

6. Saying Things (5/30/12)

Does your dog bite?

IMMANENT CLOSURE Two problems. First, deduction is supposed to be knowledge-preserving *in general*, not only with parts. Immanent closure doesn't account for this. The second is that *prima facie* closure violations are not limited to mere consequences. *Cicadas reemerge after a prime number of years* plausibly includes *Prime numbers of years exist*. Some others in the same neighborhood.

Your aunt's here. If your dad was an only child, your mom had a sister.
Schlitz is not Obama's favorite beer. He has a favourite beer.
Al appreciates he's not going to win the lottery. Al is right that he won't win.

Q strikes us as changing the subject. But is that right? *Schlitz is not his favorite beer* does speak of his favorite beer. *Al appreciates he's not going to win the lottery* does address the issue of Al winning the lottery. The consequence feels new because it was *backgrounded*, part of the frame not the content. The transition bothers us because casually made background assumptions are pulled into the limelight and made the point of contention.

These examples have a Carnapian feel. Let's dig around in that neighborhood. Here is his initial, unguarded statement of the internal/external distinction, before he decides that external questions are practical:

there are, first, questions of the existence of certain entities ... within the framework; we call them internal questions; and second, questions concerning the existence or reality of the system of entities as a whole, called external questions (Carnap [1950])

This idea of standing back and pondering the system of numbers as a whole is enormously intuitive. But it plays no further role in Carnap's thinking. From here on, he takes concerns about the number system *qua system of entities* to be "really" about *the number system qua system of linguistic rules*.

Why not take the initial statement at face value? Sometimes we wonder "about the existence or reality of the system of entities [the number system in this case] as a whole." Other times we *presume* it is there and wonder what is going on in it. Asking about numbers "within the framework" is asking about them presupposing the number system. Asking about the system as a whole is asking whether the presupposition is correct.

What is asserted when we utter a sentence *P* against the background of presupposition *Q*? The hypothesis to be explored: *P*'s assertive or at-issue content is its *incremental* content vis a vis *Q*. Assertive content is what *total* content adds to relevant presuppositions.

Return with that in mind to *Cicadas reemerge after a prime number of years*. If this feels "safer" than its platonistic part, this is because the controversial bits are presupposed, and presuppositions are pre-subtracted. What remains is the part about the cicadas, and that is uncontroversial. One might try to rescue *Prime numbers exist* the same way. But it has no cicada-ish part to speak of. And so we are thrown back on the controversial whole. The perversity of the platonistic inference is the perversity of inferring *Q* from *P*, when *P* owes its knowability to the fact that *Q* was pre-subtracted.

I locked the door does not mention misleading evidence at all.

That is a pretty dramatic reconstrual. It might have its place in a rational reconstruction of our ontological thinking, but not in a sympathetic assessment of it.

An analogous contrast might be this: one can wonder whether a visually presented scene is "real" or just, say, moving images on a screen; but one can also, presuming the scene is real, wonder whether the cat is going to catch up to the mouse it is chasing.

closure	changing the subject	shifting the focus
<i>P</i>	It's a zebra.	The cicadas will return after a prime number of years.
<i>Q</i>	It's not a cleverly painted mule.	Numbers exist, some prime.
problem	inclusion failure	implication failure
how it arises	<i>Q</i> introduces new subject matter	<i>P</i> loses old truth-conditional content
knowledge threatened because	<i>Q</i> fails in more ways than <i>P</i>	<i>Q</i> fails in more worlds than <i>P</i>

SUBTRACTION AND IMPLICATION $P-Q$ = what P adds to presupposition Q = its assertive content in context. But, $P-Q$ is defined only when P implies Q . And presuppositions are not always implied. Nor for that matter are assertive contents. A coincidence? (Vector addition and subtraction.)

This may seem a small matter but it links up with a big one. A great puzzle of of 20th century philosophy of language was, how are finite beings like ourselves able to understand a potential infinity of sentences? Answer: A sentence's meaning should be determined by the meanings of the words in it and by how they are put together.

A great puzzle of 21st century philosophy of language is shaping up to be this: how do we reconcile the first answer with what sentences actually strike us as *saying*? It's a puzzle because what a sentence in context says is often something that you would not have expected, or thought possible, given just a grasp of its meaning.

- (1) I watched her drift slowly out to sea, until she became a dot on the horizon.
- (1*) I watched her drift slowly out to sea, until she looked like a dot on the horizon.

- (2) Holmes wrote a learned monograph on cigar ash
- (2*) According to the Holmes stories, Holmes wrote a monograph on cigar ash.

