

Semantic Pluralism

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Abstract

This thesis defends Semantic Pluralism, the view that sentences express sets of propositions in context. It puts forward two arguments against Contextualism, the main opposing view, on which each sentence expresses exactly one proposition in context. It spells out two versions of Pluralism: Flexible Pluralism, which takes most sentences to be context-sensitive, and Strong Pluralism, which denies that context-sensitivity is widespread. And it defends Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism from a number of objections.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

How do speakers use language to communicate thoughts? Theorists in semantics, the subject area of this investigation, have given two quite different answers to this question. On a first answer, speakers usually communicate thoughts by putting them into sentences. If a speaker wants to communicate a thought, she utters a sentence that has the content of the thought, a *proposition*, as its meaning (i.e. as its *semantic value*). Communication is successful if her audience understands the sentence and as a result comes to entertain the proposition that is its semantic value. For example, if Anne and Bert are on a walk near Oxford, and if Anne wants to communicate to Bert that the silhouette of Oxford is beautiful, then she can do so by uttering (1) while gesturing towards Oxford's silhouette:

(1) That is beautiful.

According to the current answer, the semantic value of (1) is the proposition that the silhouette of Oxford is beautiful. Communication is successful if Bert comes to entertain this proposition by figuring out the semantic value of (1). This might be called the *correspondence view* of linguistic communication: the thought communicated (usually) corresponds to the semantic value of the sentence uttered.

On a second answer, speakers use sentences to communicate propositions, but the semantic value of a sentence is merely a guide to the proposition the speaker intends to communicate. The semantic values of most sentences are not propositions, and are

thus distinct from what speakers communicate by uttering them. Speakers and audiences, however, know which propositions a speaker *could* communicate by uttering a given sentence. In our example, (1) does not express the proposition that the silhouette of Oxford is beautiful, but something less specific (roughly: that a certain thing is beautiful). Bert uses this semantic value as a guide to what Anne intends to communicate, but he also uses other, non-linguistic clues, such as the fact that Anne is gesturing towards Oxford's silhouette. This might be called the *guide view* of linguistic communication.

The correspondence view of linguistic communication fits naturally with the semantic theory of *Contextualism*. Contextualists hold that semantics is *propositional*: that the semantic value of every sentence, as uttered on a certain occasion, is a proposition. And they hold that semantics is *sensitive*: that many sentences express different propositions on different utterances, and that which proposition such a sentence expresses on a given utterance depends on certain features of the conversational setting, e.g. the speaker's intentions. Contextualism and the correspondence view of communication fit together well because most sentences allow speakers to communicate different propositions. This is illustrated by (1), which cannot only be used to communicate the proposition that the silhouette of Oxford is beautiful, but also the proposition that Beethoven's violin concerto is beautiful and countless other propositions. If speakers usually use (1) to communicate the proposition it expresses, then it cannot express the same proposition on every utterance.

If semanticists adopt the guide view of linguistic communication, they are likely to opt for a semantic theory that strongly differs from Contextualism. They will hold that semantics is *non-propositional* and *insensitive*: that the semantic value of most sentences is not a proposition, and that most sentences have the same semantic value on any utterance. Such views on semantic values fit with the guide view of communication

because the latter does not require the proposition communicated to be the semantic value of the sentence uttered. Speakers can use a sentence such as (1) to communicate different propositions on different utterances, although (1) has the same semantic value on any utterance. Compared to Contextualism, theories of non-propositional and insensitive semantics permit a simpler account of the semantic values of sentences: they take many sentences to have the same semantic value on any utterance, and thus can avoid some of the tricky questions Contextualists face in saying *how* semantic values depend on features of the conversational setting.

Nonetheless, Contextualism is the standard view in contemporary semantics. This has to do with the fact that most semanticists accept the correspondence view of communication, which fits better with Contextualism. But it is also due to persistent worries theorists have about non-propositional semantics: about the semantic values non-propositional semanticists assign to sentences and about the way in which these are meant to guide an audience to the proposition the speaker wants to communicate. For instance, some non-propositional semanticists hold that a sentence such as (1) expresses a *propositional radical*: a fragment of a proposition that is in some sense incomplete. But it has been objected that while we have a reasonably good grip on what propositions are, namely the contents of thoughts and beliefs, it is unclear how propositional radicals should be construed. Furthermore, semanticists have objected that non-propositional semantic theories that invoke propositional radicals cannot give a satisfactory explanation of how the semantic value of a sentence enables successful communication, i.e. how it guides the audience to the proposition the speaker intends to communicate.

My first aim in this thesis is to show that these are not good reasons to avoid non-propositional semantic theories. I will argue that non-propositional semanticists should adopt a view of *Semantic Pluralism*, which takes the semantic values of sentences to be

sets of propositions. Semantic Pluralism allows non-propositional semanticists to get by with the semantic values that are familiar from Contextualism. And it allows them to give a systematic account of how semantic values guide the audience to the proposition the speaker intends to communicate: unless the speaker is being non-literal, the proposition the speaker intends to communicate has to be contained in the set of propositions expressed by the sentence uttered. In this way, non-propositional semanticists can avoid both of the objections mentioned above.

The second aim of this thesis is to provide new motivation for semanticists to move away from propositional theories, and in particular to move away from Contextualism. Contextualists hold that for many utterances features of the conversational setting (such as the speaker's intentions) fix exactly one proposition as semantic value of the sentence uttered. This requires contexts to be specific. But, as I will demonstrate with a number of examples, speaker intentions (and other features of the conversational setting) are often not nearly specific enough to pick out exactly one proposition as sentential semantic value. This, I hope, might give semanticists with a correspondence view of communication a reason to reject the Contextualist dictum of one proposition per sentence (and utterance).

My third aim in this thesis is to put forward two concrete theories of Semantic Pluralism, and to defend them against the most pressing objections. *Flexible Pluralism* is geared to those who favour a correspondence view of communication, but are moved by considerations of the kind just sketched. Flexible Pluralism accepts widespread context-sensitivity, just like Contextualism, but denies that each sentence expresses exactly one proposition (on a given utterance). *Strong Pluralism*, by contrast, is a non-propositional and insensitive version of Pluralism, which fits best with a guide view of communication.

Let me now give a brief outline of how I will proceed. Chapter 2 will set the groundwork for the following chapters. I will discuss which explanatory aims semanticists should pursue and which kinds of explanations they should provide. The primary aim of semantics, I will argue, is to contribute to an explanation of how speakers can use language to successfully communicate complex and diverse thoughts. Further aims are explanations of the productivity of language and of judgements of speakers about truth, validity and acceptability. I will argue that these latter aims are plausible because meeting them seems to be a precondition for meeting the primary aim of explaining communicative success. Then, I will look at different kinds of explanations in semantics. Theorists in philosophical semantics usually aim for rational reconstructions of their explanatory targets, and I will argue that this is a sensible and fruitful approach.

In the second half of the chapter, I will introduce important theories in philosophical semantics, classifying them according to two criteria: on the one hand, I will distinguish between propositional and non-propositional semantics, and on the other, between sensitive and insensitive semantics. This will locate Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism in the landscape of semantic theories. The following table shows the theories I will discuss and the result of applying both criteria:

	<i>Propositional semantics</i>	<i>Non-propositional semantics</i>
<i>Sensitive semantics</i>	Contextualism	Flexible Pluralism
<i>Insensitive semantics</i>	Propositional Minimalism Semantic Relativism	Radical Minimalism Strong Pluralism

In Chapter 3, I will put forward two arguments against Contextualism, the main competitor of Pluralism. The arguments are based on examples of ordinary utterances of sentences featuring gradable adjectives, quantifiers and modals. Contextualists take these expressions to be context-sensitive and hold that they have exactly one semantic value in context if they occur in an ordinary utterance. The arguments attack this assumption. The first argument uses the examples to show that in many ordinary utterances the semantic treatment Contextualists provide for gradable adjectives, quantifiers and modals does not lead to exactly one semantic value in context. Contextualism thus requires contexts to be more specific than they in fact are. The second argument uses the examples to show that the semantic values Contextualists assign in many cases are of no explanatory value because they do not help to meet the explanatory targets mentioned above. Most of the examples of this chapter involve non-literal speech, such as irony, exaggeration or metaphor. Non-literal speech is common in everyday language, but has so far not played a role in the debate between Contextualists and their critics.

Chapter 4 spells out Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism. Both of these views entail that at least some expressions have non-singleton sets of semantic values (in context), and that this leads to at least some sentences expressing non-singleton sets of propositions (in context). I will consider which expressions Flexible Pluralists and Strong Pluralists should take to have sets of semantic values, and which sets of semantic values they should assign to such expressions. I will outline how Pluralists can provide a compositional semantics and how Pluralism fits into a broadly Gricean theory of communication. I will also show how Pluralists can capture the notion of what is said.

In Chapter 5, I will consider objections to non-propositional semantics and offer Pluralist responses to such objections. To begin with, I will discuss an objection aimed

at moderately non-propositional theories, which pair some but not all sentences with non-propositional semantic values. The objection aims to show that such a position is unstable and collapses into a thoroughly non-propositional theory, on which all sentences have non-propositional semantic values. I will show that Flexible Pluralism is not likely to suffer from such a collapse, and that it is thus not clear that Pluralist views have to be thoroughly non-propositional. Nonetheless, I will respond to the remaining objections under the assumption that Pluralism is thoroughly non-propositional. Three of these objections allege that non-propositional theories are unable to account for ordinary speaker judgements of truth, of validity and of literality. I will show that Pluralists do have the resources to account for such judgements, and that they can account for judgements of the third kind better than other non-propositional and propositional theories. According to the remaining objection, non-propositional theories do not fit with the way we use sentences to ascribe beliefs and give reasons for belief. I will demonstrate that this objection, too, is ineffective against Pluralist views.

Chapter 6 will then offer a discussion of two objections to insensitive semantics: an objection based on tests for context-sensitivity, and an objection based on binding. I will show that Strong Pluralism can withstand both of these objections.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I will compare the views discussed and point to outstanding challenges for Pluralism.

Chapter 2

Semantics: Aims, explanations and theories

In this chapter, I will discuss the aims and methods of semantic theorising, and I will provide an overview over different kinds of semantic theories.

The chapter has three sections. In the first section, I will look at the aims of semantics. While semanticists of course aim to assign semantic values to the expressions of a language, the constraints on *how* this should be done are not as obvious. These constraints follow from the explanatory aims of semantics: whether a semantic theory is right to pair an expression with a certain semantic value depends on whether this helps to explain the things semantics should explain. I will present five explanatory aims that are widely accepted and that I take to be plausible. The primary aim of semantics, I will argue, is to contribute to an explanation of our remarkable success in communicating with language. But semantics must also meet more specific aims: it should contribute to explanations of how languages can be productive and it has to account for speaker judgements of truth, validity or acceptability about sentences and arguments. I will argue that these specific aims should be in place because they help to meet the overall aim of explaining communicative success.

In the second section, I will offer a short discussion of the methods of semantics and the kinds of semantic explanations that are offered to meet the previously mentioned aims. I will vote for an approach that is common in philosophical semantics, which is based on thought experiments and provides broadly Gricean explanations that take the form of rational reconstructions of linguistic communication.

The third section will give a brief overview over theories in philosophical and linguistic semantics, which will hopefully make obvious how the views advanced in this dissertation fit in with and differ from existing semantic theories.

1. The aims of semantic theorising

Natural language semantics investigates the meanings of expressions of natural languages, such as English and German.¹ The immediate aim of a semantic theory of a language is therefore to pair the simple and complex expressions of that language with meanings, which I am calling *semantic values*. But there are other, less immediate aims of semantic theorising: semanticists aim to determine the semantic values of expressions *in order* to explain certain phenomena or to account for certain data. These less immediate explanatory aims guide semanticists in assigning semantic values and thus place desiderata on semantic theories.

I will now present five widely accepted desiderata on semantic theories, which are also the desiderata I will rely on in this thesis. These require semantic theories to contribute to explanations of certain features of a language (such as that it is productive), of certain judgements of speakers of a language (e.g. about the truth or falsity of utterances) and of the general fact that speakers can use a language to successfully communicate complex and diverse information. I will use versions of these desiderata that place comparatively weak constraints on semantic theories, which should thus be accepted by most participants in the debate. After presenting the desiderata, I will say why they are plausible.

¹ As I will not be concerned with artificial languages in this thesis, I will from now on simply use *semantics* to refer to natural language semantics.

Productivity

Semanticists commonly claim that semantics has to contribute to an explanation of the *productivity* of a language. A language is productive if (in general) a speaker is able to understand (and produce) complex expressions of that language simply by being able to understand (and produce) their component expressions and by knowing the rules by which they are composed. It is thought that most or even all natural languages are productive, and English serves as a good example. As a reader of this text, you are able to understand the following sentence, even though you are likely to never have come across it before:

- (1) Antonio Stradivari was an Italian violin maker who lived in
Cremona.

You understand (1) upon first encounter because you understand its component expressions and are familiar with the rules by which they have been put together. It is thus the productivity of English that facilitates an understanding of (1).

