

Insensitive Semantics

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What is insensitive semantics (also semantic minimalism, henceforth SM)? That will need to emerge, if at all, from the authors' (henceforth C&L) objections to what they see as their opponents. They signal two main opponents: moderate contextualists (henceforth MCs); and radical contextualists (henceforth RCs). I am signaled as a main RC. I will thus henceforth represent that position *in propria persona*. In most general lines the story is this: MC collapses into RC; RC is incoherent, or inconsistent, on various counts; SM is thus the only game in town. As to all of that, we shall see.

C&L's MCs are, in essence, followers of Carnap. Carnap's idea was this: if an expression's contributions to what is said in speaking it vary from speaking to speaking, find a variable with different values for those different speakings; postulate a (tacit) device in the expression, referring, on a speaking, to the value of that variable for that speaking, find a function from that value to the contribution of the expression, on that speaking, to what was then said. In that way a sentence might be thought of as a function from indices (n-tuples of values of all such variables contained in it) to particular things there are to say. The sentence varies its truth conditions from one speaking of it to another; those things there are to say do not. MCs see more such expressions with variable contributions than, let us say, was once thought. So they postulate larger indices than was once thought necessary.

C&L's RCs do, in some sense, more of the same of what MCs do. They certainly see more variable contributions of sentential constituents. In fact they see such variation across speakings (henceforth occasion-sensitivity) as, in principle, ubiquitous. They are not thus led to posit (larger) indices. If occasion-sensitivity is ubiquitous, it is obviously not to be domesticated by such a strategy: one cannot pass from items with different conditions on truth for different occurrences of them to items not eligible thus to vary by, so to speak, letting one's indices grow. For an RC, Carnapian elimination of occasion-sensitivity is just not on. Do C&L recognize that? Sometimes, perhaps. Other times, not.

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1. Credo

Here is a succinct SM credo:

The idea motivating Semantic Minimalism is simple and obvious. The semantic content of a sentence S is the content that all utterances of S share. It is the content that all utterances of S express no matter how different their contexts of utterance are (p. 143).

There are languages. Languages have words. Words combine into complex expressions and sentences. The semantic values of words contribute to the semantic values of the complex expressions and sentences of which they are a part. Semantics is about how best to specify the semantic value of the lexical items and their contributions to the semantic values of complex expressions and sentences in which they occur (p. 58).

Semanticists ... agree that semantics is a discipline that aims to characterize systematically certain features of linguistic expressions and to do so in a way that captures general truths about languages, and not just truths about particular speakers in specific contexts. Characterizations of what speakers say ... on the other hand, ... aim to convey something about a particular act in a particular context ... (p. 58).

What part of this do RCs disagree with? Answer: no part. Semantics is concerned with properties that expressions of a language such as English *have*. It is not *per se* concerned with properties that only some occurrences of them—if any—have. SMs and RCs disagree, as will emerge, over what properties expressions of a language *do* have. So let us keep the above ground rule firmly in mind as we proceed.

Truth is the central issue here. RCs deny that (e.g., English) sentences are in the business of being true or false. They are not (RCs hold) because there is, systematically, no such thing as ‘that which a sentence says to be so’. So (RCs) claim, there will not be truths to be told of this form: ‘The English sentence ‘Pigs grunt’ is true iff pigs grunt’. So that the idea of indices does not raise its head here, I will put this in terms of open sentences. What the English ‘_____ grunts’, or any other open English sentence, *means* leaves it open to say any of indefinitely many different things, at a time, of a given item, in using that open sentence of it. So there are no truths to be told of the form ‘The English ‘_____ grunts’ is true of an item just in case that item is blah (blahs). Open English sentences do not, in that sense, have satisfaction conditions. These are, so far, claims, not a case. Reasons for them will be forthcoming.

C&L assign truth precisely that role in semantics which RC denies it. They insist that (unproblematic) declarative sentences—‘Pigs grunt’, ‘There are French women in Chicago’, ‘The oboe is double-reeded’—and even more problematic ones—‘Giraffes are tall’, ‘Sid has had enough’—express, *as such*, ‘minimal propositions’. Whatever else a minimal proposition is, it is (for them) something truth-evaluable, and, as a rule, truth-valued. That, then, is the main issue between SM and RC.

