Proposition Talk

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If logic is untrue, this is because it is logical.

Abstract

The focus of this thesis is minimal semantics and the semantic/pragmatic distinction. My assumption is that whether you are a Contextualist or a Semantic Minimalist, it is nevertheless important to get clarity on what genuine linguistic semantic content is. Further, I think the theorizing at the level of minimal semantics is the right place to begin building a theory.

The thesis is that it is possible to explain genuine semantics with no pragmatic intrusion, and still be able to account for propositionality all over.

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Acknowledgments

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1. Introduction

There are two more or less clearly opposite directions in the relatively modern debate on context and theory of meaning. On one side there are the Contextualists and on the other side, the Semantic Minimalists.

At the core of the debate are the questions, - what a semantic theory should look like, and what can or should be viewed as theoretically relevant. Most important are their opposite views on the role of context. The Contextualist claims that sentences must be understood (as truth conditional) relative to contexts, while the Semantic Minimalist holds that context must be kept apart from the truth evaluation of content.[1] On this background their different aims and scopes emerge. There are many different ways and tools for the aim of explaining how they disagree, and this thesis will only look at some of them. The main issue for the debate will be how to treat and look at literal meaning and explicit content. Another area that to some extent will be discussed is how to look at literal meaning (and explicit content) connected with the idea of a language of thought.

The proponents of Semantic Minimalism will be Herman Cappelen, Ernie Lepore and Emma Borg. Cappelen and Lepore's view will mainly be understood according to their *book Insensitive Semantics*, and Borg's view according to her book *Minimal Semantics*. The main opponents will be the Relevance Theorist Robyn Carston and the Minimal Contextualist Kent Bach, but we will also look at other theoreticians.

Relevance Theory is first and foremost a theory about communication, and compared to Semantic Minimalism, a rather different project. Carston's main work in this field is her book *Thoughts and Utterances - The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication*, and as the title indicates, the main goal is to explain and give an account of explicit communication. Contained in what she take as explicitly communicated, are in various ways and degrees enrichments and developments of literal sentences added to the proposition. This divide indicates a difference between two levels, the (linguistic) level of semantic representation and a level of what is said/stated which on Carston's framework is the level of explicatures. There is also a third level, and this is the level of implicatures. This level is wholly pragmatically

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[1]   A Semantic Minimalist recognizes a subset of context dependent expressions; these are more or less the same as the indexicals on David Kaplan's list in his paper 'Demonstratives' from 1989 (this is in particular true of Cappelen and Lepore's theory. Borg's theory recognizes a few more expressions).

implicated while the level of explicatures (what is said/stated) might have added or enriched content which is pragmatically implicated. Generally, on one hand, there are literal sentences, and on the other hand, there is communicated content, and this is either an explicature or an implicature. So a simple model will be that there is a thought/mental representation (proposition) expressed via a literal sentence. The content of this thought/mental representation is then recovered by a hearer via processing skills and other (linguistic and/or non-linguistic) information connected with the idea of relevance.

Semantic Minimalism has a more narrow scope for what they think is explainable. The central issue and area for their theorizing is the literal content and meaning of declarative sentences conjoined with appropriate truth conditions. In order to account for what a declarative sentence literally means, one has to look at the syntax and compositionality of the sentence, and what they call minimal truth preserving entities, i.e., minimal word meanings which are explainable without contextual factors. In limiting the scope as they do, the central aim is to preserve a determinable semantic level of content.

This level is defended against objections which claim is that content is truth evaluable only with respect to context sensitivity. Another aim is to keep the theorizing at a level which is workable and systematic.

On this background[2] is any view attempting to implement context sensitivity beyond what is seen as needed to account for the expressions on the list of context-sensitive expressions seen as impossible projects. This is generally because of the lack of theoretical access to "real" contextual information. Theorizing above the level of literal or semantic content is seen as very speculative and even impossible in connection with real contexts, and is because of this presented as an additional view and theory they call 'Speech Act Pluralism'. In keeping these views or theories separated, they have provided two frameworks of how to deal with literal meaning, -one where the literal content is seen as stable propositions and another where this content changes into other propositions. The meaning of a speech-act is on this view (probably) always something else than the literal content and this is viewed in respect to different possible worlds. Possible worlds are artificial constructs based on possible different intentions, context sensitivity and contextual features in general. The general claim is that allowing context sensitivity in theorizing necessarily makes content plural because of the effects context and intentions have on content.

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[2]   This is in particular a presentation of Cappelen and Lepore's view, but the front against Contextualism is shared with Borg and also Bach to some extent.

Speech Act Pluralism has two important functions; it is in general used as argument for adopting a Semantic Minimalist view, and as a theory which claim is that this is the only way to see speech act content. A difference between Contextualism and Speech Act Pluralism is that the Contextualist sees the need for taking *the respective context* into account while the Speech Act Pluralist doesn't think this can be done.

While the Semantic Minimalists' overarching aim is to persuade the reader to appreciate minimal propositions as theoretical superior, the Contextualist wants to explain how communication works. The Relevance Theoretic approach which was originated in Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber's work is partly a formal theory. Logical form has an important role to play, but is less essential compared to the Semantic Minimalist approach.

A disagreement which will be discussed in this connection is the dispute concerning truth conditions and truth-evaluability. This discussion can be seen operative in (at least) two ways. That is, the status of minimal propositions as propositional (i.e. complete and truth evaluable) or as sub-propositional (not yet truth evaluable), and a dispute about how and when linguistic or semantic content become or are truth evaluable. This latter question may be applicable to at least three levels of meaning. The following is presented in Carston's book *Thoughts and Utterances* as Bach's proposal of "the pragmatic picture" in general (verbal communication):

    a. logical form or semantic representation of the linguistic expression used (a propositional schema);

    b. what is said (minimal proposition or propositional radical);

    c. pragmatically developed (completed and/or expanded) propositional form ("impliciture"/explicature);

    d. pragmatically inferred propositional forms (implicature(s)).

    Note that in the relevance-theoretic account there is no level corresponding to the second of these. [3]

As Carston's note states, the Relevance Theoretic account doesn't include the second level of meaning. This level is comparable to the minimal proposition endorsed by the Semantic Minimalists. The main difference between Bach's view and the Semantic Minimalist view is that Bach takes the literal level to be sub-propositional and the Semantic Minimalist take it to be propositional. The difference between Bach's and Carston's sub-proposition is minimal.

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[3] Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances.* 'The Explicit/Implicit Distinction.'. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 171.

Still, there is a more fundamental difference according to what counts as what is said. Bach's what is said, is the minimal sub-proposition or proposition radical (level b) and Carston's what is said is on the level of an impliciture or an explicature (level c). The notion 'impliciture' is Bach's notion and is quite similar to Carston's explicature. The reason why Bach uses this term is to highlight that there is *implicated* content in addition to the explicit content. This is also the case with Carston's notion 'explicature', but she still take this as the content which is explicated, hence an 'explicature'.

What I now will do is to use the above suggestion and sligthly change it in a way that gives the Semantic Minimalists' minimal proposition a level separable from the other levels. The second level will be credited the Semantic Minimalists only:

    a. logical form or semantic representation of the linguistic expression used (a propositional schema or radical);

    b. minimal proposition;

    c. pragmatically developed (completed and/or expanded) propositional form (impliciture/explicature);

    d. pragmatically inferred propositional forms (implicature(s)).

I will introduce a sentence in order to show how this can be seen as mapped to the levels above. There will be a lot of talk about age in this thesis, so I'll stick to this:

    a. Jane is old.

    b. 'Jane is old' is true if and only if Jane is old

    c. Jane is old [compared to the kids].

    d. Jane is too old to enjoy the theater, because the play is made for kids.

The Semantic Minimalist is concerned about level (b) and in order to avoid duality, level (b) is seen as the only real level of semantic meaning. Speech-acts, which are manifest on level (c) and (d) are seen as out of reach of what they think is explainable. The reason for this is that indefinitely many propositions can be the content on these levels because there is no direct evidence for what these propositions could be like. Perhaps more important is the point that the content on level (c) and (d) are not taken to be semantic content. Cappelen and Lepore:

(6) The proposition semantically expressed by an utterance *u* of a (declarative) sentence S does not exhaust the speech act content of *u*. An utterance of a sentence S typically says, asserts, claims, etc. a wide range of propositions in addition to the proposition semantically expressed.

(7) An epistemic corollary of thesis (6), one that cannot be emphasized enough, is that intuitions about, and other evidence for, speech act content are not direct evidence for semantic content: an intuition to the effect that an utterance *u* said that p is not even prima facie evidence that *p* is the proposition semantically expressed by *u*. This is so no matter how refined, reflected, or "equilibriumized" the intuition in question might be.[4]

Some *Moderate Contextualist* thinks that level (c) is a level which can be accounted for, and a fundamental debate between Cappelen and Lepore and the Moderate Contextualists is about which expressions belong on a list of (genuinely) context-sensitive expressions. When or if this latter difference is the only difference, the theorizing is quite similar to Cappelen and Lepore's approach and Semantic Minimalism in general. The level of dispute and theorizing is then primarily on level (b) with some relations to level (c) viewed from the perspective of a Moderate Contextualist. The approach in general is to only consider the contextual information the context-sensitive expressions demand or require.

The Relevance Theorist is trying to account for all the above levels and truth-conditionality is only considered at level (c) and/or (d). For this aim, a lot of pragmatic principles are seen as theoretically relevant and the most fundamental principle is relevance. The Relevance Theorist has a broad area of discourse, and is what one may call full blown Contextualists. Decoding and inference is central for the Relevance Theorists and is located within our cognitive capacities.

The Relevance Theorists' agenda is to explain communication and the traditional code model is kept within their approach. The role it is assumed to play is however essential lesser than the classical approaches assumed was right:

> Relevance theory may be seen as an attempt to work out in detail one of Grice's central claims: that an essential feature of most human communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is the expression and recognition of intentions (Grice 1989: Essays 1-7, 14, 18; Retrospective Epilogue). In developing this claim, Grice laid the foundations for an inferential model of communication, an alternative to the classical code model. According to the code model, a communicator encodes her intended message into a signal, which is decoded by the audience using an identical copy of the code. According to the inferential

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4   Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 145.

model, a communicator provides evidence of her intention to convey a certain meaning, which is inferred by the audience on the basis of the evidence provided. An utterance is, of course, a linguistically coded piece of evidence, so that verbal comprehension involves an element of decoding. However, the linguistic meaning recovered by decoding is just one of the inputs to a non-demonstrative inference process which yields an interpretation of the speaker meaning.[5]

As the last sentence indicates, the role of semantics or linguistically coded pieces of evidence is given a rather small part to play in an overall picture of communication. Even though sentences often play a crucial part in communicative exchange, Relevance Theory also takes into account other types of communication and the concept of relevance plays the most central role. Paul Grice said 'be relevant'[6]; the Relevance Theorists took this idea and said that relevance is the mediating concept for communication in general:

> Intuitively, relevance is not just an all-or-none matter but a matter of degree. There is no shortage of potential inputs which might have at least some relevance for us, but we cannot attend to them all. Relevance theory claims that what makes an input worth picking out from the mass of competing stimuli is not just that it is relevant, but that it is more relevant than an alternative input available to us at that time. Intuitively, other things being equal, the more worthwhile conclusions achieved by processing an input, the more relevant it will be.[7]

The Relevance Theorists' most general conception for something communicated is 'ostensive behavior'. This may be utterances, body language, signs or other. The theoretical looseness indicated above presents Relevance Theory as aiming to explain essential features of communication and is then more like a phenomenological theory compared to formal approaches: "The central claim of Relevance Theory is that the expectations of relevance raised by an utterance are precise enough, and predictable enough, to guide the hearer towards the speaker's meaning."[8]

The above is a minimal presentation of Relevance Theory. As already noted, the discussion in this thesis has a more narrow scope and the main focus is semantic or linguistic meaning. So there will be almost no discussion of level (d), but there will be some suggestions of how

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[5] Wilson, Deirdre and Sperber, Dan. 2002. 'Relevance Theory.'. In UCL *Working Papers in Linguistics 14*, 249-287, 249.
[6] Grice, Paul. 1989. *Studies in the Way of Words.'* Logic and Conversation.'. London: Harvard University Press.
[7] Wilson, Deirdre and Sperber, Dan. 2002. 'Relevance Theory.', 252.
[8] Wilson, Deirdre and Sperber, Dan. 2002. 'Relevance Theory.', 250.

sentences can or could be interpreted at this level. The above presentation of Relevance Theory is intended to give a picture of how it works, because I believe it will be a help in understanding why Carston argues as she does. The underdeterminacy thesis is central for this thesis and the picture given above of how communication works:

> What is meant by this is that the linguistic semantics of the utterance, that is, the meanings encoded in the linguistic expressions used, the relatively stable meanings in a linguistic system, meanings which are widely shared across a community of users of the system, underdetermines the proposition expressed (what is said). The hearer has to undertake processes of pragmatic inference in order to work out not only what the speaker is implicating but also what proposition she is directly expressing.[9]

Generally why the underdetermination thesis is manifest in the Contextualists' theories is because they think propositionality, i.e., truth conditional content in all or most cases is manifest on level (c) and/or (d). So generally what they think counts as propositional content is something more than linguistic content or something other than the linguistic content expressed.

Cappelen and Lepore labels arguments resting on the underdeterminacy thesis 'incompleteness arguments' and stresses that they are all wrong.

Quite important in this connection are the different views on directions of fit[10]. Borg explains the Contextualist approach and the idea of directions of fit are applied to pragmatic processes:

> This is the idea that pragmatic processes are capable of acting *twice*: once prior to the delivery of a complete proposition expressed (that is, prior to determining the truth-conditional content of the sentence as uttered in a given context) and then once again to

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[9] Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances.* 'Pragmatics and Linguistic Underdeterminacy.', 19 – 20.

[10] Some theoreticians says that J, L. Austin was the first to introduce the term 'direction of fit', but he used it differently from what is usually assosiated with the term. Elisabeth Anscombe is credited the conception, but not the term. (See the shopping list example in her book *Intention* from 1957: § 32 page 57). I use it in Anscombe's spirit as John Searle suggests, as a domain specific conception separating between a one way or a two way direction of fit, i.e., the content is derivable from logical form and sentences to propositions as a one way direction of fit or a two way direction of fit where this is included plus non- linguistic content derivable from intention and context. (Simplified the two ways of direction can be explained as word to world or world to word.) This is derivable from the presentations of the two ways of pragmatic processing. When Borg discusses this topic she uses the term 'dependency' and she presents six possible ways to see the relationship between a semantic theory and what is said. What is said is presented by two different conceptions: what is said and what is said*. Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 110 - 131.

yield any implicatures of the utterance (i.e. any further, indirectly conveyed, propositions).[11]

The pragmatic processes that are acting prior to the delivery of a complete proposition are acting in order to get from the uttered content to an explicature or impliciture (level c). The pragmatic processes acting after an explicature or impliciture is given, is meant to give the content on level (d), i.e., an implicature. The direction of fit goes two ways: from linguistically encoded meaning to communicated explicated meaning and from context to communicated meaning. Borg puts it like this: "Thus our two stages of pragmatic interpretation might engage in the following way:

U utters 's':

    (i)   linguistic decoding + pragmatics → **explicature**

                               (what is stated/said)

    (ii) what is stated + pragmatics → **what is implied**[12]

The presentation of Relevance Theory as a whole gives a picture of a phenomenological theory. This, I think, shows that Borg's presentation above can be read as a simplification which systematically explains communication. Still, this presentation is on line with how the Relevance Theorists presents their view. So, I take it to be at least two ways to read the Relevance Theoretic approach: as a phenomenological theory and as a more systematic theory.

    The systematic approach begins with the encoded level, then recovers the explicature and then again recovers the implicature, and the implicature and the explicature are seen as distinct entities.

> There are two types of communicated assumptions on the relevance-theoretic account: explicatures and implicatures. An "explicature" is a propositional form communicated by an utterance which is pragmatically constructed on the basis of the propositional schema or template (logical form) that the utterance encodes; its content is an amalgam of linguistically decoded material and pragmatically inferred material. An "implicature" is any other propositional form communicated by an utterance; its content consists of wholly pragmatically inferred matter (see Sperber & Wilson 1986, 182). So the

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[11]   Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 38.

[12]   Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 42.

explicature/implicature distinction is a derivational distinction and, by definition, it arises only for verbal (or, more generally, code-based) ostensive communication.[13]

Carston and the Relevance Theorists' are offering a lot of principles and distinctions, and even though it seems like they actually think that these principles explain how communication works, and that they are real features, many of the principles should first and foremost be thought of as theoretical tools for the best explanation.

The distention between explicatures and implicatures as suggested above may end up not so easily drawn after some consideration. This and similar suggestions about pragmatic distinctions and principles is something the Relevance Theorist is aware of being problematic. So the idea of Relevance Theory in particular and Contextualism in general should more or less be interpreted as theories for the best explanation.

I have no intention of going into detail about this, but just as an indication, I will give some explanation for what this may amount to:

6. a.   It's raining.

    b.   *It's raining in Churchland, New Zealand, at time t.[14]*

The content of (b) is an explicature and the content of (a) is the logical form which is taken to be sub-propositional content. As we see, the logical form is kept in the explicature so the explicature is a development of the logical form and the implicated content is added to the logical form. The definition of implicatures tells us that the content is wholly pragmatically inferred, so the content of an implicature should be *entirely* different from the logical form or sub-proposition and from the explicature. This may be true only in some cases because it is probably some elements in the implicature which are also part of the explicature, and it seems like "the conception" of implicatures also sometimes must be part of the explicature. Consider: "[…], it looks very much as if the pragmatic principle(s) responsible for fixing values of indexicals and other contextual elements of the proposition expressed are the same as those involved in the derivation of implicatures."[15] Evidently, there is indexicality[16] present in the explicature above indicating a place and a time.