Explaining productivity requires input from semantics as well as from the neighbouring discipline of syntax: while semantics aims to show how the meanings of complex expressions are put together out of the meanings of simple ones, syntax aims to provide the grammatical rules by which complex expressions are composed. Semantics thus has to *contribute* to an explanation of productivity, and as a first desideratum on semantic theories we have (Des1):

(Des1): Productivity

A semantic theory of a given natural language has to contribute to an explanation of its productivity.²

² Productivity is accepted as an explanatory aim of semantics e.g. by Frege (1923: 36), Lewis (1970: 18), Borg (2004: 2) and Yalcin (forthcoming: 4).

In order to fulfil (Des1), semanticists construct theories that are *compositional*. In a compositional semantic theory, the semantic value of a complex expression is determined by the semantic values of its constituents and the way they are put together. Compositional semantic theories are thus suited to contribute to an explanation of productivity.

Judgements of truth and falsity

Many semanticists hold that a semantic theory has to contribute to an explanation of why speakers judge some utterances to be the true and others to be false (relative to a certain situation). For example, let us assume that Anne is a competent speaker of English and is talking to Bert about Italian violins. Bert utters (2) and (3):

(2) The Molitor Stradivarius was built in 1697.

(3) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive.

If Anne happens to know that the Molitor Stradivarius was built in 1697 and, in 2010, was sold for \$3.6 million, then she will judge (2) and (3) to be true. Furthermore, she will hold that (2) and (3) would not be true if the Molitor Stradivarius had been built in 1698 and if it had recently been sold for \$36. Anne's judgements concern the truth or falsity of an utterance in a situation, and, more generally, the conditions under which an utterance would be true or false. It seems plausible that most speakers of English (who have the relevant background information) would make the same judgements about these utterances of (2) and (3), and it is widely believed that semantic theories must contribute to an explanation of such judgements.

This leads to a desideratum along the lines of (Des2):

(Des2): Judgements of truth and falsity

A semantic theory of a given natural language has to contribute to an explanation of the truth-value judgements of speakers of that language.³

Some theorists might disagree with my formulation of (Des2) and instead argue for a stronger desideratum that concerns the *truth-values* of sentences, and not merely *judgements* about truth-values. Such a desideratum would be more in line with the widespread following of truth-conditional semantics and the view, expressed by Lewis (1970: 18) and accepted by many semanticists, that ‘[s]emantics with no treatment of truth conditions is not semantics’.⁴

But, for one thing, these theorists will accept that semantics has to *at least* contribute to an explanation of truth-value judgements. So these theorists will accept (Des2), as well as accepting further, stronger constraints on semantics. Given that some theorists do not accept a strong version of (Des2), the current formulation fits with my aim of capturing uncontroversial and widely accepted desiderata on semantic theories.

And secondly, I think that (Des2) should not be formulated in a stronger way. For a requirement according to which semantic theories have to account for the truth-values of sentences (and not merely for truth-value judgements) presupposes that sentences have truth-values. That, however, is not pre-theoretically obvious. The datum we have is that speakers judge utterances of sentences to be true or false, but there are several explanations for *why* this is the case. On one explanation, sentences themselves have truth-values and these are detected by speakers. But on other explanations, sentences need not have truth-values and what speakers judge to be true or false is e.g.

³ Among those accepting a desideratum similar to (Des2) are Stanley & Szabó (2000: 240), King & Stanley (2005: 160–161) and Yalcin (forthcoming: 5).

⁴ Heim & Kratzer (1998: 1), Borg (2004: 5) and Stanley (2007: 5) are among those who have explicitly claimed that semantics must be truth-conditional.

what a speaker asserts by uttering a sentence. For this reason, I think that (Des2) rightly concerns speaker judgements, and that a stronger desideratum would be misguided.⁵

This response also makes clear why, in (Des2), semantics is merely asked to *contribute* to an explanation of the data: there are *prima facie* plausible explanations of truth-value judgements which are jointly given by semantics as well as pragmatics, the study of how language is used.

Judgements of validity

A third desideratum discussed in the literature concerns judgements of validity and other logical properties of sentences and arguments. Many theorists would, for example, say that semantic theories have to contribute to an explanation of the fact that ordinary speakers would judge (4) to follow from (2) and (3) (and thus judge the argument from (2) and (3) to (4) to be valid):

- (2) The Molitor Stradivarius was built in 1697.
- (3) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive.
- (4) The Molitor Stradivarius was built in 1697 and is expensive.

Furthermore, they would expect a theory to explain (at least in part) the fact that ordinary speakers would judge (5) to be contradictory:

- (5) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive and it is not expensive.

These theorists accept a desideratum similar to (Des3), in which validity judgements stand proxy for the various different kinds of speaker judgements about logical properties of sentences and arguments:

⁵ See Yalcin (forthcoming: 5) for a similar point.

(Des3): Judgements of validity

A semantic theory of a given natural language has to contribute to an explanation of the validity judgements of speakers of that language.⁶

One way to account for (Des3) is by taking sentential semantic values to have the logical properties and stand in the logical relations at issue, and by holding that these are what the speaker judgements are about. On such an approach, semantics is taken to fulfil (Des3) all by itself. But just as it is the case for truth-value judgements, there might be other explanations that appeal e.g. to what speakers assert by sentences or sequences of sentences. In explanations of these latter kinds, semantics plays only a partial role, which is why the desideratum merely states that it has to contribute to an explanation of validity judgements.

Judgements of acceptability

Some semanticists have argued that semantic theories must account for judgements of speakers about the acceptability or unacceptability of utterances of sentences. These theorists would say that a semantic theory has to contribute to an explanation of why ordinary speakers judge utterances of (1)–(5) to be acceptable, while they would judge utterances of (6) or (7) to be unacceptable or infelicitous:

(6) The Molitor Stradivarius is prime.

(7) He is the Molitor Stradivarius.

Speakers would presumably take utterances of (6) and (7) to be unacceptable or infelicitous because something is wrong with their meaning: they would say that they are nonsensical. This makes semantics a good candidate to explain these judgements (at least in part). But utterances of sentences might also be judged to be unacceptable or

⁶ Such a desideratum is accepted e.g. by Partee (1988: 49), Borg (2004: 2; 2014: 8) and Gauker (2012).

infelicitous for other reasons, e.g. because of grammatical features or because of the manner in which they are made. Explaining these latter judgements seems to be a job (mainly) of syntax and pragmatics, respectively. So the explanation of judgements of acceptability is also a joint project, to which syntax, semantics and pragmatics should contribute.⁷

We thus have the following desideratum concerning acceptability judgements:

(Des4): Judgements of acceptability

A semantic theory of a given natural language has to contribute to an explanation of the acceptability judgements of speakers of that language.⁸

How might a semantic theory contribute to such an explanation? One approach explains the unacceptability judgements concerning sentences such as (6) and (7) by distinguishing different types of semantic values and positing restrictions on how types of semantic values can be combined with each other. If these restrictions are violated in the composition of a sentence, the sentence is in some way defective (e.g. because it is meaningless). This, in turn, explains why speakers judge it to be unacceptable.⁹

⁷ Note that (6) and (7) appear to be grammatical and that they would be judged to be unacceptable (almost) regardless of the manner or the context in which they are uttered, which seems to speak against a purely syntactic or pragmatic treatment of these judgements.

⁸ (Des4) accepted by Yalcin (forthcoming). A desideratum of this kind is not as often mentioned as the other desiderata are.

⁹ See Magidor (2013: Chapter 3) for discussion and criticism of an approach of this kind. Magidor (2013: Chapter 5) argues that sentences such as (6) and (7) are infelicitous because they carry false presuppositions. Because Magidor holds that presuppositions fall into the realm of pragmatics, she would presumably see a smaller role for semantics in fulfilling (Des4). However, Magidor is concerned primarily with sentences that contain category mistakes (such as (6) and (7)), so even on her view semantics might have a role to play in accounting for unacceptable utterances of sentences that do not contain category mistakes.

Communicative success

A desideratum accepted by many semanticists concerns the remarkable success with which speakers use natural languages to communicate. Members of a linguistic community can use their language to share a huge range of thoughts and ideas, feelings and facts between each other, and they can do so effortlessly and at great speed. A desideratum that states this general phenomenon as explanatory goal might be put as follows:

(Des5): Communicative success

A semantic theory of a given natural language has to contribute to an explanation of the communicative success of speakers of that language.¹⁰

It seems very likely that syntax, semantics and pragmatics all have to play a part in an explanation of communicative success: successful communication requires the *use* of expressions with certain *meanings* and composed according to certain *grammatical rules*.

Semanticists have tried to tackle (Des5) in very different ways, but there is one feature aimed at facilitating an explanation of communicative success that many semantic theories have in common: semantic values are taken to be *shareable*. If a speaker successfully asserts something by uttering a sentence, the sentence must have a semantic value that, in principle, can be grasped by the audience and that the audience can identify as the (or a) semantic value of the sentence uttered.¹¹

¹⁰ Among those who explicitly accept a desideratum similar to (Des5) are Pietroski (2000: 162), Soames (2008: 461), Schiffer (forthcoming: 23), Yalcin (forthcoming) and Dowell (forthcoming). A desideratum of this kind is presupposed by Cappelen & Lepore (2005: Chapter 7), Gauker (2008: 360) and others. Borg (2004: 3) votes against such a desideratum.

¹¹ Frege (1892) was one of the first semanticists to spell this desideratum out explicitly.

These are the most widely accepted desiderata on semantic theories. They are the desiderata I will accept in this investigation and that I will use to evaluate semantic theories in the following chapters. Why these desiderata, and not others?

A first, albeit weak, reason for my choice is given by the fact that they are the most widely accepted desiderata in the debate at issue. If this investigation is to contribute to the debate, its explanatory aims have to be at least similar to those of the theories it engages with. Partly for this reason, I have employed weak and uncontroversial formulations of (Des1)–(Des5) that many semanticists will accept.

But there is a second and much stronger reason to opt for these desiderata, as I want to briefly argue. Of the five desiderata, (Des5) arguably has the strongest pre-theoretical appeal. Few would deny that explaining communicative success is an interesting and worthwhile project.¹² And it seems very likely that providing a *semantics* of a language is one of the steps required for an explanation of communicative success. So (Des5) is not in need of further justification. And once (Des5) is in place, this gives us a reason to accept (Des1)–(Des4): a semantic theory is required to fulfil (Des1)–(Des4) because it seems very unlikely that it could contribute (in a substantial way) to an explanation of communicative success without fulfilling (Des1)–(Des4).

Take (Des1) as an example. It is very hard to see how a semantics of, say, English could contribute to an explanation of communicative success without contributing to an explanation of its productivity. A semantic theory therefore has to fulfil (Des1) in order to fulfil (Des5). Similar considerations hold for (Des2)–(Des4): speakers make use of judgements of truth and falsity, of validity and of acceptability in choosing the expressions they utter, and it is these judgements that (in part) facilitate communicative success. A speaker is very unlikely to communicate successfully if most of her

¹² One reason for why this is an interesting and worthwhile project is given by the fact that our ability to successfully communicate complex and diverse information is one of the distinctive features setting humans apart from other species. Stanley (2007: 1) highlights this aspect, though he does not use it to argue for a desideratum of the kind of (Des5).

utterances are (judged to be) false, contradictory or unacceptable. As a result, it is, once again, hard to see how a semantic theory could contribute to an explanation of communicative success without contributing to an explanation of these speaker judgements. Acceptance of (Des5) should thus also lead to acceptance of (Des2)–(Des4).¹³

In short, then, we are justified to accept (Des1)–(Des5) because (Des5) is an obvious desideratum on semantic theories, and because (Des1)–(Des4) follow from (Des5). I think this is an attractive way of understanding the explanatory aims of semantics. For on this picture, (Des5) ties together the diverse desiderata mentioned in the literature, which otherwise might seem to be quite unconnected and which on their own do not have the same intuitive support as (Des5). This lack of intuitive support is clearest for (Des2)–(Des4): it is not pre-theoretically obvious that figuring out speaker judgements of truth, validity or acceptability is an interesting project in its own right. But this project *does* seem interesting if it is a step towards an explanation of communicative success. This, in turn, might even be taken to provide further support for (Des5): we should accept (Des5) because this explains why semanticists commonly accept (Des1)–(Des4). I do not think that (Des5) requires such further support, but I do take the integrative role given to (Des5) to be one of the features that makes the approach I have chosen attractive.

In conclusion, then, semantic theories should at least fulfil desiderata (Des1)–(Des5), repeated below for ease of reference:

¹³ (Des2)–(Des4) do not state which judgements of speakers of a language should be explained. Should these be those of all competent speakers of a language, or rather those of language experts, such as linguists and philosophers of language? As expert judgements sometimes diverge from judgements of ordinary speakers, a decision on this point could lead to different data semantic theories are asked to explain. The foregoing discussion suggests an answer to this question. Given that (Des5) aims at an explanation of communicative success of all competent speakers of a language, and given that (Des2)–(Des4) have to be fulfilled in order to fulfil (Des5), the relevant judgements must be those of all competent speakers of a language.

