ON GRICE'S CIRCLE (FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SEMANTICS/PRAGMATICS DEBATE).[1]

by
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This paper deals with a theory-internal problem of current pragmatic theories, called 'Grice's circle'. The circle stems from the fact that conversational implicatures take their input from truth-conditional content and the latter is constituted on the basis of pragmatic inference (following a number of recent proposals based on the notion of 'explicature' or 'impliciture'). This paper deals with a conversational fragment whose aim is to contribute to the understanding of the Gricean circle; it furthermore explores two logical possibilities: explicatures are non-cancellable (hence a possible way to avoid the vicious circularity called 'Grice's circle'); explicatures and implicatures are worked out in parallel and a number of cross-referencings are allowed.

This paper is dedicated to the memory of my dear father, Giuseppe Capone, who still accompanies me in life.

Introduction

Frege (1956), Strawson (1950), and Stalnaker (1970) may be considered the first pioneers in the area of the semantics/pragmatics debate, even if their names are not quoted in the recent works by Carston (1999), Bach (1994, 1999b) and Levinson (2000), which build on and amplify their intuitions. The basic insights are that in many cases a sentence cannot constitute a complete thought and that, on such occasions, only an utterance is something that can be said to be true or false. In this paper, I shall contribute to the semantics/pragmatics debate by proposing some considerations on the nature of pragmatic intrusion into full propositional forms ready for truth-conditional evaluation. I shall start with an example of pragmatic intrusion and I shall then gradually move on to the analysis of 'Grice's circle', a theory-internal problem in the current semantics/pragmatics debate (implicatures take their input from what is said, but what is said takes its input from

pragmatics). I propose a tentative solution to this circle. I end the paper by considering the space of alternatives to this solution.

1.1. Pragmatic intrusionism: a story

I shall start this paper with a story that may serve as an example bearing on the semantics/pragmatics debate, in order to expand the data on which standard discussions are based.

M.V.M., who lives on the other side of the straits of Messina, in Reggio Calabria, complains about the traffic. The last time she came to Messina (where the conversation occurs), she got stuck in the city traffic in Reggio for three quarters of an hour. She says: 'I should have walked to the harbour. The distance between my house and the harbour is only ten minutes' walk'. I reply: 'Then why don't you walk to the harbour, instead of getting stuck in the traffic?' She continues: 'I have got a sore leg. And then, when I come back, I have got to walk uphill and it takes much longer'. What M.V.M. means, when she says 'The distance between my house and the harbour is only ten minutes' walk' is 'It only takes ten minutes to walk from my house to the harbour, since my house is situated higher than the harbour'. She does not mean: 'It takes ten minutes to walk from the harbour to my house'. Presumably, she could rely on me, as I know that she lives somewhere up the hill, to understand that her intention is to let me know that the distance between her house and the harbour, when it is measured in terms of time, is equivalent to a ten minutes' walk, starting at her house and ending at the harbour. I understand that she means that it takes her ten minutes to walk from her house to the harbour, and not to walk from the harbour to the house, because the context of utterance (what she has previously said, as selected by my cognitive ability to make it bear on the utterance interpretation (Sperber & Wilson 1986)) makes it clear enough that this is her intention. She has been talking so far of the event of her getting trapped in the traffic while driving from her house to the harbour. Supposing that this topic and her utterance 'The distance between my house and the harbour is ten minutes' walk' are connected, I make the inference that this distance (the length of the event of her going) amounts to the length of the event of her going

from her house to the harbour. In the conversation, it is also clear that she is contrasting the event of her getting stuck in the traffic for three quarters of an hour with the possible event of her walking from her house to the harbour. The contrast is more effective if the events contrasted are sufficiently similar, that is if they both describe M.V.M.'s going from her house to the harbour. In context, it is clear that she cannot be contrasting her driving the car from her house to the harbour with her walking from the harbour to her house, as they are not comparable events. Although both events involve covering the same distance, the direction of the walking/going is different.[2]

So far, I have discussed what seems to me to be an interesting example that bears on our understanding of the semantics/pragmatics debate. This example illustrates one of the possible ways in which one can express distance; M.V.M.'s utterance employs just one of the possible ways in which one can answer questions about distance. M.V.M.'s utterance measures distance in terms of the time that an event of going takes. It cannot be said that measuring distance in terms of the time that it takes one to go from one end to the other of the journey is unusual. In English (but also in some other languages) you could ask a passer-by to provide an answer to the question 'How far is London from Oxford? ', and he would probably consider the following answer appropriate: 'It's one hour by bus'. He could have said 'It's one hour by train'. Or he could have merely said 'It's one hour', meaning that if one takes the most customary form of transport, the bus, it takes one an hour to travel from Oxford to London (presupposition: in Britain, but not in Italy, the bus is the customary form of transport for shorter distances). Some pragmatic process (whose aim is to develop the logical form of the sentence into a proposition) is clearly resorted to in the understanding of this utterance. The habit to measure distance in terms of the time that it takes one to cover that distance is rooted in the ability to make equivalences. For example, I could say 'It takes one three quarters of an hour to travel from Barcellona to Messina by bus'. If one knows that on average a bus travels at the speed of 70 km/hour, then one is able to deduce that the distance from Barcellona to Messina is 52.5 km. But surely this is not the way we process utterances. We usually stop at the information concerning the time span required to cover a distance. After all, we

need to know the distance in order to be able to make calculations about the time it would take us to get to a location and, thus, when we are told that it takes a certain amount of time to go from one place to another, we are quite happy and we stop there. Does this mean that when we ask questions such as 'How far is London from Oxford?', in fact, we ask 'How long does it take one to travel from Oxford to London?'. Here, opinions may diverge. I suppose that one could ask a question such as 'How far is London from Oxford?', merely requiring information about spatial distance. A cartographer who is interested in measuring distance in terms of kilometres/miles may leave aside the issue of temporal distance and may concentrate on matters such as measuring space in terms of kilometres. But some kind of relativity is involved in this case as well. Suppose you are in Cyprus, and you want to travel from Nicosia to Enna, a mountain road that is full of bends. Although the cartographer could very well measure the distance by means of a straight line (that is to say, by letting a line pass through the two ends, and then measuring the result with the two points as its extremes), these data are hardly useful. If you investigate the possibility of travelling daily from Enna to Nicosia, you will be overjoyed at the data provided by the cartographer. However, if he were to provide you with data concerning the distance in terms of the road you have to travel (appropriately measured, say, by driving a car and watching its controls), you would be disappointed, as the distance then will be bigger.

