REFLECTIONS ON THE CANCELLABILITY
OF EXPLICATURES [1]

by

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> An explicature is a combination of linguistically encoded and contextually inferred conceptual features. The smaller the relative contribution of the contextual features, the more explicit the explicature will be, and inversely. (Sperber and Wilson 1986:182).

Introduction

There is no doubt that the boundary between semantics and pragmatics has been the object of much recent linguistic theorising and of fierce battles among scholars. Yet, it is part of dialectical conflicts that better theories emerge, in which a number of errors are purified, arguments are refined and perspectives are broadened. The aim of this paper is to reflect on the necessity of pragmatic development of propositional forms and to arrive at a better understanding of the level of meaning which Sperber and Wilson and Carston famously have called 'explicature', and to support the claim that (the pragmatically conveyed elements of) explicatures are not cancellable – unlike conversational implicatures[2]. My paper intends to fuel the discussion on the semantics/pragmatics debate by acknowledging the importance of the relevance theorists' contribution to the issue.

While the notion of explicature is originally Sperber and Wilson's (see Sperber and Wilson 1986), Robyn Carston, in a number of articles and in her 2002 book, has further refined the notion in extended discussions. Carston's monumental volume (2002a) has done much service to the cause of pragmatics by making it a more respectable discipline. Yet, if my idea that (the pragmatically conveyed elements of) explicatures are not cancellable is correct, a number of connected ideas

in that book are open to critique: and it is possible that such a theoretical move will precipitate positive consequences for the theory as a whole, as was claimed in Capone (2003; 2006) in a discussion of 'Grice's circle'. Here, however, for the sake of simplicity of discussion, I propose to divorce the issue of 'explicatures' from that of 'Grice's circle'. After critical discussion, I propose to revise the notion of explicature by taking into account the notion of asserting a proposition P, following Stainton (1994).

2. The cancellability of conversational implicatures (Grice)

On p. 39 of his 1989 book, Grice dwells on three tests for conversational implicatures: cancellability, non-detachability, and calculability. The discussion of cancellability is extended on pp. 44-45. Here I just deal with the text on p. 39:

> Since, to assume the presence of a conversational implicature, we have to assume that at least the Cooperative Principle is being observed, and since it is possible to opt out of the observation of this principle, it follows that a conversational implicature can be cancelled in a particular case. It may be explicitly cancelled, by the addition of a clause that states or implies that the speaker has opted out, or it may be contextually cancelled, if the form of an utterance that usually carries it is used in a context that makes it clear that the speaker is opting out. (Grice 1989:39)

The reader is referred to pp. 44-45, in which some examples of loose uses are discussed to set them apart from cases of real cancellability. That things are not always easy can be shown by using one of Grice's celebrated examples:

> A is writing a testimonial about a pupil who is a candidate for a philosophy job, and his letter reads as follows: 'Dear Sir, Mr. X's

command of English is excellent and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Yours etc.' (Gloss: A cannot be opting out, since if he wished to be uncooperative, why write at all? He cannot be unable, through ignorance, to say more, since the man is his pupil; moreover, he knows that more information than this is wanted. He must, therefore, be wishing to impart information that he is reluctant to write down. This supposition is tenable only if he thinks Mr. X is no good at philosophy. This, then, is what he is implicating). (Grice 1989:33)

Granting that the teacher here manages to convey a message that goes beyond what is literally said, and that the quantity of what is said (as well as the cost of reading all such information) is an element in the interception of the communicated message, I am not sure how the cancellability test applies here. One may contend that the implicature is not cancellable. I doubt that the teacher would be able to write a second letter saying 'I apologize for that cryptic message; I was in such a haste; Mr X would have deserved a longer letter, which I now hasten to provide, as follows. (…) In fact, I recommend Mr X for the philosophy job in question'. Implicated messages cannot be retracted, in certain **official circumstances**; intentions cannot be undone by further messages if the circumstances are such that these intentions are unequivocally calculated.

This is not to say that conversational implicatures, in general, cannot be cancelled. Of course they can. Suppose that a student of mine comes to visit me in my office one day and he starts to talk about family problems, saying that his grant is almost finished and that he still has got some work to do to finish his doctoral dissertation. He may expect me to work out what his tacit request is and wait patiently until it dawns on me that he needs another grant or the extension of the previous one. I am not so dull as to miss his communicative intention and I do not want to humiliate him by waiting until he directly requests the favour. I am not so sadistic as to ignore his plight and want him to go on talking and then come up with an explicit request. I may very

well anticipate such a request if I think I can satisfy it – or otherwise engage in some clever talk to drive home to him that there is nothing I can do to help him (I can use conversational implicatures, cannot I?).

Undeniably, this is a case of 'conversational implicature' in which some element of reasoning intervenes to supply a communicative intention and the reasoning, not being deductive, can fail and thus the implicated message can be retracted by some innocent remarks such as 'I was not asking you anything. You got me wrong'. Cancellability, if what I have said so far is tenable, is still an important element in deciding whether a message is a conversational implicature – coupled with the other tests, of course (Levinson 1983).

In light of the following discussion, it may be useful to distinguish here between generalized and particularized conversational implicatures. Generalized conversational implicatures (henceforth GCI) are default inferences, to use an expression dear to Levinson (2000), that is, inferential augmentations that get through in a default context, in the absence of particular clues about what the context is like, and in which context solely plays a negative role, in that it can cancel an inference in case a conflict arises between propositions already accepted and the default implicature. Particularized conversational implicatures (PCI), instead, are inferential augmentations in which contextual assumptions play a role in determining/fixing a communicative intention through a reasoning that uses those assumptions as premises. Of course, there may be disagreement as to the level or degree of conscious reasoning actually occurring in the calculation of particularized conversational implicatures. Relevance theorists, for example, prefer to see these inferences as occurring at a subconscious level. I do not exclude that both modes of inference are available and that we have to distinguish, case by case, between conscious pragmatic reasonings and subconscious pragmatic interpretative processes guided by some pragmatic principle.

Some authors, such as Burton-Roberts, believe that particularized conversational implicatures, in contrast to generalized conversational implicatures, cannot be cancelled,

(…) that is, they cannot be cancelled without contradiction of what is intended. This correlates with an obvious intuition: the more evident or manifest a speaker's intention to implicate, the less cancellable the implicature will be. I want to show that given the character of PCI – as against GCI – the *intention* to implicate is (and must be) evident to an extent incompatible with PCIs being cancellable. (Burton-Roberts 2006:10)[3]

Yet, it is clear from the student's implicature (in my, not Grice's example discussed above) that there are cases of particularized conversational implicatures that are cancellable (without contradiction). And in fact, I am not sure that 'without contradiction' must be construed as 'without contradiction of what is intended'. I think Grice meant 'without contradiction of what is said', and that allows for the possibility that, even when the speaker's intention in context is manifest, it is officially deniable, implicatures being strategies of communication allowable when a speaker wants to communicate something **off-record** (to use a metaphor due to Brown and Levinson 1987). So I propose to allow that conversational implicatures are cancellable, in general, but that strong forms of intentionality deprive conversational implicatures of the hallmark of cancellability, in special cases.

