by the sentence uttered. She refers to objects, expresses senses, predicates properties, implies semantic consequences and presupposes semantic presuppositions. This is what is involved in her locutionary act of saying something. In particular, there is no commitment to truth involved in an act of saying (or locutionary act). Whether I assert, promise, order, or declare that p, I am in each case saying that p, so saying is not just another illocutionary act.

What is the difference between an illocutionary act of assertion and a locutionary act of saying? There are two separate issues involved: the locutionary/illocutionary distinction and the distinction between saying and asserting. In indirect speech or in the utterance of propositional attitude sentences, the subordinate clause is said but not asserted. Consider the sentence ''Graham believes that we can save the world.'' If that sentence is uttered, then the subordinate clause is also uttered. So there is a phonetic act involved. And since the subordinate clause is a well formed grammatical sentence, then the phonetic act involved is also a phatic act. And since the sentence is meaningful, it is also a rhetic act. So the utterance of the subordinate clause is a locutionary act. But when I utter the whole sentence, I perform no assertion of the subordinate clause. Of course, very often, when we perform a locutionary act on a sentence, we do also simultaneously perform an illocutionary act on that sentence. The illocutionary act is performed in the course of performing the locutionary act. So if you utter ''We can save the world,'' the act of saying goes along with a commitment to the truth conditions, but it is because in the course of saying it, you performed an assertion. If you had uttered ''He believes that we can save the world,'' you would also have performed a locutionary act of saying the same minimal proposition, but without commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed, because it is embedded in a larger sentential context. The locutionary act is the act of expressing a proposition and expressing minimal truth conditions, but it does not involve a commitment to the truth of the sentence.

The other issue concerns the distinction between saying and asserting. There may be a use of 'saying' that amounts to 'asserting'. But here I am using 'saying' in a somewhat technical sense synonymous with what I take to be the locutionary act. We must coin an expression to refer to what is happening when we are using (as opposed to mentioning) a sentence without committing ourselves to the truth of that sentence. Is there a sense of 'saying' in ordinary parlance that captures this technical notion of a locutionary act? The answer is 'yes'. There are at least two institutionalized uses of the word 'say', and I am going to use them in the next sentence. Let me just say-1 that when we do not make an assertion, but we order, promise, declare something, we are always saying-2 something. In the sentence just uttered, 'say-1' is the illocutionary use of the ordinary word 'say', and 'say-2' is the other use, the one that corresponds with the locutionary sense. If I utter ''Alice believes that school is out for summer'' and ''Al believes that school is out for summer,'' I say-1 two things about Alice and Al. That is, I make two assertions. But in both cases, I say-2 the same thing about them. To make use of Donald Davidson's vocabulary, there is a samesaying relation between the two subordinate clauses.

We can illustrate the use of 'say-2' in ordinary parlance with another example. If you utter ''They shoot horses don't they?,'' and someone does not hear you clearly, she could ask, ''what did you say''? If you wrongly stick with a concept of saying understood as always involving an illocutionary act committing one to truth, then you should answer: ''I was not saying anything. I was just asking a question.'' This sounds odd. In my sense of say (say-2), you should simply repeat your question.

Why is it so important to distinguish between locutionary acts of saying and illocutionary acts of assertions? There is a philosophical argument that can be made on the basis of the distinction that has a bearing on the issue of contextualism. Locutionary acts express minimal propositions or minimal truth conditions. Full blown assertions may come equipped with loads of presuppositions and background beliefs, and therefore often determine maximal truth conditions. We may use sentences that express minimal propositions or minimal truth conditions in order to capture, express or describe what someone is saying-2, but we also very often use them while presupposing the complex cognitive architecture of each other's mental framework. The sentence ''Pierre is cutting the grass'' expresses a minimal proposition or minimal truth conditions and it is true in the minimal sense if Pierre cuts the grass, whether he is using a lawnmower or a razor blade. But in the thick, robust sense, it may be asserted with certain expectations and background presuppositions. It is in this latter sense that we are entitled to claim that the 'truth conditions' have not been satisfied if Pierre only used a razor blade.

