THE MULTIPLE-PROPOSITION APPROACH RECONSIDERED*

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I

Some philosophers have argued recently that contemporary theory of language, especially pragmatics, rests on misconceptions about the relation between an utterance and its content. Philosophers, logicians and linguists — it has been claimed by these revisionists — commonly and falsely presuppose that an utterance of a sentence always expresses at most one proposition. The view that rejects this assumption or "dogma" has been called "the multiple-proposition approach" or "pluripropositionalism", enriching philosophical dictionaries with yet another "ism"[1]

An important philosophical motivation for pluripropositionalism is provided by a metatheoretical assumption about the nature of contents (propositions), namely that:

> "Propositions are abstract objects that are assigned truth conditions. Propositions are conceived as classificatory tools, rather than denizens of a third realm. Theorists use propositions to classify utterances by the conditions under which the utterances are true." [Korta, Perry(2008), p. 356]

Since propositions are theoretical entities used to classify utterances as having particular truth conditions, the accomplishment of this task of classification clearly depends on what facts about the utterance are assumed and what facts are to be established. For example, the indexical sentence (illocutionary force aside):

[1] The terms "multiple-proposition approach" and "multiple-proposition theory" appear explicitly in Eros Corazza's work, while Kepa Korta (e.g. [Korta(2008)]) writes about "pluripropositionalism". I will use all these terms interchangeably.

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(1) I will visit you tomorrow

can — if all facts about the context of utterance are assumed as given —
express the singular proposition *that a particular person* (e.g. John) *visits
another particular person* (e.g. Mary) *on a particular day* (e.g. 22nd of
December 2008). Or — if the relevant facts about context are not given but
remain to be established — it *can* also express the token-reflexive proposi-
tion *that the person who utters this particular token of the sentence "I will
visit you tomorrow" visits the addressee of this token on the day after this to-
ken is uttered*. Of course, other possible descriptions of the relation between
the utterance and its content are possible — at the abstract level we can
distinguish another six propositions, partially singular and partially token-
reflexive, that can be assigned to this single utterance. And, if other facts
about the utterance (i.e. not only those concerning the context) are factored
in there will be no limit to the number of propositions that can be associated
with it[2].

   Nonetheless, this propositional surplus is not problematic, since it merely
helps to stake out the *possible* content of an utterance. To spell out its *actual*
content, theorists must match the possible content with the relevant empirical
facts and predictions concerning the behavior of language users. All conjec-
tures about the actual proposition expressed are thus the result of reconciling
the abstract possibility of content assignment with the task of adequately
explaining, describing and predicting a particular body of facts. If, for ex-
ample, I have received a letter containing sentence (1) and information about
the day of its utterance but no information about the author of the letter, then
the actual content of this utterance will probably be the proposition that the
author of this token will visit me on a particular day (for example, on the
22nd of December 2008). In short, I will be expecting somebody to call on
me, but the caller's identity will remain unknown till I open the door. If the
situation is different, and I am aware that Mary is the author of the letter, I
can visit the shop to buy her favorite cookies. In that case, the content ac-
tually expressed will probably be the singular proposition about Mary, me
and the date. The role of empirical data is very important, since it allows
us to eliminate those possible content assignments that do not have a clear
connection with the cognitive and behavioral dispositions of language users.

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[2] This conclusion is explicitly stated by John Perry: "There are indefinitely many relative
truth conditions for an utterance, since there are indefinitely many characteristics C1,...,Cn to
plug into the formula «Given that utterance u has characteristics C1,...Cn, what else has to be
the case for it to be true?»". [Perry(1997), p. 16]

This *methodological pluripropositionalism* is a reasonable theory. Among its merits one may cite the fact that it enables us to dissolve Quinean skepticism about propositions. Propositions, on this view, are the theorist's instruments of prediction and explanation rather than mysterious metaphysical "shadows of sentences". In light of this and other advantages, we can turn a blind eye to the fact that in all likelihood no philosopher ever defended methodological monopropositionalism and treat it simply as a justified positive approach to the semantics and pragmatics of natural language. A very good example of the methodological multiple-proposition approach is provided by John Perry's critical referentialism [3].

