

Assertibility or Truth-Values?

Prospects For Pragmatic Invariantism

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Nachdenken und Vordenken -
Herausforderungen an die Philosophie

Reflections and Projections -
Challenges to Philosophy

GAP.7

Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Pragmatic Context Dependence
- 3 Pragmatic Invariantism
- 4 Testing for Implicature
- 5 Conclusion

1. Introduction

1.1. The Contextualist Problem

Airport Case: (EASY)¹

Mary and John are at the L.A. airport contemplating taking a certain flight to New York. They want to know whether the flight has a layover in Chicago. They overhear someone ask a passenger Smith if he knows whether the flight stops in Chicago. Smith looks at the flight itinerary he got from the travel agent and responds, 'Yes I know -- it does stop in Chicago.'

¹Cohen, Stewart (1999): Contextualism, Skepticism, and the Structure of Reason. *Noûs* 33, 58.

Airport Case: (HARD)²

It turns out that Mary and John have a very important business contact they have to make at the Chicago airport. Mary says, 'How reliable is that itinerary? It could contain a misprint. They could have changed the schedule at the last minute.' Mary and John agree that Smith doesn't really know that the plane will stop in Chicago. They decide to check with the airline agent.

²Cohen, Stewart (1999): Contextualism, Skepticism, and the Structure of Reason. *Noûs* 33, 58.

The *Initial Intuitions*

Ascription Intuitions:

- (1) a. "S knows that the plane has a layover in Chicago."
is correct in EASY.
- b. "S knows that the plane has a layover in Chicago."
is not correct in HARD.

Denial Intuitions:

- (2) a. "S doesn't know that the plane has a layover in Chicago."
is correct in HARD.
- b. "S doesn't know that the plane has a layover in Chicago."
is not correct in EASY.

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Semantic explanations of the *Initial Intuitions*:

- ▶ Contextualists explain the *Initial Intuitions* by means of variations in truth-values.
- ▶ (1a) and (2a) appear to be correct because they are *true*.
- ▶ (1b) and (2b) appear to be incorrect because they are *false*.
- ▶ The variation in truth-value is due to the ascriber dependence of the knowledge relation.

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Strict invariantist responses to the *Initial Intuitions*:

- ▶ Either Smith knows in EASY and in HARD or he doesn't know.
- ▶ Sceptical vs. Moorean views.
- ▶ One pair of intuitions must be mistaken.
- ▶ **Question:** (How) can invariantism explain (rather than reject) the *Initial Intuitions*?

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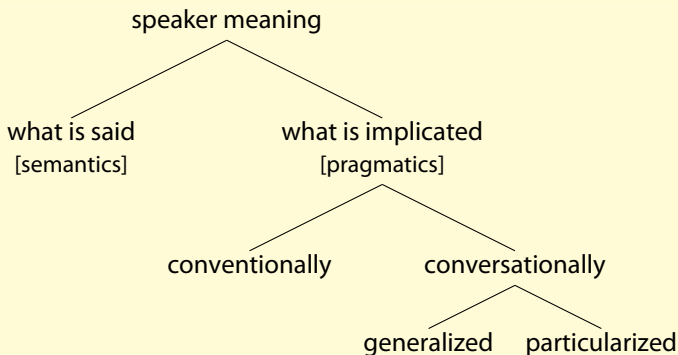
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The Gricean Programme**
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2. Pragmatic Context Dependence

The Gricean Programme

The Gricean Typology of Meaning³

(GT)



³Grice, H. Paul (1975): Logic and Conversation. In: Cole, Peter & Morgan, Jerry (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press, 41-58.

Conventional Implicature

(3) Mary is a Philosopher but she is brilliant.

Truth-conditions

[[3]] = 1, if **Philosopher(Mary) & brilliant(Mary)**.

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Conversational Implicature

- (4) a. [A:] I am out of petrol.
b. [B:] There is a garage round the corner.
+> The garage is open and selling petrol.

Truth-conditions

$\llbracket (4b) \rrbracket = 1$, if $\exists x$ **garage**(x) & **roundthecorner**(x).