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[13] Carston, Robyn. 2004. 'Explicature and Semantics.', 9.
[14] Carston, Robyn. 2004. 'Explicature and Semantics.', 9.
[15] Carston, Robyn. 2004. 'Explicature and Semantics.', 8.
[16] Indexicality or indexical behaviour points to or indicates states of affairs, like for instance the indexical 'I' points to there being someone who refers to themselves and the above sentence (a) is assumed to point to or maybe rather indicate a location and a time.

However, there is a difference between the pragmatic principles responsible for the derivation of implicatures and how the concept of implicatures is defined as type of content (communicated assumptions). So the distinction seems to be valid to some extent, but I think it is hard to draw in a lot of cases.

As already noted, my intention was not to go into this discussion, but only to indicate that Relevance Theory first and foremost should be viewed as a phenomenological theory and so to see the more detailed systematic theorizing in this light. This I think is important for the understanding of Relevance Theory in general, and should be kept in mind when the attack from Semantic Minimalism is considered.

Carston presents two ways of seeing the discussion between Contextualism and Semantic Minimalism in her review of Borg's book *Minimal Semantics:*

> According to the minimalist (or "literalist"), natural language sentences represent the world as being a certain way and are true or false depending on how the world is. The Contextualist maintains that this is a category mistake, that it is utterances or speech acts that have such content and whatever semantic properties sentences have, it is only in conjunction with the non-linguistic information in contexts of utterance that eventuate in truth-conditional content. In other words, minimalists believe that there is a formally-driven, pragmatics-free level of semantic content without quite extensive pragmatic input. Viewed this way it certainly sounds like a substantive debate.
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> However, there is another way of looking at the territory which makes the difference in the positions seem rather less momentous. […] Given a clear distinction between sentence-type meaning and what is said, which Borg and most current minimalists agree on, the debate reduces to a disagreement about the nature of sentence-type meaning, effectively the issue of just how minimal it is. Somewhat ironically, it is the Contextualist who tends to go for the most minimalist treatment of sentence meaning-as subpropositional, a mere propositional radical, a schema or template for building propositions-while the Semantic Minimalist insist that it is fully propositional, albeit seldom constituting the content of what the speaker said, which has to be constructed pragmatically on its basis.[17]

How we interpret the first sentence is central for the understanding of Carston's criticism above, and I think she presents Semantic Minimalism slightly wrong. How the Semantic Minimalist sees truth-conditionality will be discussed more extensively later, but for the moment I will highlight that the Semantic Minimalist is concerned about truth-conditionality in a way which does not necessarily judge sentences as true or false, but rather is satisfied

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[17] Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Review Minimal Semantics by Emma Borg.'. In *Mind & Language, vol. 23 No. 3* June 2008. 359 – 367, 359 - 360.

when sentences can be judged as truth-evaluable if the content of a sentence is determinable, and we can think of the world or a world being in such a state that the sentence *could* be judged as true or false. Still, Carston is right in some extent that the Semantic Minimalist thinks that there is a formally driven pragmatic free level of content, but this is something Carston agrees on.

Even though there is agreement between Cappelen and Lepore and Borg about the rejection of Contextualism as a possible project in general, Cappelen and Lepore's rejection is in general interpretable as extensively harder than Borg's. Still, the possibility of accounting for propositionality on the levels of explicatures and implicatures other than within the framework of Speech Act Pluralism is seen as default, so genuine propositionality from the formal point of view is seen as only possible on the level of sentence-type meaning.

Carston's assertion above which states that it is the Contextualist approach which goes for the most minimal treatment of semantic content as sub-propositions, may show us that it is the Contextualist which operates with the most minimal "proposition" (as sub-propositional). In the article 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction', this is Carston's main argumentative point. So her strategy is to show that the Semantic Minimalist in fact is blurring the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, and that it is her treatment of semantic content that manages to keep semantics and pragmatics as distinct features.

The one way direction of fit endorsed by the Semantic Minimalist is shared by the Relevance Theorists when only talk of strict semantics is considered, so there may be no real disagreement about the first part of the quote to come, but considerable disagreement about the latter part:

> According to formal accounts, we should begin our analysis at the level of a formal description of a sentence-type and recover content via formal operations on this syntactic description. Whereas according to use-based accounts, we should begin our analysis at the level of the utterance and recover semantic content via an examination of the role that that utterance is playing.[18]

As already indicated, The Relevance Theorist has as part of the systematic side of their theory the code model presented above, so when there is a theoretic aim to recover the semantic

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[18] Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 4.

meaning of sentences, the methodology is more or less the same as endorsed by Semantic Minimalism. The latter part of the quote is not really true of Relevance Theory (and are not meant to be either) and works more like a generalization of Contextualism. The two way direction of fit endorsed by the Relevance Theorist is simply put as a word to world direction of fit and a world to word direction of fit. The latter can be seen as input to the communicated content from non-linguistic information.

Non-linguistic information is by the Semantic Minimalist generally held to be kept out of the picture except for the information needed which interacts directly as a meta-representation connected to the sentence and further when there are expressions held to be context-sensitive present in sentences. The direction of fit is especially important in this latter connection. The context-sensitive expressions are taken to syntactically trigger non-linguistic information and contextual features. Borg's conception of direction of fit is also applied to indirect speech reports: "(d) One-way dependency-semantic analyses to indirect speech reports. Judgments concerning correct indirect speech reports are affected by the semantic analyses of the original sentence, but not visa versa."[19]

The conception of indirect speech reports is used by Cappelen and Lepore as well, and will be discussed and presented later. For now it is enough to know that we have a correct or true indirect speech report if the content of a sentence is complete. Completeness is a central aim for the Semantic Minimalist and if content is complete it is also truth conditional or truth evaluable.

Borg takes this idea and moves it over to the idea of a language of thought. Completeness is then viewed as there being an encapsulated module in our cognitive apparatus which is working with (almost only) linguistic processing. According to Borg, there are several reasons for taking this step, but the main reason may be that this is needed for the task of explaining how to treat expressions which syntactically trigger contexts sensitivity. Cappelen and Lepore's theory does not go so far as suggesting in detail how to deal with these expressions, but has as a central task a methodological way of recognizing them.

Borg's solution does arguably take into account features belonging to the pragmatic domain, and the strategy is to formalize objective features belonging to this domain. Since the pragmatic features are seen as syntactically triggered, the formalized contextual elements are seen as processed within the encapsulated module for a language of thought, rather than in the abductive domain of our cognitive capacity. So the distinction between semantics and

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[19] Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 114.

pragmatics are seen as underpinning two different kinds of comprehension processes. This way of drawing the distinction is in general the same as in Relevance Theory, so Borg's theory can be seen as being at service for the Relevance Theorist rather than as an opponent. This is something she from time to time mentions in her book, but her theorizing and positive account have as object of investigation what a formal semantic theory can be seen as able to do and as explanation of what semantics in a more or less strict sense amounts to.

Carston's use of a Fodorian language of thought shares the same idea, but is still used in a different manner. A simple explanation is that this of course is for the aim of motivating the idea of Contextualism and Relevance Theory in general and in particular as argument for propositionality on the level of explicatures as opposed to minimal propositions. The content of language of thought-sentences (mentalese sentences) is on this view not explicatures, but is seen as possibly having the same type and amount of content, and the idea is that it is impossible that they are not fully propositional.

As Carston points out, there is generally two ways to see the debate between Contextualism and Semantic Minimalism. Quite simplified; as a discussion about what counts as propositional content and what counts as sub-propositional content.

Semantic Minimalism is explainable as attempts of explaining (pure) semantics, so their semantic theories can be seen as attempts of keeping the theorizing at the semantic side of the semantic/pragmatic distinction as far as possible. The Contextualist does also find this interesting, so I think it is in this area of theorizing they have something to learn from each other. Further, I hope the debate in general and this thesis in particular will bring some fruitful results, useful for both Semantic Minimalism and Contextualism and others as well.

2. The Semantic/Pragmatic Distinction.

2.1. The Semantic/Pragmatic Distinction, Propositionality and Sub-Propositionality

> I'm all for pragmatics. But I don't think it helps the cause to blur the boundary between semantics and pragmatics. […].
>
> The basic reason is this. Even though, as people have been pointing out for some years now, the linguistic meaning of a given sentence generally underdetermines what a speaker means in uttering it, it does not follow that linguistic meaning is infected or infested by what some of these same people call 'pragmatic meaning'. There is no such thing as pragmatic meaning, at least nothing that is commensurate with linguistic meaning. There is what the sentence means and what the speaker means in uttering it[.20]

The suggestion that there usually is a difference between what a sentence means and what a speaker means in uttering it, is not an issue of disagreement. All the theorists presented in this thesis acknowledge this difference.

Here are some questions we will look at: Is there really any disagreement concerning the existence of the distinction between sentence meaning and speaker meaning? Is the disagreement rather about how one should look at it and where one should draw the line between semantics and pragmatics? As Bach in the quote above is driving at, there are two ways of looking at the distinction, -one clear cut distinction between semantic or linguistic meaning and pragmatic meaning and one that allows pragmatic meaning to interfere on the semantic level. The suggestion that there is no such thing as pragmatic meaning, seems to be in need of special interpretation, when he also says that he is all for pragmatics. One assumed intention behind this utterance is a complaint about different views on what semantics amounts to. More directly interpretable from the quote is a complaint about theories which allow pragmatics to interfere with semantic meaning in such a way that it looks like pragmatic meaning is part of the semantic content.

Cappelen may have similar or familiar considerations when he proposes:

> [...] there's no such thing as the *semantic-pragmatic distinction* and looking for it is a waste of time. No such distinction will do any important explanatory work. You can as I will below, label some level of content 'semantic content', but in so doing no interesting problem is solved and no puzzling data illuminated. To explain inter-contextual variability across

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[20] Bach, Kent. 2004. 'Minding the Gap. The Semantic-Pragmatic Gap.', In *The Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction.* Claudia Bianchi (ed.). CSLI Publications. 27 – 43, 27.

> different areas of discourse we will need an arsenal of explanatory models and data-gathering procedures.[21]

First of all, I think, this has to be interpreted as a plea for simplicity. Second it seems to indicate that Cappelen's own use of the term 'semantic content' is a special use. The book *Insensitive Semantics* is a defense of a method or methods to keep pragmatics and the literal level as distinct features as far as they see possible, so arguably a special way to make the distinction between semantics and pragmatics.

Carston sees their view as a combination of option three and four in her listing of five possible views on the distinction:[22]

(1) Context-independent linguistically encoded meaning (LEM) versus speaker meaning (or communicated meaning or utterance meaning).

(2) LEM plus contextual values for pure indexicals versus speaker meaning.

(3) LEM plus contextual values for all indexicals versus (the rest of) speaker meaning.

(4) Minimal proposition expressed versus (the rest of) speaker meaning.

(5) Intuitive proposition expressed versus (the rest of) speaker meaning.[23]

As the first four options above suggest, the discussion is narrowed down to how and where one should draw the line between semantics and pragmatics. The view Carston argues for in her article 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction' is option (1), and is most importantly connected with the idea that context-independent linguistically encoded meaning (LEM) has to be seen as unrelated to truth conditions.

On Carston's view, there are two ways it can be seen as unrelated or related to truth conditions; as non-propositional and sub-propositional. Option (1) doesn't mention sub-propositionality, so interpreted unrelated to other issues, it can be interpreted as a non-propositional view on semantic meaning. Sub-propositionality is related to the idea of propositionality and non-propositionality is not related or related as a denial of relation. Carston's general view on meaning is a combination of option (1) and (5), and sub-propositionality is in this respect to view LEM as not yet truth-conditional, i.e. as not yet propositional. As Bach proposes, this is the view that semantic or linguistic meaning generally

[21] Cappelen, Herman. 2007. 'Semantics and Pragmatics: Some Central Issues.'. In Preyer, Gerhard and Peter, George (eds). 2007. *Context-Sensitivity and Semantic Minimalism. New Essays on Semantics and Pragmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 3.

[22] Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction.'*, 15*.

[23] Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction.'*, 3*.

underdetermines *what is meant* by a sentence, but may also be seen as underdetermination on the semantic level.

All the present participants in the discussion seem to have some problems with the meaning of 'semantic' and this is partly rooted in a history of different uses. Carston who claims that all other uses than the one in option (1) are contributing to blur the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, is in fact using the term in a number of ways in her book *Thoughts and Utterances*, and may in this respect be seen as the number one target of Bach's criticism above. But this might not matter, if it is only terminological matters. What matter is how the different theories deal with the distinction.

The main point is that this of course is a terminological matter, but at the core of the discussion are not the terminological issues, but the theories themselves. This is perhaps partly why there may be reasons to give up the distinction. Still, I think its right to see the debate as concentrated on the issue of where and how to draw the distinction.

Carston wants to keep it, she writes:

> I shall argue that the right way to draw the distinction is in (1) that is a natural distinction (between distinct kinds of information and distinct kinds of mental processes). It is a distinction that matters, although, somewhat ironically, it may in fact turn out to be better viewed as a distinction between syntax and pragmatics, that is, between a semantically relevant level of linguistic representation and pragmatically derived representations. I believe the distinction in (5) is also a valid distinction, but that it is a distinction between kinds of speaker meaning (or communicated propositions) rather than a semantics/pragmatics distinction. As for the others, (2)-(4), they merely blur the semantics/pragmatics distinction, since pragmatics (concerned with recovering the content of a speaker's communicative intention) becomes one of the determinants of semantic content. Not only are these not good ways to draw the distinction between semantics and pragmatics, they are not worthwhile distinctions of any other sort either; that is, they do no useful work, or so I shall argue.[24]

As we see, all the other distinctions other than the one drawn by Carston is accused of implementing pragmatics on the semantic level in some sense. So when there is only talk of semantic content Carston is positing herself as the most minimalistic theorist with the most clear cut distinction between semantic and pragmatic meaning.

Bach is represented by option (2) and this indicates only a small difference compared to (1). Cappelen and Lepore are represented as holding a view that combines option (3) and (4).

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[24]   Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction.', 3.

The insistence of a truth conditional theory at the semantic level combined with the need for application of context when there are indexical expressions present in sentences, is on Carston's view seen as problematic for a semantic level. Two features trigger this, the truth-conditionality and the application of context, but I think the application of a truth-condition on the semantic level, i.e. the minimal propositions seen as complete or genuinely propositional (for any declarative sentence) is enough to make it problematic for Carston.

To think that truth-conditionality is to add something to the proposition seems to be Carston's point, and may be right in the light of some considerations, but may be wrong in the light of others. However, she thinks that it is her own and some other Contextualists' minimal sub-proposition which is the most minimal. The following quote is already cited in the introduction:

> Given a clear distinction between sentence-type meaning and what is said, which Borg and most current minimalists agree on, the debate reduces to a disagreement about the nature of sentence-type meaning, effectively the issue of just how minimal it is. Somewhat ironically, it is the Contextualist who tends to go for the most minimalist treatment of sentence meaning – as sub propositional, a mere propositional radical, a schema or template for pragmatically building propositions-while the Semantic Minimalist insists that it is fully propositional, albeit seldom constituting the content of what the speaker said, which has to be constructed pragmatically on its basis.[25]

A crucial difference between Semantic Minimalism and Contextualism becomes evident in the light of this quote. The minimalist treats sentence-type meaning as propositional and the Contextualist does not. As we remember, Carston's conception of a complete or genuine proposition is a thought/mental representation and it may be recovered by a receiver via an understanding of a sentence. This general picture motivates her view for looking at sentence-types as sub-propositional and non-propositional.

The motivation for a Semantic Minimalist is to build the theory in a different manner, that is, a Davidsonian-style theory. The general assumption is some version of the following. Borg: "[...] all propositional or truth-conditional semantic content can be traced back to the syntactic level and it is delivered by formal operations over the syntactic representations of sentences."[26]

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[25] Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Review Minimal Semantics by Emma Borg.', 359-360.

[26] Borg, Emma. 2006. 'Intention-based Semantics.'. In *The Oxford Handbook on Semantics*, E. Lepore & B. Smith (eds). (The page numbers are from the online paper on Philipapers.), 17.

Understood methodologically, without considering truth conditions and propositionality, this is compatible with Carston's conception of semantics in option (1), but if considerations about truth conditionality and propositionality are not present in the debate, arguments about how minimal the minimal propositions are, loose all their weight.

