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Introduction to *The Semantics-Pragmatics Boundary in Philosophy*

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Introduction

I. Preliminaries

This introductory chapter addresses two questions:

Q1: Where does the semantics-pragmatics boundary lie?

Q2: Why is getting clear about the boundary so important?

Our aim is emphatically not to give definitive answers. What we will provide, we hope, is a useful departure point, especially for those not familiar with the issues, for reading the papers included here.¹

The chapter is structured as follows. We begin with a terminological issue regarding Q1. We will see that both “semantics” and “pragmatics” can be defined in a number of ways. Once we have sorted through this convoluted tangle, we will consider, on the various readings, the nature of the things picked out by “semantic”/“pragmatic.” We then turn to two dominant conceptions of the boundary, a Cognitivist and a Formalist one, and problems that arise for each. Q2 will be addressed as we proceed, but the final section focuses on it. In particular, it presents a case study of semantics, pragmatics, and knowledge attributions.

II. Conflicting Definitions

When the topic is first introduced, it is customary to say something like this: “Semantics pertains to literal meaning, while all other meaning-related aspects of linguistic interaction pertain to pragmatics.” Spelling this out a little, it may be added that “semantic” and “pragmatic” are applied both to a kind of content and to an area of inquiry. Semantic content is literal content; pragmatic content is non-literal content. And semantics, the area of inquiry, studies literal meaning, while pragmatics studies non-literal meaning.

All this is true enough. But it is ultimately unsatisfactory, because one now needs to be told what “literal meaning” is, and what “other meaning-related aspects” are. There are at least four quite different positions, and each yields a significantly different take on the boundary.² In this section, we briefly survey these.

A first reading has it that semantics is about the meaning of linguistic types, as opposed to tokens of them. Semantics describes what has variously been called “standing meaning,” “expression meaning,” “conventional meaning in the language,” “linguistic meaning,” and “meaning wholly independent of context.” Call this the *Type View*. To explain, the book in front of you contains dozens of *tokens*—instances, concrete inscriptions—of the word

1. This chapter can be read without the footnotes, if all that is wanted is an overview of Q1 and Q2. For those interested in delving deeper into the issues, we have provided more detail, and additional suggested reading, in these notes.

2. In fact, there are rather more than four. There are other options entirely, and there are hybrids of those sketched below.

“speaker.” Like other physical objects, each token has a size, a colour, a location on the page, and so on. But there is only one *type* of which these are tokens. The type, which can be instantiated by placing chalk marks on a board, writing the word in ink, speaking it, etc., is abstract. Types never have odour, spatiotemporal location, or colour; they aren’t the right kind of thing to exhibit such properties. The Type View says that, to give the semantics of the word “speaker” is not to say anything about particular, concrete instances—tokens—of the word, but rather to describe the meaning properties of the abstract object, independent of context. On this view, pragmatics is then about meanings of specific tokens—in our example, meanings of concrete spatiotemporal occurrences of “speaker”—that do not derive from the type, but rather from worldly context, the intentions of the producers of those tokens, etc.

Another position has it that literal meaning amounts to relations between linguistic symbols and the world: in particular, reference for singular terms, and truth conditions for sentences. Call this the *Symbol-World View*. So, to give the meaning of “speaker” is to say what worldly thing it corresponds to. And to give the meaning of “Speakers are frequently interrupted” is to describe the conditions under which this sentence would hold true. Pragmatics is then about aspects of meaning other than reference and truth conditions.³

There are numerous examples of the latter. Consider the difference between using (1a) to state that Bill Clinton eats meat, and using (1b) to ask whether Bill Clinton eats meat:

1. a) Bill Clinton eats meat
b) Does Bill Clinton eat meat?

The same situation of Clinton being a meat eater is depicted. But the two sentences are not synonyms. The difference between them lies in *illocutionary force*, i.e., the kind of action performed. Or again, compare the difference between making a statement with (1a) and making a bet with it. Here again, the word–world relations are the same: “Bill Clinton” stands for the same American ex-president, “meat” stands for a fleshy foodstuff, etc. As J.L. Austin (1962) would have it, though, these speech acts are very different kinds of *performances*: they invoke different rights and responsibilities, for instance. Thus, on the Symbol-World View, this is a pragmatic matter. Here is yet another example of what would be, on this second view, a pragmatic rather than a semantic difference. Consider the (a) and (b) expressions below:

2. a) Miriam passed gas
b) Miriam farted
3. a) I saw Alfred’s shit
b) I saw Alfred’s excrement

3. The Symbol-World View’s understanding of “semantic” (and “pragmatic”), and the terminology itself, can be traced to Charles Morris, who writes: “[o]ne may study the relations of signs to the object to which the signs are applicable. This relation will be called *the semantical dimension of semiosis*.... The study of this dimension will be called *semantics*. Or the subject may be the relation of signs to interpreters. This relation will be called *the pragmatical dimension of semiosis* ... and the study of this dimension will be named *pragmatics* ...” (1938: 6–7; italics in original). Given present purposes, Morris’s definition muddies the waters by allowing non-linguistic things to have “semantics.” Mental states such as beliefs and fears connect to the world, and hence they have semantics in this specialized sense; so do some drawings, movies, and even dances.

4. a) You are a fool
b) Thou art a fool

The (a) sentences are true if and only if the (b) sentences are, and the words involved pick out the same worldly entities. Yet they do not strike us as synonymous. They exhibit different levels of formality: a socially appropriate occasion for using one of the pair would typically be a socially inappropriate occasion for using the other.

Let us pause briefly to contrast the Type View with the Symbol-World View with regard to the foregoing. As the Type View deploys the word, there is a semantic difference between (1a) and (1b). Similarly, on that usage of “semantic,” there is a semantic difference between (2a), (3a), and (4a) on the one hand and (2b), (3b), and (4b) on the other. This is precisely because *the types*, the expressions in the language, are not pre-theoretically synonymous. As the Symbol-World View deploys the word “semantic,” in contrast, these are not semantic differences because they do not pertain to differences in reference and truth conditions.

A final example makes the contrast even starker. There are numerous linguistic expressions, called “phatics,” which simply do not have reference or truth conditions: in English, words such as “please,” “hello,” “thanks,” “bye,” “cheers,” “wow,” and so forth. These expressions, the types that is, are far from gibberish. They do have meanings, in the sense that there are linguistic rules governing where, when, and how to use them: “hello” is used to greet, “wow” is used to express surprise, “bye” is used when parting, etc. They have, to introduce still more jargon, *use-theoretic* as opposed to *propositional* content. (Illocutionary force as in (1) and formality level as in (2)–(4) also exemplify use-theoretic contents.) On the Type View, then, they do have semantic content. In contrast, on the Symbol-World View, phatics by definition lack semantic content; their only meaning is pragmatic.