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The Cooperative Principle⁴

(CP) Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

The Conversational Maxims

- (CM)
- a. Quantity
 - b. Quality
 - c. Relation
 - d. Manner

⁴Grice, H. Paul (1975): Logic and Conversation. In: Cole, Peter & Morgan, Jerry (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press, 45.

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3. Pragmatic Invariantism

- ▶ The Gricean strategy seems to be able to give PI what it needs.
- ▶ additional aspects of meaning
- ▶ not part of the truth-conditions of *what is said*

One way to spell out PI

- ▶ The strategy is “to argue that the problematic intuitions reflect when it is conversationally appropriate to ascribe knowledge, not when knowledge is truly ascribed.”⁵
- ▶ Underlying is “the idea that, via familiar Gricean mechanisms, knowledge attributions and denials pragmatically convey further claims and it is the truth value of these further claims which the problematic intuitions reflect.”

⁵Brown, Jessica (2006): Contextualism and Warranted Assertibility Manoeuvres. *Philosophical Studies* 130, 408-409.

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3.1. Warranted Assertability Manoeuvres

K-WAM & the Airport Case

- (5) a. S knows that the plane has a layover in Chicago.
- b. S doesn't know that the plane has a layover in Chicago.

- ▶ (5a) literally means that *S* meets the epistemic standards for knowing that the plane has a layover in Chicago
- ▶ (5a) conveys (additionally) that *S*'s epistemic status is good enough to meet the alternatives at issue in the context of utterance.

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K-WAM & the Airport Case

- (5)
- a. *S* knows that the plane has a layover in Chicago.
 - b. *S* doesn't know that the plane has a layover in Chicago.
- ▶ (5b) literally means that *S* does not meet the epistemic standards for knowing that the plane has a layover in Chicago.
 - ▶ (5b) conveys (additionally) that *S*'s epistemic status is not good enough to meet the alternatives at issue in the context of utterance.

Anti-sceptical semantics

- ▶ The knowledge ascriptions in EASY and in HARD are both true.
- ▶ The knowledge denials in EASY and in HARD are both false.

K-WAM and the Ascription Intuitions

(5a) conveys that *S*'s epistemic status is good enough to meet the alternatives at issue.

- ▶ EASY: ✓, HARD: ✗

K-WAM and the Denial Intuitions

(5b) conveys that *S* does not meet the epistemic standards to rule out all alternatives at issue.

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4. Testing for Implicature

4.1. The Conversational Manoeuvre

Properties of conversational implicature⁶

- (6) a. Conversational implicatures are calculable.
- b. Conversational implicatures are reinforceable.
- c. Conversational implicatures are cancelable.
- d. Conversational implicatures are context dependent.
- e. Conversational implicatures are nondetachable.

⁶ Grice, H. Paul (1975): Logic and Conversation. In: Cole, Peter & Morgan, Jerry (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press, 41-58.

(6a): Calculability

- (7) a. There is no direct relation between my utterance and the literal meaning of B's response.
- b. Usually, however, garages sell petrol.
- c. B would be infringing the maxim of relation if I could not get petrol at that garage round the corner.
- d. B knows that I can infer this from her utterance and she did not stop me from inferring it.
- e. So B wanted to implicate that the garage is open and selling petrol.

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K-WAM and Calculability

Problematic: (2a) Denial Intuition in HARD⁷

- (8)
- a. By uttering 'S doesn't know p ' the speaker said that S cannot rule out all relevant alternatives to p .
 - b. But S can rule out all relevant alternatives, thus, S knows p , and the speaker knows that.
 - c. So the speaker deliberately uttered a falsehood and she knows that I can infer this from her utterance.
 - d. So she must have meant something else.
 - e. . . .
 - f. Therefore, the speaker communicated that S cannot rule out the salient alternative q that entails not- p , but which S does not have to be able to exclude in order to know p .

⁷Leite, Adam (2005): Some Worries for Would-be WAMmers. In: Martijn Blaauw (ed.) *Epistemological Contextualism*, Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 101-125.