Illocutionary acts are done in the course of saying something. What am I doing if I perform an assertion while saying something? In an assertion, I express a belief, I presuppose the existence of a justification for the content of my speech act, and I imply that the content of my speech act is true at least in part because of the presupposed justification. In a promise, I express an intention, I presuppose that you expect me to do the thing specified by the content of my speech act, and I imply that the content of my speech act will be fulfilled at least in part because of your expectation. In an order, I express a desire, I presuppose the existence of an expectation on my part that you do the thing specified in the content of the speech act, and I imply that you should bring about the situation described by the content of my speech act at least in part because of my expectation. In an expressive illocutionary act, I express an emotion, I presuppose the existence of a state of affairs and I imply that the content of my speech act is justified partly because of the presupposed state of affairs. Finally, in a declarative illocutionary act, I express my decision to bring it about that p by saying 'p', I presuppose that I have the authority to bring it about that p by saying it, and I imply that p is brought about by my utterance because of my presupposed authority.

Now all of this is done in the course of saying something. So saying p is one thing, and asserting q while we are saying p (whether or not p = q) is another thing. There are alternative ways of construing a taxonomy of illocutionary acts (viz. Searle's notion of direction of fit), but the important point is that it does not have much to do with locutionary acts of saying things.

7. Circular contextualist arguments

I am concerned about the implications of ignoring the locutionary act of saying for the argument that leads to contextualism. If we are bound to consider only illocutionary acts of assertions, we are perhaps then inevitably led to think that sentences can only be meaningful in contexts. Cappelen and Lepore admit speech act pluralism, and this relates to what takes place at the illocutionary level. They agree that we can use a sentence in many different ways in order to perform different kinds of illocutionary acts: that is, acts with the same illocutionary force (assertion) but with different contents. We should not be surprised about this since, as we saw, illocutionary acts of assertions come with expressed beliefs, pragmatic presuppositions and pragmatic implications. If we begin by ignoring at the very outset the legitimacy of the distinction between saying and asserting, this can play a major role in the argument for contextualism. I am wondering whether we are not ruling out from the very beginning the alternative conclusion, that is minimalism.

This would be a somewhat circular argument in favor of contextualism. First, we reject the distinction between locutionary acts of saying and illocutionary acts. We then proceed to consider illocutionary acts only. We then note that many different intentional illocutionary acts of assertions can be performed on a single sentence even if it is devoid of indexicals and demonstratives. Primary pragmatic features in the context seem to explain this pluralism. Therefore, literal meaning is strongly dependent on context, and pragmemes become the primary vehicle of meaning. But in this argument, the rejection of the distinction between locutionary and illocutionary acts of assertions in favor of intentional illocutionary acts is an indication of a possible circular argument. If our objects of study are intentional acts of asserting many different things in different contexts, then obviously, meaning is context relative and pragmemes are the primary vehicles of meaning.

Of course, the contextualist philosopher may be willing to accept the distinction between locutionary acts of saying and illocutionary acts of asserting. At first, granting this point might be seen as granting minimalism, because it seems like she is willing to accept the existence of minimal propositions or minimal truth conditions. But just like the radical contextualist philosopher might be willing to accept that words have a 'semantic potential', the moderate contextualist philosopher might be willing to accept that sentences have a semantic potential, but it is one that is not relevant for determining the intuitive truth conditions that both speaker and hearer associate to the sentence. But I still have worries concerning the circularity of the argument. If the contextualist philosopher is assuming that what is important is the process of interpretation of occurrences, this also influences the conclusion of the argument which is precisely that meaning is relative to contextual features in the context of utterance. I have expressed this worry in my critical study of François Recanati's *Literal Meaning* (Seymour, 2006). Recanati replied that he is perfectly willing to admit that, in some sense, we may be saying the same thing when we assert two different things. And he thinks for this reason that he is not vulnerable to a criticism of circularity in his argument. There may be something minimal that we say even when we assert many different things, but that does not prove minimalism. On the contrary, Recanati insists that the content of what is said, even if it exists, plays no important role in the process of a normal interpretation, which is after all the only game in town. But it is here that I locate the most important danger of a circular argument. The failure to distinguish between locutionary and illocutionary acts would simply be a further indication of circularity, but the real problem concerns the emphasis on interpretation or actual processing. If we are all interpreters struggling to decipher particular inscriptions, and if what is crucial is to capture what is going on in utterance events, well then of course, we must concede immediately victory to the contextualist philosopher. Linguistic inscriptions are events, or tokens, and it has already been granted that we could make very different illocutionary acts of assertions with the same sentence, even if it is devoid of indexicals and demonstratives. Now if doing this is the only game in town, then of course, pragmemes are at center stage and they have won the day.