The terminology will get more complex. But notice that, even given just the two views scouted so far, we already have four ways of reading “semantics”:

- i) Semantics is a field of study whose object of inquiry is the meaning of expression types.
- ii) Semantics is the kind of content had by expression types.
- iii) Semantics is a field of study whose object of inquiry is relations between linguistic symbols and things in the world.
- iv) Semantics is the kind of content that involves relations between linguistic symbols and the world.

And, of course, “pragmatic(s)” too gets applied to both an area of inquiry (e.g., a sub-field of linguistics) and a kind of content. And for each View, there are contrasting definitions of “pragmatic.” We thus already have four corresponding ways of reading that word:

- v) Pragmatics is a field of study whose object of inquiry is those aspects of token-meaning that do not derive from the meaning of the type.
- vi) Pragmatic content is those aspects of token meaning that do not derive from the meaning of the type.
- vii) Pragmatics is a field of study whose object of inquiry is use-theoretic content, as opposed to propositional content.
- viii) Pragmatic content is use-theoretic content.

(Given this, and turning briefly to Q2, you can already see that, when reading philosophy of language, it will be important to get clear about how the boundary is drawn. A debate could rage on about, for example, whether there are “semantic differences” between the (a) and (b) sentences, without participants realizing that they agree about all substantive matters and are simply using nomenclature differently.)

We continue now with two additional definitions of “semantics” and “pragmatics”—and, shortly thereafter, with debates among those who agree about the definitions but disagree about the extensions of the terms.

According to what we will label the What Is Said View, the discipline of semantics is about what is strictly speaking stated, asserted or claimed, what is strictly speaking asked, etc. Pragmatics, in contrast, would describe what a speaker merely hinted at, obliquely suggested, metaphorically or ironically conveyed, etc. Put another way, in terms of after-the-fact descriptions of the speech event, on this third view the semantic content of an action is what a *strict report of the speech* act would capture, whereas pragmatics would extend to a *paraphrase of what the speaker was getting at*. The contrast is most easily grasped in terms of examples. Grice (1975) draws attention to cases in which an agent says one thing but non-literally communicates something different, or something additional.⁴ Thus, suppose Maite and Rob are deciding whether to take Bill Clinton to “El Asado,” an Argentinean steak restaurant. Rob worries that the ex-president may be a vegetarian; he seems to recall reading a story about that. In such a context, in saying (1a) Maite might (to use Grice’s phrase) *conversationally implicate* that “El Asado” is a good choice. Patently, the sentence “Bill Clinton eats meat” does not conventionally mean this. Moreover, Maite did not state, assert or claim that “El Asado” is an appropriate good choice. As a result, on the What Is Said View, the proposition that “El Asado” is a good choice is not semantically expressed. It is, rather, pragmatically conveyed.⁵ Here is another example. Suppose Rob’s neighbours the Barcelós have been away for weeks. Notoriously, their dog Alfred fouls the lawn daily, when at home. Maite wonders aloud when the Barcelós might be returning, and Rob says (3a). In so speaking, Rob may conversationally implicate that they are already back. This is not part of what he states, however. According to this third usage of the term, the “semantic content” of his utterance is thus merely that Rob has visually observed Alfred’s shit. On this view, the discipline of semantics is about how literal assertion content is fixed: What kind of rules determine literal speech-act content? What role is there for context? And pragmatics, the area of inquiry, describes how non-asserted content is fixed.⁶

4. Kripke (1977) draws a related distinction between speaker reference and semantic reference.

5. Grice (1975) gives a principle and maxims that guide all communication. It is the interaction between these, contextual information, and conventional meaning, that allows hearers to derive conversational implicatures. For a different model of the principles guiding communication through assertions see Stalnaker (1978), and for rules governing conversational exchanges see Lewis (1979).

6. This Grice-inspired tradition often excludes from “what is strictly speaking said” those aspects of content highlighted in (2), (3), and (4). Content, even if conventionally encoded, is only genuinely part of “what is said” if it is truth conditional. Insofar as this move is made, one can reasonably wonder whether the What Is Said View is really different from the Symbol-World view. Indeed it is. The Symbol-World View takes the presence of truth conditions to be sufficient for—nay, constitutive of—semantic content. The modification considered here is merely that truth-conditionality be necessary for being part of what is strictly speaking said, and hence “properly semantic.” (Cf. Bach (1994) and Soames (2005), and the discussion on Formalism in Section IV below, for some qualification.)

A final position on what Q1 is asking about—i.e., what “Where does the boundary between semantics and pragmatics lie?” means—defines “semantics” such that it pertains to what a fluent speaker knows about linguistic meaning. Call this the *Knowledge of Meaning View*. Consider for one final time “speaker” as an example. The properly semantic content of the word would be the meaning that a (fully competent) speaker’s knowledge of English assigns. Other information that she knows about the expression “speaker”—such as how frequently it is spoken, where she last heard it, or how her children happen to misuse it—is thus not semantic.⁷ Semantics, the discipline, would then be about knowledge of meaning.

It may help to sharpen the contrast between the four Views if we address briefly an ontological issue, namely what kinds of things have “semantic properties.” That is, what are the bearers of semantic content? Are they abstract objects, concrete objects, or actions? Put in terms of the area of inquiry, what kind of entities is the discipline of semantics about? We will move from most to least straightforward

The Type View is the easiest. What has semantic properties, properly speaking and in the first instance, are linguistic expression types: words and sentences in the language, wholly independent of context. To be clear, someone who endorses this view can grant that other things have semantic properties, but she will insist that they are had derivatively. That is, she can grant that, when speaking loosely, it is acceptable to talk about tokens (say) as exhibiting semantic properties. Nonetheless, semantics, properly speaking and in the first instance, is only about types.

In terms of what kind of thing semantics treats of, the third view, the What Is Said View, is a little more complicated. To explain, another quick detour into terminology is required. We have already contrasted types with tokens. The former are abstract, with no spatiotemporal features; the latter are concrete instances of the types. Both are objects. The What Is Said View would have us focus on a third thing, ontologically: the *action* of speaking. In speaking, a person uses a type; and, typically, she will create a token.⁸ But the speaking, referred to as the *utterance*, is different from these. (To give a comparison, consider making lasagna: there is the variety of food, something you may make weekly; there is on each occasion a new token which you have just created; but there is also the action of cooking.) According to the What Is Said View, properly speaking and in the first instance, semantics pertains to actions: to linguistic activity. Revisiting a previous example, it would be utterances of “Speakers are frequently interrupted,” assertions made with it, that exhibit semantic properties. Again, this is not to deny that other kinds of things can inherit semantic properties. But, fundamentally, what has semantic content on this view are neither types nor tokens.