Burton-Roberts (personal communication), however, writes that:

Of course Grice meant 'without contradiction of what is said' and I say as much. But what I was suggesting was that this was a special case of 'without contradiction of what was intended' since what is said 'is a special case of what was intended'.

The way I understand this remark is that what is said (the literal meaning) after all presupposes an intention to be taken seriously and literally in the construal of one's words. I do not take issue with this; I think this clarification is important.

3. The cancellability of conversational implicatures (doubts by Burton-Roberts)

Carston (2002a:135-136) provides an interesting case of conversational implicature:

(1)
A: Let's go to a movie. I've heard *Sense and Sensibility* is good. Are you interested in seeing it?
B: Costume dramas are boring.

In order to make sense of B's utterance, an implicated premise such as '*Sense and Sensibility* is a costume drama' must be supplied. We are led to do so by the principle of relevance by which interpretation maximises contextual effects, while keeping cognitive efforts minimal. Once the premise is provided by maximising relevance, Carston argues, the following deduction occurs:

Costume dramas are usually boring.
Sense and Sensibility is a costume drama.
…
Sense and Sensibility is boring.

If one adds the further implicated premise that people 'do not generally want to go to movies they expect to be boring', then one further assumption is deduced, namely that B is not interested in seeing *Sense and Sensibility*. Following Grice, Carston attempts to show that the inferences above are implicatures, by using the cancellability test. According to Carston, example (2) shows that the implicature is cancellable (without contradiction)[4]:

(2) Costume dramas are usually boring but B is interested in seeing *Sense and Sensibility*.

Carston writes:

> However, it has been objected (by Burton Roberts, personal communication) that while implicated premises are cancellable as required, the alleged implicated conclusions are not, because they follow deductively from the given set of premises. He takes the position that these communicated assumptions are not, therefore, really implicatures and claims, furthermore, that Grice would not have treated them as such. This is worth a moment's consideration, since many people get worried (needlessly in my view) by the deductive element in the relevance-theoretic account, finding this somehow not properly pragmatic (see for instance, Levinson 1989; 2000, epilogue). It is true that once the implicated premise has been accessed, the conclusion follows deductively and so is not cancellable. But this is irrelevant to the cancellation criterion at issue, which is not concerned with how a given proposition was derived (whether deductively or otherwise). (Carston 2002:136)

I think that here we are torn, as in Grice's teacher's reference case, between the idea that an inference of a non-logical type occurs (a conversational implicature) and the fact that it is hard to cancel the implicature. The problem here is that the search for relevance is so strong that B's utterance in (1) is meaningless unless we provide some implicit premises that will lead to some inferred conclusions. Carston thinks that the implicated premise can be cancelled as in (3)

(3) Costume dramas are usually boring but *Sense and Sensibility* is not a costume drama.

The problem with this move is that we cannot make sense of (1). The two utterances in (1) remain unconnected, because there is no suitable contextual assumption that maximises contextual effects. So I think that even if the implicated premise is cancellable, the implicated conclusions are not. In some cases, the search for relevance is so strong

that unless a message is implicated, an utterance seems to be divorced from a communicative intention of any kind – and thus it is void, residing in an interpretative *limbo* that makes its author sound foolish or insane.

4. *Explicatures as developed logical forms*

Levinson (1983) opts for a negative definition of pragmatics – pragmatics deals with non-truth conditional meaning. This view is tidy and orderly: semantics is the basis for conversational implicatures (Levinson accepts the slogan 'pragmatics = meaning – truth-conditions'). However, as a final note, Levinson (1983) voices some doubts that this tidy and simplistic picture can be maintained, mainly due to the examples provided by radical pragmaticists.

Although various authors have talked about the role played by pragmatic inference in constructing a propositional form (e.g. Bach (1994), Levinson (2000), Recanati (2004), Stainton (1998)), in this paper I shall concentrate on Carston's thoughts, as crystallized in her 2002 book. Carston's idea of pragmatic contribution to the proposition expressed has something distinctive in it, because (unlike Bach) she believes that pragmatics contributes to what is said and, unlike Levinson (2000), she believes that the inferences that develop logical forms into propositional forms are explicatures, not implicatures[5]. Carston's ideas are similar to Stainton's and Recanati's, but they differ as to detail. The examples that show the role played by pragmatics in fleshing out a propositional form are roughly of the following type:

(4)   I am feeling better today;

(5)   On the top shelf (uttered by a speaker who realizes that the hearer, making his breakfast, needs the marmalade);

(6) He wasn't wearing his glasses and mistook his wife for a hat-stand;

(7) This fruit is green;

(8) It is raining.

To express a full proposition, (4) must imply a comparison between the present and a previous state (how the speaker was feeling, say, yesterday). (5) is clearly an elliptical utterance: it is not grammatically complete and requires the addition of a subject and of a verb. (6) is a case in which conjunction contributes a causality notion to the full proposition expressed. (7) also needs pragmatic intrusion, as we are left in a doubt as to whether only the outside of the fruit is green or whether the interior is, too, (by resorting to contextual knowledge, we may settle the issue). (8) says that it is raining here, in the location where both the speaker and the hearer are situated.

Carston writes:

What these examples demonstrate is that, in addition to a speaker standardly meaning more or other than she says, the 'what is said' of the utterance may itself involve more than the meaning of the linguistic expression used. So it looks as if we have to distinguish two notions which, in these preliminary observations, have been run together: there is linguistic meaning, the information encoded in the particular lexical-syntactic form employed, and there is the thought or proposition which it is being used to express, that is, what is said. While there is a fair amount of variation in how the term 'what is said' is construed, it is generally agreed to be something fully propositional, that is, semantically complete, and so truth-evaluable. It is the disparity between linguistic meaning and the proposition expressed, that I want to concentrate on in what follows in this chapter. (Carston 2002a:17)

I think it is fair to understand this text as saying that the previous examples (5 to 8) are cases in which what is encoded (by the linguistic form) is not fully propositional, because it is not semantically complete and truth-evaluable. Carston is aware that there exist different notions of what is said, but seems to take 'what is said' not as the minimal level of meaning that the speaker is committed to, but as a complete thought. She equates a thought with a proposition.