There may be several reasons for adopting a truth-conditional view on the semantic level. One is propositional stability – a propositional fall-back which is theoretically ascertained. Another is communicative access to the semantic content. The following quote from Cappelen and Lepore can be found in Carston's article 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction': "[...] the proposition semantically expressed is our minimal defense against confusion, misunderstanding, mistakes and it is that which guarantees communication across contexts of utterance"[27]

Carston comments as follows:

> The basic idea is that semantic content provides us with a reliable shared fallback, a default content – when all else fails and we are floundering in a sea of incomprehension, we can at least retreat to the one available solid anchor, the semantic content of the sentence, that much we can be sure of. Well, of course, the same can be said of LEM and could be said of Bach's "what is said", if there were any such entity. All three positions appear to be offering a stable semantic fallback. Still, on the face of it, there is reason to favor C&L's semantic content over the other two since theirs is the most fleshed out, and surely the more substantial our shared content is the better, the more there is to shore us up against mistakes, misunderstandings and confusion.
>
> There are two parts to my response to these claims: (a) Cappelen and Lepore's minimal semantic content is *not* generally shared across occurrences of a sentence in no matter what context of utterance, and (b) Even if it were common across all contexts, it would not provide the right kind of shared content for most purposes to which they (and indeed all of us) would want to put such a notion.[28]

Quite interesting is the point that Carston is appreciating, or at least points out that there is reason to favor Cappelen and Lepore's view on semantic content. A worry is the truth-conditional approach on this level and as Bach and Carston argue it may be a good solution to view this level as sub-propositional. Carston's critical response is generally that the minimal propositions they offer are not the right kind of shared content and they are not generally the shared content in all contexts. To show this latter point, she argues that indexicals and context-sensitive expressions in general must be applied to specific contexts and that the

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[27] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 185.
[28] Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction.'*,* 21.

speaker's intentions must be let into the picture. So she says that they cannot be shared across contexts. This is precisely the same point suggested by Cappelen and Lepore, and their theory is offering a way to recognize the context-sensitive expressions, but lacks specific ways to solve the problems. However what counts as a proposition when there are context-sensitive expressions present in sentences is the content of the sentence *and* contextual elements applicable to the context-sensitive expressions. So on the face of it, there should be no disagreement between Carston and Cappelen and Lepore when obviously context-sensitive expressions are considered.

One thing Cappelen and Lepore never mention is that when there are expressions from their list of context-sensitive expressions present in sentences, *the semantic content* should be viewed as sub-propositional. I think that if they accept this as true, it will be consistent with their theory and they will not loose anything if they did.

Cappelen and Lepore's view on truth-conditionality is sometimes interpretable as rather weak: "Semantic Minimalism as understood in this book, need not take a stand on whether semantic content is a proposition, or truth conditions, or what have you. Throughout the book we try to remain neutral by couching the issues both in terms of truth conditions and in terms of propositions."[29] I think it is right to assume that the idea is that sentences have determinable content that might be or can be truth-evaluable in respect to a possible world or a context C, if there are elements in the context that coincide directly with the literal content of the sentence. These elements are presented on the right hand side of the truth condition, as for instance:

> (3) Rudolf is happy is true just in case Rudolf is happy, and expresses the proposition *that Rudolf is happy.*[30]

What is most important is that the content of the sentences is determinable. When or if we have such determinable content, then we easily can think of how this can correspond to a context or a possible world C which contains the same elements. So, the stronger thesis like 'sentence S *is* truth-conditional', may not be necessary for their approach. Instead they might settle with 'sentence S is truth-*evaluable*'.

However, Semantic Minimalism is a form of propositionalism and a central issue is to deliver complete propositions. That Cappelen and Lepore's theory is dependent on truth-

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[29] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*. (footnote3), 3.
[30] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 3.

conditionality seems to be a central issue when arguing for instance against incompleteness on the literal level. In this respect, I don't think they can be neutral about whether semantic content is propositional or not. On the other hand, when the proposal is that the content of sentences is the content that can be indirectly reported, it may be that the truth-conditional approach is not needed, if this is enough for an explanation of the considered content.

Borg is pretty clear on this issue and I think that Cappelen and Lepore will agree on the following:

> I'm going to take it as pretty much constitutive of formal theories of meaning that they aim to deliver a complete meaning for each and every well-formed sentence of some natural language. That is to say, the semantic content they promise to deliver is truth-conditional or propositional-something which (given a context of evaluation) is truth-evaluable in its own right.[31]

The most traditional example is perhaps Tarski's conception:

1. 'Snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white.

Again - the context of evaluation is given on the right hand side of the truth condition, and as we see, the contextual content is of general nature. So the focus is pointed on the content in the sentence as corresponding to a general feature of the world which of course is particular on every occasion.

Comparing the above conception of a truth-condition with the one suggested by Cappelen and Lepore makes me believe that the latter is somewhat weaker. Cappelen and Lepore's 'just in case' seems looser or more open than Tarski's conception. Still, it should have strenght enough to make us look away from the even weaker suggestion that truth-conditionality (and propositionality) only is a guiding tool.

If Cappelen and Lepore were neutral about truth-conditionality and propositionality, the seemingly strong case against non-propositionalism and sub-propositionalism would be rather weak. On the other hand, this would also weaken Carston's and the other Contextualists' complaints about Semantic Minimalism. If we take the issue to be only about the determinability of linguistic content it may be that it can guide us towards an agreement concerning these issues.

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[31] Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 5.

I think it is possible to interpret Cappelen and Lepore's theory as a weaker theory than Borg's. This is because of their somewhat weak truth-condition and because their theory is not entirely formal. This is because they are allowing context-sensitivity in connection with the expressions on the list of context-sensitive expressions.[32] We will as we proceed get back to this question at times.

Four options on how to look at a semantic level is open for consideration:

1. Sub-propositions – Not yet truth-evaluable.
2. Non-propositions – Not truth-evaluable.
3. Propositions – Truth-evaluable.
4. Neutral propositions – An open question concerning the three options above.

As already noted, I think all five options for drawing the line between semantics and pragmatics, as proposed by Carston, must be seen as theoretically loaded. This is generally because all five options are meant to be used to give support to a special view.

2.2. Theoretical Neutrality and the Idea of a Neutral Proposition

In the introductory essay of the book *Context-Sensitivity and Semantic Minimalism*, named 'Semantics and Pragmatics: Some Central Issues', Cappelen has three points of neutrality that may help us see the neutral proposition in the right light (the first point is not a point of neutrality). This can be seen as a preliminary neutral ground which theoreticians can agree on before introducing more theoretical conceptions. The neutral proposition is more minimal, or maybe better: more shallow, than any other proposition, because it introduces less theoretical framework. As we see, this point is not really about the size of a proposition, but may be seen as having impact on where we should draw the line between semantics and pragmatics.

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[32] Philip Robbins points this out in his article 'Minimalism and Modularity.'. In Preyer, Gerhard and Peter, George (eds). 2007. *Context-Sensitivity and Semantic Minimalism*. *New Essays on Semantics and Pragmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press.).

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> I. Semantic content is determined compositionally and every element in the semantic value of the sentence is syntactically triggered, i.e. is triggered by elements in the syntax of the sentence.
>
> II. The definition remains neutral about whether these syntactic elements are all articulated in the surface grammatical form of the sentence. Some elements in the semantic value of S relative to context C might correspond to syntactic components that occur only in S's logical form.
>
> III. The definition remains neutral about whether semantic contents are propositional. They might be sub-propositional objects (also known as propositional skeletons […]).
>
> IV. Finally the definition remains neutral about whether the semantic content of an utterance, u, is what was said or asserted by u.[33] [34]

In the following, I will say a little about the points of neutrality in order to explain some issues that are at stake connected to them.

Point (I) can be seen as compatible with Carston's explanation of semantics as context-independent linguistically encoded meaning (LEM) and the other present theorist do agree that this is genuine semantics, so no-one is neutral about this. The latter three points are points of neutrality. Point (II) neutralizes a whole range of disagreement. This introduces two general philosophical problems which can be found for instance in the theory of metaphysics. This is the problem of reduction and the problem of expansion. In the present area of theorizing about what counts as a semantic level, this is a central issue. Proponents of the so called 'Hidden Indexical Strategy', asserts that there is more on the linguistic level to be found in the logical form of sentences than what is evidently present, so they might be seen as expanding the semantic or literal level. Now, they are obviously not expanding it, if it is existent. Nevertheless, there are added expansions in the form of placeholders or descriptions. Cappelen and Lepore explain: "[…] the Hidden Indexical Strategy accounts for alleged context sensitivity by finding (or postulating) a "hidden" (i.e., unpronounced or covert) indexical associated with the expression(s) we hear pronounced."[35] Being neutral about this for the explanation of a neutral proposition is in this connection not to go into such considerations.

Point (III) is already introduced as a central matter. In being neutral about whether sentences are propositional or sub-propositional one might think that this could solve the present dispute about semantic content.

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[33] Cappelen, Herman. 2007. 'Semantics and Pragmatics: Some Central Issues.', 4
[34] Cappelen has a slightly different agenda than how I use this quote.
[35] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 9.

Point (IV), I interpret to suggest neutrality about whether the same content is *what is said* by an utterance or if it is the declarative content of a sentence. The concept of *what is said is* traditionally richer on content than declarative sentences and the way the notion assertive content is used in Cappelen and Lepore's book is synonymous with declarative content.

The assumed way to read this neutrality is to think that the declarative content of sentences also may be what is said and even also what is meant by the use of a sentence. On the other hand it may also be true that the declarative content is not what is said or meant by a sentence and a theory may be neutral on this issue in not considering this question.

Another worry is that declarative sentences used as examples offer too little scope for a semantic theory. In this connection I will propose that assertions[36], questions, *declarations,* directives etc. have declarative content which is possible recoverable without context. For instance take a written question: what makes it a question is first and foremost because there is a question mark. Whether or not we have to judge this as a genuine speech-act will depend on the theory. Carsten Hansen at IFIKK and CSMN in Oslo was suggesting something similar a few years back; he proposed that 'telling' is a (general) speech-act. On this picture one may assert: what ever you do with a sentence or speech-act, you are telling something. So any relatively meaningful sentence can be judged to be a speech-act.

So on this background we may ask whether the assumed context independent declarative sentences must be taken to be speech-acts or not. Another question is whether Semantic Minimalism really is a theory about linguistically determinable declarative speech-acts.

The three points of neutrality can be viewed as help for the understanding of theoretical neutrality. This view on what a semantic theory may look like with minimally loaded theoretical issues should make us see more clearly that the debate concerning the semantic/pragmatic distinction not so much is a terminological debate as it is a debate about theoretical frameworks. In adding theoretical problems to be solved, one increases the explanatory burden. So we might want to only take into account the problems that necessarily

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[36] Jason Stanley seems to think that assertive declarative sentences must be seen as assertive speech-acts. See Stanley, Jason. 2000. 'Context and Logical Form.'. In *Linguistics and Philosophy Volume 23, number 4*. 391 - 434. The terms 'declarative sentences' and 'assertive sentences' is by the semantic minimalist used as terms for the content of their minimal propositions. Cappelen has written a paper called 'Against Assertion' where he argues for a position he calls *the no-assertion view* which holds that it is not theoretically useful to single out a subset of sayings as assertions: He writes: "(v) Sayings are governed by variable norms, come with variable commitments and have variable causes and effects. *What philosophers have tried to capture by the term 'assertion' is largely a philosophers' invention. It fails to pick out an act-type that we engage in and it is not a category we need in order to explain any significant component of our linguistic practice.*" Cappelen, Herman. 2010 'Against Assertion.'. In Brown, Jessica and Cappelen, Herman. (eds.). 2010. *Assertion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 21.

must be solved. The points of neutrality are excluding a lot of theoretical framework and restrictions on the theories. This makes the semantic/pragmatic distinction less problematic, but arguably more unclear.

Carston's LEM is in her article 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction', not given much explanation, so her motivation for writing this article seems to be to show that the Semantic Minimalist and the Moderate Contextualist and in particular Bach's theory are blurring the distinction between semantics and pragmatics. Another more hidden agenda seems to be to argue for the distinction given in option (5), and in general to persuade the reader to get an interest for contextualism. Her claim that it is somewhat ironic that it is the contextualist who has the most minimal proposition as sub-propositional may not be so important for what is at issue in the debate between the contextualist and the semantic minimalist. Instead the question may turn out to be what theoretical issues a semantic theory should account for.

Cappelen and Lepore's theory in general has so many neutrality theses, that it is probably their theory that really is the most neutral. This may partly be because it is meant to be a foundation for further theorizing and because the presented views are what Cappelen and Lepore agree on.

Generally, I think that the less is explained, the easier it is to think that there is a pure linguistic or semantic level. The minimal semanticists' plea for simplicity and shallowness can be seen as being in a tension between what a theory should account for and what really is belonging to the area of semantic theorizing.

2.3. Introductory Notes on Indexicals and Context

The way Cappelen presents the four points quoted above is slightly different from how I use them. Cappelen presentation can be read as special reading of Kaplan's theory. The intention is I think to make the reader of the book have this in mind when he or she reads the critical views on Cappelen and Lepore's book *Insensitive Semantics.* The view presented by Cappelen is compared to Cappelen and Lepore's view, closer to Moderate Contextualism, and in particular it is closer to the view presented by Bach. This is mainly because of his positive view on Kaplan's notion 'character' which is also endorsed by Bach. Still, there might be an

important difference which at least is evident from how Carston presents Bach's view on pure indexicals. Cappelen:

> Note that while the character of an expression is part of its linguistic meaning, it does not enter into specification of its semantic content. Characters *determine* semantic contents; they are not *constituents* of semantic contents. The semantic content of, for example, an utterance by A at a time t and location l of "I'm here now" is the proposition *that A is at l at t.* The constituents of this proposition are determined by the character of the corresponding lexical elements, but this proposition doesn't in any way "contain" these rules.[37]

The most important difference from Bach's approach is how this is applied. The idea is the same, but it might be differences in what is seen as contained in the proposition. Cappelen's use of the notion 'proposition' is in this connection however problematic because his application of Kaplan's framework is presented as neutral to the question of propositionality.

The strategy Carston exploits in her article, 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic/Pragmatics Distinction', is to show that her notion of 'semantics' is more minimal than proposed by the other theories. This comes generally with a view that undermines propositionalism on the semantic level (as the combination of option (3) and (4) proposes which is presented as Cappelen and Lepore's view), but also a denial of option (2) which is taken to be Bach's position, which is a non-propositional view. Carston's view is also non-propositional and Carston and Bach share the view of sub-propositionality. The sub-propositional views are presented as little different, where Bach is including pure-indexicals as a purely semantic matter. This is often explained by the use of the pure indexical 'I', which is seen as determinable without real contextual aspects. Instead it is proposed that there is a determinable rule (or rules), like for instance: "'I' refers to the speaker"[38] Bach explains:

> The reference of a pure indexical is determined by its linguistic meaning as a function of a contextual variable (call that the *semantic context*). However, the reference of other indexicals and of demonstratives is not so determined. They suffer from a character deficiency. For them the role of context is not to determine reference, in the sense of constituting it, but to enable the listener to determine it, in the sense of ascertaining. But this is cognitive, not semantic context. Their reference is a matter of the speaker's communicative intention, which is not just another contextual variable. In fact, rather than

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[37] Cappelen, Herman. 2007. 'Semantics and Pragmatics: Some Central Issues.' , 5.
[38] The idea of pure-indexicals and their special role, can be found in Kaplan's paper *Demonstratives*.

describing them as referring, it would be better to describe speakers as using them to refer.[39]

Other pure indexicals are 'today', 'tomorrow', 'actual', 'present' and (perhaps) 'here' and 'now'. Now, if there is an agreement between Carston and Bach that the semantic level has to be seen as non-propositional and sub-propositional, how can there be a disagreement about what counts as the semantic level? One possible answer is that they disagree about how the semantic level has to be seen as non-propositional and sub-propositional, but this might not necessarily affect what counts as semantics. Bach:

> The fact that a sentence is semantically incomplete or underdeterminate does not mean that
> it is semantically defective. Yes, it does have a character deficiency, but still it has a definite
> content (or contents, if it is ambiguous), as given compositionally by the semantics. There
> is no empirical or theoretical reason why, at the level of *semantics*, the content of the
> sentence has to be supplemented or refined.[40]

As presented in Carston's paper, the difference is that Bach is seen as adding something to the semantic level when he says that pure-indexicals have determinate rules. This is a minor difference. The general disagreement is more extensive and this relates to some fundamental issues about encoding, processing and how they see the pragmatic story.[41] Bach's distinction between narrow context and "wide context" (context which lends support to intentions and other contextual features) is by Carston explained as follows:

> Bach distinguishes the notion of "narrow context", which plays a role in semantics, from
> contextual information in the broad sense, which is anything the hearer takes into account,
> in accordance with pragmatic maxims/principles, in reaching the *intended* interpretation of
> the utterance. "Narrow" context consists of a small, well-defined set of objective
> parameters, including, and perhaps exhausted by, the speaker, the addressee, the time, the
> day and the place of utterance.[42]

Carston argues against determination of the pure-indexical 'I' at the semantic level, and the argumentation is in general against narrow context:

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[39] Bach, Kent. 2004.' Minding the Gap. The Semantic-Pragmatic Gap.', 36.
[40] Bach, Kent. 2004. 'Minding the Gap. The Semantic-Pragmatic Gap.', 38.
[41] One important issue is that Carston holds that there are encoded expressions at the linguistic level, while Bach thinks that inference goes all the way down to and through the linguistic level.
[42] Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances*. 'The Explicit/Implicit Distinction.', 178.

> […] narrow context as standardly construed does not give the right result for a whole host
> of utterances involving pure-indexicals. Consider, for example a post-it note, which says
> '*I*'ll miss *my* office hour *today*', written by a departmental secretary sitting in her office one
> evening, who then attaches it to an absent professor's office door the next morning; clearly,
> the correct referent of 'I' and 'my' is not the writer of the note but the professor, and the
> correct referent of 'today' is not the day on which the note was written but the day on which
> it appears on the professor's door.[43]

As we see, Carston argues from wide context for the explanation of how communication can be done. Narrow context is to be understood as the same as 'linguistic meaning as a function of a contextual variable (call that the *semantic context*)'. Semantic-context as proposed by Bach is for Carston not a semantic matter, but a pragmatic matter.