Unfortunately, this version of the multiple-proposition approach can be confused with another idea, which may be called "substantive pluripropositionalism". According to proponents of the latter position, utterances not only can express various propositions but also on some occasions, do express several propositions. It is this kind of pluripropositionalism that I would like to consider in this paper.

Before I take the first step in that direction, let me make one more important distinction. Pluripropositionalism is a thesis about utterances — sentences uttered on a particular occasion [4]. But one may find in contemporary philosophy a very similar view about *sentences*. For example, Stalnaker's answer to the "problem of deduction", the issue of reconciling the intuition that deductive reasoning is informative and the observation that sentences true in the same possible worlds express one and the same proposition, explores the following idea:

> "Relative to any propositional expression one can determine two propositions: there is the proposition that is expressed, according to the standard rules, and there is a proposition that relates the expression to what it expresses. If sentence s expresses (according to the standard rules) proposition P, then the second proposition in question is the proposition that s expresses P. In case of ignorance of necessity and equivalence, I am suggesting, it is the second proposition that is the object of doubt and investigation." [Stalnaker(1984), pp. 84–85]

Stalnaker's theory is holistic — it applies to all sentences. A similar holistic view can probably be associated with those philosophers who set a lot of

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[3] [Perry(2001)].

[4] One may also interpret it as a thesis about occurrences — "mere combinations of the expressions with contexts". [Kaplan(1989)]

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store by the subjective aspects of meaning and understanding. On the other
hand, one may defend the application of the idea to some restricted class
of sentences, for example to propositional attitude ascriptions and reports.
Although I will not be considering pluripropositionalism about sentences
further on, I would like to point out that the very same distinction could
be used to distinguish various versions of substantive pluripropositional-
ism about utterances (methodological pluripropositionalism must always be
holistic). The issue of deciding whether a particular multiple-proposition ap-
proach is holistic or atomistic, methodological or substantive is not always
easy. Recent work by François Recanati provides a case in point. Reca-
nati's main goal is to defend the position he calls "Moderate Relativism" —
a theory which presupposes that there is a need for postulating a class of
propositions which are incomplete in character (he calls this type of content
"lekton" or "relativized proposition"). This assumption by itself does not en-
tail that an utterance of a sentence may express, on certain occasions, more
than one proposition (we can claim that some or all propositions are incom-
plete while denying that utterances can express or do express several propo-
sitions). Nevertheless, Recanati distinguishes another type of content. He
calls it "classical proposition" and describes it as corresponding to Fregean
complete propositions or to propositions understood as functions from pos-
sible worlds to truth values.

When discussing Richard's argument for the claim that objects of belief
expressed by sentences are all eternal (and, hence, classical propositions),
Recanati writes:

> "Temporalism can be rescued, Richard points out, if we give up the
> assumption that «a sentence expresses at most one thing (a propo-
> sition) at a time». Moderate Relativism as I have described it pre-
> cisely rejects that claim since it posits two levels of content for every
> utterance" [Recanati(2007), p. 78]

The meaning of this holistic pluripropositionalism depends on what is
meant by "positing two levels of content". It can mean that in semantic
theory one needs to consider the possibility of assigning to all utterances the
two types of content (our *methodological pluripropositionalism*). But it may
also mean that every utterance actually expresses two types of propositions
(our *substantive pluripropositionalism*). In the first case one cannot exclude
a priori the possibility of assigning to some utterances two types of propo-
sitions simultaneously. Whether such a possibility is worthy of serious con-
sideration depends on an analysis of particular communicative situations —
one must show that there are (or could be) situations in which agents do (or

could) actually use both types of propositions. If such situations are possible, then some atomistic substantive pluripropositionalism follows from the methodological one. On the other hand, it is empirically false that a description of every actual communicative situation requires introducing two types of content. This shows that — on a reasonable interpretation — if Recanati's multiple-proposition approach is to be holistic, it must be methodological (one may abstractly consider that two types of content can be assigned to every utterance); it cannot be substantive and holistic (every utterance actually expresses two propositions). A question that remains is whether it is also substantive and atomistic — whether it envisages the possibility of assigning to some utterances two types of propositions simultaneously. I cannot find in Recanati's work any argument for this claim — so I will leave the matter undecided.