Do C&L recognize that fact? Sometimes. They say, e.g., ‘That there is a proposition semantically expressed is presupposed by any coherent account of linguistic communication, i.e., accounts which fail to recognize a semantically expressed proposition . . . are incoherent’ (p. 144), whereas, they also tell us, it is a central tenet of RC that ‘[n]o English sentence S ever semantically expresses a proposition’ (p. 6). Here they see what the issue is. Other times, though, they seem to think things turn on acceptance or rejection of something like the credo. For example, they accuse RCs (and me specifically) of holding on to something which they call ‘the mistaken assumption’, of which they give two versions:

MA: A theory of semantic content is adequate just in case it accounts for all or most of the intuitions speakers have about speech act contents, i.e., intuitions about what speakers say, assert, claim and state by uttering sentences (p. 53).

MA*: If CSAs of the kind presented so far trigger the intuition that proposition p is said, claimed, stated, or asserted by an utterance u of sentence S in language L, then an adequate semantic theory for L should assign p as the semantic content of u (p. 54). (‘CSAs’ are ‘context-shifting arguments’, about which more later.)

But RCs think nothing of the sort. For an RC, semantics is emphatically not in the business of predicting what proposition would be expressed in some given utterance of a sentence. Nor do RCs think such things *are* predictable (as a function of some set of parameters). Exactly not. That would be a Carnapian approach—the sort of thing elaborated by Richard Montague, or David Kaplan. To an RC, such an idea simply fails to see what the phenomenon of occasion-sensitivity in fact is.

Incredibly, C&L accuse me specifically of holding MA. I cannot imagine why. Perhaps it is because I think that if a *sentence* were true under such-and-such conditions, and you spoke it where those conditions obtained, you would say something true. That sounds about right. But of course I do not think that, in that sense, any sentence does have a truth condition.

2. Argument

The core thesis of RC is that any way for things to be which an English (or etc.) open sentence speaks of admits of understandings as to when something would be that way. Any of many different things may thus be said of a given item in saying it to be that way. The same variety of different things may thus be said of it in using that open sentence of it. (Illustrations are about to come.) How might one argue for this?

C&L are fascinated by one style of argument. They call it a context-shifting argument (henceforth CSA). The argument begins with a contrasting pair. Each member of a pair is a speaking of a sentence on which all its component expressions mean what they do mean, and such that the same items are spoken of each time (as being whatever way is spoken of by the open sentence they complete). The

contrast lies in this: one member of the pair says something true (of those items), the other something false. The conclusion will be that that sentence may, while meaning what it does, say things to be any of various ways. It would do so on different speakings of it. It would thus have different truth conditions on different such speakings, some of these perhaps met while others were not, no one of which is the condition for the truth of the sentence as such. So what a sentence means determines neither when *it* would be true (there being no condition for that), nor when any speaking of it would. (Counter, *nota bene*, to what would be so by MA.)

Take, for example, the English 'Sid grunts' (spoken of Sid at a time). Sid has been in an accident. The fear is that he has lost his ability to grunt. Pia give him a sharp blow in the solar plexus. He responds with a grunt. Which Pia reports (correctly) by saying, 'Sid grunts!' By contrast, Pia and Zoë are planning a soirée. Pia would prefer Sid not to come. (He knows too much.) So she says, 'Don't invite Sid. Sid grunts.' But Sid is the most urbane of men. He has no such habit. Pia speaks mendaciously, so falsely.

To establish RC in this way one would need to make very sure that each contrasting pair was all it was meant to be, and to produce enough such pairs to produce conviction that the phenomenon is pervasive throughout English (etc.). Happily I need not do that here. C&L are convinced of the pervasiveness of contrasting pairs. It is not that over which they and RCs disagree. I merely reiterate an agreed ground rule. Semantic theory should not assign an expression a property *it* does not have; hence not one had by one member, but not another, of a contrasting pair. Such pairs may thus reveal some things semantics does *not* deal in.

