

# Further Reflections on Semantic Minimalism: Reply to Wedgwood

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**Abstract** In this paper I discuss a paper by Wedgwood in which he considers the possibility that Relevance Theory and Semantic Minimalism share at least some common resources. I maintain that the two theories have different aims and different orientations and that it might be fruitful to understand why Cappelen and Lepore stick to Semantic Minimalism despite the various objections levelled to their theory. I explore certain minimalist solutions along the lines of considerations by Michel Seymour, adopting Jaszczolt's considerations on parsimony of levels of interpretation. I assume that logical forms contain certain variables which can be filled (or saturated) in context. As a final proposal, I broach the idea that pragmatic enrichment at the level of the predication can be avoided by resorting to a more complex enrichment at the level of the subject. I resort to ideas by Jaszczolt (specifically POL), to argue that parsimony considerations require that enrichments be operated at the level of subjects, if possible, thus avoiding a less parsimonious view according to which both subject and predicates should be enriched.

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, I reply to an important and also intellectually stimulating paper by Wedgwood (2007). Wedgwood's paper is of importance because it throws light on certain structural similarities between theories which belong to different conceptual domains, philosophical semantics and cognitive pragmatics. It creates

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations are explained in Appendix 1. I would like to give thanks to Wayne Davis, M. Wedgwood, Yan Huang, and Noel Burton-Roberts who provided comments for this paper.

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undoubtedly important bridges between the two theoretical constructions and provides a very intelligent critique of Cappelen and Lepore's (2005) book (from now onwards Cappelen and Lepore is abbreviated to C & L). My difference with Wedgwood is one of point of view and of emphasis. Also, in some cases I point out what I take to be the weakest parts of his paper. I am sure he will find a way to refine those points and to answer them from his point of view, which is different from mine.

The three main threads of the paper are as follows:

I disagree with Wedgwood's conclusion that there is more common ground between C & L and RT than there initially appears to be;

I disagree with Wedgwood's contention that RT's semantics is more minimal than C & L.

I hold that C & L's tests for context-sensitivity are robust, and thus that 'ready' and certain other apparently context-sensitive expressions have an abstract, context-insensitive semantics, which needs to be coupled with null prepositional phrases, which, in turn, require saturation.

Semantic minimalism, as proposed by C & L (2005), has met vigorous opposition on the part of Radical Contextualists. Semantic minimalism is the view that the semantic content of a sentence *S* is the content that all utterances of *S* share in virtue of what is contributed by their words and the syntactic relations among constituents.<sup>2</sup> 'It is the content that **all** utterances of **S** express no matter how different their contexts of utterance are. It is also the content that can be grasped and reported by someone who is ignorant about the relevant characteristics of the context in which an utterance of *S* took place' (C & L 2005, 143). Semantic Minimalism claims that semantic content is pragmatically affected only with respect to standard indexicals, and that semantic content is propositional.<sup>3</sup> In his review of Cappelen and Lepore (2005), Recanati (2006) writes:

Like most philosophers of language, C & L are minimalists, but they defend a fairly radical version of minimalism, close to the literalist ideal. Instead of multiplying indexical variables, as other minimalists do, they maintain that there is only a short list of context-sensitive expressions and that sentences not including any of them are such that their meaning is their truth-conditional content (Recanati 2006: 21).

Recanati finds it strange that the authors should say that sentences such as 'John is ready' express complete propositions, while refusing to say what these

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<sup>2</sup> The addition of 'in virtue of what is contributed...' serves to overcome the objection that—unless such a modification is added—one could hold that all utterances of a sentence *S* shared content *p* but that *p* was pragmatically enriched in ways not traceable to standard indexicals.

Wayne Davis (personal communication) considers that this definition must be conjoined with another definition which C & L provide: Semantic Minimalism holds that "the semantic content of a sentence *S* is the proposition that all utterances of *S* express (when we adjust or keep stable the semantic values of the obvious context sensitive expressions)" (C & L 2005: 2).

<sup>3</sup> One should note that the shared content assumption is not shared by all versions of minimalism [for instance, it is rejected in Borg (2004)].

propositions are (in detail), apart from saying that e.g. ‘John is ready’ expresses the proposition that John is ready.

I agree that C & L should provide more than their mysterious story. At least one should try and provide some elucidations of the meaning of words such as ‘ready’.

The main argument against contextualism is that, once we fall into the trap of contextualism, the kind of argument used to show that the literal meaning of an expression is not sufficient to provide a full proposition will also show that the truth-conditional meaning arrived at through contextual augmentations will not be enough, as more stringent truth-conditions are required. Presumably this regress should be extended *ad libitum*. This is also another mysterious point. Even if we grant that the contextualist’s claims generalize too much (as the authors say), this does not amount to saying that an infinite regress is generated.<sup>4</sup>

Despite various shortcomings, my view is that we should very carefully consider what C & L say and we should at least accept the various tests they propose which will enable us to detect context-sensitivity or, alternatively, context-invariance. This is not to say that the discussion of such tests should be uncritical and it is possible that such tests will be refined considerably in the years to come. In this paper, I try to assess the validity of some criticism levelled to C & L on the part of Wedgwood (2007).

## 2 Some Background

In this section I shall mainly outline the main arguments of the paper by Wedgwood. The main aim is to create the context for the discussion of very specific and technical points later on in subsequent sections. In this way, it will not be possible to say that I have extrapolated excerpts from the general discussion by focusing on parts of the discussion which are not particularly crucial to the general line of the discussion.

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<sup>4</sup> One could cast doubt on my idea that there is a limit to what contextualist claims can say about meaning. Consider, for example, one of C & L’s examples: ‘John went to the gym’. Did he go to the vicinity of the gym? Did he enter the gym? Or suppose we grant that the example is so heavily context dependent and that we resolve for this type of context-dependence, by saying that on a plausible interpretation the speaker meant that John entered the gym. Is not there a limit to what context-dependence could say about this example? Should we continue the context-dependent claims and say that under-determination is there because we are still able to articulate the purpose of getting into the gym? Ok. Let us suppose that we also provide a purpose constituent: ‘John went to the gym to keep fit’. Let us suppose that we can go on providing implicit constituents until our imagination allows us to do so; is not there a limit to the number of constituents we can provide by free enrichment? My intuition is that it is not possible to add implicit constituents *ad libitum*, for one thing; the intentions of the speaker are finite and, thus, going on to add implicit constituents will not realistically model finite speaker’s intentions.

Wedgwood sees RT and C & L's positions as being compatible. If this is right, Wedgwood takes this to be an important result as it represents the convergence of two major distinct approaches: a philosophical perspective on semantics; a cognitive perspective on pragmatics.

For C & L, context sharing is the very foundation of communication. RT has a similar concern with content-sharing, even if this is fundamentally the result of the combination of encoded meaning and inferential processes.

In general, Wedgwood argues that C & L's outlook is essentially very similar to that of RT, despite C & L's persuasion that they differ substantially from RT.

According to Wedgwood, there is a difference between the two approaches. This is constituted by C & L's notion of minimal content. Nevertheless, Wedgwood argues that this is largely equivalent in function to RT's encoded meaning. For C & L, minimal content is propositional, while encoded meaning is not necessarily propositional. The key property of minimal semantic content is that it should be conveyed consistently across all contexts. According to Wedgwood, RT's encoded meaning does the same job.

Wedgwood agrees that RT is an example of what C & L calls radical contextualism in so far as it accepts that the influence of context on propositional meaning is pervasive and ubiquitous. According to RT, the intrinsic content of a linguistic form is systematically sub-propositional (it must be complemented by pragmatic inferences to achieve full propositionality).

Wedgwood expatiates on the basic assumptions of RT, its character as a theory that studies 'mind-reading' processes in which a hearer must attempt to infer the speaker's communicative intentions on the basis of knowing that the speaker relies on knowledge of the language and on propositions that are mutually manifest to both the speaker and the hearer.

Wedgwood stresses that RT considers that what is understood to be communicated by any utterance is heavily context-dependent and that, despite this, people succeed in communicating with each other without any special problem. This is ensured because communication is governed by some set of principles enabling people to recognize the intended meanings.

Wedgwood considers that despite the emphasis on context, RT admits that some meaning is encoded in linguistic forms. The meaning encoded in a given linguistic form is sometimes called its 'logical form' or, as Wedgwood prefers, 'encoded meaning'.

According to Wedgwood, RT assumes that a speaker relies on assumptions which he takes to be mutually manifest in his expectation that the hearer will recover the intended meaning.

According to RT, interpretation proceeds according to a presumption of optimal relevance, where relevance is conceived of as a ratio of communicative rewards to processing efforts. These rewards are what RTs call 'cognitive effects' (such as strengthening or weakening/eliminating existing assumptions or providing new assumptions that interact with existing assumptions to allow new deductions).

Words and structures of a given language can be taken to convey a variety of things in different contexts, depending on the assumptions which are brought to

bear on the interpretation process. This means that linguistically encoded forms constrain but do not (fully) determine what is conveyed on a given occasion.

According to Wedgwood, RT accepts that there are two distinct notions of content: the inputs and outputs of the communication process, that is to say encoded and inferred meanings.

These two levels are sufficiently similar to C & L's position, which they call semantic minimalism which combines with speech act pluralism, the idea that the same sentence can be used to make a variety of (different) speech acts in different contexts. C & L too recognize two important levels of meaning: minimal semantic content and speech act content.

A point of divergence between C & L and RT is that the former take content sharing to be guaranteed by the conventional means of language. RT, instead, does not agree that communication involves the sharing of (identical) thoughts, but only similarity of thoughts. Wedgwood takes RT to be a more realistic and psychologically plausible theory as it reflects our daily experience quite accurately. In RT the goal of communication is to enlarge the interlocutor's mutual cognitive environment; that is, communication is successful if two people can tell that they have some more assumptions in common than they had before. This does not require the exact reproduction of thoughts.