II

The substantive multiple-proposition approach can be interpreted as consisting of one main thesis and a commentary. Its principal thesis describes the positive content of the theory, while the commentary states how the thesis should *not* be understood. We can characterize the principal statement as follows:

(MPA) *An utterance of a sentence (of some class C) may express (on certain occasions) more than one proposition.*

Our class C could be the class of all sentences or some special class of sentences (propositional attitude reports as well as sentences containing appositive clauses or those containing so-called "description-names" etc.) These correspond to, respectively, the holistic and atomistic variants of MPA. MPA is of course a very general and vague claim. Its formulation fits many well-known phenomena such as ambiguity or semantic indetermination. This is why some commentary must be attached to it. Three statements are more or less obvious candidates:

(Ambiguity) *The phenomenon of expressing more than one proposition is not a matter of syntactic, semantic or pragmatic ambiguity.*

This constraint should be obvious. Neither of the following sentences (as uttered on a particular occasion):

(2) I bought a pair of alligator shoes. (*example due to Paul Ziff*)
(3) Iraqi head seeks arms.

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is a source of pluripropositionality in the intended sense, as the fact that each expresses more than one proposition is accounted for by the facts concerning possible syntactic interpretations, lexical ambiguities or figurative uses of particular words. If pluripropositionality is a phenomenon of any interest, it must be something else. This constraint is important for the following reason: if a proponent of the multiple-proposition approach is applying her theory to particular cases, she should simultaneously prove that alternative and more classical analyses are unjustified.

Sometimes philosophers who claim that there are non-obvious ambiguities of some sort are classified as proponents of pluripropositionalism. For example, Dever, claims that sentences with appositive clauses express two propositions because "such «sentences » are in fact two sentences" [Dever(2001), p. 296] and is described as a person defending a version of multiple-proposition theory[5]. The argument is that:

> "(...) single utterance can be a token of two distinct sentences, i.e. an utterance can incorporate different sentences (...) It is for this reason that an utterance can express two distinct propositions and, as we shall now see, be true even if one of these propositions is false" [Corazza(2004), p. 118]

But, in an exactly analogous way, one may argue that any utterance that embodies two syntactic interpretations provides evidence against monopropositionalism. The thing is that the version of monopropositionalism rejected in this way is certainly an absurd theory that denies the possibility of syntactic ambiguity. To reiterate: if pluripropositionality is a phenomenon of any interest, it must be something else.

(Category-shift) *The phenomenon of expressing more than one proposition is not a matter of category shift, i.e. changing the type of semantic relation linking an expression with a proposition.*

In this sense the utterance of the sentence:

(4) The proposition that Rome is situated on the Tiber is true.

which expresses one proposition (*that the proposition that Rome is situated on the Tiber is true*) and mentions another (*that Rome is situated on the Tiber*) is not an instance of pluripropositionality. More generally, we may say that the relation of expressing a proposition mentioned in MPA must be

[5] See: [Corazza(2004), pp. 116–118].

univocal. This constraint partially overlaps with the first one. Both result in excluding cases such as implicatures from the scope of pluripropositionality.

(Logical Independence) *Propositions expressed are logically independent e.g. it is not a conjunction of those propositions (or any other operation on those propositions) that is expressed by an utterance.*

Classical analytic philosophy is full of examples of sentences and contexts that, in light of detailed analysis, turn out to be a complex sum of many postulates. One may say that *in some sense* statements of this sort express several propositions. Thus, Frege's well-known sentence:

(5) Bebel fancies that the return of Alsace-Lorraine would appease France's desire for revenge.

expresses a proposition which is a conjunction of two other propositions one about Bebel's beliefs (*that Bebel believes that the return of Alsace-Lorraine would appease France's desire for revenge*) and another about facts (*that it is not the case that the return of Alsace-Lorraine would appease France's desire for revenge*). A proponent of the multiple-proposition view does not want to claim that (5) expresses (in her sense of "expressing") two propositions, otherwise she would simply be doing classical conceptual analysis.