C&L are also fascinated (for reasons to emerge) by what *they* would say sitting in their favourite coffee shop, speaking a sentence occurring in some contrasting pair. On this I think they mistake the force of RC, and of CSAs. Where there are contrasting pairs, the circumstances of a speaking must contribute *substantially* to fixing what is thus said, if anything even possibly true or false is to be said at all. Not just any circumstances will do the required work. So, taking Sid for granted, what will C&L say, in their coffee shop, in saying, 'Sid grunts'? Quite likely *nothing* either true or false. Suppose Lepore says, 'I know Pia said truly (the first time) that Sid grunts, and falsely (the second time) that he does. But does Sid grunt?' Then, probably, he has asked a question with no straight answer. Not enough is fixed as to how to take that occurrence of 'grunt' to make either 'Yes' or 'No' correct. Perhaps what C&L mean to ask is: 'Perhaps Sid grunts on one understanding of doing that, and not on another. But does he really *grunt*, that is, independent of any contingent understanding of what it would be to do that?' But if RC is correct, that is a bad question. Given RC, there is not, in addition to all the facts as to whether Sid grunts on this or that understanding of his doing so some further fact as to whether he 'really grunts'. Grunting on one or another understanding of doing so is the most we ever do.

There is another way of arguing for RC. We begin with the plausible assumption that (the English) 'grunts' speaks of being a grunter, 'is blue' speaks of being

(coloured) blue, and so on. We then ask ourselves such questions as, ‘When *would* something be coloured blue? How about Lac Lemman? It has a blue appearance on this sunny day. But its water is not blue in the way that Lake Louise’s water is green. Is it blue?’ We find that one *can* understand (a lake’s) being blue such that Lac Lemman is that way, but also such that Lac Lemman is not. Neither understanding is, so far as we can see, either required or excluded by what being blue is *per se*. So neither is required or excluded by ‘is blue’ meaning what it does. (So Lac Lemman can neither satisfy, or fail to satisfy, that English predicate as such.) We then observe that on some occasions for speaking of the colour of a lake, one *would* understand its being blue in the one of these ways, on others in the other. Since being blue is what ‘is blue’ speaks of, in using those words of a lake on the first sort of occasion one would speak of its being blue; hence of its being blue on that first sort of understanding of its so being. What one would thus say to be so, that is, would be so just in case the lake is blue on that understanding. Since what ‘is blue’ speaks of in meaning what it does is simply being blue, it is thereby eligible to speak of that, on occasion, on any of the understandings that being blue admits of. Indeed, if it were not—if it were somehow reserved, in point of meaning, for speaking of being blue on only certain understandings of being blue—then it would not speak of *being blue*. It would rather speak of being blue on a special sort of understanding of that. The meaning of an English expression makes it *for* saying a certain sort of thing in speaking English. The meaning of ‘is blue’, in making those words speak of being blue, makes it for (e. g.) calling something blue on the understanding there would then be of its being so.

Again the ground rule. We must not assign the English ‘grunts’, or ‘is blue’, a property it does not have. So we must not assign it a property in having which it would speak of something other than being blue. So we must not assign it a property which would make it for something other than speaking of what, on the occasion of the speaking, being blue would be understood to be. This rules out assigning ‘being blue’, or ‘grunts’, a satisfaction condition, at least if such a condition determines an extension. I will return to that point.

3. Reduction

I said it was a plausible supposition that ‘is blue’ speaks of being blue and ‘grunts’ speaks of being a grunter; that, in this way, open English sentences speak of particular ways for a thing to be. Suppose one asked, ‘Just what *is* this thing, being coloured blue? What way for a thing to be is that?’ A neat answer might be: ‘It is that way which a thing is iff C’, where C stated a condition which was met by (and only by) some determinate class of things. Those things would then be ‘the blue things’ *sans phrase*. A similar answer for being a grunter would entitle us similarly to speak of ‘those things which grunt’. And so on. Such an answer would be, in effect, a material mode version of a satisfaction condition for a predicate. But I have denied, on RC’s behalf, that there is any such neat answer. So I have denied

that there is any such thing as ‘the class of blue things’, or ‘the class of grunTERS’—except, perhaps, where ‘blue things’, or ‘grunTERS’, bears some particular understanding. No class of things is the class of blue things *sans phrase*.

What I have said instead is that being blue is a way which a given thing may count as being, when one understands so being in a certain way (and on occasions where it would be so understood), and similarly count, on some understandings and occasions, as not being. In that sense, what sometimes counts as being it may sometimes not. Which may raise the question, ‘When is it *that* way that is spoken of (or otherwise in question)?’ To which my only answer is that if you are one of us (say, a speaker of some language enough like English), then that is something you are prepared to recognize. If you are not, then I have no formula—as it were, a cognitive prosthetic—to offer you with which to replace such competence. (Though there is much more to say on this topic, I do not believe there is such a prosthetic.) Which may leave one yearning for the neat answer I am unprepared to give. Which would show, in turn, what such a neat answer amounts to: a sort of reduction of being blue, or being a grunTER, to something else—of speaking of such things to a condition on speaking truly of a thing in given words which actually decides when one would do so. I see no more hope for such a reduction than there is generally for reductions of anything to anything else. Read that way, Bishop Butler had the right idea.