(Des1): Productivity

(Des2): Judgements of truth and falsity

(Des3): Judgements of validity

(Des4): Judgements of acceptability

(Des5): Communicative success

Semanticists use many different methods and kinds of explanations in order to fulfil these desiderata. In the next section, I will look at some of these approaches and say which approach I will pursue in what follows.

2. Methods and explanations in semantics

Semantics is pursued by theorists in philosophy, linguistics, psychology and various other disciplines. Because of these different backgrounds, semanticists employ quite different methods and they aim for quite different kinds of explanations of the phenomena and data they target. At one end of the spectrum are psycholinguists, who rely mainly on experimental methods, e.g. behavioural studies and studies involving eye tracking and brain imaging, and aim to provide causal explanations of how communication proceeds. The present investigation is placed at the opposite end of the spectrum: it is an investigation in philosophical semantics. It uses different methods and seeks for different kinds of explanations. It relies mainly on thought experiments, in which (imagined) speakers use sentences to communicate with an (imagined) audience. And the explanations it aims for take the shape of idealised rational reconstructions of successful linguistic communication, of productivity and of the judgements of speakers about truth, validity or acceptability.

Let me use an example to illustrate this approach and to contrast it with approaches in psycholinguistics. A great deal of our everyday communication is somewhat indirect:

in many cases what a speaker means (and asserts if she is successful) does not seem to match the meaning of the sentence she utters. For example, we communicate indirectly when we speak ironically, hyperbolically or metaphorically, and we often speak this way. How can an audience figure out what a speaker means in an instance of indirect communication? An influential answer to this question is due to H.P. Grice (1975). Grice argues that cases of indirect communication should be analysed as involving *conversational implicatures*, in which a speaker uses a sentence with a certain meaning in a way that appears to violate certain maxims of conversation that both the speaker and her audience take to be in place. The basic idea is that if the audience expects the speaker to be cooperative and thus to be observing certain maxims of conversation, but finds that the speaker would violate such a maxim by trying to communicate what the sentence means, it will infer that the speaker wants to convey something different from what the sentence means and will thus arrive at what the speaker has conversationally implicated. The following passage provides a nice illustration of irony as an example of a conversational implicature and of the kinds of explanations Grice aims to provide:

X, with whom A has been on close terms until now, has betrayed a secret of A's to a business rival. A and his audience both know this. A says '*X is a fine friend*'. (Gloss: It is perfectly obvious to A and his audience that what A has said or has made as if to say is something he does not believe, and the audience knows that A knows that this is obvious to the audience. So, unless A's utterance is entirely pointless, A must be trying to get across some other proposition than the one he purports to be putting forward. This must be some obviously related proposition; the most obviously related proposition is the contradictory of the one he purports to be putting forward.) (1975: 53; original emphasis)

This discussion is typical for a philosophical approach to semantics: it begins with a thought experiment about an instance (of a certain kind) of communication and then offers a reconstruction of what is going on in that instance. The reconstruction is tested against other instances of the same kind of communication and, if successful, generalised.

It is arguably not Grice's aim to capture the actual processes involved in the audience's interpretation of A's utterance. He does not expect an audience to go through the stages of utterance interpretation offered in his gloss *whenever* it is faced with ironical language. Rather, he wants to explain how an idealised audience could, in principle, use its knowledge of how communication works, of the meaning of the sentence uttered and of the clues present in the context of utterance to arrive at what the speaker intends to convey. The explanation is successful if the predictions it makes for these kinds of thought experiments match the results of corresponding instances of real world communication.¹⁴

In my view, it is plausible that semantic theories in philosophy should aim for such rational reconstructions as explanations of the phenomena and data mentioned in (Des1)–(Des5). This approach allows semantics to abstract away from enough detail to capture mechanisms that are in play in many different instances and kinds of communication (as well as in different languages). At the same time, it leaves enough work for semanticists to do and leads to illuminating and substantial insights into the mechanisms of meaning and of successful communication.¹⁵

The Gricean approach is very different from approaches in psycholinguistics, which *are* meant to provide causal explanations of cases of communicative success. Nonetheless, some theorists have used empirical studies to test Gricean explanations. For example, they have interpreted his account of irony comprehension as an attempt to capture the psychological processes of hearers understanding ironical utterances, and have therefore tried to test it by measuring reading speeds of ironical and non-ironical

¹⁴ This interpretation of Grice's aims is supported (a) by the fact that he nowhere in his writings mentions an aim of capturing the processes of utterance interpretation and (b) by the form his explanations take. Saul (2002) brings out the second point nicely: she shows that Grice's characterisation of implicatures cannot be taken to include an explanation of how audiences actually figure out implicatures because it allows audiences to be wrong about the implicatures generated.

¹⁵ For a recent endorsement of such an approach see Soames (2010: 171–173).

utterances.¹⁶ The idea is that because Grice posits an inference in the process of how hearers (or readers) work out what a speaker means by an ironical utterance, it should take longer to comprehend an ironical utterance than it does for a non-ironical utterance (which does not require such an inference). Some theorists claim that such studies support a Gricean explanation of irony, while others hold that they speak against it.¹⁷ But if Grice is interpreted as merely providing a rational reconstruction of what is going on (which, in my view, is the most charitable interpretation of Grice's project), studying reading speeds can neither confirm nor disconfirm Gricean explanations. Such explanations are simply not fine-grained enough to be tested for in this way.

Some theorists might criticise the approach I have chosen because they hold that rational reconstructions of the Gricean kind cannot offer proper explanations of the data mentioned in (Des1)–(Des5). Such theorists might point out that speakers of a language are not ideally rational agents and that real world conversational settings are different from those in philosophical thought experiments. They might thus claim that offering rational reconstructions of communicative success is not an interesting project.

But such criticism is unwarranted. For one thing, it seems wrong to say that theories in philosophical semantics do not offer proper explanations. Again, Grice's theory of implicatures can serve as an example: this theory surely explains, in a substantial way, how speakers can exploit conversational maxims to communicate indirectly. This explanation, in turn, contributes to a general explanation of how successful communication proceeds. And secondly, even though explanations in philosophical semantics are not full, causal explanations, they are very much like explanations in many other high level sciences, and in particular like those in sciences investigating

¹⁶ See e.g. Giora (1995: 239) and Gibbs (2002: 459).

¹⁷ See Glucksberg (2003) and Sedivy (2007) for helpful reviews of empirical work in this area.

social practices. Explanations in economics, for example, standardly take the form of a modelling of the decisions of idealised agents. And even the natural sciences have to rely on a great deal of idealisation. So if the complaint applies to explanations in philosophical semantics, it should equally apply to explanations in many high level sciences. This, I think, shows that philosophical semanticists need not be too worried by such criticism.

3. Four kinds of semantic theories

In this section, I will map out important theories in philosophical and linguistic semantics. I will classify theories with the two criteria mentioned in the introduction. Firstly, I will distinguish between propositional and non-propositional semantic theories. And secondly, I will distinguish between sensitive and insensitive semantic theories. A semantic theory is *propositional* if it entails that, for any everyday utterance of a sentence, the semantic value of the sentence uttered in the context of utterance is exactly one truth-evaluable proposition, and *non-propositional* if it pairs at least some sentences in context with semantic values that are not truth-evaluable propositions. And a semantic theory is *sensitive* if it entails that many expressions (in a sense of ‘many’ shortly to be precisified) are context-sensitive, and *insensitive* if it entails that few or no expressions are context-sensitive. An expression is *context-sensitive* (roughly) if it has different semantic values in different contexts of utterance. These distinctions lead to four kinds of theories, which are given in the following table:

Propositional and sensitive semantics	Non-propositional and sensitive semantics
Propositional and insensitive semantics	Non-propositional and insensitive semantics

To keep things manageable, I will narrow my focus in classifying theories and in discussing them thereafter to declarative sentences, and I will consider only ordinary, successful utterances, which may be called *everyday utterances*. This restriction should be taken to be in place unless I give an indication to the contrary, even where I do not make it explicit.

I will first consider propositional theories (Section 3.1), and then turn to non-propositional theories (Section 3.2).

3.1 Propositional semantics

A first group of semantic theories is that of *propositional semantics*. A semantic theory is propositional if it entails the following principle:

(Prop): Propositionality

For any everyday utterance of a (declarative) sentence, the sentence uttered has exactly one semantic value in the context of utterance, and that semantic value is a proposition.

The notion of a proposition has been spelled out in multifarious ways. I will remain neutral on most questions concerning the nature of propositions, and will merely

assume the equivalence of ‘the proposition that φ is true’ and ‘ φ ’, as well as the equivalence of ‘x believes/asserts the proposition that φ ’ and ‘x believes/asserts that φ ’.

Propositional semantics is the dominant approach in contemporary philosophy of language and linguistics. This is reflected in the following statement by Stanley & Szabó, which is representative for the view of many semanticists:

[It is] immensely plausible [...] that in normal instances of *successful* communication, the hearer who grasps the proposition communicated will also know what sentence was uttered and what proposition was expressed by that sentence on the given occasion. [...] Cases when the hearer knows the proposition communicated without the proposition expressed or the proposition expressed without the sentence uttered are highly exceptional. (2000: 231; original emphasis)

This passage clearly presupposes (Prop).¹⁸ A further indication for the popularity of this approach is given by the fact that the semantic value of a sentence is commonly referred to as its *propositional content*.¹⁹

There are several reasons for the popularity of propositional semantics. For one thing, this has to do with the success of *formal semantics*, the formal investigation of the semantic values of natural language expressions. Formal semantics of natural languages has grown out of the formal study of ideal languages. Frege, Russell, Carnap and Tarski, the pioneers of formal semantics, were for the most part interested in constructing theories of formal semantics for logically perfect languages.²⁰ Only in the 1970s did semanticists start to apply the apparatus of formal semantics to natural languages.²¹ And when they did so, they maintained many assumptions that had proven fruitful in the study of formal languages. One of these assumptions was the propositionality of sentential semantic values, which is still accepted by most formal semanticists. Natural

¹⁸ Following Stanley & Szabó and general usage, I will say that a sentence expresses a proposition p (in context) just in case it has p as its semantic value (in context).

¹⁹ Yet further evidence can be found in recent introductions to semantics. See e.g. Heim & Kratzer (1998: Chapter 12), Lycan (2000: Part II), Elbourne (2011: 50) and Zimmermann & Sternefeld (2013: Chapter 7).

²⁰ See Segal (2006).

²¹ See Partee (2011) for an outline of the historical development of formal semantics.

language formal semantics has been very successful in recent decades, and has influenced the views of many semanticists. The success of formal semantics and its adherence to propositionality is thus a first reason why many contemporary semanticists accept (Prop).

A second such reason is the widespread view that a semantic theory has to be propositional in order to fulfil its explanatory aims. For example, many semanticists hold that a semantic theory has to assign propositional semantic values if it is to account for ordinary speaker judgements of truth or validity, and thus to fulfil (Des2) and (Des3). For these and other reasons, propositional views are dominant in contemporary semantics.

Because semanticists have very different views on propositions, the group of propositional semantic theories is diverse. Some semanticists construe propositions as structured entities consisting of objects, properties and relations. This view is associated with Russell (1903) and is accepted by many contemporary semanticists, e.g. by Kaplan (1977). A second and related view also entails that propositions are structured, but takes them to consist of *senses*, which are ways of thinking about the objects, properties and relations that feature in Russellian propositions. This view is originally due to Frege (1892), and versions of it have been defended e.g. by McDowell (1977) and Chalmers (2011). A third view takes propositions to be intensions, which are functions from worlds to truth-values. Such views of *intensional semantics* have been defended e.g. by Lewis (1970), Stalnaker (1978), Zimmermann (1991) and Heim & Kratzer (1998). In the vicinity are views that take propositions to be functions from centred worlds to truth-values (Lewis 1979) or functions from situations to truth-values (Barwise & Perry 1983). As mentioned, I will remain neutral between these views.²²

²² There are further theories that do not pair sentences with propositions but that are similar in spirit to propositional semantics. Davidson (1984), for example, pairs sentences with *truth-conditions* instead of

Despite the diversity of propositional semantics, there are two assumptions any theory in this group has good reasons to accept. Firstly, propositional views should accept that semantic values are compositional: that the semantic value of a complex expression is determined by the semantic values of its parts and the way in which they are put together. An assumption of this kind is arguably required to account for the productivity of natural languages, and thus to fulfil (Des1). For this reason, propositional semanticists in general accept that the proposition a sentence expresses depends on the semantic values of its constituents and the way they are put together.²³

Secondly, for a theory of propositional semantics to be plausible, it has to entail that at least some sentences express different propositions on different utterances. Propositional semanticists thus cannot pair sentences with propositions *simpliciter*. This may work for sentences such as (8):

(8) Snow is white.

