WAYS OF USING WORDS: ON SEMANTIC INTENTIONS

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Abstract

Intentionalism is the view that demonstratives, gradable adjectives, quantifiers, modals and other context-sensitive expressions are intention-sensitive: their semantic value on a given use is fixed by speaker intentions. The first aim of this paper is to defend Intentionalism against three recent objections, according to which speakers at least sometimes do not have suitable intentions when using supposedly intention-sensitive expressions. Its second aim is to thereby shed light on the so far little-explored question of which kinds of intentions can be semantically relevant.

1. Introduction

Some natural language expressions are context-sensitive: their semantic value on a given use depends on the context of utterance. Among the expressions commonly taken to be context-sensitive are demonstratives, gradable adjectives, quantifiers and modals. Which aspect of the context are such expressions sensitive to? A popular answer to this metasemantic question is *Intentionalism*. While different versions of this view have been put forward, Intentionalists agree that the semantic value of an intention-sensitive expression e in a context c is an object o *only if* the speaker intends o to be the value of e in c (see e.g. Kaplan 1989, Siegel 2002, Åkerman 2009, Stokke 2010, King 2014a, 2014b, Speaks 2016 and Lewerentz & Marschall 2018).

In this paper, I will focus on three objections to Intentionalism which try to establish that speakers at least sometimes do not have suitable intentions when using supposedly intention-sensitive expressions. According to the first objection, due to Kent Bach (2017), it is in general implausible to ascribe semantically relevant intentions to speakers. The second objection, put forward by Michael Glanzberg (2007, 2009), focuses on just some supposedly intention-sensitive

expressions (namely gradable adjectives), and alleges that their semantic values are too complex to be the object of ordinary speakers' intentions. The third objection, brought up by Jeff Speaks (2016), focuses on just some speakers: Speaks argues that while young children can be competent with supposedly intention-sensitive expressions, they cannot be said to have intentions about such expressions.

The aim of this paper is to defend Intentionalism against these objections, and, in doing so, bring out which kinds of intentions can be semantically relevant. In response to Bach, I will argue, firstly, that ascribing semantically relevant intentions gains plausibility if such intentions are seen as resulting from and embedded in communicative intentions, i.e. intentions to convey a certain content to an audience; secondly, I will point out that semantically relevant intentions are required to fix the operative meaning of polysemous expressions, which supports the view that they can play a similar role for intention-sensitive expressions. In response to Glanzberg and Speaks, I will describe three kinds of intentions that can be semantically relevant:

(i)   encoding intentions: intentions to encode a message in a string of expressions,

(ii)   equivalence intentions: intentions for a string of expressions to mean the same as another string of expressions, and

(iii)   deferential intentions: intentions to use expressions in the same way as they have been previously used.

If speakers have intentions of any of these kinds, they might be said to intend an expression to have a certain semantic value, even though in most cases that is not how speakers would describe their intentions. I hope to show that in view of the widely shared acceptance of communicative intentions it is plausible to also ascribe semantically relevant intentions to speakers.

Three brief remarks before I begin. Firstly, I will follow King (2014b: n. 3) and Speaks (2016: 305) in using *semantic value* to pick out the entity that is semantically associated with an expression, regardless of how precisely the relation of semantic association is spelled out. This will allow me to steer clear of issues concerning certain intention-sensitive expressions that are orthogonal to the issues of this paper. For example, I will stay neutral on the question of whether demonstratives are directly referential or quantificational expressions: on either option, a demonstrative (on a successful use) is semantically associated with an entity (or collection of entities), and I will count this entity (or collection of entities) as its semantic value.

Secondly, I will in what follows use *semantic intentions* instead of the more cumbersome *semantically relevant intentions*, where the meaning of the former is meant to be equivalent to the meaning of the latter. And I will include in the class of semantic intentions those intentions that are *meant* to be semantically relevant, regardless of whether they in fact *succeed* in being semantically relevant.

Thirdly, I will not be concerned with further requirements Intentionalists have proposed for the successful fixing of semantic values for intention-sensitive expressions. While Intentionalists agree that semantic intentions are necessary to give intention-sensitive expressions a semantic value, they also hold that merely having a semantic intention is not sufficient. King (2013, 2014a, 2014b), for example, argues for a view on which speakers are not only required to have semantic intentions, but also have to make these accessible to an idealised hearer who knows the common ground of the conversation.[1] King spells out this idea as follows:

> A speaker S's use δ of a demonstrative expression in context c has o as its semantic value iff 1. S intends o to be the semantic value of δ in c; and 2. a competent, reasonable, attentive hearer H who knows the common ground of the conversation at the time S utters δ, and who has the properties attributed to the audience by the common ground at the time S utters δ would recognize that S intends o to be the semantic value of δ in c in the way S intends H to recognize her intention. (King 2013: 290).

In order to keep things manageable, I will in what follows focus on the question of whether speakers have semantic intentions in the first place and set aside the question of whether such intentions also fulfil further requirements on successful fixing of semantic values.

2. Do speakers have semantic intentions?

Kent Bach's objection to Intentionalism has two parts. In a first step, he argues that while speakers can plausibly be said to have communicative intentions, such intentions are unsuited to fix the semantic values of supposedly intention-sensitive expressions. Then, he claims that it is implausible to, in addition, ascribe semantic intentions to speakers.

In this section, I will argue that the first part of Bach's objection is convincing, but that the second part should be resisted. Bach is right that communicative intentions are unsuited to fix the semantic values of intention-sensitive expressions. And it is helpful to draw attention to the difference between communicative intentions and semantic intentions. But it is not as implausible as Bach states to additionally posit semantic intentions—as long as these are seen as resulting from and embedded in communicative intentions. Indeed, semantic intentions are required in the metasemantics of polysemy (where Bach and others accept them), so there is little reason to rule them out in the metasemantics of context-sensitivity.

Before presenting the objection in detail, let me note that Bach (2017) is concerned only with demonstratives, such as 'this' or 'that'. He does not discuss other expressions that have been argued to be intention-sensitive, such as gradable adjectives, quantifiers and modals. But it is clear that his

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[1] See Stokke (2010: 388) for a similar view.

objection applies to intention-sensitive expressions in general, and not only to demonstratives. After all, demonstratives are arguably the best and most obvious candidates for being intention-sensitive, and the intention-sensitivity of other context-sensitive expressions is usually modelled on that of demonstratives.[2] So if it is shown that speakers do not have semantic intentions directed at demonstratives, there should be little hope that the situation is better for gradable adjectives, quantifiers or modals.

2.1 Bach's objection

In the first part of his objection, Bach highlights the difference between communicative intentions and semantic intentions: a communicative intention, he points out, is an intention to convey a certain content, and is thus distinct from an intention to use expressions with certain semantic values.[3] Consider a situation in which Anne intends to tell Bert that he can have the book that is lying on the table in front of them. Anne gestures towards the book and utters:

(1)   You can have that.

Anne's communicative intention, Bach holds, is distinct from a semantic intention that concerns the semantic values of the expressions uttered. And if we focus on the demonstrative 'that', it seems that Anne has an intention to refer to a certain book; Bach takes this *referential intention* to be a 'part of a speaker's total communicative intention' (2017: 58). But, he emphasises, this intention must not be mistaken with an intention that 'that' should have the book in question as its semantic value, which would be a semantic intention.[4]

Building on the distinction between communicative and semantic intentions, Bach argues that Intentionalists cannot appeal to communicative intentions as fixers of semantic values. In particular, he argues that communicative intentions do not have the right kind of content to fix semantic values: the speaker's referential intention (accompanying a use of a demonstrative) is an intention 'to refer to a certain thing, not the intention for the demonstrative to have a certain semantic value' (2017: 68). That seems right: referential intentions are directed at whatever the speaker wants to talk about, and not at the expressions the speaker uses.