Perhaps it is because C&L are so wedded to neat answers, or at least to such things as ‘the class of grunTERS’ *sans phrase*, that they cannot help misquoting me. They report me as saying, ‘Since what sometimes counts as green may sometimes not be . . .’ (p. 132). That ‘be’ is not mine. What I said, and meant to say, is: what sometimes counts as green may sometimes not *so count*. But they seem to think that I *must* have spoken of something counting as green *even though it is not*. Or else I just slipped. For they say,

The first claim made in the Travis quote above [the misquote] simply says that ‘What sometimes counts as green may sometimes not be’, i.e., a thing can satisfy ‘is green’ even though it is not green. No Radical Contextualist can deny this, because to do so is, in effect, to endorse Semantic Minimalism. It is constitutive of Semantic Minimalism that only something green can satisfy ‘green’, and so anyone who endorses this claim endorses Semantic Minimalism (p. 136).

But what is meant to be constitutive of semantic minimalism here is what could only be said coherently at all if what I have called a neat answer were available for the phenomenon of being green. By RC, you can only speak truly in calling something green if it *is* green on that understanding of a thing’s so being on which you speak. So you can only speak truly in calling something green on occasions on which you would thus be calling it green on an understanding on which it is. There is no way in which something which *is* green on the understanding on which it was said to be may, for all that, really not be green, unless, irrelevantly, that is for it not to be green on some

other understanding on which it was not said to be. There is no other sort of sense to be given to the expression ‘only something green’ in ‘only something green can satisfy “green”’ on which there is a coherent requirement here which, by RC, is flouted. Nor can semantic minimalism be defined by requirements not there to be imposed. (Though it might be defined by its trying to.)

Rejecting neat answers here does leave us with two different understandings of the notion *saying that*. To head off future confusion, I will sketch them. In using ‘grunts’ as meaning what it does, one speaks of (something’s) being a grunter. If, on an occasion, Pia spoke of being a grunter, and said Sid to be that way, she did what it would then be to say that Sid was a grunter. On one understanding of *saying that*, for her to have done that is for her to have said that Sid is a grunter. If I say her to have said that Sid is a grunter, I *may* be speaking on that understanding. In which case I will have told you nothing about the understanding of being a grunter on which she said that. In which case I will have told you nothing which settles when what she thus said would be true. By compensation, I will have told you what can be known to be so merely in knowing that she used given words (‘Sid grunts’, say) as meaning what they do. On the other understanding, when I say Pia to have said that Sid is a grunter, I thereby identify what it is she said to be so. To do that I will have to have spoken on some particular understanding of being a grunter. So this understanding of *saying that* presupposes that there is some such understanding on which I speak. All comes to grief if not. In so speaking, I may inform you as to when what Pia said would be true. I also say what does not follow merely from her having used given words (such as ‘Sid grunts’) as meaning what they do. Conflating these two conceptions can lead to the strangest superstitions, such as that there is truth to be told in saying, ‘If Pia said ‘Sid grunts’, using those words as meaning what they do, then what she said is true iff Sid grunts’. I hope we can now avoid such blunders in what follows.

4. Complaints

C&L have three main complaints against RC: first, it postulates context sensitivity where what ought to be tests for it are failed; second, it makes communication impossible; third, it is internally inconsistent. I take these in order.

4.1. Failing tests

RC tells us that, since ‘grunts’ speaks of being a grunter, there are many things to be said of someone in saying ‘He grunts.’ C&L want ‘grunts’ to pass three tests. First, it should block disquotation: there should be no automatic inference from ‘Pia said “The lake is blue”’ to ‘Pia said that the lake is blue’. Second, there should be a bar to ‘collective description’. In C&L’s words, ‘From there being contexts of utterance in which “A *v*-s” and [ones in which] “B *v*-s” are true, it doesn’t *follow* that there is a true utterance of “A and B both *v*”’ (p. 99). Third, it should be possible to say (truly), ‘There can be false utterances of “S” even though S.’ While

speaking truth in saying 'S', we should still be able to recognize, explicitly, circumstances in which, in saying 'S', one would speak falsehood.

