

# Chapter One

## Overview

Try this on some pure, uncontaminated, students: List a few incontrovertibly context sensitive expressions like 'I', 'you', 'now' and 'that'. Then ask them to pick other expressions just *like these*. They are very good at it. They consistently choose expressions like 'yesterday', 'those', 'we' and they never choose expressions like 'penguin', 'red', 'know' or 'dance'. And if you ask them directly whether they think that 'penguin' is like the first person personal pronoun 'I', they think you must be joking; when they understand that you're serious, they are invariably answer 'No'. Of course, they might be wrong. It might be that the more refined intuitions of seasoned linguists and semanticists reveal that our natural inclinations in these respects are mistaken. But we don't think so. We think these strong and clear initial classifications are correct and that semanticists who ignore them are led astray.

On the first page of Kaplan's classic *Demonstratives*, there is a list of expressions he calls indexicals. 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 (1989, p. 489). Words and aspects of words that indicate tense also have their reference so determined. And there are also the contextuials, 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., Valle'e (2003), Nunberg (1992), Condoravdi and Gawron (1995), Partee (1989)).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To be honest, we have our doubts about so-called contextuials; and it's probably no accident that they did not occur on Kaplan's (1989) original list. We will let you decide for yourself after you have read our book.

In what follows, we shall refer to this set of expressions both as the *Basic Set of Context Sensitive Expressions* (the Basic Set, for short) and as the set of *genuinely context sensitive expressions*.

Why choose those expressions? Why didn't he put, say, 'red,' 'know,' 'duck', 'every', 'good' or 'happy' in this set? Here's an interesting fact about Kaplan's classic paper: He doesn't give a reason. He never sees the need to elaborate on, or defend, his choice of examples. In the end, he develops a sophisticated theory of the semantics of demonstratives and other context sensitive expressions. But his account presupposes that the domain he is theorizing about is obvious and already identified.

One central goal in this book is to defend the uncontaminated intuitions that underlie Kaplan's methodology from a wide range of popular objections. In so doing, we also defend a certain view of the role of context sensitivity in the semantics for natural language. It's simultaneously a defense of a certain conception of semantics and of a conception of semantic content.

This first chapter is intended just as an overview of what's to come. We don't really engage in any serious argumentation here; we just quickly present the views we advertised in our title, i.e., Semantic Minimalism and Speech Act Pluralism; we describe our central opponents (Radical and Moderate Contextualists), the kind of arguments used by our adversaries; and at the end of the chapter, we outline the book's argumentative strategy.

### **Introduction to Semantic Minimalism**

At this introductory stage, we'll just list three particularly important features of Semantic Minimalism, all of which will be elaborated on, and defended, later in the book (see in particular Chapter 10):

- a) The most salient feature of Semantic Minimalism is that it recognizes few context sensitive expressions, and hence, acknowledges a very limited effect of the context of utterance on the semantic content of an utterance. The only context sensitive expressions are the very obvious ones listed above plus or minus a bit. These are not only obvious, but they pass certain tests for context sensitivity that we spell out in Chapter 7.

- b) It follows that all semantic context sensitivity is grammatically (i.e., syntactically or morphemically) triggered.
- c) Beyond fixing the semantic value of these obviously context sensitive expressions, the context of utterance has no effect on the proposition semantically expressed. In this sense, the semantic content of a sentence S is the proposition that all utterances of S express (when we adjust for or keep stable) the semantic values of the obvious context sensitive expressions in S).

Some illustrations: If we keep tense fixed,<sup>2</sup> any utterance of (1)

(1) Rudolf is a reindeer.

is true just in case Rudolf is a reindeer, and expresses the proposition *that Rudolf is a reindeer*.<sup>3</sup>

Any utterance of (2)

(2) Rudolf has a red nose.

is true just in case Rudolf has a red nose, and expresses the proposition *that Rudolf has a red nose*.

Any utterance of (3)

(3) Rudolf is happy.

is true just in case Rudolf is happy, and expresses the proposition *that Rudolf is happy*.

Any utterance of (4)

(4) Rudolf has had breakfast.

is true just in case Rudolf has had breakfast, and expresses the proposition *that Rudolf has had breakfast*.

Any utterance of (5)

(5) Rudolf doesn't know that penguins eat fish

is true just in case Rudolf doesn't know that penguins eat fish and expresses the proposition *that Rudolf doesn't know that penguins eat fish*.