- (3) Smith's murderer is insane,
- (3*) Jones is insane.

- (4) I am Scott Soames.
- (4*) I am the one you're looking for.

PIVOTING Call these "unexpected readings" or "contents." One problem: What makes *these* unexpected readings the right ones? Second, the cognitive problem of saying how people are able to hit on them in actual speech situations. Today the first. Ideally we'd like determine them as a function of literal truth-conditions and relevant presuppositions. Stalnaker suggests there's a kind of definite description which refers *as a matter of meaning* (character) to whoever is presupposed to satisfy the description.

the referent is the one and only one member of the appropriate domain who is presupposed to have the property expressed in the description (Stalnaker [1970]).

But the phenomenon seems broader.

- (5) My cousin is not a boy any more.
- (5*) My cousin is no longer a child. (presupposing my cousin is still male)
- (5**) My cousin is no longer male. (presupposing my cousin is still young)

No one thinks it is part of the meaning of *boy* to express *child* when maleness is presupposed, and to express *male* when youth is presupposed. *Boy* expresses *child* because that's what it adds to *male*, and *male* in the second case because that's what it adds to *young*.

A more general idea is needed. He speaks elsewhere of "the *increment of information*, or of content, conveyed by [a] statement" (Stalnaker [1999]). *Increment* suggests that we find assertive content by asking what it takes for P to be true, supposing that the requirement of Q 's truth is waived. That's of course $P-Q$. To have a name for the discursive strategy of uttering P against the background of Q to assert $P-Q$, let's call it *pivoting on a presupposition*.

One way unexpected concepts might be generated is by pivoting on a presupposition. This is a welcome development because pivoting yields a remainder, and remainders are already part of our toolkit. But it's also worrisome, because remainders are so far undefined unless P implies Q , and assertive content extends more widely than that allows. If possible we would like to lift the restriction, but how?

"Jones is on trial for Smith's murder... Observing the wild behavior of the defendant at the dock, I may say, "Smith's murderer is insane."... Then my use is referential: whether or not Jones was the real murderer, and even if someone else was, if Jones accused me of libel, his failure to fit my description would give me no defense" (Kripke [1977])

"Officials enter the room. "There is an emergency. We are looking for Professor Scott Soames".... I stand up, saying, "I am Scott Soames." Later, [someone] reports what happened. "Professor Soames said [told them] he was the person they were looking for, and the three of them left" (Soames [2002], 74)

"If mother goat knocks on the door of her hut, and the seven little goats open immediately without even asking who's there, she might say: "Are you crazy, to open the door like this?! I could have been the wolf!"" (Büring [1998]; see Nunberg [1993, 2004].)

PIGGYBACKING I look for inspiration here to Walton on metaphorical content. Walton's is one of the few not entirely hand-wavy ways in which assertive contents can be generated that are independent of literal contents. Michigan is roughly hand-shaped, which lets Michiganders indicate where they live by pointing to an upheld appendage.

(6) Tuscola is at the crook of the Michigan thumb.

(6*) It is in *dthat*[the place that puts it at the crook, if Michigan is a hand].

(7) It was Grand Central Station around here this morning.

(7*) It was chaotically busy around here this morning.

Make-believe games specify what is to be imagined—pretended, assumed, treated as true—as a function of properties of the “props.” G 's content is the to-be-imagined items all taken together, or a single item of which the others are parts. As for the game itself, that is given by a function γ from hypotheses X about the props, to elements Y of the game's content, where Y is what players are supposed to imagine to be the case when X really is the case.

That's what games are, what can be done with them? Obviously we'll be interested in the content, but the interest can be intrinsic or instrumental.

If we're intrinsically interested in the content, then we're likely engaged in *content-oriented* make believe is where we we look to X (the state of the props) for the light it sheds on $\gamma(X)$ (the content). Alternatively we might engage in *prop-oriented* make believe, in which one looks to the content for the light it sheds on what is going on with the props.

The prop-oriented variety is supposed to provide a model for metaphor. Mock-asserting A now gives voice to fact about the world: the props are in a certain condition, whatever the condition is that makes a mock-assertion of A appropriate in the game, or that makes A pretense-worthy, or in Walton's terms fictional in the game.

1 A 's real content, in the context of game G , is the R such that A is to be imagined true, in G , just when R really is true...*in short*, $\gamma^{-1}(A)$.

Using A to assert a content whose truth-conditions = A 's pretendability-conditions is called *piggybacking* on the game (Richard [2000]).