### **3 Discussion of Wedgwood's Response to C & L: General Considerations on Semantic Minimalism**

The paper gives the impression that Wedgwood is more favourable to RT than to C & L while he attempts to establish the basic tenets on which the semantics/pragmatics debate ought to rest. In the attempt to reconcile the two theories, Wedgwood claims that moderate contextualism is opposed to both Semantic Minimalism and RT. It is doubtful that by creating a common enemy one can reconcile two radically different theories. For one thing, moderate contextualism is opposed to Semantic Minimalism only in so far (as proven by C & L) one slides from there into Radical Contextualism. It might be legitimate to hold the view that C & L are against all forms of contextualism and, in particular, they go to some length to distance themselves from moderate contextualists. Even if MC did not always slide into RC, MC already goes beyond their belief that one should limit contextual influence to basic indexicals (or anyway, to elements of the Basic Set of context-sensitive expressions). However, given that C & L accept pragmatic intrusion at the level of pronominals and deictic elements, in principle they should accept moderate forms of contextualism provided that they are reducible to usage of pronominals.<sup>5</sup> It is the sliding from MC to RC that crucially scares them. This

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<sup>5</sup> Someone might say that this is something that C & L explicitly reject. Yet, as my quotation of Seymour makes clear, it is reasonable to suppose that C & L are compelled to accept that when

assertion should be properly evaluated in the background of important considerations by Seymour (2010):

In more controversial cases like “Mary has had enough” and “John is ready,” it could be argued that their incomplete character may be explained by the implicit presence of a demonstrative expression like ‘this’, so that the sentences should read “Mary has had enough of *this*” and “John is ready for *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. The reason is that they would be analysed as implicitly involving expressions belonging to the basic set. “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 analyzed 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. (Seymour 2010: 2872).

Now, it appears to me that the cases above are reducible to semantic items having invariant semantics combinable with implicit (or null) elements that appear to belong to the Basic Set as formulated by C & L. We do not need to extend the basic set and the assumption that sometimes expressions of the basic set are null from a phonetic point of view is needed independently of the specific issue we are confronted with here. Nobody disputes that we have null elements such as PRO or pro in English or in Italian. But even in abstraction from grammatically stipulated null categories, we have free recourse to null categories as in ‘Look’ (look at that) or as in implicit arguments (The ship was sunk to collect the insurance). We may use a technical term for such null categories. One characteristic of these silent PPs is that they are elements present in semantic interpretation that are recoverable from context and without which semantic interpretation cannot arrive at a full proposition.

One might argue that my claim that we do not need to extend the Basic Set as formulated by C & L is confusing, as the implicit demonstratives that I am advocating to account for the context-sensitivity of ‘ready’, ‘enough’, comparative adjectives, etc. must be encoded in the meanings of these expressions (thus, I must be suggesting that the Basic Set be extended to include these expressions).

Now we are at a fork. Either we say that, e.g., ‘ready’ is a context-sensitive expression, and extend the Basic Set, or we say, as I propose, that ‘John is ready’

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(Footnote 5 continued)

linguistic structure mandates a gap, such a gap must be filled by saturation. Of course, it is possible to have different views of the various examples discussed here or by Stanley. However, in principle C & L cannot deny that, when there is a gap, it must be saturated; in the same way they cannot deny that a deictic requires saturation; a pronominal requires saturation: pro and PRO require semantic values, either assigned by the grammar or by the linguistic co-text (Rizzi 1982).

has a meaning equivalent to ‘John is ready for that’.<sup>6</sup> The semantics needs to say that ‘ready’ subcategorises for a prepositional phrase (PP), which can be explicit as in ‘John is ready for the exam’ or left inexplicit as in ‘John is ready’. Is this kind of uses rare in language? I would say not. I can reply ‘I am coming’ to my mother who says I should go to lunch. When a constituent is left out, it is reconstructed on the basis of context and of the grammatical patterns of the expressions which are actually present in the utterance (Thus I say ‘I am coming (to the kitchen)’ but not ‘I am coming (under the kitchen)’). Implicit arguments are not that rare in the language, as there are examples such as ‘The ship was sunk to collect the insurance’ (See Roeper 1987).

In other words, we need no special resources other than implicit arguments, that is null PPs, which are recognised as a grammatical category anyway. So we do not need to list, as the commentator implies, ‘ready’, ‘happy’, ‘enough’ etc. as part of the Basic Set. All we need to ensure is that null PPs are part of the Basic Set.

It could be argued that my proposal, in fact, amounts to accepting indexical elements at LF, in which case it would amount to accepting a position analogous to that put forward by Stanley. But SM is not a thesis according to which some contextual effects on propositional content are due to indexical elements at LF, but rather a thesis according to which propositional content is fully determined by the semantics of the over material. Such contents are admittedly impoverished and skeletal, but they are the basics of a theory of meaning.

My reply to this objection is the following. Hidden indexicals as well as PRO and pro are present in the structure of the sentence. So there may be a minimalist story according to which some minimal propositions are calculable on their basis. There may be another story according to which the full proposition is fleshed out by assigning values to variables. This story which involves saturating variables is not in conflict with the minimalist account. Even assuming that minimalists can account for problematic adjectives like ‘ready’ in some other way, they would have to cope with the interpretation of pro and PRO. Such a story would involve variables at LF. What I think would characterize semantic minimalists as opposed to people like Stanley is the desire to keep truth-conditions minimal and to accept

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<sup>6</sup> Wayne Davis (personal communication) considers that we have two uses of ‘John is ready’. In one use, ‘John is ready’ is elliptical for ‘John is ready to go to dinner’. In this case, it is not plausible to think that ‘John is ready’ is elliptical for ‘John is ready for that’. Davis thinks that the sentence is elliptical for ‘John is ready for dinner’. He thinks we need to distinguish two views: (1) ‘ready’ is elliptical for phrases of the form ‘ready for NP’; (2) ‘ready’ means ‘ready for that’. On (2) ‘ready’ is indexical; on (1), it is not indexical and does not have a meaning although it is elliptical for phrases that do have a meaning. According to Davis, there would not be any independent meaning that ‘ready’ contributes to the meaning of ‘ready for dinner’ or ‘ready for that’.

My reply is that considerations of parsimony militate against Davis’s story. His story amounts to positing an ambiguity. At most we can grant an interpretative ambiguity. A common denominator could be ‘X is ready for x’ and allow that in some contexts x has the force of a demonstrative.

that things like ‘John is ready for that’ have minimal truth conditions even if no saturation has yet occurred.

## 4 RT and C & L on Shared Content

Wedgwood goes on to write:

I identify two key points of confusion in C & L’s arguments. The first, dealt with in section 3.1, is the failure to distinguish two kinds of assessment of the content of utterance: one from the addressee’s subjective point of view and the other from the point of view of an omniscient third party (such as a philosopher or a linguist). The former plays a key role in RT, while crucial parts of C & L’s arguments erroneously appeal to the latter. The second point of confusion concerns different kinds of content. As I discuss in section 4, the phenomena that C & L invoke as evidence against RT involve a kind of content that is not guaranteed to be shared under any theoretical approach. Indeed, their own position on this kind of content—in so far as it is made explicit anywhere—is shown to be equivalent to that of RT in all crucial respects. As such, it is just as well for C & L that their ‘shared content’ arguments against RT fail, as any arguments of this kind that succeeded in undermining RT would also undermine their own position (Wedgwood 2007: 649).

The passage above is fairly problematic. It presents two points. Let us start with the first point.

Let us assume that this position can be summed up as follows:

The difference between RT and SM is that the former claims that propositional content ensues from inferential processes that take place in the hearer’s mind, whereas the latter maintains that such content ensues from meanings conventionally encoded in words and, hence, propositional content persists independently of particular instances of interpretation.

Now, it should be born in mind that an explicature is what is taken to express the propositional content and that, according to Carston (2002), at least, an explicature has two components: a semantically encoded component and a pragmatically derived component. Now, if things stand as Carston says, it is simply not true that propositional content ensues from inferential processes that take place in the hearer’s mind. At least part of this content is provided by the semantics. The difference between the two positions, as I see it, is that Minimal semantics stresses the conventional layer of meaning, while Relevance theorists stress the non-conventional layer of meaning. It should be conceded that at least in some cases propositional meaning is exhausted by the conventional meaning of a sentence; in some other cases, propositional meaning is not exhausted by conventional meaning.

There is one further complication in this picture. Carston is ready to accept that explicatures are developments of conventional meaning, even if she insists that usually conventional meaning under-determines semantic interpretation (and pragmatics must intervene to provide full propositional forms). However, there are cases in which one must decide whether the contribution of the semantics must be

discarded or modulated—ironic utterances are cases in which literal meanings do not reach the level of propositionality. Cases of modulation à la Recanati (2010) also show that pragmatic interpretation may reach the level of compositionality.

So, it is not necessary that the conventional meanings of words will make up the linguistic component of the explicature. Both the conventional and the pragmatic component of the explicature are subject to pre-semantic interpretation. However, it could be said that the conventional meaning of a sentence is where the pragmatic interpretation originated and that the human mind must be able to have access to the meanings from which the pragmatic interpretation originated. It is also plausible that the human mind, in constructing the propositional form, does not throw away those bits of language which served to arrive at the propositional form. To provide an example, a hearer who encounters the utterance ‘The lion stood in the middle of the square’ will proceed from its literal meaning to its modulated meaning ‘The statue of the lion stood in the middle of the square’. However, the sentence ‘The lion stood in the middle of the square’ does not completely disappear from the hearer’s mind, since the effect of surprise crucially hinges on that linguistic construct. Poetic interpretation of metaphors, likewise, does not throw away bits of linguistic structure, as these contribute to poetic effects. Furthermore, a person who uses a sentence in its modulated sense and a hearer who understands it should be able to keep in mind not only the final product of interpretation, but the process as well and the linguistic sentence from which it originated. If this is the case, then one can argue that it is methodologically sound to keep the semantic and the pragmatic component of the explicature separate, while surely one must be able to merge them (at some stage).

Wedgwood, in his paper, characterizes RT as a theory of the hearer’s interpretation. It is not clear to me whether this is a point that is crucial to Wedgwood’s paper or not. It is possible that not much in the main argumentative line of that paper changed if this point was dropped. It is worthwhile discussing it nevertheless. Wedgwood’s insistence on the hearer’s perspective does more harm than good to RT. If I were challenged to provide arguments for this persuasion, I should quote from Capone (2010a) on indirect reports. In this paper I argue that the process of interpreting indirect reports usually (albeit not always, as interpretation process must adapt to special contexts) prevents the speaker (the reporter) from using an NP (coextensive with the NP actually used in the original utterance) that would transform (and distort) the original speech act, as such a move would place excessive processing efforts on the hearer. Now, my understanding of indirect reports is that pragmatic principles constrain both the speaker’s behaviour and the hearer’s behaviour. Emphasis on the hearer would surely provide only half of the explanation required, perhaps the half which we need least, as after all it is legitimate to try and explain the speaker’s behaviour as well, and such a behaviour clearly incorporates expectations about the hearer’s behaviour.

