

Chapter Thirteen

Speech Act Pluralism (SPAP)

So far we have:

- (a) outlined what we think are the sources of semantic context sensitivity;
- (b) refuted the alternative accounts – MC and RC;
- (c) told you what we can (admittedly, not much) about the nature of propositions semantically expressed; and
- (d) responded to objections to Semantic Minimalism, in particular, to the view that we express minimal propositions.

Throughout, we have said that what an utterance says, states, claims, etc., differs from the proposition it semantically expresses. In this chapter we elaborate on that claim.

We call the view we defend *Speech Act Pluralism* (SPAP, for short). SPAP is not really a theory; it's collection of observations, one of which is that there can be no *systematic theory* of speech act content. Since we're inclined to insist that a theory has to be systematic, we refuse to call SPAP a theory.

Our presentation and defense of SPAP has four parts:

- (1) First, we register some methodological observations: since SPAP is a collection of observations about the nature of speech acts, we start by outlining, in general terms, how we think speech acts should be investigated.
- (2) We present what we call *The Central Observation*. This provides the basis for our non-theory theory of speech act content.
- (3) We then present observations about speech act content. These eight observations constitute SPAP.
- (4) We distinguish SPAP from four related views (some of which we ourselves once held) and explain why we don't endorse these views.

Methodology: Nothing is Hidden

We are naïve about speech act content; we take our non-theoretic beliefs and intuitions about what speaker's say, assert, claim, etc., at face value (unless

given overwhelming reason to do otherwise). We're naïve for a reason: Speech act content isn't deeply hidden somewhere, where only a theorist can excavate it. That would undermine its purpose. What speaker's say, claim, assert, etc., is what we hear when we listen to them. It is what we respond to, question, laugh at, take seriously, ignore, agree or disagree with. It is not concealed; it is not something requiring an investigation to uncover.¹

Intuitions and non-theoretic assumptions about speech act content can, of course, be overridden should important theoretical considerations lead us to reject specific intuitions or general considerations. We are, however, unaware of any such intuitions or considerations relevant to the cases we discuss here.

How, then, do we identify the clear cases we take at face value? Well, we just sit here at the café on 5th Street and think about what people say, and what people say about what people say. Then we check with others sitting at adjoining tables to ensure our reactions aren't idiosyncratic. And finally we check whether there are any overwhelming reasons for rejecting these observations.

The Central Observation

Consider this verbatim transcript of an utterance, the so-called 'Smoking Gun' utterance ('...' indicates pauses):

When you get in these people, when you get these people in, say: 'Look, the problem is that this will open the whole, the whole Bay of Pigs thing, and the president just feels that,' ah, without going into the details...don't, don't lie to them to the extent to say there is no involvement, but just say this is sort of a comedy of errors, bizarre, without getting into it, 'the president believes that it is going to open the whole Bay of Pigs thing up again, and ah because these people are plugging for, for keeps and that they should call the FBI in and say that we wish for the country, don't go any further into this case'. Period. That's the way to put it, do it straight.

Let's reflect on what is said by this utterance. We want a naïve description of what it says, the sort of description you would give if weren't encountering it with a philosophical axe to grind. Notice first the following:

¹ All of this is not to deny that confusion, obscurity, misunderstanding, and related phenomena are not ubiquitous. They are. But those cases illustrate our point even more clearly.

- (a) This quote is typical in that almost none of it includes a fully grammatical sentence. Indeed, very few well-formed English sentences ever get uttered.
- (b) As a result, to ascertain what's said, you first have to reconstruct utterances to a point where they express thoughts. There are many ways to achieve this end, as illustrated by this quote. No one way is uniquely correct.
- (c) To report on this utterance (and see how others would report on it), it obviously helps to know some basic facts about it, such *who the speaker and audience are and where the utterance took place*. It helps, for example, to know that the speaker was President Richard Milhouse Nixon, the 37th President of the United States, that the audience was R.H. Haldeman (Nixon's Chief of Staff), that the locution 'these people' refers to one or all of CIA Director Richard Helms and his deputy, General Vernon Walters (a longtime associate of the President's), and FBI Acting Director Pat Gray, that the conversation takes place in Oval Office June 23 1972 from 10:04-11:39 A.M. (It's from a transcript of the so-called Smoking Gun Tape).²

Observation: Such factors influence how we describe what Nixon said, asserted, claimed, ordered, etc. Our hypothesis, formulated as SPAP₁ below, is that there's no *single* way to put all of this together in order to come up with a unique description of what Nixon said. There are many different ways to do it, no one of which is more correct than all others.

