

The Myth of Unarticulated Constituents

Herman Cappelen and Ernie Lepore
University of Oslo and Rutgers University

This paper evaluates arguments presented by John Perry (and Ken Taylor) in favor of the presence of an unarticulated constituent in the proposition expressed by utterance of, for example, (1):¹

1. It's raining (at *t*).

We contend that these arguments are, at best, inconclusive. That's the critical part of our paper. On the positive side, we argue that (1) has as its semantic content the proposition *that it is raining (at t)* and that this is a *location-neutral* proposition. According to the view we propose, an audience typically looks for a location when they hear utterances of (1) because their interests in rain are *location-focused*: it is the location of rain that determines whether we get wet, carrots grow, and roads become slippery. These are, however, contingent facts about rain, wetness, people, carrots, and roads – they are not built into the semantics for the verb 'rain'.

We're interested the semantics and pragmatics of (1) not because of an interest in weather reports in general or rain reports in particular. We find Perry's examples and discussion of them important as case studies in the relationships among three central components of all communicative interactions:

- The meaning of words (e.g. 'rain') and sentences they occur in (e.g. (1)).
- Facts about the subject matter of our sentences not “encoded” in the meaning of our words (in this case, facts about rain and our interest in the location of rain).
- Our intuitions about what is asserted, claimed, and said by utterances of sentences.

We'll argue that (1), provides a particularly clear illustration of how non-semantic (and more generally, non-linguistic) facts about the subject matter of our sentences determine communicated content. It is difficult, in such cases, to distinguish those components of communicated content determined by the meanings of words used and those not so determined. The various devices we use to tweak them apart in this case provide a model for how it can be done in other cases.

The paper is structured as follows: We present a brief overview of Perry's (and other's) view of unarticulated constituents. We present one central argument for the thesis. We rebut that argument. We consider a second argument in favor of unarticulated constituents, and rebut it. We conclude with some general methodological remarks.

Unarticulated Constituents in Perry, Crimmins, Bach, and Austin

About (1) Perry famously says:

In order to assign a truth-value to my son's statement [of (1)] ...I needed a place. But no component of his statement stood for a place...Palo Alto is a constituent of the content of my son's remark, which no component of his statement designated; it is an unarticulated constituent. (Perry, 1986, p. 206)

[the location] is a constituent, *because, since rain occurs at a time in a place, there is no truth-evaluable proposition unless a place is supplied. It is unarticulated, because there is no morpheme that designates that place* (Perry 1998, p. 9, our emphasis; cf. also Perry 2001, p. 45)

...the task of identifying the unarticulated constituents of the proposition expressed by an utterance remains after all of the

relevant semantic rules have been understood and applied. (Perry 1998, p. 10, our emphasis)

According to these passages, if we fail to add a location to what's expressed by an utterance of (1) we lack something truth evaluable, i.e. we don't have a proposition. In what follows one of our central concerns is with *the justification* for this claim. Perry provides a justification in the first passage (found in Perry's classic 1986 and in the two more recent pieces (Perry 1998, 2001)): His reason for opining that no proposition gets expressed without an added location is *that rain occurs at a time in a place*. What exactly does he mean?

Here's our interpretation: it's a necessary truth about rain that it happens in a place at a time. Such necessary truths must, in some way, be encoded in the propositions expressed by utterances of (1). We call this *Perry's Argument for Non-Exist*, and it will be further discussed below.

This isn't the only significant feature of this famous passage. Another important claim is that no expression in (1) refers to a location. This part of the claim is emphasized by Crimmins:

[where]...an unarticulated constituent of the content of a statement is an item that is used by the semantics as a building block of the statement's content but is such that there is no (overt) expression in the sentence that supplies the object as its content. In a semantics that takes propositions to be structures containing objects and properties an unarticulated constituent is simply a propositional constituent that is not explicitly mentioned--it is not the content of any expression in the sentence. (Crimmins 1992, p.16)

Crimmins' parenthetical remark, "(overt)", introduces a hedge where there's none in Perry. It seems to open the possibility that "hidden" in the logical/syntactic

form of (1) there is an expression that refers to a location. This is not Perry's position. He says:

...there is no basic problem with a statement being about unarticulated constituents. In particular, we do not need to first find an expression, hidden in the “deep structure” or somewhere else and then do the semantics of the statement augmented by the hidden expression. Things are intelligible just as they appear on the surface, and the explanation we might ordinarily give in nonphilosophical moments, that we simply understand what the statement is about, is essentially correct. (Perry 1986, p. 211)

We interpret him to mean that there's no lexical element that takes locations as its semantic value, not just no “overt” lexical element. We should emphasize that even though our arguments below are directed against Perry's view so interpreted, it works just as effectively against the view that there is a “hidden” variable in logical form. (We in particular have in mind the view suggested by Stanley (2000).).