Carston thus embraces the underdeterminacy thesis, that is, the view that the meaning encoded in the linguistic expressions used (the relatively stable meanings in a linguistic system) underdetermines the proposition expressed (what is said). The hearer must resort to pragmatic inference in order to work out the proposition expressed by an utterance.

Doing this, Carston abandons the Isomorphism Principle, as formulated by Fodor and Lepore (1991):

If a sentence S expresses the proposition P, then the syntactic constituents of S express the constituents of P.

Carston's approach allows for pragmatic processes to supply constituents to what is said solely on communicative grounds, without any linguistic pointer, in which case the Isomorphism Principle does not hold.[6] I think that the move of abandoning the Isomorphism Principle is welcome, because it allows us to assign to a proposition constituents which do not appear in the corresponding sentence's logical form – a kind of pragmatic intrusion, as some have called it (e.g. Levinson 2000:16).

4.1. An alternative view (Bach 1994)

An alternative view of pragmatic intrusion is due to Bach (1994). According to Bach, what is said does not correspond to a full proposition determined through pragmatic inference, but corresponds

to a minimal proposition or to a propositional radical. It is constrained by the following assumption:

> The elements of what is said must correspond to elements in the linguistic expression (the sentence under consideration).

Bach's test for distinguishing what is said uses the following schema: 'S said that…'. He claims that only those elements of the original utterance that can be embedded without infelicity in the schema above are part of what is said.

Apart from his conception of what is said, Bach agrees with Relevance Theorists that pragmatics is needed to flesh out the proposition a speaker intends to express. He calls such pragmatic inferences 'implicitures'. He mainly distinguishes between two pragmatic processes involved in working out implicitures: completion and expansion. Completion is required for those sentences which do not express a full proposition. Expansion is required for those cases in which a sentence does express a full proposition which cannot be considered to be the proposition a speaker really intends to express.

I think that Bach's picture is not incoherent; even so, I favour an approach that considers 'what is said' to be a propositional level of thought. Perhaps a test case for which notion of what is said must be adopted is furnished by ironic utterances. Here, in the absence of rich contextual clues (the original context in which the words were proffered), it would be misleading to quote the words contained in the original utterance, as these may lead to a misrecognition of the communicative intention accompanying them. In any case, I accept that 'what is said' may be understood in two senses: either the words uttered, or the thought communicated ('A-saying' vs. 'B-saying'; see below, section 5.2).

4. 2. A paradoxical example of explicature

Some authors, such as Cappelen and Lepore (2005) are unpersuaded by the standard examples provided by radical pragmaticists and discuss a specific point on pp. 64-65. They believe that if the standard examples of explicature do not have invariant truth-conditions, it could be shown that no sentences have invariant truth conditions. Consider the sentence:

(9) John went to the gym.

One could argue that this sentence is not truth-evaluable since one could always go on to ask: how did he go to the gym? Did he walk to the vicinity of the gym? What did he do in the gym? etc. I think that what the authors want to prove is that if we think hard enough, then every example of language use will exhibit semantic underdetermination, simply because we have set our standards of truth-evaluability too high.

Montminy (2006), commenting on Cappelen and Lepore's work, writes:

> Unfortunately, C & L's treatment of Incompleteness Arguments conflates *lack of full specificity* with *incompleteness*: It conflates cases in which a sentence is not completely informative with cases in which the standing meaning of a sentence does not determine a complete, truth-evaluable proposition. (…) C and L thus seem to miss Bach's distinction between *completion* and *expansion*. (…) [I]n cases of both completion and expansion, the proposition conveyed by the speaker is an elaboration of the standing meaning of the sentence uttered; however, only in cases of completion does the standing meaning of the sentence fail to determine truth conditions. (Montminy 2006:14)

The point Montminy may be missing here is that there is a wide gap between the interpretations of (10) as (11) and of (10) as (12):

(10)   John went to the gym;

(11)   John went to the vicinity of the gym;

(12)   John went into (inside) the gym,

that one is tempted to say that this too is a case of semantic underdetermination: the full(er) proposition being provided by enriching the propositional radical (to use Bach's words), and ending up with something like the following (if, for the sake of argument, we accept what Cappelen and Lepore say):

(13)   John went (in)to an area vast enough to include the gym and its close vicinity (say, the courtyard).

Surely, (more) fully determining the proposition of (13) requires some narrowing down, that is to say, the addition of some concept. A move open to Montminy (which he does not make) would be to take what Cappelen and Lepore say at face value and argue that this is a case in which pragmatics intervenes to enrich a truth-evaluable proposition; nothing bad about that. Yet, this would not be the same as saying that no proposition at all is expressed by (12).

An alternative move would be to deny the acceptability of the data provided by Cappelen and Lepore. In any case, Montminy does not appreciate the real point of Cappelen and Lepore's discussion, which is, I think, a refinement of the question: how do we know when something is a full proposition? Is there not some latitude in deciding whether an interpretation (whether semantically or pragmatically accessed) is a full proposition? And could we not push this latitude further in our search for complete propositions? And, finally, what does the expression 'a complete proposition' mean?[7] This final question is important, since all researchers in the semantics/pragmatics debate stress the priority of pragmatic inference on the grounds that semantic interpretation does not provide a complete proposition (or a full

proposition). Presumably, a full proposition is the minimal proposition that is truth-evaluable. However, if we are pedantic enough, we could always say that a proposition is not truth-evaluable and that we need (further) pragmatic inference to arrive at a truth-evaluable proposition. The problem is: where do we stop?

It may be worth noting that truth-conditions mean something different for minimalists and for contextualists. Minimalists are not interested in what the world would have to be like for the sentence/utterance to be true (judged by what they call the verification procedure), but merely in the formal proposition: 'p' iff p, even if p is incomplete. Given this distinction, it goes without saying that contextualists are more exigent when it comes to deciding whether a sentence expresses a full proposition. However, as Lepore (personal communication) says, minimalists are not at all surprised to find out that many of the propositions we communicate are absurd, illogical, a priori falsehoods, and they do not think that it is the task of semanticists to account for these uses.

The considerations offered so far are applicable to Carston's work as well. Isn' it possible that if one thinks hard enough, every linguistic example requires pragmatic development into a proposition? Well, I think Carston is not scared of this consequence, as she professes to be interested in knowing whether the gap between linguistic meaning and what is said is a contingent or necessary property of verbal communication (Carston 2002a:15) and she has a chapter in which she discusses whether pragmatic intrusion is a necessary feature of human communication. This is not the place for a lengthy discussion of Cappelen and Lepore (2005); I refer the reader to an interesting discussion of the Inter-Contextual Indirect report test by Corazza (2007:124; 125).