So, what did Nixon say? Well, the current standard reports on this tape go something like this (found in any history book, innumerable articles, etc):

Nixon told Haldeman to tell the CIA to tell the FBI not to pursue their investigation into the Watergate Burglary.

Nixon is clearly heard telling his chief of staff, Bob Haldeman, to implement John Dean's idea that the CIA be used to pressure the FBI to limit the Watergate investigation.

Nixon wanted the CIA Director Richard Helms to thwart the FBI's probe of the Watergate Burglary by saying it was a CIA operation.

² It's not clear whether 'those people' refers to [CIA Director] Richard Helms, [Deputy CIA Director] Vernon Walters, [FBI Director] Pat Gray, or to all of them. Reports actually vary, and if you read the transcript carefully, no unique answer emerges and there's no reason to think there would be one even if you able to go back in time and look into Nixon's head.

Nixon told Haldeman to tell Helms that Nixon wanted him to stop the Watergate Investigation.

Nixon told Haldeman to break the law.

These reports all attribute different sayings to the utterance; and they constitute but just a modest start. Nixon's utterance clearly said lots of other things, e.g.:

He told Haldeman to tell someone at the CIA to tell the FBI that there was a connection between the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Watergate Burglary.

He said that Haldeman should give the FBI few details about the connection between the Bay of Pigs and the Watergate Burglary.

And so on and so on.

What's crucial to notice here (and, in general) is that our intuitions about what speakers say with their utterances are influenced by, at least, the following sorts of considerations:

(1) *Facts about the Speaker's Intentions and Beliefs*

These reports make assumptions about what Nixon believes, for example, that he thinks 'those people' hold certain positions and that they have certain kinds of power; he has certain beliefs about the CIA and the FBI, the legal system, etc.

(2) *Facts about the Conversational Context of this Particular Utterance*

The reports of what Nixon said are influenced by information we have about whom Nixon and Haldeman have been talking about, the topic of their conversation, etc.

(3) *Other Facts about the World*

What's illegal (i.e., that it would be a crime for the President of the United States to ask the CIA to ask the FBI to stop an investigation), that getting the CIA to talk to the FBI in certain ways constitutes undue influence, etc.

(4) *Logical Relations*

The most obvious examples are conjuncts of conjunctions or trivial logical implications. For example, if Nixon said that he wanted the CIA Director Richard Helms to thwart the FBI's probe of the Watergate Burglary by saying it was a CIA operation, then it follows he also said that he wanted the CIA Director Richard

Helms to thwart the FBI's probe of the Watergate Burglary – where the latter follows logically/semantically from the former.

(5) In light of (1)-(4), we can easily substitute co-extensive predicates and referring expressions.

Take, e.g., Haldeman. Since he was Nixon's Chief of Staff, one true report would be: 'Nixon told his Chief of Staff to break the law.

(6) There's no reason to think (1)-(5) exhaust all the factors that influence our intuitions about what speakers say.

The general point illustrated by (1)-(6) is that our intuitions about what speakers say depend on a wide range of considerations not all of which is encoded solely in the meanings of the words uttered. It is only when these considerations are combined with the meanings of the words used that it makes sense for us to ask what an individual said with his utterance.

Thought Experiment

To see the effect of a wide range of background beliefs on our intuitions about what Nixon said, imagine encountering his utterance with these peculiar beliefs:

That Nixon is a French construction worker, an illegal immigrant working as a carpenter on a housing project in Washington DC (but knowing enough about Nixon, e.g., being able to recognize him, etc., to refer to him); that Haldeman is a clerk in a video store; and, that Gray and Helms run a Laundromat together. That Nixon is obsessed with US foreign politics and that he's trying to influence what the guy in the video store says to the guys who run the laundromat. That in his own confused way, he's trying to defend the president.