I have so far shown that utterances that answer the question 'How far is x from y?' may show an interesting kind of speaker/hearer relativity. Going back to the issue whether *How far is London from Oxford?*, is a question about temporal or spatial distance, I believe that this is a genuine case of what Jaszczolt (1999) calls an 'interpretative ambiguity'. Presumably, the question is interpretatively ambiguous and might refer to distance in terms of travel time or to distance in terms of spatial coordinates. Even in the latter case, some kind of relativity affects the interpretation of the utterance, as this is not interpreted as 'Please provide me with data concerning the distance between two points measured by a straight line that passes through them (and has the two points as its ends)'.

I would now like to return to the initial story, in order to deepen our understanding of what goes on there. M.V.M. says 'The distance between my house and the harbour is ten minutes' walk'. That amounts to 'If you measure the distance between my house and the harbour, is equivalent to a ten minutes' walk'. Obviously, this needs further interpretation. One who has the habit of walking from the harbour to M.V.M.'s house would say that it is false that the distance is ten minutes' walk. In fact, it takes one eighteen minutes to go up to M.V.M.'s house. But surely we would not say that M.V.M.'s utterance is false. What she meant, saying 'The distance between my house and the harbour is ten minutes' walk', is 'It takes ten minutes to go down to the harbour from my house'.

There are alternatives to what M.V.M. says. Of course M.V.M. could have said *The distance from my house to the harbour is ten minutes' walk*. This would have been different from *The distance from the harbour to my house is ten minutes' walk*. We must arrive at the conclusion that either it is the case that *The distance from my house to the harbour is ten minutes' walk* and *The distance from the harbour to my house is ten minutes' walk* have a different truth-conditional (semantic) import, or that the asymmetry in meaning is due to pragmatic conditions. Of course, if we consider a flat surface as providing the context of utterance, there is no considerable difference between the two utterances. But if we consider rougher surfaces, the difference could be quite great. The difference seems to be of a semantic kind. The point of departure, which is marked by a prepositional phrase (*from* …), encodes the point from which distance is measured. Then, it is obvious that there is an asymmetry in terms of semantics between *The distance from my house to the harbour is ten minutes' walk* and *The distance from the harbour to my house is ten minutes' walk*. One of these two utterances could be true while the other could be false. Let us consider the two cases in detail. Consider (1) and (2):

(1) The distance from my house to the harbour is ten minutes' walk.
(2) The distance from the harbour to my house is ten minutes' walk.

Example (1) could be paraphrased as: for any typical event w_i taken at random such that w_i is a walk by the speaker (X) from X's house to the harbour (y), then w_i lasts no less than ten minutes and no longer than ten minutes (i.e, exactly ten minutes); this typical event w_i gives you the measure of the distance between X's house and Y. Example (2) could be paraphrased as: for any typical event w_j taken at random such that w_j is a walk by the speaker (X) from the harbour (y) to X's house, then w_j lasts ten minutes and no longer than ten minutes (i.e, exactly ten minutes). This typical event w_j gives you the measure of the distance between y and X's house. It appears that both (1) and (2) require some interpretative work that will make explicit the agent of the walking and the implicit argument of 'walk': *from …to …*The logical form of (1) is obtained by coindexing the PP that acts as a restrictive modifier in the NP (the distance from … to …) and the implicit argument of 'walk' *from …to …* that is projected by the verb 'walk'.

This coindexing may appear to be a matter of semantics. Consider the case in which the surface we are considering is flat. Let us look at the following example in this context:

(3) The distance from X's house to y is ten minutes' walk.

As the surface we are considering is flat, the distance from X's house to y is equal to the distance from y to X's house. Yet, we will not say that (3) has the same import as *The distance from y to X's house is ten minutes' walk*. In Fregean terminology, the sense of the latter sentence is very different from that expressed by (3). The way the distance is measured is part of the sense of (3).

We have seen that there is a difference between saying 'The distance between my house and the harbour is ten minutes' walk' and saying 'The distance from my house to the harbour is ten minutes' walk'. We have assumed that when M.V.M. says 'The distance between my house and the harbour is ten minutes' walk', she means something like 'It takes me ten minutes to walk from my house to the harbour and this typical event of my walking from my house to the harbour measures the distance from my house to the harbour'. She could have meant, equally plausibly, 'It takes one ten minutes to walk from my house to the harbour and this typical event of one's walking from my

house to the harbour measures the distance from my house to the harbour'. The alternative between 'It takes me …' and 'It takes one …' is based on a conspicuous difference in meaning. The former interpretation is speaker-relative. The second interpretation is also speaker-relative, as by 'one' the speaker presumably means 'one who is like me; one who has my abilities and limitations'. However, the reference to the speaker, in the latter case, is merely indirect. Surely the speaker does not mean that it takes Superman ten minutes to get from X's house to y. Although both interpretations are speaker-relative, the former makes reference directly to the speaker in the sense that the speaker is the understood argument of 'walk', whereas the latter makes an indirect reference to a (possible) speaker.

2.1. The classical views

Frege (1956) broached the semantics/pragmatics issue by reflecting on what a (complete) thought is. Not surprisingly, he thought that knowledge of the elements of the context of utterance went into the expression of a thought. His examples make use of deictic expressions such as 'here' and 'there'. Clearly, he argued, in a number of cases it is not possible to evaluate a sentence for truth or falsity, unless it is enriched with contextual clues that provide the content of the deictic elements. He also argued that only a sentence supplemented by a time indication can express a thought. The example he uses is *The tree there is covered with green leaves*. This utterance, which is true now, may be false in six months' time. He correctly remarks that, after all, that sentence, uttered in six months, does not express the same thought.