The semantic value of (8) can plausibly be taken to be the proposition that snow is white. But such a pairing is not plausible for many other sentences. Consider (9):

(9) I am hungry.

propositions. He claims that for a sentence to be meaningful is simply to have a certain truth-condition. This, in turn, is the case if there is a T-sentence for that sentence in an extensional truth-theory. Adherents of propositional semantics accept that propositions determine truth-conditions, so Davidson's view fits in with this general approach. Then there are theories of *Dynamic Semantics*, as developed by Kamp (1981) and Heim (1982). Should these be counted as propositional theories? That is a hard question. Adherents of such theories take discourses, and not sentences, to carry information, and hold that the meaning of a sentence consists in its potential to update discourses. Sentential semantic values are thus construed as *context-change potentials*. Nonetheless, even on views of Dynamic Semantics many sentences in everyday utterances can be paired with truth-conditions: sentences have truth-conditions relative to true information states. They are true if they preserve the truth of an information state, false if they do not. But truth-conditions cannot be defined for sentences that are uttered against false information states. Still, adherents of Dynamic Semantics would say that most everyday utterances take place against true information states: truth-conditions can be therefore defined for most utterances, and given the close connection between truth-conditions and propositions, this means that theories of Dynamic Semantics are similar in spirit to theories of propositional semantics.

²³ However, recently a number of semanticists have argued that propositional semantic values cannot be compositional. Rabern (2012) and Yli-Vakkuri (2013) have pointed to the behaviour of embedded sentences featuring unbound pronouns and have argued that this is incompatible with such sentences having propositional semantic values.

(9) appears to express different propositions when uttered by different speakers, and there is no proposition it can plausibly be said to express *simpliciter*.²⁴ But it does seem possible to assign a proposition to (9) if it is uttered by a certain speaker: if, for instance, (9) is uttered by Anne, it expresses the proposition that Anne is hungry.

The standard way of capturing this sensitivity of sentences to their conversational setting is due to Kaplan (1977, 1989). On Kaplan's view, each sentence expresses exactly one proposition relative to a *context*: a quadruple of an agent, a time, a location and a world.²⁵ Kaplanian contexts are meant to model – in a simplified way – the conversational setting of an utterance. (It is important to keep in mind that Kaplanian contexts are theoretical entities that abstract away from much that would intuitively count as the context of an utterance. In what follows, I will refer to a theoretical entity of this Kaplanian kind (and to any related entity in other theories) as a *context*, and to what would pre-theoretically be called 'context' as a *conversational setting*.) The second main ingredient in Kaplan's theory is that of the *character* of a sentence: the character of a sentence is a function that takes a context as input and spits out the proposition the sentence expresses in that context. Because (on Kaplan's view) each utterance of a sentence is associated with (i.e. located in) exactly one context, each utterance of a sentence expresses exactly one proposition.

The character of a sentence such as (8) ('Snow is white') is a constant function: fed any context, it spits out the same proposition. But if a sentence contains a context-sensitive expression (in Kaplan's terminology: an *indexical*), then its character is non-constant, delivering different proposition in different contexts.²⁶ This is the case for (9) ('I am hungry'), which contains the context-sensitive expression 'I'. So Kaplan splits up the meaning of a sentence into two levels: firstly, there is the character of a sentence,

²⁴ The sentence also expresses different propositions when uttered at different times. But to keep things simple, I will ignore tense in this case and in the remainder of this dissertation

²⁵ See Kaplan (1977: 543)

²⁶ I will precisify my use of 'context-sensitive' shortly.

and secondly, there is the proposition a sentence expresses in context, which Kaplan calls its *content*. Kaplan's view applies not only to sentences, but also to subsentential expressions: these, too, have a character and a content in context. The character of a context-sensitive expression is a non-constant function, while that of a context-insensitive expression is constant.

Kaplan's two-layered view of meaning has been very influential, and (as far as I can see) a distinction along these lines is incorporated in all propositional theories. Theorists have, however, used different labels for the two kinds of meaning: the character of an expression is also called its *standing meaning*, *conventional meaning* or *standing linguistic meaning*; and often the content of an expression is referred to as its *semantic value*. In what follows, I will refer to the first kind of meaning as *standing meaning* and to the second as *semantic value*. So in my terminology, the standing meaning of an expression is a function from contexts to semantic values. This way of talking fits with many (even if not all) uses in the debate, and it has the advantage of carrying comparatively little theoretical baggage (compared e.g. to the notions of *character* and *content*, which are closely tied to Kaplan's theory).

Semanticists have also taken different views on how to model contexts. Here are some examples: Lewis (1980: 79) takes a context to be an ordered triple of a possible world, a time and an agent. Stalnaker (1978) argues that it is a set of propositions mutually accepted by the participants of the conversation. And according to Stokke (2010), a context is an ordered tuple of an agent, a time, a location, a world and a collection of referential intentions. But on each of these views the *role* of context is the same: it provides inputs for standing meanings, which then deliver semantic values.

I will now turn to an important distinguishing feature between views of propositional semantics: the question of how many expressions should be included in the group of context-sensitive expressions. Before doing so, let me precisify my use of

context-sensitive: an expression e is context-sensitive if there are two contexts C_1 and C_2 and there is some semantic value S , such that e has S in C_1 but not in C_2 .²⁷ As far as I can see, any propositional semanticist accepts that the group of context-sensitive expressions includes those on the following well-known list provided by Kaplan (which I will henceforth call *Kaplan's list*):

the pronouns 'I', 'my', 'you', 'he', 'his', 'she', 'it', the demonstrative pronouns 'that', 'this', the adverbs 'here', 'now', 'tomorrow', 'yesterday', the adjectives 'actual', 'present' (1977: 489).

But how far does the group extend beyond this list? That is a matter of debate. Theories of propositional and sensitive semantics entail that there are many more context-sensitive expressions than those on Kaplan's list, while theories of propositional and insensitive semanticists deny this. Let us now look at these variants of propositional semantics in turn.

3.1.1 Propositional and sensitive semantics

Most propositional semanticists hold that the group of context-sensitive expressions is large and by far exceeds Kaplan's list. Such semanticists accept (CS), and thus a view of sensitive semantics:

(CS): Context-sensitivity

Many expressions are context-sensitive.

²⁷ Here and in most of what follows I am bracketing the phenomenon of ambiguity. It is not always easy to keep ambiguity and context-sensitivity apart, but in the examples to be discussed, potential ambiguity will not be an issue. A definition of context-sensitivity that takes ambiguity into account would have to be much more complex than the one just offered. One difficulty here is that many expressions are both ambiguous and context-sensitive. For a case study on the ambiguity and context-sensitivity of modals and for considerations on how to keep ambiguity and context-sensitivity apart see Vetter & Viebahn (2014).

I will refer to a view that entails (Prop) as well as (CS) as *Contextualism*.²⁸

To motivate the view that many expressions are context-sensitive, Contextualists commonly use so-called *context-shifting arguments*.²⁹ Context-shifting arguments are based on the following assumption: if it is possible that there are two utterances U_1 and U_2 of the same sentence S so that S is true on U_1 and false on U_2 , then S must express a different proposition on U_1 than it does on U_2 . And if it is possible that a sentence expresses different propositions on different utterances, then it must be context-sensitive and contain at least one context-sensitive constituent expression. In an application of a context-shifting argument, semanticists thus look at (actual or imagined) utterances of a sentence and consider whether they have different truth-values. Typical applications involve sentences such as (3), (10) or (11):

(3) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive.

(10) Everyone came to the party.

(11) Anne might go to the concert.

It seems that (3) can have different truth-values if uttered in contexts involving different standards of expensiveness. For example, it might be false in a conversation between millionaires while it is true in a conversation between people with an average income. Similarly, (10) appears to have different truth-values if uttered in contexts involving different groups of people, and (11) in contexts involving different bodies of information. In each case, different utterances of a sentence can have different truth-values although the facts the sentence is about stay fixed: for example, the cost of the Molitor Stradivarius stays fixed, and still one utterance of (3) appears to be true and another false. Contextualists hold that this is evidence that different utterances of (3),

²⁸ This view has also been labelled *Indexicalism*, e.g. by Recanati (2004) and Borg (2012). I have chosen *Contextualism* as label, because (i) this seems to be the most common name for such a view in contemporary semantics, and (ii) it reflects the fact that adherents of this view take context to have a significant influence on semantic values.

²⁹ This label is due to Cappelen & Lepore (2005).

(10) and (11) express different propositions, and that these sentences are therefore context-sensitive. They trace the context-sensitivity to the gradable adjective ‘expensive’, the quantifier ‘everyone’ and the modal auxiliary ‘might’.

If context-shifting arguments show that ‘expensive’, ‘everyone’ and ‘might’ are context-sensitive, they show that this is the case for many further expressions. Similar arguments to those involving (3), (10) and (11) can be constructed for other gradable adjectives (both relative, such as ‘tall’, ‘versatile’, ‘smart’, and absolute, such as ‘hexagonal’, ‘dry’, ‘full’), other quantifiers (‘every’, ‘everything’, ‘some’) and other modal auxiliaries (‘can’, ‘may’, ‘must’). And they can also be constructed for perspectival terms (‘right’, ‘nearby’), relational terms (‘friend’, ‘neighbour’), taste predicates (‘delicious’, ‘fun’), colour predicates (‘red’), and expressions used in attitude ascriptions (‘believes’, ‘knows’) and counterfactuals. For Contextualism (based on context-shifting arguments) to be plausible, it must thus entail that all of these kinds of expressions are context-sensitive. This further precisifies the vague use of ‘many’ in (CS). By stating that many expressions are context-sensitive, (CS) states that at least those kinds of expressions just listed are context-sensitive (in addition to those on Kaplan’s list).

Among the propositional semanticists who have used context-shifting arguments to argue for the context-sensitivity of at least some of these expressions, and that are thus most plausibly construed as Contextualists, are Lewis (1973, 1979), Kratzer (1977), Zimmermann (1991), DeRose (1992), Perry (1993), von Stechow (1994), Stanley (2007), Kennedy (2007), Gauker (2008), Rothschild & Segal (2009), Schaffer (2011) and von Stechow & Gillies (2011).

Contextualists take different views on which contextual elements play a role in determining the semantic value in context of context-sensitive expressions. Many hold that the semantic value of most context-sensitive expressions is fixed by the speaker’s

intentions, while some instead appeal to other features, e.g. what is salient in the conversational setting. I will attend to this question in detail in the following chapter.

Given their acceptance of (Prop) and (CS), Contextualists also have good reasons to accept the following principle concerning the relation between sentential semantic values and what is asserted:

(SVA): Semantic values and assertion

With any literal everyday utterance of a sentence, the speaker asserts the semantic value in context of the sentence uttered.³⁰

(SVA) is one way to spell out the correspondence view of linguistic communication mentioned in Chapter 1. It goes naturally with Contextualism because the propositions Contextualists assign to sentences as semantic values in context are good candidates to be what a speaker asserts by uttering a sentence (while speaking literally). Here are some sentences that give rough approximations of the propositions Contextualists would assign as semantic values of (3), (10) and (11) as uttered in a certain context:

(3) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive.

(3.1) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive by a millionaire standard.

(10) Everyone came to the party.

(10.1) Everyone who was invited came to the party.

(11) Anne might go to the concert.

(11.1) Anne might, for all Bert knows, go to the concert.

It seems plausible that literal speakers uttering (3), (10) and (11) (in a suitable context) communicate propositions such as those given by (3.1), (10.1) and (11.1).³¹ (SVA)

³⁰ 'Literal' in (SVA) is meant to be read in a pre-theoretical way: an utterance (a speaker making an utterance) counts as literal if ordinary speakers would take it (her) to be literal.

leaves open the possibility that literal speakers communicate something in addition to the semantic value of the sentence uttered. Most Contextualists would accept that this sometimes happens, e.g. when an utterance carries an implicature.

3.1.2 Propositional and insensitive semantics

Some propositional semanticists reject (CS) and hold that the group of context-sensitive expressions is limited (more or less) to those on Kaplan's list. Two kinds of propositional and insensitive semantics have been put forward: *Propositional Minimalism* and *Semantic Relativism*.

Propositional Minimalism has been defended by Borg (2004; 2012) and Cappelen & Lepore (2005). These semanticists hold that context-shifting arguments provide no evidence for context-sensitivity. They object that if one accepts that context-shifting arguments show that *some* expressions are context-sensitive, one must accept that they do so for *every* (or almost every) expression. The objection is based on the observation that it is possible to find utterances with apparently diverging truth-values for almost every sentence. As a result, context-shifting arguments would, if successful, indicate that almost every expression is context-sensitive. But such a view, the objection continues, is clearly implausible, so arguments that lead to it must be defective. Semanticists should thus reject context-shifting arguments and take only those expressions to be context-sensitive for which context-sensitivity is pre-theoretically obvious, namely those on Kaplan's list (and possibly a handful of further expressions).³²

In order to account for the fact that many sentences nonetheless *appear* to have different truth-values on different utterances (even if they do not contain any context-sensitive expressions), Propositional Minimalists drive a wedge between the semantic

³¹ Here and in what follows the phrase 'literal speaker' is to be read as equivalent to 'speaker (while speaking literally)'.