There's nothing in the words of Nixon's utterance (their meaning) that prevents these beliefs from being true. Now imagine hearing Nixon's Smoking Gun utterance with these beliefs as your background.

When you get in Gray and Helms [the guys the audience believes runs the Laundromat], when you get these people in, say: 'Look, the problem is that this will open the whole, the whole Bay of Pigs thing, and the president just feels that,' ah, without going into the details...don't, don't lie to them to the extent to say there is no involvement, but just say this is sort of a comedy of errors, bizarre, without getting into it, 'the president believes that it is going to open the whole Bay of Pigs thing up again, and ah because these people are plugging for, for keeps and that they should

call the FBI in and say that we wish for the country, don't go any further into this case'. Period. That's the way to put it, do it straight.

If you plug these beliefs into the equation, aren't you going to miss a lot of what was said? You're clearly not going to have the intuition that:

Nixon told Haldeman to tell the CIA to tell the FBI to not pursue their investigation into the Watergate Burglary.

Nixon is clearly heard telling his chief of staff, Bob Haldeman, to implement John Dean's idea that the CIA be used to pressure the FBI to limit the Watergate Investigation.

Wouldn't you miss a lot of what was said?

Additional Illustrations

The above example is *typical*. Take any speech act, and you can use it to illustrate the same point. We love these cases, but we worry that if we do too much of it we'll lose you, but the temptation is too great for us not to provide just a few additional illustrations.

'Liddy an Asshole?'

This next case also is from the 'Smoking Gun' transcript of the conversation between Nixon and Haldeman. Nixon is trying to find out who arranged the payment to those who broke into the hotel room in the Watergate Hotel. The conversation goes as follows:

President Nixon: He [Hunt] didn't know how it was going to be handled though, with Dahlberg and the Texans and so forth? Well who is the asshole that did? Is it Liddy? Is that the fellow? He must be a little nuts.

Haldeman: He is.

President Nixon: I mean, he isn't well screwed on is he? Isn't that the problem?

Here are some questions for you to think about: Does Nixon say:

Liddy is clinically insane?

Liddy is an asshole?

Liddy has a low IQ?

Liddy handled the situation in an irresponsible way?

Liddy mishandled the situation because he's stupid?

He (Nixon) has no confidence in Liddy?

Does he blame Liddy?

Does he ask Haldeman whether Liddy is an asshole?

'O.J. Dressing'

Here is the kind of crucial information we were constantly being assailed with during O.J.'s infamous trial. O.J. uttered:

At 11:05 p.m. I put on a white shirt, a blue Yojhi Yamamoto suit, dark socks and my brown Bruno Magli shoes.

It is easy to imagine these as reports of what O.J. said:

He said that he dressed up in some really fancy clothes late in the evening.

He said that he changed his clothes right after 11 p.m. (said in a context where it is shared knowledge that he was wearing a different set of clothes before 11 p.m.).

He said that he stopped exposing himself to the neighbors right after 11 p.m. (said in a context where it is common knowledge that he was standing naked in front of the his window before 11 p.m.).

He said that he gave the sign at 11:05 (said in a context where it is common knowledge that putting on the brown Bruno Magli shoes is a sign of some significance or other).

'The Moronic Clown'

Suppose A is a philosopher we tend to describe as *a moronic clown* even though we both know A is neither really a clown nor really moronic. It's just how we tend affectionately to describe A. Suppose Cappelen hears B utter 'A just wrote a book.' Cappelen could naturally report B's utterance to Lepore with:

B said that the moronic clown just wrote a book.

What's distinctive about this example is that the subject term in the indirect report not only does not refer to A, it doesn't even describe A, and the speaker and the audience know this is so.³

Two Objections

Here are a couple of objections we have encountered to the Central Observation.⁴ Did Nixon *really* say what we attributed to him? Did he, *strictly speaking*, say it? Did he *literally* say it? Let's see: We know this particular

³ For further discussion and many more examples see Cappelen and Lepore 1997; 1998.

⁴ See also Richard 1998, and Reimer 1998. Both raise objections to our view. We respond in Cappelen and Lepore 1998.

utterance was the cornerstone of the impeachment case against Nixon. It was, in effect, one of the central causes of Nixon's resignation. Imagine the absurdity of a defense of Nixon that he didn't, strictly speaking, ask the CIA to block the FBI investigation. Or, that he didn't *really* ask it. Or, that he didn't *literally* order it. Any such defense would have been just plain silly.