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<sup>2</sup> As we will do throughout this book.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

If you find it surprising that someone would write a book defending conclusions so obvious, we have a great deal of sympathy. The problem is that a wide range of our contemporary colleagues rejects these views (see below). (It's probably no exaggeration to say that our views about (1)-(5) are currently held only by a small minority of philosophers and linguists, at least among those who have thought about the surrounding issues.) This book is our attempt to rebut these influential objections. A great deal of that defense focuses on the relationship between speech act content and semantic content, and in that respect Speech Act Pluralism plays a central role.

### **Introduction to Speech Act Pluralism**

Here's one way to summarize Speech Act Pluralism (for fuller presentation see Chapter 13):

No one thing is said (or asserted, or claimed or...) by any utterance: rather, indefinitely many propositions are said, asserted, claimed, stated. What is said (asserted, claimed, etc.) depends on a wide range of facts other than the proposition semantically expressed. It depends on a potentially indefinite number of features of the context of utterance and of the context of those who report on (or think about) what was said by the utterance.

It follows from Speech Act Pluralism that an utterance can assert propositions that are not even logical implications of the proposition semantically expressed. Nothing even prevents an utterance from asserting (saying, claiming, etc.) propositions incompatible with the proposition semantically expressed by that utterance. From this, it further follows that if you want to exploit intuitions about speech act content to fix semantic content, then you have to be extremely careful in so doing. It can be done, and we'll show you how, but it's a subtle and easily corrupted process.

These points are connected to our defense of Semantic Minimalism because one underlying assumption in many anti-minimalist arguments (in particular, what we shall call the Context Shifting Arguments) is the idea that semantic content has to be closely connected to speech act content. If Speech Act Pluralism is correct, then there is no such tight connection, and so, this requirement is revealed to be a philosophical prejudice. Another way to see the

connection is this: If there really were (or had to be) a close connection between speech act content and semantic content, then all the data we think support Speech Act Pluralism would also serve to undermine Semantic Minimalism. That's how some of the most clearheaded contextualists argue. Our strategy is to endorse the data they invoke, but undermine their assumption that this data has semantic implications.

At this initial stage it's worth highlighting one more aspect of Speech Act Pluralism that both has wide ranging implications and sets our view apart from (all?) other contemporary accounts of context sensitivity. We don't think that everything a speaker says by uttering a sentence in a context *C* is determined *by features of C*. The speaker's intentions, facts about the audience, the place and time of utterance, background knowledge that's salient in *C*, the previous conversations salient in *C*, etc., are insufficient to fix what the speaker said. According to Speech Act Pluralism, a theory of speech act content has to take into account the context of those who say or think about what the speaker said, i.e., the context of those who report what's said by the utterance can, in part, determine what was said by that utterance. (As far as we can tell, we are on our own in defending this view; we published a paper defending it in 1997 and don't know of anyone else who has endorsed it yet.)

### **Opponents of Semantic Minimalism**

As we have already mentioned, a wide range of semantic theorists can advocate Semantic Minimalism. Indeed, those who practice semantics accepting these kinds of constraints tend to fight fierce internal battles. This book is not a contribution to such rivalries. It's about a range of arguments (below we call them Context Shifting Arguments and Incompleteness Arguments), which, if sound, would undermine the possibility of semantic theorizing. Not all of those who employ these arguments realize the logical implications of doing so. Indeed, one of the points we'll emphasize below is that most proponents of these arguments operate under the illusion they can be a part of 'business as usual' semantics. They don't recognize the dangers lurking right around the corner as soon as they start down this path.

The two central opponents of Semantic Minimalism we'll be concerned with we will call Radical and Moderate Contextualists. What they have in common is that their positions are based on similar kinds of arguments. We now outline these positions, and then, the kinds of arguments used by their proponents.

### **Central Opponent #1: Radical Contextualism (RC)**

We want to engage two traditions according to which Semantic Minimalism is fundamentally mistaken. One of these goes back to the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*, on through Austin, and is today represented by a wide range of philosophers, some of whom call themselves *Relevance Theorists*,<sup>4</sup> some neo-Wittgensteinians, some Sellarsians. We call them all *Radical Contextualists*. These theorists all hold some version or other of the view that *every* single expression is context sensitive,<sup>5</sup> and that the peculiarities of members of the Basic Set are of no deep theoretical significance. Slightly more precisely, they adhere to some version of (RC1)-(RC3):

(RC1) No English sentence S ever semantically expresses a proposition. Any semantic value that Semantic Minimalists assign to S can be no more than a *propositional fragment (or radical)*, where the hallmark of a propositional fragment (or radical) is that it does not determine a set of truth conditions, and hence, cannot take a truth-value.