4.3. Explicatures

Explicatures (those assumptions which are required to make a proposition truth-evaluable) must be differentiated neatly from implicatures. The notion of 'explicature' is originally due to Sperber and Wilson (1986) who write:

> (I) An assumption by an utterance U is *explicit* [hence an 'explicature'] if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by U.
> (II) An assumption communicated by U which is not explicit is *implicit* [hence an 'implicature'].

Carston argues that, along with pragmatic processes triggered by linguistic expressions, there are 'free' pragmatic processes that determine certain elements of the explicature on a purely contextual/inferential basis:

> (…) clearly the content of explicatures comes from two distinct sources, the linguistic expressions used and the context, and it is derived in two distinct ways depending on its source, by linguistic decoding or by pragmatic inference. As discussed at length in the previous chapter, the logical form, which is the output of the decoding phase, virtually never constitutes a fully propositional entity, but is rather a schema for the inferential construction of fully propositional assumptions. (Carston 2002a:117)

Burton-Roberts speculates that Carston's theory implies that explicatures are a development of the logical form L of the sentence uttered, if and only if P (asymmetrically) entails L[8]. For example, if I say 'He shrugged and left', meaning (via explicature) 'He shrugged and then left', it must be the case that the latter proposition implies the former (the explicature entails the encoded form it is a development of). Burton-Roberts (2005), however, contends that 'If the encoded form

can be entailed, it must deliver a truth-evaluable proposition' (p. 397) and this could be a problem with the notion of development. I do not share Burton-Roberts' worry, as entailment is distinct from logical implication. In logical deduction, inferences need to make reference to full propositions (otherwise fallacies arise) (see Levinson 1983, Capone 2008); but entailments can simply be defined in terms of sub-propositional semantics (for example the sentence 'He likes white flags' entails 'If "he" refers to x, then x likes flags').[9]

Burton-Roberts (personal communication) says in reply to the above considerations:

> Any distinction between entailment and logical implication is irrelevant here – Carston's Principle is expressed in terms of entailment. Do you deny that 'P and then Q' entails 'P and Q'?

While I do not deny that 'P and then Q' entails the interpretatively ambiguous 'P and Q', I do deny that 'P and Q' is a full proposition, because it is compatible with two possible distinct readings: P and then Q; Q and then P. If one of these two readings is true, the other must be false: so they are incompatible. Presumably Burton-Roberts believes that 'P and Q' is a full proposition, because it is truth-evaluable. However, the famous example 'If the King of France dies and France becomes a Republic, I will be happy but if France becomes a Republic and the King of France dies I will be unhappy' clearly shows that 'P and Q' is not a full proposition.

Another problem Burton-Roberts raises has to do with negation. For example, 'I've not had breakfast today' is the explicature of 'I have not had breakfast', but the explicature in this case does not entail (or so it appears) the logical form it is a development of. But, in fact, I do not share Burton-Roberts' worries, for a sentence such as 'I have not had breakfast' merely means 'I have not had breakfast at t, t being part of a time-span D/t', and this is surely entailed by 'I have not had breakfast today'. *Pace* Burton-Roberts, I think that the idea that explicatures are developments of logical forms does not suffer from the problems he

notices. I should, nevertheless, add that this idea is not general enough to encompass cases of loosening, like 'Sicily is a triangle'. So at least some type of explicatures seems to escape Carston's constraint.

Let us now sum up some of the most important constitutive features of explicatures:

A. Explicatures amount to constitutive aspects of what is explicitly said;

B. Explicatures are not linguistically encoded but have to be pragmatically expressed;

C. Speakers are committed to the explicature of an utterance;

D. Explicatures are part of what is communicated and, thus, are overtly endorsed by a speaker;

F. Explicatures are motivated by the indeterminacy of language (see also Grundy 2000).

There are interesting developments of the notion of explicature in Bezuidenhout (1997), Wilson and Sperber (2002), Blakemore and Carston (2005), Powell (2001), and Capone (2008). Each of these papers supports the view that:

(…) as the gap between sentence meaning and speaker's meaning widens, it increasingly brings into question a basic assumption of much philosophy of language, that the semantics of sentences provides straightforward, direct access to the structure of human thoughts (Sperber and Wilson, forthcoming, 31).

5. *Are explicatures cancellable?*

Both Burton-Roberts (2006) and Capone (2006) converge towards the idea that explicatures cannot be cancelled. In the following sections, I discuss Burton-Roberts (2006) and Capone (2006), in the hope to extend that discussion.

5.1. Burton-Roberts (2005) on the non-cancellability of explicatures

It is interesting to see what Burton-Roberts has to say on cancellability (of explicatures) in his review of Carston (2002a):

> Carston's argument (138) is that, since explicatures are pragmatically inferred, and since (as quoted) 'it is pragmatic inference quite generally that is cancellable/defeasible', explicatures must be cancellable.
>
> But is this possible in Carston's own terms? Independently of the definition of 'explicature' in terms of 'development', we are told that explicature is the domain of 'real' (truth-conditional, entailment-based, propositional) semantics. And we have just seen that, for Carston, it is precisely those 'implicatures' that are entailments of – bear a truth-conditional relation to – the explicature that are not cancellable. On this showing [+ truth-conditional] does imply [– cancellable]. If none of the truth-conditional content (the entailments) of the explicature can be cancelled, the explicature itself shouldn't be cancellable either. Indeed, since every proposition entails itself, the explicated proposition is included among its own (uncancellable) entailments. Cancellable explicature, then, is a logical impossibility in Carston's own terms. (Burton-Roberts 2005:400-401)

This quotation reminds us of a worry already expressed by Levinson (2000):

The crucial fact that I will try to establish is that generalized conversational implicatures seem to play a role in the assignment of truth-conditional content. This may seem not only a distinctly odd idea but even definitionally impossible, because implicatures are often partially defined in opposition to truth-conditional content. (Levinson 2000:166)

Presumably what worries Levinson as well as Burton-Roberts is that conversational implicatures are cancellable, hence in opposition to truth-conditional meaning.

Carston may find the idea that (the pragmatically derived elements of) explicatures cannot be cancelled unpalatable, because if her notion of explicature is to focus on the central role of pragmatics in human communication, freezing the implicatures in the notion of non-cancellable explicatures will amount to a non-insignificant concession to truth-conditional semantics. Readers may notice that Burton-Roberts' objections (to Carston) come from the perspective of truth-conditional semantics.

Burton-Roberts considers an example Carston discusses on p. 138:

(13) She's ready but Karen isn't ready to leave for the airport.