There may of course be many different contexts of utterance in which the literal, minimal content does not appear to coincide with the content of the interpretation. But this has a bearing on literal meaning only if, from the start, we assume that literal meaning is what is taking place at the illocutionary level. To take a classic example, when Ms Malaprop is interpreted as asserting that this is a nice arrangement of epithets, her actual act of saying that this is a nice derangement of epitaphs does not figure in the net result of the process of interpretation. Similarly, there is an important discrepancy between what is actually said and what is interpreted in cases of enrichment (she took her key and then unlocked the door),

loosening (the cash machine swallowed my credit card) and transfer (the ham sandwich has left without paying). What is 'literally' said may be interesting, but according to the contextualist, it is not relevant to what is actually asserted and interpreted. But the minimalist philosopher is eager to reply: so what? What is the bearing of these observations on the issue of literal meaning? It is here that the contextualist philosopher is forced right from the start to answer that what is important in meaning is what goes on at the level of speech acts. But was not it precisely the conclusion the contextualist was looking for?

So I am afraid that contextualist conclusions are very often implicitly contained either in the rejection of the locutionary/illocutionary distinction, in the methodological principle that interpretation or information processing is the only game in town, or as suggested above, in the accessibility constraint, if it is interpreted as accessibility-in-a-certain-context. Another instance of circularity is bound to occur in arguments that assume that one could diagnose pragmatic intrusion if some pragmatic features cannot be canceled-in-the-context-of-utterance. If what is important occurs at the level of assertions, interpretations and accessible truth conditions, well then of course, it is hard to resist the contextualist conclusion. But these methodological assumptions make almost all the work in the argument, and they already presuppose the truth of contextualism. If we insist that what is important concerning meaning is what takes place at the level of intended meaning, interpretation or illocutionary acts, then what is important is automatically related to occurrences, tokens and events along with their contextual features. We should not then be surprised to be in a position to conclude, along with Recanati, that meaning is relative to illocutionary acts and that illocutionary acts are the primary vehicles of meaning. Recanati's argument is that even if there is a minimal proposition expressed by a locutionary act, it does not necessarily play a part in occurrent on-line processing, but he is assuming from the start that what is important to meaning theory is "occurrent on-line processing," and this is why he is in a position to conclude that meaning is context relative.

A similar debate has been raised with Rob Stainton in a private exchange. He asks: "Are we trying to model natural languages, understood as systems of expressions, or are we modeling human psychological processing of language in context?" If we are assuming from the start that meaning theory is "modeling human psychological processing of language in context," well who will be surprised about the conclusion that meaning is relative to context?

The crucial issue is that of accessibility. For if the potential truth conditions are accessible in certain contexts, then they are accessible period, unless of course, we arbitrarily decide to constrain the accessibility principle to the context of utterance. This, I believe, is what is taking place in most if not all contextualist arguments. Since optionality implies that the potential minimal content is accessible in certain contexts, accessibility has to be construed as a contextual feature in order to avoid the conclusion that there are minimal literal contents in each context of utterance. Minimal content will be accessible in certain contexts but it would not be accessible in other contexts. So it appears that the only way out of incoherence for the contextualist is to say that there is no such thing as accessibility in general. Literal meaning must intimately be related to what is accessible in a context. The contextualist philosopher must assume from the start that the medium in which literal meaning is determined is the context of utterance.

8. The final blow

Let us avoid for the case of argument the problems related to the circularity of the argument. Let us say that she can make the controversial and circular methodological claim according to which the most important level of meaning is the eventful language processing. Let us ignore the fact that this claim contains in a way the essential ingredients involved in the conclusion of her argument. Let us instead consider the debate concerning the claim that what is said, the minimal proposition (or minimal truth conditions) is not relevant in this process.

The minimalist philosopher could still argue against contextualism that even if language processing were crucial, minimal propositions or minimal truth conditions would still be essential to the language processing of sentences involved in cases of enrichment, loosening and transfer. Without them, interpretation would never get off the ground. This is especially so in the case of Ms Malaprop (Davidson, 2005). The interpreter must first consider the literal meaning of the sentence uttered, that is ("this is a nice derangement of epitaphs"), and then finds it odd in the context of a poetry class, for instance. But then the interpreter notices that another sentence, phonetically similar to the one uttered, has a literal meaning that is relevant in the context ("this is a nice arrangement of epithets"). So the interpreter is led to conclude that Ms Malaprop asserted the latter. Now even if the net result of the interpretation does not include what was said, it is hard to claim that what was said did not play an important role in the process of interpretation. As Wittgenstein would put it, capturing what Ms Malaprop wanted to say is moving from a form of expression to another form of expression (Wittgenstein, 1953, § 334).