I would like to stress that any single proposition expressed could be the result of other operations on propositions than conjunction. That the truth of all propositions assignable to an utterance is not sufficient and necessary for classifying this utterance as true is not a decisive argument for the claim that more than one proposition is being expressed. As an example, let us take the multiple-proposition view, according to which in certain cases utterances express two propositions, and "Only when both are true and both are false do we feel pulled to judge the utterance to be true or false" [Neale(1999), p. 66]. It is certainly not very difficult to observe that by admitting the possibility of truth-value gaps (and by using many-valued logic) we may introduce the following operation on propositions which satisfies our requirements ('*' stands for 'undefined'):

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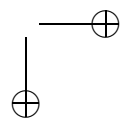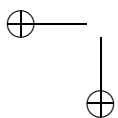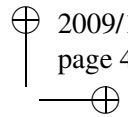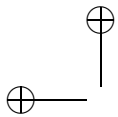
A	B	$AxxB$
1	1	1
0	0	0
1	0	$*$
0	1	$*$
$*$	$*$	$*$
$*$	1	$*$
$*$	0	$*$
1	$*$	$*$
0	$*$	$*$

and claim that the phenomenon of pluripropositionality is reduced to the phenomenon of expressing a single proposition of the form AxxB [6].

All described constraints have one important consequence for any philosopher who would like to defend a version of MPA. It must be proven, for every application of MPA to some particular class C, that the alleged pluripropositionality associated with this class either cannot be construed as a case of ambiguity, category-shifting, having complex analysans or that, although such a description is in principle possible, it is theoretically less fruitful than the approach offered by the rejection of monopropositionalism. As we shall see below, pluripropositionalists rarely offer any argument of this sort. But before looking at the problems MPA must face, let us discuss a concrete example of substantive pluripropositionalism about utterances. As an illustration I will use a theory proposed by Eros Corazza.

III

Eros Corazza (see: [Corazza(2002)] and [Corazza(2004), pp. 97–134]) introduced his atomistic multiple-proposition theory to overcome problems with the interpretation of utterances containing subordinate clauses, description-names, complex demonstratives and third person pronouns. As he puts it:

> "The position I propose is a multiple-propositions view: the utterance of a single sentence can express several propositions, and the truth conditions on such utterances are independent of their subordinate clauses. In defending this contention, we must accept the following two theses:

[6] Careful readers will recognize that the operation corresponds to the 'interjunction function' investigated in partial logics. See: [Blamey(1986)].

T1 Utterances like «Louis XIV (the king of France) is bald» and «Louis XIV, who is king of France, is bald» do not express a single, conjoint proposition, but instead express two or more distinct propositions. Utterances of «Louis XIV (the king of France) is bald» and «Louis XIV, who is king of France, is bald» express the proposition that Louis XIV is king of France and the (distinct) proposition that Louis XIV is bald.

T2 The truth-values of utterances like «Louis XIV (the king of France) is bald» and «Louis XIV, who is king of France, is bald» depend only on one of these propositions, namely the proposition expressed by the main clause.

I characterize the two propositions expressed «the background proposition» and «the official proposition», the former being the proposition expressed by the subordinate clause." [Corazza(2002), p. 318]

Let us denote the official proposition expressed by an utterance u as 'OP(u)' and the background proposition as 'BP(u)'. Thus on Corazza's approach the abovementioned types of utterances can be analyzed as:

(subordinate clauses)
(6) OP(Louis XIV, who is king of France, is bald) = the proposition that Louis XIV is bald.
(7) BP(Louis XIV, who is king of France, is bald) = the proposition that Louis XIV is the king of France.