Frege's intuition is of extreme importance. Matters such as contradictions must be settled in the same context, since, with the passing of time, the same sentence may express a different thought. Thus, it is crucial, in showing that a statement is contradictory, to assume (or explicitly state) that the time variables implicit in the sentences of the statement to be tested share the same time index. When no connectives are used to link sentences, nothing can guarantee that the thoughts they express are true (or false) at the same instant of time. Thus, a contradiction is perceived on the **tacit assumption** that

the context is kept the same. Things may change when we consider sentences that are explicitly conjoined through connectives. Thus, if you say *The car is green and the car is not green*, this counts as a contradiction, as it is understood that the speaker claims that the car is green and the car is not green at the same instant of time.

In the same vein, Bakhtin (1986) repeatedly points out that sentences can be contradictory, but only speakers (in utterances) can disagree. Strawson (1950) similarly pointed out that only utterances, not sentences, can be said to be true or false. We may extrapolate this thought from his important discussion of referential expressions and their presuppositions. For Strawson, it is absurd to ask whether the sentence *The table is covered with books* is true or false. Before being able to consider the issue of truth or falsity, we need to establish the reference of 'The table'. Once reference is established, we are dealing with an utterance and not with a sentence. The sentence cannot be true or false, because it is not about a specific object. Strawson uses another example to support his position. Consider the sentence *The king of France is wise*, uttered by two different individuals on two different occasions. Uttered during the reign of Louis XIV, the sentence expresses something very different from whatever it means when uttered during the reign of Louis XV. Thus, we cannot say that the sentence taken by itself is true in the reign of Louis XIV and false in the reign of Louis XV. A sentence like this cannot be true or false.[3]

Stalnaker (1970) holds a position that is not very different from Frege's and Strawson's. In fact, he explicitly says that pairing a sentence with a context of use yields a proposition, something that has a specific truth value in a specific possible world. I assume this position is well-known.

2.2. Standard recent views on the semantics/pragmatics debate

So far, we have seen what some classical authors had to say on the important issue of whether a sentence expresses a thought. Now, I shall discuss some recent standard approaches to the semantics /pragmatics debate. I shall not provide an exhaustive conspectus of the literature that bears on this debate, but I will need to touch on the

main problems, hoping to propose some solutions. Grice (1989) defined implicatures as meaning augmentations, based on what is said plus the assumption that the Cooperative Principle is being obeyed. In my reading of Grice, what is said depends on the words used and the syntactic relations into which they enter; the encoding and interpretation of their meaning is assisted by some linguistic conventions. In addition, according to Bach (2001a), Grice assumed some compositionality principle. Grice's conversational implicatures were non-conventional and cancellable; however, testing for cancellability is problematic, as Grice was well aware. In particular, he realized that in the case of an ambiguous sentence, it is always possible to cancel at least one reading. Thus he was careful enough to say that cancellability is neither necessary nor sufficient as a test. Of course, Grice must have been aware that in the case of sentences containing indexicals, the meaning of what is said is obtained by letting the sentential meaning interact with some contextual clues, properly selected as part of speaker's meaning (following the considerations of Frege and Strawson, as discussed above); thus, he must have accepted that reference-fixing and disambiguation should lead to what is said, in one sense of what is said, namely the sense in which what is proffered is legitimately ascribed to a speaker, although its linguistic form may change (as pointed out by Davidson (1984)). It ought to be noted that Grice's view of what is said is very close to Kasher's (1991) view that what has been said results from the integration of the output of the language module with some output of a perception module. Presumably, this view bases itself on some notion of shared knowledge that is finitely representable (Kasher 1991:572).

Some more recent theories offer striking contrasts to Grice's classical view of pragmatics. Carston (1999), Bach (1994, 1999b), Levinson (2000) and Récanati (2002) provide some of the most important recent contributions to the semantics/pragmatics debate. Carston believes that pragmatics intrudes into what is said and that implicatures take their input from it (following Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995)). Carston calls the inferential enrichments that contribute the propositional forms explicatures. Récanati (2002:113) calls these inferential enrichments *primary pragmatic processes*. According to

Récanati, these are psychological processes that take us from the meaning of the sentence to the content of the utterance; they are realized in the brain, although they need not involve the representation of the speaker's beliefs and intentions. Instead, Bach (1994a, 1999) believes, as does Grice, that what is said is constituted by the meanings assigned to the utterances based on the lexemes used and certain linguistic conventions (among these, the ones dealing with compositional effects). What is said may include contextual information that determines reference or disambiguates utterance meaning; it needs to be completed or expanded towards a full propositional form. This is obtained by calculating the **implicitures** of the utterance[4] on the basis of what is said: by putting together what is said and the implicitures, one obtains the full propositional forms, on the basis of which conversational implicatures can be calculated.

Bach does not accept Carston's view of what is said. In his opinion, the latter equates saying with stating, whereas Bach himself takes a more literal view of what is said, identifying it with the 'locutionary act' in Austin's sense. Bach (1994b) quotes the case of reporting in order to show that it is legitimate to report just what is said (literally) and that, thus, his notion of 'what is said' is quite robust. My own impression is that there might be two views of what is said, one which corresponds to Bach's position and the other to that held by Carston. If, on the one hand, it is legitimate to use 'say' in a literal (locutionary) sense, a sense which is justified by the fact that we can report (just) what is literally said (e.g. 'She said you are not going to die'), on the other hand it might be claimed that even reports of what is said are subject to pragmatic intrusion. Thus, an utterance such as 'She said you are not going to die' might be understood as 'She said you are not going to die from this particular disease'. Bach might retort that such an inferential enrichment is not always possible, as it presupposes that the hearer of the report shares the same context of utterance with the report and, furthermore, with the person who authored the utterance. As it is always possible to report an utterance without having to supply information about the context in which it was said, Bach's view appears to be immune to the above objection.

The controversy cannot be easily settled. Suffice it to say that even a philosopher such as Cresswell (2000) thinks that the notion of 'same

saying' involved in Davidson's paratactic account of utterances such as 'X said that' must be pragmatic. However, Bach might very well grant this point, considering that his notion of what is said incorporates reference-fixing.