At this point, Intentionalists might object that communicative intentions can nonetheless be semantically relevant. They might, for example, say that the semantic values of the expressions used correspond to whatever the speaker intends to convey (given that any further requirements

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[2] King (2014a), for example, introduces his version of Intentionalism by discussing demonstratives and then extends it to gradable adjectives and other expressions.

[3] Cf. Bach (2017: 57–59).

[4] Bach rightly notes that Intentionalists have not always held these two kinds of intentions apart. For example, he points out that Stokke (2010) appeals to referential, non-semantic intentions in defending his version of Intentionalism. Similar considerations apply to Montminy (2010).

on successful fixing of semantic values are fulfilled). With respect to demonstratives, this picture would entail that the semantic value of a demonstrative is whatever the speaker intends to refer to.

But such an approach does not fit well with the fact that a speaker's communicative intentions can be successful even if the expressions used clearly do not have semantic values that correspond to these communicative intentions.[5] This can be brought out by considering *non-literal* uses of intention-sensitive expressions and broadening the focus to include intention-sensitive expressions other than demonstratives. Let us briefly focus on gradable adjectives, such as 'tall', which e.g. King (2014a, 2014b), Speaks (2016) and MacFarlane (2016) take to be intention-sensitive. According to Kennedy's (2007) influential account of gradable adjectives, the context-sensitive element of their positive form is a function *s* from adjective meanings to degrees on a scale. A scale, in turn, is a set of degrees that are totally ordered with respect to a dimension determined by the adjectives meaning (e.g. a dimension of height for 'tall'). If Kennedy's approach is combined with Intentionalism, the task of the speaker's intentions is to fix a certain value for *s*. Now consider the following non-literal utterances featuring gradable adjectives:

Irony

(2)   *Following a terrible meal*: I thought that meal was delightful.

(3)   *During an unentertaining speech*: What a gripping speech.

Metaphor

(4)   *A political analyst*: Greece is still shouldering a heavy burden of debt.

These utterances are non-literal in the following sense: the speaker intends to communicate something that does not match the semantic value of the sentence uttered. The speaker of (2) intends to communicate that she thought that the meal was terrible, not that it was delightful. (3) is uttered to communicate that the speech is boring, not that it is gripping. And (4) is meant to communicate that Greece still has high debt, not that it is literally shouldering something heavy. In short, the speakers *say* one thing, but *mean* something else. As a result, it is very hard to see how the speakers' communicative intentions could fix the semantic values of the gradable adjectives in these utterances: not only are they not directed at these expressions, they do not remotely correspond to the semantic values they would have to fix. For example, the communicative intentions accompanying (4) concern amounts of debt, not degrees of heaviness. And despite this mismatch between communicative intentions and semantic values, these are ordinary utterances that are likely to meet communicative success—after all, non-literality is the norm, not the exception, in everyday use of language.

There are thus good reasons not to appeal to communicative intentions as determiners of semantic values. Intentionalists have to bring in semantic intentions: intentions that are in some

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[5] This point is also made by Speaks (2016: 304) and Bach (2017: 70–71).

sense about the expressions used. This is where the second part of Bach's objections comes into play. Bach argues that it is implausible to posit semantic intentions in addition to communicative intentions:

> Defenders of semantic intentionalism about demonstratives simply assume that we have intentions that determine semantic values (references) of uses of demonstratives in contexts. To me it is anything but obvious that we do. I don't know about you, but when I use a demonstrative, the only intention I have that is directly associated with the demonstrative is to refer to something. I am doing the referring, and all the demonstrative does, so far as I can tell, is to signal that that's what I'm doing in using it. (2017: 72)

In my view, this verdict is too quick. While it is right that Intentionalists have not done much to support the view that speakers have semantic intentions, it is possible to spell out the nature of such intentions in a way that makes their existence much less questionable than Bach argues. To this end, I will now argue that semantic intentions should be seen as embedded in communicative intentions, and then point to the need for semantic intentions in the metasemantics of ambiguity.

2.2 Embedding semantic intentions

Some intentions embed others. Consider a situation in which I form the intention to repair my bicycle, which is unusable because of a stiff chain. This intention gives rise to more specific intentions as to *how* to repair my bicycle. I might either repair it by loosening the stiff links of the chain or by replacing the chain. If I decide to go for the second option, the general intention to repair my bicycle results in the more specific intention to repair it by replacing the chain. This intention, in turn, leads to even more specific intentions about how to remove the old chain, how to place the bike in order to remove the chain, and so on.

This picture of general intentions embedding more specific ones via means-ends reasoning is an important element of Michael Bratman's (1987) influential account of intentions.[6] In my view, it can also be helpfully applied in the linguistic domain. In particular, communicative intentions can be seen as embedding intentions that are semantically relevant. In the above example involving (1) ('You can have that'), Anne forms the communicative intention to tell Bert that he can have the book that is lying on the table in front of them. This is a general intention that results in more specific intentions as to *how* to tell Bert that he can have the book, as there are many different ways in which Anne could try to get her message across: she could use expressions of different languages, written or spoken signs, she could speak literally or non-literally, etc.

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[6] See in particular Bratman (1987: Chapter 3). In a similar fashion, Gollwitzer (1993) and Holton (2009: Chapter 1) distinguish between *goal intentions* and *implementation intentions*, where the latter typically result from and are embedded in the former.

One way in which Anne might intend to achieve her communicative goal is by uttering expressions that *encode* or *express* (or in more technical terms: *have as their semantic value*) what she intends to communicate. So we might say that Anne intends to communicate that Bert can have the book that is lying on the table in front of them by encoding her message in the string of expressions 'You can have that'.[7] If Anne has such an intention, she appears to have an intention that is semantically relevant. Anne does not only intend to utter certain expressions, she intends to use them *in a certain way*. Intentions of this kind might be called *encoding intentions*, and I will say more about them and other kinds of semantic intentions in the next section. For now, I want to remark that ascribing semantic intentions (such as encoding intentions) to speakers gains plausibility if these intentions are seen as resulting from and embedded in communicative intentions.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the many ways in which any communicative intention can be fulfilled *requires* speakers to decide on how to communicate, and thus to form an intention on communicative means. These means need not involve uttering expressions, but if they do, speakers have to decide on *which* expressions to utter. In most situations, there will be several strings of expressions that are equally good ways of getting across the intended message. If speakers do not make a decision on which expressions to use, they might be stuck midway between equally suitable expressions and fail to make themselves understood. [8] So the multitude of options in communicating linguistically suggests that speakers are often required to form an intention to use certain expressions once they have formed a communicative intention. And from an intention to use certain expressions it is only a very short way to an intention to use certain expressions *in a certain way* or *with certain semantic values*. Indeed, in many cases intentions to use certain expressions will also be intentions to use them in a certain way. This holds for the encoding intentions just mentioned and for the other semantically relevant intentions I will shortly discuss. So if speakers are taken to have communicative intentions, as is widely accepted, there are strong reasons also to accept semantically relevant intentions embedded in and resulting from such communicative intentions

Intentionalists can still say that speakers may have a semantic intention without having a corresponding communicative intention, e.g. when they are speaking without an audience (possibly to practise a speech). But they should hold that in the normal case speakers form semantic intentions because of their communicative intentions: they use expressions with certain semantic values (as well as other means) to make their communicative intentions clear to their hearers.[9]

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[7] Perry (2009: 194) holds that speakers can have intentions of this kind.

[8] See Holton (2009: 12–15) for similar considerations concerning non-linguistic intentions.