Before evaluating this view, we want to mention how it can be generalized beyond weather reports. Perry and Crimmins mention a number of such examples, including but not limited to:

It's 2 pm.

She's moving.

The central examples in Bach' (1994) makes essentially the same point as Perry's but applied to a different set of examples. Bach says:

For example, sentences [2] and [3],

[2] Steel isn't strong enough.

[3] Willie almost robbed a bank.

though syntactically well-formed, are semantically or conceptually incomplete, in the sense that something must be added for the

sentence to express a complete and determinate proposition (something capable of being true or false)...In these cases the conventional meaning of the sentence determines not a full proposition but merely a propositional radical; a complete proposition would be expressed, a truth condition determined, only if the sentence were elaborated somehow.

Perry, Crimmins and Bach each appeals to some rather restricted sub-set of sentences to make their points. Various neo-Wittgensteineans, ordinary language philosophers, and other Radical Contextualists claim that *all* sentences suffer from the sort of incompleteness that Perry attributes to (1) and that Bach attributes to (2) and (3). This passage from Austin is representative (for more quotes along these lines see Cappelen/Lepore (2004) Chapter 2):

If you just take a bunch of sentences...impeccably formulated in some language or other, there can be no question of sorting them out into those that are true and those that are false; for...the question of truth and falsehood does not turn only on what a sentence *is*, nor yet on what it *means*, but on, speaking very broadly, the circumstances in which it is uttered. Sentences are not *as such* either true or false (Austin 1962, pp. 110-11).

Our focus here will be on Perry's famous example (1). It is not entirely clear that our diagnosis of his example generalizes in any obvious way to these other cases. It might be that the specific diagnosis will vary from case to case--we won't take a stand on that issue here. We do, however, hold that the general strategies that can be used with respect to (1) can be, at least, useful heuristics in a wider range of cases. We return to the question of how to draw general lessons from this particular case at the very end of the paper.

Two Central Claims: Non-Express and Non-Exist

Perry is committed to something like Non-Express:

Non-Express: Let u be an utterance of (1) in context C . The semantic values of the lexical components of u (in C) and their compositional structure do not suffice to express a proposition.

Non-Express is closely related to Non-Exist. To articulate Non-Exist, we'll use the following convention: Let an italicized that-clause denote *whatever* you get by *not* including the alleged unarticulated constituents--so *that it's raining (at t)* denotes whatever you get without adding the location:

Non-Exist: There is no proposition for *that it's raining (at t)* to denote.

Another way to put Non-Exist is as the claim that there's no location-neutral proposition of the form *that it's raining (at t)*. This is a claim about which propositions *exist*, rather than about which proposition is or is not *expressed* by a certain English sentence. The two claims are intimately connected, as we've seen, since the argument for Non-Express is based on Non-Exist. We turn now to an evaluation of that argument.

Evaluation of Perry's argument for Non-Exist

If Non-Exist is true, then Non-Express seems immensely plausible. If there's nothing propositional expressed by (1) before a location is added, then, if a proposition is expressed, then that proposition must contain something like an unarticulated constituent, if we assume, as Perry does, that there's no hidden lexical item in its syntactic/logical form. Assuming utterances of (1) do express propositions, we have what appears to be a good argument for unarticulated constituents.

For this argument to work, we need an argument for Non-Exist (one that doesn't rely on Non-Express). Absent such an argument, the central argument for Non-Express is without a foundation. We have already encountered an argument for Non-Exist in the quotes where Perry introduces the notion of an unarticulated constituent. He repeats this argument in several presentations. Above we called it

Perry's Argument, and it's a very simple argument: rain happens in a location, and so nothing propositional, no complete proposition, can be expressed by (1) unless a location is added.

We don't think this a strong argument. Our objection to it is not original. We take it from Taylor (2001). Taylor does not present it as an objection to Perry, but in fact it is. He points out something exceedingly obvious once you think about it, namely, that almost any kind of activity as a matter of necessity occurs in a location. This is true about, for example, boxing, kissing, spinning, breaking and dancing. Taylor focuses on the latter example and notes that it is impossible for (4) to be true unless Nina danced *somewhere* last night.