As we mentioned earlier, we are terribly naïve in that we take the practice of talking about, and thinking about, what people say at face value. We think the best way to find out about what speakers say is to listen to them, and then think about what they have said, and ask other people what they have said. Recanati objects to our modest procedure, and suggests an alternative:

...I strongly disagree with Cappelen and Lepore's surprising statement:

We ourselves don't see how to elicit intuitions about what-is-said by an utterance of a sentence without appealing to intuitions about the accuracy of indirect reports of the form 'He said that...' or 'What he said is that...' or even 'What was said is that...' (Cappelen and Lepore, 'On an alleged connection between indirect speech and the theory of meaning', *Mind and Language* 12: 278-296, 1997, p.280)

I find this statement surprising, because there obviously *is* another way of eliciting truth-conditional intuitions. One has simply to provide subjects with scenarios describing situations, or, even better, with — possibly animated — pictures of situations, and to ask them to evaluate the target utterance as true or false with respect to the situations in question. ... this procedure presupposes that normal interpreters have intuitions concerning the truth-conditional content of utterances. On my view, those intuitions correspond to a certain 'level' in the comprehension process — a level that a proper theory of language understanding must capture. That is the level of 'what is said' (as opposed to, e.g., what is implied) (Recanati, 2004, pp. 92-3.)

Let's see. Recanati's idea is that there's a level of content, a level he calls 'what is said,' that this level corresponds to a level 'in the comprehension' process, and that's revealed, not by intuitions about what a speaker said, not by asking people what they think was said, but rather by looking at animated pictures. (We're not sure exactly what 'animated' comes to here, but we'll let that pass.)

Try to apply Recanati's proposal to Nixon's Smoking Gun utterance. The suggestion, if we understand it correctly, is that we should look at a little picture, like this:

Drawing of Haldeman talking to Helms, etc, Little arrows with bubble out of Haldeman's mouth saying to Helms: 'Don't Investigate Watergate'. JEAN – *anything you can do to make this better please do! Ernie*

Or, even better, we should watch a movie, maybe Oliver Stone's *Nixon* with Anthony Hopkins playing the role of Nixon in which there is a scene very close to this one.

We have three brief comments on/objections to Recanati's alternative methodology:

(1) Our main objection, and it has nothing in particular to do with the specific features of the Smoking Gun utterance, is this: We're not sure what we're supposed to compare to the picture/animation because we are not sure what Recanati is referring to by 'utterance.' If the utterance is just the sounds made, then we don't know how to evaluate it with respect to a picture. If by 'utterance' he doesn't have in mind the sounds uttered, then he must be referring to a proposition expressed. If this is what he has in mind, then we need to choose *which* expressed proposition, i.e., we have to decide what is said by the utterance before we can do the comparison. Hence, the comparison can't be what gets us what is said. No matter what you do you must rely on assumptions about what was said, asserted, etc., in order to evaluate 'the utterance' with respect to the animated picture.

(2) We're not even sure how to understand Recanati's animated pictures. We take it to be plain obvious that pictures don't have intrinsic representative properties. There's nothing in a particular drawing that requires that drawing to be a representation of Nixon. So, the comparison presupposes extensive interpretation of the picture by the audience. In effect, the audience has to decide the content on the picture before a comparison. Again, this shows that the idea that a naïve, non-theoretic intuition can be elicited in this way is deeply confused.

(3) Here's a point that has more specifically to do with the Smoking Gun utterance: The utterance is a piece of advice. Nixon is telling Haldeman what he *should* do; he's not describing what Haldeman did or will do. But how do you 'animate' an order, or a suggestion, or a recommendation? More generally, how do you animate modality?

There are other interesting issues we could pursue here, but limitations of space and time forces us to push forward.

The Central Observation and the sort of data we have been discussing lead us to the first thesis of Radical Speech-Act Pluralism, which we call SPAP₁.

SPAP₁: Pluralism

No one thing is said (or asserted, or claimed or...) by any utterance: rather, indefinitely many propositions are said, asserted, claimed, stated, etc.