(RC2) Context sensitivity is ubiquitous in this sense: No expansion of what we are calling the Basic Set of context sensitive expressions can salvage Semantic Minimalism, i.e., however the Basic Set is expanded, the output will never be more than a propositional fragment; something, therefore, not even truth evaluable.

(RC3) Only an *utterance* can semantically express a complete proposition, have a truth condition, and so, take a truth-value.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf., e.g., Sperber and Wilson (1986); Carston (1988, 2002), Recanati (1989, 1993, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Different ways of characterizing their views: Every sentence is context sensitive, if the only context sensitivity you take into account is that due to the expressions in the Basic Set, you won't get a proposition or anything truth-evaluable.

Though they are not alone, John Searle and Charles Travis – without acknowledging each other often (if at all) – are and have been for over thirty years the chief spokespersons for RC.

...the notion of literal meaning of a sentence only has application relative to a set of background assumptions, and furthermore, these background assumptions are not and could not all be realized in the semantic structure of the sentence in the way that presuppositions and indexically dependent elements of the sentence's truth conditions are realized in the semantic structure of the sentence (Searle 1978, p. 210).

What words mean plays a role in fixing when they would be true; but not an exhaustive one. Meaning leaves room for variation in truth conditions from one speaking to another (Travis 1996, p. 451).

...in general the meaning of a sentence only has application (it only, for example, determines a set of truth conditions) against a background of assumptions and practices that are not representable as a part of meaning (Travis 1980, p. 221).

Both of these philosophers allude to Wittgenstein and Austin as their chief influences (Travis, 1987, p. 187; 1996, p. 451; Searle, 1980, p. 229).

There is a sense in which we have a great deal of respect for RC. RC, we'll argue, is the logical consequence of denying Semantic Minimalism. As far as we can tell, philosophers and linguists who try to modify Semantic Minimalism only along the edges, by adding a bit of context sensitivity here and there, fail to see that by so doing they lead themselves directly in the clutches of RC.

### **Central Opponent #2: Moderate Contextualism (MC)**

The other opponent of Semantic Minimalism we are calling Moderate Contextualists. Moderate Contextualists try to steer a middle course between Semantic Minimalism and Radical Contextualism by minimally expanding the Basic Set of context sensitive expressions. Slightly more precisely, Moderate Contextualists endorse some version of (MC1)-(MC3):

(MC1) The expressions in the Basic Set do not exhaust all the sources of semantic context sensitivity.

(MC2) Many sentences that Semantic Minimalism assigns truth conditions to, and treats as semantically expressing a proposition, fail to have truth conditions or to semantically express a

proposition; they express only *fragmentary propositions*. Such linguistic expressions are described as providing ‘incomplete logical forms,’ ‘semantic skeletons,’ ‘semantic scaffolding,’ ‘semantic templates,’ ‘propositional schemas’ (see, e.g., Carston 2002, Sperber and Wilson 1986, Recanati 1993, 2004, Bach 1994, Taylor 2001). All of these locutions entail that the expression is not fully propositional; it is incomplete *qua* semantic entity; it is not truth-evaluable.

(MC3) For the cases in question, *only* their utterances semantically express a proposition, and have (interpretive) truth conditions, and so, take a truth value.

Moderate Contextualists don’t typically see themselves as belonging to a tradition or a group and they wouldn’t classify themselves as Moderate Contextualists. There are two kinds of Moderate Contextualists: *Misguided Semanticists* and *Semantic Opportunists*.

The Misguided Semanticists come to MC by noticing some data or evidence they think has to be accounted for by a semantic theory (we will describe this kind of data below). They don’t see how to account for it except by expanding the Basic Set.

The Semantic Opportunists are sneakier. They are philosophers who come to semantics *with* a non-semantic agenda. They might be concerned with defending a view in epistemology, ethics, philosophical logic, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, etc. They have no interest in, or understanding of, the overall semantic project. They postulate that various expressions are context sensitive because doing so lends support to a view, usually radical, they endorse in their respective area.