4. Nina danced last night.

But it would be crazy to infer, on that basis alone, that the location of dancing is an unarticulated constituent of the proposition expressed by an utterance of (4).

Or consider (5):

5. John drove to Cleveland last night.

The driving must have happened at a certain speed, but Perry would not, and should not, conclude from this that the speed is a component of the proposition expressed by (5).

The general point should be obvious: just because a certain kind of activity necessarily happens in a location (or at a velocity), it doesn't follow that that location (or velocity) is part of the propositions expressed by utterances of (4) and (5). More generally, there are plenty of facts that might be metaphysically required for a certain sentence to be true, but we don't want to build unarticulated constituents corresponding to all of these facts into the proposition we express by uttering such sentences. This would, potentially, create an indefinite number of unarticulated constituents in all the propositions we express with our utterances. So, what we've called Perry's Argument for the location being an unarticulated constituent of (1) fails.

Of course, you might think you don't need a real argument for Non-Exist; you might think it's just *obvious* that (1) doesn't express a proposition. We don't share that sense of obviousness. It seems to us to be the result of limited imagination or theoretical prejudice--and in the next three sections we try to convince you of this by “softening” your philosophical imagination through thinking about 'rain' when it occurs as a mass term and in theoretical interpretations of questions such as ‘Why does it rain?’

Two Exercises

Remember, all we are trying to achieve now is to show that the non-localized proposition exists. How does one go about showing that a proposition exists? We're not sure we have a complete and general answer to this question (does anyone?), but the following seems to *suffice*: If you (or anyone) can think that p, then p exists (and is a proposition). So, if we can get you to think the location-neutral proposition, then we have established that it exists.

At this point we are not trying to show that (1) expresses the location-neutral proposition. All we're trying to show is that there is such a proposition. We're doing this because the central argument for Non-Express is based on Non-Exist.

In what follows we'll try to get you to think *that it rains* by thinking about other occurrences of 'rain' where the location-neutral interpretation seems obvious. There are two exercises.

First Exercise: 'Rain' in Subject Position

First, consider 'rain' in subject position, as in (6)-(9):

6. Rain is Nina's favorite weather condition.
7. Rain is the topic of our next book.
8. Nina dreamt about rain yesterday.
9. I've missed rain since moving to Arizona.

We are not going to present a semantics for 'rain' in (6)-(9); all we want to do is point out that the most natural reading of 'rain' in these four sentences is *location-neutral*. The natural reading of (6) is *not* one according to which Nina's favorite weather condition is rain *in l*. Nor is it a location general reading according to which her favorite weather condition is rain *in some location*. The same applies to (7)-(9). Try for yourself.

Can we say something more specific about that location-neutral interpretation of 'rain'? Again, we're not going to (because we don't need to) present a fully developed semantic proposal here; what we will do is give an intuitive characterization. We can, as a first stab, take 'rain' to refer to *a certain kind of activity* (and we'll remain neutral about what sort of things *kinds of activities* are). It is an activity that always takes place in a location--just as, for example, dance is an activity that always takes place in a location. But that fact isn't reflected in our interpretation of (6)-(9). It is, rather, a fact we know about that *kind of activity*. Let's call this kind of activity *R*.

How does this help us get clearer on the location-neutral proposition *that it's raining (at t)*? In the obvious way: on the present proposal, *that it's raining (at t)* is the proposition *that R is going on at t, that it R's at t*, i.e. *that it rains at t*. This is the *location-neutral proposition*.²

Remember, all we are trying to achieve at this point is get you to notice that it is possible to think the location-neutral thought. We're doing that in order to refute Non-Exist (and we want to refute Non-Exist in order to undermine one of the main arguments for Non-Express). We're suggesting that going from *R* to *that R is going on at t* will help you grasp the location-neutral rain proposition.

Second Exercise: Read Theoretical Literature about Rain

To learn about how to think the location-neutral proposition it also helps to read some theoretical literature about rain. This is where the continuity between

uses of 'rain' as an abstract noun and as a verb becomes most salient. Here's a sample from a webpage that tries to explain what rain is:

For most areas of the world, rain is so common that few people stop to think about it. *Why does it rain?* Does all rainfall have the same causes? For those of us living in England, rain is a common subject of discussion and debate.