Corollary

When you report what is said, many things are said by your report, i.e., indirect reports are, of course, no exception to SPAP₁. In other words, Pluralism about speech act content applies just as much to sentences that report something about what speakers' utterances say as it does to the reported speakers' utterances. As a result: Not only is there *no* one correct answer to what was said by an utterance, there's *no* one correct answer to what was said by a report of what was said by an utterance either. There's no meta-language in which the speech act content is fixed and determinate. Pluralism applies all the way through.

Comparison to Related Views We don't Endorse

It is important to distinguish Pluralism from two other views, neither of which we mean to endorse by virtue of endorsing Pluralism (nor do we mean to be rejecting either of these views as well; we don't have to take any stand whatsoever on these views here).

1. Pluralism ≠ Semantic Context Sensitivity of 'Said that'

Pluralism is not the view that the English locution 'said that' is semantically context sensitive. That would involve the claim that 'said that' passes our three tests for context sensitivity (cf., Chapter 7). That's not the claim we are making here (though we're not rejecting it⁵ either). We're simply making the claim that any one utterance asserts many distinct propositions.

2. Pluralism ≠ Relativization to Context

⁵ Remember, we're not really doing semantics in this book, so we'll not make any substantial claims about the semantics for specific expressions. We intend to remain neutral here.

Nor are we rejecting nor endorsing the view that at least one of the propositions said (or asserted, or claimed, or...) by an utterance of 'A said that p' includes a reference to the context of utterance of that indirect report, i.e., it is consistent with Pluralism that there is some sort of relativization to the context of utterance of the indirect report at the level of what is said by a report of what is said. In that sense, what a speaker said might depend on the context of utterance of the report of what that speaker said.

Here's what we have in mind: Return to our old friend A, whom, recall, we regrettably tend to call *a moronic clown*; we both know A isn't really a clown and we're exaggerating wildly when we describe him as a moron. Nonetheless, if we hear B utter 'A just wrote a book,' Cappelen might report that utterance to Lepore by saying 'B said that the moronic clown just wrote not a book.' It is compatible with SPAP that one of the things Cappelen said by reporting what B said about A is that *B said that the guy we (in such and such contexts) tend to describe as a moronic clown wrote a book.*

SPAP₂: What's Said and What's Semantically Expressed

One of the many propositions asserted by an utterance is the semantic content of that utterance (the proposition semantically expressed). We argued for this in Chapter 7-10.

SPAP₃: The No-Theory Theory of Speech Act Content

We have been unable to figure out how to devise an algorithm that takes the proposition semantically expressed and delivers all the propositions said, asserted, etc. There might not be *any* systematic theory from which one can derive all of which is said by an utterance. In this respect, what was said by u might be similar to what u can be *used for*, or what's *interesting* about u, or what u is *similar* to, or what is strange about u. In all of these cases, there is no one unique answer. There are many things u is similar to; there are many things that are interesting about it u; and so on.

We don't have a proof that there is no such theory, so we're open minded about the prospect that someone might devise one, but we strongly suspect that no such theory is ever forthcoming.

SPAP₄: Contextual Two-Dimensionalism (Against Original-Utterance Centricism)

Our theory is opposed to theories that are speaker (or audience) centricists, and more generally, to Original Utterance Centricism. These are theories according to which the speech act content is fixed by facts about the speaker, his audience, and their common context. On our view, that's definitely *not* the case.

We think facts not known or available to the speaker (or his audience) can make a difference. Assumptions made by people who have nothing at all to do with the original context of utterance can fix what the speaker said. To take a simple illustration, suppose you uttered (1) several weeks ago:

(1) The table is covered with books.

Suppose that whatever table is under discussion currently sits comfortably in your father's office (though it did not sit there when you uttered (1)).

Haven't you said with your utterance of (1) that the table in your father's office is covered with books? Note, that no other account we are aware of can factor being in your father's office into what was said by your utterance of (1), since you yourself were ignorant or misinformed about what would or wouldn't be in your father's office at the time of your utterance – maybe the table got moved there right after you spoke.