Wilson and Sperber (2004) write:

The central claim of RT is that the expectations of relevance raised by an utterance are precise and predictable enough to guide the hearer toward the speaker's meaning (Wilson and Sperber 2004: 607).

Since an utterance creates expectations of relevance, it is licit to deduce that the speaker's linguistic behaviour is what creates such expectations. Thus, both the speaker and the hearer must be taken into account in an explanation of how relevance works. After all, when the authors say that human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance, 'maximization' is best understood as maximization by both the speaker and the hearer. Someone might take issue with this, by saying that after all, when I say that human cognition is geared to the maximization of relevance, 'maximization' is best understood as maximization by both the speaker and the hearer, this is confused. Cognition does not involve a speaker and a hearer (only communication does). Despite my difference of point of view, I find this suggestion useful. Since I am obviously talking of cognition in the context of communication (I admit it is not my intention to write a paper about the hearer's cognitive powers in isolation from the speaker's cognitive powers), it is probably useful to distinguish the speaker's cognitive processes from the hearer's cognitive processes. However, I claim that cognitive processes follow a social path of intentionality, which means that the speaker in uttering a sentence is busy predicting what is going on to happen in the hearer's mind, while the hearer is busy understanding what the speaker meant in virtue of predicting the direction of the hearer's cognitive processes. It is correct to say that communication can be guaranteed by the fact that both the speaker and the hearer share the same psychological make-up (Recanati 2010). If Recanati's intuition must be made the most of, it is useful to see that cognition involves a mirroring relation between the speaker and the hearer.

If further evidence is needed, consider the following case, from Blommaert (2005). Blommaert considers a misunderstanding between himself and a research associate. They were at a conference together and they had rooms in the same hotel. They were speaking Dutch. Blommaert wanted to say that his associate had a nice balcony by a Dutch utterance equivalent in meaning to 'You have a balcony too'. The word for 'balcony' in Dutch is ambiguous between 'balcony' and 'breasts'. It happened that when he used this utterance, there was a woman walking in the opposite direction who was wearing a deeply cut summer top exposing parts of her breasts. Blommaert writes: Unfortunately, my young female research associate had noticed the woman—she had picked up a contextualization clue—and the term 'balcony' suddenly acquired a very suggestive, sexually offensive, meaning, which called for extensive explanation and damage repair afterwards. My words had been placed in (or made to point to) a context which had altered their meaning, triggering a shift from a descriptive, neutral meaning for 'balcony' to an implicit, male sexist slang meaning (Blommaert 2005, 42). This is clearly a situation where the speaker's meanings (or interpretations) and the hearer's meanings (or interpretations) diverge. This is a situation that perfectly models Wedgwood's considerations on inferential work (on interpretation of utterances).

Yet, I would like to claim that RT, like any other pragmatic theory, must not typically model situations in which there is a discrepancy between the hearer's and the speaker's interpretation. There are ways of expanding the discussion of Blommaert's example that point to the fact that the addressee somehow goes wrong in interpreting intentions. In fact, she follows an individual path of interpretation preferring it to the social path of interpretation (see Jaszczolt 1999).<sup>7</sup> Since Blommaert never pointed or looked at the woman with the deeply cut top, the hearer made reference to a contextual clue which was only (unilaterally) presumed. The context which she brought to bear on the utterance was her unilateral version of the context, as she had no evidence that the context was shared. She also followed an individual path of interpretation by choosing the pejorative meaning, when she had a choice between a meaning which was in line with the intentions compatible with the public role assumed by the speaker (a professor speaking in the context of a conference) and a meaning which could implausibly relate to sexual matters. Presumably most Dutch people who use the word for 'balcony' are in Blommaert's position; however, ordinary usage is never as ambiguous as Blommaert really wants to let us accept. In context, ambiguities are easily settled. One should always go for the social path of interpretation (as Jaszczolt 1999 says), as this is the only path of interpretation that can ensure that the speaker's and the hearer's meanings coincide. Since following the social path of interpretation involves the speaker's duty to project meaning on the basis of conventions of language and of use and the hearer's duty to interpret intentions on the basis of the same conventions of language and of use, convergence is guaranteed if both the speaker and the hearer abide by their duties. Presumably, there are also norms of interpretation besides the Gricean maxims, like the ones I tentatively put forward in Capone (2004). The most basic ones of which are the following:

**Show Goodwill**

Contextualise an action in such a way that it can be interpreted positively; if you do not find a context in which it can be interpreted positively, then at least allow for the possibility of finding a context in which the action can be interpreted positively.

**Be Constructive**

Repair your coparticipant's mistakes by attributing positive interpretations to her actions; in particular, adjust any interpretations of her actions by taking into consideration the intentions that can be plausibly attributed to her.

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<sup>7</sup> Intentionality is a notion that makes sense of the content of speaker's mind during the process of uttering a certain sentence as correlated to the utterance. Intentionality that follows the social path of interpretation is undispersed intentionality, according to Jaszczolt (2005). From Jaszczolt's picture, we understand that the hearer is allowed to reconstruct the speaker's intentions on the basis of conventions correlating sentences and meanings and conventions of use correlating utterances in context with interpretations. Speakers' intentions and hearers' reconstructed intentions should converge if both speaker and hearers follow the social path of intentionality.

Now, there is nothing ‘ad hoc’ about these norms for interpretations. The other day I happened to make a blatant mistake and I said ‘Hello’ to a woman in the street that looked like an acquaintance of mine. When I realized I had greeted the wrong person, I apologised. What followed was a mini interaction in which the woman intended to play down the event—categorizing it as a thing that can happen to everyone. If one wonders why such lengthy elaborations follow these incidents, the reason is clear. People want to be seen as showing goodwill—they will let errors pass and they will discard pejorative interpretations when it is possible. In the light of this, what is striking about Blommaert’s example is that it may serve to model a theory of language which is utterly different from RT—in fact, RT too needs a mechanism to ensure that in the standard case the speaker’s and the hearer’s interpretations coincide (or at least do not differ vastly). Wedgwood’s picture of RT makes it appear suitable to modeling situations like Blommaert’s, while, in fact, it is suitable to giving us a model of Blommaert’s situation that tells us why the hearer went wrong, what was wrong in the interpretation process and why the speaker was perfectly entitled to receive an interpretation in line with his original intentions.

A possible objection to my approach based on good will is that a principle such as ‘Show good will’ is surely liable to change with context. In RT terms, the attitude of one’s interlocutors is a contingent factor that may be mutually manifest or may be made so as a result of their behavior. Such attitude cannot therefore be constitutive of any general conversational principle.

My reply would be the following. Although I have not said anything about whether the principle ‘Show good will’ could be reduced to the principle of relevance (arguably it could be so reduced, given that such a principle would tend to maximize positive effects in the face of the same cognitive efforts; something to the same effect could be argued in connection with the maxim of Quality which could be subsumed, arguably, under the maxim of Good will), there are reasons to believe that ‘Good will’ is rooted in our culture and has roots in social practices. Just to give you an example, consider the example I discussed in Capone (2005), describing the evil teacher who asks a question expecting/desiring that the pupil will not answer it. In Capone (2005), I argued that this a bad teacher, one who does not conform to the standards of benevolent teachers, who are the norm in society. He does not conform to the standard because he does not conform to the maxim of Good Will.

The second point by Wedgwood is more difficult. Wedgwood says that RT, despite what C & L claim, has an approach similar to C & L on content-sharing. Wedgwood accepts that the level of linguistic meaning due to the conventional meanings of words and grammar is what is common to both semantic minimalism and RT. Yet, the assumption that linguistic meaning is largely underdetermined makes the two theories sufficiently differentiated.

## 5 RT and C & L on the Equation of Semantic Content with Intuitions About Speech Act Content

Wedgwood (2007) discusses the (so called) Mistaken Assumption (by C & L):

[The mistaken Assumption] A theory of semantic content is adequate just in case it accounts for all or most of the intuitions speakers have about speech act content, i.e. intuitions about what speakers say, assert, claim and state by uttering sentences (C & L 2005, 53).

What C & L apparently fail to recognize is that RT quite explicitly rejects this too (see further Sect. 5.1). It may be that relevance theorists tend to express the idea in rather different terms—for example, ‘linguistically encoded semantics falls short of truth-conditionality’—but since truth conditions are conventionally identified with what the speaker is taken to be committed to (i.e. to have asserted, claimed or stated) by uttering some sentence, this is in fact just another way of expressing the very same point (Wedgwood 2007: 654).

There are interpretative complications. What does ‘this’ refer to? Presumably it refers to The mistaken Assumption. ‘The same point’ also requires disambiguation: does the expression refer to ‘the same point as The mistaken Assumption’? Or does it refer to ‘RT quite explicitly rejects this too’? Even after such a disambiguation, there is very little sense in what is said. In any case, let us see if it is true that RT too rejects the equation of semantic content with speech act content. Carston (1991) says that a sentence such as:

- (1) If the king of France dies and France becomes a republic, I will be happy, but if France becomes a republic and the king of France dies I will not be happy

has contradictory truth-conditional import and this defect is remedied by resorting to inferential pragmatics. In other words, truth-conditional import is calculated by trying to find out what kind of assertion the speaker made, what his intentions were in making this assertion. It is implicit in her view that the truth-conditional content of (the whole of) sentence (1) is not merely based on the truth-conditional content of each of the conjuncts in each conditional, but there is a truth-conditional content at the level of the speech act that is (globally) pragmatically conveyed. Now, while surely both Carston and C & L agree that the semantics of ‘and’ is basically truth-conditional, it is not clear that for Carston the truth-conditional content of (the whole) of utterance (1) and the truth-conditional import based on sentential semantics do not come apart. Consider what Carston (1991) says about (1).

As Cohen (1971) has pointed out, if *and* is simply truth-functional and the temporal and causal connotations are captured by implicatures, then (22a) and (22b) should be contradictory at the level of explicit content (instantiating ‘If P then Q but if P then not Q’, and ‘Not P; P’ respectively) (...). However, these examples are not understood as contradictory or redundant. Those who wish to maintain an alleged implicature analysis have to say that the alleged temporal and causal implicatures contribute to the truth conditions of the utterance in which they occur (...).

So a clear difference emerges between, e.g. C & L and Carston. C & L would have to hold the view that there is a contradiction in (1) (which is then resolved at

the level of the speech act). Carston, instead, holds the radical view that the pragmatics of conjunction is integrated into truth-conditional semantics. (I discuss this problem in Capone 2006).