[9] A related approach is suggested by King (2013: 296–305), who is mainly concerned with how semantic intentions embed other semantic intentions. King's aim is to bring out what happens when a speaker has several conflicting semantic intentions, as is the case in Kaplan's (1970) famous Carnap/Agnew example. In the example, Kaplan points behind him towards what he thinks is a picture of Carnap and utters: 'That is a picture of one of the greatest

Of course, many embedded semantic intentions are different from the intentions in play in standard examples in the philosophy of action. For example, they are different from most of the intentions in the bicycle example given above. Repairing a bicycle requires deliberation and planning, and the intention to repair a bicycle as well as many of the intentions resulting from it (e.g. the intention to replace the chain) are aimed at future actions of the agent—they are thus *future-directed*. By contrast, semantic intentions (such as encoding intentions) are usually spontaneously formed without a process of deliberation, and they concern the immediate actions of the agent, which makes them *present-directed*. These differences might lead some theorists to question the plausibility of ascribing semantic intentions to speakers. But there are several reasons why such a worry is unwarranted.

Firstly, positing present-directed intentions does not in itself seem problematic. As Holton (2009: 12–14) argues, the kinds of considerations that motivate the existence of future-directed intentions equally apply to present-directed intentions. If there are cases in which agents have reasons to form future-direct intentions (because desires and beliefs do not suffice to decide on a future course of action), there also seem to be cases in which agents have reasons to form present-directed intentions (because desires and beliefs do not suffice to decide on a present action).

Secondly, it is clear that *communicative* intentions will often have to be present-directed. Much of our everyday communication takes place in rapid-fire discussion, and so speakers often do not have the time to deliberate and plan what to communicate next. Many communicative intentions must thus be spontaneously formed and concern the speaker's immediate actions. However, few theorists would deny the existence of communicative intentions, even if they are spontaneously formed, so positing similar present-directed semantic intentions seems unproblematic.

Thirdly, there are many cases in which both communicative intentions and the semantic intentions they embed are future-directed. Sometimes we carefully plan ahead not only *what* we want to communicate, but also *how* we want to get it across. Before making a speech or giving evidence in court or even asking a question in a seminar, speakers think carefully about their communicative goals and the ways to implement them (as is evidenced by the written notes that are often used in such situations). And of course the written texts of emails, letters, journal articles and books involve a huge amount of deliberation and planning about how to encode the intended

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philosophers of the twentieth century.' However, the picture has been replaced by a picture of Spiro Agnew. As a result, Kaplan's intention that the picture behind him should be the semantic value of 'that' conflicts with his intention that Carnap's picture should be the semantic value of 'that'. In discussing this case, King (2013: 299) ascribes three intentions to Kaplan: (a) an intention to say something about the picture of Carnap, (b) an intention to have the picture of Carnap as the semantic value of (his use of the demonstrative) 'that' and (c) an intention to have the picture behind him as the semantic value of 'that'. All three of these intentions seem to be semantically relevant, and King helpfully brings out how they relate to each other and how (b) conflicts with (c). Although King is not concerned with the question of whether *communicative* intentions embed semantic intentions, his view of course is naturally extended in such a way. I will set the question of how to deal with conflicting intentions aside for now and will briefly return to it in Section 5.

message in a string of expressions. So there seem to be at least *some* semantic intentions that do involve deliberation, just like future-directed intentions in non-communicative contexts.

The foregoing shows, I hope, that semantic intentions are not as implausible as Bach takes them to be. While such intentions might seem dubious if taken out of context, the comparison with non-linguistic intentions shows that it is quite normal for general intentions to embed more specific ones. And as there are many ways in which communicative intentions can be fulfilled, we should indeed expect speakers to have semantic intentions if they have communicative intentions.

2.3 The metasemantics of polysemy and context-sensitivity

There is a second reason not to rule out semantic intentions from the start: such intentions seem to be required to fix the operative meaning of ambiguous expressions.[10] Let us focus on polysemous expressions, i.e. expressions with several related meanings. How is a particular meaning of a polysemous expression selected on a given use? While there is a large amount of research on how hearers process and resolve polysemies (see e.g. Vitello & Rodd 2015), the metasemantics of polysemy has not received much attention. But for at least some uses of polysemous expressions, which meaning is operative seems to depend on the speaker's intentions. Consider an utterance of the following sentence:

(5)   Adrian looks smart.

This sentence contains the polysemous expression 'smart', which has one meaning equivalent to 'clever' and another one equivalent to 'smartly dressed' (and possibly yet further meanings that we can ignore for now). At least *prima facie*, it seems to be up to the speaker which of these meanings is operative. Even if (5) is uttered in a conversation about how certain people are dressed, a speaker could, it seems, choose a meaning of 'smart' on which (5) expresses that Adrian looks clever. Of course, this view will be particularly natural for those who accept an Intentionalist metasemantics for context-sensitive expressions. But it has also been adopted by theorists who are opposed to Intentionalism, and indeed by Bach.

Bach discusses the metasemantics of ambiguity and polysemy on several occasions:

> If the sentence is ambiguous, the speaker's intention determines which of its meanings is operative. (1994: 66)

> Where there is ambiguity or polysemy, how the speaker's words are to be disambiguated is a matter of the speaker's [semantic] intention rather than his communicative intention. (2001: 18, n. 4)

> Presumably it is the speaker's semantic intention that does the disambiguating. This intention determines what she takes her words to mean as she is using them, and is

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[10] It will shortly become apparent why I have switched from *semantic values* to *meanings*.

distinct from her communicative intention, which determines how she intends her audience to take her act of uttering those words. (2012: 50)

These remarks make clear that Bach holds that semantic intentions are required to select which meaning of a polysemous expression is operative. And they helpfully bring out a second point: as in the case of context-sensitive expressions, it is important to distinguish the speaker's communicative intentions from her semantic intentions directed at any polysemous expressions she uses. While in this context Bach does not say *why* communicative intentions cannot do the disambiguating, this point can be supported in the same way as above. On the one hand, the speaker's communicative intentions do not have the right kind of content, as they are not directed at the expressions uttered. On the other hand, they need not even loosely correspond to the semantic values of the expressions she uses, e.g. if the utterance is non-literal.

Bach's metasemantic account of polysemy is appealing, and it certainly fits with the natural view that the speaker can decide which meaning of a polysemous expression is operative.[11] But once semantic intentions are accepted for the purpose of disambiguation, it is very hard to see why they should not also feature in the resolution of context-sensitivity. This point can be further strengthened by considering expressions that are both context-sensitive and polysemous. Let us return to 'smart' once more. As mentioned, 'smart' is polysemous because it has (at least) two related meanings. But it is arguably also context-sensitive: both of its meanings can express different degrees of smartness in different contexts, just like the meanings of 'tall' and other gradable adjectives. The twofold variability can be captured by distinguishing between the *standing meaning* of an expression and the *semantic value* it receives on a given use, where a standing meaning is a function from contexts to semantic values.[12] If an expression is polysemous but not context-sensitive, it has several related standing meanings that correspond to (or are identical with) one semantic value each. If an expression is context-sensitive but not polysemous, there is one standing meaning that can lead to different semantic values in different contexts of utterance. And an expression that is both polysemous and context-sensitive has several standing meanings, at least one of which can lead to different semantic values in different contexts. Schematically, these forms of linguistic variability can be put as in Fig. 1:

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[11] See Kripke (1977: 263), Cruse (1986: 53) and Predelli (2017: 28) for similar views.