(description-names)
(8) OP(The Holy Roman Empire was not an empire) = the proposition that The Holy Roman Empire was not an empire.
(9) BP(The Holy Roman Empire was not an empire) = the proposition that The Holy Roman Empire was the titular successor to the former Western Roman Empire.
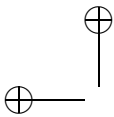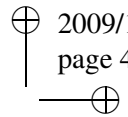
(complex demonstratives)
(10) OP(This book is difficult) = the proposition that this is difficult.
(11) BP(This book is difficult) = the proposition that this is a book.

(third person pronouns)
(12) OP(She is gorgeous) [the speaker points at Monica Bellucci] = the proposition that Monica Bellucci is gorgeous.

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(13) BP(She is gorgeous) [the speaker points at Monica Bellucci] = the proposition that Monica Bellucci is a woman.

I believe that one should agree with Corazza that his analysis has strong intuitive support. Nevertheless, there is something disconcerting and very unclear about the claim that utterances of the sentences above do not express "a single, conjoint proposition, but instead express two or more distinct propositions." On Corazza's approach only the official proposition influences the truth-value of the whole utterance, while there is no analogous determination effected by the background proposition. Appealing to the truth-value gap strategy sketched above one can easily accommodate this fact. Instead of describing an utterance of a particular sentence as expressing two propositions, we may consider employing the operator $\ulcorner oo \urcorner$:

A	B	$AooB$
1	1	1
0	0	0
1	0	1
0	1	0
$*$	$*$	$*$
$*$	1	$*$
$*$	0	$*$
1	$*$	1
0	$*$	0

and claim that the proper analysis of the utterances mentioned above looks like this ('P(u)' is short for "the proposition expressed by u"):

(14) P(Louis XIV, who is king of France, is bald) = the proposition that (Louis XIV is bald *oo* Louis XIV is the king of France)
(15) P(The Holy Roman Empire was not an empire) = the proposition that (The Holy Roman was not an empire *oo* the proposition that The Holy Roman Empire was the titular successor to the former Western Roman Empire)
(16) P(This book is difficult) = the proposition that (this is difficult *oo* this is a book)
(17) P(She is gorgeous) [the speaker points at Monica Bellucci] = the proposition that (Monica Bellucci is gorgeous *oo* Monica Bellucci is a woman)

Moreover, it is by no means clear whether the intention of the theory is to exclude as improper cases in which there is a logical dependence between official and background propositions. I think that this is not a view supported
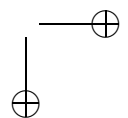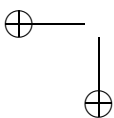
by Corazza, but vague phrases like "expressing distinct propositions", "expressing more than one proposition without expressing the conjunction of these propositions", "not expressing one composite proposition but two separately evaluable ones, one of which is peripheral to the main point of the utterance" (this one by Kent Bach, as quoted in [Corazza(2002), p. 118]) are not helpful in excluding this interpretation.

Let me finish my exposition of Corazza's view by describing yet another difficulty. Nothing in the official-proposition/background-proposition distinction prohibits us from applying it to sentences and utterances about propositions (and, in effect, about official-background propositions). And this fact leads to a dilemma: one cannot, on pain of inconsistency, accept this version of the multiple-proposition approach and claim that logical (or necessary) equivalence is a necessary and sufficient condition for identity of propositions. This, by itself, does not constitute a knockdown argument against pluripropositionalism, but it does show that the multiple-proposition approach (in Corazza's version) is committed to a very strong (probably structural) theory of propositions.

Let us consider the utterance of the sentence:

(18) The official proposition expressed by (18), namely the proposition that the official proposition expressed by (18) is distinct from the background proposition expressed by (18), is distinct from the background proposition expressed by (18).

and two principles governing the relation between propositional identity and logical (and necessary) equivalence (denoted by '$\equiv$'):

(A) $(P(p) = P(q)) \Rightarrow (P(p) \equiv P(q))$ (*identical propositions are logically equivalent*)
(B) $(P(p) \equiv P(q)) \Rightarrow (P(p) = P(q))$ (*logically equivalent propositions are identical*))

Principle (A) is accepted by any reasonable theory of propositions. Principle (B) could be rejected by those who are looking for a stronger (e.g. structural) criterion of propositional identity.