Carston says that the explicature of 'She's ready' can be cancelled, because the sentence (13) is not contradictory. Burton-Roberts, in my view, correctly argues that the sentence (13) cannot possibly be contradictory; it is only statements that are contradictory: 'contradiction must be assessed at the (propositional) level of explicature'. Burton-Roberts' position is in line with considerations by Capone (2006:660), who writes that the sentence (14)

(14) 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,

which *prima facie* appears to be contradictory, is not really so:

> Here, even though we cannot point to any explicit time variables (e.g. in the form of time adverbials), 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 have not been specified. A contradiction can arise only when we decide on a particular temporal configuration. The evidence of the configuration under which no contradiction arises allows us to say that the sentence is not contradictory *per se*. (Capone 2006:660)

So Burton-Roberts is right in saying that (13) does not provide evidence in favour of the cancellability of explicatures. In particular, he believes that 'She is ready' in (13) can be interpreted in three ways:

(15)   Pat is ready at time t to leave for the airport

(16a)   Karen is ready at time t to leave for the airport x;

(16b) Karen is ready for something (though we do not know what).

If interpretation (15) holds, the second clause of (13) surely does not contradict it. If interpretation (16b) holds, the second clause of (13) does not cancel it either. So it must be (16a) that is the implicature Carston has in mind. But it is precisely (16a) that is contradicted by the second clause of (13).

Burton-Roberts considers another example discussed by Carston on p. 138:

(17) He ran to the edge of the cliff and jumped.

The explicature of (17) is something like (18):

(18) Lionel ran to the edge of the cliff and jumped over the edge of the cliff.

For Carston, the explicature (17) can be explicitly cancelled by saying (19)

(19) He ran to the edge of the cliff and jumped but stayed on the top of the cliff

where 'jumped' is understood as 'jumped up and down'.

According to Burton-Roberts, (19) is not an example of explicature cancellation, but a clarification that (18) was not the explicature, in that the transitive meaning rather than the directional meaning of 'jump' is regarded relevant. Apparently, Burton-Roberts says that Carston is not allowed to take an ambiguous verb and then use a sentence that denies one of the two meanings of the verb saying that in this way an explicature is cancelled (see Burton-Roberts 1994 for an interesting paper on ambiguity and explicature; there he argues that ambiguity is not a semantic concept, but at most a phenomenon having to do with utterances; whatever view we accept, it goes without saying that pragmatics disambiguates utterances).

Here, we seem to be faced with an old problem. In an influential article, Sadock (1978) showed that cancellation is not a reliable test for conversational implicature, because one sense of an ambiguous expression can be explicitly cancelled in a sentence set up for this purpose. However, if I am right, Carston's example is surely a case in which a pragmatic inference gets through despite the ambiguity of a lexeme (in this case 'jump'). So, as Burton-Roberts says, what may appear as something that cancels the explicature, in this case results in a clarification move. What is being clarified is that the non-directional meaning of 'jump' is promoted through pragmatic inference, which then, as Carston says, contributes to an explicature.

5.2. Burton-Roberts (2006) on non-cancellable explicatures

Burton-Roberts (2006) is a refinement of the discussion in Burton-Roberts (2005), in which the author goes beyond the analysis of Carston's data and moves on to a more theoretical discussion of explicatures. He starts with a preamble on the distinction between **A-saying** and **B-saying**. A-saying is taken to be the literal words expressed in an utterance, which can be reported in abstraction from the original context in which they were produced (presumably to fix an intention). Roughly, A-saying corresponds to the words actually proffered by a speaker in communication (Burton-Roberts (2005) says that to report what a speaker has A-said we must (and need only) quote her utterance). B-saying, instead, involves the assessment (the individuation) of the thought the speaker explicitly intended to communicate, and this may involve putting together both the words used and pragmatic assumptions of the context to arrive at explicatures and to add these to what was literally expressed. B-saying involves fixing the speaker's communicative intention. Burton-Roberts (personal communication) adds:

> In fact, to report a B-saying you don't have to use any of the actual words that were A-said. Thus, to accurately report what you B-said when you A-said 'Fa caldo' (It's warm in here), I can report you as having said that it was hot. Similarly a person who A-says 'It's at 12 o'clock' can be reported by 'She said the meeting was at midday'.

According to Burton-Roberts, Carston's notion of explicature reconstructs what is B-said (I construe this as: explicatures correspond to a level of what is B-said). For him, explicatures cannot be cancelled without contradiction of what is A-said or of what is B-said. They cannot be cancelled without contradiction of what is A-said because what is A-said is what is linguistically encoded and does not yield a truth-evaluable proposition (if there is no proposition at this stage, no proposition can be retracted, or cancelled). Burton-Roberts deduces

that 'cancellation without contradiction' must mean 'cancellation without contradiction of what is B-said'. He goes on to say:

> Then cancellation of explicature is clearly impossible as well. To allow that an explicature is cancellable would be to allow that an explicature can be cancelled without contradicting the explicature (that what is B-said can be cancelled without contradicting what is B-said). This looks straightforwardly contradictory. Furthermore, assuming a normal understanding of what is to be 'committed' to a proposition, what it is to 'overtly endorse' it and to 'express commitment' to it, it is clearly impossible for a speaker to cancel what she has explicated without contradicting herself. (Burton-Roberts 2006:4)

Furthermore, Burton-Roberts notices that Carston's claim that explicatures are cancellable shifts the emphasis from the speaker's intentions to the hearer's reconstruction of these intentions, a move that is dubious in his opinion, since for both Grice and Sperber and Wilson (2006), pragmatics is all about intention.

Burton-Roberts' insistence on the logical impossibility of cancelling explicatures is immediately appealing. Yet, we have to ponder a bit on what it means to endorse or commit oneself to an explicature. Carston says that a speaker endorses explicatures, and that she commits herself to them – but what is it to endorse a proposition, what is it to express commitment to it? Much depends on the way we define 'commitment' and 'endorsing a proposition'. In a sense, a speaker commits herself and endorses a proposition through implicature as well – and if we go along with Burton-Roberts, then the subtle difference between particularized implicatures and explicatures vanishes.[10] If a proposition is actually implicated, it cannot be un-implicated, that is cancelled without contradiction of the executed intention to implicate. Implicatures in some cases are quite strong commitments to a proposition, as we saw in the case of the philosophy tutor who writes an odd reference to support a candidate for a philosophy job. Yet, in

general they seem to be weaker ways of expressing commitment to a proposition than in the case of explicit messages (coded through the use of pure semantics).