I understand that Wedgwood would say, at this point, that Carston, like C & L, differentiates between sentential meaning and the level of the speech act. For Carston, the sentence would have to be contradictory at the level of the sentence, but not at the level of the speech act. But the question now arises, how is this possible? Do intentions have the magical powers to make a sentence that is contradictory non-contradictory? How can this be? It can be argued that the sentence is not contradictory in the first place. At this point, it is clear that Carston's account and NOT C & L's account is confused. C & L can argue that the sentence is not contradictory because it has temporal variables that can be filled and they are filled only at the level of the speech act. Carston, instead, projects the categories of the speech act to the level of the sentence. The problem does indeed arise from the habit of confusing speech act categories with sentential categories.

Now there is the further question of how we should use 'semantic content'. If we use semantic content in the way Wedgwood presumably does, this comes to (boils down to) semantic import. If we use it the way C & L do, this comes to propositional import. What Wedgwood commits himself to is a rhetorical fallacy (called 'equivocation'; see Stati 2002, 122): he attempts to defeat C & L by shifting the semantic import of their words. For RT 'semantic content' is linguistically encoded content, which may fall short of a proposition (a proposition being recovered only once rich pragmatic processing takes place). This distinguishes it from semantic minimalism which claims that linguistically encoded content will be propositional. Thus it is clear that 'semantic import' is understood differently by RT and by C & L, the former being committed by its use only to the underdetermined logical forms of semantics, while C & L allow a modest dose of pragmatic intrusion.

Of course, on both views, it should be granted that semantics should not be equated with the level of speech act content, since this invariably involves recourse to pragmatics. But the question whether a speech act can be associated, at least in some cases, with a minimal propositional content is undoubtedly important. The fact that we can communicate some messages in virtue of language in a non-miraculous way is of some concern for the theorist of language. The very notion of conventionality relies on the idea that we can express messages by using language. There should be some tough correlations between sentences and utterances—otherwise it would be absurd to create a sophisticated language system. Despite contextualists' attempts to place the onus of signification on contextual assumptions and pragmatic strategies, there is a reason why we do not have a magic word which in different contexts can express all the possible speech acts of the language. The fact that a language consists of (usually at least) fifty thousand words serves to illustrate that we pay a price for the possibility of expressing a potentially high quantity of meanings and that these meanings are structured on the basis of words—conventional tools at the basis of the semiotic process.

Words and syntax offered us an obvious way to escape the limitations of gestures, acts of pointing, pragmatic resources of all types, and to do so they had to be based on the notion that language has at least some independence from contextual and pragmatic effects. This does not mean that language cannot be modulated in context, but that in principle it must be possible to interpret sentences on the basis of what they conventionally say in virtue of conventional meanings. This independence is what guarantees that human beings follow a social path of interpretation when they proffer utterances. This independence is, furthermore, a model on which rules of language use are based. Pragmatics is not chaotic but essentially follows some rules or principles of language use and these are available to all users of the language and must be followed by all. It is only through the independence of language from pragmatics that language users could break out of the otherwise necessary lack of communication. The relative independence of semantics from pragmatics, furthermore, is what guarantees that pragmatics can have orderly effects on top of semantics, what guarantees that inputs and outputs are correlated through something which cannot alter completely the nature of the input. If it was possible to deform and freely alter the input, then nothing would prevent pragmatic effects from resulting into a chaotic magma in which the individual path of intentionality could prevail over the social path of intentionality, thus rendering communication impossible.<sup>8</sup>

## 6 On the Equivalence of Minimal Semantics and Encoded Meaning in RT

Wedgwood (2007) criticises C & L saying that, despite their attacks on RT, C & L's notion of semantic content is entirely equivalent to the notion of encoded meaning in RT. For the reader's convenience, I report an extract:

When C & L speak of truth conditions, they do not refer to the common (moderate contextualist) conception of 'what makes the proposition intuitively expressed by a given utterance true', but rather something that is indeed considerably more minimal. (1) is an example:

- (1) 'Steel isn't strong enough' expresses the proposition that steel isn't strong enough (C & L 2005: 61).

Though this kind of statements appears less than dazzlingly enlightening, C & L insist that this is the level at which truth conditions should be stated, arguing that it is the business of metaphysics, not semantics, to determine conditions on truth more precisely.

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<sup>8</sup> If am asked 'What did you mean by saying S in context C?', the set of my answers should be heavily restricted by the rules of language and the rules of use (the rules valid for the language game I am playing). I cannot reply by saying what might be convenient to me at that point of the interaction. The latitude in possible answers is severely restricted by the severe judgments of those who could reconstruct the meaning on the basis of what I said and the context in which I said that.

The point for current purposes is that (1) shows how C & L's strict semantic argumentation—in common with their essentially communication-based 'shared content' arguments—is committed to the idea that the semantic content of a given sentence is just whatever remains common to its meaning across all contexts of utterance. There is no other way to interpret statements like (1).

By this definition, C & L's minimal semantic content is entirely equivalent to the notion of encoded meaning in RT. This is necessarily the case, since encoded meaning is by definition just that which is conveyed by a given linguistic form, irrespective of context. (Wedgwood 2007: 664).

According to Wedgwood, to say that some meaning is encoded is entirely neutral with respect to questions such as whether it has other properties, such as being propositional. All logical considerations militate against the equation of sentential levels of meaning with propositional meanings.

If we take what Wedgwood says seriously, we should concede that

(2) The sentence 'She is happy'  $\leftrightarrow$  It is true that Mary Thornton is happy.<sup>9</sup>

The sentence 'She is happy' is equivalent to the proposition that Mary Thornton is happy. Presumably we have to assign the words 'entirely equivalent', as used by Wedgwood, a meaning which is radically different from what the words mean, say a speaker's meaning. Would this still be correct? I think it is not. There is no question that a sentence and a proposition can be equivalent. A sentence can serve to express a proposition in a given context, but, as pointed out by Strawson and by Frege (see Capone 2006), a sentence can be neither true nor false in itself, while a proposition is something that can be true or false. Sentences can be said to be equivalent in meaning only if they contain no indexical parts: alternatively we can say that two sentences are equivalent in meaning if, in case the indexical parts are saturated in exactly the same way by providing the same contextual value, uttering of one or the other sentence constitutes the same statement. The operation done by Wedgwood is very curious: the author subtracts important features from the programs of C & L and of Sperber and Wilson, and then says that by the phrase 'semantic content' they refer to more or less the same thing. The element subtracted from C & L's program is partial, local intrusion, at the level of deictic terms; the one subtracted from Sperber and Wilson is radical intrusion, at the level of enrichment of predicate meaning. After these elements are subtracted, he shows that the programs are similar. What is not captured is the spirit of Sperber and Wilson's program, which is to argue in favour of modulation, denying that verbs like, for example, 'open' can be assigned uniform truth-conditions. There is no denying that Sperber and Wilson's program is more radical.

One could argue that I misrepresented Wedgwood's point, which is that minimal content and encoded meaning are both assigned the role of being the content that is common across contexts, and that this means that SM will need to rely on

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<sup>9</sup> It was pointed out to me that there is no way to make this equivalence statement syntactically correct. But this is exactly the point of the example, there can be no equivalence statement of this sort.

similar processes as RT does when it comes to explaining how intuitive contents are arrived at in particular contexts. Wedgwood is not arguing that minimal content and encoded meanings are logically equivalent—but rather that the roles they are assigned by the two theories are structurally similar.

Now, acceptance of the above considerations, whether or not they represent Wedgwood's stance, would surely be easier than accepting the text a fragment of which I quoted. Of course, one would wonder what role structural similarity would play in stressing the compatibility of the two theories being compared, if, as one should concede, full propositionality of the minimal level of meaning is an obstacle in the way of reconciling the two theories.

The types of arguments I presented above might be replied to by saying that it is true that RT sees the predicate of an utterance as generally underdetermining the property it is used to express, but RT denies that the 'completion' of the predicate contributes to semantic content. To justify my position I should argue why the minimal proposition should be considered the semantic content.

If semantic content is used as expressing the idea of the skeletal semantic representations of linguistic meaning, then I agree that Relevance Theorists do not claim that completion processes contribute to semantics. The challenge to justify the position that the minimal proposition should be the semantic content, is a challenge for C & L, as I am simply imagining how they might defend themselves.

We should start with making connections between semantics and the idea that semantics deals with communication and transmission of factual information. On this idea, two statements have the same content, not if they have roughly the same semantic meaning, but if they report the same situations, if they connect with the world in such a way that both statements are about the same situation. While surely we can use two different sentences to express the same situation, and we could also use the same sentence to express different situations, one point is clear: if two statements consist of the same sentences and they are proffered in the same context (say in replicas of the same context) and with the same intentions, the two sentences will be taken to make a report on a certain state of the world. If reporting on the world is the basic point of communication, we should be able to choose between a semantics which more directly connects with the transmission of information about the world and a semantics in which this connection is less direct. Suppose we choose an indirect connection between semantics and the purpose of transmitting factual knowledge. This means that semantics mainly deals with schematic information, which produces factual information only when coupled with contextual information. Is such a view plausible? And which view is more basic? The one in which semantics has a direct connection with the purpose of transmitting information, or the one in which semantics is only indirectly connected with the purpose of transmitting factual information? Choosing the indirect connection is a way of committing oneself to a view in which semantics is directly connected with some purpose, other than communicating factual information. But what purpose could this be? The alternative that language serves merely or primarily to construct relationships does not surmount these difficulties, as

constructing relationships somehow relates to the expression of information about the world (about the way we feel about others).

And why should a looser relationship between semantics and communication of factual information be privileged? It is as if the theorist were to accept that language serves the purpose of providing information, but not information about the world, and that information about the world must be reconstructed on the basis of schematic, fragmentary information. But if this is the case, we must accept that this is the case even for prototypical utterances. A request for water as expressed by ‘I am thirsty’ provides or should provide bits of information, from which I reconstruct the puzzle of an intentional entity, the proposition that the speaker is thirsty.