The question that leads to contradiction can be stated as follows: is the background proposition expressed by (18) identical with the official proposition expressed by (18)? Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that OP(18) = BP(18). On Corazza's account, it is the case that:
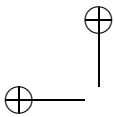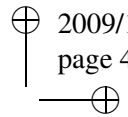
(*)   OP(18) = the proposition that (OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18))
(**) BP(18) = the proposition that (OP(18) = the proposition that (OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18)))

in consequence (on the assumption that OP(18) = BP(18)):

the proposition (OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18)) = the proposition that (OP((18) = the proposition that (OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18))),

which, by principle (A), gives us:

(OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18)) $\equiv$ (OP(18) = the proposition that (OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18)),

which by equivalence detachment yields:

(OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18)),

which, in turn, contradicts the assumption.
   We must therefore assume that OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18). From this and (*) it follows:

the proposition that (OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18)) $\neq$ the proposition that (OP(18) = the proposition that (OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18)))

which, by (B), gives us:

$\neg$ ((OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18)) $\equiv$ (OP(18) = the proposition that (OP(18) $\neq$ BP(18))))
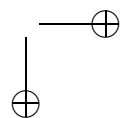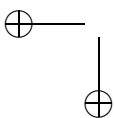
   The second argument of the equivalence is identical with (*). Moreover, (*) is a consequence of our theory. We now use the rule of inference [7]

$$\frac{Theory \vdash \neg(A \equiv B) \qquad Theory \vdash B}{Theory \vdash \neg(\neg A \Rightarrow Contradiction)}$$

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[7] Which has its modal counterpart in:

$$\frac{\vdash \neg\Box(A \Leftrightarrow B) \qquad \vdash \Box B}{\vdash \Diamond\neg A}$$

if our background modal logic contains as theorem: (S5) $\Box p \Rightarrow \Box\Box p$, then every propositional identity is necessary. So are (*) and (**).

This rule gives us:

$$\neg(\neg\,(OP(18) \neq BP(18)) \Rightarrow \text{Contradiction}),$$

which entails:

$$\neg\,(OP(18) = BP(18) \Rightarrow \text{Contradiction})$$

which contradicts the result obtained in the first part of the argument, namely that $(OP(18) = BP(18))$ leads to a contradiction. As I have mentioned above, we can avoid the inconsistency by rejecting (**) and accepting the truth of $OP(18) \neq BP(18)$.

IV

The aim of these critical remarks is not to suggest that Corazza's pragmatic intuition that "the subordinate clause is often used merely as a tool or support, enabling the speaker to convey information" [Corazza(2004), p. 105] is wrong. I think that Corazza is basically right about that. On the other hand, it is my aim to suggest that the theory that takes that intuition into account should steer clear of substantive pluripropositionalism. But let us now depart from particular features of Corazza's multiple-proposition approach and consider pluripropositionalism from a more abstract perspective. There are, in my opinion, two general challenges for every proponent of substantive pluripropositionalism. One is the *discernibility problem* which was briefly sketched in part II, the second is *the problem of molecular utterances*. Both deserve a more detailed exposition, to which we now devote ourselves.

The discernibility problem concerns the requirement of proving that the phenomenon postulated by the multiple-proposition view is not a familiar thing under a new name. We enumerated, as possible sources of confusion, (i) different types of ambiguity, (ii) shifting the category of the relation between an expression (or used expression) and a proposition, and (iii) expressing a compound proposition of some sort. Philosophers who defend MPA should somehow exclude those competitive analyses — either as impossible or inadequate, or as theoretically less fruitful. As we saw above, some proposals could probably be dealt with by allowing truth-value gaps and introducing special partial logic operators. Since such an analysis is clearly possible, the probability of confusing the fact of expressing one compound proposition with the alleged fact of expressing two independent propositions is serious indeed. This is not to say that my particular monopropositional analysis must be correct but pluripropositionalists should provide at least a sketch of an argument against it. Sources of confusion other than (iii) could