There is another important difference between Carston's and Bach's views. In Bach's view, that which lies behind implicitures are some reflexive intentions. In other words, the speaker intends his communicative intention to be recognized by the hearer; this recognition constitutes the hearer's basis for believing a proposition. Carston does not favour this model of communication. Furthermore, for Bach, communicating is possible through the resolution of a coordination problem, while there is no such coordination problem for Carston.

I believe that one can alternate between the two notions of 'what is said'; in particular, one can alternate between Bach's view that the inferences that build up full propositional forms are reflexive, and made possible through the resolution of a coordination problem (as shown in the M.V.M. example above), and a view like Carston's that the inferences building propositional forms are not reflexive, instantaneous, and unconscious. Thus, I would support Récanati's (2002) careful claim that 'the processes in question, *qua* causal processes somehow realized in the brain, need not involve the representation of the speaker's beliefs and intentions' (p. 113). This claim leaves open the possibility that reflexive inferences (as in the M.V.M. case), can contribute to the full propositional form.

Despite these differences, I believe that both Bach and Carston have got to admit that implicatures, as distinct from implicitures or explicatures, take input from full propositional forms. Thus, I fundamentally agree with Récanati (2002) that conversational implicatures 'in the strict sense, are inferentially derived from premises concerning the speaker's intentions in saying what he says' (p. 114) and that 'the interpreter has to be aware of what is said, aware of what is implied, and aware of the inferential connection between them' (p. 114).

Levinson (2000) also proposes that pragmatics intrudes into propositional forms and thus is constitutive of truth-conditional meaning (read: truth-conditional content) but, unlike Bach and

Carston, he does not differentiate terminologically between inferences that contribute to propositional forms and inferences that take input from propositional forms.

The examples that support the analyses just exposed are of the following type:

(4) If the king of France died and France became a republic, I would be happy but if France became a republic and the king of France died, I would be unhappy.
(5) Take these three plates to those three people over there (there is another set of four plates close to the set of three plates).
(6) You will not die (said to John who has just cut his arm).
(7) I am not ready (to start the journey).

If just what is literally said is taken into account, (4) (on the above views) must count as a contradiction. However, the statement is not contradictory if we admit that pragmatics intrudes into what is said and that 'and' will then be interpreted as 'as a result of that' (in accordance with Carston), or that it expands what is said (in accordance with Bach, who claims that there is some middle ground between what is said and conversational implicatures). In (5), scalar conversational implicatures either determine or further develop what is said, in this way determining full propositional forms. A scalar conversational implicature is one that takes input from a lexeme that is part of an ordered set of expressions based on certain characteristics such as entailment, semantic relatedness, and lexical simplicity (the scalar items must be equally lexicalised, according to Levinson (2000)). If two lexemes x, y form a scale <x, y>, such that x entails y, then by the use of y the speaker will implicate that, for all he knows, the stronger item is not applicable. Levinson (2000) argues that the references to the set of plates and the set of people in (5) are properly established/fixed by scalar implicatures that serve to properly differentiate the sets in question; and indeed, without scalar implicatures, it is not possible to properly distinguish the set of three plates from the set of four plates, as the cardinal number would serve to refer to an unbounded series of objects, having just an inferior limit of at least three. In (6), some expansion work is needed to transform the sentence into a statement

that can be true (the statement will be understood to mean 'You will not die from this cut'). Without this inferential expansion, the statement will be necessarily false. In fact, it might be possible to explain this example of expansion in a different way: it might be claimed that, in the absence of the process of expansion, the pragmatic anomaly exhibited by the sentence is its lack of relevant specificity, as is made clear by the positive version of this example. Suppose that an oncologist says to his patient 'You are going to die'. Presumably, he does not say something that is trivially true; on the contrary, we may assume that this utterance possesses relevant specificity (Bach 2002). In (7), what is said needs to be completed in order to arrive at a complete thought.

2.3. Grice's circle

In this section, I will address a theory-internal theoretical problem known as 'Grice's circle'. So far, we have considered the theoretical implications of some examples that are standardly taken to support recent views of the semantics/pragmatics debate. Now it is time to consider the difficulties with each of these views. First off, it is not clear how to define pragmatics on these views (nor is it clear that the authors in question actually attempt to provide a broad, general definition of pragmatics). All these proposals have abandoned the neat definitional proposal in Levinson (1983), according to which pragmatics amounts to meaning minus truth-conditional semantics. That proposal has the advantage of offering a picture in which semantics and pragmatics play complementary roles (although that picture is too simplified)[5]. If you know what semantics is, you know what pragmatics is. That proposal fitted in very well with Grice's original view of pragmatics, according to which conversational implicatures are cancellable. For Levinson (2000), who adopts the view that conversational implicatures contribute to truth-conditional content (read: propositional forms), the pragmatic enterprise that concedes that pragmatics intrudes into semantics (read: truth-conditional content) is a circular, hence definitionally impossible enterprise. Conversational implicatures, in fact, take input from what is said but what

is said takes input from conversational implicatures; this is what I have called 'Grice's circle'.

So far, we have confined our attention to generalized conversational implicatures. But there are other types to consider as well. Grice has divided non-logical inferences into two types: generalized and particularized implicatures. Generalized implicatures are those that arise in a default context, that is to say, without the assistance of a particular context. Particularized implicatures are those that arise in particular contexts. It might be thought that the distinction between generalized and particularized implicatures correlates with the distinction between instantaneous and non-instantaneous inferences. Non-instantaneous implicatures involve a complex, lengthy, time-consuming argument. One stops to reflect on what the speaker must have meant. Suppose that one of my students, out of the blue, mentions a topic such as the changes in government policy concerning academic job competitions. There might be a reason why he suddenly mentions this topic – especially if it is not sufficiently connected with previous conversational issues. I might reason that if he mentions this topic, then he must have an interest in it. I may form the intuition that the reason why he mentions it is that he is broaching the issue 'jobs'. I may reinforce my impression by including various other premises. For example, he may have mentioned at some previous stage that he is running out of money, from which I infer that sooner or later he may need a job. In this case, implicature calculation is not instantaneous.