The idea of a possible indirect link between language and communication makes it difficult to understand, for example, how the first intentional linguistic acts in the history of mankind were interpreted. If one starts with the idea of fragments of information being conveyed in semantic acts, one never really reconstructs the point of the utterance, as the utterance could be about ideas in general, rather than about facts. And yet, the intentional dimension of communication, as pointed out by Jaszczolt (1999) is a basis for all communication, even a default principle of communication. The very primitive acts of communication were interpreted as being about the world, and not about abstract ideas (and this made it possible for the hearers to utilize contextual clues for interpretation), but this could be possible only if there was perhaps an a priori principle, working in language (that is to say operative in the minds of language users) like the one produced by Jaszczolt, in favour of the intentionality of linguistic acts. It is true that in another book Jaszczolt (2009) opts for merger representations in which linguistic and non-linguistic representations merge, to form a propositional dimension, but this is not to say that prototypical, or primitive linguistic acts were devoid of intentionality or that in no cases the semantic representation corresponds to a proposition. I think it is clear that Jaszczolt is more interested in the complicated cases, but this is not like denying that there are simple cases.

## 7 A Problem for Semantic Minimalism: Indexicals

Wedgwood (2007) writes:

C & L’s self-imposed commitment to the propositionality of minimal semantic content forces them to make this content less minimal than it could be (...). It also introduces a difference between their conception of minimal semantic content and RT’s encoded meaning, as Carston (2007) stresses. In order to stick to what they recognize to be propositional meanings, C & L have to assume that minimal semantic content contains no unsaturated indexicals or ambiguities. The problem is that this immediately makes minimal semantic content something other than that which is shared across different contexts: the saturation of indexicals is a context-dependent process. (Wedgwood 2007: 666).

Let us see how this works in practice. Consider the following utterance:

(3) She is happy.

[(3) is uttered by Mary who points to Ann when she says ‘she’].

According to C & L we could report Mary’s utterance by saying (4):

(4) Mary said that she is happy.

Such reports can be uttered on the basis of the identity of the referent of the pronominal. Suppose this is a rule constraining indirect reports. The main question is whether there is identity of content between (3) and the reported part of (4), assuming identity of the referents of ‘she’ in the two utterances. If there is such an identity (and we suppose the answer is positive), then C & L’s theory is a theory of abstract semantic content. The fact that semantic content is propositional is no impediment to having a view of content that is context-invariant. Propositionality simply means that we keep fixed certain elements which are tied to context while we use the tests for context-invariance. If, by keeping fixed the contextual contribution of pronominals, we obtain an invariant interpretation of the sentence, the results of this analysis will contribute to semantics and not to pragmatics. The fact that the semantic content of the sentence is propositional (in that it incorporates the semantic interpretation of indexicals and pronouns) is hardly a reason for thinking that C & L reject minimal semantics or for thinking that RT is a more minimal theory of semantic content. Since the contribution of context at the level of pronominals is factored out in the attempt to show that the reported utterance in an indirect report has the same content as in the original utterance, the theory has the level of abstraction required. Furthermore, it is simply not true that RT is a more minimal semantic theory simply because it factors out the contextual interpretations of pronominals, given the radical claim that the predication in an utterance is largely underdetermined (e.g. ‘The car is red’). We do not grant that RT is more minimal at the level of pronominal interpretation, but even if we granted that, given that the predication act is largely underdetermined under RT, Wedgwood should be discouraged from arguing that RT is a more minimal semantic theory than C & L.

At this point the following objection by Wedgwood (p.c.) should be answered:

But why couldn’t RT just argue in parallel that the contextual contribution required by ‘red’ is ‘factored out’—you get an invariant interpretation of ‘that is red’ so long as you fix both the referent of ‘that’ and the way in which the object satisfies ‘red’. The point is that RT holds both pragmatic enrichments together, indexical saturation and predicate explication).

The question Wedgwood is pressing is why C & L treat the former as part of minimal semantics and the latter as part of pragmatic communication.

The answer to this question is very simple. C & L grant that pragmatic intrusion is indispensable when it comes to pronominals and similar expressions drawn from the ‘Basic Set of genuinely context-sensitive expressions’, while they do not grant that pragmatic intrusion occurs at the level of predicates such as, e.g., ‘red’. Given the asymmetric status of pronominals and predicates, it does not come as a surprise that the pragmatics of pronominals is somehow incorporated into minimal

semantics, while the pragmatics of predicates is relegated to the level of speech act interpretation. Presumably, the reasoning implicit in this asymmetric treatment is that pronominals and other deictic expressions do not contribute much to the thought expressed without pragmatic intervention, that is without relating the sentence to the context in which it is uttered. There is no thought at all, as Frege would say, without anchoring deictic elements to a given context. So, presumably in this conception there is an implicit equation between knowing the semantics of a sentence and knowing the thought it would express. A good question to ask is whether there could be genuine thoughts without anchoring deictic elements and pronominals to a context. The thought expressed by (5)

(5) She went to the cinema

cannot be the thought that a female person went to the cinema, since that would be expressible through (6) as well:

(6) A woman went to the cinema.

And (5) is different from (6).

A minimal semantics without provision of referents for pronominals would not describe thoughts, but would simply provide skeletal elements for the provision of thoughts. Instead, if my understanding of C & L is correct, they want to equate semantics with the vehicle for expressing thoughts, not just fragments of thoughts.

Wedgwood writes:

It is particularly strange that C & L should include the referents of overt indexicals in that meaning that is infallibly shared, since this is one of the most obvious sources of misinterpretations in language use (given an utterance of *He's ready*, surely a response like *Who? Mark or Paul?* is at least as likely as *Ready for what?*: yet, according to C & L's position, the former question should be pre-empted by 'shared content' while the latter is not) (Wedgwood 2007: 666).

The point is exactly the opposite of the one made above. C & L admit that there is a tightly restricted class of genuine context-sensitive expressions, such as pronominals, which have variable interpretation in relation to the actual context of use and linguistic expressions that are not context-sensitive. They deny that 'ready' is a context-sensitive expression.

Yet, one might insist that Wedgwood is exploiting C & L's claim that 'ready' is not context sensitive but that 'he' is. Given C & L's view, the referent of 'he' makes it into the shared semantic content while the determination of 'ready' doesn't, yet as Wedgwood points out hearers often don't know who is being referred to by an utterance of 'he' (just as they may not know 'ready for what')—but C & L's position should rule this out—if we grasp shared content for C & L we should know who or what the referent is.

There is no doubt that some hearers may be in a position not to know the referent of a pronominal. Suppose I am persuaded that behind me there is a picture

of George Washington. It has been there for twenty years, and I expect it to be there while I am speaking. However, Mr Wedgwood to prove that C & L's theory is wrong suddenly removes the painting, while I say to my guests: 'He has a beautiful jacket'. When I turn round to point to the painting, I find out that George Washington is no longer there. My referential intention, as Wedgwood would want to say, cannot be understood correctly by my interlocutor. Is this situation the norm? Is this the way we ordinarily use pronominals and deictic expressions? I would say it is not. It is possible that the addition of a semantic clause restricting the use of pronominals to accompanying demonstrative gestures is too strong. However, surely there is a norm preventing speakers from using pronominals unless the hearer can identify the intended referent of the pronominal through contextual clues that are unambiguous. Suppose I am a general reviewing an army. There are thousands of soldiers before me. Could I legitimately use: 'He is clever', unless there are contextual clues that enable the hearer to identify the referent? Presumably I could not.

So, while I agree that unlike predicates, pronominals do not have a content that can be grasped without recourse to a context, there must at least be some basic agreement with C & L that pronominals belong to shared meanings, in the sense that given the semantic resources available to speakers/hearers and knowledge of rich contextual clues, one is able to understand the meaning of linguistic expressions in context. Presumably to work perfectly, C & L's view would have to be allied with a view of pronominals and indexical expressions in which semantics strictly regiments the content of a linguistic expression through a rule to the effect that pronominals and indexicals should be accompanied with unambiguous demonstrative gestures. Whether such a theory is desirable or terribly problematic is a topic for a different paper.

There is, obviously, the problem of how a context-sensitive expression can contribute a context-invariant meaning. But is this a real problem for semantics? While it is certainly true, as Wedgwood says, that the referent of a pronominal is provided by context, this is not to say that the semantics of pronominals cannot be furnished in a context-free manner. A very straightforward method is to let the pronominal refer to a thing *x* and to provide the semantics of the pronominal expression through a conditional:

(7) He is happy  
is given the following semantics:

(8) If 'he' refers to *x*, then 'He is happy is true' just in case *x* is happy (Higginbothams, p.c.).

Following this reasoning, we can now understand how C & L can answer Wedgwood. The minimal semantics of a sentence includes the referents of pronominals and still remains context-invariant. To furnish the referent of a pronominal is just to furnish a specific value to 'x'. Replacing this value for *x* in (8), we obtain:

- (9) If ‘he’ refers to John, then ‘He is happy’ is true just in case John is happy. ‘He’ refers to John.

The second clause of (9) is provided through pragmatics, but this does not destroy the context-invariance of the minimal semantics of (8), since this is perfectly represented in the first clause in (9). All C & L should do is use context-invariant semantics and couple it with a specification of the value of the variable involved in the logical form of the minimal semantics.

## 8 Indirect Reports as a Test

Wedgwood discusses ‘Indirect reports’ as a way of testing intuitions about context-sensitivity. According to C & L indirect reports are a good test for context-sensitivity, as genuinely context-sensitive expressions, such as indexicals, as used in the original utterance, simply cannot be preserved in the indirect report. Here is an example:

- (10) John: I am happy;  
 (11) John said that I was happy.

The sentence (11) cannot be a correct indirect report of (10), but something like (12) is required:

- (12) John said that he was happy.

On the contrary, if a lexical item (say one in the predication) is not context-sensitive, it can figure both in the original utterance and in the indirect report, as the new context of the indirect report does not change its interpretation. Here is an example from C & L (not a good one, actually):

- (13) John: Mary is ready.  
 (14) John said that Mary was ready.

Furthermore, suppose that ‘ready’ was used in two (completely) different contexts, as in (15), (16), then it would still be correct to make the report as in (17):

- (15) John: Mary is ready (for the exam);  
 (16) Ted: Mary is ready (to catch the train).  
 (17) Both John and Ted said that Mary was ready.

This, however, should be understood as a quotational usage. The indirect reports promotes some common denominator interpretation, even if the two sentences were interpreted quite differently. I will return on the equivocation that allows C & L to obtain the wrong effects with the test in the case of ‘ready’.