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also be a threat. Eros Corazza's approach to subordinate clauses can be reformulated in terms of pragmatic ambiguity of some sort. One may say, for example, that the relation between an utterance and a "background proposition" is a matter of *conventional implicature* or *pragmatic presupposition*. A theory of the first sort has already been defended (see: [Grudzińska(2007)]); that theory is also hermaphrodite-friendly in Corazza's sense, since utterances of sentences of the form (uttered when the speaker points at particular person who is a hermaphrodite):

(19) That woman is gorgeous.
(20) That man is gorgeous.
(21) She is gorgeous.
(22) He is gorgeous.

could be true, despite the falsity of respective conventional implicatures (Corazza's "background propositions"). The same result can be obtained by claiming that by uttering (19), (20), (21) or (22) the speaker presupposes that the indicated person is a woman/man/woman/man, respectively. The falsity of this presupposition does not preclude all those utterances from being true, although it results in classifying them as pragmatically defective. Just as in the case of compound propositions, one should put forward arguments for the inadequacy of those (more classical) approaches.

The possibility of conflating alleged pluripropositionality with a category-shift of the relation between an utterance and a proposition can be made concrete by reference to Recanati's pluripropositionalism. Let us assume for a moment that it has a non-methodological (substantive) interpretation (a matter which was left undecided). Let us use some basic ideas of two-dimensional semantics to represent Recanati's distinction between lekton and classical proposition. Let C be the class of (possible and proper) pragmatic contexts, W the class of possible worlds. Classical propositions on this approach are well-known functions:

Classical Proposition: $W \rightarrow \{Vr, Fl\}$

To every utterance there is assigned another function that represents how context determines a classical proposition (this function corresponds to the linguistic meaning of some sentence types):

Linguistic Meaning (1): $C \rightarrow (W \rightarrow \{Vr, Fl\})$

Lekton, as Recanati understands this term, is a proposition neutral with respect to some aspect (other than the possible world) of a sentence's circumstance of evaluation — a place, time, psychological perspective, epistemic or aesthetic standard etc. (the choice of particular aspects with respect to which lekta are neutral is not important at this point). Now we replace classical propositions with a new function:

Lekton: $X \rightarrow (W \rightarrow \{Vr, Fl\})$,

where X represents the n-tuple of aspects with respect to which an utterance is supposed to be neutral. And the linguistic meaning, with the function:

Linguistic Meaning (2): $C \rightarrow (X \rightarrow (W \rightarrow \{Vr, Fl\}))$,

which we may think of as being a generalization of *Linguistic Meaning (1)* (both functions can be identified in cases where elements of X have no influence on $W \rightarrow \{Vr, Fl\}$). To give an example, we may assign to the utterance of sentence (1) on the 22nd of December 2008 (with Paul as the speaker and Mary as the addressee) the place-of-visit neutral lekton *that Paul visits Mary on the 23rd of December 2008* and the classical proposition *that Paul visits Mary on the 23rd of December 2008 at the office in which she is working*. The first corresponds to the function:

$(X \rightarrow (W \rightarrow \{Vr, Fl\}))$

with X left unspecified, while the second to:

$\{\text{Marys office}\} \rightarrow (W \rightarrow \{Vr, Fl\})$,

which can be reduced to a classical proposition, because X is a singleton with a fixed element. In the first case, the utterance is true in some possible world if and only if Paul visits Marry on the 23rd of December 2008 in an arbitrary place (in that world); in the second case, it is true if he visits her on this particular date at her office (in that world).

So far so good. A closer look at lekta and classical propositions reveals that a lekton is a propositional function of a special sort — a function which assigns propositions to some types of objects (instants, places, places-of-visit, psychological perspectives etc.) As such, lekta are semantic values of sentential functions, or to be more exact — semantic values of uses of sentential functions. In our example, the sentential function in question corresponds to the utterance of "I will visit you tomorrow at p" (where the range of $\ulcorner p \urcorner$ is restricted to places-of-visit). Hence, we switched from the

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category of sentences (and utterances of sentences) to the category of sentential functions (and usage of sentential functions)[8], which certainly violates our *Category-Shift Constraint*. Once again, we are able to reconstruct the multiple-proposition approach in more familiar terms.