[12] That is why I switched from semantic values to standing meanings at the beginning of this subsection. In Kaplanian terms, the distinction is one between the *character* and the *content* of an expression, cf. Kaplan (1989). I have chosen to use *standing meaning* and *semantic value* so as not to be bound to the particularities of Kaplan's account, e.g. his directly referential view of demonstratives.
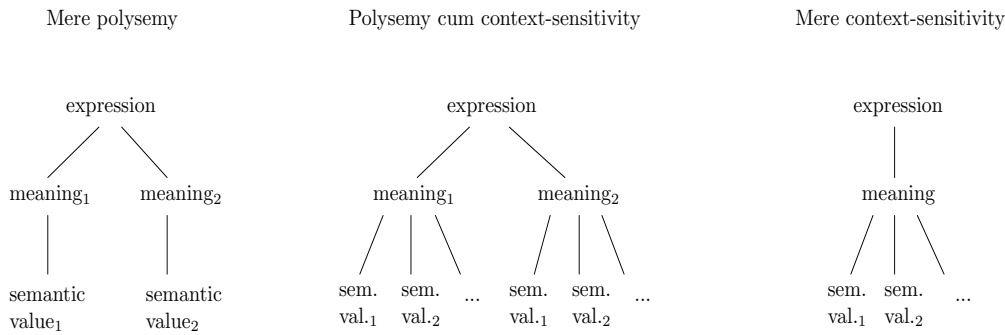
Mere polysemy   Polysemy cum context-sensitivity   Mere context-sensitivity

expression   expression   expression

meaning$_1$ meaning$_2$ meaning$_1$ meaning$_2$ meaning

semantic   semantic   sem.   sem.   ...   sem.   sem.   ...   sem.   sem.   ...
value$_1$ value$_2$ val.$_1$ val.$_2$ val.$_1$ val.$_2$ val.$_1$ val.$_2$

Fig. 1: Polysemy and context-sensitivity. (Diagram taken from Viebahn & Vetter 2016: 7).

For 'smart', the first dimension of variability (at the level of standing meaning) concerns the kind of smartness involved, while the second dimension (at the level of semantic values) concerns the degree of smartness (of a certain kind). There are many other expressions that are doubly variable in this way, with plausible candidates including 'long' (spatial/temporal), 'hard' (non-soft/difficult), 'light' (weight/colour) and 'bright' (luminous/clever). A second group of doubly variable expressions are modal, such as 'may' and 'can'. Modals can come in different modal flavours (e.g. 'may' can be used to express epistemic or deontic possibility) but can also feature different modal bases within a certain modal flavour (different bodies of information can be in play on different epistemic uses of 'may' and different sets of rules can matter for its deontic uses).[13] There are thus expressions of different kinds for which polysemy and context-sensitivity go hand in hand.

Now, what should be said about the metasemantics of expressions such as 'smart' and 'may'? On Bach's view, the speaker's semantic intentions determine which standing meaning is operative on a given use of such an expression. The speaker has to intend to use 'smart' or 'may' in a certain way. But it seems that intentions of this kind are also suited to fix which semantic value the standing meaning receives. For example, consider a situation in which a teacher intends to communicate that Samuel is allowed to go home according to the school rules. Then the teacher might intend to achieve her communicative goal by encoding the message she wants to get across (that Samuel is allowed to go home according to the school rules) in:

(6)   Samuel may go home.

In this case, the teacher's semantic intention appears to be suited to fix a modal flavour for 'may' (namely a deontic one); but it also seems suited to determine a set of rules (the set of school rules) and thus a semantic value for 'may'. I do not mean to imply that this is the only semantically

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[13] See Viebahn & Vetter (2016) for an account on which 'may' and other modals are polysemous as well as context-sensitive. On the traditional view of modals, developed by Angelika Kratzer (1977, 1981, 1991), modals are merely context-sensitive and not polysemous.

relevant intention one may plausibly ascribe to the teacher. But here we have an intention that the teacher might plausibly have in uttering (6), and this intention seems to resolve both the polysemy and the context-sensitivity of 'may'.

So, if a speaker has a semantic intention that resolves the polysemy of an expression she uses, and if that expression also happens to be context-sensitive, then Intentionalists can hold that the speaker's intention also fixes its semantic value in context. Moreover, if it is plausible to say that speakers can intend to use polysemous expressions in a certain way, then it seems equally plausible to say that they can intend to use context-sensitive expressions in a certain way, even if these expressions are not polysemous. Bach's observation that speakers have intentions that are relevant for polysemous expressions thus lends support to the view that, in general, speakers have intentions that are relevant for context-sensitive expressions.

Before I move on to the next objection to Intentionalism, I want to consider a potential response to the foregoing considerations. It is commonly held that while the resolution of context-sensitivity is a semantic matter, the resolution of ambiguity belongs to *presemantics*. The idea is that a presemantic theory takes utterances and maps them onto disambiguated strings of expressions (and a disambiguated syntactic structure) of a certain language, thereby providing the input for a semantic theory, which pairs the strings of expressions with semantic values.[14] With this distinction in mind, it might be argued that metasemantic considerations about ambiguity and polysemy cannot be straightforwardly transferred to the case of context-sensitivity, as these are different linguistic phenomena. To put it slightly differently: it is one thing for a speaker to intend to speak a certain language and to use certain expressions, and another thing to intend to use context-sensitive expressions in a certain way.

But this line of argument is not fully convincing. For one thing, it is not clear that the resolution of polysemy should be placed in presemantics rather than semantics. After all, polysemy and context-sensitivity are strikingly similar phenomena. Polysemy is a phenomenon where one expression has several standing meanings (or *senses*) and thus several candidate semantic values, i.e. several semantic values the expression could receive in context. (Polysemy thus contrasts with *homonymy*, which is often said to involve several expressions that happen to be spelled the same.) Context-sensitivity also involves one expression that has several candidate semantic values.[15] Given these similarities, it seems plausible to place the resolution of polysemy and the resolution of context-sensitivity in the same realm.[16] And while a full discussion of this matter requires more

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[14] See e.g. Kaplan (1989: 559), Kölbel (2010: 307) and Predelli (2017: 28) on the distinction between presemantics and semantics.
[15] One of the few clear differences between polysemy and context-sensitivity seems to be that merely polysemous expressions have fewer candidate semantic values than context-sensitive expressions. See Viebahn & Vetter (2016: 8) on this matter.
[16] Kölbel (2010: 307) voices similar doubts about separating ambiguity and context-sensitivity in this way.

space than I have here, it seems clear that one should not place too much weight on the fact that the two phenomena are often treated on different theoretical levels.

Furthermore, even if polysemy is a matter of presemantics and context-sensitivity a matter of semantics, the fact remains that the kind of intentions that are required to resolve polysemy and context-sensitivity are very similar. In both cases, the speaker has to (in some sense) intend to use expressions in a certain way, so the intentions involved seem to be of the same kind. Theoretical considerations about the levels at which the influence of speaker intentions takes effect are therefore not important for the question of whether speakers have intentions that could be pre-semantically or semantically relevant.

I have tried to show that Bach's general objection against semantic intentions is not as forceful as it may seem. While Bach is right to point out that communicative intentions are unsuited to fix the semantic values of intention-sensitive expressions, he makes semantic intentions look more implausible than they in fact are. Not only do such intentions gain plausibility if they are seen as embedded in communicative intentions, they already feature in the metasemantics of polysemy, where they are surely unobjectionable. Once it is accepted that speakers have communicative intentions, there is thus little reason to rule out that they also have semantic intentions.

However, even if it is not in general implausible that speakers can have semantic intentions, Bach is right that very little has been said about what *kinds* of intentions can be semantically relevant. I want to respond to this worry by addressing two more specific objections against semantic intentions: Glanzberg's objection against intentions directed at complex semantic values in the next section, and Speaks's point that small children cannot be said to have semantic intentions in Section 4.