I think of course that there are fundamental problems concerning the determinability of pure-indexicals, but I think Carston's argument above is questionable. The meaning of pure indexicals involves referring, and the function of a referring-expression is to refer. This conception is needed for the purpose of stating that pure indexicals and also names have meaning at all. So, some kind of extension for the explanation of how such expressions function is I think needed. Still, Carston's argument is not against the above description, but against the possibility of actually determining an actual referent with the help of narrow context. So how should Bach's statement: "The reference of a pure indexical is determined by its linguistic meaning as a function of a contextual variable (call that the *semantic context*)"[44] be interpreted? A weak interpretation may be that there are rules connected to pure indexicals which make them differ in some respect from other indexicals and demonstratives.

I think it is right that they differ in some fundamental respect. A demonstrative like 'that' can point or refer to anything, while a pure indexical like 'I' is pointing or referring to an individual subject. What we are able to "minimally think" when such expressions are used is that the user of 'I' is referring to himself and that the user of 'that' is pointing or referring to something. The pure indexicals is arguably interpretable as more determinable than the demonstratives or other indexicals. This is at this point not meant to be an argument against Carston's objection, but only as an indication of correctness concerning the separation of different interpretative strength concerning pure indexicals and other indexicals and demonstratives. Carston's objection is pointed directly at the explicated rule "'I' refers to the speaker", and more indirectly at the conception of narrow context. What I think the objection

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[43]   Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction.', 11.
[44]   Bach, Kent. 2004. 'Minding the Gap. The Semantic-Pragmatic Gap.', 36.

shows, is that in her view, indexicals has to be determined by wide context and this invites the "whole" pragmatic apparatus. I think it is a middle ground here somewhere, and that this is introduced by the expressions themselves. A rule like "'I' refers to the speaker" can be viewed to be over-specified, but will be a rule or a conception which is manifest whenever a speaker use 'I' to refer to himself or herself.

Whether or not an intention is involved for the determination of the expression is a central issue of disagreement. This is arguably not needed for an explanation of what the meaning of linguistic items are, but maybe always needed for how language in general is used. What we take to be the semantic value of an expression seems to be the problem, and an assumption is that we need only some information about the function of the expressions for the explanation of the semantics. Some (and almost all) seem to think that we need actual referents for the determination of the meaning of indexical and demonstrative expressions.

Whether or not a Semantic Minimalist should go into such considerations, may be an open question, and Cappelen and Lepore seem to be quite open considering how to treat indexicals and demonstratives. In their book *Insensitive Semantics*, Recanati is represented as not distinguishing between pure indexicals and other indexicals and demonstratives, because he thinks that wide context and speaker's intention are involved in both cases:

> We encounter the same sort of problem even with expressions like 'here' and 'now' which are traditionally considered as *pure* indexicals (rather than demonstratives). Their semantic value is the time or place of the context respectively. But what counts as the time and place of the context? How inclusive must the time or place in question be? It depends on what the speaker means, hence, again, on the wide context. (Recanati 2004, p. 68)[45]

And this is their response:

> These are insights that we might agree with, i.e., we might agree that the semantic value of semantically context sensitive expressions might be fixed by the *intentions* of the speaker. We don't (need to) assume that the semantic value is fixed by purely "objective" features of the context of utterance. Our view need not take a stand on the question of the exact nature of these reference fixing mechanisms, but as far as we can tell, Recanati is probably right: wide context is involved. (At least we would be willing to concede that for the sake of argument.)[46]

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[45] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 147 – 148.
[46] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 147.

What Cappelen and Lepore are willing to concede seems to be that indexicals and demonstratives are irreducible and that without wide context and intention they cannot be determined, so in this respect, in agreement with Recanati's and Carston's theory. But by stating that they don't need to take a stand on these issues, we seem to be left with the assumption that such expressions must be determined in privileged ways: "Semantic Minimalism recognizes a small subset of expressions that interact with context of utterance in privileged ways; we call these the *genuinely context sensitive expressions*."[47] In not going into detail about this, a whole lot of considerations are left open. What may seem a bit strange is that names are not seen in need of reference assignment for the determination of their semantic value, while the indexicals are seen in need of reference assignment.

2.4. General Considerations and Some More Notes on Word Meaning.

What may be most important for Cappelen and Lepore's approach in general is to make a preliminary framework for further theorizing and frame a clear methodology for how to distinguish between context-sensitive and context-insensitive expressions and of course to undermine Contextualism in general. The preliminary approach for further theorizing can be seen as a methodology which can be mapped on different theories:

> In order to fix or determine the proposition semantically expressed by an utterance of a sentence S, follow steps (a) – (e):
> (a) Specify the meaning (or semantic value) of every expression in S (doing so in accordance with your favorite semantic theory, i.e., we want Semantic Minimalism to be neutral between the different accounts of how best to assign semantic values to linguistic expressions; e.g., objects, sets, properties, functions, conceptual roles, stereotypes, or whatever).
> (b) Specify all the relevant compositional meaning rules for English (doing so also in accordance with your favorite semantic theory; again, we insist upon Semantic Minimalism being neutral between different accounts of how best to respect compositionality).
> (c) Disambiguate every ambiguous/polysemous expression in S.

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[47] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 143.

(d) Precisify every vague expression in S.[48]

The rather open view on semantic theorizing presented above, is I think not consistent or only consistent to some extent with other views presented in their book, but is still showing us how it can be used for further theorizing.

Ambiguous or polysemous expressions are not present on their list of genuinely context-sensitive expressions so the disambiguation must probably be done on the basis of compositionality or just by decision.[49]

The proponents of narrow context (or semantic context) are by Cappelen and Lepore named 'Moderate Contextualists' and Bach is seen as belonging to this group. Carston is presented as a Moderate and a Radical Contextualist.[50] Radical Contextualists are those who argue for and from wide context, but maybe more importantly (at least for the present purposes) those theorists who "[...] hold some version or other of the view that *every* single expression is context-sensitive"[51] From a wide context perspective, the possibility that every single expression is context-sensitive is highly present, but this seems to be under the assumption that speech acts are context-sensitive in general, and this no-one disagrees about. However, Carston seem to hold the view that every single expression is (possibly) context-sensitive. Still, she holds that there is a level of linguistic or semantic meaning which is context invariant all over which underpins further pragmatic enrichment. The all clear distinction between semantics and pragmatics then, should tell us that there is something determinable about any expression, even indexicals and demonstratives. So when Carston is claiming that the semantic level is determinable, it may be a mystery what is left when all the pragmatics is pealed of. This is especially interesting in connection with the indexicals and demonstratives, but is interesting in connection with other expressions as well.

In *Thoughts and Utterances* she writes:

> According to the relevance-theoretic view, an atomic concept consists of an address or node in memory which may make available three kinds of information: logical content, encyclopedic or general knowledge, and lexical properties. Each of these kinds of information has its own format. The logical entry consists of a set of inference rules, or

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[48] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 145.
[49] What seems to be true or at least possible is that once you have disqutational ambiguous or polysemous expression in a sentence, it will pass the disqutational indirect report test (which will be presented later), and show that *it can* be taken to be context-insensitive. This is because there is arguably nothing in the syntax which triggers the context sensitivity.
[50] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 5 - 7.
[51] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 5.

> "meaning postulates", which capture certain analytic implications of the concept, generally falling short of anything definitional.[52] [53]

What this quote seems to indicate is a complexity within decoding with an indication of stages or levels within decoding. The latter sentence may be interpreted as saying that she doesn't think it is a determinable level of content on the linguistic level. This is so because the inference rules or meaning postulates are seen as generally falling short of anything definitional. This view will render the whole linguistic level indeterminate and every expression must be seen as indicating some sort of indexicality.

Another general assumption is that any expression might be in need of adjustment – lexical narrowing or broadening[54] or other conceptions that shows that the content of expressions changes. The general idea is presented as the idea of ad hoc concepts and in this connection the view is that it is a determinable level of linguistic content and the lexical narrowing or broadening is "done" by pragmatics:

> The basic characteristic of an *ad hoc* concept is that it is accessed in a particular context by a spontaneous process of pragmatic inference, as distinct from a concept which is accessed by the process of lexical decoding and so is context-invariant (that is, one that comprises the standing meaning of the word in the linguistic system). So, for instance, a speaker may use the word 'happy' in a particular context to communicate a concept which, although not encoded by the lexical form, is an established component of the hearer's conceptual repertoire, one that features as a constituent of certain of his thoughts.[55]

So the general assumption is that Carston thinks that all expressions have determinable meanings which are decodable to some extent or degree, but the point that all expressions can be attributed stable meanings independent of pragmatic input seems to be needed for the semantic/pragmatic distinction Carston argues for:

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[52] Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances.* 'The Pragmatics of On-line Concept Construction.', 321.

[53] Carston distinguishes between atomic concepts and complex concepts where atomic concepts are simple unstructured entities and complex concepts are structured strings of atomic concepts. Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances.* 'The Pragmatics of On-line Concept Construction.', 321.

[54] Carston, Robyn and Wilson, Deirdre. 2007. 'A Unitary Approach to Lexical Pragmatics: Relevance, Inference and Ad-Hoc Concepts.'. In Burton-Roberts, N, (ed.) *Pragmatics. 23. 259.* Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke and New York.

[55] Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances.* 'The Pragmatics of On-line Concept Construction.' 322 – 323.

> What does seem clear is that all these various pragmatic contributions can be distinguished from the meaning contributed by the linguistic expression itself used by Sue in (6), that is, the meaning that the words 'she', 'enough', 'units', 'and', 'continue', etc. have as elements in a particular linguistic system (the meaning which is logged for them in the mental lexicon), together with the relations between these meanings imposed by the particular syntactic structure of the sentence. This gives us the distinction in (1): it can be seen as a distinction between the information/meaning that comes from (is encoded by) the linguistic form used by the speaker (LEM) and the nonlinguistic information/meaning required for a complete understanding of the speaker's meaning. Alternatively to, or parallel with, this informational construal, it can be seen as a distinction between psychological processes: the decoding processes by which an addressee recovers LEM and the inferential processes by which he extends and adjusts it in order to recover what the speaker meant. This latter distinction is central in the Relevance theory approach to communication and comprehension (see Sperber & Wilson 1986/95).[56]

The node or the entry introduced in the quote before this quote is the starting point for further decoding and pragmatic inference. This is thought to be within the cognitive apparatus of an individual subject. LEM is of course the material that is interpreted, so the idea is that there is purely linguistic information/meaning which is encoded and encoded only. The encoded word meanings in a sentence are then seen as related to each other compositionally by the syntactic structure of the sentence.

It seems possible to think that this alone, without pragmatic contribution or non-linguistic information, sometimes is enough to change the value of an expression. So it may be right that there still is a question whether the narrowing/ broadening thesis can operate with atomic concepts at the bottom of the theory. Another interesting question is what counts as compositionality and how this can be separated from what we take to be contextual import.

Consider the sentence:

1. Jane is old, she is 29 years old.

Arguably it seems possible to state that the two occurrences of 'old' have to be interpreted differently even if we just consider the decoding of the expression and the compositionality of the sentence. We don't seem to need a (particular) context to state that the meaning of 'old' in 'Jane is old' introduces a concept that indicates comparison to something (introduces a parameter) and that the 'old' in 'she is 29 years old' is neutral, only indicating having age.

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[56] Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction.', 6 -7.

Another way to explain this is that the 'old' that introduces a parameter, is in a complementary relation to the word 'young' and that this is not the case with the neutral 'old'. The address or node might however be the same, because there seems to be something minimal mutually shared by the two instances of 'old'. So, a question that arises can be, -what is the primary meaning of old? I will not choose one of them as primary, but it might be tempting to choose the neutral one, for the purpose of theoretical simplicity. The node itself or the unrelated expression 'old', might be seen as neutral to such considerations, so we might think that the question arises at a second level.[57] So it may be that the decoding starts with the node or the expression on a first level, and ends as decoded on a second level. If we take the somewhat neutral 'old' to be primary, we may consider the 'old' which comes with a parameter to be pragmatically adjusted. But the "problem" with this view, seems to be that we don't need a particular context for the determination of any of the instances of 'old' in the sentence. What I think is evident, is that we need more than the node or the expression for a determinate level of linguistic or semantic meaning, if the node or the expression is lesser than one of the semantic meanings of 'old'. So the expression 'old' on a context independent semantic level may have to be viewed as indeterminate, but might be viewed as determinate if we think that compositionality is enough to determinate the two different meanings of 'old'.

Now, sentences do seem to introduce contextual information without necessarily the introduction of *the respective context.* So how can we separate between compositionality and context? Let's cut the sentence above and make two sentences:

2. Jane is old.
3. Jane is 29 years old.

It is evidently not the meaning of sentence (2) to only indicate that Jane has age, and it is not the meaning of sentence (3) to indicate that Jane has an age of 29 compared to anything else than being 29 years old. This can arguably be asserted as determined by the meaning of the expressions and the differences in compositionality only, but the differences in compositionality and the meanings of the expressions do seem to introduce or relate to information that is contextual.

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[57] This is the view Carston has to argue for and in fact seems to argue for in order to have a pure linguistic level of content, but I don't think it is all that clear that she always hold this view. Nevertheless she must choose a primary meaning for each expression, except for clear cases of ambiguity where there are two or more primary meanings which relates to different things.

So, it may be that the level of semantic content cannot be purely semantic because there is something present which is only recognizable by intuition and/or inference in connection with the use of the expressions. Now, I think there are some unsolved questions concerning how these issues should be solved, but Carston has a solution and this is to move the appropriate domain for semantics to a language of thought. The "linguistic" content of a thought is the mental representation that comprises that thought. On Carston's view this is genuinely truth-conditional content, i.e., propositional content:

> Now, let's think about semantics without pragmatics, the appropriate domain for this being thought. Unlike natural language sentences and phrases, employed in acts of ostensive communication, it seems reasonable to assume that the mental representations that comprise thoughts are (by and large) semantically complete, that is propositional, hence evaluable as true or false of states of affairs they represent. It doesn't make any sense to distinguish between a *minimal* and a *pragmatically completed or enriched* proposition with regard to a thought, (as opposed to a verbal utterance), since, for any case of differences in propositional form we simply have different thoughts. Jerry Fodor puts this in an especially strong way: 'Whereas the content of a sentence may be [and often is] inexplicit with respect to the content of the thought it expresses, a thought can't be inexplicit with respect to the content of the thought it expresses, a thought can't be inexplicit with respect to its own content; there can't be more – or less – to a thought than there is to its content because a thought just *is* its content" (Fodor 2001, 14). Having a thought is a strikingly different kind of mental activity from comprehending an utterance: we do not have to undergo a process of comprehending occurrences (tokenings) of our own thoughts; we may go on to derive implications (further thoughts) from a thought, but grasping the thought itself does not go beyond the occurrence of it […][58]

A lot of problems can be seen as solved on this conception of semantics. This is evidently because there is no need to consider any sense of interpretation. So there is a semantic/pragmatic distinction within thought, where at least in a lot of cases, reference assignment, ambiguity, indexicality etc. are seen as solved simply by being a mental representation that are mapped on a certain environment of non-linguistic information in the abductive domain of a thought. The idea is still that the semantics of the thought is distinct from the non-linguistic information. Fodors conception (and others) of a language of thought is often presented as the Language of Thought Hypothesis (LOTH). We will come back to this issue.

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[58]   Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction.', *35*.

2.5. Further Considerations on Word Meaning, Context Sensitivity and Context Insensitivity

Bach's different views and conceptual separation between pure-indexicals and other indexicals and demonstratives should make it evident that he sees all the other expressions which are not among what he takes to be on his list of contexts sensitive expressions, as determinate expressions on the semantic level. So, the pure-indexicals and all the other expressions that are not suffering any character deficiency on the semantic level are seen as having definite determinable content. Still, any sentence which is semantically incomplete or underdeterminate is seen as defective, because it is in need of supplementation and this supplementation is a seen as a pragmatic matter. So, deficiency is seen as having two distinct origins, -semantic deficiency and pragmatic deficiency.

Carston's complain about Bach's inclusion of pure indexicals as stable minimal word meanings may seem to be on the right track, and this is because it is hard to assume objective context. Carston and Cappelen and Lepore can be seen as teaming up against Bach on this particular point. The following test is meant to prove that context-sensitive expressions block inter-contextual disquotational indirect reports:

> *Real context sensitive expressions block Inter-Contextual Disquotational* Indirect Reports*. By definition, for *e* to be context sensitive is for *e* to shift its semantic value from one context of utterance to another. So, if *e* is context sensitive and Rupert uses *e* in context C, and Lepore uses it in context C´, and the relevant contextual features change, then it will be just an *accident* if their uses of *e* end up with the same semantic value. In particular, if Lepore finds himself in a context other than Rupert's and wants to utter a sentence that matches the semantic content of Rupert's utterance of a sentence with *e,* he can't use *e* i.e., he can't report Rupert's utterance disquotationally.
>
> All the expressions in the Basic Set block Inter-Contextual Disquotational Indirect Reports.[59]

The inter-contextual disquotational indirect report test is meant to show that all the expressions on the list of *genuinely context-sensitive expressions* are context-sensitive expressions. These expressions are more or less the same as the ones on Kaplan's list in his paper 'Demonstratives'*:*

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[59] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie. 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 89.