I acknowledge that Recanati's arguments are compatible with admitting that there are locutionary acts. He simply argues that, very often, what is expressed by the sentence is not processed by speaker and interpreter, and that it is useless precisely for that reason. But there are problems with his examples, similar to the problems I just raised concerning Ms Malaprop. To give an obvious illustration, if someone utters "she took her key and unlocked the door," who will deny that the minimal proposition expressed by the sentence was of no use? The information that she took her key and unlocked the door is surely contained in the information that she took her key and unlocked the door with her key! The point of Recanati, of course, is that we never parse the minimal proposition separately, and then add the information that the door was opened with the key. Nevertheless, the argument seems to rest on very little evidence. I would argue the same thing concerning many (all?) cases of loosening ("the cash machine swallowed my card"). The first time that we hear such a sentence we may imagine a strange deglutition process. We then very rapidly get use to the secondary meaning, but the fact that we do get use to it does

not turn it into a primary meaning. I would argue in a similar way against Recanati concerning transfer, for when we say that the ham sandwich left without paying, we are first processing the proposition literally expressed by the sentence, in order to arrive at the conclusion that it must have been the client that ate the ham sandwich and left without paying. You first hear what has been asserted as very strange indeed, and then you get the point. According to Recanati, we never reach the stage where the minimal proposition is processed. We merely feel the incompatibility between the subject and predicate, and then shift the process of interpretation by taking into consideration primary pragmatic features. The first proposition that we grasp is the one determined by these pragmatic features, and not the one literally expressed by the sentence. For the minimalist, on the contrary, we do reach the stage of processing the minimal proposition, for feeling the incompatibility between the subject and the predicate amounts to an attitude toward the sentence containing these subject and predicate. In order to arrive at a final interpretation, we must first consider the strange character of what is being said, and then consider "secondary pragmatic features." The minimal propositions or truth conditions may not end up in the final interpretation, but they are occurring at one point in the process of interpretation.

One may think that the debate might be settled by considering "reaction experiments." Perhaps these can show that the speaker who hears about the ham sandwich leaving the restaurant automatically computes that it is a person that left. Metaphors and idioms investigated in those reaction experiments may perhaps show that interpretations are made without considering literal meaning first. But if the experiment has been performed on someone who is accustomed to a secondary meaning, the fact that she no longer computes the primary meaning does not turn secondary meaning into primary meaning. Of course, one could reply that reaction experiment in a particularized situation allow us to draw conclusion concerning literal meaning, but this is problematic for reasons that were already stated. We should not draw any conclusion from such a result unless of course we stipulate at the outset that literal meaning is determined by pragmemes in a context, for this would be precisely asserting the conclusion of the argument, and not providing an argument.

In any case, as we shall now see, the situation is even worse than that for the contextualist. Let us grant for the sake of argument that reaction experiments do confirm Recanati's interpretation. Nevertheless, I shall show that we can ascribe to speakers and hearers commitments concerning what has been said. I have distinguished two uses of saying: one which corresponds to asserting, that is, an illocutionary act, and one which corresponds to the locutionary act. In other words, I grant that sometimes we use 'saying' as synonymous with asserting, but there is still a distinction to be made because saying is also sometimes used in the sense of a locutionary act. But we should also introduce a distinction between 'intentional' reports and 'material' reports in order to capture another distinction between two different uses of saying in its locutionary sense (Seymour, 1999, 1992). As we shall see, this distinction can be used to refute contextualist philosophers.

Let me first discuss very briefly the distinction between these two kinds of report. An intentional report describes an intentional state, act or action. In the full blooded sense of intentionality, the state, act or action will have all the usual features of intentionality: directedness (intentional object), intensionality (with an s), reflexivity and first person authority. That is, if someone is in an intentional state of belief that p, she knows that she believes that p. If someone performs an intentional act of saying, the person knows what she is saying.