3. Semantic intentions and complex semantic values

3.1 Glanzberg's objection

Michael Glanzberg (2007, 2009) is not in general opposed to semantic intentions. He holds that speakers do have intentions directed at demonstratives and pronouns. But he is sceptical about speaker intentions fixing semantic values for context-sensitive expressions with more complex semantic values. In particular, he argues that the semantic values of gradable adjectives are too complex to be the objects of ordinary speakers' intentions. Glanzberg discusses Kennedy's (2007) account of gradable adjectives, which (as mentioned above) entails that the context-sensitive element of the positive form of a gradable adjective is a function s from adjective meanings to degrees on a scale. With respect to such semantic values, Glanzberg argues as follows:

> For instance, speakers do not have anything like a referential intention which fixes the value of the standard function s. […] Unlike a demonstrative or deictic pronoun, it is not clear that many speakers could form any kind of conscious intention related to it at all. (2007: 26)

Glanzberg does not entirely rule out intentions directed at the semantic values of gradable adjectives. But because he takes speakers rarely to have such intentions, he holds that other contextual factors can be decisive in fixing semantic values, including 'what is salient in the environment, […] linguistic meaning, general principles governing context, discourse structure, etc' (2007: 25). Glanzberg thus rejects the constraint common to Intentionalist theories, according to which the semantic value of an intention-sensitive expression e in a context c is an object o *only if* the speaker intends o to be the value of e in c. On his view, a gradable adjective might have a semantic value o although the speaker does not intend o to be its semantic value.

While Glanzberg is mainly concerned with gradable adjectives, his objection applies equally to modals, quantifiers and other supposedly intention-sensitive expressions with less straightforward semantic values than demonstratives. If speakers rarely have intentions directed at a function from adjective meanings to degrees on a scale, they will likewise rarely have intentions directed at a domain restriction for a quantifier or at a proposition that restricts the set of possibilities relevant for a modal. So if Glanzberg were right about the absence of semantic intentions for gradable adjectives, that would be a significant problem for Intentionalism.

Glanzberg's objection has been taken up by King (2014b). I will now look at King's response, point out that it is somewhat limited in its application and then propose other kinds of intentions that can be brought in to respond to the objection.

3.2 King's response: modifying semantic values and indirect intentions
Jeffrey King agrees with Glanzberg that the semantic values of intention-sensitive expressions 'must be such that it is plausible that ordinary speakers have intentions regarding them' (2014b: 166). And he holds that, for this reason, 'highly abstract or mathematically sophisticated entities' (ibid.) cannot be the semantic values of intention-sensitive expressions. But King proposes two ways in which gradable adjectives and other expressions with complex semantic values can nonetheless fit into an Intentionalist theory. For some expressions, he holds, simpler semantic values can be found that are plausible objects of speaker intentions. For others, Intentionalists can point to speaker intentions that *indirectly* fix semantic values.

King introduces his first proposal by discussing the (positive form of the) gradable adjective 'tall'. The standard function *s* posited by Kennedy as part of its semantic value is, in King's view, indeed not the kind of thing ordinary speakers can have intentions about. But King holds that

Kennedy's analysis can be replaced by an analysis that features a similar but simpler semantic value. Here is Kennedy's proposal for the semantics of the positive form 'is tall' (where **tall** stands for the semantic value of 'tall'):

$$\lambda x.\textbf{tall}(x) > s(\textbf{tall})$$

On this analysis, an object o is tall just in case saturating **tall** with o leads to a greater height than saturating the standard function s with **tall**; context has to fix a certain standard function s from adjective meanings to heights on a scale. King's modified proposal entails that what is contextually fixed is not a function from adjective meanings to heights on a scale, but simply a scale with a cut-off height for tallness h_c:

$$\lambda x.\textbf{tall}(x) > h_c$$

King holds that speakers *can* be plausibly said to intend a certain cut-off height for tallness while using 'is tall'. For example, a speaker might use 'is tall' and intend to count only objects taller than 2.00 m as tall, which would lead to a value of 2.00 m for h_c. The simplified proposal can be applied to other gradable adjectives that are plausibly accompanied by intentions about a certain numerical cut-off point, including 'long', 'cold', 'fast', etc. But King notes that there are gradable adjectives for which it does not work, and he mentions 'smart' as an example of an expression that speakers will not usually use with a certain number in mind.

For expressions such as 'smart', King favours a second proposal, on which semantic values are fixed indirectly. According to this proposal, a speaker using 'smart' might 'intend that a certain *kind* of person as regards intelligence provides the cutoff for being smart' (2014b: 167, emphasis unchanged). The semantic value of 'smart' then features the degree of smartness of the kind of person the speaker has in mind.[17]

In my view, King's proposals offer promising solutions for the cases he discusses.[18] But I also think that there are many kinds of expressions that cannot be treated in either of the two ways King proposes and that thus require other solutions. As we have seen, King himself mentions that the move of simplifying semantic values does not work for gradable adjectives such as 'smart'. Many other gradable adjectives are like 'smart' in that they are clearly not accompanied by numerical intentions, including 'funny', 'beautiful', 'happy', 'loud', 'hungry' and 'light'. Furthermore, it is hard to see how the simplification strategy could be applied beyond gradable adjectives, e.g. to quantifiers and modals. How could the domain restriction associated with a use of a quantifier or

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[17] Although King does not discuss the polysemy of 'smart', it seems that the intentions he appeals to are also suited to determine which *kind* of smartness is in play.

[18] While I find the proposals promising, they do require further working out. For example, King's second proposal raises the question of how an intention about a kind of person fixes a cut-off point. One might think that if a speaker has a kind of person in mind in using 'smart', that kind of person will rather exemplify a property of prototypical smartness that lies clearly above the cut-off point for smartness. But if that is the case, it is not clear that having a kind of person in mind suffices to fix a cut-off point of smartness.

the restricted modal base associated with a use of a modal be simplified to make them plausible objects of speaker intentions? Simplification does not seem the right solution for such expressions.

King's second proposal can be applied more widely. If an intention about a kind of person is suited to fix the cut-off point for 'smart', intentions about kinds of persons or objects would, it seems, work for gradable adjectives in general. But this proposal, too, does not seem easily extendable to other context-sensitive expressions. For example, intentions about kinds of persons or objects will often be of the wrong kind to restrict modal bases.

I thus want to use the rest of the paper to spell out further kinds of intentions that might help to respond to Glanzberg's worry. I will describe two such kinds of intentions in the next two subsections and a further kind of intention in response to Speaks's objection in Section 4.

3.3 Encoding intentions

In discussing Bach's objection, I said that communicative intentions might embed encoding intentions, which can be semantically relevant: a speaker might intend to achieve her communicative goal by uttering a string of expressions that encodes her message. (In less technical language: a speaker might intend to communicate by putting her thoughts into words.) Such encoding intentions are not aimed at the semantic values of the individual expressions a speaker utters, but rather at the semantic value of the entire utterance. But they do seem suited to fix semantic values for individual expressions. As long as the speaker uses suitable expressions (and fulfils any further requirements on successful semantic intentions), their semantic values will align with the content of the (relevant part of the) communicative intention.

Encoding intentions are not limited to certain kinds of expressions, as the following examples illustrate. Let us start with gradable adjectives and consider a case in which Claire intends to communicate that Bert is taller than 2.00 m by encoding this message in the following sentence:

(7)   Bert is tall.

Claire's intention is, it seems, of the right kind to fix a semantic value for 'is tall' that features a cut-off height of 2.00 m. In the same way, the teacher's intention to communicate that Samuel is allowed to go home according to the school rules by uttering (6) seems suited to fix a semantic value for the modal 'may':

(6)   Samuel may go home.

And if Daisy utters (8) in order to encode that everyone who was invited to the party came, then that seems the right kind of intention to fix a domain as part of the semantic value of 'everyone':

(8)   Everyone came to the party.

An attractive feature of encoding intentions is thus their broad applicability: they apply to many different kinds of intention-sensitive expressions, regardless of whether they have simple or complex semantic values.