(<http://www.krysstal.com/rain.html>)

Focus on the question (10), as it occurs in the above passage:

10. Why does it rain?

The following seems obvious: The natural interpretation of question (10), at least in the context of the internet discussion about rain, is not *location-specific*, i.e. it is not “Why does it rain *in location l?*” It also is not the *location-general* “Why does it rain *in some location?*” The natural interpretation of (10) is *location-neutral*. We're suggesting using that interpretation of 'rain' in order to get at the location-neutral reading of *that it's raining (at t)*.

(10) is not the sole example of an English sentence where the verb 'rain' takes a location-neutral interpretation. Below we argue that there, in the right settings, are utterances of, e.g., (11) that require the same interpretation:

11. I don't care *where* it rains; I only care *whether* it rains.

That example is best presented with stage setting (and we provide that below), but even out of context, one can get the location-neutral reading of 'rain' in (11).

Taylor's analogy with 'dance' might help to clarify the point of focusing on examples like (10) and (11). Someone with a more theoretical interest in dance might ask question (12):

12. What is it to dance?

Since all dancing, as a matter of necessity, takes place in a location, any explanation of what it is to dance will be an explanation of what it is to dance *in some location or other*. But it does not follow from this metaphysical/physical

fact that (12) has a location as an unarticulated constituent. That's to say, it is not the question, "What is to dance *in l* (or *in some location*)?" The natural interpretation of (12) is location-*neutral*. This, as Taylor points out, generalizes to occurrences of 'dance' in sentences like (4).

4. Nina danced last night.

We're suggesting that you try to make the same extension from (10) to (13):

13. It rained last night.

Let's take stock: We have no way to ensure that going through these two exercises will help you fix on the location-neutral proposition *that it's raining (at t)*. If it doesn't, we don't really have much more to say--there's a kind of stand off here. We claim to be able to think it; you claim not to be able to do so. We don't know how to make progress if that's the case. We are, however, quite confident that *we* are able to think the location-neutral thought, and that's enough for us. So, from now on we assume its existence.

Refuting Non-Exist helps refute Non-Express because most arguments for Non-Express rely on Non-Exist. There is, however, one influential argument for Non-Express that does not obviously rely on Non-Exist. This is an argument from Taylor (2001) that we call "the argument from feelings of incompleteness." The next turn to a presentation and evaluation of Taylor's argument.

Taylor's Argument from Feelings of Incompleteness

Taylor says:

The view which I favor supposes that the verb 'to rain' has a lexically specified argument place which is θ -marked THEME and that this argument place takes places as values. This is a way of saying that the subatomic structure of the verb 'to rain' explicitly marks rainings as a kind of change that places undergo. (...) Thus though:

[1] It is raining.

is missing no syntactically mandatory sentential constituent, nonetheless, it is semantically incomplete. The semantic incompleteness is manifest to us as *a felt inability* to evaluate the truth value of an utterance of [1] in the absence of a contextually provided location (or range of locations). This *felt need* for a contextually provided location has its source, I claim, in our tacit cognition of the syntactically unexpressed argument place of the verb 'to rain'. (Taylor 2001, our emphasis)

We take the structure of Taylor's argument to be this: He starts with data that need explanation. The data is this: when we encounter utterances of (1), we feel unable to evaluate that utterance as true or false unless we are provide with a location for the rain. In what follows we call this “the feeling of incompleteness.” Taylor proposes the following explanation of the data: What he calls the “subatomic structure” of the verb 'rain' contains an argument place for a location. This argument is not articulated in the logical form of (1) (there's no expression corresponding to it), but without being provided with a location we're left with something incomplete, and that incomplete object causes feelings of incompleteness.

We suspect that when the argument gets spelled in this way, it'll seem a little fishy to some readers. After all, what do we philosophers really know about what causes feelings of incompleteness? Or, come to think of it, does anyone have an idea of what the “subatomic structure” of a verb is? Taylor says very little about this notion; which is surprising given how much work he thinks it does for him. We could rest our objections to Taylor's argument on the speculative nature of the alleged causal mechanism behind our feelings of incompleteness and his failure to provide any sort of an account of what the “subatomic structure” of a verb is, much less an account of how it can provoke feelings of incompleteness. But our objections are more generous in this sense: We'll grant Taylor that he

might, at some point in the future, be able to specify what the “subatomic structure” of a verb is and that he'll be able to say something about the kind of causal mechanism through which it might elicit feelings of incompleteness in us. But even granting Taylor all of this, there are, we think, conclusive arguments for holding that Taylor has the wrong story about what, *as a matter of fact*, causes feelings of incompleteness when confronted by utterances of (1).