These tests, applied with an attentive ear, *are* passed by 'grunts'. The first first. Max, testing Sid's medical condition, hits him sharply in the solar plexus. Sid grunts. Max reports the result to Pia in saying 'Sid grunts'. At another place and time Zoë says to Pia, 'Let's invite Sid'. Pia replies, 'Let's not. Max said that he grunts'. A false and deceitful response, to which Zoë replies truly (and indignantly), 'He does not'. Max did *not* say what Pia said him to, given the understanding of being a grunter on which she will have spoken.

The second test is trivially passed. Max said truly, 'Sid grunts'. Zoë said truly, 'He (Sid) does not'. There is no occasion on which one can say truly, 'Sid grunts and he does not', thereby telling both the truth that Max did and the one that Zoë did. (The qualification rules out the case where one says 'He does and he doesn't', meaning, roughly, 'Sort of'.)

The third test is also passed, though at the cost of some tedium. Max could quite correctly say, 'Sid grunts. Of course, one would describe him falsely in those terms (in saying of him 'He grunts') if (as might be) what one were thereby saying is that he is in that habit.' Not that I advise so speaking to non-philosophers.

4.2. Blocking communication

What communication requires, C&L suppose, is that from the fact that Max said, on some occasion, 'Sid grunts', of Sid (at time *t*), those words meaning in Max's mouth what they do mean, one can extract what it is that Max thus said to be so. RC of course denies that one can do that. But why in the world should one need to? Perhaps their idea is this. If Max's words are to be any use to me, I must be able to identify precisely the proposition they expressed. To do that would be to identify precisely *which* understanding they bore; to distinguish that understanding of 'grunts' on which they spoke from every other possible and distinguishable one. But (their idea would continue), to do that you would really need to be there (at Max's speaking). On the RC view, though, communication just isn't like that. True, Max's words are worth little to me if I know *nothing* of the circumstances in which he spoke. But knowing *something* of them may be enough to know something of what is to be expected if things are as he said. Which may, if things go well, make them quite useful to me. I know he spoke reporting Sid's medical condition. That may tell me all I need to know as to how to understand his words. The idea of identifying 'the' proposition he expressed can simply drop out of the picture.

4.3. Contradiction

C&L think RC contradicts itself. It is hard to fall into contradiction without falling into ever so many. But I will concentrate on one. RC denies that sentences have truth conditions. C&L think that RC then goes on to provide some.

To proceed with this charge we will need some idea of the sort of condition RC thinks can be provided. It amounts to this: The English 'He grunts', said of

someone at a time, thus meaning what it does mean, says what is true of that person at that time just in case that person is a grunter on that understanding of being one on which one then would speak. There are now two points. The first is that a sentence's truth condition would be a condition on the truth of *that sentence*. That is what RC says sentences do not have. But no condition on the truth of a sentence has yet been stated. What has been stated is a sort of condition on the truth of what would be said in a given speaking of a sentence. I refer back to agreed ground rules. We must not assign a sentence a property it does not have. And *it* does not have a property which some literal speakings of it would have but others would not. The sentence 'He grunts' certainly does not have the property of being true of someone at a time if that person is a grunter on such-and-such non-obligatory understanding of being one.

The second point is a bit more complex. RC's targets—such figures as Donald Davidson and David Lewis—took it that in stating a truth condition for something one was saying when it would be true. One says, 'He grunts' is true iff he grunts', and, the idea is, *that* is when it will be true (namely, when he grunts, supposing that to be some determinate condition of things). That idea could be put in terms of relief from reliance on intuition. Suppose (impossibly) I am a monolingual Finn. I hear Max say, 'Sid grunts'. I have not a clue as to when what Max said would be true. Now you tell me what Davidson hoped to say about that sentence: it is true iff 'Sid grunts' (these last scare quotes). Armed with what you told me I need no longer rely on ideas (implicit or not) as to how language works. I have been told how the *world* will be if Max spoke truth. I am in a position to check whether the world *is* as it must be for that. Suppose, now, that, on an occasion, Max said, of Sid, 'He grunts'. Now consult the 'truth condition' that RC supplies for that. When will things be as Max said? You cannot tell. Such information is not extractable from that condition. What you need still to know is how, in the circumstances of Max's speaking, one would understand talk of being a grunter (what one would then understand being that to be). For that you need your intuitive grasp of how language works. You have not been provided the relief Davidson and followers meant to provide. RC does not contradict itself on this point.