However, if we follow Bach's view (Bach 2006) that all messages express a speaker's commitment through pragmatics, since in any case a hearer must distinguish between a serious and an ironic interpretation of an utterance (see also Lepore and Ludwig 2005), we are led to the view that commitment is really a matter of 'explicature'; and then Burton-Roberts is right in his claim that when a speaker commits herself to a certain intention, that intention is no longer retractable.

Here is what Burton-Roberts writes concerning (apparent) explicature cancellation:

> Treating the relevant phenomenon as clarification rather than cancellation seems an obvious solution to an otherwise serious problem of principle with explicature. If we stick with cancellation of explicature, we are going to have to abandon Carston's intuitive account of explicature in terms of expressing commitment to and endorsement of a proposition. (Burton-Roberts 2006:5)

However, Carston may reply by distinguishing between explicatures* (asterisked) and explicatures (non-asterisked). Explicatures* (with the asterisk) are just potential explicatures. Explicatures (without the asterisk) are just actual explicatures. This move would presumably follow an idea due to Gazdar (1979), the importance of which is brought to our attention by Burton-Roberts (2006:8):

> Gazdar brings out the modal character of GCI. In modelling GCI, he posited 'potential implicatures' ('im-dash-implicatures'). 'Potential implicatures' are assigned *automatically* – that is, independently of any intention-to-implicate – to linguistic expressions on the basis of their semantic representation. These 'potential implicatures' only become actual implicatures – i.e. get to be actually implicated by a speaker – when the relevant expressions are uttered. If they are not

consistent, they are thereby cancelled. Presumably, inconsistency with the context of actual utterance – and thus cancellation – means that they cannot have been intended. A 'potential implicature' is then an implicature that arises independently of speaker-intention. (Burton-Roberts 2006:9)

Using the above ideas, Carston may want to distinguish between potential explicatures and actual explicatures. Explicatures (without the asterisk) are those that a speaker commits herself to and explicitly endorses. Explicatures* are only potentially endorsable, things which a speaker potentially commits herself to[11]. Thus explicatures* are cancellable (as Carston would say), while explicatures are not. So, in a sense both Carston and Burton-Roberts are right. Yet, I do not want to exclude the possibility that (only) Burton-Roberts is right, if explicatures are a more restricted class than what Carston takes them to be (a move that circumvents some of the problems noted by Cappelen and Lepore 2005). Suppose that we confine ourselves to calling 'explicatures' those inferential increments that are meant to supply a full proposition, where none is supplied by bare semantics, or to rescue a proposition from contradiction or logical impossibility (absurdity). These explicatures are in no obvious way 'potential explicatures'. They are necessitated by the contingencies of communication and by the fact that logical forms are too fragmentary or present wide lacunae. Since in these cases there are no explicatures*, Burton-Roberts is right in saying that explicatures cannot be cancelled.

What kind of arguments would support the assertion that there are just explicatures (actual explicatures) and no explicatures* (potential explicatures)? Burton-Roberts might go back to the definition of explicatures, and say:

D1
An assumption (proposition) communicated by an utterance is an 'explicature' of the utterance if and only if it is a DEVELOPMENT

of (a) linguistically encoded logical form of the utterance, or of (b) a sentential sub-part of a logical form.

He may further say that the distinction between explicatures and explicatures calls for a refinement of definition D1 above, which would have to be changed to yield something like the following:

D2
An assumption (proposition) (possibly) communicated by an utterance is/would be an 'explicature*'/'explicature' of the utterance if and only if it is a (possible) DEVELOPMENT of (a), a linguistically encoded logical form of the utterance, or of (b), a sentential sub-part of a logical form.

There is a further problem. Burton-Roberts says that Carston's notion of explicature reconstructs what is B-said. What is B-said is something that really goes on in the conversation and is not to be described as potential. If we distinguish between explicatures* and explicatures, we must abandon Burton-Roberts' tidy picture, according to which explicatures (unqualified) are a component of what is B-said. Explicatures*, in fact, do not seem to be a component of what is B-said.

Carston may argue that for definitional purposes, we should solely use explicatures (without the asterisk), while explicatures* are just a theoretical construct that reminds us of the pragmatic derivation of the inference in question. Explicatures* are only a reminder that some pragmatic processes went on at some point in the utterance interpretation.

The distinction between explicatures* and explicatures is suspicious on independent grounds. Explicatures* have all the properties of Gazdar's potential implicatures, and none of the properties of explicatures as pragmatically constructed propositional forms. To say that explicatures are cancellable amounts to saying that (potential) implicatures are cancellable, and that comes as no news. The fact that

there is a stage of pragmatic communication at which an inference is potential (before an explicature proper is calculated in context) is a recognition of the fact that the inference is potentially an implicature. But it is an implicature before it is calculated. After calculation, it becomes an explicature in the right circumstances, being correlated with the speaker's communicative intention. And actual explicatures are necessarily calculated inferences[12].

5.3. Capone on non-cancellable explicatures

Capone (2006) considers some examples of pragmatic intrusion such as (20), (21) and (22):

(20) 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;

(21) Take these three plates to those three people over there;

(22) You will die (said to John who has just cut his arm).

Capone writes:

Cancelling a causality implicature that allows us to make sense of an otherwise contradictory (or at least highly indeterminate) statement results in an unacceptable utterance: hence in this case it is not possible, in my view, to build the propositional form, while 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 considered 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, such a contribution cannot be withdrawn without causing havoc. (Capone 2006:651)

It is quite easy to show that the explicatures in (21) and (22) cannot be cancelled.

5.4. Why explicatures cannot be cancelled

I think it is important to find some theoretical grounds motivating the idea that explicatures cannot be cancelled. An immediate place to start is the distinction between implicatures and explicatures. Conversational implicatures are cancellable – this follows from their definition: they are not part of truth-conditional meaning and they are messages conveyed through conversational assumptions (not through the semantics of the sentence uttered). Failing to be part of truth-conditional meaning is not enough to entail cancellability (in fact, conventional implicatures are not cancellable, even if they do not form part of truth-conditional meaning). What seems to ensure that conversational implicatures are cancellable is the fact that they are messages arising from the exploitation of conversational assumptions (the Gricean maxims or the Principle of Relevance). On reflection, this fact alone does not ensure cancellability of an inference. In fact, even explicatures are calculable through conversational assumptions, but they are not cancellable.

Now suppose that we follow Carston's idea that the Principle of Relevance is sufficient to decide whether an inference is an implicature or, otherwise, an explicature. Since the Principle of Relevance maximises positive contextual effects and is counterbalanced by cognitive efforts, this seems a plausible assumption.

Carston accepts the following

Cognitive Principle of Relevance:
Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance.