However, Wedgwood (2007) writes:

C & L’s reasoning here rests on a crucial empirical question that they do not investigate: do indirect speech reports work consistently in this way? In particular, can we really make reliable

judgements of truth and falsity about such reports? Note that this consistency is crucial to C & L's arguments; if the answer to the question is no, we can no longer assume that the complement of 'said' in such cases is necessarily propositional. In that case, being the complement of 'said' simply is not a test for propositionality—with the consequence that indirect speech reports cannot be used to argue for the propositionality of encoded meaning that putatively distinguishes semantic minimalism from RT.

There are various ways in which indirect reports of the kind that C & L rely on can fail to report a single proposition. For example, being the complement of 'said' does not force disambiguation of homonyms. I can truthfully utter the sentence 'In C1 and C2, Nina said that John went to the bank' even if I know that Nina was referring in C1 to the financial bank and in C2 to the watercourse bank. (...) Significantly, one may easily do this with regard to C & L's example also: In C1 and C2, Nina said that John is ready—but in C1 she meant that he is prepared for the exam, while in C2 she meant he has his raincoat on. (Wedgwood 2007: 669).

It is legitimate to raise such doubts. In fact, if indirect reports merely allowed quotational interpretations, then their efficacy would be destroyed. As Wedgwood says, they would no longer be efficient tests for propositionality. However, the very examples he uses persuade us that indirect reports like (18)

(18) In both C1 and C2, Nina said that John went to the bank  
made on the basis of utterances such as (19), (20)

(19) Nina: John went to the bank<sub>1</sub> (financial institution)

(20) Nina: John went to the bank<sub>2</sub> (river course bank)

are not licit. I think everyone agrees that (18) should be different from (21):

(21) In both C1 and C2 Nina uttered the words: 'John' 'went' 'to' 'the' 'bank' in this order.

It would not even be licit to utter (22):

(22) In both C1 and C2 Nina uttered the sentence 'John went to the bank'.

In fact, given the homonyms 'bank<sub>1</sub>' and 'bank<sub>2</sub>' there is not a single sentence, but there are two different sentences having distinct meanings.

Wedgwood (2007) also writes:

Similarly, C & L's test fails to disambiguate use/mention ambiguities.

My intuitions are completely different. So called use/mention ambiguities are not really cases of ambiguity in the written language, where inverted commas are conventionally used to make reference to mentions of a lexical item. Oral language uses different ways of marking inverted commas (...). Given these facts, it would simply be absurd to use indirect reports in ways that ignore the use/mention distinction (Wedgwood 2007, 669).

The attack on indirect reports as a test for a common meaning denominator is vaguely reminiscent of another attack on Cappelen and Lepore by Stanley (2005) Stanley's position is misguided, because it focuses on a specific problem in C & L's approach and draws generalizations about a more general point. Stanley, after noting C & L's position according to which

The semantic content of a sentence S is the content all utterances of S share (p. 143)

moves on to ponder on the consequences of this statement. He writes:

This passage is rather unclear. Is it the content that all assertions of S express, no matter how different their contexts of utterance? If so, “every bottle is in the fridge” has no semantic content relative to any context, since there is no one proposition that is asserted by every utterance of the sentence (and certainly not, as we have seen, the proposition that every bottle in the universe is in the fridge, since this is never asserted). If the common content of all utterances of a certain sentence is not the content of any genuine speech act, what is the motivation for thinking that common contents are always genuine propositions, rather than just Recanati’s “semantic schemata”? (Stanley 2005: 143).

However, this scepticism is simply defeated if one notices that C & L may well be wrong about quantifier domain restriction (a story like Stanley’s being more palatable), while being right in the general claim that the semantic content of a sentence is the content that all utterances of S share (Perhaps the addition is required that we should confine ourselves to serious, rather than non serious uses).

To go back to Wedgwood, one of the merits of C & L is to say that we should extrapolate some common denominator meanings from the various and disparate uses of some linguistic (sentential) expression. It is essential for this virtue of the theory to survive that both Wedgwood’s and Stanley’s contentions be silenced.

We should now reflect on the meaning of ‘ready’. Contextualists assume that ‘ready’ is more or less interpreted as ‘ready for that’. This would explain why in a context ‘John is ready’ means that he is ready for the exam, while in another context it means that John is ready for the tennis match. I claim that contextualism along these lines does not seriously jeopardise C & L’s work, as they, after all, admit that there is a restricted class of context-sensitive expressions, which they call ‘The Basic Set’. Pronominals belong to this class. But are there ways to make sense of C & L’s claim that ‘ready’ is not context-sensitive? It should at least be possible to discover that ‘ready’ is, semantically, not context-sensitive as contextualists say. I think it is useful to consult the Longman Dictionary of the English Language. The dictionary lists a number of senses, some of which appear to be more context-sensitive than the others. Let us start from the least context-sensitive:

- ‘spontaneously prompt’ (always has an answer);
- ‘Notably dexterous or skilled’ (he is very ready craftsman);
- ‘Immediately available’ (had little ready cash)
- ‘prepared for immediate use’ (dinner is ready’)

Then we have some context-sensitive senses:

- ‘forward or presumptuously eager’ (he is very ready with his criticism)
- ‘prepared mentally or physically for some experience or action’.

The real problem is to do with ‘ready’ what one should do with ‘open’, that is to say account for the various distinct uses of this word. Suppose we choose a sense such as ‘prompt’ (‘disposed to act as occasion demands’) as the basic sense from

the others can be derived pragmatically. At this point, we can easily explain how Intercontextual Disquotational Indirect Reports make this basic sense emerge as a context-invariant one.

I should clarify that I am not saying that ‘John is ready’ is context-independent, but I am arguing that there is a meaning of ‘ready’ which allows C & L to obtain the right results from the test of indirect reports.

Someone might criticise my views suggesting that by treating ‘ready’ and ‘enough’ as having hidden indexical components, I am actually rejecting the results of C & L’s tests. This suggestion is too quick, and to some extent resembles Stanley’s tactic to generalise from a local problem to a general problem. It should be admitted in principle that even if there is a reliable testing procedure, the person effecting the test may be wrong in executing it. We should remember that tests should be used judiciously, as they depend, after all, on intuitive judgements. In the case of ‘ready’, C & L strain their tests of context invariance. When we say that Julia and Mary are both ready, given that Julia is ready for her English exam and Mary is ready for her maths exams, we are certainly right **on the interpretation** that they are both well prepared for their respective exams, but saying that they are both ready in the sense that they are both ready for *x*, *x* being the (specific) thing each intends to do is surely false. It may very well be that there is an equivocation of meanings in the way C & L use this test, but this does not mean that all users of the test should be led away by things such as equivocation (of meaning).<sup>10</sup>

## 9 Justification for Semantic Minimalism

Last, I want to discuss Wedgwood’s following assertion:

Consider again the kinds of observation that C & L claim make shared context indispensable: co-ordinated action, collective deliberation, linguistic communication justifying beliefs, holding people responsible for what they say, and so on. Is minimal semantic content capable of supporting such things? If so, then an engineer who says ‘Steel is strong enough’ is held responsible just for that proposition (if we call it that) which is expressed by any and every utterance of this sentence. If the roof collapses, it should be considered reasonable of the engineer to point out that I just said steel is strong enough; I never said strong enough to support the roof. Such utterances would usually be described using words other than ‘reasonable’. (Wedgwood 2007: 670)

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<sup>10</sup> As Zwicky and Sadock (1975: 14) say, “If the semantic representation of certain sentences lack specification of some piece of meaning, then the applicability of transformation to them cannot possibly depend on whether or not this piece of meaning is present. If a sentence is unspecified with respect to some distinction, this lack of specification must be preserved by every transformational operation. But if a sentence is ambiguous, then it is possible for a transformation to apply in some but not all, of the cases, so that the effect of the transformation is to eliminate one or more understandings of the sentence”. In our case, the crossed reading can be obtained because the underspecified interpretations are preserved by the transformation of conjunction reduction. Since under-specification is preserved, the crossed readings can obtain.

While in principle we could agree with Wedgwood that more than minimal semantics is required for language to stimulate coordinated action, two things ought to be noted here:

C & L might reply that minimal semantics is like the pillars and beams of a house; the house can't exist without them. So communication is not possible without minimal semantics. Coordinated action as triggered by language implies a shared understanding of at least the basics of the utterances: that is to say their minimal semantics.

Second, in replying specifically to the point about the falling roof, an engineer who says 'Steel is strong enough' presumably means that 'steel satisfies one's needs. Then the pragmatics of his utterance will intervene in securing the interpretation that steel is strong enough for the roof. However, even if pragmatics did not intervene to secure such a specific interpretation, the engineer cannot be accused of incompetence or of having said something irrelevant.

## 10 On the Compatibility Between Radical Contextualism and Semantic Minimalism

Jaszczolt (forthcoming) claims that there is compatibility between Semantic Minimalism and Radical Contextualism. The compatibility in question mainly stems from the fact that (or as a consequence from the fact that) she abandons the syntactic direction principle, that is to say the assumption that the enriched propositions obtained through radical pragmatics should be considered developments of logical forms provided by sentential semantics. In other words, if I understand Jaszczolt well, in many cases, arriving at an enriched proposition is not a matter of taking a logical form as a point of departure and arriving at an enriched logical form, but it is a matter of going beyond what the initial logical form says, of bypassing that logical form. Consider the examples

(23) You are not going to die

(24) Child: Can I go punting?

Mother: You are too small

It seems implausible that the hearer goes from the literal logical form 'You are not going to die at t' to the non-literal 'You are not going to die from that cut' or that in (24) the hearer first recovers 'You are too small', whatever its context-invariant meaning ought to be, and then moves on to the contextualised meaning 'You are too small to go punting'.

There are also many other examples, from Capone (2009), where recovering an explicature is not just a question of developing a logical form, but is a question of bypassing it altogether:

## (25) Sicily is a triangle

is one such case. In this case the enrichment is not of an augmentative type, but of a subtractive type, as it is implausible that Sicily is a literal triangle. So, it appears that the assumption that an explicature should be a development of a logical form in the sense that the logical form it starts with appears intact in the explicature must be abandoned.

I am aware that more than one approach will be available to this example, so I propose to use other examples, to show that the logical form of a sentence can be bypassed altogether in semantic interpretation. Cases of irony can prove that what is literally said need not be literally expressed and that, therefore, all cases in which a literal meaning is projected, heavy pragmatic processing is required.