Our objection to him has two components: we first point out that the location-neutral readings of 'rain', as presented in (10) and (11), above are incompatible with Taylor's view. Second, we provide an alternative explanation for the feeling of incompleteness, one that makes Taylor's appeal to the subatomic structure of 'rain' otiose.

Part One of Objection

The first objection has, in effect, already been anticipated by us earlier: if in *some* sentences the only acceptable interpretation of 'rain' is a location-neutral interpretation, then the “subatomic structure” of 'rain' cannot require a location. If it did, it would do so in all its occurrences. We have already seen examples where it does not, the most obvious one being the occurrence of 'rain' in (11) and in (12) (see discussion below). This occurrence of 'rain' cannot be interpreted in a location specific way, i.e. cannot be interpreted as 'rain [at l]'. Nor can it be interpreted in a location-general manner, i.e. as 'rain [somewhere]'. This provides strong evidence against Taylor's view.

Part Two of Objection

Of course, we don't disagree with Perry (and Taylor) about the empirical fact that speakers typically look for a location when they hear utterances of (1). Who could deny that! Nor do we disagree that when speakers hear such utterances they feel a kind of “incompleteness” prior to a location being provided. Nor do we disagree with them that in some sense the metaphor of the utterance

“demanding” a location is a good one. What we do disagree about, however, is the explanation of this feeling--its cause.

According to Taylor's interpretation (or elaboration) of Perry's view, this feeling of incompleteness is caused in us by the fact that the subatomic structure of 'rain' contains an argument place for a location. We have an alternative explanation: Our interest in rain is *location focused* and as a result, our interpretation of rain-talk is typically (but not invariably) *location focused*. Our interests are location focused in this sense: The location of rain is essential to our interest in it. It is only *at* the location of the rain that we get wet, that food grows or rots, that cars slide, etc. In almost all the different ways in which rain affects human life, its location is essential. These facts, and not the subatomic structure of the verb 'rain', explain why we typically (but not always) focus on location.

Some evidence that an explanation along these lines is reasonable can be gathered from trying to imagine scenarios in which our interests in rain are *not* location focused. This is hard to do, but here is a modest attempt:

The Rain-Ache Universe: This universe differs from ours in four respects:

- a. Rain is never noticed by humans as wetness--as soon as rain touches any object it evaporates immediately--so there is no need for umbrellas or any other rain-protection instruments.
- b. Food is not grown, so there is no need for rainfall for that purpose.
- c. However, whenever it rains, no matter where it rains, through some poorly understood causal mechanism, it causes headaches in humans. And humans don't need to be in the vicinity of rain to get a headache.
- d. These headaches can be avoided by wearing yellow hats.

In the rain-ache universe, parents are prone to tell their kids things like: “If it rains, you have to wear a yellow hat.” To avoid these epidemic headaches,

humans place rain detectors around the entire globe³ and they put out daily warnings that say things like (14):

14. It will rain at 2 pm, so make sure to bring your yellow hats.

Sometimes when the rain detectors fail to pick up rain and a distinctive headache occurs, people say things like:

15. Oh, it's really raining today.

16. Ugh, it's raining; those rain detectors never work.

It might be hard for us to get our minds around such a world, but it seems plausible to assume that those who speak about rain in this universe will do so without any interest whatsoever in the location of rain. The location will never be salient. The only thing they'll care about is not where it rains, but ~~about~~ whether it rains (Note to reader: think about how you interpreted the sentence before this parenthesis). They'll express that by uttering sentences like (11):

11. I don't care *where* it rains; I only care *whether* it rains.

They care about whether it rains because that causes headaches and when it does, they have to wear yellow hats. Utterances of e.g. (14) will feel complete, even though no location is salient.

If you share our intuition about this example, it shows two important things:

- a) It provides evidence in favor of an alternative explanation of the feeling of incompleteness: we have that feeling because of contingent features of our way of life and the role of rain in it, and not because of any feature of the verb 'rain'.
- b) When inhabitants of this world interpret utterances by inhabitants of the Rain-Ache universe, they interpret them as expressing location-neutral propositions. We take (11) to be a particularly clear instance – it is almost impossible not to read (11) in a location-neutral way. This is further evidence (of the kind

encountered with (10)) that the “subatomic structure” of the verb 'rain' lacks an argument place for location.