5. Minimalism

The driving force of RC is this idea: the open sentences of language speak of ways for things to be which admit of understandings (as evidenced in the second style of argument of section 2). This blocks truth-conditional semantics. For suppose I say, 'The sentence 'Sid grunts' is true iff Sid grunts'. Either I use that last 'grunts' on some particular understanding of being a grunter—one understanding among many—or I do not. If I do, then I assign the sentence a property it does not have. For *it* does not speak of being a grunter on any special understanding of this. But if I do not, then I fail to state *any* condition under which anything might be

true. Being a grunter on no particular understanding of being one is just not a way for Sid to be. In brief, the choices here are falsehood or failure to say anything. What would be needed to block this result are ways for things to be, which one might speak of, and which do not admit of understandings.

It is central to semantic minimalism that (for given values of referring devices, tacit or otherwise) a sentence expresses a ‘minimal proposition’, where this is something truth-evaluable. (See p. 155 *et passim*.) There is thus a condition on which, and one under which, the minimal proposition would be true. So, too, then, the sentence. If that is what C&L think, one would expect them to have in mind some ways for things to be to speak of which do not admit of understandings. Or at least to have some strategy to lift the barrier RC sets out. So far as I can see, their only strategy here is studied silence. They utter certain forms of words—‘The sentence “Sid grunts” expresses the proposition that Sid grunts, which is true iff Sid grunts’ will do as illustration. But they emphatically refuse any explanation as to what it is they thus said. What they pretend to have said is *what* proposition ‘Sid grunts’ expresses, and *when* it would be true. But if one feels left in the dark by that, they have no help to offer.

C&L anticipate perplexity at this strategy. But they mistake the question that would be raised here. Here is their idea of that question p. 000:

[The proposition that A is red] is just the proposition *that A is red*. But which proposition is that? What, for example, is it to be just red? What is it that all these things (those that are red when seen through red sunglasses, red on the inside, red in the dark, red on the outside, red when washed, etc.) have in common? What is that state of affairs that the proposition *that A is red* picks out?

... this worry has nothing specifically to do with *redness*. It generalizes. What, for example, do all dancers have in common? Some fly in the air, some underwater; some with music, some without: some stand on their feet, some crawl, some touch other people, some don’t. What is the state of affairs that the proposition *that A dances* picks out?

Their question is thus what is in common to all those things each of which is red on some understanding or other of so being. The answer is probably nothing; or nothing *else*. It might be interesting to ask why speaking on all those understandings counts as speaking of being *red*. But that is not the question that arises at this point.

The RC—I, for one—simply wants more details as to when, say, ‘the proposition that Pia dances’ would be true. If Pia is a trained, skilled, dancer but refuses now to do it, is that proposition true then? If she eagerly takes the floor at every opportunity, but is so clumsy that one might refuse to call it dancing, is it true then? If she dances, but only when you heat the floor enough, is it true then? And so on. The questions are an embarrassment for the reason already stated. If, say, C&L say ‘Yes’ to the first one, then *that* proposition cannot be the one the English

sentence ‘Pia dances’ expresses. For it does not, as such, speak of dancing on that understanding of engaging in it. If they systematically say ‘Don’t know’, or steadfastly maintain silence, then (unless they are hiding something) there simply is no answer to the question when that would-be proposition would be true; in which case it is no proposition at all.

What is in common to blood in her veins (needing oxygen to redden it) and Pia’s lips (reddened by lipstick)? How does that matter to when C&L’s ‘proposition that A is red’ would be true? Not at all. Unless they mean that proposition to be true just in case A is red *on some understanding or other* of something’s being so. If they mean some such thing, they are in gross violation of our agreed rules. Suppose we ever did, in saying, ‘Pia dances’, say what was true just in case Pia dances on never mind what understanding of so engaging. So to speak would be to speak on a *very* unusual understanding of being a dancer. The rule was: do not assign English expressions properties *they* do not have. As we saw, this rule means that if what an expression speaks of being, or doing, is such-and-such then it does *not* speak of that on such-and-such special understanding of it, so does not say what it would be true to say only on some such understanding. If this is what C&L have in mind, then English simply does not do what they make it out to do. Minimal propositions lead nowhere.

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