The point by Jaszczolt that implicatures and explicatures can be calculated at the same time in the same merger representation is a bit more contentious. One of her best examples is the following:

## (26) Everybody is going to Egypt this spring.

She claims that the main point of the assertion (the primary meaning) is that the interlocutors should consider going to Egypt this spring. She argues that primary meanings should be allocated a prominent place in a contextualist theory of meaning. That preoccupation, for Jaszczolt, seems to be incompatible with the syntactic direction principle. This point seems to me to be less well established, UNLESS we take her claim to be that a merger representation merges information deriving from explicatures and implicatures and that in many cases the literal interpretation is overridden by contextual considerations.

Let us return to the compatibility between semantic minimalism and radical contextualism. Once we agree with Jaszczolt that minimal semantics lacks psychological plausibility, a point that I think is conceded by C & L (2005), there are no problems in understanding how contextual considerations can override minimal semantics and how minimal semantics is absorbed and transformed into richer and often radically different propositional forms.

According to Jaszczolt, Semantic Minimalism is a project which is busy with truth-conditions at the sentential level, while radical pragmatics is busy with truth-conditions at the utterance level. In the same way in which semantic minimalism adheres to a compositionality principle, radical pragmatics adheres to a compositionality principle at a different level, given that the enriched propositions contain constituents which are not present at the level of logical form. It goes without saying that the compositionality principle employed in radical pragmatics is not a level of syntactic combination that belongs to surface structure (or to the logical form of the sentential semantics), but presupposes a level of syntactic combination that is (in principle) usable at the level of surface structure (or of the logical form of the sentential semantics).

According to Jaszczolt (2005), merger representations have the character of compositionality. This is to be accepted, as some implicit constituents, hence structure, is imposed on merger representations; we should suppose that the

combination of certain semantic interpretations with certain pragmatically supplied constituents should follow compositionality. Consider the following example:

(27) That piano is better.

In (27) there is a missing constituent, and this one must combine with ‘That piano is better’. Now, in examples like (27) the kind of compositionality which the merger representation displays is exactly the same which the full sentence would exhibit. (There are, of course, infinite discussions on whether (27) is a complete sentence or not; what is incontrovertible is that the full alternative to (27) has the same compositional structure as an utterance of (27)). However, Jaszczolt claims that in some cases there are some mismatches between the sentence and the utterance, and that while compositionality cannot be held at the level of the sentence, it can be held at the level of the merger representation. The best examples of this mismatch are belief reports. Jaszczolt’s ideas derive from Frege. Compositionality, at the level of the sentence, in the case of (28) breaks down.

(28) John believes that Mary is happy.

It breaks down because, by the compositional picture, when one replaces ‘Mary’ with a coreferential NP, one obtains (or may obtain) a false statement. So, a picture in which we compositionally build up the meaning of the sentence/statement by replacing each constituent with the appropriate value it has in context breaks down because such a compositional picture would require the possibility of substitution of identicals in slots associated with, say, proper names. At the level of the merger representation, further structure is provided, that quickly shows how it comes about that substitution of identicals is not always licit in intensional contexts. (Implicit modes of presentations are provided and integrated into the semantics, say as appositives, following (Capone (2008b)). Belief reports are ideal candidates for the task of showing that compositionality obtains at the level of merger representations. I would add that ‘de se’ beliefs are even better for this purpose.<sup>11</sup> Although my views on belief reports do not exactly coincide with Jaszczolt, we agree that the so called scope ambiguities do not resolve the problem of compositionality. In fact, assuming scope ambiguities, it is possible to differentiate the ‘de re’ and the ‘de dicto’ reading of a belief report

(‘de re’ reading: John is such that Mary believes of him that he is clever)

(‘de dicto’ reading: Mary believes that John is clever).

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<sup>11</sup> My paper on ‘de se’ attitudes (Capone 2010b) shows that ‘de se’ constructions are cases of intrusive constructions à la Levinson. ‘De se beliefs’ like ‘John remembers being in Oxford’ are beliefs about the self—they have first-personal readings which are truth-conditionally different from ‘de re’ readings. In my paper I argued that the mode of presentation ‘I’ is implicit in de se attitudes and furnished through pragmatic intrusion. Pragmatic Intrusion is also instantiated in the internal dimension of PRO in ‘de se’ constructions. See also Lewis (1979).

However, a problem to be noted is that the ‘de re’ reading entails the ‘de dicto’ reading, and thus scope ambiguities do not explain at all the problem of opacity (there would be some kind of circularity). It is best to accept, as Jaszczolt does, that compositionality is at the level of merger representation, where an implicit mode of presentation motivates opacity in the case where intentionality is dispersed (the strongest level of intentionality correlating with ‘de re’ readings, according to Jaszczolt). Does this amount to saying that the compositionality principle applies only at the level of merger representations? Should we reject the compositionality principle at the level of sentential semantics? (However, it should be born in mind that sentential semantics often consists of logical forms that do not match with the veneer of sentence structure). There is a sense in which the reply to this question is positive. If we do semantics in the merger representation, compositionality in the merger representation is all that is required (Jaszczolt 2005, p. 72). However, I also sympathize with more traditional semanticists, who claim that compositionality is an important characteristic of semantics. I can comfort them by saying that, after all, their semantics is done at a level of abstraction, thus it is methodologically correct to attribute compositionality to sentence structure, even if it has been abstracted away from the merger representation, for methodological reasons. The compositionality we find in the sentential semantics percolates to the semantics from the merger representation. However, since semantics is done, for methodological reasons, in abstraction from the merger representation, it appears as if the compositionality is there in the semantics. And in a sense, perhaps not the one by Jaszczolt, it is in the semantics.

## 11 A Final Note

In this section I will sketch a solution to some of the problems discussed, while I cannot go into the details of such a solution. It appears to me that Semantic Minimalism seeks to establish an asymmetry between subject and predicate positions. Subject positions are invariably subject to pragmatic intrusion, and there is nothing one can do about it. Furthermore, pragmatic intrusion provides a constituent of the proposition, whether minimal or at the level of speech act theory. Without such a constituent there can be no minimal proposition, so C & L cannot really provide minimal semantics without such constituents. Since subject positions are usually positions for reference assignment and reference assignment is pragmatic (having to resort to a number of contextual clues), there is no expectation that the subject position can provide a constituent of thought without referential resolution; and there is no expectation that there can be a minimal thought without referential resolution and the assignment of a constituent to the subject position. The predicate position, instead, has got a different status. It is true that a predicate is not immune to pragmatic enrichment; but it is not as dependent on pragmatic intrusion as the subject. Many cases have been provided to try to show that predicates cannot really furnish minimal truth-conditions. However, I am not

persuaded that these cases are really against Cappelen and Lepore. Consider the case of ‘The lemon is yellow’. This may well require pragmatic intrusion, but only at the level of the subject. We may enrich the proposition up to ‘The lemon’s peel is yellow’. Since the pragmatic intrusion is required at the level of the subject, the predicate is not affected. Could we extend a similar treatment to ‘John is ready’? Presumably, we need to transfer the pragmatic intrusion from the predicate to the subject. One way to do so is through an implicit apposition constituent: ‘John [who must take the exam] is ready’. We could extend this position further by positing a null prepositional phrase as sub-categorized by ‘ready’. We thus obtain ‘John [who must take the exam] is ready [for it]’. And now we have obtained a considerable advantage. While I previously said that ‘ready’ subcategorizes the constituent ‘for that’, which is fundamentally deictic, the prepositional phrase ‘for it’ is anaphoric. This means that the constituent [who must take the exam] is to all effects part of what is said, given that it is indispensable for anaphoric resolution. This could explain, presumably, why ‘Mary is ready’ cannot really mean that Mary is ready for that, for that and for that. The enrichment process is constrained and part of its constraints is that one should make sense of a sentence by enriching the subject first and one can enrich the predicate by anaphoric resolution through materials provided as apposition in the subject. Furthermore, one cannot say ‘Mary is ready and not ready’ meaning ‘Mary is ready for that1 and not ready for that1’. This presumably follows from the fact that the prepositional phrase ‘For it’ is anaphoric and thus it would be a contradiction if the first occurrence of ‘it’ and the second occurrence of it both referred back to the same constituent. ‘Mary [who must take an exam] is both ready [for it] and not ready [for it]’.

If I am right about these data, then we have bumped into the deep question of constraints to pragmatic enrichment and where they come from. But now we must ask the following questions. Do all predicates follow the same pattern as ‘ready’? Why is it that predicates can be enriched only through anaphoric resolution, while subjects can be enriched through provision of apposition constituents (that is to say in a really free way)? Why is it that indexicality cannot occur in predicates (unless use is made of explicit deictic pronominals), while anaphoric pronominals are tolerated? In reply to the first question, it appears that things are very much the same with ‘happy’. We cannot easily say ‘Mary was happy but unhappy’, meaning ‘Mary was happy about this but unhappy about that’, as we have the same anaphoric pattern as before: ‘Mary [who found her jewel] was happy about it but unhappy about it. It is also clear that somehow the anaphoric pronominal incorporates a reference to the event of finding Mary’s jewel, which compels the semanticist to incorporate the event in the apposition close through a device such as ‘Mary, who was such that there was an event of finding her jewel...’. Now I address the question of why pragmatic intrusion in the predicate appears to be subordinate to pragmatic intrusion in the subject and why it can occur through anaphora and not through deixis. A tentative answer has to do with a principle which has been brought to my attention by Jaszczolt (1999): Do not multiply levels of interpretation. This seems to correspond precisely with Cappelen and Lepore’s notion of semantic minimalism, in which intrusion is granted for subjects but not

or only minimally for predicates. In other words, Parsimony of levels of interpretation (POL) compels us to minimize the loci of pragmatic intrusion and to utilize an already existing and necessary locus. Since the subject is a necessary locus of pragmatic intrusion, reference being necessarily a pragmatic process and the subject being the locus for an NP that is also a referential position, pragmatic intrusion must occur primarily in the subject and if pragmatic intrusion occurs in a predicate, then this process must be subordinated syntactically to the subject position. Subordination allows us to keep the level of pragmatic intrusion in the predicate to a minimum (anaphoric resolution), while the pragmatic intrusion occurring in the subject is more radical.