Summary

We've presented arguments against both Perry's and Taylor's arguments for Non-Express. Along the way we established the existence of a location-neutral proposition and established that some utterances of sentences containing 'rain' must have location-neutral readings. One conclusion we can draw from all of this, one we do draw, is that the location-neutral proposition is the *semantic* content of (1) and that the verb 'rain' has a location-neutral semantic value (there's nothing in its subatomic structure that requires a location). If some occurrences of 'rain' are location-neutral and 'rain' is not ambiguous, then we should expect it to have a location-neutral semantic value also when it occurs in 'It's raining'. Remember, Perry's only objection to this is Non-Exist, i.e. that there is no such thing as the location-neutral proposition. As soon as that view is off the table, it is hard to see how (1) could fail to express the location-neutral proposition, prior to the addition of a contextually salient location. Combine this with an alternative explanation of the feeling of incompleteness (as we provided above) and it's hard to see why what objections there could be to treating the location-neutral proposition as the semantic value.

We should point out right away that it is possible that *our* disagreement with Perry is less serious than it might at first seem. There are two points we disagree over:

- We disagree about the existence of a certain proposition, Perry doesn't think that the location-neutral proposition *that it's raining (at t)* exists; we do.
- As a result, we disagree about the explanation of our search for a location when we hear utterances of (1): Perry says: “[the location] is a constituent, because, since rain occurs at a time in a place,

there is no truth-evaluable proposition unless a place is supplied.”

We provided an alternative explanation.

It is perfectly possible that our alternative explanation is acceptable to Perry. We suspect that the argument we focused on (the argument from Non-Exist to Non-Express) might be just a kind of throw away by Perry--something he'd give up easily when confronted by our objections. In which case, there's little substantive disagreement between us here. What we do *not* disagree with Perry about is that when normal speakers utter (1) the proposition they saliently assert is one that contains a component that does not correspond to any lexical component of the sentence. So, we concur with Perry that "...Palo Alto is a constituent of the content of my son's remark, which no component of his statement designated," at least if 'remark' is interpreted to mean "what was saliently asserted by the utterance." We also agree that so understood, "...it [i.e. the location] is an unarticulated constituent.”

Our disagreement with Taylor, however, is more fundamental: Taylor's argument from the Feeling of Incompleteness and his theory about the "subatomic structure" of verbs such as 'rain' must, if we are right, be abandoned. This is clearly not a throw away point for Taylor--it is, in effect, at the very centre of his interpretation of Perry's theory of unarticulated constituents. As we see things, Perry is better off ignoring Taylor's proposed underpinning of unarticulated constituents. Instead, he should embrace the idea that a minimal, location-neutral proposition is expressed and he should combine that idea with an alternative, interest-focused, explanation for why the proposition that gets saliently asserted with an utterance of (1) has a location in it.

General Lessons

If our diagnosis of weather reports is correct, it has important corollaries. Below we present these as rather grand and general claims. Of course, all we have shown is that these hold in one particular case. It goes beyond the scope of the

present paper to establish them in the general form presented below--for further justification see Cappelen/Lepore (2004):

- The example discussed in this paper illustrates a general phenomenon: the proposition semantically expressed by an utterance of S can be very different from the proposition *saliently asserted* by that utterance. For most utterances of (1), the purpose of the utterance is not to assert or convey the semantic content. What is saliently asserted is a proposition of the form *that it's raining in l*. We suspect this phenomenon is ubiquitous in linguistic communication.
- Grice (1989) introduced a “quasi-technical” notion of “what was said” by the utterance of a sentence. He tied this notion closely to the meaning of the words in the sentence and their compositional structure--it is close to what we in this paper (and in Cappelen/Lepore 2004) have called “the semantic content” (though nothing depends on that choice of terminology). The remaining components of the totality of the communicated content Grice explained by an appeal to conversational or conventional implicatures. In the case of (1) we have seen that “what was said” in Grice's technical sense can be very different from what intuitively is said (or asserted or claimed). For that reason we think Grice's choice of terminology was extremely unfortunate. More often than not, what's intuitively *said* or *asserted* by an utterance is not what Grice would classify as “what was said”. This, we suspect, has been the source of a great deal of confusion in the literature since Grice. We elaborate on that point in Chapter 4 of Cappelen/Lepore (2004).