A still trickier case is the Symbol-World View. According to its usage of the term, “semantics” will pertain to anything that has reference or truth conditions. The complication

7. There are a variety of sub-options here. A proponent of the Knowledge of Meaning View with cognitive scientific leanings might propose that semantics studies information about meaning that is stored in the language faculty of the human brain, in Chomsky’s sense. The domain of pragmatics would then be contributions of other kinds of psychological abilities and information-bases, to in-context interpretation. (We will revisit this idea in Section IV.) Another sub-option has it that the difference between semantics and pragmatics corresponds to a difference in the sorts of linguistic dispositions a speaker has. (See Evans (1981) for a characterization of semantic dispositions.)

8. Only typically because, for instance, having created a sign-token that reads “Merry Christmas,” a person may use that very token year after year. Such re-uses would be new utterances, but they would not create new tokens.

here is that some theorists within this camp hold that only tokens refer and have truth conditions. They will thus say that only tokens have semantic properties. (We will address the reasons for this shortly.) Others allow that types relative to a context have reference/truth conditions. They will say that these complexes have semantic properties and are the subject matter of semantics. Still worse, even those who allow that both tokens and types relative to context can have semantic properties can differ on which have semantics derivatively. Some will say that types stand in symbol-world relations primitively, but that tokens can do so derivatively. Others will say just the opposite: tokens refer and have truth conditions fundamentally, but types can have them derivatively.

We have yet to say anything about the ontology of meaning-bearers on the fourth option canvassed above, the Knowledge of Meaning View. That is not an accident. The ontological issues become exceedingly complex therein. Since our aim is to sharpen and clarify, let us set this aside for now. We will revisit the issue in Section IV.

One last remark about ontology, and about Q2. Our brief discussion illustrates again why it matters that we be clear about the semantics-pragmatics boundary. How one draws it has important ontological implications: Are there non-spatiotemporal types? If so, what kinds of properties, including meaning properties, do they have? Can actions really have meaning? What kinds of entities have meaning inherently, and what things get it derivatively? And so, metaphysically, on.

We may give a rough-and-ready summary as follows:

	Semantics	Pragmatics
The Type View	• Semantic content is defined as the conventionally fixed meaning of the expression type in the language. • Semantics as a discipline studies the context independent meanings of these types. • It is such types that are the (fundamental) bearers of semantic content.	• Pragmatic contents are defined as the meaning-contributions to token meaning that do not derive from the type produced. • Pragmatics as a discipline studies how type meaning and context interact to yield token meanings. • It is such tokens that bear pragmatic content.
The Symbol-World View	• Semantic content is defined as the relations between linguistic items and worldly correlates, e.g., reference and truth conditions. • Semantics as a discipline studies the relationship between linguistic items and their worldly correlates. • Tokens (and speech acts) exhibit such relations, and thus are among the bearers of semantic content. Whether types do so remains an open question. It also remains open which things have semantic content fundamentally.	• Pragmatic contents are defined as the non-propositional aspects of meaning: use-theoretic meanings such as illocutionary force, levels of formality, and rules of use for phatics. • Pragmatics as a discipline studies such meanings (whether they be properties of types, tokens or actions). • Seemingly, types, tokens, and speech acts all exhibit use-theoretic meanings, and hence bear pragmatic contents.

The What Is Said View	• Semantic content is defined as the part of the speech-act content that is strictly speaking stated (or asked, or commanded). • Semantics as a discipline studies the factors that fix these aspects of a speech act's meaning. • The fundamental bearers of semantic content are actions.	• Pragmatic contents are defined as additional things, beyond what is strictly said/asked/commanded, that a speaker hints at, metaphorically conveys, etc. • Pragmatics as a discipline studies the factors that fix these non-literal aspects of a speech act's meaning.
The Knowledge of Meaning View	• Semantic content is defined as what a fluent speaker knows about the meaning of linguistic items. • The discipline of semantics will describe this properly linguistic knowledge.	• Pragmatic content is defined as the information about what a speaker means that does not derive from knowledge of language proper: information from general-purpose memory, perception, inference, etc. • The discipline of pragmatics will describe the interaction of properly linguistic knowledge with these other kinds.

III. The Four Views and Indexicals

One of the most important topics at the semantics-pragmatics interface is indexicality: How do overtly context-sensitive expressions, such as pronouns, manage to work their magic? The topic is doubly worth our attention because it highlights that, even once the terminology is agreed upon, theorists can disagree about the extension of “semantic” and “pragmatic,” and thus about the location of the boundary.

Simplifying, we will divide indexicals into two sub-classes. Pure indexicals are words which, when tokened, the objective context (e.g., who is speaking, when, where, to whom) fixes their referents.⁹ In particular, the referent is fixed without appeal to the speaker's intentions. Words of this kind include “I,” “now,” “here,” and “yesterday.” Though not uncontroversial, it is taken as a hallmark of pure indexicals that speakers' intentions not only are not required to fix their reference, but are otiose if present. For instance, if a deluded mental patient Juan Mario in Boston in 2011 comes to believe that he is Napoleon Bonaparte, stranded in prison on St. Helena, he may utter “I want out of here now”—intending “I” to refer to Napoleon, “here” to St. Helena, and “now” to 1816. His intentions notwithstanding, these do not become the referents of his token words. The reference, rather, is fixed by who actually speaks, where, and when: thus, what the mental patient states, despite himself, is true if and only if Juan Mario wants out of the Boston mental asylum in 2011. Demonstratives such as “he,” “there,” “that,” and “this” are different. These are context-sensitive words where speakers' intentions are essential: e.g., which male is referred to by a token of “he” will depend, among other things, upon whom the speaker

9. The distinction between two kinds of indexicals is owed to Kaplan (1977, 1989). However, he opposes the view that the bearers of reference are tokens, i.e., physical objects that instantiate the types. (His arguments are not, however, easily applied to actions/events, e.g., utterances. See García-Carpintero (1998).)

wishes to speak about. Let us now consider what each of the four views described above has to say about this key topic.

Defining “semantics” such that its purview is type meaning, there are two obvious options for indexicals. On the first, the meaning of the type is an instruction to the hearer about what to do when she encounters an indexical: the semantic content tells the hearer what to do, namely, to find a referent in a context. Thus, the meaning of Spanish “yo” might be given thus: *Upon encountering a token of the type “yo”, identify the speaker, and assign him/her as referent.* A second option, popularized by Kaplan, is to assign as type meaning a function—in the sense of an input-output relation, rather than a purpose—from context to a worldly correlate. Taking “yo” again, its meaning would be characterized as a function that takes contexts as inputs and as outputs the speakers of those contexts. We will say rather more about this Kaplanian idea immediately below. For now, we merely want to stress that there is agreement, between these two sub-options, regarding what is being asked by “What is the semantic contribution of indexicals?” The question pertains to what the type means in the shared language. That is, proponents of the Type View all concur that, in searching for the boundary between semantics and pragmatics, one is searching for the contribution of type meaning versus other contributions to in-context content. The answers, however, are slightly different: option one is procedural, taking the form of an imperative; the other assigns an abstract object as meaning, a logico-mathematical function.