Suppose Frank utters (1) in a context where only one table is present. Later, after another table is brought in, a question arises about what Frank said with his earlier utterance of (1). Suppose that on the sole table present when Frank spoke now sits a vase, and on the added table sits nothing. Anyone who reports Frank's utterance of (1) in this context as having said that the table is covered with books might grossly misrepresent what he said, but anyone who reports him as having said that the table with a vase on it is covered with books has gotten him just right. If you disagree, how would you in the context described usefully and correctly answer the question what did Frank say? Should you conclude you cannot correctly report his utterance?

For additional examples, consider the Moronic Clown utterance again. The speaker doesn't believe that A is a moronic clown; indeed, he isn't. Even if you go back to the Smoking Gun utterance, it's clear that Nixon asked Haldeman to put undue pressure on the CIA *even if Nixon didn't think he was*.

SPAP₅: Speakers Don't Know Have Privileged Access to the Content of Their Speech Acts

It is a corollary of SPAP₄ that speakers don't have privileged access to all the propositions they assert or say in uttering a sentence. In the above example, the speaker didn't know that she said that the table with a vase on it is covered with books. Such examples need not involve co-extensive referring expressions. If someone points at our friend, the moronic clown (who is neither a clown nor moronic) and utters 'That man is shady', she has said *that that moronic clown is shady*. If Justin bought the picture, and if Justine is French, and Jack utters the sentence 'Justine bought the picture' there are contexts in which one would say something true by saying *that Jack said that a French woman bought the picture*, even though Jack doesn't know that Justine is French.

The semantic content of an uttered sentence provides an additional, but more complex, illustration of the same point. In Chapter 11 we argued that all a semanticist has to say about the semantic content of an utterance of 'A is red' is that it expresses the proposition *that A is red*, and is true just in case A is red. We semanticists are not in the business of telling you what it is to be red. It is possible that at the end of the day, color-metaphysicians will conclude that *being red is to be red under conditions C*, and this might come as a bit of a surprise, both to the semanticist and to ordinary speakers. It might, for example, turn out that it is much easier to satisfy this condition than one would pre-theoretically expect (and harder not to satisfy it). A speaker who is not a color-metaphysician might utter the sentence 'A is red' primarily intending to communicate that A is red on the outside when washed. In so doing she

need not be aware of the fact that she also expressed a content that's metaphysically equivalent to the claim that A is red under conditions C (of course, she does know that she expressed the proposition *that A is red*, what she doesn't know is that this is metaphysically equivalent to the proposition that *A is red under conditions C*).

SPAP₆: Speakers Need Not Believe Everything They Sincerely Say

A corollary of SPAP₄ and SPAP₅ is that speakers need not believe everything they say even when their saying it is sincere. At least there's no reason for saying the person who uttered 'Justine bought the picture' and thereby said that a French woman bought the picture, believes that a French woman bought the picture. There's no reason to think that the person who uttered 'That man is shady' and thereby said that the moronic clown is shady believes that the moronic clown is shady. There's no reason to think that someone who utters 'The table is covered in books' and thereby said that the table in your father's office is covered in books, believes that the table in your fathers office is covered in books. We don't have to think that when Nixon uttered the sentences heard on the Smoking Gun tape, and thereby asked Haldeman to break the law, he believed he was asking Haldeman to break the law (he might have, we don't know, but he might not have).

SPAP₇: Expressed Belief Need Not be Equivalent to Semantic Content

A further corollary is that the principle Hawthorne calls The True Belief Principle is false: (Hawthorne 2003, p. 99)

The True Belief Principle (TBP): If a speaker sincerely accepts an utterance *u* and *u* has semantic value *p*, then the belief manifested by his sincerely accepting *u* is true iff *p* is true.

TBP is mistaken for at least two reasons.

First, as formulated, it presupposes that there's a *single* belief manifested by a speaker's sincere acceptance of an utterance *u*. That's not so. Just as an utterance expresses a wide range of distinct contents, the speaker's sincere acceptance of *u* might manifest a range of distinct beliefs.