Graphically, A is the pink left-pointing diagonal at the bottom left. A calls to mind a game G ; the associated generation rule is represented by the blue arrow marked γ . A and γ together induce a real content R , to be found at the input end of the blue game-arrow pointing to A . R is the inverse image of A under γ . For a simple-minded example, suppose

the Metropolitan Museum borrows a portrait of Napoleon and has it shipped to New York on the Queen Mary...one might observe that Napoleon is a 'passenger' on the Queen Mary, thus invoking a possible game in which the presence of a portrait on a ship makes it fictional that the subject of the portrait is a passenger" (Walton [1993], 41).

(8) = (A) Napoleon is a passenger on the Queen Mary.

(8*) = (R) There's a portrait of Napoleon on board.

A is *Napoleon is a passenger on the Queen Mary*, the pink region contains worlds where Napoleon is indeed on the ship. The yellow region contains the R -worlds: the ones where it is legitimate to pretend that Napoleon is a passenger. The individual yellow diamonds correspond to different possible portraits, all legitimating the same pretense.

ANALOGIES Both have us treating hypotheses as true in pursuit of an expressive aim. The goal is to draw a line through logical space. The strategy, in both cases, is to draw (lightly sketch) a *different* line.

A further analogy. A 's metaphorical content varies with the implied game; the real-world facts that make A pretendable in one game may not do so in another.

Imagine (7) uttered in Grand Central Station on Xmas Eve. That both readings are true does not make it particularly difficult to tell them apart. "No man is an island," "That guy is an animal," "The rain beat down without mercy," and "Singapore is an island of efficiency in Southeast Asia" (Cohen [1976], Goatley [1997]).

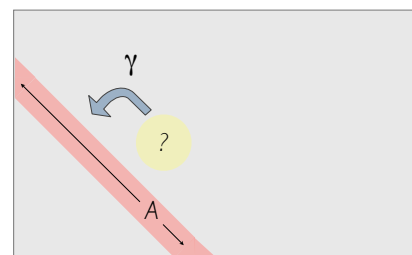


Figure 1: A 's real content is whatever worldly condition makes A sayable in G

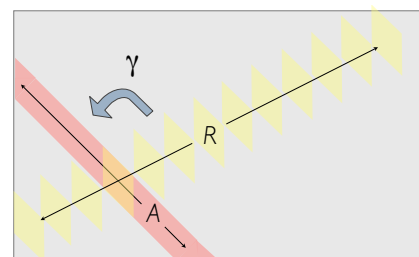


Figure 2: The sayability-maker is $\gamma^{-1}(A)$ = the yellow diamond necklace.

Drawing the line directly is for some reason not an option—one doesn't know how to draw it directly, or it is dangerous to do so, or drawing the intended line directly is sub-optimal for some other reason—while indicating it indirectly *is* an option, because the intended line is somehow recoverable from the one that is lightly sketched.

- (9) The conference committee is all over the map.
- (9*) Members are far apart doctrinally (on the bill).
- (9**) Members are far apart geographically (in their districts).

A sentence's possible metaphorical contents are all over the map, too. A device that lets us shift between them as needed may be expected to boost efficiency and expressive power. Real content can shift too, as we pivot on different presuppositions. "Have you noticed the engine light coming on?" "You can't imagine what we're going through." "Contact me if you discover the book is still available" "We regret to say the event is cancelled" (Beaver [2010]).

These analogies are suggestive. Could the two operate by similar mechanisms? Piggybacking works like this: *A*'s real content is what it takes to ensure that *A* is fictionally true, given the rules of the game. Maybe pivoting works like this: *A*'s real content is what it takes to ensure *A* is *really* true, spotting it the content of operative presuppositions *B*. Assertive contents are found by completing the enthymeme: *B*, *??R??*, therefore *A*. One looks for an *R* that in some good sense *interpolates* between *B* and *A*.

This could be good since enthymeme completion proceeds on the same principles whether *A* implies *B* or not. To bridge the gap between *p* and *p & q*, one sticks in *q*. To bridge the gap between *p & q* and *q & r*, one sticks in *r*.

ENTHYMEME COMPLETION Suppose we consider the problem in general. What are the constraints on enthymeme completion, or interpolation?

All firefighters are goalkeepers, and vice versa.

????R????

No firefighters are horticulturalists.