³² See Cappelen & Lepore (2005: Chapters 3 and 4) and also Borg (2004: Chapter 4).

value in context of the sentence uttered and the proposition a speaker thereby asserts. They thus reject (SVA) and hold that these two notions often come apart, even if a speaker is speaking literally. Our judgements about the truth-value of an utterance might, they argue, track the proposition the sentence expresses, they might track what the speaker asserts or they might track yet something else, so the appearance of differing truth-values on different utterances of a sentence should not be taken as indication of its context-sensitivity.

Propositional Minimalists reject (CS) and (SVA), but they hold on to (Prop): they take the semantic value in context of any sentence to be a proposition. However, for many sentences the propositions they assign differ from those Contextualists assign, as I want to briefly show. Reconsider (3) ('The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive'). Contextualists hold that (3) expresses different propositions in different contexts, and that if it is uttered in a conversation between millionaires, it expresses (roughly) the proposition that the Molitor Stradivarius is expensive by a millionaire standard. Propositional Minimalists, by contrast, hold that (3) expresses the same proposition in any context. According to Borg, (3) expresses the proposition that the Molitor Stradivarius is expensive by some standard.³³ This proposition is almost trivially true, as it is almost trivially true of anything that it is expensive by some extremely low standard of expensiveness. Borg thus pairs (3) with what I will call a *weak proposition*. Borg pairs other sentences with *strong propositions*: for example, she pairs (9) with the proposition that absolutely everyone came to the party. According to Cappelen & Lepore, (3) expresses the proposition that the Molitor Stradivarius is expensive.³⁴ All that Cappelen & Lepore say about this proposition is that it is true iff the Molitor Stradivarius is expensive, so it is suitable that they call it a *minimal proposition*. Borg and Cappelen &

³³ See Borg (2004: 230), where she discusses sentences similar to (3).

³⁴ See Cappelen & Lepore (2005: Chapter 11).

Lepore pair many further sentences with these unusual propositions, including any sentence containing a gradable adjective, a quantifier or a modal, as well as many other sentences containing expressions that Contextualists take to be context-sensitive but that do not appear on Kaplan's list. So Propositional Minimalism differs from Contextualism not only in rejecting (CS) and (SVA), but also in the kinds of propositions it assigns to many sentences.

Propositional Minimalism is an interesting view, but it is fair to say that it has not become a mainstream view. The majority of semanticists are uncomfortable with pairing sentences with the weak, strong or minimal propositions posited by Borg and Cappelen & Lepore.³⁵ I will therefore set Propositional Minimalism aside for most of the discussion to follow, but I will return to (and argue against) it in Chapters 5 and 6.

Semantic Relativism is a second form of propositional but insensitive semantics. Semantic Relativism has been most prominently defended by MacFarlane (2007, 2009, 2014). Relativist views are usually supported by considerations involving predicates of taste, such as 'tasty' or 'delicious', which can feature in conversations that allow for the so-called phenomena of *faultless disagreement* and *retraction*. Relativists have argued that their views do best at capturing these phenomena. But certain forms of Relativism have also been used to give a further non-Contextualist response to context-shifting arguments. MacFarlane (2007, 2009) has pursued this route (under the label of *Nonindexical Contextualism*), and I will focus on this version of Semantic Relativism here.³⁶

Relativists (of the kind under consideration) accept (Prop) while denying (CS), just like Propositional Minimalists. But they also accept (SVA): they hold that a literal speaker asserts the semantic value of the sentence uttered. How can they then account

³⁵ See e.g. Stanley (2007: 236) for criticism in this vein.

³⁶ Other semanticists who have argued for such a view include Lasnik (2005) and Recanati (2008). I am labelling this view *Semantic Relativism* because I am reserving the label of *Contextualism* for views that accept (CS).

for the apparent shift of truth-values in context-shifting arguments? By rejecting the assumption that a proposition is true or false with respect to a possible world. This assumption is very widely accepted among semanticists, but it is not without alternatives.³⁷ Kaplan (1977: 502), for example, adopts a *Temporalist* view of propositions, according to which the circumstance of evaluation of a proposition includes two parameters: a possible world and a time. On the standard *Eternalist* view of propositions, these specify the time required for their evaluation, and are thus either eternally true or eternally false (at a world). Kaplan's Temporalist propositions, by contrast, are time-neutral, and can change their truth-values: they can be true at a world w and time t_1 , while being false at w and t_2 . On an utterance of a sentence expressing a Temporalist proposition, the context of utterance determines the time-parameter of the circumstance of evaluation (as well as its world-parameter): such a sentence is true (false) if the proposition expressed by the sentence uttered is true (false) at the time of the context of utterance. So Temporalists accept that sentences are (in some sense) context-sensitive, but they say that this is because the context determines how the proposition expressed by the sentence uttered is *evaluated*, and not because it determines which proposition the sentence expresses.³⁸

Semantic Relativists use this same mechanism to account for the truth-value judgements in context-shifting arguments while holding on to (Prop) and (SVA). To do so, they add parameters to circumstances of evaluation that explain the apparent shifts in truth-value. For example, to account for judgements about (3), they add a standard of expensiveness-parameter: (3) expresses a proposition that is neutral with respect to a standard of expensiveness (and expresses this proposition in any context), and (3) is true (false) on an utterance if the Molitor Stradivarius is expensive (not expensive) at

³⁷ The assumption is in fact entailed by any propositional view that takes propositions to be intensions, which are functions from worlds to truth-values.

³⁸ The dispute between Eternalists and Temporalists is commonly used to introduce Semantic Relativism. See e.g. MacFarlane (2009) and Borg (2012: Chapter 1).

the standard of expensiveness determined by the context of utterance. So (3) is true if the context fixes an average income-standard in the circumstance of evaluation, and false if it the context fixes a millionaire-standard. Nonetheless, on any utterance of (3) the same proposition is expressed and asserted by the speaker.

To account for the full range of cases, Relativists have to either posit a large number of contextually determined parameters in circumstances of evaluation. (For example, to account for judgements about (10) and (11), they have to add parameters for domains and modal bases). Or they have to say that circumstances of evaluation include MacFarlane's (2007: 246) *counts as*-parameter: a parameter that determines for any property *p* what an entity has to be like in order to count as having *p*. On this latter view, (3) is true (false) if the Molitor Stradivarius *counts as* expensive (not expensive) in the circumstance of evaluation determined by the context of utterance.

This is all I am going to say about Semantic Relativism because, as mentioned above, most semanticists disagree with the Relativist move of adding further parameters to circumstances of evaluation.³⁹ The standard view is that propositions are true or false at a world, and this is also the view I will presuppose in the remainder of this thesis.

3.2 Non-propositional semantics

Views of non-propositional semantics reject (Prop). On such views, at least some sentences do not express exactly one proposition (in context). (Prop) is a strong claim: for *any* everyday utterance of a sentence, the sentence uttered is said to express exactly one proposition. It is thus not surprising that some semanticists do not accept (Prop). What are the motivations for such a decision? I think that many non-propositional semanticists are moved by one of the following two considerations.

³⁹ See e.g. Glanzberg (2007) and Cappelen & Hawthorne (2009).

A first group of semanticists rejects (Prop) because it disagrees with Contextualists about the role semantic values play in successful communication. Contextualists accept (SVA), and thus a correspondence view of linguistic communication: they see a close alignment between the semantic value (in context) of a sentence *S* and what a literal speaker asserts by uttering *S*. Most non-propositional semanticists, by contrast, reject (SVA) and the correspondence view of linguistic communication, positing a much looser connection between sentential semantic values and what speakers assert. They hold that semantic values merely *constrain* what a literal speaker can assert, and that what is asserted normally goes beyond the semantic value (in context) of the sentence uttered. These semanticists thus move some of the work Contextualists want semantics to do into pragmatics: semantics no longer has to deliver the propositions speakers assert. This approach goes hand in hand with a view on which context-sensitivity is much less widespread than on Contextualism. Because the semantic values of sentences are not expected to shadow the propositions speakers assert by uttering them, fewer sentences, and thus fewer expressions, have to be construed as context-sensitive. Context-shifting arguments are taken to show merely that a speaker can use the same sentence to *assert* different propositions on different utterances, and not that the sentential semantic value varies across contexts. If semanticists are moved by these or similar considerations, and if they are also sceptical about the minimal, weak or strong propositions posited by Cappelen & Lepore and Borg, they defend views of non-propositional and insensitive semantics.

A second group of semanticists rejects (Prop) for a different reason. Semanticists in this group agree with much of the Contextualist approach. They accept that many expressions are context-sensitive, and they take sentential semantic values and what is asserted to be, for the most part, in accordance. But they are sceptical that contexts and standing meanings can do what (Prop) requires them to do: namely to determine

exactly one proposition for any everyday utterance of a sentence featuring a context-sensitive expression. The standard view on Contextualism is that most context-sensitive expressions are sensitive to the speaker's intentions. The current worry with respect to such a view is that there are many everyday utterances in which speakers lack intentions, which, together with the standing meaning of the sentence uttered, could single out exactly one proposition. Such a worry about the Contextualist approach has led some semanticists with a correspondence view of linguistic communication to contemplate views of non-propositional and sensitive semantics.⁴⁰

I will now show that these very different worries about (Prop) lead to very different theories of non-propositional semantics.

3.2.1 Non-propositional and insensitive semantics

Theories of non-propositional and insensitive semantics reject (Prop) as well as (CS). I will now present *Radical Minimalism* as a representative theory of this group, and then give an outline of *Strong Pluralism*, the first of the two views I want to advance.

Radical Minimalism has been most prominently defended by Bach (1994a, 1994b, 2001, 2005). Bach's view is rooted in the following two assumptions: (i) speaker intentions have no influence on semantic values, and (ii) semantic values merely constrain what a literal speaker can assert. These assumptions lead to a view on which there are only very few context-sensitive expressions: 'I', 'today' and a handful of other expressions are context-sensitive, whereas even expressions that appear to be context-sensitive, such as 'that', 'she', 'here' and 'ready', are in fact context-*ins*sensitive. Such expressions merely place constraints on how a literal speaker can use them (e.g. in

⁴⁰ Nonetheless, non-propositional semanticists share some views with propositional semanticists. Most importantly, they accept that semantic values are compositional. And they accept that at least some expressions are context-sensitive. Stojanovic (2008) is an exception here; she argues that there are no context-sensitive expressions.

making an assertion): for example, ‘she’ constrains the speaker to refer to a certain female and ‘here’ to a certain region of space.⁴¹

Expressions of this kind lead Bach to reject (Prop). Bach holds that such expressions are *gappy*: they have gaps in their semantic values. If a sentence contains a gappy expression, the sentence itself expresses not a proposition, but rather what Bach calls a *propositional radical*.⁴² He describes a propositional radical (somewhat metaphorically) as a structured proposition minus at least one of its constituents.⁴³ For example, (12) expresses a propositional radical that is given by (12.1) (where ‘___’ indicates the gap in the propositional radical):

(12) Bert is ready.

(12.1) Bert is ready ___.

Bach’s propositional radicals are not to be confused with Cappelen & Lepore’s minimal propositions: the latter, but not the former, have truth-conditions. Bach takes many expressions to be gappy, and thus he holds that many sentences express propositional radicals.

How do sentential semantic values constrain assertion on Bach’s view? Bach holds that a literal speaker can assert either the semantic value of the sentence uttered (if this is a proposition) or a proposition that is an *implicature* of its semantic value.⁴⁴ An implicature is a proposition that is a *completion* or an *expansion* (or both a completion and an expansion) of the semantic value of the sentence uttered. A completion is a proposition that results from filling each gap in a propositional radical with an element suitable for that gap. And an expansion is a proposition that results from expanding

⁴¹ See Bach (1994a: Chapter 9).

⁴² Other names for entities of this kind are *propositional fragments*, *propositional blueprints* and *propositional schemas*.

⁴³ See e.g. Bach (2006b: 436).

⁴⁴ Bach’s implicatures differ from Gricean implicatures. The former, but not the latter, have to be ‘closely related’ (1994b: 126) to the semantic value of the sentence uttered.

(adding material to) a proposition. For example, (12.2) gives a possible completion of the propositional radical expressed by (12):

(12.2) Bert is ready to buy the Molitor Stradivarius.

And (13.1) gives a possible expansion of the proposition expressed by (13):

(13) Anne is not going to die.

(13.1) Anne is not going to die from that cut.

Bach thus gives speakers considerable leeway in the propositions they assert by uttering a sentence, regardless of whether that sentence expresses a proposition or a propositional radical. On his view, semantic values place only weak constraints on what a speaker can assert.

There are a number of views that are similar in spirit to Radical Minimalism: *Relevance Theory*, as defended by Sperber & Wilson (1986, 2002) and Carston (2002), and the views of Neale (2005), Soames (2010) and Buchanan (2010, 2013).⁴⁵ Some of these views differ considerably from Bach's view in certain respects: Relevance Theorists, for example, posit quite different pragmatic mechanisms than Bach does. But for the purposes of this thesis they can be grouped with Radical Minimalism, as they entail that (i) speaker intentions are not semantically significant, (ii) only few expressions are context-sensitive, (iii) sentential semantic values are often non-propositional and (iv) semantic values only loosely constrain what a speaker can assert.⁴⁶

Just like Propositional Minimalism and Semantic Relativism, Radical Minimalism and its relatives have convinced comparatively few semanticists.⁴⁷ In my view, this is mainly because semanticists have the following (or related) concerns about such views.