Encoding intentions tie semantic values to communicative intentions. The latter are often unspecific: in many cases, there will not be exactly one proposition the speaker wants to get across, as e.g. King (2014b) and MacFarlane (2016) point out. Does that present a problem for the current proposal? I do not think it does. If a speaker has unspecific communicative intentions, it can happen that encoding intentions do not fix a single semantic value for an intention-sensitive expression, but rather a range of semantic values. For example, if Claire's communicative intention in uttering (7) is somewhat unspecific with respect to what counts as tall, and if Claire intends to encode that message in (7), then 'is tall' will express a range of semantic values featuring different cut-off heights in context. Her intentions will rule out some very small or very large cut-off heights, but might not favour e.g. a height of 1.90 m over a height of 1.95 m. The possibility of expressions with ranges of semantic values in context has been highlighted by King (2014b: 170–172). In King's view, ranges of semantic values fit well with the low standard of precision required in casual conversations, where speakers often use expressions in a loose way. King takes such ranges of semantic values in context to be unproblematic, and I fully agree with his verdict.[19]

Furthermore, note that lacking contextual specificity is a phenomenon that affects metasemantic theories of all kinds. For example, consider a metasemantic theory according to which the semantic values of gradable adjectives are sensitive only to what is most prominent (or salient) in the context of utterance.[20] Defenders of such a view will have to admit that in many contexts of utterance, there will not be exactly one most prominent cut-off point for the gradable adjectives speakers use. Rather, a range of cut-off points (and thus semantic values) will be prominent. Challenges raised by ranges of semantic values due to unspecific contexts are thus challenges for the semantics and metasemantics of context-sensitivity in general, and do not speak against encoding intentions as determiners of semantic values.

3.4 Equivalence intentions

Speakers do not always intend to use expressions that encode what they intend to get across. If, for example, they are speaking non-literally, they intend to convey something by using expressions that do *not* have what they intend to convey as their semantic value. But even then, speakers might intend to use their expressions in a certain way. They might, for example, intend to use their

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[19] In Viebahn (2018), I motivate, spell out and defend a pluralist semantics, according to which context-sensitive expressions have sets of semantic values in context.
[20] See e.g. Stojnić et al (2013) for such a view.

expressions in such a way that they mean the same thing as certain other expressions. Let us label such intentions *equivalence intentions*.

Just as encoding intentions, equivalence intentions can apply to intention-sensitive expressions of different kinds. For example, Claire might utter (7) while intending that 'is tall' should mean the same as 'is taller than 2.00 m':

> (7)   Bert is tall.

This intention seems to be of the right kind to fix a semantic value for 'is tall' that features a cut-off height of 2.00 m. Similar considerations apply to (6) and (8):

> (6)   Samuel may go home.

> (8)   Everyone came to the party.

The teacher might intend that 'may go home' means the same as 'is allowed to go home according to the school rules' in uttering (6), and Daisy might intend that 'everyone' means the same as 'everyone who was invited to the party' in uttering (8). In both cases, these intentions are suited to fix the semantic values of the intention-sensitive expressions. Furthermore, equivalence intentions can be present when the speaker is speaking non-literally. For example, Claire might use (8) ironically to convey that hardly any of those invited came, and still have the equivalence intention that restricts the domain of 'everyone' to those invited to the party.

How plausible is it that speakers at least sometimes have equivalence intentions? I think that some evidence in favour of such intentions can be found by attending to how speakers respond to queries about what the expressions they used meant. For example, following her utterance of (7), Claire might be asked what she means by 'tall'; if she has a certain cut-off point (or range of cut-off points) in mind, then she will reply along the lines of 'taller than 2.00 m' or 'at least as tall as David'. Such replies fit very well with equivalence intentions of the kind at issue here.[21]

Of course, equivalence intentions will typically not be fully specific. Speakers with such intentions will often want the expressions they use to mean *roughly* the same as some other expressions. Such non-specificity will be especially prevalent in non-literal utterances, as communicative intentions in non-literal utterances are often unspecific. But, as I have argued above, such lack of specificity does not speak against Intentionalism.

I have discussed two kinds of intentions that Intentionalists can appeal to in response to Glanzberg's objection. Encoding intentions and equivalence intentions are good candidates as

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[21] See King (2014b: 112) on such replies and the evidence they provide for semantic intentions. The strength of the evidence provided by such replies must not be overstated, as an anonymous referee helpfully pointed out: it might happen that speakers specify a semantic value after the utterance although they did not have the relevant intentions prior to or at the time of the utterance. Still, it seems that the replies mentioned do add *some* plausibility to the point that speakers at least sometimes have equivalence intentions that can be semantically relevant.

determinants of semantic values because they apply to a wide range of expressions, and not merely to demonstratives. Furthermore, they do not depend on a certain semantic analysis of the intention-sensitive expressions in question. A speaker can intend to communicate something by encoding it in an utterance or intend that one expression means (roughly) the same as another regardless of the nature of the expression's semantic value. Of course, the speaker needs to be competent with the expression—she needs to have an idea of what the expression *can* mean in context. But that is a general requirement on competent speakers, and thus not a commitment specific to Intentionalism. If speakers indeed have encoding intentions and equivalence intentions, semantic complexity is not a hurdle for Intentionalist metasemantics. By tying the semantic value of an intention-sensitive expression to communicative intentions or by aligning it with the semantic value of other expressions, speaker intentions can be relevant even for gradable adjective, quantifiers and modals, contrary to what Glanzberg claims.

4. Do young children have semantic intentions?

4.1 Speaks's objection

The third objection to Intentionalism concerns a certain group of speakers: young children. With respect to such speakers, Jeff Speaks raises the following issue:

> [Intentionalism] requires speakers to have intentions about objects being the semantic values of expression tokens. And while I have intentions of this sort, it's at least not obvious that my two year old daughter, who is a competent user of demonstratives, does. […] This is a serious problem […] for attempts to use speaker intentions in describing the character of comparative adjectives, expressions of quantification, and the other context-sensitive expressions mentioned above. (2016: 304–305)

Speaks brings up this matter to set it aside, and so far it has not been taken up in the debate. But this is a matter Intentionalists should pay attention to: it seems right that two-year-olds can be competent users of demonstratives and other intention-sensitive expressions, and it would, indeed, be a serious problem for Intentionalism if it did not have anything to say about such speakers.

Speaks describes the required intentions as 'intentions about objects being the semantic values of expression tokens', and I agree that few children have intentions that they would describe in this way. How about encoding intentions or equivalence intentions? For such intentions, the case is less clear. At least sometimes, even young children might intend to put their thoughts into words or intend that an expression means the same as another. But still, it is unclear whether young children regularly form such intentions in using intention-sensitive expressions. For that reason, I want to point to intentions of a further kind, namely to deferential intentions, which small children

can be said to have on a regular basis. And I will argue that the absence of semantic intentions need not be catastrophic: speakers can use intention-sensitive expressions to communicate successfully even if they lack the required intentions.

4.2 Deferential intentions and parasitic context-sensitivity

Young children frequently imitate communicative acts of adults, often repeating the exact words previously uttered. This imitative practice plays an important role in language acquisition.[22] It helps children to learn how to use expressions: how to pronounce them, how to combine them with other expressions, when to use them and what to apply them to. And it applies to both context-insensitive as well as context-sensitive expressions. Now, if my two-year-old son imitates my use of a certain expression, it seems plausible to ascribe a *deferential intention* to him: an intention to use the expression in the same way (or with the same meaning) as I previously used it. In my view, deferential intentions can help to explain how young children competently use intention-sensitive expressions.[23]

Let us return to sentence (5) from above, and let us assume that I utter (5) in order to tell my two-year-old son that Adrian looks clever:

(5)   Adrian looks smart.[24]

Then it seems immensely plausibly that my son could later utter (5) to tell someone else that Adrian looks clever while intending to use the sentence in the same way (or with the same meaning) as I used it.[25] This deferential intention can, it seems, be semantically relevant for 'smart'. As this is a typical example of how young children speak (by repeating *verbatim* what someone else has said), it should at least soften the worry Speaks raises.