> Slightly elaborated, his list goes like this: The personal pronouns 'I', 'you,' 'he,' 'she', 'it,' in their various cases and number (e.g., singular, plural, nominative, accusative, genitive forms), the demonstrative pronouns 'that' and 'this' in their various cases and number, the adverbs 'here,' 'there,' 'now,' 'today,' 'yesterday,' 'tomorrow,' 'ago,' (as in 'He left two days ago'), 'hence(forth)' (as in 'There will be no talking henceforth), and the adjectives 'actual' and 'present' (Kaplan 1989a, p. 489). Words and aspects of words that indicate tense also have their reference so determined. And there are also the contextuals, which include common nouns like 'enemy,' 'outsider,' 'foreigner,' 'alien,' 'immigrant,' 'friend,' and 'native' as well as common adjectives like 'foreign,' 'local', 'domestic,' 'national,' 'imported,' and 'exported' (cf., Vallée 2003): Nunberg 1992; Condoravdi and Gawron 1995; Partee 1989).[60]

The above presentation can be viewed as if Cappelen and Lepore are holding an *Expression-type Contextualist view*. They don't want to be Contextualists, but they see the need for being so when there are *genuinely context-sensitive expressions* present in sentences.

Bach's inclusion of pure-indexicals to his list of determinable expressions without context makes him somewhat less of a Contextualist compared to Cappelen and Lepore concerning pure-indexicals only.

In a handout used by Bach in Kingston 11-13 September 09 called 'Why not Contextualism'[61] he presents a list of context-dependent expressions. This list includes (possibly) less obvious context-dependent expressions than the expressions presented on Cappelen and Lepore's list. This is for instance gradable adjectives, like 'tall,' 'old,' and 'fast,' etc. This point makes him more of a Contextualist compared to Cappelen and Lepore.

In the article 'A Tall Tale' and in their book *Insensitive Semantics*, Cappelen and Lepore argue for minimal conceptual interpretation of such expressions without the need for appeal to context and/or parametrical conceptions. This seems important for their approach, and I think it gives a good explanation for how Minimalism can be done. The distinction between sub-propositionalism and propositionalism is in this light given a clear conception.

This is a minimal presentation of Cappelen and Lepore's position:

> The semantic content of a sentence S is the content that all utterances of S share. 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.

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[60] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie. 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 1.
[61] Bach, Kent: 2009. 'Why Not Contextualism*'*. Handout: Kingston, On Contextualism Workshop, 11-13 Sep. 09.

> The minimal proposition cannot be characterized *completely* independently of the context of utterance. Semantic Minimalism recognizes a small subset of expressions that interact with context of utterance in privileged ways; we call these the genuinely context sensitive expressions.[62]

As already mentioned, I think it is possible to see their position as operating with both propositions and sub-propositions on the semantic level. The first part of the quote as explaining what it takes for a sentence to be a proposition and the second part as explaining when sentences must be seen as sub-propositional (when only considering linguistic meaning). This is however not how Cappelen and Lepore present their theory; this is because they see the expressions which interact with context as determinable by context and their main aim is to explain propositionality.

As argumentation for minimal propositions and Semantic Minimalism in general, declarative sentences containing expressions like 'tall,' 'old etc, are used as paradigm cases. A central response to objections to their central view is that all that is necessary is a truth condition and that sentences can be seen as expressing the same content in different contexts.

So when we have a sentence like 'Victoria is neither young or old', this sentence is seen as expressing the content that Victoria is neither young or old and is true just in case Victoria is neither young or old.

A Contextualist needs a context. For the name 'Victoria' this could be a person or something else, like for instance a type of a car; types of Ford made in the thirties and the fifties and such cars are usually thought to be old. There are also rules that state that they are, which makes one get away with smaller insurance bills and one doesn't have to pay road-tax (at least in Norway). However, at this point I'll leave such considerations for the purpose of making evident that we don't have access to the context of utterance in which the sentence is used. So, we don't have the referent of the name 'Victoria' and we don't have real contextual parameters that can tell us what is meant by 'is neither young or old'.

In such cases, the Contextualist argues that there is no truth-conditional content that can be evaluated. This is because the sentence is seen as underdetermined and because of this has to be viewed to be a sub-proposition. The Semantic Minimalist is only obliged to determine the meaning of the sentence and see this in the perspective of a truth-condition. Again: the sentence is what's on the left side of the truth-condition and the perspectival content or meta-representation is the content on the right side:

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[62] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 143

'Victoria is neither young or old' is true if and only if Victoria is neither young or old. Let's do some pragmatic possible world semantics: the temptation to judge this sentence as false seems to be strong and is dependent on what the truth-condition is related to. The problem seems to be that Victoria is presented as having existence without the predicate 'having age', i.e., 'is neither young or old'. This will render the proposition false in every possible world. Arguably if the proposition can be judged as false in every possible (real) world, then the proposition is truth-evaluable and can be seen as expressing a determinate content.

An objection to this might be that the proposition can't be seen as truth-evaluable because it can be judged as neither true nor false. This is because nothing can have existence and at the same time no age. This is similar to the point above, but with another outcome which asserts that the sentence is meaningless, i.e., not expressing content that could have been true or false.

Let's put truth-conditions aside for the moment, and again look at Cappelen and Lepore's disquotational indirect speech reports.[63] A disquotational indirect speech report is seen as true if it is indirectly reportable by a person unaware of the context in which it is uttered (or any other context). So the idea is that a sentence like 'Victoria is neither young or old' is indirectly reportable if it doesn't contain any expressions that are context-sensitive. A form will typically be: 'Hannah said *that* Victoria is neither young or old'. The sentence is true as a report made by another person, so we will get the form: 'It is true that Aristotle said that Hannah said that Victoria is neither young or old'. This conception may show that Cappelen and Lepore's theory doesn't need truth-conditionality if this is enough for an account of genuine propositionality. Still, if it is indirectly reportable it should also be truth-evaluable.

One reason for my choice of the above sentence is to show that it is even more plausible that it is disquotationally reportable than if we have a sentence like 'Victoria is old'. This is because the negation of 'young and old' can be seen as neutralizing any potential parameters. In comparison, the sentence 'Victoria is old' can (intuitively) be seen as introducing a parameter, because without it, it seems possible to interpret it as meaning only 'having age'.

This is evidently the meaning 'old' is attributed in a sentence like 'Victoria is 29 years old'. Arguably there are no parameters involved when 'old' is used in such a sentence or the parameter is given in the sentence as the age of Victoria being 29 year. The contrast between

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63   Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 88 – 89.

the two slightly different meanings of old in the sentences 'Victoria is old' and 'Victoria is 29 years old' is evidently present, but there is still a question whether this has to be seen as a matter of context dependency or not. As we saw, it may be possible to see this as a matter of compositionality and linguistic meaning only. This may be so because we need different sentences to mark this difference.

Further, 'old' can be judged to be ambiguous[64] between the two uses, but it is not ambiguous in the same manner as for instance 'bank', meaning either 'financial institution' or 'edge of a river'. This is because 'bank' has completely different lexical definitions, and this is evidently not the case with 'old' because it can be seen as the concept is the same but that it has different secondary concepts related to the primary concept - one with a parameter and another (perhaps) without a parameter, and more generally, one with an extension and another without an extension. Another difference is that 'bank' is ambiguous when the same sentence is used, i.e. in 'He went to the bank'. There is no pointer that indicates what kind of bank he went to. In contrast, it can arguably be interpreted from the sentences how we should read the meaning of 'old' and we don't seem to need a context in order to understand this.

A Contextualist will assert that 'old' is a context dependent expression. Cappelen and Lepore are the theorists who most *clearly* don't think that it is context dependent, (at least among the present theorists). Such phenomenon's like ambiguity, syntactic ellipses, polysemy, nonliterality and vagueness is on their view thought to be irrelevant factors for the assertion that expressions and sentences is context-sensitive.[65] If for instance it is thought to be a problem concerning ambiguity, they simply say disambiguate every ambiguous expression and if it is supposed by someone that there is a parameter involved they can assert that however that may be, it is not relevant for the semantic meaning of such expressions. About this latter suggestion it is still a question whether the general parametrical function of words like 'old' and 'tall' already is part of the semantic meaning of the word meaning simpliciter.

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[64] In connection with different meanings of 'not', Carston presents polysemy as being a position within a larger domain of lexical ambiguity positions. She writes: "I assume that the only lexical ambiguity position which could be up for consideration is one of polysemy, that is, that there is a single lexical item 'not' which has two or more related senses. But polysemies may show up fairly systematically across languages, since universal properties of conceptualization may lead to certain basic senses or uses of words being extended in reasonable predictable ways." Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances.* 'The pragmatics of Negation.', 274. Now, it seems like it is a distinction between ambiguos words and polysemes. An example of lexical ambiguity is for instance 'bank' where there is at least two different references for the term. Polysemy is defined as above by Carston as having two or more *related* senses and this differs from the ambiguitivity in connection with the term 'bank'. However this difference are often explained as 'bank' being a homonym because of the separate meanings it entails and this differs from polysemes since they are not related in meaning.

[65] Cappelen, Herman and Lepore, Ernie: 2005. *Insensitive Semantics*, 42.

In particular contexts there might be uses of 'old' that indicate something else than age, like matureness or other. The sentence 'Victoria is old' can in such a context indicate something like Victoria is mature for her age, but this will be an implicature.[66] This is something which clearly falls outside the realm of Semantic Minimalism and is the main target for criticism when Contextualism is considered. So this is a clear difference in what the different approaches can and are willing to account for. The Contextualists will say that the Semantic Minimalist looses something essential by their unwillingness concerning pragmatic theorizing.

As noted in the introduction, Carston has a point that makes the disagreement between the Contextualist and the Semantic Minimalist seem somewhat harmless: "[...] once we recognize that what the Contextualist is focusing on is this pragmatic notion of what is said (that is, the truth-conditional content of an *utterance or speech act)* as distinct from a formal 'pure' level of linguistic semantics, much of the fire goes out of the minimalist/contextualist debate."[67] I think Carston slightly are changing her critical view on formal semantics, and becomes less critical than the impression one gets after reading *Thoughts and Utterances*. Still, her interest in minimal propositions is quite minimal, and her minimal sub-proposition seems to be just a tool and not the goal of her investigations:

> I think we would all agree that a crucial ingredient in figuring out what the speaker means by a verbal utterance is the linguistically determined input, but I would claim that this is precisely what LEM gives us. Now, it could be objected that LEM alone cannot be an input to this interpretive process because it is not fully propositional and so is not the right kind of entity to serve as a premise in inference; what we need is something which is at least minimally propositional.[68]

Carston can be interpreted as slightly opening up for the possibility that the Semantic Minimalists' minimal-proposition is a conceptual device better suited as a premise in inference for figuring out what the speaker means. Still she holds that LEM is sub-propositional.

One may ask what a linguistically determined input amounts to: if it is determined, why not see it as a genuine semantic proposition at the semantic level?

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[66] The already mentioned vagueness between what counts as explicatures and what counts as implicatures seems to be traceable in connection with this example. Evidently, the content of the implicature is not a wholly pragmatic matter, so it is still only partly a pragmatic matter and is also the case for an explicature.

[67] Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Review Minimal Semantics by Emma Borg.', 361.

[68] Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction.', 13.

The sentence 'Victoria is neither young or old' will on Carston's view be taken to be under-determinate. The right proposition or thought and communicated content may in this case be that 'Victoria is *feeling* neither young or old'. The "parameter" for 'feeling neither young or old' is the feeling which amounts to how it is to feel neither young or old. This may have something to do with the age of Victoria or it may be independent of this. Some Contextualists is concerned about such things and there may be differences among them concerning the limits of investigations they take into account for the explanation of what communicated content amounts to.

Cappelen and Lepore complain about the Contextualists' tendencies of going into metaphysical speculations. This is for instance presented in connection with "the metaphysics of tallness" and what is left of 'tall' on their view is 'tall' simpliciter or simply tall without any parameters. Still it may seem right that the semantic meaning of 'tall' comes with parametrical considerations as opposed to shortness, i.e., it may be right to explain the semantics for 'tall' with some explanation or definite description of tallness as indicating a degree of height or a degree of height measured as higher than something else.

Borg does take into concern that comparative adjectives semantically indicate that there is parametrical considerations. Borg's parametrical considerations are general, i.e., that 'tall' has some comparison class compared to something. So the main difference is that Borg's theory operates with extensions, while Cappelen and Lepore do see a point in avoiding them. Still they agree on the following and Cappelen's neutrality point II can be seen as operative in this quote:

> So, if I know that you said 'Jill is tall' but I don't know what comparison class you had in mind, I can nevertheless report you as having said that Jill is tall (i.e. I can report you using the minimal proposition expressed by your sentence). I can do so because, even if I don't know much about the context, I know what your words meant.[69]

I do not think it is clear what a word meaning for 'tall' simpliciter amount to. Cappelen and Lepore take it to be context-insensitive and disquotationally indirectly reportable. Borg's theory does agree with this but adds an extension for the explanation of such words because she sees the need for an explanation of the general parametrical function of such words. Whether or not the size of the proposition containing such words is larger or the same as in

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[69] Borg, Emma. 2007. 'Minimalism versus Contextualism in Semantics.'. In Preyer, Gerhard and Peter, George (eds). 2007. *Context-Sensitivity and Semantic Minimalism. New Essays on Semantics and Pragmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 347.

Cappelen and Lepore's theory may be an open question. The difference may rather contain in the point that Cappelen and Lepore's shallow view do not see the importance for such explanations. What I think is right in this connection is that Cappelen and Lepore's theory more clearly not are introducing context for the explanation of the semantic content of sentences contain such expressions. We will come back to this issue later.

It seems right that the size of a sub-proposition or proposition can be the same and that the only difference is that the same-sized sub-proposition or proposition is seen as either an incomplete proposition or a full or genuine proposition. In Carston's and Bach's view, the sentence 'Jill is tall' is seen as incomplete because it is seen as underdetermined. In the quote above, Carston argues for a linguistically *determined* input, and she claims that this is something everyone can agree on. Arguably this is precisely the same as the Semantic Minimalist claim. As an attempted persuasion, the Semantic Minimalist can in this connection assert: 'If there is a linguistically determined input; there is a content that can be judged truth-conditionally because there is a linguistically determined input.'

Let's look at Bach's quote again:

> The fact that a sentence is semantically incomplete or underdeterminate does not mean that it is semantically defective. Yes, it does have a character deficiency, but still it has a definite content (or contents, if it is ambiguous), as given compositionally by the semantics. There is no empirical or theoretical reason why, at the level of *semantics*, the content of the sentence has to be supplemented or refined.[70]

The only difference at sight, compared with Semantic Minimalism is 'the fact that a sentence is semantically incomplete or underdeterminate'. This need not be a fact if there is something that can be judged as a linguistically determined input as Carston put it, or a definite content as Bach put it. So, again the only difference is the different views on what counts as propositionality.

It is possible that we should leave it as a conclusion that there is no need to disagree about this, and rather focus on other issues. Now, the reason why we may want to keep this "confusion" or better; the central disagreement about this issue is because of how this issue relates to other issues. Generally, I think the conceptions sub-propositionality and propositionality are good tools for both sides of the debate.[71] The semantic/pragmatic

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[70] Bach, Kent. 2004. 'Minding the Gap. The Semantic-Pragmatic Gap.'. 38.
[71] James A. Woodbridge suggests that we should think of propositions as semantic pretence: "The non-error-theoretic solution is to understand proposition-talk in terms of *semantic pretence*. On this approach, talking

distinction can if one want to stick to the idea of propositionality on both levels, simply be a divide between two sorts of propositionality, i.e., between semantic propositions or minimal propositions and pragmatic propositions (speech acts). On the contextualist approach; the pragmatic proposition is roughly separable between explicatures and implicatures.

In keeping the theoretical notions sub-propositionality and propositionality when considering linguistic meaning and/or semantic meaning one get the advantage of separating between stable propositions and in-stable propositions at the level of linguistic meaning. On this account is any in-stable proposition the same as a sub-proposition, and any stable proposition is a proposition. For an in-stable proposition to become a stable proposition some kind of application to context must be done. However this is done and when all such problems are solved what we have is semantics. So in general, in a lot of cases semantics is still some kind of hybrid between pragmatic, linguistic and syntactic features. The problems which have to be solved are in tension between the necessary pragmatics and how one applies the linguistic and syntactical forms or features. More generally put is to see the problem as a tension between linguistic meaning and propositionality. Now, whenever there is a tension between linguistic meaning and propositionality this is because the linguistic form has the status of a sub-proposition and something must be done in order to get propositional content. The great thing about stable linguistic propositions is that nothing has to be done because the linguistic meaning is equivalent to the semantic meaning and it is thereby propositional.

In arguing for this point my emphasis is directed to Cappelen and Lepore's conception of stable propositions. If we can label all the propositions they take to be stable, genuine propositions what we arguably have is an amount of sentences were all the problems can be seen as solved. This will of course indicate that we for instance are satisfied with their way of solving the problems concerning gradable adjectives.

Emma Borg's theory have as a central notion, the conception 'liberal truth condition' and this conception makes Borg the only entirely formal theorist or at least the only theorist which manages to account for propositions with all the problematic context-sensitive expressions without the application of real contextual features,

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as if there were propositions lets us put readily available logical and linguistic devices to new expressive purposes, providing a way to make indirectly certain complicated, genuinely true assertions we cannot make directly. Proposition-talk thus extends the expressive capacity of a language in a logico-syntactically conservative way." Woodbridge, James. A: 2006. 'Propositions as Semantic Pretense.'. 343. In *Language & Communication 26*, 343 – 355.