I think that the distinction between instantaneous and non-instantaneous inferences might be rejected on the grounds that the view that some inferences are instantaneous is an exaggeration (see Bach 1999). Any calculation takes some time, and this is true even when we calculate inferences that appear to be default. Some theorists such as Jaszczolt (1999) have noted that in a number of cases (referentially and attributively ambiguous NPs, *de re*/*de dicto* interpretations of NPs embedded in belief contexts, etc.), interpretatively ambiguous utterances are processed in such a way that the default reading is immediately yielded, without the hearer having to stop to think about what the speaker might mean. Although I do not quite accept Jaszczolt's view of the semantics/pragmatics debate (she conflates semantics and pragmatics, overlooking the arbitrary nature of

semantics (in the Saussurian sense) in contrast to pragmatics), I think she has a point in claiming that one is not conscious of inferential calculation in cases such as the above. One does not stop to construct an argument to work out what the speaker means. It is not a question of having to decide that the inferential process takes place in, say, time x. When I say that an inference is instantaneous, I mean that the hearer is not conscious of the calculation he performs. Possibly, the calculation is 'unconscious' in that, having made it once for similar cases, the hearer need not replicate it every time. In those cases which I call non-instantaneous inferences, the hearer is conscious of an argument by which he calculates a speaker's implicature, as I have shown in the example of the student who volunteers a remark about changes in academic laws.

In light of the difficulties involved in deciding if an inference is instantaneous or not, one may want to abandon this terminology altogether, and instead distinguish between non-conscious inferential calculations and conscious inferential calculations. The issue cannot be easily settled, however. On the one hand, Bach believes that the case for instantaneous inferences is an exaggeration. On the other hand, Récanati (2002) claims that even implicatures of the conscious, reflexive sort are not always time-consuming. One may surely, in virtually no time, represent in one's mind an argumentative procedure by which an inference is calculated. So, all we are left with is a distinction between reflexive and non-reflexive inferences. Explicatures, in this sense, are typically of the second type. I believe that this tells us something of importance about these mental processes.

It is time to turn to particularized implicatures. Consider the following example:

(8) A: I need to buy some petrol.
B: There are two garages round the corner.

As Grice has noted, utterances need to be related in order to make up a coherent and cooperative conversation. Thus, B's utterance will very well be interpreted as 'If you want to buy some petrol, you will find

some by going to either of the two garages round the corner'. This particularized implicature, one may notice, arises after the hearer builds up fully truth-evaluable propositional forms. Thus, it seems reasonable to suppose that some pragmatic mechanisms must have provided the full propositional forms (for example, the scalar implicature arising from the use of 'two' must have been calculated before relation implicatures arise). But the need to consider such implicated assumptions as part of the truth-conditionally evaluable content raises the question whether we should reformulate the notion of conversational implicature itself. In addition, another associate question arises: if an implicature contributes to truth-conditional content, is it then non-truth-conditional (that is, can it be cancelled)? I will answer the latter question and then turn to the former.[6]

2.4. Can implicatures that intrude into propositional forms be cancelled?

The question whether we can cancel implicatures that intrude into propositional forms is intriguing. Consider again the examples (4) - (6), here represented as (9) - (11) for convenience's sake:

(9) If the king of France died and France became a republic, I would be happy but if France became a republic and the king of France died, I would be unhappy.
(10) Take these three plates to those three people over there (there is another set of four plates close to the set of three plates).
(11) You will not die (said to John who has just cut his arm).

Suppose somebody utters (9), then goes on cancelling the resulting implicature of causality:

(12) But I do not mean to say that if France became a republic as a result of the fact that the king of France had died, I would be happy and that if the king of France died as a consequence of the fact that France had become a republic, I would be unhappy.

Cancelling the causality implicature, in order to obviate a possibly contradictory statement, results in an unacceptable utterance; hence, in this case, it is not possible, in my view, to build the propositional form, allowing for pragmatic intrusion, and then cancel the related implicature, without rendering the discourse incoherent. While in ordinary cases of implicature cancellation, the speaker can still be said to have said something intelligible, something that is coherent in itself and non-contradictory, in cases where pragmatics contributes in a decisive way to the propositional form, that contribution cannot be withdrawn without causing havoc.

Likewise, in (10), the scalar implicature (exactly three plates; exactly three people) serves to identify reference. Thus, if reference fixing is its point, it cannot be cancelled. It would be odd to add (13) to (10)

(13) but I do not mean that the set of plates I am referring to is constituted by only three plates.

The fact that the set is constituted by three plates may distinguish it from a set of, say, four plates. Cancelling the implicature results in a statement that cannot be assessed as true or false.

Presumably, (11) needs some expansion, resulting in a particularized implicature, and thus it will not be possible to cancel the implicature 'not dying from this cut' without making a necessarily false statement. Without this expansion, the speaker will have to be understood as meaning that the addressee will never die – a highly implausible understanding, to say the least. Cancelling the implicature will result in attributing an implausible intention to the speaker.

Examples like these, where implicatures intrude into propositional forms with a subsequent effort to cancel those very implicatures can be multiplied *ad libitum*. If the inferential expansions in question cannot be cancelled without the resulting perception that the utterance is false or that it is not possible to assess it for truth, then we are faced with a class of inferential processes which are distinct from conversational implicatures (the latter, in fact, unlike explicatures, still being cancellable on the present view).

Such inferential completions/expansions are like implicatures in their mode of inference, but unlike implicatures in that they cannot be cancelled; hence they have to be called 'explicatures', adopting Carston's terminology[7], to distinguish them neatly from implicatures. Explicatures are inferential processes that complete or expand logical forms. Although they are constructed instantaneously and need not be reflexive or conscious, we 'are still dealing with conceptual representtations manipulated under constraints of rationality' (Récanati 2002:121). They take their input from logical forms, whereas implicatures take their input from fully truth-evaluable propositional forms. While explicatures seem to be determined by the need to conform to the convention of truthfulness, conversational implicatures may skirt the issue of truth. Explicatures and implicatures are clearly distinguished in that the former serve to constitute a compound statement that can be true or false, the latter serve to evade the issue of truth.