Deferential intentions might also accompany other kinds of intention-sensitive expressions, including demonstratives. As an example, consider a case in which I decide to tell my son that a certain plant on our terrace is a sunflower, form an encoding intention and (while pointing at the plant in question) utter:

(9)   That is a sunflower.

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[22] See e.g. Tomasello (2003).

[23] This section has greatly benefitted from discussions with Jonas Åkerman, who convinced me of the plausibility of deferential intentions.

[24] Let us also assume that I have an encoding intention in uttering (5).

[25] Does my son have to be aware of the context-sensitivity of 'smart' to form such an intention? That is a difficult question. On the one hand, it seems possible to intend to use a sentence in the same way as someone else is using it without being aware of *all* of the ways in which the sentence can be used. On the other hand, one might think that awareness of *some* variability is required. Fortunately, this question need not be answered here, as Syrett et al (2009) have provided evidence that children are already aware of the context-sensitivity of gradable adjectives by the age of three years. This fits well with the fact that two-year-olds sometimes, but not always, use context-sensitive expressions competently. I will discuss cases in which semantic intentions are absent in the next subsection.

Then my son might utter the same sentence to tell someone else that the plant in question is a sunflower. Here, a deferential intention seems to do the job of securing the sunflower in question as semantic value of my son's use of 'that'. But the example also brings out a limitation of deferential intentions: it seems that my son could not use a deferential intention to select a *different* sunflower as semantic value of the demonstrative.[26] As the semantic values of demonstratives frequently vary across uses, even within one and the same conversation, deferential intentions may thus be less useful for demonstratives than for intention-sensitive expressions that have less variable semantic values, such as possibly adjectives and quantifiers. Still, at least for some cases in which young children use intention-sensitive expressions, Intentionalists can say that semantic values are fixed by deferential intentions.

The use of deferential intentions is not restricted to young children—such intentions can join encoding intentions and equivalence intentions in a general account of how speakers use intention-sensitive expressions. Deferential intentions therefore strengthen my responses to the objections by Bach and Glanzberg. Firstly, deferential intentions are naturally embedded in communicative intentions. For example, my two-year-old son might intend to communicate that Adrian looks clever by uttering (5) and using the expressions in the way I previously used them. Secondly, the possession of semantically relevant deferential intentions is clearly independent of the complexity of the semantic values at issue. If a speaker intends to use an expression in the same way as someone else did, then it does not matter whether the original use features a simple or a complex semantic value. So deferential intentions can be added to the range of intentions that speakers may have in using intention-sensitive expressions.

Furthermore, they can help to explain the phenomenon of *parasitic context-sensitivity*, which so far has not received sufficient attention from the perspective of metasemantics. One difficulty in the semantics of context-sensitive expressions concerns the phenomenon of co-ordination. How can we explain that in some cases semantic values of certain context-sensitive expressions remain constant across uses by different speakers in different situations? For example, how can we explain that David can successfully report Claire's utterance of (7) by using (7.1), even if David is in a different context than Claire was while uttering (7) and does not know the relevant details of Claire's context (i.e. what degree of tallness was in play)?

(7)   Bert is tall.

(7.1)   Claire said that Bert is tall.

Cappelen & Lepore (2005) use the ease of such reports to argue that 'tall' is in fact not context-sensitive. Although few theorists agree with the conclusion that 'tall' is context-*in*sensitive, the phenomenon highlighted by Cappelen & Lepore is not yet fully understood.

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[26] Many thanks to an anonymous referee for highlighting this point.

One proposal concerning this phenomenon is due to Cappelen & Hawthorne (2009: 40–42), who note that in some situations, certain clearly context-sensitive expressions can be used 'in a way that is *parasitic* on features of the environment of the subjects that one is reporting on' (40, original emphasis). The idea of Cappelen & Hawthorne is that because parasitic context-sensitivity shows up with clearly context-sensitive expressions, we should not accept easy reports of the kind of (7.1) as evidence against the context-sensitivity of 'tall'. But Cappelen & Hawthorne do not address the metasemantics of parasitic context-sensitivity. In my view, this metasemantic gap can be filled by deferential intentions. If 'tall' is intention-sensitive, and if David intends to use 'tall' in the same way as Claire used it (and if any further requirements on fixing semantic values are fulfilled), then that explains why (7.1) is a correct report of (7). This explanation does not require David to know what the semantic value of Claire's utterance of (7) is, but such ignorant intentions are not unusual and not limited to language use. For example, I might intend to have for lunch whatever Patrick is having (and accordingly tell the waiter 'I'll have whatever Patrick is having') without knowing what Patrick has chosen.[27]

In this way, deferential intentions can help to explain the phenomenon of parasitic context-sensitivity. At the same time the fact that speakers can use expressions parasitically lends support to the view that speakers at least sometimes have deferential intentions.

4.3 What if semantic intentions are absent?

Finally, I want to look at cases in which children or other speakers use intention-sensitive expressions but lack semantic intentions. In such cases, the context is *inappropriate* with respect to the intention-sensitive expressions used, which thus fail to have a semantic value.[28] Although I hope to have made it more plausible that speakers often do intend to use the expressions they utter in a certain way, and thus do have intentions that could fix semantic values, I have not shown that this is the case for every use of an intention-sensitive expression. So how can Intentionalism deal with contexts that are inappropriate due to an absence of semantic intentions?

For one thing, the competence young children exhibit with intention-sensitive expressions should not be overstated. Such expressions do present challenges for children, and there are certainly situations in which two-year-olds do not competently use e.g. demonstratives. Perry describes one such situation in the following passage:

> Many children regularly use demonstratives for things that they can see, but which
> the people they are trying to communicate with cannot identify. My favorite
> example, because it has happened to me so often, is a child in the backseat of a car

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[27] In Viebahn (2013: 195–197), I discuss parasitic context-sensitivity and arrive at a less optimistic verdict about its explanatory power. I would have arrived at a different verdict if I had had the possibility of deferential intentions in view back then.
[28] See e.g. Kaplan (1989: 585–586).

I'm driving telling me all about something I can't possibly find without taking my eyes off of the road, turning around, and following their gaze. (2009: 198)

In the cases Perry describes, the young interlocutors fail to successfully communicate (at least in the first instance—Perry might find out what they meant by asking for a description of the object in question). From an Intentionalist perspective, there is a straightforward explanation of the lack of communicative success: the child in the backseat does not have a semantic intention, and as a result the demonstrative used lacks a semantic value.[29]

But what about cases in which children or other speakers seem to lack semantic intentions and nonetheless successfully communicate? Here, it is important to keep in mind that while the lack of a semantic value can prevent communicative success, the two notions can come apart. In particular, a speaker might successfully communicate despite using expressions that lack a semantic value. The following two observations support this point. On the one hand, communication can succeed even if the hearer only comprehends a part of an utterance. In noisy environments, on the phone and in many other situations, hearers have to make do with incomplete utterances, and because such situations are common, they are good at using the incomplete material they pick up to figure out what the speaker wants to get across. Now, it makes no difference to the hearer whether there was a complete utterance and only some of it got across or whether the utterance was incomplete to begin with (possibly because some of the expressions uttered lacked semantic values). So partial comprehension shows that communicative success is possible despite partial lack of semantic values. On the other hand, communication can succeed even if the hearer *knows* that some of the expressions uttered lack semantic values. For example, if someone uses 'that rabbit' to refer to a hare, communication is likely to succeed even if the addressee knows that the creature in question is a hare and thus knows that 'that rabbit' lacks a semantic value. Cases of this kind seem to show that not all of the expressions uttered have to have semantic values for communication to succeed.