The following seem like *bad* things to put in as the missing premise, except the last:

- (*R*₁) No firefighters are beekeepers. ($\forall x(Fx \supset \neg Bx)$)
- (*R*₂) No firefighters are horticulturalists or beekeepers. ($\forall x(Fx \supset (\neg Hx \wedge \neg Bx))$)
- (*R*₃) All firefighters are goalkeepers and none are horticulturalists. ($\forall x(Fx \equiv Gx) \wedge \forall x(Gx \supset \neg Hx)$)
- (*R*₄) If all firefighters are goalkeepers, no goalkeepers are horticulturalists. ($\forall x(Fx \equiv Gx) \supset \forall x(Gx \supset \neg Hx)$)
- (*R*₅) No firefighting goalkeepers are horticulturalists. ($\forall x(Fx \wedge Gx) \supset \neg Hx$)
- (*R*₆) No goalkeepers are horticulturalists. ($\forall x(Gx \supset \neg Hx)$)

Why are (*R*₁)-(*R*₅) the wrong choices and (*R*₆) the right one?

- R*₁, *Sufficiency*: Given *B*, *R* should suffice for *A*.
- R*₂, *Necessity*: Given *B*, *R* should suffice for *A*.
- R*₃, *Irredundancy*: No falsemaker for *R* should force *B* to be false.
- R*₄, *Additivity*: Truthmakers for *R* should be consistent with *B*.
- R*₅, *Efficiency*: *R* should use as much of *B* as it can.

These combine to imply the conditions that defined extrapolation in lecture 3. That definition assumed *A* implied *B*. Generalising to the case where *B* is not implied has required one small change. Where before we had "*R* is true/false for the reasons *A* is true given *B*," now we have "*R* uses as much of *B* as it can." *R* uses as much of *B* as it can if its truthmakers/falsmakers are not *B*-wasteful as defined in the margin.

2 *A*'s real content, pivoting on presupposition *B*, is the *R* that has to be added to *B* to obtain *A*.....in short, $\beta^{-1}(A)$

"Productivity emphasizes the possibility of using ever more complex expressions to describe things around us. But what is important....is that expressions, whether simple or complex, can be recycled, can be used over and over again ...to say different things. This is what we mean by the *efficiency* of language" (Barwise [1983], 32).

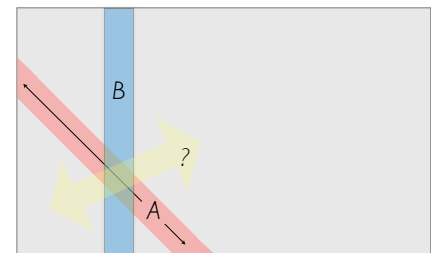


Figure 3: What bridges the *B/A* gap?

1. \mathbb{R}' uses more of *B* than \mathbb{R} if $\{B^- | \mathbb{R}', B^- \neq A\} \subsetneq \{B^- | \mathbb{R}, B^- \neq A\}$
2. \mathbb{R} is *B*-wasteful in *w* if an \mathbb{R}' holding in *w* uses more of *B* than \mathbb{R} does.
3. \mathbb{R} is *B*-wasteful if it's *B*-wasteful in every *B*-world where it obtains.

One should think of β here as the function taking X to its conjunction with B ; β^{-1} is in some sense undoing this operation. R is $\beta^{-1}(A) =$ the premise that when added to B yields A .

Extra- and inter-polation would seem to be very similar operations, except that the second extends more widely, to cases where A is independent of B . One might wonder if extrapolation too can be extended to these new cases, along the lines just laid down. It's not initially clear what it could mean to extrapolate A beyond a B that never contained it. But let's have a go.

Diagrammatically... $A =$ *Smith's murderer is insane* = the pink bar. A is uttered against the background of presupposition B . $B =$ *That individual (the wild man on the stand) murdered Smith* = the vertical blue bar. R should be a proposition that (i) agrees with A in the B -region, and that (ii) "goes on in the same way" outside the B -region.

The R we are looking for begins with the greenish diamond where the two bars meet (the A -worlds in B). R extends the green diamond from the blue bar (the B -region) to the rest of logical space. This is indicated by the yellow diamonds on the diagonal.

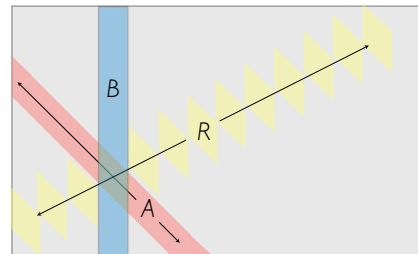


Figure 4: The gap is bridged by $R = \beta^{-1}(A)$

Agreement in the B -region means that A is equivalent to $R \& B$.