3.1. A tentative solution

In the preceding section, I have discussed a possible problem that theories of the semantics/pragmatics debate encounter, that is, the non-cancellability of explicatures. It may turn out, however, that this theoretical problem carries the key to its own solution. Conversational implicatures take their input from what is said; they should not take their input from conversational implicatures. It might be objected, that, after all, what is said is also obtained thanks to pragmatic intrusion, and that in this way any solution is circular: we build on pragmatics to solve a pragmatic problem. I might reply that although the mode of inference is pragmatic, the result obtained is part of the truth-conditional content and thus, in a sense, it lacks the essential features of pragmatics (defined as non-truth-conditional meaning).

In order to better understand the kind of phenomena we are facing, here, it might be useful to make an analogy. Consider the NP 'Going to Paris' in the sentence *Going to Paris is a fantastic project!* Is this a verb or a noun? We are tempted to reply that it is both verb and noun. Still, as linguists, most of us will reply that it is a noun phrase.

Language involves certain transformations, and it is possible that what started its life as a verb ends up as a noun phrase. In the same way, it is possible that what started its life as a pragmatic inference ends up being a truth-conditional aspect of meaning. We can say that, in a sense, conversational implicatures are blind to whether the propositional form that gives rise to them has been obtained by recourse to pragmatics. Implicatures are not sensitive to the pragmatic status of an inference once it has been precipitated as a truth-conditional aspect of meaning. Hence the problem of 'Grice's circle' does not arise, because, meanwhile, the implicature has been transformed into something that is not an implicature: viz., an explicature (in Carston's terminology). Whereas implicatures are cancellable, explicatures are not: they arise out of what is said, that is to say out of non-cancellable aspects of meaning.

We can still define 'core' pragmatics as dealing with those inferential phenomena that take input from truth-conditional meaning and give as output conversational implicatures. The problem is that now we have non-core pragmatics, a residue that deals with completions and expansions and generates full propositional forms, and thus seemingly jeopardizes a unified definition. The problem vanishes, however, if we define pragmatics as those inferential phenomena that are *potentially* non-truth-conditional – i.e. non-truth-conditional unless they are needed to construct a full propositional form.

Before concluding this section, it may be good to preempt a possible anxiety. We have talked about implicature cancellation but we have not ventured a proper definition of cancellation. It is my understanding that Grice thought of cancellability as a property of implicatures, whereby an utterance that potentially (conversationally) implicates a message can lose its implicature in the context of a further utterance that explicitly denies the intention of the message as it is reflected in the implicature. Of course, a speaker who somehow implicates an assumption will (usually and provisionally) be understood as also meaning it. But he can cancel the implied proposition in such a way that he appears only to have meant something more innocent, something that excludes the implicated proposition. In cancelling an implicature, a speaker can go back to a more innocent or less loaded

message (but still to a message of some kind, something that is a full proposition): the implicature can be taken back, to use Bach's terminology. Explicatures, on the other hand, cannot be cancelled, because the result of cancelling them is to fail to communicate something specific, since in the absence of an explicature what is said would be underdetermined, underspecified, incomplete or even an apriori falsehood (alternatively, a trivial truth). A cancelled explicature results in an incomplete thought or a thought that cannot be seriously imputed to the speaker, since to impute such a thought to him would be to accuse him of producing a contradiction, a falsehood, or even a trivial truth.

Admittedly, the discussion so far has touched on an intricate issue and I do not pretend that my considerations cannot be gainsaid. One possible objection would be that implicatures, too, when cancelled, may result in incoherent discourse; in particular, implicatures that repair violations of the maxim of relation cannot be cancelled for this very reason. There is a way out of this difficulty, however. In the case of an incoherent discourse resulting from cancelling an implicature required in order to safeguard the relation maxim, the person who is responsible for the discourse will be said to have generated a text that lacks coherence or intelligibility. While the fragments of this discourse have a truth-conditional content (they can be evaluated as true or false), it is simply difficult to put the pieces that are there together and form argumentative relations; but, since the pieces are there, we can say that, from the point of view of truth-conditional content, some complete thoughts have been expressed. If we are content with this solution, we can say that indeed relation implicatures can be cancelled without having to lead to the voicing of some incomplete or contradictory thoughts.

4.1. Expanding on the M.V.M. example

The M.V.M. example bears on the understanding of Grice's circle. Returning to the case discussed in section 1.1, the question is how M.V.M. can say: 'The distance between my house and the harbour is a ten minutes' walk'. We need a lot of inferential work before we obtain

the full propositional form. First, we need to know who the speaker is, in order to be able to say that the utterance means that the distance between M.V.M.'s house and the harbour is ten minutes' walk. Then we need a scalar implicature: ten minutes > exactly ten minutes. We also need to fill in the thematic roles projected by 'walk', assuming that the speaker or someone who is sufficiently similar to the speaker (i.e. M.V.M.) is the person who does the walking and that the walk is a walk from M.V.M.'s house to the harbour and not the other way round. However, even after all this expansion work, some further pragmatic enrichments could accrue to this utterance. Suppose M.V.M. said:

(14) The distance between my house and the harbour is ten minutes' walk. And I got stuck in the traffic with my car!

Presumably, she might conversationally implicate that the next time, she will walk down to the harbour. But then again, she might not. After all, she has to walk up from the harbour to her house, and that might take her eighteen minutes. She may not be prepared for this long a walk. But perhaps the context makes it clear that she is so upset by the chaotic traffic that she might undertake the walk from the harbour to her house. We notice how this implicature is defeasible, in contrast to the explicature that it takes her ten minutes to walk down from her house to the harbour. After all, the latter is supported by our world knowledge, and that – unless a miracle happens – is not defeasible.