Of course, the chances of communicative success are diminished if e.g. a child uses a demonstrative without any semantic intentions. Hearers have to do more in order to find out what the child wants to get across, and in some cases (such as those described by Perry) further questions may be the only way of finding out the intended message. But adults are particularly charitable in interpreting the utterances of young children, and this approach certainly does help children to successfully communicate.

I hope that the foregoing considerations alleviate the worries Speaks raises about the use of intention-sensitive expressions by young children. In some cases, young children can plausibly be

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[29] This is not the only explanation Intentionalists can provide. They could also say that the child does have an intention but fails to make it accessible to Perry.

said to have deferential intentions concerning the expressions they utter and such intentions can be semantically relevant. Furthermore, Intentionalism can account for cases in which children or other speakers have no semantic intentions. Such a lack of intentions leads to a lack of semantic values, which may or may not lead prevent communicative success, depending on the situation and the effort the hearer puts into interpreting the utterance.

5. The diversity of semantic intentions

In responding to the above objections, I have pointed to several kinds of intentions that can be semantically relevant: encoding intentions, equivalence intentions and deferential intentions. There may well be further kinds of semantic intentions, such as the direct and indirect intentions proposed by King in his reply to Glanzberg. How can such a variety of semantically relevant intentions be brought together into an Intentionalist theory? Are there limitations on which kinds of intentions can apply to which kind of intention-sensitive expressions? And what happens if a single utterance is accompanied by several, possibly conflicting semantic intentions? These are the questions I will consider in this section.[30]

As mentioned above, Intentionalists agree that the semantic value of an intention-sensitive expression e in a context c is an object o *only if* the speaker intends o to be the value of e in c. How do encoding intentions, equivalence intentions and deferential intentions fit into this requirement? In my view, they fit in straightforwardly: if a speaker has a semantic intention (of any of the kinds discussed) that singles out o as the value of e in c, that speaker intends o to be the value of e in c.[31] Here I am neither mentioning particular kinds of intention-sensitive expressions, nor particular kinds of semantic intentions. That suggests an answer to the second question posed above:

Are there limitations on which kinds of intentions can apply to which kind of intention-sensitive expressions? As I see it, encoding intentions, equivalence intentions and deferential intentions can apply to all of the kinds of intention-sensitive expressions discussed in this paper.[32] Indeed, I take that to be an advantage of appealing to such kinds of intentions, as it helps to give a general, rather than a piecemeal, answer to the question of whether intention-sensitive expressions are plausibly accompanied by semantic intentions. At the same time, the fact that

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[30] I am grateful to an anonymous referee for suggesting a treatment of these questions.

[31] A few further remarks on this requirement: Firstly, to incorporate the frequent unspecificity of semantic intentions, we should allow o to stand not only for a *single* semantic value, but also for a *range of semantic values*. Secondly, the requirement should not demand that speakers describe their semantic intentions in a particular way: a speaker might intend o to be the value of e in c without being able to provide such a description of her intentions. And, finally, I am still assuming that any further requirements on successful semantic intentions (such as the accessibility requirement proposed by King) are met.

[32] Still, I want to leave open that certain kinds of intention-sensitive expressions are more often used with some intentions than with other. For example, it seems that demonstratives will less often be used with deferential intentions, as their semantic values frequently vary between uses. See Section 4.2 on this matter.

various kinds of intentions can be relevant for one and the same expression also makes the third of the above questions more pressing.

What happens if a single utterance is accompanied by several semantic intentions? Here, we can distinguish two kinds of cases. In some cases, there are several intentions singling out the same semantic value, e.g. an encoding intention and an equivalence intention that converge on a single semantic value for an occurrence of an intention-sensitive expression. Such cases are easily dealt with: the expression's semantic value will then be the same as it would have been if either of the intentions in play had been the only semantic intention.

In other cases, there are several intentions singling out *different* semantic values for a single occurrence of an intention-sensitive expression. Such cases of *conflicting intentions* are much harder to deal with and are at the heart of a lively debate in metasemantics.[33] One of the main aims of theorists in this debate is to provide a theory that explains how at most one of several conflicting semantic intentions is effective—how one intention *trumps* all other conflicting intentions. Such a *trumping theory*, however, is exceedingly hard to find, as Speaks (2016) forcefully argues with the help of a host of examples. There is thus much work for the Intentionalist left to do. I cannot delve into this matter here, which (as far as I can see) is not directly related to the objections I have responded to in this paper. But I want to offer one brief remark to show that Intentionalism might be able to deal with the problem of conflicting intentions even if the search for a trumping theory fails.

In discussing cases of conflicting intentions, theorists tend to agree that intention-sensitive expressions have at most one of the potential semantic values (that are singled out by the conflicting intentions). This becomes apparent when Speaks (2017) discusses Kaplan's (1970) example of Carnap and Agnew.[34] Speaks states:

> Though opinions differ about the right thing to say about the case of Carnap and Agnew, we can all agree that in that scenario the demonstrative does not refer to both the picture of Carnap and the picture of Agnew. (2017: 720)

While Speaks seems right that theorists *agree* that the demonstrative ('that') does not have both the picture of Carnap and the picture of Agnew as its semantic value, it is not so obvious that this is what one *should* say about the case. After all, we have seen that Intentionalists do accept that an intention-sensitive expression (as it occurs in a certain utterance) can have more than one semantic value in other situations, namely when the speaker's intentions are unspecific. It thus does not seem out of the question to posit several semantic values in other cases, and in particular in cases of conflicting intentions. If it could be made plausible that conflicting intentions always lead to several semantic values, this would remove the need for a trumping theory. Further investigation

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[33] See e.g. Stokke (2010), King (2013, 2014a, 2014b), Speaks (2016, 2017).
[34] For a description of the example see footnote 9.

is needed to find out whether an approach along these lines is viable. For example, it would have to be shown to be compatible with the fact that in some cases of conflicting intentions only one semantic value is picked up by the audience. Nonetheless it is, I think, worth noting that there are options in replying to the problem of conflicting intentions that have yet to be explored.

6. Conclusion

The first aim of this paper has been to answer three objections to Intentionalism. In response to Bach's charge that positing semantic intentions is in general implausible, I have argued that such intentions should be seen as resulting from and embedded in communicative intentions and that they are required to fix the operative meaning of polysemous expressions. In response to Glanzberg and Speaks, who argue against semantic intentions for certain supposedly intention-sensitive expressions or certain speakers, I have outlined several kinds of intentions that can be semantically relevant: encoding intentions, equivalence intentions and deferential intentions. If speakers indeed form intentions of these kinds, as I have tried to make plausible, the Intentionalist has a strong reply to the objections considered in this paper.

While I thus disagree with Bach, Glanzberg and Speaks about the viability of Intentionalism, I do think they rightly spotted a gap in the Intentionalist theory: so far, too little has been said about which kinds of intentions can be semantically relevant. The second aim of this paper has been to fill this gap, at least to some extent. There are further aspects of Intentionalism that require clarification and that I have only briefly touched on in this paper: Which further requirements should Intentionalists place on the successful fixing of semantic values? Should Intentionalists posit an *accessibility constraint*, according to which a semantic intention can only succeed in fixing a semantic value if it is recognisable by an idealised hearer who knows the common ground of the conversation, as King (2013, 2014a, 2014b) has argued? And what happens if speakers have conflicting intentions concerning an intention-sensitive expression? I hope that a clearer picture of the nature of semantic intentions can also contribute to a better understanding of these and related questions.

Acknowledgements

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