On the Symbol-World View, semantics is about relations between linguistic forms and worldly things. A semanticist of this persuasion must therefore find worldly correlates for indexicals, whether pure or demonstrative, and truth conditions for indexical-containing sentences. Some types taken out of context have such correlates: “Two” refers to two, and “Four is greater than two” is true if and only if four is greater than two. But many types, unless contextualized, seem not to stand for anything. Specifically, indexicals seem not to. In the face of this, the Symbol-World View affords at least two options. The first is simple: focus on tokens, and say that they are the genuine bearers of semantic content.¹⁰ The second option was mentioned in the previous paragraph: have types-relative-to-context be the subject matter of semantics.

It is worth describing the latter in more detail, because it will be important further along in the Introduction, and throughout the book. Following Kaplan, let us define an *occurrence* as a pair of an expression type and a list of contextual parameters. For instance, revisiting an example above, an example occurrence of a word would be <“I,” <Juan Mario, 11/19/2011, BOSTON>>. The semantic content of this complex thing is quite simple: Juan Mario. That’s because, as noted above, “I” expresses a function from a context to the speaker therein, and the speaker of this context, i.e., the first element of the n-tuple, is Juan Mario. (In this particular example, the other parameters of the context do not come into play.) Another occurrence is <“I,” <Obama, 11/19/2011, WASHINGTON>>, and its semantic content is Obama. Similarly, the semantic content of the occurrence <“today,” <Obama, 11/19/2011, BOSTON>> is November 19, 2011. Notice that what is given a reference on the Kaplanian approach really are the types “I” and “today,” relative, granted, to a list of contextual parameters. One final example, this time of a sentence, will reinforce this. The

10. Even within this first option, various more specific sub-options are available. Some Symbol-World theorists hold, for instance, that the semantic content of a token of “I” is the referent, namely the speaker; others, following Frege (1892), hold that the semantic content of a token of “I” is a Sense, a way of thinking about the speaker.

truth conditions of the sentence type (5) given the context (6a) are that Juan Mario wants out of Boston on November 19, 2011. The truth conditions of (5) given context (6b) are that Obama wants out of Washington on November 19, 2011.

5. I want out of here now
6. a) <Juan Mario, 11/19/2011, BOSTON>
b) <Obama, 11/19/2011, WASHINGTON>

On the What Is Said account, to give the semantics of indexicals is to describe their role in fixing the statement strictly made by a speech act. (Or, recalling (1b), the question asked, or the bet made, etc.) The standard approach, which can be traced to Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), goes like this. Providing the semantics of, say, “He eats meat” requires describing two things: the felicity conditions governing the use of “he” and the present tense, i.e., the circumstances in which these context-sensitive items can be meaningfully used at all; and the content of the speech act that would be performed, given such-and-such circumstances.

We end this section with the Knowledge of Meaning View. To understand the sub-options here, we first need to contrast two long-standing philosophical approaches to linguistic content. One, as we have seen, takes meaning to derive from pairing linguistic expressions with a worldly thing. Its roots can be traced to Frege and Russell. But many proponents of the Knowledge of Meaning View endorse an approach as old as Aristotle, and which dominated the Early Modern period, according to which giving the meaning of public language expressions involves pairing them with internal mental representations. That is, one gives the meaning of a word or sentence by translating it into a synonym in another representational medium, specifically a mental one. Meanings are thus Ideas or other kinds of mental representations. Understanding semantics as mentalistic/translational in this way, there are dozens of positions one could take on the semantics of indexicals, corresponding to the dozens of views about what mental representations are like. Suffice it to provide one. For Sperber and Wilson, whose views we will re-encounter immediately below, to give the meaning of a public language indexical is to pair it with a context-sensitive mental representation. Simplifying greatly, the semantic content of the English word “here” (and of the Spanish “aquí,” the French “ici,” etc.) might be the here-concept, and the semantic content of the sentence “I want out of here right now” might be a schematic mental representation, individuated in terms of its causal role in thought and action, composed of the here-concept, the concept WANTING, etc.

By way of conclusion, we must stress once again that these are not the only possible positions on indexicals. There are ways of combining the options noted above. And there are other options entirely. Given that our aim is merely to introduce how debates about the semantics-pragmatics boundary proceed, however, and to survey some key ideas for reading the papers included here, this should prove sufficient. (After reading the papers included here, it will be useful to re-read this introductory chapter in its entirety. Doing so, you may find places where you think “That’s not quite right,” or “That isn’t exactly the author’s view,” or even “Ezcurdia and Stainton say something different elsewhere.” So be it.)

IV. Two Dominant Traditions: Cognitivism and Strict Formalism

Before we proceed, a summary and “look ahead” are in order. We are addressing two questions:

Q1: Where does the semantics-pragmatics boundary lie?

Q2: Why is getting clear about the boundary so important?

Regarding Q1, we have sorted through a veritable terminological thicket: semantics as a discipline versus a kind of content; semantic content as the content of the type, as symbol-world content, as literal speech-act content, etc. We also considered ontological matters. That is, what kind of things are the bearers of semantic content? Closely related to this, what kind of thing, metaphysically speaking, is the discipline of semantics about? Abstract objects, concrete objects, actions? Finally, we applied the concepts introduced to a central issue, namely indexicals. Though the focus so far has been Q1, we also have reflected on Q2. Specifically, we noted the threat of terminological confusion and cross-talk. And we addressed the ontological commitments of various programs in semantics/pragmatics, not only in terms of the sorts of meaning bearers, but also in terms of the variety of meanings that one might be committed to: mental representations, Fregean Senses, use-theoretic meanings, and abstracta such as functions from context to propositions.

It remains to survey two key traditions with respect to the boundary, and the problems they face; and, turning squarely to Q2, to provide a case study of using the semantics-pragmatics boundary to address traditional philosophical problems, specifically about knowledge attributions.