Paradigm examples are ethicists who claim that ethical terms are context sensitive; epistemologists that certain epistemic terms are context sensitive; metaphysicians who claims that vague terms are context sensitive; philosophical logicians who claim that quantifiers or certain semantic terms are context sensitive, and so on.

For our purposes, what motivates Moderate Contextualists doesn't really matter. What does matter is *how* MC is implemented. Here's what we have in mind: Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that Moderate Contextualists hold that some expression *e*, not in the Basic Set, is context sensitive. Remember, they do not think, as Radical Contextualists do, that semantics is impossible. They therefore face a range of additional questions about how a semantic theory should accommodate this additional context sensitivity.

If you have evidence that *e* is context sensitive and you want that incorporated into a semantic theory, primarily three basic strategies are available to you: the Surprise Indexical Strategy, the Hidden Indexical Strategy, and the Unarticulated Constituent Strategy. Here, in very brief outline, is each option:

#### *The Surprise Indexical Strategy*

The Surprise Indexical Strategy is the most straightforward of the three. If you opine that an expression *e* is context sensitive, then add *e* to the Basic Set, thereby treating it as an indexical, in the exact same way that 'I' and 'that' are indexicals. So, some epistemologists, e.g., Lewis, DeRose or Cohen, think that knowledge attributions exhibit context sensitivity. This leads them to treat the verb 'to know' as context sensitive. One way to incorporate this contextualist view into semantics is to treat 'know' as an indexical expression in a straightforward manner: The semantic value of 'know' changes from one context of utterance to another. As a result, what's required for satisfying, say, 'Lewis knows that penguins eat fish' varies from one context of utterance to another, contingent, say, on rising or falling epistemic standards. Commitment to epistemological contextualism in this manner thereby commits one to extending the Basic Set to include 'know' in addition to 'I', 'here', etc.

#### *The Hidden Indexical Strategy*

The Hidden Indexical Strategy postulates a phonetically unrealized component (a covert indexical) at some level of linguistic representation, say, in Logical Form. Rather than treating a surface (overt) expression *e* itself as an indexical (as the Surprise Indexical Strategy does), 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. For example, most philosophers and linguists think that sentences with comparative adjectives are context sensitive. They hold that when someone utters, for example, 'Bill is short,' there's an unpronounced indexical associated with 'short' that makes reference to a comparison class. For any utterance of this sentence, you don't hear 'for an F' or anything like it; rather, what you hear is just 'short.' But in the underlying logical/syntactic form of the sentence, there's alleged to be a (covert) lexical item that refers in context to a comparison class. Again, there are many ways to achieve this end formally, but the basic idea is to take the logical form of 'Bill is short' to be something along the lines of 'Bill is short for an F', where 'F' can vary from one context of utterance to another.

#### *The Unarticulated Constituent Strategy*

The Unarticulated Constituent Strategy finds context sensitivity in certain sentences, but does not recommend treating any pronounced or unpronounced component of that sentence as the source of this context sensitivity. According to this view, a propositional component gets added without being triggered by a syntactic component (pronounced or unpronounced) in the uttered sentence.<sup>6</sup> For example, consider the sentence 'It's raining.' Perry (1986) claims that unless the proposition semantically expressed by an utterance of this sentence included a location, it would not be 'complete,' and so, would not be truth evaluable. However, there's no expression in the logical/syntactic form of this sentence that makes reference to a location. Instead, the location is somehow or other added to the proposition semantically expressed by an

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<sup>6</sup> 'An indexical is like a free variable needing to be assigned a value.... [T]he conceptual gaps in utterances of semantically underdeterminate sentences do not correspond to anything in the sentences themselves... Not being sentence constituents, they enter in not at the linguistic level but at the conceptual level...' (Bach 1994, p. 133).

utterance of the sentence without its being required by any lexical item in the sentence.

### **Methodological Observation: MC and RC are Supported by only two Kinds of Arguments**

Here's a methodological observation that underlies the entire rest of this book:

*Methodological Observation:* There are two basic kinds of argument adduced in favor of all versions of RC and MC: Context Shifting Arguments and Incompleteness Arguments.

These two kinds of argument are the central motivation behind all departures from Semantic Minimalism.

This observation about the literature on (semantic) context sensitivity is meant to be substantial and controversial. If we are right, then a wide range of apparently diverse philosophical positions rely solely upon two kinds of argument. Chapter 2 is devoted to presenting textual evidence in support of this claim. Here we give a rather brief introduction to what we mean by *Context Shifting Arguments (CSA)* and *Incompleteness Arguments*.