Communicative Principle of Relevance:
Every act of communication conveys a presumption of its optimal relevance.

Presumption of optimal relevance:
(a) The utterance is relevant enough to be worth processing;
(b) It is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences. (Carston 2002a)

For Sperber and Wilson (1986), relevance is the trade-off between cognitive effects and processing efforts: the greater the ratio of effects to efforts, the greater the relevance of an input.

In the case of explicatures, if the inference called 'explicature' were defeasible, then the cost of building a propositional form would be too high, since defeasibility would imply returning to an underdetermined or otherwise absurd, illogical proposition. Thus, it appears that the non-cancellable character of explicatures is what diminishes processing costs and thus makes for optimal relevance, as a balance of positive contextual effects and processing efforts. This is in line with what Jaszczolt says about cancellation of default inferences:

(…) cancellation is costly and we must not postulate it unless we have to. Rational conversational behaviour requires that hearers process utterances using the minimal effort to arrive at what is regarded as the intended interpretation. (Jaszczolt 2005:65-66)

Presumably, Carston may retort to this by again invoking the distinction between explicatures* and explicatures, the former being cancellable, the latter not. The cancellability of explicatures* does not involve any extra processing costs, whereas cancelling explicatures does.

But again, we are faced with a distinction which is rather artificial, since (as I said earlier) explicatures* now are very much like Gazdar's potential implicatures. Surely potential implicatures are cancellable, but one gets the impression that one does not deal with explicatures proper, in the sense used by Carston throughout her work on the semantics/pragmatics debate. It is, I think, the notion of cancellability, as we know it, that has commanded respect on the part of many writers in pragmatics. This notion must be **maximally** differentiated from explicatures by subsuming lack of cancellability.

It may be suggested that another way of proving that explicatures are not cancellable is to point out that they are part of a speaker's intentions. Presumably one of Carston's reasons in claiming that explicatures are cancellable is that she thinks the hearer entertains the proposition conveyed by the speaker with a high degree of probability but never with certainty (he can go wrong in the process of utterance interpretation). As Saul (forthcoming) and Burton-Roberts (2005) point out, relevance theorists focus on utterance interpretation, rather than on utterance production, and this may very well lead them away from recognizing the central importance of a speaker's communicative intention, which must be a guide to utterance interpretation insofar as it manifests itself through semantic clues and pragmatic strategies (see also Bach 1998). Since intentions in some cases are fixed, it goes without saying that explicatures which are the correlate of those intentions, should be non-cancellable. Saul correctly points out that the speaker's intentions (once they are manifested in thought) are fixed and that while the process of interpretation may finally provide one or more interpretations which are or are not in line with the original intentions, the communicative process started with those intentions; they are the ones which crucially matter. We should not be surprised, therefore, that there are loci in conversation where failure to attribute a certain communicative intention deprives the utterance of truth-evaluability, and it is these which make the case of non-cancellability compelling.

If Carston counters by saying that implicatures, too, are the correlates of intentions but are nevertheless cancellable (an indication

that correlation with an intention does not prove that an explicature cannot be cancelled), one may reply that intentionality comes in various degrees and that we have weaker as well as stronger forms of intentionality. Explicatures correlate with a stronger level of intentionality; in the presence of such a stronger level, explicatures cannot be cancelled, because they express intentions of the strongest type.

The reason why explicatures correlate with the stronger type of intentionality is that they arise in those circumstances where there cannot be an 'out' for the speaker: the communicative intention proceeds along the path of the only intentionality available, outside which all sorts of wild grasses grow, and assignable intentions become so implausible as to impair rational communication. Explicatures, unlike implicatures, are not there to rescue the utterance from all kinds of defective communicative effects, such as lack of informativeness, lack of relevance or lack of quality, but are there to furnish an uttered proposition, the speaker's thought, in the first place; this is the condition *sine qua non* for evaluating all other communicative deficiencies. The kind of deficiencies which explicatures have to remedy have to do with the lack of a truth-evaluable proposition or with the lack of a plausible truth-evaluable proposition, one which is not irremediably contaminated by *a priori* contradiction or logical absurdity. It is exactly these cases which shape intentionality within the strict mould of the rational assessment of the thought the utterance must be taken to express.

6. *Refining the notion of explicature*

A residual problem is that we still need to differentiate conversational implicatures from explicatures properly. It does not help much to say that explicatures are **primary** pragmatic processes (as opposed to conversational implicatures. which are **secondary)**, in that conversational implicatures normally take input from explicatures,

whereas explicatures are normally independent of conversational implicatures. The inferential processes leading either to explicatures or to conversational implicatures are determined by the same cognitive principle (the Principle of Relevance, alternatively the Gricean maxims) and, thus, are of the same type.

I propose that explicatures and conversational implicatures are responses to different types of deficiencies. Conversational implicatures are responses to informational deficiencies and arise as solutions to the problem of determining the speaker's intention in a way that provides optimal cognitive effects and reduces processing costs without any subordination to the further task of determining an utterance that is truth-evaluable (thus, even if an utterance is truth-evaluable, further pragmatic interpretation goes on, with greater cognitive effects and lower processing costs). Explicatures are responses to the problem of determining a speaker's intention, while achieving optimal cognitive effects and reducing processing costs in subordination to the problem of making the utterance truth-evaluable. An utterance which lacks specific truth-conditions (which is not truth-evaluable) triggers the search for a more specific, truth-evaluable proposition, since the absence of definite truth-conditions is a defect. When a truth-evaluable proposition is furnished through the Principle of Relevance, cognitive costs decrease and greater contextual effects are furnished, since the conjunction of a proposition that is true with other true propositions will lead to logical consequences. The processing costs of adding non-truth-evaluable utterances to one's knowledge are high, since one does not know in advance how such incomplete propositions interact with the rest of one's knowledge, and also because the form in which such piece of knowledge can be stored is always *ad hoc*, the possibility of abstracting away from it not being available.

In light of what I have said, an explicature is a process of the following kind:

Starting from a logical form S, develop S by bringing the Principle of Relevance into account and adding the feature Te (truth-

evaluability) to u(S) as a consequence of the consideration that u(S)/Te has greater contextual effects and fewer cognitive costs than u(S)/$\neg$ Te.

The approach so far is minimally distinct from Sperber and Wilson's or Carston's in that they all argue that in specific cases, the search for relevance leads to the construction of explicatures. Instead, I argue on general grounds that explicatures that maximise truth-evaluability are preferable on the grounds of the Principle of Relevance.