We begin with the Cognitivist tradition. It is an outgrowth of the Knowledge of Meaning View. Its philosophical roots can be traced to H. Paul Grice, and to Noam Chomsky and Jerry Fodor. (Examples in the text include the papers by Sperber and Wilson, Carston, and Elugardo and Stainton.) As Cognitivists see things, the study of semantics and pragmatics is closely linked to cognitive psychology in particular, and to the cognitive sciences in general. Cognitivists endorse a translational semantics of the kind described briefly above, and take meanings to be mental representations: specifically, concepts and Mentalese sentences built from them. The Cognitivist, though she does not define semantics in terms of literal speech-act content, does have a view on the latter, namely that grasping even the literal meaning of a speech act, though it involves knowledge of linguistic rules, is a massive interaction effect of numerous cognitive capacities. Put picturesquely, the idea is that there are two fundamental kinds of psychological creativity involved in understanding literal speech: systematic and productive language-specific rules, and “being plain clever.” Phrased more concretely, and in the language of contemporary cognitive science, the human mind is modular; there is a module for language; but, even to find literal content, it must interact with other modules and general-purpose systems.¹¹

11. Simplifying, the Cognitivist’s picture of interpretation goes like this: the properly linguistic module operates on sound-patterns and yields Language of Thought representations as outputs; other mental faculties operate on this to infer the mental states of the speaker that gave rise to the utterance. Regarding the former step, although very limited in number, the rules stored in the language faculty are recursive, i.e., the outputs of the rules can serve as their inputs as well. This makes them infinitely productive, and it means that people can use and understand expressions that they have never heard before. Similarly, because the same parts (morphemes and whole words) recur in the same tree structures, the meanings of whole expressions are systematically related to one another. (For instance, the meaning-connection

The other dominant tradition, which we label “Strict Formalism”, is an outgrowth of the Symbol-World View. Its philosophical roots lie in the work of Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Rudolf Carnap, and Richard Montague. (Examples in the text are the papers by Kaplan, Stanley, and, in certain respects, the selection by Cappelen and Lepore.) The study of semantics, for the Strict Formalist, is closely linked to logic and mathematics, rather than to cognitive psychology. And meanings, rather than being mental entities, are external, worldly things. Semantics is defined in terms of reference and truth conditions. However, the Strict Formalist posits a close contingent connection between semantics and the literal content of speech acts. In particular, they maintain that there is an algorithm which, but for some complexities about indexicals and ambiguity, outputs the literal meaning. For the most part, Strict Formalists remain agnostic about the psychological processing of linguistic signals. The one exception is this: related to their commitment to an algorithm for literal speech-act content, though they grant that cleverness is important in language use, they insist that it plays a large role only in non-literal usage.

The Strict Formalists object to Cognitivism on a number of grounds. In terms of methodology, they accuse the Cognitivist of confusing facts about language *per se* with facts about the psychology of language. The latter is a fascinating topic, but it isn’t what semantics and pragmatics are about. More deeply, they complain that the Cognitivist owes an account of what mental representations are like, and how they get their meanings. Some work has been done in describing what “mental meanings” look like in terms of structure and content (e.g., Jackendoff 2002), but it remains tremendously sketchy. Related to this, the Cognitivist must eventually give a meaning theory for her posited mental representations. Thus, suppose that the meaning of (1a) is given as follows: it translates to the (sub-propositional) Mentalese sentence (7):

7. EAT(t=NOW)[MEAT][BC].

One now needs to know what the Mentalese concepts EAT, MEAT and BC mean, and why they mean this. Answering this kind of question looks to be nearly as hard as linguistic semantics itself.¹² The Strict Formalist concludes that Cognitivism is merely a promissory note, hence not a genuine theory of semantics at all.

So far we have introduced two competing traditions, Cognitivism and Strict Formalism, and rehearsed objections by the latter to the former. The Cognitivist, in her turn, offers a key objection to Strict Formalism. To understand it, we need to add a crucial detail.

As noted, the Strict Formalist tradition places truth conditions and reference at the heart of semantics. The reason is partly historical. In artificial logical languages, constants refer and sentences have truth values. For instance, “a” might be assigned the number three, and “F” might be assigned the set of prime numbers. Similarly, sentences such as “F(a)” and “(x)F(x)” are true and false (and they, the sentence types, stand in entailment relations): the former would express (truly) the proposition that three is prime, while the latter would express (falsely) the proposition that everything is a prime number. The Formalist wants to extend this to languages such as English. A further commitment, also

between (1a) and (1b) can be algorithmically calculated solely on the basis of the latter being the interrogative correlate of the former. Similarly, the meaning-difference between (3a) and (3b) can be calculated solely on the basis of the contrast between “excrement” and “shit.”

12. For an overview of current theories and challenges, see Pitt (2008).

tracing to its logical roots, is that sentences of natural language have their reference and truth conditions fixed *compositionally* by an algorithm. That is, the meaning of a whole is exhaustively determined by: i) what its syntactic parts are, ii) how those syntactic parts are combined into a tree structure, and iii) the meaning of each syntactic part. (To continue with our logical example, what fixes the meaning of “F(a)” is that the parts are “F” and “a”, that “F” refers to the set of prime numbers and “a” refers to three, and that “a” appears, in brackets, immediately to the right of the “F.” On this basis alone, what we obtain for “F(a)” are the truth conditions that three belongs to the set of prime numbers.)

But, the Cognitivists urge, the combination of algorithmic tractability and a referential/truth conditional semantics is problematic. The reason is context sensitivity. We have already encountered an obvious case in point, namely indexicals. Recall, for instance, sentences (4a) and (5):

4. a) You are a fool
5. I want out of here now

Given only what their syntactic parts are, how those syntactic parts are combined into a tree structure, and the standing meaning of each syntactic part, neither is truth-evaluable. Similarly, because each contains a tense marker that indicates sensitivity to a time of utterance, neither sentence (1a) nor sentence (2a), repeated below, is truth evaluable given only (i)–(iii) (i.e., its syntactic parts, how they are combined, and the meaning of each of the parts):

1. a) Bill Clinton eats meat
2. a) Miriam passed gas

More pressing, because far less algorithmically tractable, are cases of the sort introduced by Searle, Travis, and others. This takes us to the topic of pragmatic determinants of truth conditions.

Work from the late 1970s onwards by theorists such as Bach (1994), Bezuidenhout (2002, 2006), Carston (1988, 2002), Perry (1986, 1993a), Récanati (2002, 2004), Searle (1978), Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1987), Stainton (1995), and Travis (1996, 1997), pressed the issue of context sensitivity beyond tense markers and indexicals. To understand their point, we need to contrast two notions of context. The first, often labelled “narrow context,” is the one we discussed above: a finite, typically quite small, list of objective parameters such as speaker, hearer, time of utterance, place of utterance—possibly expanded slightly to account for intention-sensitive demonstratives. The second, often labelled “broad context,” is a different, very untidy notion. It includes everything about the speech situation: from the mental states of all participants, to such idiosyncratic minutiae as whether they are hungry, what kind of building they are constructing, or whether they happen to be in zero gravity. Roughly speaking, what Bach *et al.* urge is the following. On the one hand, type meaning together with broad context do indeed determine truth conditions, but not algorithmically/compositionally. (Pointedly, for example, allowing in reference to broad context would preclude the development of a formal logic for natural language expressions.) On the other hand, the interaction of narrow context with type meaning plausibly is compositional, and tractable using logico-linguistic algorithms; however, the resulting predictions about truth-conditional content are, at best, counterintuitive. This conclusion-cum-dilemma was supported by a barrage of examples in which narrow

context either did not compositionally yield truth conditions at all, or gave what are manifestly counterintuitive ones.