Nelson Morales (personal communication) has thought of ways of falsifying my considerations. He thinks that loosening is such a case. He thinks that, in certain circumstances, a statement such as ‘Mary is ready and not ready’ is not contradictory (consider the interpretation ‘Mary [who must take the exam] is [physically] ready but [emotionally] not ready’). His remarks are certainly useful, even if his example does not necessarily require loosening. As should be clear to anyone, contradiction is a property of statements and NOT of sentences. Someone who says ‘Mary [who must take the exam] is [physically] ready and not [emotionally] ready [for it]’ introduces some modifiers and this kind of modifier introduction is one of the various manifestations of pragmatic intrusion, not necessarily loosening. Notice that the anaphoric phrase [for it] stays there all the time and even in his example, one is prohibited from interpreting: Mary [who must take an exam] is physically ready for this [the exam] and emotionally not ready for that [getting married].

His example is very interesting and useful, as I said. Loosening applies to predicates like ‘a triangle’, when one says things such as ‘Sicily is a triangle’. However, these cases are different because what is involved is a modification of the predicate to make the predicate fit the subject: Sicily has the rough shape of a triangle. Alternatively: Sicily’s shape resembles a triangle. Strictly speaking, it would not be true to say that Sicily is a triangle. And again, one could contrive the case in such a way, that the pragmatic intrusion is at the level of the subject and not of the predicate. One, in fact, could have the following result:

Sicily’s rough shape is a triangle.

This would very much be compatible with Jaszczolt’s POL.

Let us now consider the following objection by Burton-Roberts (p.c.):

In the rest of the paper you contrast indexicals (including pronominals) and predicates. However, in the final section you advert to a different notion of ‘predicate’. Here ‘predicate’ identifies a sentence constituent (‘THE predicate’) in contrast to the sentence constituent you refer to as ‘the subject’. On this latter use it corresponds to VP, assuming  $S \rightarrow NP + VP$ . It is this that leads you to refer to an asymmetry in C & L’s treatment of subjects and predicates and, on that assumption, to your proposal.

But this (VP) sense of predicate is not the sense of ‘predicate’ appealed to in the rest of the paper which I’ll call “pred-1”. Pred-1’s can and do occur in the subject (and indeed all over the place, it covers common nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs). Any \*descriptive\* subject expression includes a pred-1. So I don’t think C & L’s position can be said to result in an asymmetry between subject and predicate—and that perhaps you need to look again at your proposal in the light of that.

Answer: it is true that C & L speak of sub-constituent predicates, and of them they say that they are not to be modulated (their meanings are stable and are not in need of modulation). On the contrary for more radical treatments, predicates (at the sub-constituent level) require free enrichment because they cannot contribute to a full proposition; in other words, the contribution of the predicate to the proposition is sub-propositional. But then if my predicate roughly corresponds to a VP constituent, it is clear that the VP which contains as a sub-constituent a Predicate 1 also contributes a sub-propositional contribution; in other words, by applying that VP to the subject assuming that the subject can be used to identify a referent, one still obtains a sub-propositional element, that is to say an element which is not fully truth-evaluable. Since subjects are referential elements and reference always needs pragmatics means for being secured, it may be useful to transfer pragmatic intrusion from the level of the Predicate 1 and, subsequently, from the level of the next projection, VP to the subject, which, as I have already said, needs to secure its referent through pragmatic means.

Now consider the idea (correct, as far as I can understand) that after all Predicates of the type Pred1 can occur inside the subject (adjectival modification is an obvious illustration (e.g. ‘A tall girl’). As I said predicates of the type Pred 1 may be in need of pragmatic intrusion. But this is ok, since we hypothesed to start with that pragmatic intrusion is more parsimonious if it applied at the level of the subject.

Let us consider the next objection by Burton-Roberts (p.c.):

I don’t think you CAN “transfer the pragmatic intrusion to the subject” from the predicate, as you suggest, i.e. by interpolating a non restrictive (NR, appositive) relative clause. [1] Interpolating an NR relative does not actually enrich/modulate the referential semantics of the subject (unlike restrictive relative clauses); indeed, it has been argued that NR relative clauses aren’t true sentence constituents anyway; [2] there is no limit to the range of the content of such NR clauses you might add (anything you might happen to know the referent of the subject); [3] as I understand it, you want to restrict the content of the relative clause in a way that might be relevant to the modulation of the predicate. However, that could be argued to be circular, either empirically or methodologically: first you have to identify the subject in order to know what modulation of the predicate might be relevant but you are arguing that the subject must be modulated in a way relevant to how the predicate is modulated.

Answer: why should we secure modulation in the subject by taking into account possible ways of enriching the predicate? The predicate does not require any

enrichment if we are ready to enrich the subject in the proper way. When I said that ‘Sicily is a triangle’ may correspond to the proposition ‘Sicily’s rough shape is a triangle’ I gave up completely the idea that the predicate or VP where it is contained needed pragmatic enrichment. I said that I transferred enrichment from the predicate to the subject as a way of speaking, as a way of contrasting my analysis with those of radical contextualists, but the transferral of the enrichment from predicate to subject, in fact, may never occur (otherwise, it would be correct to say that it would be circular). All we need is to enrich the subject.

My opponent argues that Non-restrictive relative clauses may not be relevant to pragmatic enrichment. Yet, if one makes use of them in the context of a sentence such as ‘Mary is ready’, which contextualists argue to be context-sensitive, and it can be demonstrated that they play a role in modulating the meanings of such sentences, it goes without saying that they must be ancillary to pragmatic enrichment, whether or not, by themselves, they constitute cases of pragmatic intrusion. (In any case, see Capone 2008 on pragmatic intrusion and appositives). But then which are the reasons for doubting that the addition of non-restrictive relative clauses may amount to pragmatic intrusion? Presumably my opponent thinks that the addition of a non-restrictive relative clause will be indifferent to truth-conditional evaluation. Consider the case ‘John, who is the President, never accepts to be contradicted’ as a pragmatic enrichment of ‘John never accepts to be contradicted’. Surely this is an obvious case where the pragmatic intrusion does not intrude into truth-conditional meaning; so we may very well call it a pragmatic intrusion but not a truth-conditional pragmatic intrusion. And this is pretty uncontroversial. However, what about more complicated cases, such as Mary believes that [John does not accept to be contradicted] [APPosition]? In Capone (2008), I articulated the idea that apposition clauses serve to provide modes of presentation (sentential appositions being modes of presentation of the that-clause dependent on ‘believe’). But then there are at least some cases in which appositions (which is what non-restrictive relative clauses are similar to) result in truth-conditional pragmatic intrusion.

Finally, let us consider the charge of circularity: “first you have to identify the subject in order to know what modulation of the predicate might be relevant but you are arguing that the subject must be modulated in a way relevant to how the predicate is modulated”. But I said previously that my way of speaking ‘shifting pragmatic intrusion from the predicate to the subject’ is only a way of speaking and we need not think of it in this way. It is not the case that I need to identify the subject and the predicate etc. The predicate usually has slots one of which is occupied by the subject. So the subject can only occur in that slot. Thus I need not identify the subject, but the subject allows me to identify the object it refers to, and this can be done, usually, if the NP corresponding to the subject is expanded pragmatically. And most importantly I am not arguing that the subject must be modulated in a way relevant to how the predicate is modulated. In fact, what I am denying is that the predicate is being modulated. The modulation of the predicate is only a theoretical construction of other theorists—certainly a plausible construction until other possibilities are investigated. However, when other

possibilities are investigated, one can easily see that there are syntactic means for gluing the pragmatic increments to subjects and thus explaining away what *prima facie* can be considered pragmatic enrichments of the predicates. What I am basically claiming is that yes, there is a phenomenon of pragmatic intrusion, but the location of the intrusion is wrong. But then why is it that theorists are so adamant in claiming that predicates are loci of pragmatic intrusion? I will reply that theorists wear the eyeglasses of their own theories. We usually see what we want to see or what we can see through our ordinary glasses. Superficial syntax may also lead us astray and once we may consider other possible ways of gluing constituents to the existing ones, enrichments can be constructed in different ways. The merger representations in which literal and pragmatic meanings are combined are open to combinations which amount to different syntactic glues, which are different from the superficial syntax we can observe by considering literal meanings. The existence of merger representations à la Jaszczolt (2005) opens us up to the idea that there may be different modes of syntactic combinations other than those visible at the level of superficial syntax. We need not impute these non-standard modes of syntactic combination to logical form. We may simply impute them to the Merger Representations.

## 12 Conclusion

I confined myself to the discussion of Wedgwood's points from the perspective of C & L. In general, we should be taught some salutary lessons by C & L concerning minimal semantics. This is not to say that we should abandon a contextualist approach to language. But perhaps it is convenient to make such an approach as compatible as possible with C & L's assumption that the Basic Set of context-sensitive expressions should be maximally restricted. There are some interesting context-sensitive expressions mentioned by C & L, such as 'enemy', 'friend', 'foreigner', 'outsider' etc. (C & L p. 1), but these are almost never discussed in the literature. I think we should concentrate on cases such as these or such as those dealt with in Capone (2006), and Capone (2008b).

The ideas on the semantics/pragmatics debate are quite fluid for the time being, but I have a propensity to follow Jaszczolt in her radical pragmatic perspective on language, trying to make her picture compatible with more classical theories on semantics. The idea that semantic minimalism and contextualism should not be enemies has recently been voiced by Recanati (2010). Of course, to enhance this compatibility one would have to accept that at least in many cases, but not in all cases, the meanings of sentences are truth-conditional and that at least in basic cases knowledge of the language will allow one to say what must be true for an utterance of a given sentence to be true. Contextualism, in such a hybrid theory, would be considered as a tool for enhancing the semantic potential of a language, rather than for arguing that language in itself is value-less. I remember distinctly Higginbotham's (personal communication) words in this respect—pragmatics is a

**path** that makes truth-conditional semantics work. It is very useful to think of semantics and pragmatics in this way: as a path and a vehicle. You cannot use your car unless you have a road; the road is what makes your car useful. The road without the car is useless. Nevertheless, you can use your car in as many roads as you want to. This invariably involves a certain degree of autonomy.

## Appendix 1

### *Abbreviations*

In this paper, I make use of the following abbreviations:

SM	Semantic minimalism
RT	RT
RC	Radical contextualism
MC	Moderate contextualism
C & L	Cappelen and Lepore

## Appendix 2

Wedgwood, in replying to my paper, was bothered by the fact that C & L allow pragmatic intrusion for indexicals but not for predicates. However, on my view that at least in some cases, predicates subcategorize for null prepositional phrases a limited form of pragmatic intrusion could be allowed for predicates as well. On my view, the asymmetry could be dissolved. Of course, this approach may be suitable for some cases; I am not saying that it should be suitable for all predicates. In fact, it is plausible that some forms of modulation à la Recanati should be accepted.

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