⁴⁵ Relevance Theory is more accurately described as a theory in *pragmatics*, and not semantics. But it nonetheless comes with a view of semantic values that fits with Radical Minimalism.

⁴⁶ A further view that might be added to this group is *Truth-conditional Pragmatics*, as defended by Recanati (1993, 2004, 2010) and Bezuidenhout (2002). It is not entirely clear, however, whether this view belongs here, as Recanati and Bezuidenhout *do* hold that speaker intentions are semantically significant. But Truth-conditional Pragmatics is closer to Radical Minimalism than it is to Contextualism.

⁴⁷ Relevance Theory has been hugely successful, but (as far as I can see) not in the field of philosophical and linguistic semantics.

Firstly, many semanticists are suspicious of the propositional radicals these views posit. Discussions of propositional radicals (such as the one I gave just above) usually involve metaphorical talk of subtractions of propositional elements and fillings of gaps. But this way of talking seems to presuppose a structured view of propositions, which is not universally shared. And it is unclear how the metaphorical talk used to introduce propositional radicals should be made fully precise. For example, how does a propositional radical control what can and what cannot go into its gaps? Does a sentence that contains two occurrences of the same gappy expression express a radical with one or two gaps? To my knowledge, Radical Minimalists have not addressed these questions.

Secondly, some semanticists take the constraints on assertion posited by these views to be too lax. Bach, for example, holds that literal speakers can assert an expansion of the semantic value of the sentence uttered. But Bach does not give a systematic account of how expansions have to be related to sentential semantic values. This leaves open the possibility that speakers assert propositions that are quite far removed from the semantic value of the sentence uttered. And it makes it hard to see how semantic values can be used to account for some of the desiderata on semantic theories, e.g. (Des2) (which concerns truth-value judgements) and (Des3) (which concerns validity judgements).

Strong Pluralism, the first of the views I want to defend, avoids these worries. Strong Pluralism shares the overall approach of Radical Minimalism, but tightens a few screws and does without propositional radicals. Strong Pluralism entails that (i) speaker intentions are not semantically relevant, (ii) only few expressions are context-sensitive and (iii) sentential semantic values are often non-propositional. But it also entails that semantic values place stronger and more systematic constraints on what a literal speaker can assert.

On Strong Pluralism, Bach's propositional radicals are replaced with sets of propositions.⁴⁸ This move allows Strong Pluralists to avoid the first worry mentioned above: sets of propositions are compatible with any construal of propositions and should be accepted by any semanticist who accepts both sets and propositions. It also helps to avoid the second worry. As I will spell out Strong Pluralism, a sentence expresses a set of propositions (in context) just in case it contains an expression that expresses a set of semantic values (in context). The expressions with sets of semantic values (in context) are roughly those Bach takes to be gappy. The set of propositions a sentence *S* expresses in context constrains what a literal speaker can assert by uttering *S*: the speaker can assert any proposition (or subset of propositions) in the set *S* expresses. In this way, Strong Pluralism captures the semantic constraint Bach aims to capture with his notion of completion. And because Strong Pluralism does not incorporate a counterpart for what Bach calls expansion, it entails that semantic values place tighter constraints on what is asserted.

This shall suffice as a brief introduction to Strong Pluralism, as my aim at this point is merely to locate the view among the other views in the debate. Below I will present it in more detail.

3.2.2 Non-propositional and sensitive semantics

Theories of non-propositional and sensitive semantics reject (Prop) but accept (CS). Although some semanticists have contemplated such views, I know of no theories of this kind that have been fully worked out or defended. One of the aims of this thesis is to fill this gap with a theory of *Flexible Pluralism*.

Flexible Pluralism is aimed at those semanticists who share the overall Contextualist outlook but have the second concern mentioned at the beginning of this section: the

⁴⁸ The idea of pairing sentences with sets of propositions is due to Dorr (2014: 57–58).

concern that contexts and standing meanings are not always able to fix exactly one proposition in context for an utterance of a sentence featuring a context-sensitive expression. Such a worry has been voiced by King (forthcoming) with respect to sentences featuring gradable adjectives (e.g. ‘expensive’) and demonstratives (e.g. ‘those’). And von Fintel & Gillies (2011) have expressed a related concern about sentences featuring epistemic modals (e.g. ‘might’).⁴⁹ Now, it should be clear that if the worry applies to sentences of these kinds, it applies to many other sentences as well, and should thus not be taken lightly.

Flexible Pluralism reacts to this worry by pairing the sentences in question with sets of propositions as semantic values in context. The basic idea is similar to that of Strong Pluralism: certain expressions can have sets of semantic values in context, and if a sentence contains an expression with a non-singleton set of semantic values (in context), it expresses a set of propositions (in context). But for Flexible Pluralists, the sets of propositions a sentence expresses on a certain utterance will usually be less extensive than for Strong Pluralists. This is because Flexible Pluralists accept widespread context-sensitivity, and merely deny that every context is suitably specific to fix exactly one proposition as sentential semantic value. Another result of this approach is that Flexible Pluralism allows one and the same sentence to express a set of propositions in one context and to express a single proposition in another.

Flexible Pluralists hold that semantic values tightly constrain what a literal speaker can assert: in most cases, what is asserted is what is semantically expressed. This holds, I will argue, even in cases in which what is semantically expressed is a set of propositions. In such cases, the speaker indeterminately asserts a set of propositions, in a sense that I will spell out below.

⁴⁹ Von Fintel & Gillies are not primarily moved by concerns about a lack of specificity of speaker intentions, but they end up with a view that appears to be similar in spirit to Flexible Pluralism.

So Strong Pluralism and Flexible Pluralism employ the same tools but arrive at very different theories. The former is close to Radical Minimalism, the latter close to Contextualism. This is also apparent in the following table, which shows how semantic theories pan out if they are classified with the help of (Prop) and (CS):

	<i>Propositional semantics</i>	<i>Non-propositional semantics</i>
<i>Sensitive semantics</i>	Contextualism	Flexible Pluralism
<i>Insensitive semantics</i>	Propositional Minimalism Semantic Relativism	Radical Minimalism Strong Pluralism

In the three sections of this chapter I have argued in favour of five explanatory targets of semantic theorising, I have defended a certain approach in providing explanations of these targets and I have introduced the theories that I will discuss in what follows. I hope this chapter can therefore serve as a basis for the considerations and arguments of the following chapters.

Chapter 3

Against Contextualism

Semantic Pluralism is an alternative to Contextualism, the dominant view in contemporary semantics. In this chapter, I will put forward two arguments against Contextualism and thereby provide some motivation for Pluralism. Contextualism entails (CS): many expressions, including gradable adjectives, quantifiers and modals, are context-sensitive. And because it also entails (Prop), it entails that if a context-sensitive expression occurs in an everyday utterance, it has exactly one semantic value in context. The arguments of this chapter will attack this entailment: I will show that there are many occurrences of gradable adjectives, quantifiers and modals (henceforth: *GQMs*) in everyday utterances, which Contextualism cannot plausibly pair with exactly one semantic value in context.

The first argument aims to show that there are everyday utterances for which the standing meanings Contextualists provide for *GQMs* do not lead to exactly one semantic value in context: many contexts lack features that would allow Contextualist standing meanings to map them onto exactly one semantic value. This is the argument from unspecific contexts.

The second argument is meant to establish that if Contextualists posit a single semantic value in the problematic cases of the first argument, then these could not be identified by the respective audience. Such semantic values could not help to explain the data semantic theories aim to explain, and should therefore not be assigned in the first place. This is the argument from explanatory value.

Both arguments will be based mainly on examples of *non-literal* everyday utterances featuring e.g. exaggerated or metaphorical use of language. Such examples have not yet been discussed in the debate between Contextualists and their critics. Nonetheless, these are not special or unusual cases: they are typical for many instances of everyday, successful communication. As a result, the problems raised with respect to these examples are serious problems for Contextualism. At the same time, the examples provide some motivation for Pluralism, because one response to the problems is to accept the possibility of semantic multiplicity: to accept that expressions in everyday utterances can have several semantic values in context.

My focus in these examples will be on GQMs. These kinds of expressions clearly fall within the group of expressions Contextualists take to be context-sensitive, and they have been extensively discussed in the literature. As a result, there are concrete Contextualist proposals for their semantics, which can be put to the test below. Furthermore, such expressions are commonly used in a non-literal way, which makes it easy to find suitable examples. But hopefully it will be apparent that the points I make are not limited to GQMs: the arguments also work with expressions of other kinds, even though then they might not deliver quite as clear results.

The chapter is structured as follows. In the remainder of this introductory section, I will show that Contextualism indeed has the entailment the arguments target. In Section 1, I will then present the aforementioned examples and the argument from unspecific contexts. In Section 2, I will put forward the argument from explanatory value. I will consider and respond to objections to both arguments in Section 3.

If the arguments of this chapter are to have any bite, Contextualism has to entail the thesis they are attacking. This thesis might be put as follows:

(Ent): Entailment

Any GQM occurring in an everyday utterance has exactly one semantic value in the context of utterance, and has different semantic values in different contexts of utterance.

Does Contextualism entail (Ent)? In the previous chapter, I characterised Contextualism as the view that entails (Prop) and (CS):

(Prop): Propositionality

For any everyday utterance of a (declarative) sentence, the sentence uttered has exactly one semantic value in the context of utterance, and that semantic value is a proposition.

(CS): Context-sensitivity

Many expressions are context-sensitive.

An expression is context-sensitive if it has different semantic values in different contexts of utterance.⁵⁰ According to (CS), GQMs are context-sensitive. So (CS) entails that GQMs have different semantic values in different contexts of utterance. We have almost reached (Ent), but not quite. (Ent) states that a GQM in an everyday utterance has exactly one semantic value in the context of utterance. It is not clear that Contextualism has this entailment simply by entailing (Prop). For there could in principle be a view on which a sentence can have exactly one proposition as semantic value even if its sub-sentential constituents have multiple semantic values. However,

⁵⁰ To be more precise: An expression *e* is context-sensitive if there are two contexts *C*₁ and *C*₂ and there is some semantic value *S*, such that *e* has *S* in *C*₁ but not in *C*₂. See Chapter 2, Section 3.1.

such a view would require some very unusual compositional rules that explain how semantic multiplicity at the sub-sentential level gives way to uniqueness at the sentential level. It is unclear how such compositional rules would work (in a Contextualist framework), and, as far as I can see, there are no existing views of Contextualism that employ such rules. Rather, the compositional rules given by Contextualists allow uniqueness at the sentential level *only* if there is uniqueness at the sub-sentential level.⁵¹ So by accepting (Prop) and the usual compositional rules, Contextualists also accept the following principle:

(Sing): Singularism

For any expression occurring in an everyday utterance, the expression uttered has exactly one semantic value in the context of utterance.

(Sing) applies to any expression, and therefore of course to GQMs. So once (Sing) is in place, (Ent) clearly follows.

Because Contextualism only entails (Ent) if it accepts the usual compositional rules, one might think that Contextualists can evade my arguments by proposing different compositional rules. For the following two reasons I do not think that is a promising move. Firstly, my criticism of Contextualism is not related in any direct way to the composition of semantic values. If Contextualists were to react to the arguments by adopting different compositional rules that would therefore be at least somewhat *ad hoc*. Secondly, and relatedly, the arguments of this chapter could equally be run at the sentential level and then attack (Ent1):

⁵¹ See e.g. Heim & Kratzer (1998) and Zimmermann & Sternefeld (2013).

(Ent1): Entailment 1

For any everyday utterance of a sentence featuring a GQM, the sentence uttered expresses exactly one proposition in the context of utterance, and expresses different propositions in different contexts of utterance.

(Ent1) follows from (Prop), (CS) and the extremely plausible assumption that the proposition a sentence expresses in context depends on the semantic values in context of its constituent expressions. Few, if any, semanticists would give up this latter assumption, so efficient arguments against (Ent1) are efficient arguments against Contextualism. I have chosen to run the arguments at the sub-sentential level, attacking (Ent) rather than (Ent1), because this will allow us to focus on the standing meanings and semantic values of individual expressions, rather than on those of whole sentences. This, in turn, will permit a more straightforward presentation of the arguments and bring out the problems for Contextualism in a clearer fashion. For these reasons, I will continue under the assumption that Contextualism entails (Ent), but I will briefly return to this matter at the end of the chapter.

1. The argument from unspecific contexts

Because Contextualists accept (Ent), they face the following challenge: they have to provide a standing meaning for GQMs that fixes exactly one semantic value in context for any occurrence of such an expression in an everyday utterance. My aim in this section is to show that Contextualists cannot meet this challenge. Many everyday utterances featuring GQMs are situated in contexts which lack features that single out exactly one entity, so that a standing meaning cannot map such a context onto exactly one semantic value (in a non-arbitrary way).