I propose we concentrate on this latter point: the defeasibility of the explicature. After all, if the context changes, we would not have any explicature, which should be enough to show that it is defeasible. Here it is of importance not to confuse defeasibility with context-dependency. A context provides some objective clues for the interpretation of an utterance (Récanati 2002). If the context were different, the utterance would be interpreted in a different way. So, if, in the presence of a chair, I say 'This chair is quite old', I cannot cancel the inference that this particular old chair is the one next to me. Surely the context may change and my utterance 'This chair is quite old' might in one context pick out a brown chair and in another, a yellow chair. But it will not usually do to let some contextual clues guide the inter-

pretation of an utterance and then cancel the contextual implication on the grounds that the context might be different. So, in the case of M.V.M.'s utterance, we cannot just let the contextual clues guide us to the interpretation 'The distance between M.V.M.'s house and the harbour is measurable in terms of a walk from M.V.M.'s house to the harbour', and then cancel the explicature on the grounds that the context could have been different. In this particular context, the above interpretation is the only plausible one. Any alternative interpretation, in fact, would be false in that context and amount to assuming that M.V.M. does not know that which, in fact, she knows very well – a rather unreasonable assumption. The explicature, in this case, enables us to make sense of an utterance which otherwise might very well appear to be false.

Before concluding this section, I would like to compare the M.V.M. example with other standard examples. Consider again (4), repeated here as (15):

(15) If the king of France died and France became a republic I would be happy but if France became a republic and the king of France died, I would be unhappy.

Now suppose we cancel the explicature. We then end up with a sentence which, in Carston's view, is contradictory. However, along with Levinson's (2000) fictional *Obstinate Opponent*, we might claim that, after all, the contradictory sentence is rescued in virtue of a pragmatic readjustment due to the principle of charity. Levinson is quite right in noting that this tack would involve the premise that the sentence is a contradiction, as rescuing the sentence would impose some extra inferential burden. I think Levinson is quite right. To start with apparent incoherences to move on to coherent meanings obtained through the principle of charity is not a good strategy – for one thing, this strategy does not represent the way we process such sentences.[8]

But now one might object that a sentence like (15) is *not* contradictory. Contradiction, generally speaking and with the exception of sentences where an analytic constituent is negated, seems to be a logical property of statements (albeit in a loose sense we can talk of contradictory sentences). We can think of some time variables present

in the logical form of the conjoined sentences in (15), and when we instantiate these variables with adverbial or prepositional phrases, the sentence has the potential to form a perfectly coherent (or at least consistent or non-contradictory) utterance.[9] Of course, there is an implicature of consequence and this may very well render the statement more plausible. But this implicature is accompanied by one of a temporal kind. The two implicatures go hand in hand. They can even be cancelled both, in which case one is left with a logical form that is neither inconsistent nor incoherent from a temporal or causal implicature point of view.

Here, we shall skip the endless discussions about the presence of time variables in logical forms. Some theorists may object to our move, by saying that a view of things which does not have to posit time variables in logical forms is more parsimonious. While we may grant the legitimacy of this position, even so these theorists would have to show that sentences, in contrast to utterances, are contradictory. However, as the case of (overt or implicit) indexicals shows, it is utterances, and not sentences, that can be said to be contradictory (with the exception already voiced). Thus, when somebody utters (16), he or she seems *prima facie* to produce a contradiction:

(16) *This is grey. This is not grey.*

Outside of its context and without indexicals, what is uttered in (16) is contradictory. But it is simple to show that this sentence is neither contradictory nor non-contradictory. I once bought a stone at a mall which had a special property. It was grey but as you touched it, it changed its colour, it became green. In these circumstances, (16) would be a true sentence, which shows that, except for the case of analytic sentences, matters touching on contradiction have to be settled in context. Even so, one might argue that not all sentences involve deictic elements and that if a sentence is of the form *P and not P* (in other words, explicitly connecting a term and its negation), it must be contradictory. However, this is only the case under the tacit assumption that P is not a complex sentence, and that P is not interpretatively ambiguous. If P is a complex sentence and, furthermore, allows for ambiguous interpretations, then on one reading of P, we may have a

contradiction, while on another reading of P, we may not (Jaszczolt 1999). The result of uttering *P and not P* is thus not necessarily a contradiction, as the utterance is contradictory only on one set of readings.

Going back to our previous example (4), repeated below as (17), it might be claimed (a position Carston might advocate) that in

(17) If the king of France died and France became a republic I would be happy but if France became a republic and the king of France died, I would be unhappy,

the sentence as such (not the utterance) is contradictory, as it contains no indexicals. Here, even though we cannot point to any explicit time variables (e.g. in the shape of time adverbs), the possibility of an interpretative ambiguity (in the sense of Jaszczolt 1999) remains open. This is due to the fact that the temporal relations between the constituent sentences of each conjoined (complex) sentence (here, the sentences conjoined by 'but') have not been specified. A contradiction may arise only when we decide on a particular temporal configuration. The evidence of the configurations under which no contradiction arises (along with the examples in which overt deictic elements are present) allows us to say that the sentence is not contradictory *per se*.[10]

But there are examples which cannot be treated in the way I have dealt with (17). Consider again Bach's (expansion) example (6), repeated below as (18):

(18) You will not die.

(18) is more problematic than (4) and (5) are. (18) seems to express a falsehood, if taken literally.[11] Other examples, such as those involving genitive constructions also seem to be intractable to a purely semantic analysis (see Récanati 2002).

4.2. Does Bach's proposal avoid the Gricean circle?

One of the merits of Bach's impliciture proposal is that it seems to avoid Grice's circle. According to Bach, implicitures take input from what is said (in the literal sense of 'what is said'). What is said, in his view, is what has been *literally* voiced, supplemented by contextual clues that enable the speaker to fix reference. Bach believes that we can remain agnostic as to whether the speaker means what the proposition says. I have some doubts about this, as a certain amount of speaker meaning must be involved in order to allow what is said to be properly determined by access to referents of pronominals, proper nouns, or definite descriptions. Bach may try to overcome this objection by saying that, after all, reference can be assigned at a further stage – more precisely, at the stage at which implicitures are calculated, or even after this stage. But, on close reflection, Bach needs to say something like this in order to escape Grice's circle, as after all, the assignment of reference is based on pragmatic principles (for example, we determine the referents of proper names by selecting the most salient referents associated with such names); moreover, implicitures, which are pragmatic levels of meaning, would take their input from pragmatics if reference assignment occurred prior to their creation. The move that claims reference assignment to be parallel to implicitures is, although not altogether implausible, still not without its own problems – it involves our reasoning about certain schematic, to a certain extent even incomplete, propositions, while amending implausible or incomplete schematic interpretations by resorting to pragmatics.