Second, it is not the case that *all* of the propositions a speaker might manifest a belief in when sincerely accepting an utterance, *u*, are true just in case the semantic content of *u* is true. SPAP provides an indefinite range of counter examples here, but to make it vivid we'll stick with two:

Imagine a context in which several children are arranged by their nationality. Suppose this is some kind of competition in which nationalities are of utmost significance. All the participants are wrapped in their national flags. They are there as representatives of their nation, not as individuals. Suppose, in this context, Cappelen points at a child wrapped in a French flag and utters, 'He's suspicious.' In so doing he has exhibited a belief in the proposition *that a French child is suspicious* and the proposition *that the French participant is suspicious*. That proposition is not equivalent to the semantic content of the uttered sentence.

Or, consider an utterance of 'The moronic clown is shady'. The speaker in uttering this sentence might manifest a belief in the proposition *that Professor Smyth is shady*, but that proposition is not true just in case the semantic content of *u* is true.

More generally: We have no idea why anyone should accept TBP. If it is some kind of *a priori* philosophical principle that's supposed to be self-evident, then all we can say is that it's not self-evident for us. Indeed, we think it's pretty obviously false if considered as an empirical observation about the relationship between utterances, beliefs and semantic content.

**SPAP₈: Against Grice: For Those Engaged in 'Semantic vs. Pragmatics'
Talk: Sayings and Implicatures Are Both on the Pragmatic Side of the Divide**

Finally, we want to reemphasize a point made in earlier chapters. The very same contextual features that determine the implicatures of an utterance influence what speakers say and assert by that utterance. There is no fundamental theoretical divide between sayings and implicatures. They are both on the side of speech act content. Whatever mechanisms might generate implicatures are also all used to generate what speakers say.

Pluralism: Summary

SPAP₁–SPAP₈ and their corollaries are some of the most salient implications of The Central Observation with which we began this chapter. They are by no means the only relevant such observations, and we think there's rich material here for understanding subtle distinctions between various kinds of speech acts and about the relationship between reports of what people say and the context of those reports. We'll not engage in a detailed investigation here, since the overall goals of this book are simply to defend Semantic Minimalism and to show how, in broad outlines, it fits hand in glove with Speech Act Pluralism.

Objection #1: How is Communication Non-Miraculous?

At several crucial points in this book, we have argued that contextualism makes it impossible to understand the varieties of ways in which speakers share content across diverse contexts. Test #1 in Chapter 7 appeals to facts about how speakers report on what others say by using disquotational indirect reports. Chapter 8 accuses contextualists of not being in a position to account for how speakers could communicate across diverse context. The second and third inconsistency charge in Chapter 9 rely on assumptions about what radical contextualists have to say about what speakers say in various thought experiments. In Chapter 10 we claim that two central virtues of Semantic Minimalism are related to its ability to avoid what we called 'contextual isolationism.'

In the light of this last chapter, the following might be a natural question to us: Isn't communication across contexts miraculous on our view too? On our account, a bunch of propositions gets expressed, some of which the speaker doesn't even know about. Communication concerns that which is said, that which the speaker understands. Doesn't this view undermined the possibility of communication just as much as Radical Contextualism?

Our response is fourfold:

1. How does our theory account for the ease with which we disquotationally report each other across contexts? I.e., how do we explain that any utterance of, for example, (1)

(1) Peter's duck is brown.

can be reported disquotationally, i.e., by

(2) The speaker said that Peter's duck is brown.

even when the report takes place in a context radically different from the context of the reported utterance of (1)? On our view, this is possible because every utterance of 'Peter's duck is brown' semantically expresses the proposition *that Peter's duck is brown*. This minimal semantic content is one of the many propositions *said* by *any* utterance of (1). Hence, an utterance of (2) will succeed as an indirect report, even in those cases where the context of utterance for (2) is radically different from the context of the reported utterance of (1). Of course, in most cases, this minimal content is not the only, or even the most important, proposition the speaker intended to communicate to her audience. She typically would intend to communicate something more specific about the relationship between Peter and the duck (ownership, possession, proximity, or what have you), something more specific about the brownness (located on the feathers, the beak, or what have you), and no doubt much more. But despite all this, the speaker can't help but to say *that Peter's duck is brown* by uttering (1). That's why we can indirectly report each other disquotationally across contexts.