> Well, I want to suggest […] what I will call 'liberal' truth-conditions which are *liberal* since they clearly admit of satisfaction by a range of more specific states of affairs. A liberal truth-condition posits 'extra' syntactic material (i.e. material in the sub-syntactic basement) only when it is intuitively compelling to do so, or when there is good empirical evidence to support the move. Furthermore, what these truth-conditions take to be delivered by sub-syntactic information is merely the presence of an additional argument place, marked by an existentially quantified argument place in the lexical entry, and not the contextually (intentionally) supplied value of this variable. Finally, when there is no evidence for positing an additional argument place within the sub-syntactic basement, liberal truth-conditions run merely off the explicit syntactic constituents of the sentence (those given by uttered elements together with any genuinely elliptical items).[72]

Compared to Cappelen and Lepore account, the main difference is that they sees the need for application of context when there is expressions from their list of genuinely context-sensitive expressions present in sentences. Borg on the other hand, solves this by positing 'extra' syntactical material from what she takes to be a sub-syntactic basement. Her list of expressions which is in need of treatment is more comprehensive than Cappelen and Lepore's list. This is for instance comparative adjectives and names in addition to the expressions Cappelen and Lepore take to be context-sensitive.

The difference is again explainable with respect to the gradable adjectives and as we remember Cappelen and Lepore asserts that there is something which is 'tall' and 'ready' simpliciter without further extensions or conceptualization. In this connection Borg sees a problem concerning Cappelen and Lepore's view on truth-conditionality, and it may be that Borg's view on propositionality use a stronger truth-condition compared to theirs:

> In conversation, Herman Cappelen stressed that this is all *IS* (Insensitive Semantics) is committed to-the claim that Contextualists arguments against propositionalism are flawed. CL thus wish to remain agnostic on the truth of propositionalism (though since they are happy to allow that sentences like 'Jill is ready' express propositions, it is not immediately obvious what an example of a well-formed sentence which fails to express a proposition could look like for them). The Minimalism advocated in Borg 2004a thus goes further than CL: it holds as a default assumption that all well-formed sentences express propositions and argues that, since Contextualist arguments are flawed, propositionalism should be retained.[73]

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[72]   Borg, Emma. 2004. Minimal Semantics, 230.
[73]   Borg, Emma. 2007. 'Minimalism versus Contextualism in Semantics.', 347.

Another issue is that Borg's proposition can be viewed as being richer and bigger compared to the other main present theories. By introducing 'extra' syntactical material at the level of semantics, it is added conceptions comparable to those introduced by Bach concerning pure indexicals for all expressions which intuitively or empirically invites to it.

Let's try to explain Borg's view among Carston's suggestions:

(1) Context-independent linguistically encoded meaning (LEM) versus speaker meaning (or communicated meaning or utterance meaning).

(2) LEM plus contextual values for pure indexicals versus speaker meaning.

(3) LEM plus contextual values for all indexicals versus (the rest of) speaker meaning.

(4) Minimal proposition expressed versus (the rest of) speaker meaning.

(5) Intuitive proposition expressed versus (the rest of) speaker meaning.[74]

I think the closest we come is a combination of option (3) and (4), but there will additionally be contextual values for other expressions as well. As we already know, the combination of option (3) and (4) is the same as Cappelen and Lepore's suggestion is presented. So, option (3) seems to be in need of adjustment.

This may be a possible sixth option:

(6) Minimal proposition plus formal contextual values for all expressions which intuitively or empirically demands for it versus the rest of speaker meaning.

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[74] Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction.', 3.

3. Modularity

3.1 Modularity

Borg's strategy is to close the semantic domain formally, and then look at this domain in combination with the idea of a modular language of thought. The strategy is to show that there are radically different comprehension processes between decoding and abductive inference. The decoding which happens within a modular language of thought is taken to be encapsulated and as such seen as a closed system. Abductive inference or reasoning is in contrast to decoding seen as non-demonstrative, and as such viewed to be global processing. The main point for how Borg uses this distinction is, I think, that decoding is seen as demonstrative by operating with signs, and abductive reasoning is not seen as operating with signs.

One hypothesis is that the decoding happens in an independent module in our brains and that the abductive inferences happen in another part, but Borg is not all that convinced about this. She lends support from Sperber and Wilson: "For it might be (as, say, Sperber and Wilson have argued) that linguistic comprehension is a sub-module of a broader, communicative comprehension."[75] Borg takes linguistic comprehension to be encapsulated within a representational system comparable to the Relevance Theorists' mental representation system. The idea of encapsulation is important to her formal program. One way to look at her strategy, is that she takes the general idea of semantic minimalism and relocates it with the idea of a sub-module which is encapsulated as a comprehension module only dealing with linguistic meaning (and rules). She writes; "[...], because the formal approach treats linguistic meaning as determinable by purely computational processes, it is consistent with the existence of a discrete body of information, and rules operating only over that information, which underpins our linguistic comprehension up to and including grasp of literal sentence meaning."[76]

There is also a debate about how the term 'modular' should be used, and in Borg's framework it is only the decoding taken to be encapsulated within a language of thought, which is seen as deserving the label 'modular':

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[75]   Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics,* 103.
[76]   Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics,* 74.

For, by Fodorian Lights, the things posited by MM look far more like *non-modular,* global processes. For instance, to take one apparent example of a non-Fodorian module: the theory of mind module (often referred to as the agent's 'mind-reading' capacity). It seems clear that embarking on an intentional explanation of some piece of observed behavior depends upon precisely the kind of non-demonstrative, context-saturated and all-things considered reasoning which Fodor takes to be characteristic of global process. Thus, from now on, unless explicitly stated, the term 'module' will be reserved for an encapsulated body of information with deductive, computational rules operating only over that information. Any system employing abductive (i.e. non-demonstrative) reasoning processes will not be labeled a module.[77]

The non-demonstrative features of Relevance Theory are at the core for criticism, but the adoption of a Fodorian module is the same. The sub-module where the comprehension process which underpins grasp of literal meaning is located, is the place for Mentalese. Mentalese is the name Fodor uses for a computational representational system which is the modular language of thought. Carston puts it like this: "Mentalese is the medium of thought. Given the computational view of mental states and processes, it follows that, for every feature of content that a thought process is sensitive to, there must be a formal element present in the Mentalese presentation of that content."[78]

The mental representation is seen as independent and separable from the background, i.e., the abductive global mental "landscape", but must however be seen as *representing* that part in the abductive domain which is restricted to the mental representation. So the entities referred to will be located in the abductive domain, while the Mentalese expressions are located in the mental representation. Carston's assumption is that Mentalese sentences are not underdetermined and as such eternal sentences:

Mentalese sentences do not underdetermine their truth-conditional content, they are not context-sensitive, they are eternal. Given the formality constraint, Mentalese sentences and phrases must be unambiguous; that is, there are no elements of form which have several distinct semantic values, as do 'bank' and 'visiting relatives' in English. Otherwise, a 'bank' thought would send you off on two wildly divergent inferential tracks. Similar considerations would seem to apply to indexicals. For instance, take the thought of a person who, if she wanted to express it, might utter the English sentence "That one is better than that one", while pointing first at one object, then at another (say, two cars). The English sentence contains identical elements for referring to the two cars, but the Mentalese

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[77]   Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances.* 'Pragmatics and Linguistic Underdeterminacy.', 74.

[78]   Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances.* 'Pragmatics and Linguistic Underdeterminacy.', 74.

> sentence must contain distinct components. If it did not, that thought would be indistinguishable from a nonsensical one in which a person predicates of an object that it is better than itself. In fact, the issue is wider than this example makes it seem; it doesn't arise just for utterances involving *multiple* uses of an indexical. A thought about a particular object, say a vase I am looking at, which could be expressed by an utterance of "That's beautiful", must surely involve a formal component that distinguishes it from those thoughts I have about other objects which could also be expressed by the utterance of a "that" sentence. Otherwise, we could not keep track (to the quite considerable extent that we do) of distinct objects in our environment.[79]

I think the idea of eternal sentences as presented above is quite problematic. The main reason for this is because they are dependent on epistemological factors. Carston's example 'That one is better than that one', where the mental representation is something like 'That one* is better than that one^' is meant to solve the problem of indexicality and indeterminacy by distinguishing between the two cars pointed at. This, arguably does not contribute to make it evident that the sentence is context independent and eternal. The context dependency is reinforced and the sentence can't be eternal. Still, the problems concerning ambiguity and indexicality are given a solution. The problem is that, as presented above, the solution to these problems is presented as a connection of thought to the external world. A possible solution could be: yes, the content of the sentence is context-sensitive, but the sentence itself is not, so since it is not context-sensitive, it is eternal. I will argue that this doesn't work because of the dependency on context.

An advantage which comes with the idea of a modular language of thought, is the point that the language is richer and more nuanced than any natural linguistic language. So with this basis, and the idea of decoding operating only with the rules connected to expressions and compositionality, we have an area of theorizing dealing only with semantics. What we need is a way of explaining semantics without context, and the idea of truth-conditionality and propositionality should, I think, find its place under the assumption that this is possible in order to have a genuine minimal semantics.

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[79] Carston, Robyn. 2004. *Thoughts and Utterances.* 'Pragmatics and Linguistic Underdeterminacy.'*,* 75.

3.2 Modularity, Indexicals and Extensions

Borg's solution seems to be explainable as a formalization of at least some explicatures or parts of explicatures. So her proposition is lesser than any explicatures or implicitures, but (arguably) larger than any of the presented minimal propositions or sub-propositions.

The idea of a Fodorian language of thought, is an assumption Borg and Carston share, but how they exploit this idea seems partly different. The disagreement about what they take to be genuine propositionality can be seen in this light. As Carston points out: a thought can't be inexplicit; so a sentence like 'Jane is old, she is 29 years old,' is on this view unproblematic because the mental representation of the sentence has different signs or representations for the different logged meanings of 'old' (and of course because the meaning of the expressions is determined by the compositionality of the sentence, but the main point is that it is possible to operate with different nodes for the same expression).

The difference between Borg's proposition and Carston's mental representation can be explained as follows: There is a mental representation which has the content 'Jill is ready for basket-ball practice'. The uttered sentence is 'Jill is ready'. The explicature and intuitive proposition to be interpreted can be represented as follows:

1. Jill is ready [for basket-ball practice].

The content in the brackets is not uttered content, so it has to be pragmatically enriched by an interpreter. Still, the mental representation contains all the elements in the explicature, so the semantics in the mental representation is seen as the truth-conditional content, and as the genuine proposition. Borg's formal solution is to formalize a general extension, as in:

2. Jill is ready [for something].

The proposition in (2.) is an example of what Borg takes to be a genuine proposition and solution for the rejection of incompleteness arguments. The proposition in (1.) is meant to show how a sentence is seen as underdetermined, and the genuine proposition is the explicit content plus the material in the brackets.

The general idea and understanding of a Fodorian language of thought may be the same for Carston and Borg, but they both use it to motivate their views of what a theory of language should look like. This is Borg's conditional claim:

> […]if we thought that grasp of literal linguistic meaning was a modular process, then the right kind of theory to account for semantic understanding would be a formal theory. For this kind of approach to semantics, grasp of literal linguistic meaning is a purely computational process; it can be calculated by processes which are sensitive only to the local properties of syntactic representations, rather than via sensitivity to global features, like the agent's entire belief set. In this section I have tried to suggest that there is good reason to think the antecedent of the above conditional claim is true: there intuitively does seem to be a level of content which can be recovered by competent language users when faced with a sentence of a natural language, the grasp of which displays all the properties which are taken to be characteristic of genuinely modular activities.[80]

As we see, Borg is talking about grasp of literal linguistic meaning and semantic understanding, and is thereby not considering the mental representation of for instance 'Jill is ready for basket-ball practice'. The content Borg is considering is 'Jill is ready'.

The distinction between syntactic representation and global features is the same on their views, so the distinction between semantics and pragmatics is the same when the cognitive apparatus is considered. That is, if the semantic content of a mental representation is 'Jill is ready for basket-ball practice', then, this and only this is the content of that mental representation, and is true if and only if Jill is ready for basket-ball practice. So, the main disagreement is still about what counts as a proposition. This is not entirely true: Carston objects to Borg's proposition in two ways: the first claim is that it is not propositional; the second objection is that her extensional content is not a linguistic or semantic matter, but a pragmatic matter. The latter objection is, I think, dependent on what a semantic matter really consist of and what a pragmatic matter consist of. What belongs to which domain, is I think, in some cases quite hard to decide.

In Carston's review of Borg's book, she endorses her solution for demonstrative and indexical expressions and admits that it is more elaborated than the suggestions made so far by herself and the Relevance Theorists:

> The second (and innovative) part of Borg's story is her idea that each tokening of a demonstrative or indexical syntactically triggers the creation of a singular concept which is its semantic content. A singular concept (as opposed to a general concept) is one that refers directly to (has as *its* content) an object, but figuring out who or what that object standardly is requires consideration of speaker intentions and so is a task that lies beyond the remit of

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[80] Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 107.

the formal semantic processor. According to this account, what we grasp when we understand an utterance of "That's mine" is the proposition or thought of the shape [α is β's] where 'α' and 'β' are singular concepts. Each comes with a further bit of information along the lines that 'α' is a THAT concept while 'β' is a SPEAKER concept, information provided by the (non-truth-conditional) semantic character of the linguistic expressions, which functions as a constraint on how the concepts are subsequently integrated with other language-module-external information (from perception or memory), specifically in the pragmatic process of identifying the entity the speaker is referring to.[81]

Borg goes through a lot of material from the debate about indexicals and demonstratives in her book. Carston's presentation of Borg's solution is quite right, and is, as Carston writes after the quote above, meant to be a critical response to John Perry's solution in his book _Reference and Reflexivity_.[82] [83]

This is how Borg presents Perry's suggestion:

> Perry suggests that statements involving context-dependent expressions possess (at least) two different kinds, or levels, of content, which he calls "reflexive" and "referential" contents. The latter is exhausted by the object referred to; thus, if we are thinking in terms of Russellian propositions, the referential content of a referring term will be just the object it contributes to a Russellian proposition (rather than any description of that object). On the other hand, reflexive content utilizes the descriptive condition under which the referent is selected; it is reflexive since the condition to be met mentions the token expression itself. So, for instance, imagine an utterance u of "I am happy", as said by s. This yields the reflexive proposition that _the speaker of u is happy_ as well as the referential proposition _s is happy_. However, and this is where things can be tricky, Perry also notes that the descriptive condition appearing in the reflexive proposition can, as it were, get used, rather than being mentioned as part of the content of the proposition.[84]

Perry's theory is a nuanced theory which operates with quite a few propositions related to a given sentence. The most important distinction is as mentioned in the quote, the distinction between _reflexive_ and _referential_ content. Borg's criticism of Perry's theory is focused on the conception of reflexive content and has something to do with it being used rather than being mentioned. Still, as she notes above, the reflexivity is about the mentioning of the token expression itself, and this idea is present in Borg's theory.

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[81] Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Review Minimal Semantics by Emma Borg'_, 7.

[82] Perry, John. 2001. _Reference and Reflexivity._ California: CSLI Publications.

[83] The views presented in Perry's book rests to a large extent on the views Hans Reichenbach presents in his book _Elements of Symbolic Logic_ from 1947.

[84] Borg, Emma. 2004. _Minimal Semantics_, 189.

The idea is that there are descriptions or rules for the use of such expressions, the designation of the object is rigid, and the description or rule is functioning as a reflection of the object, at the same time as it explains fundamental features of the semantics for such expressions. The difference between the two solutions is explainable as different views of how to apply Kaplan's concept 'character'.[85] Character, in Kaplan's framework, is a variety of sense, and is contrasted to content. "The content of an expression is always taken *with respect to* a given context."[86] And this is contrasted to character as follows:

> […] I call that component of the sense of an expression which determines how the content is determined by the context the "character" of an expression. Just as contents (or intensions) can be represented by functions from possible worlds to extensions, so characters can be represented by functions from contexts to contents The character of "I" would then be represented by *the function (or rule, if you prefer) which assigns to each context that content which is representated by the constant function from possible worlds to the agent of the context.* The latter function has been called an "individual concept".[87]

Borg's suggestion is that 'β' is taken to be a SPEAKER concept where 'β' is a meta-representation of an instance of 'I' in a sentence. The rule or description is viewed as a constant function, but is not taken to be part of the propositional content or the semantics for the expression. Kaplan's 'dthat' operator is used as a converter from the description or rule to a single concept for the explanation of the indexical 'I'. This is put as follows: "'(ii) That dthat (the speaker of u) is F'."[88] The converter takes a general concept and converts it into a singular concept.

> For all we really have at the level of the content of the proposition in (ii) is the object which the description selects in the actual context of utterance; once it has served (using Kripke's terminology) to fix the referent of the expression, the identifying condition drops out of the picture (it does not also give the meaning of the expression). The claim I would like to make, then, is that for an indexical or demonstrative expression, the content that can be recovered on the basis of an agent's knowledge of language alone (the genuinely semantic content of the token expression) is a proposition like (ii) [...].[89]

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[85] Note that Perry and Kaplan have developed their theories independently in the same time span, but Perry is still using Kaplan's theory and terminology in his book *Reference and Reflexivity.*

[86] Kaplan, David. 1978. 'On the Logic of Demonstratives.'. In *Journal of Philosophical Logic*. 1978. 81-98, 83.