Consider first examples in which narrow context seemingly fails to deliver truth conditions. Searle (1978) urges that even a paradigm example such as (8) lacks truth conditions in a situation in which both cat and mat are weightless in outer space: to yield truth conditions, one must describe untold background conditions such as why the speaker cares, whether there are numerous cat-mat pairs floating around, etc. Adapting Searle's example slightly, Travis suggests that (9) fails to exhibit truth conditions unless the context fixes what the banana is for (e.g., for some purposes, a banana that has been painted green counts; for other purposes, a banana with a naturally green peel counts; for still others, what matters is whether the fruit inside, rather than the peel, is green).

- 8. The cat is on the mat
- 9. The banana is green

Bach, along with numerous others, maintains that sentences such as (3 a-b) lack truth conditions without a specification of what Marie is preparing for and of what is being built with the steel:

- 10. a) Marie is ready
- b) Steel isn't strong enough

Sperber and Wilson draw attention to possessive constructions such as "Utpal's painting," noting that it lacks a reference if the relation between Utpal and the painting is not given: e.g., whether it is the painting that Utpal created, the one he owns, the one he plans to study, and so on.

The viability of Strict Formalism in light of such cases has been one of the central debates in philosophy of language over the last quarter-century. We cannot possibly do justice to it here. Let us briefly highlight, however, two sharply contrasting attempts to rescue it.

One response, pursued by Semantic Minimalists such as Borg (2004), and Cappelen and Lepore (2004, 2005), is to challenge the claims about "richer" truth conditions. To introduce another very influential example from Perry (1986), the truth conditions of (4) seem to make reference to a place. For instance, if uttered in Paris, whether "It is raining" is true depends on Parisian weather. But there is no syntactic item that refers to place in the sentence:

- 11. It is raining

The Minimalist responds: (4) is true if and only if it is raining. Period. In a similar vein, these theorists will urge: (1) has as its truth conditions that the cat is on the mat; (2) has as its truth conditions that the banana is green; (3a) has as its truth conditions that Marie is ready; and so on. To demand of a semantic theory that it explain what it *is* for it to be raining, a cat to be on a mat, a banana to be green, a person to be ready, etc., is, they insist, to ask too much. These are metaphysical issues, not linguistic ones. (Equally, it is too much to expect that a semantic theory predict—given only what the parts are, what each means, and how they combine—what reasonable people would "count as" a green banana, a ready

person, a cat on a mat, etc., for every imaginable circumstance. See Elugardo and Stainton (2002) for discussion.)

Another approach is to grant that the intuitive truth conditions are “rich,” but to urge that, as a matter of empirical fact, there are unpronounced elements of syntax that account for the alleged “failure of fit”: unheard parts that are assigned values from narrow context. For instance, there is more in (4) than “meets the ear.” Sophisticated empirical scrutiny reveals, says Stanley (2000), that the former has an unpronounced variable for location and is thus synonymous with “It is raining at place *p*.”¹³ As a result, the truth conditions may invoke Paris, but without violating compositionality.

Stanley’s insight may be put another way. We described two notions of context, narrow and broad. Consider now two ways in which context can influence utterance content. In some cases, there are items within the sentence that, as a matter of their context-independent conventional meaning, “call out for” contextual completion. Putting things psychologically, such terms trigger the hearer, linguistically, to seek out a referent. Pure indexicals like “I” and “here” are like this. So are demonstratives like “he” and “there.” In other cases, it is not something “in” the sentence, but something solely about the speech situation, that brings context in. Recall an earlier example of conversational implicature: Rob says (3a) and thereby communicates that the Barcelós have returned home. What causes Maite to pay attention to the context here, and to depart from the bare conventional meaning, is not any special context-sensitive item in “I saw Alfred’s shit,” but rather that a statement to this effect would ordinarily be irrelevant. Stanley’s suggestion, understood in these terms, is that context gets drawn upon in “It is raining,” not “top down,” i.e., because of general-purpose considerations of conversational cooperation, but “bottom up,” i.e., because of a linguistic trigger within the sentence itself.

Consider now a second example. Stanley grants that a use of (5) while pointing at a woman, Sarah, would have as truth conditions that she is a world famous typologist. But, again, it seems that there is no syntactic item in the Noun Phrase to stand for this person:

12. A world famous typologist

This once again suggests that there isn’t an algorithmic function from syntax+narrow context to truth conditions. It seems, rather, that the same kind of phenomenon at work in full-on conversational implicature is at work here—this time, impacting upon the literal statement made. But, Stanley claims, it turns out that the imagined usage of (5) is actually syntactically elliptical. There is, after all, something in the expression used that “calls out” for contextual completion. Thus, there is no conflict between the “rich” truth conditions and the “poor” syntax, because the latter is an illusion. So Strict Formalism is rescued once again. (Both Elugardo and Stainton’s, and Récanati’s papers in this volume take issue with Stanley’s claims.)

Let us sum up our discussion of Strict Formalism. It grew out of work on artificial formal languages and adopted two core commitments from these: that the calculation of meaning is tractable using certain formal logico-linguistic techniques, and that the

13. Another approach would be to say that the linguistic meaning, the type meaning, of “rain,” “strong,” “ready,” etc., requires there to be a place, and a parameter for strength and readiness, but that this is not traced back to logical form, that is, it is not present syntactically. For suggestions along these lines, see Ezcurdia (2009), Récanati (2002), and Taylor (2001).

backbone of meaning is reference and truth conditions. A fundamental problem is how to “tame context” within this program of research. Introducing the notion of narrow context helps. The remaining challenge, in a nutshell, is that there frequently appears to be a failure of fit between, on the one hand, the syntax and standing meaning of the expression and narrow context, and on the other hand the intuitive truth conditions. The point is not that *speech acts* performed with such expressions lack expression–world relations. To the contrary, a broad enough context will fix these. The point of the concern, to repeat, is that the type meaning of the words in (1), (2), and (3 a-b), even given narrow context, cannot compositionally do the trick: an algorithm that takes as input only factors (i)–(iii) will not yield the correct truth conditions. Minimalists and those who posit unpronounced syntax have tried, each in their own way, to overcome this issue. It remains to be seen whether they can succeed.