2. How is it that we can understand what was said by an utterance of (1) when that utterance took place in a context radically different from ours (and we know little or nothing about that context)? The answer should be obvious by now: We can always understand part of what the speaker said, *viz.*, that *Peter's duck is brown*. That part is easy to understand and it doesn't require knowing much about the original context of utterance. You might even have mistaken beliefs about that context and still understand that the speaker said that *Peter's duck is brown*.

3. This third aspect of our account of inter-contextual communication is a bit tricky to understand (in part, because it is based on such an unusual view, i.e., SPAP₄): Remember two features of our view:

- (i) First, any utterance, *u*, succeeds in saying indefinitely many propositions (see SPAP₁)
- (ii) Second, our view is not original-utterance-centrist (see SPAP₄), i.e. we think what was said by an utterance, *u*, of (1) in a context *C*, can be determined by features of the context in which we describe what was said by *u*. So when we say what was said by *u*, we can draw on features of the context we are in now, say, the 5stC. These features of 5stC can be constitutive of what was said by *u*.

Given (i) and (ii) it isn't surprising that we can have easy access to *some* of what was said by *u*. In some cases, we might even have access to parts of what the speaker said that the speaker herself doesn't have access to (see SPAP₄ and SPAP₅₋₇). You might think that is a strange kind of communication, but no so if to communicate is to understand each other and if understanding someone involves understanding what she said and if we are right about SPAP₄, i.e., if we are right in our rejection of Original Utterance-Centrism.

4. An adequate account of inter-contextual communication should not only explain how it is possible for speakers in diverse contexts to understand each other. It should also explain why it sometimes seems so mind-bogglingly hard to understand what other people have said. Someone with a strong sense of failing to understand what someone else said would not, typically, be particularly relieved by being told that she can fall back on an inter-contextual disquotational indirect report. A theory that makes communicative interaction seem ridiculously easy is no better than one that makes communication impossible.

We don't think successful communication is easy. On our view, any utterance succeeds in expressing an indefinite number of propositions. One of these, the proposition semantically expressed, is easy to grasp. Others are extremely hard to access and there is no reason to think that any *one* person can ever grasp all that was said by an utterance, not even the speaker. This is how

Semantic Minimalism combined with Speech Act Pluralism can account both for the sense in which communication is easy and the sense in which it is impossibly difficult.⁶

Objection #2: How to Talk About and Test for Semantic Content

In this book, we have talked repeatedly about the semantic content of utterances (the proposition semantically expressed). We have presented tests for how to find the semantic content of utterances. We have done that by uttering sentences, by making claims, and assertions. But in so doing we assert an indefinite number of propositions, only one of which is the proposition semantically expressed. Doesn't that undermine our tests? Doesn't it make the very project of this book impossible?

Again, the answer should be fairly obvious. It takes stage setting to get readers to 'see' or 'notice' the semantic content of an utterance. In most regular-life contexts, the semantic content is not what is focused upon. We're interested in all the extra stuff; that's typically where the juice is. However, in certain peculiar contexts, such as articles on semantics, the goal is to draw the audience's attention to the semantic content of an utterance, and the audience recognizes that this is the goal. With a little stage setting from us, and some receptiveness from the audience, we almost always succeed.

When you read our tests in Chapter 7, for example, you obviously have to focus on what's communicated; we are after all communicating with you, the reader, so the tests are tests that go *via* the communicated content. But that's not a problem if we ensure that the context is such that it is the semantic content that's being focused on. Think of the tests like this: They are ways to get the audience to notice the semantic features of (utterances of) sentences. They create contexts in which our attention is drawn to features of the semantic content.

⁶ In 'Shared Content' (2004 ms), we pursue the connection between these ideas and various non-linguistic practices.

Can we be sure that we will succeed? Can we be sure we have succeeded in constructing the right kind of context for this? No. But we are fairly confident.

Conclusion: The Diagram of Communication

We noticed that others authors who write books on the topics of this book tend to employ many interesting and complicated diagrams. They have elaborate pictures of how varies levels of content are inter-related, what kinds of content can be expressed by an utterance, and so on and so on. We've always been impressed by (and to be honest a little bit jealous of) these diagrams, and so it seems appropriate to end our book with what we call *The Diagram of Communication*:

Insert diagram here