*Context Shifting Arguments (and a preview of how they are misused)*

Someone in the business of investigating context sensitivity *contemplates* and *imagines* language as used in contexts *other* than the one she happens to find herself in. She is, after all, interested in the way in which content is influenced by variation in the context of utterance; in particular, she tries to elicit intuitions about whether *what is said*, or *expressed*, or *the truth conditions of, an utterance* varies in some systematic way with contexts of utterance. To do so, she imagines a range of utterances,  $u_1$ - $u_n$ , of a sentence  $S$ . The resulting data consists of her reports of, and the audience's own, intuitions about the content of  $u_1$ - $u_n$ . Arguments that appeal to this kind of evidence we call *Context Shifting Arguments*.

Here's a preview of what we'll argue later: The literature on context sensitivity is plagued by a blatant misuse of this kind of argument. The mistake is not simply of the kind Grice pointed out, i.e., that theorists have to distinguish between intuitions about what utterances *say* and what they *implicate*. The way

we see it, that mistake is superficial and relatively easy to avoid. Rather, the fundamental mistake in the entire contextualist literature is this: To properly engage in this sort of thought experiment a theorist has to locate herself *in a particular context*. To not make the context of the thought experiment an essential variable of the experiment is like trying to measure the speed of objects around you while ignoring your own speed. You can't do it. This mistake, we argue, is exactly the one that both Radical and Moderate Contextualists are guilty of.

If our metaphorical presentation of the problem seems obscure, bear with us until Chapters 7-9 where full details and clarification will be provided.

*Incompleteness Arguments (and a preview of how they are misused)*

The second kind of argument in the literature on context sensitivity we call Incompleteness Arguments. These also require an appeal to intuition, but an appeal to a kind of metaphysical intuition rather than to a linguistic one. The goal of an Incompleteness Argument is to establish that the proposition Semantic Minimalists claim is semantically expressed by some sentence S is no more than a *propositional fragment*.

Incompleteness Arguments are always simple (so simple that they might not deserve the moniker 'argument'). Typically, all they amount to is a claim like the following:

Consider the alleged proposition that P that some sentence S semantically expresses. Intuitively, the world can't just be P *simpliciter*. The world is neither P nor not P. There's no such thing as P's being the case *simpliciter*. And, so, there is no such proposition.

So, for example, consider 'Al is ready.' Some authors contend that it is *just plain obvious* that there isn't any such thing as Al's being ready *simpliciter*. Likewise, Perry (1986) and Crimmins (1992) argue, for example, that with a range of weather or temporal reports (containing pleonastic 'it's'), as in, 'It's raining' and 'It is 3pm,' there's no such thing as raining *simpliciter* or as being 3pm *simpliciter*.

Again, a preview of our central contentions about Incompleteness Arguments: First, Moderate and Radical Contextualists who use such arguments are typically deeply confused about the relationship between semantics and

metaphysics. These arguments are *not* about language; they are about various non-linguistic aspects of the world. Even if they were good arguments, nothing would follow about the sentences in question, more generally, no semantic conclusions follow from these arguments even if they were sound. Second, considered, as they ought to be, as metaphysical arguments, they are unsound.

### **Comparison to Other Ways of Structuring the Debate**

The way we have presented the debates about context sensitivity (as a debate between Semantic Minimalism, MC and RC) is controversial. It is, for example, not how all of the participants of these debates think of them. More specifically:

- Moderate and Radical Contextualists do not see themselves as aligned with each other, differing only with respect to where they are located on a continuum (the former wanting more of something that the latter wants not as much of). The Radical Contextualists see the Moderate Contextualists as fierce opponents, and *vice versa*.
- The three different versions of MC (Surprise Indexicalists, Hidden Indexicalists and proponents of Unarticulated Constituents) do not think of each other as holding different versions of the same view. Advocates of each of these views spend a great deal of time arguing against the other two.
- Within each version of MC, there is disagreement about which expressions should be added to the Basic Set.
- Even those proponents of MC that agree on some version of MC and about which expressions should be added to the Basic Set disagree about how the versions should be implemented. For example, Moderate Contextualists who are Hidden Indexicalists about quantified noun phrases disagree about each of the following:
  - The nature of the semantic value of the hidden indexical (a class or a property or something else).
  - The larger semantic frameworks that this view should be embedded in.