A material report describes a state, an act or an action by supposing much less than full blooded intentionality. It assumes the existence of a functional state of the agent. The properties of directedness and perhaps to a certain extent also intensionality are exemplified, but not necessarily reflexivity and first person authority. In the material sense, Fido might be described as believing that there is a cat in the tree because he behaves in a way that seems to take for granted the existence of a certain state of affairs. Fido is not reflexive and certainly does not have first person authority, but the animal is nevertheless in a certain functional state of belief. Unconscious beliefs provide another example. Oedipus intentionally believed he wanted to marry Jocasta, but he did not realize that Jocasta was his mother. So he did not intentionally believe that he wanted to marry his mother. But at the level of his unconscious states, he might have believed it.

Of course, since intentional states, acts and actions are themselves types of functional phenomena, material reports can also apply to them. If I intentionally believe that p, I also as a matter of fact find myself in a functional state of believing that p. Intentional states are types of functional states. A material report is one that describes a state, an act or an action as functional without assuming full blooded intentionality. But it does not deny the presence of full blooded intentionality in what it is describing. This is why it can also apply to full blooded intentional states, acts or actions. But since it does not assume full blooded intentionality, it can also be used to describe functional states, acts or actions that do not exhibit all the properties generally associated with full blooded intentionality.

Another instance of application of material reports would be concerning certain kinds of locutionary acts. When I utter some sentence, there are things that I am saying that I do not necessarily fully comprehend or entertain. I might of course know what I am saying while saying it, but I might also fail to attend or grasp all the elements involved in my act of saying. This might be because of my ignorance (not fully grasping the meaning of a word, for instance) or simply because I did not fully attend to what I was saying.

This can happen when I intend to mean something in the course of saying some other thing. There is something I intend to mean in the course of my act of saying and, precisely for that reason, I am not entirely vigilant on the actual meaning of what I am in fact saying. So when someone utters 'she took her key and opened the door' or 'the cash machine swallowed my credit card' or 'the ham sandwich left without paying,' she does not necessarily realize what she is actually saying. There are true material reports that could describe what she is actually saying even if they would not describe what is taking place in her mind in the course of her actual intentional assertion.

So most cases that seem to serve the cause of contextualist philosophers can perhaps be explained by using the distinction between intentional and material reports and applying it to the locutionary act of saying. Although the speaker intentionally meant that the key was used in opening the door, that the cash machine did less than swallow something and that it is a person that left without paying, she did as a matter of fact say in the material sense what is literally expressed by the sentences she uttered. Now in their use of language, speakers also defer to others. So if someone attracts her attention to what she actually said in the material sense, she will now entertain or realize what she earlier failed to entertain. Since she defers to others, she will recognize that what she did not consider or apprehend was actually said.

To conclude on this, we must accept the distinction between what the speaker actually says and what the speaker intentionally asserts while saying it, even in contexts in which the speaker does not intentionally entertain the content of what is said. These contexts do not prove that the intended meaning of the speaker intrudes in the literal meaning of the sentence, because the speaker can be described as having said what is expressed by the sentence in a material report describing her functional behavior.

I earlier argued for the existence of minimal content even in the case where both speaker and hearer have access only to the content of the illocutionary act. My point was that the content of the sentence used was accessible both to the speaker and the hearer. My argument for this was that since the intended meaning was optional, there should be other contexts in which the meaning of the sentence itself was fully accessible to them; and I argued that this was all we needed in order to claim that sentence meaning met the accessibility condition, even in the hard cases discussed by contextualists. But I have now provided another argument. I believe that there are other reasons for suggesting that what is expressed by the sentence meets the accessibility condition in the three examples mentioned. This condition is met even in the context in which the speaker only has in mind what she means without knowing, or without fully attending to, what she is actually saying. In this kind of situation, even if the speaker may perhaps fail to perform an intentional act of saying, she can be described as actually saying (in the material sense) what is expressed by the sentence she is using. And if someone informs her or attracts her attention to what she is actually saying, she will then intentionally be attending to what was initially expressed by the sentence itself. As a deferring member of a linguistic community, she will herself acknowledge that she was saying what the sentence was expressing. Her disposition to defer to people will induce her to recognize that what she was in fact saying was different from what she intended, but that it was nevertheless what she said. What she said was the minimal content postulated by minimalist philosophers.