[87] Kaplan, David. 1978. 'On the Logic of Demonstratives.', 84.

[88] Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 190.

[89] Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 191.

Borg claims that all we really have at the level of content of the proposition in (ii) is the object selected in the *actual context*. The rule or description is only taken to be an identifying condition, which is operative at the time of the selection of the object. Then she says that the content to be recovered as the genuine semantic content is a proposition like (ii). So the content is taken to be: '(ii) That dthat (the speaker of u) is F'. So Borg suggests that the identifying condition 'the speaker of u' in the brackets is not present in the proposition, but is only an identifying condition. So the content of the token expression 'I' which is part of the proposition is explainable as the ('β') of u as in "That dthat ('β') is F".

That she takes into account an actual context for the explanation seems to me a little strange, considering that she also holds the following to be true:

> The claim will be that, whatever is special about having a singular thought, it is not to be explained in terms of the kind of relationship an agent has with an object. This, then, will be one instance of the more general advocacy of minimal semantics, for it will thus turn out that it is no job of a semantic theory to tell us, in any substantial way, which objects in the world expressions hook up to, nor indeed whether or not certain expressions succeed in hooking up with an object at all.[90]

This explanation makes Carston's explanation of Borg's solution quite right. So I interpret Borg's solution as not dependent on an actual context. Further, I take her to hold that the objects of thought belong in the abductive domain of thought, and the signs or nodes connecting to the objects, to belong in the domain of the mental representation or Mentalese. So, there should be no dependency on actual contexts for the explanation of semantics on Borg's view.

The identifying condition seems only to be a processing mechanism and not part of the semantics for the expression. So it belongs in the domain of what she takes to be encapsulated, but since it is not part of the proposition, it is arguably not semantics. (Borg does in fact think that the character (identifying condition) is part of the semantics or linguistic meaning for the expressions, but she still holds that it is not propositional content.)

I agree with Borg that characters are semantic content, but contrary to her suggestion, I think it is part of the proposition. I think it is right to distinguish between the nodes or the signs and the decoding or linguistic comprehension, but it is also right to say that an essential part of the meaning of referring expressions is the function of identification. So I think there

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[90] Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 169.

must be a way to explain the identifying conditions as part of the semantic content and propositional content.

Borg's solution for indexicals and demonstratives is similar in some respect to the solution for the other contexts sensitive expressions. The similarity is of course generally the concept of attaching extensions to expressions, but also perhaps explainable as making room for a somewhat empty or open context which can contain operators, rules, descriptions or general descriptive content. In connection with the concept for 'ready', she adds an extension 'for something', and this I will label 'context "neutral" general descriptive content'.

A sentence like 'I am ready' has two extensions on Borg's view: I [referring to a salient dthat ('β')] am ready [for something]. The most important difference between the two expressions 'I' and 'ready' with their respective extensions is that the first is a (or becomes a) singular concept and the second is a general concept. The distinction between singular and general concepts is traditionally taken to be important, and Borg thinks so too:

> One natural way of spelling out this difference - between meta-language expressions which directly invoke objects and those which do not - concerns the kinds of thoughts which are required to understand the expressions in question. Thus, for instance, "that boy is happy" and "some boy is happy" mean radically different things because, in the first case, the sentence possesses a truth-condition with a referential meta-language expression in subject position which requires the entertaining of a *singular thought* to understand (a thought involving a *singular concept* in subject position) while, in the second case, the thought entertained is *general* or object-independent, since "some boy" contributes only a *general concept* to the thought entertained. (In what follows, I will use the terms "singular concept" and "singular thought" more or less interchangeably, for all that is meant by a singular thought is a thought with a singular concept in subject position; *mutatis mutandis* for "general concept"/"general thought". The assumption being that a singular thought is not an atomic element, but is rather composed of a representation of the object and a representation of the property.)[91]

On Borg's view, the idea is that there is a singular concept entertained in connection with the indexical 'I'. The identifying condition is a general concept functioning as a converter.

As put above, it is the meta-language expressions which directly invoke objects or not. This is connected with the idea that there are different kinds of thoughts required for the understanding of the expressions.

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[91] Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 168.

Perry suggests that it is useful to distinguish between different types of propositions. The following presentation is a simplification of Perry's nuanced way of using different propositions.

This is from his paper 'Predelli's threatening note: contexts, utterances, and tokens in the philosophy of language':

> On the reflexive-referential theory, the utterances have a variety of contents, the most important of which are the reflexive contents and referential contents. The referential contents of utterances of sentences containing names, indexicals, and demonstratives will be just those assigned by standard referential theories. The referential content of
>
> (5)   I am sorry,
>
> Uttered by me, is the proposition
>
> (6)   that **John Perry** is sorry.
>
> When I use bold face in identifying propositions, it identifies a constituent of the proposition. 6, is a singular proposition with me as a constituent, true in worlds in which I am sorry.
> I use italics to indicate that an identifying complex, rather than the object that fits it, is being mentioned. So the proposition
>
> (7)   that the *speaker of (5)* is sorry
>
> has an identifying condition as constituent; it is what Kaplan calls a 'general proposition' and is true in worlds in which whoever uttered (5) in the world is sorry there.
> Kaplan and others use various arguments to show that (6) and not (7) is the proposition expressed by my utterance of (5); (6) is what I said. I agree with this. I call (6) the *referential content* or *the subject matter content* of (5). But I believe that it is useful also to recognize (7) as the *reflexive content* of (5). I call it 'reflexive' simply because it is a condition of (5) *itself*. (5) is not what (5) is *about*; it is not part of the subject matter of (5). Still, (5) will be true if (7) is true, and vice versa. I claim that the reflexive content helps us understand the reasoning that motivates the production of utterances, and the reasoning that is involved in their interpretation.
> The systematic connection among the contents is *loading*. This is a function from an identifying condition and a state of affairs to an object. Thus (6) is the result of loading the identifying condition in (7) with the fact that I uttered (5).[92]

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[92] Perry, John. 2002. 'Predelli's Threatening Note: Context, Utterances, and Tokens in the Philosophy of

A general difference between Borg and Perry is that Borg is a Semantic Minimalist and Perry is a Moderate Contextualist. So there are differences in what they allow and take to be propositional content. Perry, however, operates with different types of content and propositions, which may or may not relate to each other. What is evident is that Borg doesn't see the need to go as far as to account for the proposition in (6). This proposition is an example of *what is said* by (5) and has a real referent as a constituent. The proposition is a pragmatically derived proposition and is dependent on an actual context. This is often taken to be official content. Perry: "I'll call this 'official' content. This is what someone who knows the meaning and the context grasps."[93]

Perry presents the proposition in (6) as a singular proposition. This is because it has a particular object (John Perry) as a constituent of the proposition. Both the propositions in (6) and (7) are presented as identifying propositions and this is because they in different ways identifies the referents of the expression 'I' in sentence (5). The proposition in (6) has referential content, while the proposition in (7) has reflexive content. The latter content is presented as having an identifying complex as constituent and is taken to be a general proposition.

One difference between Borg's and Perry's theories is that Borg wants to explain *one* proposition in connection with a sentence and Perry operates with several propositions.

How the idea of character or reflexive content is seen as useful is at the core in Borg's criticism of Perry's suggestion, and she takes Perry to want to explain the content recoverable on the basis of linguistic knowledge alone. This is not true of the proposition in (6), but can at least sometimes or in some way be interpreted in connection with the proposition of (7).

> […] he seems to suggest that it is the reflexive content of an utterance of a demonstrative- or indexical-containing sentence (where the identifying conditions themselves form part of the content of the proposition) which gives the content recoverable on the basis of linguistic knowledge alone. He suggests that the "indexical content" [...] of an utterance corresponds to the truth-conditions of the utterance given the facts that fix the language of the utterance, the words involved, their syntax and their meaning, and this appears to be the reflexive proposition: [...][94]

Language.'. In Elsevier. *Journal of Pragmatics 35*. 2003. 373-387, 379.

[93] Perry, John. 2000. 'Indexicals.', 3.

[94] Perry, John. 2002. 'Predelli's Threatening Note: Context, Utterances, and Tokens in the Philosophy of Language.', 379.

From the perspective of there being explanatory problems rather than the issue of pragmatics, I think the only real difference between Perry's and Borg's way of explaining how the character in sentence (7) 'that the *speaker of (5)* is sorry' is applied, is that he conforms with the fact that it is a general concept, and Borg is using the identifying condition to explain linguistic processing as a mediating principle - for the purpose of having a singular concept in her minimal proposition.

In Perry's explanation above, the proposition in (6) identifies a constituent of the proposition, and this is the referential content. The proposition in (7), is presented as having an identifying condition for the understanding of the sentence in (5), for the aim of getting the proposition in (6). As Borg's complaint suggests; the identifying conditions themselves are loaded into the propositions.

One way to interpret Borg's criticism, is that she wants to neglect (7) and rather focus on the relationship between (5) and (6) without the need for a real referent. Still, (7) is presented as a mediating principle which disappears once the singular concept is fixed as a singular concept. So there is knowledge about there being a genuine referent and a general principle mediating between a genuine referent and the indexical or demonstrative involved, but they are not seen as part of the minimal propositional content. The structure of Perry's suggestion can be interpreted to be similar, but what they see as propositional content differs: "The systematic connection among the contents is *loading*. This is a function from an identifying condition and a state of affairs to an object. Thus (6) is the result of loading the identifying condition in (7) with the fact that I uttered (5)."[95]

Borg's account has a similar conception, but explains it without loading the identifying condition or real referents into the proposition. Perry's suggestion is that the identifying condition in (7) is loaded with the fact that (5) is uttered, so the character or identifying condition seems to become a constituent of the proposition of (6). The constituent in the proposition (6) is the "object" **John Perry** and the identifying condition is loaded with the fact that (5) is uttered. So it seems to me like the identifying condition in (7) rather is replaced with **John Perry**. The proposition in (7) has the identifying condition as constituent.

The concept 'identifying condition' is arguably the same concept Borg makes use of. So the difference which remains when the identifying condition is all we focus on, is that Borg uses the identifying condition as a converter between a general concept and a singular

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[95] Perry, John. 2002. 'Predelli's Threatening Note: Context, Utterances, and Tokens in the Philosophy of Language.', 379.

concept, and Perry is accepting it as a general concept. But the object in (6) (John Perry), is a singular object, so the conception or methodology is the same or at least very similar.

The proposition in (6) is a singular proposition and what Perry takes to be *what is said* by the sentence (5). Now, there is a way to see Perry's proposition in (7) as an identifying condition between (5) and (6) and as an identifying condition between (5) and a proposition which is only reflexive and not referential. As for instance: (8) a person (*the writer of (5)*) is sorry. This may be the case if someone has written 'I am sorry' on a wall and we don't know who the writer is. The proposition in (8) is arguably just another way to explicate a proposition similar to (7) and a reflexive proposition like this is arguably pretty close to what Borg wants to explain, at least when we take Carston' s explanation to be the right way to interpret Borg's suggestion without the application of an actual context. Still, the identifying condition in Perry's theory is general, but the object it is referring to is at least probably a singular object. (It is important that we don't reach the proposition in (6) in such cases.)

The converter or the identifying condition is arguably syntactically triggered and this is something Borg and Perry agree on. So a central question is whether or not it belongs to the semantic or the pragmatic domain. Perry is, I think, more clearly suggesting that it belongs to the pragmatic domain and Borg seems to want to get rid of it as a constituent of her minimal proposition. So, on her view it is only an identifying condition or a converter, but this is (arguably at least partly) how it is used in Perry's theory. Borg writes: "[…] character is certainly part of the literal meaning of the expressions in question, yet the modal evidence stressed by both Kaplan and Perry shows that character rules do not figure in the propositional, or truth-conditional, contribution the expressions make."[96] (What happened to the complaints about characters being loaded on to the propositional content?)

If the function or character of an expression is part of its semantic content, and in the case of the expression 'I', the function is to refer to the one thinking of it or using it or some other way of explaining it, there should be a way to explain this without the need for real context and hopefully without any assumed objective context. Explanations like 'the speaker of 'I' or the 'the writer of 'I' or 'the thinker of 'I', is explaining the situation the person is in and the context is not objective because the context varies in connection with what kind of situation the person is in. Further, even if we could give an explanation from objective context, the meaning of the expressions is syntactically triggered. The characters should be explainable on

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[96] Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 226.

this basis only, so what I want is an explanation which is not explained as a function from context.

The indexical 'I' is often taken to be an entirely special case, which differs extensively from how all the other indexicals "behave". As we remember, Bach takes the pure indexicals to connect to context in a way which separates them from all the other indexicals. The idea is that they are context-relative, but intention does not have to be a factor for the determination of their referents. I take what Bach says in the following quote to be quite sensible, and I think it can be helpful for how we should understand how the semantic content of indexical and demonstrative expressions should be explained:

> If the suggestion is to be genuinely semantic, the context-relative determination of the referent and the truth-condition cannot involve speaker's intention. If the speaker's intention were a factor, the suggestion would lose its semantic import. Or so I will argue.
>
> The suggestion does apply to the special case of 'I'. One must use 'I' to refer to oneself, and that is a fact about its meaning. Moreover, who is using it is a fact about its context of utterance. And notice that there seems to be no description, not even an indexical one, capable of giving the meaning of 'I'. For example, 'the utterer of these words' will not do as a definition; since I could use that description to refer to the person I am presently quoting. The semantics of the word 'I' seems to come to no more and no less than the fact that to use it literally is to refer to oneself: the meaning of the word type is a rule for using a token of that type to refer-to oneself.[97]

That the meaning of the word type is a rule for using a token of that type to refer to oneself, is perhaps all we need and can be seen as capturing the central idea of both Borg's and Perry's suggestions. I think the point that a singular concept is triggered by the rule or the description is right, and the language of thought hypothesis is needed for this explanation. Now, how this should be explained seems still to be problematic, and Bach's explanation, that it is a fact that to use the indexical 'I' literally is to refer to oneself, can be understood as a rule that belongs to the semantic domain. Bach is critical of using definitions or descriptions for the explanation of indexicals and demonstratives, and I think he is right in being so.

As already noted, I think Carston's presentation of Borg's solution explains what is essential about Borg's view. When it comes to the question of what is constituted as part of decoding, I think some kind of explanation of rules should be taken to be part of the semantic domain. In Carston's review of Borg's theory she says that she pretty much agrees with Borg's

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[97] Bach, Kent. 1987. *Thought and Reference*. New York: Oxford Clarendon Press. Oxford University Press. 176.

solution, but she disagree with the propositionality claim at the level of linguistic meaning. This is in particular a comment on Borg's solution for indexicals:

> I find this a very appealing account since it is not only quite similar to the way in which the semantic representation (or logical form) of indexical sentences is envisaged in the relevance-theoretic framework I work with, but could be seen as a better worked out version of it than we've had up to now. We've talked in terms of indexicals triggering open slots or place-holders which carry certain constraints with them (as given by the lexical character of the indexical) (see Carston 2002, 60). It might well be that Borg's thin singular concepts provide a better, more precise, way of thinking about what the decoding of indexicals yields. […] the more immediate question in the current context is whether this "content" in which the referent remains unidentified really does constitute genuine full-blooded truth-conditional content or is more akin to the schematic truth conditional template that the relevance-theorists and other contextualists maintain is the most that we get for sentence-type meaning.[98]

The incompleteness argument is put in quite modest terms, but in knowing how Carston thinks of propositionality, it is quite understandable that she thinks of Borg's liberal truth-condition as only reaching a sub-propositional level of content.

As we remember, Carston's objection against Bach's treatment of pure indexicals consisted in the claim that a description or rule like "'I' refers to the speaker or writer" cannot be loaded on the linguistic level, because this is part of the pragmatic domain. Let's rehearse the argument:

> […] narrow context as standardly construed does not give the right result for a whole host of utterances involving pure-indexicals. Consider, for example a post-it note, which says *'I*'ll miss *my* office hour *today*', written by a departmental secretary sitting in her office one evening, who then attaches it to an absent professor's office door the next morning; clearly, the correct referent of 'I' and 'my' is not the writer of the note but the professor, and the correct referent of 'today' is not the day on which the note was written but the day on which it appears on the professor's door.[99]

The question is evidently put as 'who is the writer of the 'I'll' in the sentence ''*I*'ll miss *my* office hour *today*''. What Carston seems to argue for as a positive thesis, is that intention and wide context is involved, and as such it seems to work well as an argument against Bach's

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[98]   Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Review Minimal Semantics by Emma Borg.', 7 - 8.

[99]   Carston, Robyn. 2008. 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction.', 11.

claim that 'I' is a pronoun where intention is not involved. But the proposition Carston has in mind, which requires real referents, is a pragmatically derived proposition.

The argument does not work very well as an argument against the point that there are rules or descriptions involved which is part of the semantics for the expressions. But it works as an argument against the assertion that the rules or descriptions are (universally) describable, as for instance in "'I' refers to the speaker". This point is Bach quite aware of, and he agrees with Carston on this. As we remember, he wrote: "And notice that there seems to be no description, not even an indexical one, capable of giving the meaning of 'I'. For example, 'the utterer of these words' will not do as a definition; since I could use that description to refer to the person I am presently quoting."[100] I take this to be enough as a response to Carston's complaint.