- Various issues concerning how semantic values of the hidden indexicals are fixed ('wide' or 'narrow' context).
- Where to place the hidden indexical: attach it to the quantifier, to the noun phrase, as separate lexical entry or as 'co-habiting' with some other expression.
- There's a lively debate among Radical Contextualists, and many of those we so classify do not think of themselves as holding versions of the same view. They spend huge chunks of time arguing with each other about the differences between 'enrichment,' 'saturation,' 'free enrichment,' 'concept construction,' and a wide range of other issues.

Not only does our structuring of the debate lump together philosophers and linguists who would rather not be lumped together, but it might also (in part, as a result of this (apparently) crude classification) seem to miss what some think of as *the deep* and *underlying* issues. In particular, we have heard the following suggestions for what these debates are *really* about:

1. *Deep down* it is all about *compositionality*. Roughly, the central issue in all these debates is whether it is possible to develop a compositional semantics for natural language. The interesting question is not about context sensitivity as such, but about how it affects compositionality.
2. *Deep down* it is all about whether we need to take *speaker's intentions* into account to fix semantic values. In a terminology often used, it is all about whether semantics needs to take into account 'wide' context in addition to 'narrow' context (of the kind Kaplan seemed to focus on in his paper 'Demonstratives').

In sum, we have encountered various charges to the effect that we have failed to see what these debates are *really all about deep down* and that our structure leaves out important distinctions.

That, unsurprisingly, is not now how we see things. We do, of course, agree that there are many interesting, deep and subtle issues about context sensitivity not addressed in this book. In no way do we mean our discussion to be exhaustive. But to leave it at that would be to understate our case. We

organize the various positions as we do because we think so doing elicits (renders explicit) the fundamental assumptions shared by positions that conceive of themselves as fundamentally opposed. Four substantive and controversial views underlie our organization of the debate:

- I. All opponents of Semantic Minimalism (be they some version of MC or some version of RC) share certain important assumptions.
- II. These assumptions seem so obvious to opponents of Semantic Minimalism that they are almost never made explicit and when they are made explicit they are never convincingly defended.
- III. We argue that all of these underlying, shared assumptions should be rejected.
- IV. If these shared assumptions are rejected, then:
  - Most (maybe all) of the arguments against Semantic Minimalism collapse.
  - The distinction between various versions of MC and RC will seem unimportant (since these questions don't even arise unless one makes certain false assumptions).
  - The label 'the Deep/Fundamental Issues' should be awarded to a range of issues independent of any debates internal to MC or RC.

One underlying assumption (the simplest version of which we call the Mistaken Assumption (MA, for short) is spelled out in Chapter 4. In brief, it is the view that the semantic content of a sentence S is constrained in certain ways (spelled out in Chapter 4) by what speakers can use S to say (assert, claim, state, etc.) and that intuitions about what speakers say (assert, claim, state, etc.) with a sentence S provide evidence for the semantic content of S. This can also be described as the mistake of conflating *semantic content* and *speech-act content*. (This, we further argue in Chapter 4, is what underlies the constant misuse of Context Shifting Arguments in the philosophy of language, and elsewhere.)

### **Outline of Argumentative Strategy**

1. In Chapter 2, we document that in a wide range of cases, indeed, in all of the cases we are aware of, arguments to the effect that an

expression *e* exhibits semantic context sensitivity are based either on some version of a Context Shifting Argument or on some version of an Incompleteness Argument. (Other arguments occasionally presented as arguments for context sensitivity are shown to be parasitic on these two kinds of argument.)

2. In Chapters 3-6, we show that any attempt to exploit these two kinds of argument to expand the Basic Set of context sensitive expressions to one any larger is susceptible to an instability charge. The charge takes this form: We consider a range of data, *D*, presented in favor of expanding the Basic Set of context sensitive expressions, and show that if this evidence supports an expansion of the Basic Set, then *all* expressions are context sensitive, i.e., RC is true. In other words, we will establish that any argument for MC inevitably slips into an argument for RC.

3. In Chapters 7-9, we show that RC is, first, empirically flawed, and worse, ultimately, incoherent. Since MC collapses into RC, it follows that MC also is both empirically flawed and ultimately incoherent.

4. In Chapters 10-12, we present and defend Semantic Minimalism.

5. In Chapter 13, we present and defend Speech Act Pluralism.