I will begin by considering which semantic values and standing meanings Contextualists assign to GQMs. Most Contextualists accept a view of *Intentionalism* concerning the standing meanings of GQMs, according to which these are sensitive to the speaker's intentions in the context of utterance. This view will be the main focus for the remainder of the section. I will present a number of examples that speak against Intentionalism. I will begin with examples of literal speech and then, after considering a Contextualist response to such cases, turn to non-literal speech. At the end of the section I will show that the examples, once fully fleshed out, are equally effective against non-Intentionalist views.

1.1 Contextualist semantics for gradable adjectives, quantifiers and modals

Which kinds of semantic values do Contextualists assign to gradable adjectives, quantifiers and modals? And which standing meanings have they provided for these expressions? I will now consider these questions in turn.

Let us, for now, focus on the gradable adjective 'expensive', the quantifier 'everything' and the modal 'might'. There is no consensus among Contextualists about which kinds of semantic values to assign to these expressions. But there is an important feature that all Contextualist approaches share and that will become apparent by considering some of the approaches. For 'expensive', there are two popular Contextualist analyses. On the first, due to Kennedy (2007), the semantic value of 'expensive' in a given context is a property of expensiveness to a certain degree of cost; different contexts lead to different degrees of expensiveness. On the second, defended e.g. by Stanley (2007), it is a property of expensiveness for a certain comparison class; different contexts lead to different comparison classes. On standard Contextualist analyses of 'everything', stated e.g. in Glanzberg (2006), its semantic value in a given context is a property of properties instantiated by everything in a certain domain.

Different contexts lead to different domains and thus to different properties of properties as semantic values in context. And on the dominant Contextualist account of the modal ‘might’, due to Kratzer (1977, 1981), its semantic value in context is a property of propositions: a property of being a proposition that holds in some worlds that have a certain property, e.g. being compatible with someone’s knowledge. This latter property that fixes which worlds are in play in a certain context is called the *modal base* of ‘might’.⁵² Different contexts lead to different modal bases and thus to different semantic values for ‘might’.⁵³

All of these approaches have in common that they take the expressions discussed (and GQMs in general) to have infinitely many *candidate semantic values*. A candidate semantic value is a semantic value in context a given expression *could* have.⁵⁴ ‘Expensive’ has a candidate semantic value for every degree of expensiveness or every possible comparison class, ‘everything’ has a candidate semantic value for every possible restriction of its domain, and ‘might’ for every possible modal base. There may be room for Contextualist views on which GQMs do not have infinitely many candidate semantic values. But such views have not been defended in the literature (at least to my knowledge), and it is hard to see how such views could be motivated: any argument that is used to support the view that a GQM has more than one candidate semantic value could, it seems, equally well be used to argue that it has (infinitely) many candidate semantic values. I will therefore not consider Contextualist views on which GQMs do not have infinitely many candidate semantic values in what follows.

⁵² This is a simplified version of Kratzer’s early account of modals. Later accounts entail that the modal base also fixes an ordering on the worlds the modal quantifies over. This complication can be ignored for present purposes.

⁵³ On some Contextualist views, it is not the GQMs themselves that are context-sensitive, but certain unpronounced, covert elements that accompany them. I will not distinguish between these versions of Contextualism because the question of whether a GQM itself or rather an accompanying element is context-sensitive is irrelevant to the arguments to follow.

⁵⁴ The term *candidate semantic value* is used differently in debates concerning vagueness. Then, it is meant to pick out the possible semantic values of an expression *on a given use* or *in a given context*. As I am using the term, it applies to expressions *simpliciter*.

The foregoing gives an idea of the difficulty Contextualists face in pairing GQMs with standing meanings that are compatible with (Ent). Such a standing meaning has to take a context as input and single out exactly one of the infinitely many candidate semantic values of the expression as its semantic value in context. A function that delivers such a fine-grained output has to be sensitive to a similarly fine-grained features of the contexts, and such fine-grained features may not be available in every context.

There has not been much discussion of the standing meanings of GQMs, but almost all of those Contextualists who have written about this matter have opted for a view on which these are sensitive to the speaker's intentions, and thus for an *Intentionalist* view of GQMs. I will now introduce Intentionalism and then briefly look at some non-Intentionalist alternatives.

1.1.1 Intentionalism

The standing meanings of GQMs are commonly modelled on those of demonstratives, such as 'that', 'she' and 'there'. Following Kaplan (1989), most Contextualists hold that demonstratives are sensitive to the speaker's intentions.⁵⁵ Some Contextualists, including Stanley & Szabó (2000), King & Stanley (2005), Dowell (2013) and King (2014, forthcoming), have extended this picture to GQMs, claiming that these, too, are sensitive to speaker intentions.⁵⁶

Intentionalists have not said much about which *kinds* of speaker intentions fix the semantic value in context of intention-sensitive expressions, but there seem to be two natural choices. On a first approach, intention-sensitive expressions are sensitive to the speaker's *communicative intentions*. Such intentions already play an important role in many

⁵⁵ Among the Contextualists accepting Intentionalist views of demonstratives are Siegel (2002), Perry (2009), Montminy (2010), Stokke (2010), King (2013, 2014) and Speaks (forthcoming).

⁵⁶ I am calling an *expression* intention-sensitive if it has a *standing meaning* that is intention-sensitive.

semantic and pragmatic theories as determinants of what a speaker means and communicates (if communication is successful). On the current approach, which I will call *C-Intentionalism*, they do double-duty and also play a role in fixing semantic values in context. Example (A) illustrates how C-Intentionalism works for the demonstrative ‘that’:

Example (A)

Anne and Bert see a woman cycling by. Anne notices that the woman on the bike is Claire, her violin teacher, and utters (A1):

(A1) That is my violin teacher.

On a direct reference view of ‘that’, its semantic value in context in (A1) is Claire. C-Intentionalism entails that what determines that Claire is the semantic value of ‘that’ in (A1) is Anne’s communicative intention, which plausibly is to communicate to Bert that Claire is her violin teacher.⁵⁷

A second approach invokes two types of speaker intentions: communicative intentions as well as *semantic intentions*. Semantic intentions are directed at the expressions uttered and are, roughly, intentions that an expression should have a certain semantic value. On this view, which I will call *S-Intentionalism*, intention-sensitive expressions are sensitive to the speaker’s semantic intentions, and not to her communicative intentions. According to S-Intentionalism, Anne’s intention to communicate that Claire is her violin teacher does not fix Claire as the semantic value of ‘that’ in (A1). To achieve this, Anne has to have an intention directed at ‘that’: she has to intend that Claire is the semantic value of ‘that’.

⁵⁷ Communicative intentions will include so-called *referential intentions*: intentions of a speaker to refer to a particular entity. In example (A), Anne’s communicative intention will include the intention to refer to Claire. Referential intentions will not play a role in this chapter because arguably they can only apply to referring expressions, and not to GQMs, the main subjects of this chapter.

The views of C-Intentionalism and S-Intentionalism can be applied to GQMs, leading either to a view on which their standing meanings are sensitive to the speaker's communicative intentions or to a view on which they are sensitive to her semantic intentions. Let us look at both views in a bit more detail by considering the following example featuring the GQM 'everything':

Example (B)

Anne has prepared the conference room for a meeting. When her colleague comes in, Anne utters (B1):

(B1) Everything is set up for the meeting.

On a standard Contextualist analysis, 'everything' in (B1) will have (roughly) the same semantic value as 'everything in the conference room' or 'everything needed for the meeting'. How can the two versions of Intentionalism arrive at this result?

On C-Intentionalism about GQMs, the standing meaning of 'everything' takes the communicative intention of the context as input.⁵⁸ How can it then spit out a semantic value featuring a restricted domain? C-Intentionalism about GQMs has not (to my knowledge) been spelled out in the literature, but a natural thing to say is that the standing meaning scans the communicative intention for a property that could be a domain restrictor. By uttering (B1), Anne intends to communicate that everything *in the conference room* is set up for the meeting. The standing meaning of 'everything' detects this property and as a result spits out a semantic value in context that is equivalent to that of 'everything in the conference room'. In such a straightforward case this

⁵⁸ Semanticists have sympathised with such a view. Recanati (2010: 2), for instance, states that the 'semantic value of a context-sensitive expression varies from occurrence to occurrence, yet it often varies not as a function of some objective features of the context but as a function of what *the speaker means*' (my emphasis). Given that what a speaker means is determined by her communicative intentions, Recanati's view is at least similar to C-Intentionalism.

approach does not seem implausible, and it seems to deliver a result that is compatible with (Ent).⁵⁹

S-Intentionalism about GQMs, which has recently been defended by King (forthcoming), entails that the standing meaning of ‘everything’ looks for a semantic intention of the speaker of the context aimed at ‘everything’ and uses this intention to arrive at a restricted domain. It is conceivable that, in uttering (B1), Anne has the semantic intention that the property of being in the conference room should restrict the domain of ‘everything’ or that she has the semantic intention that ‘everything’ should have the same semantic value as ‘everything in the conference room’.⁶⁰ If Anne indeed has such an intention, S-Intentionalism can explain why ‘everything’ in (B1) has the same semantic value as ‘everything in the conference room’. Just like C-Intentionalism, S-Intentionalism appears to be able to handle this case.

S-Intentionalists have to take care that the semantic intentions they appeal to do not have sophisticated abstract entities (e.g. functions) as objects, because ordinary speakers cannot plausibly be said to have intentions directed at such entities.⁶¹ To avoid this worry, King argues that semantic intentions sometimes fix semantic values *indirectly*. For example, King (forthcoming: 20–21) argues that the standing meaning of ‘smart’ is sensitive to semantic intentions involving kinds of persons, and not degrees of smartness: in using ‘smart’, a speaker will have a semantic intention with a certain kind of person as object, and the standing meaning of ‘smart’ will take that intention as input and deliver the degree of smartness of the intended kind of person as (part of) the semantic value. It seems that S-Intentionalists can achieve this result in a simpler

⁵⁹ However, if this is how C-Intentionalism works, it may face a challenge when a sentence features several occurrences of the same expression (or several expressions of the same kind). For example, a speaker might utter ‘Everyone saw that everything was set up’ with an aim to communicate that everyone *looking into the room* saw that everything *in the room* was set up. How do the standing meanings of ‘everyone’ and ‘everything’ know which property belongs to which expression?

⁶⁰ King (forthcoming: 15) appeals to intentions of the former kind.

⁶¹ This point is due to Glanzberg (2007).

manner by holding that semantic intentions are often intentions that an expression should have the same semantic value as a certain other expression (which will usually be longer than the expression the intention is aimed at). If speakers have semantic intentions, it seems plausible that a speaker using ‘smart’ has the semantic intention that the expression should have the same semantic value (or mean the same) as ‘smart for a philosopher’. But this matter need not be settled here. S-Intentionalists appear to have resources to avoid worries about sophisticated abstract entities as objects of semantic intentions.

It is plausible that, on either version of Intentionalism, speaker intentions must fulfil certain conditions in order to fix a semantic value in context for an intention-sensitive expression. Simply having a communicative or semantic intention might not be enough. King (2014), for example, holds that an intention can only fix a semantic value if the speaker ‘successfully reveals’ (2014: 230) this intention (to an idealised audience that knows the common ground). So for King, the only intentions that matter for the standing meaning of an intention-sensitive expression will be intentions that the speaker has successfully revealed in the context of utterance. Although it is an interesting question which conditions speaker intentions have to fulfil in order to be semantically efficient, nothing in what follows will turn on this matter, so I will set it aside.⁶²

Views of the kinds just described have many close cousins that, to date, have not been explored. While the focus has been on intentions as determiners of semantic values in context, there are related mental states that could, in principle, be employed in a similar way: states of hoping, trying, wanting etc. This would lead to views on which the standing meanings of GQMs (and other context-sensitive expressions) are sensitive to facts about what the speaker hopes, tries or wants to communicate, or on which they

⁶² See King (2013, 2014) and Speaks (forthcoming) for a detailed discussion of this matter.

are sensitive to which semantic values she hopes, tries or wants an expression to have. That most Contextualists favour Intentionalism and none of these related views can be seen as an indication of the influence Grice and his intention-centred view have had on contemporary semantics. I will not discuss these cousins of Intentionalism any further, but, as will be easy to see, the argument from unspecific contexts applies equally to any such views in the vicinity of Intentionalism.

How should Intentionalists construe contexts? It seems that they can make use of standard notions of a context. They can, for example, adopt a Kaplanian view, on which a context is a quadruple of an agent, a time, a location and a world. The standing meaning of an intention-sensitive expression then takes the intentions of the agent of the context in which it is situated as input. Some theorists (e.g. Stokke 2010: 384) have argued that this will not work: that Intentionalists have to add speaker intentions as further parameters to contexts. But it is hard to see why such a move should be required. Given that the speaker is part of a context, her intentions are also part of it.