9. Conclusion

In this paper, I have been looking for an argument in favor of semantic contextualism that would show how sentence meaning is determined by the intended meaning of speakers in contexts. As we now know, thanks to the contributions of those working in the fields of pragmatics, we now realize that an intentional act of assertion may give rise to all sorts of things: pragmatic presuppositions, conversational implicatures, metaphors, irony, indirect speech acts and so on and so forth. There may be some minimalists like Stanley and Szabo (2000) who would deny that a wide variety of speech acts can be performed in intentional acts of assertion. But I tend to favor an enlightened version of minimalism that acknowledges speech act pluralism.

Nevertheless, while we may be asserting all sorts of things in the context of a particular utterance, we may at the same time be saying the very same thing if we use the same sentence and if the sentence contains no indexicals and is not ambiguous. Our locutionary act remains the same unless it contains indexicals and it is ambiguous. What we are saying is the minimal proposition (or minimal truth conditions). I have argued that conversational implicatures were a secondary level of (pragmatic) meaning and that they were cancelable. I have also suggested that we could harmlessly increase the number of context sensitive sentences beyond those that explicitly contain expressions belonging to the basic set, as long as we construe them as implicitly containing these indexicals. I then investigated the possibility of primary, optional and intentional pragmatic features determining literal truth conditions. It was shown that if one accepts the distinction between locutionary acts and illocutionary acts, then the notion of accessibility appealed to by Recanati could be used against him. For if pragmatic features were really meant to be optional, then there is at least one context of utterance in which what is said is accessible and this is all that we need in order to defend the syncretic view.

Instead of referring to what Recanati calls the 'syncretic' view, I would use 'bifurcationism', because there are two levels of meaning: the minimal proposition expressed by the sentence (what is said by the speaker) and the additional intentional pragmatic meaning conveyed by the full illocutionary act (what is intentionally asserted by the speaker). Recanati does not deny in principle the existence of such a double level of meaning, but he argues that in the case of enrichment, loosening and transfer, the so called literal meaning of the sentence is not cognitively relevant for the speaker and normal interpreter. So the literal truth conditions are in these cases determined by speakers' intentions and normal interpreters in the context of an intentional act of assertion. Recanati rejects the syncretic view (or bifurcationism) not because it is not possible to distinguish in principle different levels of meaning, but because there are apparently cases where no one computes (parses, cognitively entertains) the minimal proposition or the minimal truth conditions. So even if we admit the existence of minimal propositions or minimal truth conditions, they should according to Recanati be ignored in many cases and replaced by propositions or truth conditions that are determined by what the speaker meant in the context, which also happens to coincide with what the normal interpreter understands. Therefore, since pragmatic features like enrichment, loosening and transfer determine primary propositions or truth conditions, they are primary pragmatic features, and this refutes bifurcationism.

It is possible for Recanati to accept the distinction between saying and asserting and still be arguing for his idea that the so called minimal proposition or minimal truth condition is irrelevant. Recanati could perhaps claim that in certain contexts of utterances, the speaker is only 'saying' something in a very weak sense, and is therefore not intentionally saying the thing that is literally expressed by the sentence. Simultaneously, the normal interpreter is not processing the minimal content of the sentence in order to achieve his interpretation. So this is why the literal, minimal proposition (or truth conditions) is irrelevant. And this is why Recanati believes that the syncretic view is false.

I have argued that this argument presupposed methodological assumptions that turn contextualism into a circular argument. I then challenged Recanati on each of the examples he has provided in his attempt to refute bifurcationism. I would want to say that in all the examples discussed, the minimal proposition is in different ways relevant for the normal interpreter and even for the speaker. It seems that I am cognitively entertaining the minimal proposition when I am intentionally saying a sentence that expresses such a minimal proposition. But even if there were good examples where it appears that neither the speaker nor the hearer really considers the minimal proposition in their language processing, it would not affect the general criticism of circularity.

I suggest instead a general twofold approach in which bifurcationism and speech act pluralism form a sophisticated and enlightened version of semantic minimalism. I also showed that there were reasons to believe that there are explicatures that are cancelable. I then discussed the distinction between saying and asserting and the obliteration of this distinction was described crucial for many contextualist arguments. I suggested that they were often circular, and I concluded by exploiting a distinction between what someone intentionally says and what someone says as a matter of fact, or says in a functional sense. The suggestion was that even if reaction experiments showed that speakers do not attend to the content of the sentence uttered, they are actually functionally related to the content of the sentence. If they do defer to others and if others tell them what they said, they will realize that even while they were not attending to what they were saying, they were nevertheless saying it.

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