At this point, we may voice our belief that while conversational implicatures are not part of a speaker's assertion, explicatures are. Consider what Lyons has to say in connection with this. Suppose X utters: 'Have you finished your homework and put your books away?' and Y replies 'I have finished my homework', then

> X can reasonably infer that Y has not put his books away. Presented with the conjunction of p and q, Y has deliberately chosen to assign a truth-value to just one of the conjuncts, p, when he might have assigned a truth-value to the whole conjunction p & q (by saying yes), if not only p but also q were true. Given that X has no reason to believe that Y is violating the maxim of quantity (or any of the other maxims), X is entitled to assume that q is false. At the same time, it is obvious that p does not entail $- q$. Nor can Y be held to have asserted $- q$ (or, alternatively, to have denied q (…). He has merely implicated $- q$; and he has done so by his failure to assert q (in a context in which he could be expected to assert q). (Lyons 1977:594)

The importance of this example lies in contrasting conversational implicatures with assertions, and implicating (conversationally) with asserting. I think Lyons takes implicatures to be ways of letting the hearer know what the speaker's attitude to a proposition is, without expressing commitment to that proposition in an overt way, without asserting it. Lyons's view is a step forward in our discussion of the

distinction between conversational implicatures and explicatures. If Lyons is right, we should be able to test the distinction between implicatures and entailments or between implicatures and explicatures by using Moore's paradox. I predict that the denial of implicatures through a belief clause (e.g. 'but I do not believe that P', said after having uttered something giving rise to an implicature that P) does not give rise to Moore's paradox, while the denial of explicatures (and of entailments) does. In this connection, it is useful to heed what Dummett (1971) says about assertions:

> Assertion is rightly called an expression of belief, and the correctness of such a characterization is not impugned by the occurrence of insincere assertions. This is shown by Moore's paradox – the fact, namely, that one frustrates the linguistic act if one makes an assertion, but immediately states, or otherwise indicates, that one does not believe it to be true. (Dummett 1971:330)

Of course we may wonder whether conversational implicatures are propositions the speaker commits herself to; considerations such as the one above, as well as considerations about cancellability, suggest that conversational implicatures involve weaker commitments than entailments and explicatures do: in other words, they involve **cancellable commitments**.

The considerations so far significantly coincide with what Stainton (1994:280) says about assertions, revising considerations by Sperber and Wilson (1986):

An utterance U is an assertion that P if and only if:

(a) Either P is the propositional form of U (i.e. P results merely by completing the Logical Form of U – i.e. by disambiguating it, enriching it and assigning it reference) or P could result merely by completing the Logical Form of U and conjoining it with

another manifest Logical Form of the appropriate semantic type; and

(b) P is consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance (i.e. U actually communicates P).

In other words, Stainton, too, believes that explicatures form part of the asserted proposition and therefore he is implicitly committed to the non-cancellability of explicatures.

7. Conclusion

This paper has assumed that pragmatic intrusion is a rather general phenomenon in language use and that Carston's notion of 'explicature' is very important. This notion may need refinement, and in this paper we have shown what kind of facts have to be taken into consideration for this purpose. Cancellability seems to me to be an important concept, leading to some theoretical revisions. Furthermore, the fact that in some cases it is difficult to distinguish between implicatures and explicatures if merely empirical facts such as cancellation are considered, will inevitably lead us to tighten up the definition of explicatures.

Jaszczolt (personal communication) says that Carston may find the idea of non-cancellable explicatures problematic in that it goes against the idea of nonce-inference (context-driven inference) and makes explicatures more akin to unmarked, default meanings – not Levinson's highly cancellable defaults, but rather Asher and Lascarides's (2003) or Jaszczolt's (1999) defaults.

While I do not think that this is necessarily an implication of what I have written so far, I do maintain that Capone (2006) amply discusses a case of explicature that requires some kind of contextual inference. Explicatures are non-cancellable, not because they necessarily correspond to a level of default reference, but because the purpose they

fulfil is such that it makes them non-cancellable. If they were easy to cancel, then it would be hard to see what role they could play in establishing the full truth-conditional meaning of an utterance. While it makes sense to say that implicatures leave an 'out' for the speaker, it is not very reasonable to say that explicatures give the speaker an 'out'. The purpose of committing oneself to a proposition is to leave no room for disagreement as to what the speaker actually means.

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Notes

1. I would like to express my warmest thanks to Jacob L. Mey and Yan Huang for their feedback.
2. To the possible assertion that my claim is not original, I would modestly point out that I put forward the claim as early as my 2003 paper (revised and reprinted in 2006).
3. PCI = particularized conversational implicatures; GCI = generalized conversational implicatures.
4. K. Jaszczolt (personal communication) says that the implicature does not go through only when it receives flat intonation.
5. It is fair to acknowledge that radical pragmaticists such as Cohen (1971) also have discussed the phenomenon of pragmatic intrusion. Yet, I think their contributions were only programmatic, while Carston's contribution to this issue is systematic and fully-developed.
6. I ought to mention here that Wilson and Sperber (2002) hold an approach to semantic underdetermination similar to Carston's – but in this paper I mainly discuss Carston's idea, as she has been more specifically concerned with explicatures.
7. Burton-Roberts finds that talk of full propositions is bizarre. A proposition, by definition, cannot be non-truth-evaluable. He also asks: Why should a full proposition be the minimal proposition? I agree that something is either

a proposition or it isn't and if it is, it must be truth-evaluable. Presumably the expression 'a full proposition' is redundant.

8. Burton-Roberts (personal communication) says he is just speculating that Carston, in fact, thinks of explicatures as definable in terms of entailment (A is a development of B if A entails B). This is a reasonable speculation. Her earlier Principle of Functional Independence had it that A cannot be an implicature of B if A entails B. Since a communicated assumption is EITHER an explicature OR an implicature (for RT), it follows that any communicated assumption that entails the encoded logical form must be an explicature. So, with explicature defined in terms of 'development', it is reasonable to speculate that development should be defined in terms of entailment.

9. Commenting on the present paper, a referee says that my view of entailment is idiosyncratic – yet the only way to avoid meaning axioms such as e.g. 'Mary is happy' if Mary is happy and either it will rain or it will not (see the problems highlighted in Lepore and Ludwig (2005) and also my review of Lepore and Ludwig (2005)) is to assume that meaning (entailments) and demonstrative inferences or logical implication are not on a par.

10. Actually, Burton-Roberts (personal communication) stresses that he only said that with a PCI a speaker commits herself to having implicated the proposition.

11. I should make it clear that this is not a position Carston has ever embraced. I think that Carston may react to Burton-Roberts in this way, but I have no evidence that she may be sympathetic to the hypothetical position expressed in this paper.

12. Specific comments by Burton-Roberts have persuaded me that 'explicatures*' cannot but be potential implicatures.

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