$A =$ sentence uttered	assumption B_1 assertion $R_1 = A - B_1$	assumption B_2 assertion $R_2 = A - B_2$
" <i>Smith's murderer is insane.</i> "	Smith was murdered by that guy. That guy is insane.	Insanity is the perfect excuse. Whoever did it has the perfect excuse.
" <i>I am Scott Soames.</i> "	You're looking for Soames. I am the one you're looking for.	No one knows x's views like x. I know Soames's views better than anyone.
" <i>Holmes fell to his death.</i> "	The story is true. The story says he fell to his death.	Holmes did what Doyle wanted. Doyle wanted Holmes to fall to his death.
" <i>The bank stopped bothering me.</i> "	They bothered me by calling. They stopped calling.	...and they still call. I like the calls now.
" <i>She became a dot.</i> "	Things are the way they look. She came to look like a dot.	She's always dreamed of being a dot. Her dream came true.
" <i>You aren't getting any younger.</i> "	People do not stay the same age. You are getting older.	The device should be making you younger. The device isn't working.
" <i>They are shooting at us.</i> "	Negotiators don't shoot. The negotiations are over.	One should respond in kind. We should be shooting at them.

STYLES OF PHILOSOPHY How should we feel about a philosophy that is not true in its entirety, but partly true? Lewis gave one answer in Volume 1 of his philosophical papers, another in Volume 2.

NO. "Unless we are doubleplusgood doublethinkers, it will not last. And it should not last, for it is safe to say in such a case that we will believe a great deal that is false."

YES. "What I uphold is not the truth of Humean supervenience but the tenability of it. If physics were to teach me that it is false, I wouldn't grieve...What I want to fight are philosophical arguments against Humean supervenience." Falsity for *scientific* reasons can be tolerated, until the physicists get their act together.

That is the goal of a philosophical theory-builder. Another kind of philosopher wants to sweep theory away and return to the plain truths we supposedly had in common, before philosophy made us self-conscious. What did cave-dwellers mean by *It's getting dark out?* Something so basic and unmistakable, one might think, that everyone can agree on it. Crucially it's the same IT for all of us: realists, bundle theorists, endurantists, idealists, mereological nihilists and so on. The point of agreement is not just that something true was said, where everyone decides for themselves what it was. A hypothesis can be found such that we agree on (i) her saying it, (ii) what it means and (iii) that she is right.

Now we run into a problem. Should the hypothesis speak of experience? Or of nearby

Another take on these cases: assertive content selects from contextual implications S of A (A implies S in B -worlds) that are suitably independent of B . $A-B$ is one of many such implications.

Lewis [1983], xi

"I am not ready to take lessons in ontology from quantum physics as it is now" (Lewis [1986], xi).

On *philosophical* ways of being false, see Hawthorne and Michael [1996].

middle-sized objects? Or of "what is evident" in some Pyrrhonian sense? Right from the start, there are theoretical choices to be made of a kind we were hoping to be done with. The words don't exist any longer to state the facts plainly, in a way that gives no hostages to theoretical fortune. One always winds up saying too much.

This sounds like the phenomenon we've been dealing with all along, in which truths come wrapped in larger falsehoods, or claims anyway that court unnecessary controversy. If those are the claims we have, then we're always overshooting the mark. All we can do at this point is try to back up to the part of *A* that concerns **the plain**, as opposed to **the philosophical**. But we have no real conception of that subject matter.

Or is that we have no *positive* conception? Perhaps we know **the plain** only negatively, as the part of our doctrine that is *not* vulnerable to certain worries. Where Lewis sought a story that was not false for philosophical reasons, we in our Wittgensteinian moments are after the opposite: a story *S* that is false, if it is, *only* for philosophical reasons. (The kind raised by idealists, or bundle theorists, or nominalists, or mereological nihilists.) Our advocacy extends only to the part *R* of that story that is not philosophically exposed.

R is meant to be the part of *S* that is not at all about **the philosophical**. To model it would require a version of logical space with worlds in it answering to Plato's view, Berkeley's, van Inwagen's, and so on. It would also require a way of deciding when worlds are just alike in "ordinary," non-philosophical respects, even though only one of the two contains macro-objects, or enduring things, or what have you. The framework is pushed beyond its limits here. But although the idea of *plain truths* may not be ultimately capturable with these methods, they do bring it into some kind of relief. The idea may be hopeless. Alternatively it might seem that way because we can't attach any positive content to it; and we've forgotten that some truths are reached only by *detaching* positive content and focussing on what remains.

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Cf. the search for a language in which to formulate protocol sentences (Carnap [1987] Neurath [1959])

On "the plain" and "the philosophical," see Clarke [1972] and Stroud [1984].