V. Why the Boundary Matters

So far, our focus has been on Q1, “Where does the semantics-pragmatics boundary lie?” In this final section, we focus on Q2, “Why is getting clear about the boundary so important?”

We have encountered some reasons already. One’s ontological commitments will depend squarely upon how one understands “semantics.” If the Type View is right, semantics is committed to abstract types and very abstract meanings for them. Not so on other positions. If the Knowledge of Meaning View is right, there must be a difference between what we know about meaning versus other kinds of knowledge. And so on. A similar lesson holds for the natural evidence base for semantics. On the Knowledge of Meaning View, psychological evidence, presumably of the most *recherché* kind, will of course be relevant: that’s because semantics is about something psychological. The relevance of such evidence is much less obvious, however, on the Type View, or the What Is Said View.

We have seen also that the literature in philosophy is rife with cross-talk spawned by these terms. Consider the much debated issue of whether pragmatic processes play a role in semantics. If “semantics” is interpreted as per the Type View, the very question rings odd. It asks whether processes that do not pertain to type meaning, but rather only to token meaning, somehow have an impact upon type meaning. Of course, not. (One might equally ask whether context affects context-independent meaning!) If “semantics” is read as amounting to reference and truth conditions, however, and “pragmatics” is understood as involving psychological processes that are not language-specific, then the question is perfectly reasonable. Here is another case in point. David Lewis (1970) urged that semantics with no treatment of truth conditions is not semantics. This proved to be very influential and turned many philosophers away from translational, mentalistic semantics. Arguably, however, there is an equivocation here. Lewis’s dictum is true by definition on the Symbol-World View, and thus cannot be denied. However, whether semantics understood as pertaining to type meaning or knowledge of meaning must provide truth conditions is a hard empirical question, and it cannot be established by fiat.

One last example of cross-talk is worth singling out, because it plays such a dominant role in Part II of this anthology. There is a wealth of discussion about whether there are “pragmatic determinants of what is said.” What the question means, of course, depends upon how “pragmatics” is understood. Another source of terminological confusion is

the phrase “what is said.” All participants in the debate take the term over from Grice (1975), but they mean subtly different things by it. Some authors, including Stanley (2000), understand this as a synonym for what is stated, asserted or claimed—that is, the literal content of the speech act. So understood, it is a broadly empirical question whether, and if so how, pragmatics comes into play. Still others, e.g., Carston (1988), understand the phrase “what is said” psychologically, specifically as the departure point for finding conversational implicatures. Others, e.g., Bach (1994, 2002), essentially define “what is said” as the result of disambiguation and the assignment of referents to indexicals, using only narrow context. So read, it may be true by stipulation that pragmatics can have no impact on what is said.¹⁴ In short, even to sort out what is being asked and argued, it is essential that philosophers get clearer about “semantics,” “pragmatics,” and the boundary between them.

Reflection on such cross-talk raises a concern. Is the whole issue a matter of “semantics” in the derogatory sense of a silly confusion over how people are using their words? Maybe there simply isn’t a right answer to Q1. In response to this, it is worth stressing that, as our discussion of indexicals illustrated, even once parties in the dispute are clear about which technical sense of the key terms is at work, important, substantive, empirical issues arise about what is and is not semantic/pragmatic. For instance, granting that semantics is about reference and truth conditions, it remains open to debate whether terms such as “Santa Claus” and “now” genuinely have semantic content in this sense; whether sentences such as “Marie is ready,” “Abortion is immoral,” or “It will rain next Tuesday” do so; etc. Or again, granting that semantics is about knowledge of meaning, it remains open whether our knowledge that “or” has two readings, inclusive and exclusive, is properly semantic or not. And so on. So it is not the case that the location of the boundary can be entirely side-stepped if we are careful about terminology. More importantly, however, there may be a right answer to Q1. If so, finding what it is is of intrinsic interest to both philosophers of language and linguists. To be clear, “semantic” and “pragmatic” are both technical terms: a theorist *could* blithely stipulate, for instance, that what she will mean by “semantics” is the truth conditions of the type, relative to narrow context. Nonetheless, we doubt that the issue is merely terminological, in that certain readings of “semantic” and “pragmatic” may lead to fruitful inquiry, while certain others may not. For instance, suppose that the Cognitivist is correct that reference and truth conditions are inevitably a massive, unruly interaction effect. Then semantics, understood as the Symbol-World View does, is probably not a viable scientific topic. Better, then, to mean something different by the term. Or suppose that there simply is no such thing as a language faculty; more generally, that there is no genuine divide between knowing linguistic meanings and knowing your way around in the world. Then the Knowledge of Meaning View would appear to be a dead end. It would leave semantics not just without a scientifically viable subject matter, but with no subject matter at all. In a related vein, there are worldly constraints on how the technical term “pragmatics” is best construed. Both the Symbol-World View and the What Is Said View, e.g., because they take truth conditions to be the heart of semantics, typically treat as “pragmatic” things as pre-theoretically different as conversational implicatures, illocutionary force, sarcasm and irony, the contribution of words like “therefore” and

14. Kaplan (1977, 1989) does not participate in this debate but has a related notion of what is said. For him it is identified as that on which modality operates, that which is possible or necessary. It is truth-conditional and corresponds to what he calls the “content” of a sentence relative to a context.

“however,” and level of formality. Maybe this shared classification misses the existence of a genuine natural kind, and is thus a poor choice.

We turn now to a wholly new reason why the boundary matters: the case study of knowledge attributions.

Famously, G.E. Moore (1939) claimed to prove the existence of the external world by appeal to his hands. Simplifying, Moore offers as a premise “I know that I have a hand.” The sceptic, who maintains that her view entails that no one knows that they have a hand, is now forced to choose between her sophisticated philosophical arguments and this platitude. Not quite so famously, Norman Malcolm (1949) rejected Moore’s proof—not because Moore’s premise was question begging, or simply false, mind you, but because it was senseless. Malcolm suggested that such a sentence can be meaningfully used only to assuage a legitimate doubt; and here there is none. The semantics-pragmatics boundary now comes into play. Is Malcolm right that Moore-type usages lack a truth value, a matter of semantics? Or is it just that such usages are odd, and convey unwanted messages, a matter of pragmatics? Moore, in a 1949 letter, took the latter stance. He, and Grice later on (1989), responded that while it is peculiar to use “I know that I have a hand” when it is perfectly plain that one does, a speaker nonetheless says something. If what that speaker says is true, scepticism seems in trouble.