What would be lovely is an explanation of how Carston can agree with Borg and not with Bach. Carston: "[…] (d) the somewhat mysterious "{singular, female}" is intended to indicate that the encoded linguistic meaning, or character, of the pronoun "she" does not enter into the logical form as a conceptual constituent but is instead a procedural indication to the pragmatic processor of the sort of entity being referred to; […]"[101] The procedural indication, which is Carston's way of applying the character of the expression, is comparable with how Borg applies it. Carston can be interpreted as not taking it to be a constituent of the semantic or the pragmatic domain. Instead it is a mediating principle which bridges the gap between semantics and pragmatics as a procedural indication. If this is right, it is problematic because elsewhere Carston has taken encoded linguistic meaning to be what she takes to be genuine semantic content for expressions.

What we perhaps should apply in this connection is the old Wittgensteinian idea that we know rules tacitly and that this knowledge is part of the known semantics (at least in some cases when the rules can be taken to be semantic rules). The tacitly known rules in connection with indexicals and demonstratives seem however not necessarily to be very tacit since we obviously can say something about them, but we are still facing a problem every time we try to explicate the rule for the indexical 'I' and other rules for other expressions.

What I will assert, is that there are rules which are explicable in some cases and not so easily explicable in other cases, but that the rules are part of the semantics. This will be the case for the meaning of the comparative adjective 'tall' as well, and we seem to need some

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[100]   Bach, Kent. 1987. *Thought and Reference*, 176.
[101]   Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and Utterances.* 'Pragmatics and Linguistic Underdeterminacy.', 60.

explanation of the word as having something to do with *measurement of length*. This conception will do no harm to Cappelen and Lepore's suggestion that 'tall' means tall *simpliciter*. This is because the suggestion does not take into consideration that something is measured as tall compared to *something else*. So there is no need for a comparison class which measures something in comparison with other things of the same kind (or another way of making a comparison class). So I agree with Cappelen and Lepore when they suggest that this is not needed, and that it is not part of an explanation of the semantics for the expression. The character is perhaps again hard to explain, but the semantic meaning of 'tall' has some explanation of measurement of length as character. In a context or in a sentence, the word can be used to measure something as 'tall' compared to something else, or it can be used to say that something is 'tall' without the comparison to something else.

That Borg is so strict about her account of the indexical 'I', may seem a bit strange when considering her liberal truth-condition. Borg's "liberality" is liberal about how to make the choices of which expressions to be judged as context-sensitive, but also, I think, about what she takes onboard as semantic content and propositional content. In this connection I will say that I largely agree with Borg's treatment of the indexical 'I', but I think the character is part of the proposition, so we disagree on this. This is what I think she is too strict about, and a little strange considering that her extension or place-holder makes room for what arguably is not part of the semantic meaning of for instance 'ready' as part of the propositional content.

Let's look at the above examples again: Carston's explicature is 'Jill is ready [for basket-ball practice].' In contrast to Borg's minimal proposition: 'Jill is ready [for something].'

In Carston's explicature the rest of the speaker meaning is seen as (and is) a pragmatic matter, so I will propose that the generalized content "for something" in Borg's minimal proposition also is a pragmatic matter. Borg has the same kind of explanation in connection with the verb 'kicks':

> So, say we have a transitive verb, the lexical entry for which tells us that it possess 'slots' for two arguments. If only one argument place is filled in the surface form of a particular utterance, the presence of the other argument place is nevertheless guaranteed by the sub-syntactic form. For instance, take the lexical entry for a verb like 'kicks', treated as a transitive verb with one argument place for the agent and one for the object (so that the form of the relation is "x kicks y"). Then, if we get a surface level description of a sentence utilizing this expression, but with only one argument place explicitly filled (e.g. "John kicks"), the syntactic level description of that sentence will

nevertheless supply the second argument place, with an existentially bound variable acting

as a placeholder, yielding "John kicks something" […].[102]

As Borg notes, "treated as a transitive verb", she may also see a way of treating it as an intransitive verb. Since the explanation of 'ready' is transitive all over, the complaint I am about to make can be considered to be about this expression and others as well.

In comparing the notions "ready" and "kicks" it seems intuitive to me that being ready more evidently is to be ready for something or other, compared to the probability of kicking as necessarily indicating that something is kicked. This seems however dependent on how the interpretation of 'something' is applied. If this can be about situations like 'Jill kicks in the air', as well as 'Jill kicks a ball', the generality of 'something' is perhaps the same for the expressions 'ready' and 'kicks'. The one way and down-top direction of fit endorsed by Borg, says that it is the syntactic features of the expression which triggers the extra place-holder or argument place. As an argument against this claim, one may suggest that what Borg really does, is to generalize features belonging to the pragmatic domain in a way which goes from context to linguistic meaning. So the proposed one way direction of fit is not really present. Instead it is a two way direction of fit, which goes from logical form to linguistic meaning, and from a special notion of what is said, to linguistic meaning. In other words, a down-top and a top-down direction of fit.

Borg's suggestion is as we remember meant to function as a formal solution which solves the problem of underdeterminacy. The point that the extensions are triggered by the syntactic features of the expressions, and not by context, is meant to show that there are no unarticulated constituents present in the propositions. The extensions are thereby seen as articulated in the syntax, and as she puts it; are to be found in the sub-syntactic basement.

Borg quotes Recanati and shows that his view is quite close to her own, when only what is syntactically triggered is considered:

In context, it may be that the unarticulated constituent is "required"; but then it is required *in virtue of features of the context,* not in virtue of the linguistic properties of the expression-type. A constituent is mandatory in the relevant sense only if *in every context* such a constituent has to be provided (precisely because the need for completion is not a contextual matter, but a context-independent property of the expression-type). This, then, is the criterion we must use when testing for (genuine) unarticulatedness: Can we imagine a context in which the same words are used normally, and a truth-

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[102]   Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 226.

evaluable statement is made, yet no such constituent is provided? If we can imagine such a context, then the relevant constituent is indeed unarticulated; if we cannot, it is articulated, at some level of linguistic analyses.[103]

The main difference I am interested in between Recanatis's and Borg's view is that Recanati takes the constituent to be a matter of pragmatics, while Borg denies this. Both take the constituents to be needed for completeness, and whether or not this is the case, is another interesting question. The *need* for completeness is by Recanati not seen as a contextual matter, but as he puts it: it is a context-independent property of the expression-type. The judgment is dependent on the idea of objective context, i.e., that in every context a constituent is needed. This is what Borg agrees on, and what she doesn't agree on is the point that pragmatics is involved, and this assertion is based on the view that the constituent is articulated because it is sub-syntactically triggered. Recanati operates with two distinct minimal propositions and pragmatics is involved in both cases:

> Let 'what is said$_{min}$' be the proposition expressed by an utterance when the effects of top-down pragmatic processes such as free enrichment have been discounted, in accordance with Minimalism; and let 'what is said$_{int}$' correspond to the intuitive truth-conditions of the utterance, which may well result from the operation of such processes. Both what is said$_{min}$ and what is said$_{int}$ are influenced by pragmatic factors, but not to the same extent. If I am right what is said$_{int}$ is affected by top-down processes such as free enrichment, whereas the only pragmatic processes that are allowed to affect what is said$_{min}$ are those that are triggered by something in the sentence itself.[104]

I must say that I agree to a larger extent with Recanati than with Borg on this issue, but I will go further and say that even though we can imagine objective context, the content assumed to belong in objective context is contextual information. If it is not contextual information it is semantic content. So on my view, there is no need for extensions for expressions like 'ready' or 'kicks', if it is genuine semantics you want to explain.

As already mentioned, I think the extra place holder 'for something' or 'something' belongs to the pragmatic, contextual and abductive domain. Further, I don't think that it is triggered by something found in a sub-syntactic basement. So I disagree with both Recanati and Borg on this. When this is said, I have no problem with the plausiblilty of there being

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[103] Recanati, Francois. 2002. 'Unarticulated Constituents.', 316 In *Linguistics and Philosophy 25 (3): 299-345*, 316. Quoted in Borg, Emma. 2004. *Minimal Semantics*, 227.

[104] Recanati, Francois. 2002. 'Unarticulated Constituents.', 303.

something which is kicked or something to be ready for in contexts when such expressions are used, so I agree with Recanati that it is influenced by pragmatic factors.

Arguably, if we are to explain a determinate level of semantic content, the meaning of the expressions should only reflect what is constituted in the expressions themselves, and not expand in context and reflect something else the expressions not are about. So I will simply assert that the distinction between transitive verbs and intransitive verbs is irrelevant for a minimal semantic theory. This is because we don't need the extensions or extra place-holders, and because they are not part of the explanation of the expressions semantic meaning.

A semantic minimalist should reject the underdeterminacy thesis when such expressions as 'tall', 'ready' and 'continue' is considered. These are determinable expressions without the need for extensions of the kind posited by Borg.

All expressions have a character and this character in combination with the node or sign in a Mentalese language, is the semantic determinate content of the expressions, or so I will argue.

If we can claim that there is a determinate level of genuine semantic content, the propositions are arguably truth-evaluable. This will be the case for any well-formed declarative sentence.

There is no need for real referents. What we need is semantic content which is determinable. In connection with the indexicals and demonstratives, I believe it to be possible to deliver purely semantic explanations.

If there are any problems with the explanation of such expressions, the problems are not that the expressions lack referents, but rather that the meanings of the expressions are indeterminate, or that the expressions are so hard to explain, that they seem to be indeterminate.

The Mentalese sentences make it possible to distinguish between different concepts for the same words. So for instance in connection with the two meanings of 'old', the suggestion is that there are two different nodes for it, and there are two ways of decoding, which makes it possible to separate between the two meanings. That the meanings of the expressions are syntactically determined by the nodes or the words themselves and by compositionality seems to be the only criteria we need.

4. Conclusions

The introduction had a point claiming that Contextualism and Semantic Minimalism are dealing with different topics, but that this is only partly right. The focus of this thesis have been the area of theorizing where the two rather different positions overlap and are dealing with the same issue, i.e., linguistic or genuine semantic meaning.

As I have tried to show, the differences between the present Contextualists and Semantic Minimalists are perhaps lesser than one might have expected. This is most evident from the fact that they all claim that there is determinable genuine semantic content which can be recovered. The different views on propositionality, as either determined or underdetermined, are rooted in a difference in opinion about what a proposition is. Bach and Carston claim is that even if a sentence has determinable semantic content, the proposition is underdetermined because there is more than semantic content in a proposition (at least in most cases). Cappelen and Lepore agree with this when there are expressions from their list of context sensitive expressions present in sentences. Borg's theory is the Semantic minimalist theory which at least tries to keep pragmatic intrusion at a distance all over. So, I take this theory to be most consistent on the issue of what kind of content which is considered as propositional.

The part of the debate which is about Contextualism and Semantic Minimalism trying to undermine each other in general, is almost not present in this thesis. This area of theorizing is of course also about the same theme, but I think the pre-conditions and methodology for their theorizing is too different for the debate to be interesting.

What I think is right is that the Semantic Minimalists may not have so much to learn from the Contextualists when the pragmatic principles are the issue, because this is outside their field of interest. On the other hand, I think the Contextualists has something to learn from the Semantic Minimalist, because the area of theorizing is an important part of Contextualism. The Semantic Minimalists, and in particular Cappelen and Lepore, do undermine Contextualism in general. This is because they model their theorizing on the view that minimal propositions are the only type of content which is explainable.

On my view there are at least three types of content: minimal propositions, explicatures (a special notion of what is said) and implicatures. In order to account for indexicals and demonstratives with real referents, the type of propositional content needed is an explicature. I take the explicature to include the type of content suggested by for instance Perry which includes referential content. This is his notion of what is said or the official content. I think

the level of an explicature at least sometimes can be seen as determinable and propositional. This is not the case with an implicature, but it is nevertheless valuable as a conception for the explanation of what is meant by the use of sentences and ostensive behavior. Such theorizing is on my view phenomenological in various degrees, dependent on the situation, epistemic access and other factors.

On this background, I have to say that I don't think Speech-act Pluralism is the only way to deal with contextual propositions, but it is a theory which shows how content shifts between contexts. Context-shifting arguments are used by both the Semantic Minimalists and the Contextualists. The Contextualists uses the arguments to show that context is influential on semantic content, and the Semantic Minimalist uses the arguments to undermine Contextualism. Speech-act Pluralism, is then arguably already present in most or all Contextualist theories.

Carston's aim in her article 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction' is to show that all the other ways of explaining genuine semantic content are blurring the distinction between semantic and pragmatic meaning, and I think this is true. This is as Carston suggests, more evident when it comes to the Semantic Minimalists theories and it is not so much the case when it comes to Bach's view. This is first and foremost because it is more important for the Semantic Minimalist to account for minimal propositions, than it is to account for a purely semantic meaning. So even though the pragmatic principles for the most part are used by the Contextualists, there is some pragmatics within the Semantic Minimalist approaches. The different Semantic Minimalist approaches apply context and pragmatics quite differently. Borg's liberal truth-condition allows in connection with some expressions for content which I think belong on the pragmatic side of the distinction between semantics and pragmatics. Cappelen and Lepore are managing without context and pragmatic principles, as long as the expressions on the list of context-sensitive expressions are not present in sentences. When such expressions appear in sentences, context must be applied for the determination of the semantic values of the expressions. How this is done seems according to their theory, at least partly to be an open question. In some cases at least, both intention and wide-context are taken to be involved.

This is something Borg has a strong case against. Her aim is to solve the problems within the framework of her liberal truth-condition, and what she takes to be contained in the encapsulated modular domain of thought. So on this approach, wide-context and intention is kept outside of what she takes to be the semantic domain of content. Borg's liberal truth-condition is arguably more consistent about what kind of content it operates over, - roughly

only distinguishes between sentences with or without expressions in need of special treatment, in the form of adding extra place-holders or extensions.

On this background, Carston is quite right in her claim that the Semantic Minimalist takes more content on to their propositions than what is contained in what she takes to be semantic content on the level of logical-form and sub-propositional content. So there is a way to see a part of her position as more minimal compared to Semantic Minimalism.

It is still a bit unclear to me what Carston thinks is genuine semantics. The article 'Linguistic Communication and the Semantic-Pragmatics Distinction' shows how she disagrees with the other views, but it lacks a positive explanation of what she takes to be genuine semantic content (or logical-form). What is evident is that she takes on board a concept of character as a mediating principle between logical-form and syntax and pragmatics, which is taken to be neither semantics nor pragmatics. So she is making room for what could have blurred her distinction and instead only thinks of it as a 'procedural indication'. That a character of an expression can be seen as a mere procedural indication and as not part of the semantic content is, I think, wrong. Still, I have no problem with distinguishing between *the concepts* 'procedural indication' and 'character'. These conceptions are explaining different things, but I think it is right that both procedural indication and characters belongs on the semantic side of the semantic/pragmatics distinction. Arguably, if it is not semantics, we don't have meanings which are decoded. Decoded pieces of evidence are part of what Carston takes to be semantics, but in the case of indexicals and other complex expressions, we seem to be left with undecoded nodes.

I agree with Borg that there is a way to explain semantic processing in an assumed encapsulated sub-module in a larger module. The idea is that what is taken to be semantic meaning including characters is mapping on what is taken to be semantic processing and the result is the interpreted semantic content of sentences. The semantics is static and the processing is not, so we need a semantics for the aim of explaining what we take to be within the encapsulated modular domain of thought.

What I will argue is that such a level of semantic content is explainable, but it is perhaps at least partly an artificial construct.

Borg's truth-condition, which only takes the necessity of content being truth-evaluable is the favorable option. This, is I think, is quite similar to how Cappelen and Lepore apply it, - at least when there are no expressions from their list of context-sensitive expressions present in sentences. When there for instance are indexicals or demonstratves in sentences, they see the need for real referents in actual contexts, so the truth-condition changes character in

connection with what kind of content it operates over. Whenever there is a sentence not containing expressions on the list of context sensitive expressions, the content needs only to be truth-evaluable. Whenever there is a sentence containing context sensitive expressions, the content must be supplied with contextual information in such a way that the content must be evaluable as true or false. On this background I don't think Cappelen and Lepore's theory is minimal enough, so I am in agreement with Carston and others about this.

I take any expression to have a stable or more than one stable meaning. The problem is only how this is explainable. As Kaplan and Perry suggests, the character of an expression is taken to be a function from context, but also that it is syntactically triggered. I take what the character reflex to the meaning of an expression, so I think it is entirely a semantic matter what the meaning of an expression is. Word meanings do of course change in connection with different intentions, context and background information, but this is nothing the Semantic Minimalist needs to worry about. This requires however, that the focus is pointed at semantics and not pragmatics.

Arguably, if one thinks that the truth-condition is needed on the level of communicated content, there should be no reason to think that the truth-condition is not needed at a semantic level. So I don't think the Contextualists necessarily loose anything if they accept a Semantic Minimalist approach on semantic meaning.

Carston seems to think that the truth-condition applied by the Semantic Minimalists has an interpretative strength which is stronger than it actually is. This is because she thinks that sentences actually must be evaluable as true or false, and that it is not only a device for judging content as truth-evaluable or not. Her interpretation is however right in connection with the truth-conditionality posited by Cappelen and Lepore, when there are context dependent expressions present in sentences.

All parties agree to some extent that there is a determinable level of genuine semantic content. As already pointed out, the content in a determinable sentence is truth-evaluable. The same content is of course underdetermined, if you think there only is propositional content on the levels of explicatures and implicatures. As Bach and Carston put it, linguistic or semantic content is seen as determinable and underdetermined. It is not necessary to see it like that.

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