Even granting all this, we still have to see if, and how, Bach escapes the Gricean circle. Presumably, the implicitures contribute to full propositions and such propositions are the basis of further pragmatic reasonings. Consider for example (19), uttered by my D.Phil. student in the course of a conversation with me, his supervisor:

(19) The government has changed the rule for academic competitions. But I will not die.

Presumably, the (abstractly) false proposition *I will not die* has to be expanded to 'I will not die as a result of this'. Now, there is the issue of whether the metaphorical level of meaning ('I will not fail to obtain an academic job') should be part of this impliciture, or whether it should merely be an implicature. If the latter, the implicature has to be worked out after the creation of the impliciture, and Grice's circle comes into effect. Now, Bach might deny this by saying that both the non-literal meaning and the ('as a result of this') inferred constituent are part of an impliciture. It might be observed that the student can utter the first part of (19) in order to implicate that he would like me to write a good reference for him. I would argue that the second part of (19) reinforces this implicature, as it brings out the relevance of the government's policy to the student's needs. If we assume – as I do – that the complete utterance (and its constituent parts) conversationally implicate 'I would be grateful if you could write a good reference', then the implicature does take its input from the proposition expressed and from the impliciture that serves to flesh it out. So, in this respect, Bach is not immune to the Gricean circle either. What is needed is a solution similar to the one I have tentatively proposed above.

5. Concluding remarks

Even though my considerations may not be conclusive, I believe that my proposal is a possible way to resolve the dilemma of the Gricean circle. The only other way (if indeed there is one) would be to allow all inferential enrichments to happen simultaneously. Thus, if you hear the sentence *He saw some students*, you need not first choose a referent for 'he' and then compute the conversational implicature; you may do both simultaneously, and then merge the obtained results. If you hear the sentence/utterance *The three boys will not die* (implying: 'from these cuts'), you will not first compute the impliciture 'from these cuts' and then calculate the scalar implicature 'not (a group of) four boys', but you do both at the same time, thus avoiding the circle. There is certainly no circular procedure involved in Grice's original theory, as reference fixing or disambiguation can be done simultaneously with

calculating implicatures; the only problem I can see here has to do with particularized implicatures. Consider (20):

(20) A: The man having a martini has got eight children.
B: Now I understand why he drinks.

B conversationally implicates, by the maxim of relation, that the man has taken to drinking because he has eight children. The maxim must be invoked since, if no relation is presumed, then B could be supposed to understand on independent grounds why the man drinks (say, he has thought about this problem all day and now he has got this sudden illumination, without any connection to what A had said). Likewise, it could be argued that the relation implicature is dependent on an explicature (the hearer has to choose the referential, rather than the attributive, interpretation of the NP 'the man having a martini', furthermore, he has got to calculate the scalar implicature 'exactly eight'). Thus, the fleshing out of the propositional form has to be completed before the relation implicature can be calculated. Presumably, to set this case on the same footing as was done for the generalized implicatures considered so far in this alternative solution, we would have to say that the assignment of truth conditions is holistic – it is not done sentence by sentence, but makes reference to more complex discourses. It might be claimed, for example, that the preferentially anaphoric pronoun 'he' (see Levinson 2000 and references there), makes clear that 'the man having a martini' has to be interpreted referentially (and not attributively). Such a cross-sentential assignment of truth-conditional import, by which the relation implicature reinforces the referential interpretation of the NP 'the man having a martini' is not without interest. For even if Jaszczolt's theory is accepted, the preferential interpretation of NPs is referential and not attributive, and in this case, too, this preferred interpretation is reinforced by the relation implicature. B understands why the man having a martini drinks more than he should, since A has said that this man has eight children. The implicature reinforces the referential reading, but also promotes a reading of 'a martini' as 'more than one' (or: 'more than is good for the man'). This pragmatic expansion could not be effected unless the relation implicature were previously

computed, and, therefore, on such a holistic view, the circularity is not vicious. However, this alternative picture will have to be spelled out in greater detail; in particular, although attractive, the suggestion still will have to deal with an utterance interpretation over various strata and the need for some ordering even in the presence of necessary and permissible cross-referencing.

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Notes

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   I incorporate specific comments by Kent Bach, for which I would like to thank him.
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   This research was undertaken when I was a research fellow at the University of Messina.
2. If we imagine the distance as a straight line with a number of points between the extremes, we may suppose (with a certain amount of idealization) that in her walking, she passes through each section of the line (each section must be thought of as large enough to allow this idealization).
3. From this discussion we should not infer that **in general** a sentence is something that cannot be true or false, as sentences in which an analytic constituent is denied (e.g. A man is an individual who is not a man) can be said to be false (and customarily are). But the discussion makes it clear that in many cases a sentence is simply not something that can be said to be true or false.

4. Defined as inferential processes that allow the utterance to acquire a specific and plausible truth-value.
5. Bach (personal communication) believes that this picture not only is over-simplified but confused.
6. From now on I shall discuss the phenomenon called 'Grice's circle' with reference to Levinson's view, while incorporating Carston's suggestion to differentiate implicatures from explicatures.
7. The notion of 'explicature' is originally due to Sperber & Wilson (1986).
8. This strategy is also apparently refuted by Récanati's 'availability principle' (Récanati 2002).
9. It might be objected that, in this example, it is not so much the temporal dimension but the causal dimension that is at stake in the interpretation.
10. Something similar might be said of Levinson's (2000) 'plates' (example (5) above). Matters such as reference must be settled in context, as is well-known – but the sentence, without the explicature, still has a logical form that can be intelligibly understood and may provide the basis for further incrementations. My intention here is not to prove the relevance theorists or Levinson wrong. I have simply pointed out a different avenue of research, one that deprives Carston's and Levinson's ideas of their potential 'explosiveness' (I use Levinson's (2000) term) by stressing the fact that such considerations are the natural consequence of some classical assumptions by Frege, Strawson and Stalnaker. Neither were Grice's views necessarily different from theirs.
11. My own M.V.M. example is also more problematic than (8) and (9), as it introduces a kind of speaker-relativity that cannot be dealt with in terms of an underdetermined logical form only.

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