- Our diagnosis of Perry's example also provides an illustration of how speakers can, on a regular basis, sincerely utter a sentence that semantically expresses a proposition they don't believe. They utter it in order to communicate a proposition they do believe. Take the negation of the location neutral-proposition, i.e. *that it's not raining*. If we are right, every utterance of 'It's not raining' expresses that proposition. Nevertheless, when speakers utter, 'It's not raining,' they use a sentence to assert a different proposition (e.g. *that it's not raining in I*). We believe this is a situation that does not occur only in connection with (1), but is ubiquitous in language (see Cappelen/Lepore 2004). This should come as no surprise; while our communicative goals are context dependent in the extreme, the meanings of our words are stable. So we use stable meaning (i.e. semantic content) to perform speech acts, e.g. make assertions, the content of which is shaped by the peculiarities of the particular contexts we find ourselves in.
- A further corollary, one that should be obvious by now, is that our intuitions about what speaker's saliently assert and our feelings about which propositions are expressed are extremely poor guides to semantic content. As we have seen, they are even worse guides to what propositions exist.

How do we study semantic content if it isn't salient to us? If our intuitions about what speakers say and assert are poor guides to the semantic content of sentences, what tools do we who study language have for finding semantic content? In reply we should first point out that this is a tricky question for *anyone* to answer and it is, if anything, made *easier* by giving up the demand that a semantic theory capture or explain our intuitions about what speakers saliently say and assert in uttering sentences (for the difficulties raised by this demand, see Cappelen/Lepore

1997, 2004 Chapter 4). Our strategy in this paper has been to look for uses that are minimal in this sense: if some feature *F* seems to be part of what's said by most utterances of an expression *e*, but you can find contexts in which *F* isn't included in what's asserted by sentences containing *e*, then you know that *F* is not a stable part of the meaning of *e*. This is in effect a version of what Grice (Grice 1989, p. 44) called Contextual Cancelability--in this case use as a device for separating semantic content from other parts of communicated content. There are other strategies, some of which we outline in Cappelen/Lepore (2004), what they all have in common is an attempt to abstract away from the peculiarities of particular contexts of utterance and find contents that are common between them. We doubt, however, that there will a single, universal procedures that for each sentence, *S*, will provide a simple and informative account of *S*'s semantic content. Those who feel the need for more informative presentations of sentential content might have to work it out on a case-by-case basis, much as we just did for (1).

Notes

1. The 'at *t*' reflects the tense of the (1). We are simply making it explicit, say, in logical form.

2. In conversations with students (and even some colleagues) we often encounter the misunderstanding that the location-neutral proposition really is a *location general* proposition, i.e. that proposition *that it's raining somewhere*. This, it should be obvious, is *not* our view.

3. An example involving rain detectors (but no head-aches) is in Recanati (2002). He uses his example for partly the same purposes as our Pain-Ache example. But Recanati (2002) is not defending the view we propose here. He says, for example, "Hearing it [i.e. the rain alarm], the weatherman on duty in the adjacent room shouts: 'It's raining!' *His utterance is true, iff it is raining (at the*

time of utterance) in some place or other” (Recanati 2002, our emphasis). In other words, Recanati is arguing that the location-*general* proposition gets expressed, and not the location-*neutral* proposition. For reasons pointed out above, these propositions are importantly different. It is hard to see whether this proposal is even incompatible with Perry's view given that Perry accepts that there is a proposition expressed by “It's raining somewhere”; Perry can't think that proposition doesn't exist. What Recanati's only means for ruling out the need for a *particular* location is also clear from this passage: “The fact that one can imagine an utterance of ‘It's raining’ that is true iff it is raining (at the time of utterance) in some place or other arguably establishes the pragmatic nature of the felt necessity *to single out a particular place*, in the contexts in which such a necessity is indeed felt” (Recanati 2002, our emphasis). There are a number of other fundamental points at which we disagree with Recanati's position and presentation of the issues in that paper, but this isn't the place to go through them all in detail. For a discussion of the “big-picture” differences between the kind of view we defend and the kind of view Recanati defends, see our ~~forthcoming~~ exchange in *Mind and Language* (Recanati 2006, Cappelen and Lepore 2006). Put simply: We see this as a partial defense of the kind of Semantic Minimalism we defend in Cappelen/Lepore 2004. For Recanati, it is an attempt to defend his brand of Radical Contextualism (Recanati 2004).

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