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(6b): Reinforceability

- (9) a. Some students passed the exam.
+> Not all students passed the exam.
- b. Some students passed the exam, but unfortunately not all of them passed the exam.

K-WAM and Reinforceability

- (10) a. *S* knows that the plane has a layover in Chicago. *S* can rule out the possibility that it is a non-stop flight.
- b. *S* doesn't know that the plane has a layover in Chicago. *S* cannot rule out the possibility that it is a non-stop flight.

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(6c): Cancelability

- (11) a. Some students passed the exam.
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K-WAM and Cancelability

- (12) a. ?S knows that the plane has a layover in Chicago, but S cannot rule out the possibility that she is a brain in a vat.
- b. ??S knows that the plane has a layover in Chicago, but S cannot rule out the possibility that the itinerary contains a misprint.

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(6d): Context-dependency

- (13) a. [A:] I am gathering data for the *Yellow Pages*. Is there any business in your area?
- b. [B:] There is a garage round the corner.

▶ K-WAM is supposed to be at work in **every** context.

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(6e): Nondetachability

- (14)
- a. [A:] What did you think of the lecture?
 - b. [B:] Isn't the weather wonderful today?
+> I do not want to answer this question.
 - c. [B:] Isn't the weather spectacular today?
+> I do not want to answer this question.

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K-WAM and Nondetachability

- (15)
- a. *S* knows that the plane has a layover in Chicago.
+> *S* meets the epistemic standards to rule out all alternatives at issue in which the plane does not have a layover in Chicago.
 - b. *S* is aware that the plane has a layover in Chicago.
? +> *S* meets the epistemic standards to rule out all alternatives at issue in which the plane does not have a layover in Chicago.
 - c. *S* has a justified true belief that the plane has a layover in Chicago.
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 - c. *S* has a justified true belief that the plane has a layover in Chicago.
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The 'knowledge implicature' is . . .

- ▶ calculable: ✗
- ▶ reinforcing: ✓
- ▶ cancelable: ✗
- ▶ context-dependent: ✗
- ▶ nondetachable: ✗

4.2. The Conventional Manoeuvre

Properties of conventional implicature⁸

- (16)
- a. CIs are part of the conventional meaning of words and therefore context-independent.
 - b. CIs are detachable.
 - c. CIs are speaker oriented.
 - d. CIs are logically and compositionally independent of *what is said*.

⁸ Grice, H. Paul (1975): Logic and Conversation. In: Cole, Peter & Morgan, Jerry (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press, 41-58.
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Already shown

The “knowledge implicature” is . . .

- ▶ context-dependent: ✗ ⇨ context-independent: ✓
- ▶ nondetachable: ✗ ⇨ detachable: ✓

(16c): Speaker oriented

▶ Kent Bach⁹ and embedded CIs:

- (17) a. Kent_i says that Mary is a philosopher, but_i that she is brilliant.
b. Kent_i says that S knows_i that the plane has a layover in Chicago.

(18) My father screamed that he would never allow me to marry *that bastard Webster*.¹⁰

▶ Analogous problem for contextualists

⁹Bach, Kent (1999): The Myth of Conventional Implicature. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 22, 327-366.

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(16d): Independent of *what is said*

- (19) a. Mary is a philosopher but she is brilliant.
 b. It is not the case that Mary is a philosopher but that she
 is brilliant.

(20) HARD: *S* knows that the plane has a layover in Chicago.

- ▶ The truth of (20) depends only on whether *S* meets the (invariant) epistemic standards for knowledge.
- ▶ Analogously to (19), (20) is odd in case only the literally expressed meaning is true, i.e. in case *S* does not meet the standards necessary to rule out the alternatives at issue.
- ▶ This is why we get the denial intuitions.

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The 'knowledge implicature' is . . .

- ▶ context-independent: ✓
- ▶ detachable: ✓
- ▶ speaker oriented: ?
- ▶ independent of *what is said*: ✓

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5. Conclusion

- ▶ The K-WAM understood in terms of conversational implicature is unplausible.
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GAP.7