Continuing with “know” as a case study, consider a rather different scenario. Maite, illustrating her proficiency in Mexican political geography, says “I know that Mexico has 31 states.” Rob replies that she knows no such thing, because a law could have been passed minutes ago, adding a new state. Maite insists: she follows Mexican politics closely, and no such law was in the works. She thus repeats, “I know that Mexico has 31 states.” Rob now ups the stakes: she doesn’t know that Mexico has 31 states because she might be having a bizarre dream, or an evil demon might have planted the idea in her head. Suppose Maite is moved by such arguments for radical scepticism. She grants that she cannot now truly say “I know that Mexico has 31 states.” Must she retract her earlier claims? Must she concede that she previously overstated her geographical expertise? The debate about semantics and pragmatics enters again, at just this point.

One strategy to save Maite is to appeal to Gricean conversational implicatures: to urge that, though she said something that is literally false (semantics), she meant and conveyed something true, namely that she had pretty good grounds for believing that Mexico has 31 states (pragmatics). The outcome on this strategy is that most attributions of knowledge will be literally false, though what is conveyed is frequently true. Another strategy is to say that “to know” is, as a matter of its standing conventional meaning, a context-sensitive verb.¹⁵ Specifically, “I know that *p*” semantically means “I know by contextually supplied standard *s* that *p*.” At the point of Maite’s first utterance, the standards for knowledge were ordinary; hence, according to this proposal, what she stated with her first utterance was *Maite knows by ordinary standards that Mexico has 31 states*. This proposition is literally true. Once Rob mentions dreams and demons, however, the standards have been raised. Were Maite to utter the same sentence in the new context, the result would be *Maite knows by the standards of the philosophical sceptic that Mexico has 31 states*. Maite can safely eschew this claim, while maintaining that she made no mistake when first she

15. Solutions of this general sort have been dubbed “contextualist.” There has been an enormous literature on contextualist accounts of “knows” from both philosophers of language and epistemologists. See, for example, Cohen (1986, 1998), DeRose (1992, 2002 and 2005), Dretske (1981), Hawthorne (2004), Schiffer (1996), Neta (2005), Pritchard (2010), Stanley (2005), Williamson (2005), Wright (2005).

spoke. (Lewis (1996) pursues an idea along these lines.) A third approach is to reject the idea that “know” is a context-sensitive word—it isn’t like “you,” “here” or “now”—and instead appeal to “top-down” pragmatic determinants of what is stated/asserted/claimed. That is, what a person can literally state with “know” can vary as “broad context” does, even though her words are not marked, *qua* types, as requiring contextual completion. To give a comparison, even if “banana” and “green” in (2) are not context-sensitive words, it does seem plausible that this sentence can be used to literally assert a variety of different propositions. (See Stainton (2010) for discussion.)

All three strategies are clever. But all hang on empirical commitments about the semantics-pragmatics boundary. Is it correct that, though we may pragmatically convey truths with it, what we literally state with “I know that *p*” is almost always false, because of radical scepticism?¹⁶ As a matter of empirical fact, does “know” contain a hidden indexical slot for standards? Following Stanley (2000), any time we posit a hidden syntactical element in a sentence, we had better have syntactical evidence that such an element is there. Otherwise, there is no reason to believe that there is one. Besides, as Schiffer (1996) has argued, there is a disanalogy between covertly indexical sentences like “It is raining” and knowledge attributions. While speakers are all aware, when making an utterance about rain, that it is relativized to a place, they are not aware of such relativization to standards when they make knowledge attributions. If speakers are not aware of this, it seems reasonable to suppose that it is not part of the meaning they associate with “know.” As for the third approach, whether it can succeed depends upon whether we have good reason in general to believe in fully pragmatic, “top-down” determinants of literal speech-act content.¹⁷

Knowledge attribution thus affords a clear example of why the semantics-pragmatics boundary matters to philosophy. Others are legion, including in this book. You will find herein debates about the semantics versus pragmatics of “and,” “or,” and “if-then” (Grice 1975); about whether predicates of taste should be treated as context-sensitive or not (Kölbel 2003);¹⁸ and about whether metaphor should be treated semantically or pragmatically (Searle 1979a, Davidson 1978, Wearing 2006). You will encounter moves about names by Millians, who appeal to pragmatic consideration to account for alleged failures of substitution *salva veritate*.¹⁹ Most notoriously, five of the nine papers in Part

16. See Ezcurdia (2009) for reasons why it is inappropriate for semantics always to render false what we say.

17. There is a fourth option we have not mentioned above: one where context affects not pragmatic or semantic content, but the evaluation of the truth of the content semantically expressed. Context introduces the standard of knowledge relative to which the semantically expressed content (that does not include the standard) is assessed for its truth or falsity. This is semantic relativism applied to knowledge attributions. See MacFarlane (2005)

and Richard (2004).

18. Kölbel opts for semantic relativism in treating predicates of taste. Much has been written on relativism of late; see, for example, Cappelen and Hawthorne (2009), Lasersohn (2011), MacFarlane (2007, 2009), Richard (2004), Wright (1992). For arguments motivating relativism but from a different perspective, see Kaplan (1977) (for tense markers), Perry (1986) and Récanati (2002) (both reprinted in this volume), along with Perry (1993a) and Récanati (2007).

19. Salmon (1991) and Soames (2002) have defended Millian theories of names according to which the meaning of a name is its referent. To deal with evidence from failures of substitution of co-referring names (for example, “Clark Kent” and “Superman” in attitude reports such as “Lois Lane believes that

I are devoted to an issue that dominated much of the twentieth century, namely the semantics and pragmatics of “the.”²⁰ We rest content, however, with this one case study.

Let us end by summarizing this final section. It is important to get clear about the boundary, first off, because the literature, not just in philosophy of language but in philosophy generally, is rife with cross-talk. And, even when the terminology is clarified and agreed upon, there remain substantive disagreements about cases. By the same token, different understandings of the terms “semantics” and “pragmatics” yield different methodological and ontological commitments. What’s more, though “semantics” and “pragmatics” are technical terms, there may well be a theoretically most promising usage. All these points can be illustrated by case studies, as we have tried to do with the example of the semantics and pragmatics of knowledge attributions.²¹

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Superman can fly”), they have suggested pragmatic explanations. Saul’s paper in this volume highlights other cases of failures of substitution outside of attitude reports.

20. Russell (1905) held that the sentence “The King of France is bald” has as its semantic content the propositions that there is one and only one king of France, and every king of France is bald. For arguments against a Russellian account of definite descriptions, see Strawson (1950), Donnellan (1966), and Lewis (1979). For a pragmatics-based defence of the Russellian position, see Kripke (1977). A detailed defence of the Russellian position can be found in Neale (1990).

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