The problem of molecular utterances arises in cases when an utterance is the utterance of a complex sentence. This complexity can be explicit, as in the case of:

(23) Juan loves Vicky, and Juan loves Maria.

or implicit, as in the case of:

(24) Juan loves Vicky and Maria.

In both cases, we may say that the utterance consists of two (explicit or implicit) subutterances: the subutterance of "Juan loves Vicky" and the subutterance of "Juan loves Maria". Now, according to the substantive pluripropositionalist, there are utterances that express several propositions. In particular cases, those utterances could be parts of more complex utterances. Now, the problem arises: what is the relation between propositions that are (according to pluripropositionalists) expressed by a complex utterance and propositions expressed by its subutterances. One may think that this question is a special variant of the compositionality problem. I would like to stress that, although the two are interconnected, the problem of molecular propositions is more general it concerns not only the issue of connecting the meaning (semantic value) of a complex expression with meanings (semantic values) of its parts, but also the problem of determining which combinations of simple meanings can result in complex meaning in general.

There are two general strategies that one may follow when dealing with this problem. The radical answer consists in saying that all combinations of propositions expressed by subutterances result in some proposition expressed by the whole utterance. This strategy is very unreasonable, since it has the immediate effect of combinatorial explosion of expressed propositions (e.g. on this approach the conjunction of sentences used in examples

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[8] One may object that we can treat sentences as sentential functions of a particular sort (sentential functions without free variables) thus, a difference of type is reduced to a difference of degree. I think that there is something to this objection; nevertheless, it has some undesirable consequences for pluripropositionalism. First of all, it reduces all propositions to lekta (and justifies Recanati's conjecture [formulated in a different context] that "it is unclear that we need classical propositions" ([Recanati(2004), p. 129]). Secondly, it blocks one of the possible replies which pluripropositionalist can give to the problem of molecular utterances (see footnote 9 below).

(6)–(13) would express sixteen different propositions!). More importantly, it cannot be easily reconciled with the assumption made by those proponents of the multiple-proposition view who claim (like Corazza) that some such propositions play a different role (are, for example, "used merely as a tool or support"). This is why I believe that we cannot take this sort of answer seriously.

According to the moderate answer to the molecular utterances problem we must exclude some combinations of semantic values of subutterances. This strategy, which is clearly more reasonable than the previous one, aims to distinguish types of propositions expressed and allows combinations of contents only *within* appropriately isolated kinds. Thus, for example, Corazza may claim that a complex proposition can either be the result of combining official propositions, or the result of combining background propositions. Similarly, Recanati could exclude the possibility of combining lekta with classical propositions. In a Recanati-like theory, the prohibition has an independent justification — one may appeal to the fact that lekta and classical propositions are entities of a different sort. [9]

On a Corazza-like approach, the moderate strategy must be based on a distinction in the semiotic (pragmatic or semantic) relation between content and utterance. Nonetheless, such theories have not been explicitly formulated and it is by no means clear what concrete shape they could take. I have the impression that the fact that the required typologies of propositions can be determined either by appeal to their intrinsic structural features (the Recanati-like strategy) or by appeal to the kind of semantic relation that links utterances and contents (the Corazza-like strategy) suggests that pluripropositionality is at most a shift in the category of used expression or a familiar type of pragmatic ambiguity.

V

I do not pretend to have shown that a viable semantic or pragmatic theory based upon the idea of pluripropositionality cannot be constructed. Perhaps an ingenious person will show that the problems are less severe than they look, and some sort of substantive multiple-proposition view is worthy of serious defense. I shall be content if I have shown what difficulties should be

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[9] This justification is blocked if we assume that classical propositions are lekta of a specific sort.

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faced by such a future pluripropositionalism. I think that until that time our philosophical encyclopedias should not be enriched with yet another "ism".

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