Intentionalism requires the standing meanings of some expressions to be sensitive to what I will call *fine-grained* features of the context. These include features determined by the mental states of the speaker and members of the audience: e.g. the speaker's intentions, what is common ground between the speaker and the audience, what is salient to them or what is at issue when the utterance is made. These fine-grained features are opposed to a context's (coarse-grained) *circumstantial* features, which include basic facts about who is speaking, who is in the audience, and the time and location of the context.^{63 64}

⁶³ Should who is in the audience count as a circumstantial feature of the context? Arguably it should, as the fact of who stands in the audience relation to the speaker does not appear to be a fine-grained fact.

⁶⁴ Circumstantial features are sometimes called *objective* features of the context, e.g. by DeRose (1992: 916), Borg (2004: 29) and Zimmermann (2012: 2362). Bach (1999: 72) calls them *narrow* features of the context. Fine-grained features are sometimes called *subjective* features of the context, e.g. by DeRose (1992: 916) and Zimmermann (2012: 2362). Borg (2004: 29) labels them *perspectival/intentional* features.

1.1.2 Alternatives to Intentionalism

A few Contextualists have argued for alternative treatments of GQMs. These Contextualists hold either that no context-sensitive expressions are sensitive to speaker intentions, or they accept the Intentionalist picture for demonstratives but hold that it should not be extended to GQMs.

Gauker (2008) has defended the first of these options, arguing that context-sensitive expressions are, in general, sensitive to a combination of features of the context of utterance, but that the speaker's intentions are not among these features.⁶⁵ The standing meanings of context-sensitive expressions look at what Gauker calls *accessibility criteria* (2008: 364), which include what is salient, what has been referred to before the utterance, what is relevant to the conversation and a number of further features, in order to spit out a semantic value. This view would analyse the occurrence of 'everything' in (B1) as follows: the standing meaning of 'everything' looks at what is salient to Anne and her colleague, what they have previously referred to, what is relevant to their conversation and at further contextual features, and chooses the domain that fits best with these contextual features (and thus best satisfies the accessibility criteria). In the current case, Gauker would claim, this is the domain of things in the conference room.

Glanzberg (2007, 2009), on the other hand, accepts that demonstratives are sensitive (only) to speaker intentions, but takes their standing meanings to be different in kind from those of GQMs. He takes the semantic values in context of GQMs to be fixed by 'complicated combinations of such factors as what is salient in the environment, speakers' intentions, hearers' intentions, coordinating intentions, linguistic meaning, general principles governing context, discourse structure, etc.' (2007:

⁶⁵ McGinn (1981) and Wettstein (1984) have argued for context-sensitive but intention-*ins*sensitive analyses of demonstratives, and might thus also be inclined to accept the view Gauker defends.

25). So Glanzberg also sees a host of contextual features at work in fixing the semantic values of GQMs, but unlike Gauker he still allows speaker intentions to play a role here. On Glanzberg's view, the standing meaning of 'everything' looks at the complicated combination of the contextual features just mentioned in order to map the context of Anne's utterance onto a semantic value for 'everything', and in the current example it thus maps it onto the domain of things in the conference room.⁶⁶

Because these are minority views, I will for now focus on Intentionalism about GQMs. But I will briefly return to the views of Gauker and Glanzberg at the end of this section and will show that, once the examples to follow are fully fleshed out, they are equally problematic for such views.

1.2 Unspecific intentions in direct communication

On Intentionalism, the semantic values of GQMs are fixed by the speaker's intentions. Are such standing meanings compatible with Contextualism's entailment of (Ent)? Do they spit out exactly one semantic value whenever a GQM occurs in an everyday utterance? I will now argue that these questions have to be answered negatively: I will present a number of examples that show that in many contexts speakers lack intentions that could lead to exactly one semantic value in context. To begin with, I will consider an example of literal speech, before moving on to examples of non-literal speech.

The first example is a case in which the speaker arguably has unspecific communicative and semantic intentions. A *communicative* intention is *specific* if there is exactly one proposition the audience has to pick up for the intention to be realised.⁶⁷

And it is *unspecific* if there are several propositions, at least one of which the audience

⁶⁶ Gauker and Glanzberg of course have to say that some standing meanings are sensitive to fine-grained features of the context, just like Intentionalists.

⁶⁷ An audience *picks up* a proposition if it comes to entertain it or comes to believe it. I am using this general term in order to be able to remain neutral on the difficult question of whether communication has to culminate in a relation of entertaining, believing or yet another relation holding between the audience and what is communicated.

has to pick up for the intention to be realised. Correspondingly, a *semantic* intention is specific if there is only one way it can be realised (if there is exactly one semantic value the expression the intention is aimed at has to have for the intention to be realised) and unspecific otherwise. Unspecific communicative or semantic intentions can be more or less specific, depending on how many ways there are in which they can be realised: the more ways a communicative or semantic intention can be realised, the less specific it is. In what follows, I will call a context unspecific if it contains only unspecific communicative and semantic intentions or if it contains no such intentions.

In the following example, both the communicative and the semantic intentions of the speaker appear to be unspecific:

Example (C):

Claire and David are visiting Oxford. They are strolling through the city centre when Claire utters (C1):

(C1) Flats in Oxford must be expensive.

David replies:

(C2) I'm sure they are.

This is a perfectly normal exchange and an instance of successful communication: we have every reason to believe that David understands what Claire intends to get across. (C1) contains two GQMs, 'must' and 'expensive', but I will only be interested in 'expensive' here (which is why I have underlined it). According to Contextualism, the semantic value in context of 'expensive' in (C1) is a property of expensiveness to a

certain degree.⁶⁸ But the Intentionalist's standing meaning of 'expensive' cannot deliver such a semantic value in this context. Because 'expensive' has infinitely many candidate semantic values, the speaker's intentions have to be specific to fix exactly one of these candidates as semantic value in context. However, in example (C) it is quite implausible that Claire should have such specific intentions, whether communicative or semantic, as I will now argue.

Let us first consider the case of C-Intentionalism. It is immensely plausible that Claire's communicative intention in (C) is unspecific: that there is not exactly one proposition featuring a certain degree of expensiveness Claire intends to communicate by her utterance of (C1) and that David has to pick up for her intention to be realised. There is simply no reason for Claire to have such a specific communicative intention: she is making a casual remark, and nothing hangs on whether David picks up a proposition featuring a certain degree of expensiveness or instead a closely related proposition featuring a slightly different degree of expensiveness.

This initial impression can be further backed up by the following consideration. Suppose that Claire did have a specific communicative intention. Suppose that there were exactly one proposition she wanted David to pick up as a result of her uttering (C1). In that case, her chances of communicative success upon uttering (C1) would be very small. After all, she gives David no clue as to which proposition this could be: she does not mention a certain degree of expensiveness, or make such a degree obvious in any other way. If she is fortunate, David might pick up the proposition she has in mind. But it is much more likely that he will pick up one of the many other propositions she could, for all he knows, be intending to communicate by uttering (C1). So, with a specific communicative intention, the chances of communicative success would be

⁶⁸ In what follows, I will adopt Kennedy's (2007) view of gradable adjectives to keep things simple. The examples are equally effective on the alternative treatment defended by Stanley (2007), on which the semantic values of gradable adjective feature comparison classes.

small. However, Claire's chances of communicative success in the example appear to be very good. And this supports the initial impression that Claire does not have a specific communicative intention.

A final and related point in favour of an unspecific communicative intention can be derived from the widely accepted view that the formation of intentions is constrained by beliefs: one cannot intend what one believes to be impossible, and in normal cases one will only intend what one thinks one can reasonably achieve.⁶⁹ Applied to communicative intentions, this constraint states that in normal cases a speaker will only intend to communicate a certain proposition P to an audience by uttering a sentence S if she believes that there is a reasonable chance that her audience will pick up P on the basis of her uttering S. To be sure, there are some cases in which speakers have communicative intentions of which they believe that they are unlikely to be fulfilled. For example, a hiker trapped in a cave might keep calling for help even if she believes that other hikers only rarely pass by its entrance and that it is therefore unlikely that she will be heard. Or a speaker among a crowd of people most of which she believes not to speak her language might still address several people in her own language, just in case one of them happens to understand her.⁷⁰ But these are special cases. Most of the time, speakers will only form communicative intentions that they think are likely to be fulfilled. There is no indication that example (C) is a special case, so we may suppose that Claire believes that her communicative intention is likely to be fulfilled. She could

⁶⁹ See e.g. Neale (2005: 181).

⁷⁰ Because of such special cases I think Buchanan (2010: 350) is wrong to accept the following stronger constraint on the formation of communicative intentions:

If a speaker is to mean a proposition P by an utterance U, it is required that she believe it reasonable to expect that her audience can "work out" that she means that proposition.

While *in general* (in normal cases) a speaker will mean a proposition P only if she believes that her audience can work out that she means P, such an expectation is not *required* for the formation of a communicative intention.

not believe this if she had a specific communicative intention.⁷¹ We thus have strong reasons to hold that Claire's communicative intention in uttering (C1) is unspecific.

How about S-Intentionalism? Might Claire have specific semantic intentions? That, too, seems unlikely. First, one might doubt that Claire has any semantic intentions concerning her utterance. While it is unproblematic to assign a (possibly unspecific) communicative intention to Claire, it is much less clear that she has any intentions concerning the semantic values (or meanings) of the expressions she utters. Speakers might have such intentions in some cases, e.g. when they are giving a speech and thus making careful decisions about which expressions with which semantic values to use. But such cases are exceptional and appear to be quite different from example (C): Claire's utterance of (C1) is a casual remark, and not a well-crafted speech.

Secondly, even if we grant that Claire has a semantic intention concerning 'expensive', it will at best be unspecific. Why would Claire have *any* semantic intention concerning 'expensive'? An S-Intentionalist might provide the following answer: Claire intends to communicate something by uttering (C1). One way of realising this intention involves a) uttering a sentence that has as its semantic value what she wants to communicate and b) getting David to identify this semantic value. Now, in order to ensure that the sentence uttered has the required semantic value, Claire has to have a semantic intention directed at 'expensive' (because its semantic value in context depends on such intentions). So, the answer concludes, having a semantic intention directed at 'expensive' helps to realise her communicative intention in uttering (C1). However, even if the S-Intentionalist is right about speakers having semantic intentions, her answer reveals that a speaker only has a reason to have a specific semantic intention if she has a specific communicative intention. Without a specific

⁷¹ Claire might have a specific communicative intention and believe that it is likely to be fulfilled if she is mistaken about the context of utterance. For example, she might falsely believe a particular degree of expensiveness to be salient to David, and thus think that her communicative intention featuring that degree is likely to be fulfilled. But there is no indication that Claire has such false beliefs in (C).

communicative intention, there is no wider goal a specific semantic intention could contribute to.⁷² Claire thus has no reason to have a specific semantic intention concerning ‘expensive’, which supports the view that she does not have such a specific semantic intention.

A third reason to doubt that Claire has specific semantic intentions emerges if we consider whether she could retrospectively report these intentions or the semantic values they are meant to determine. To elicit such reports, one might use questions such as the following ones:

(Q1) What did ‘expensive’ mean when you used it?

(Q2) How expensive did you say the flats in Oxford must be?

(Q3) Expensive by which standard?

Claire would not be able to provide specific answers to these questions. At best, it seems, she could give approximate answers, using qualifications such as ‘it meant something like/more or less/roughly...’. But she might equally well deny that she intended to use ‘expensive’ in any specific way, as in (Ans1), (Ans2) or (Ans3):

(Ans1) ‘Expensive’ didn’t mean anything specific when I used it.

(Ans2) I didn’t mean to use ‘expensive’ in any specific way.

(Ans3) I didn’t have any particular standard in mind.

This is further evidence that Claire does not have specific semantic intentions of the kind S-Intentionalism requires.⁷³

This point can be made even stronger if we look at the specific answers speakers can give in other cases. For example, S-Intentionalists hold that semantic intentions fix the semantic value of the demonstrative ‘that’. This view fits with the fact that,

⁷² Here I am only considering cases in which semantic and communicative intentions are specific or unspecific in the same respect.

⁷³ Glanzberg (2009: 13) makes a similar point with respect to ‘tall’. He notes that for an utterance of ‘tall’ we ‘cannot usually query a speaker about the standard for what counts as, e.g. tall, and get back any kind of straightforward answer’.

following her utterance of (A1) (“That is my violin teacher”) in example (A), Anne is likely to provide a specific answer to questions such as (Q4) or (Q5):

(Q4) What did ‘that’ mean when you used it?

(Q5) Who did you mean by ‘that’?

Anne might well respond to these questions using (Ans4) or (Ans5):

(Ans4) I wanted ‘that’ to stand for Claire/the woman on the bicycle.

(Ans5) I meant Claire/the woman on the bicycle.

And these answers are compatible with the view that Anne has specific intentions about the demonstrative ‘that’.⁷⁴ This contrast between uses of ‘that’ and example (C) provides further support for the view that Claire lacks specific semantic intentions concerning her use of ‘expensive’.⁷⁵

It thus seems that Claire neither has specific communicative intentions, nor specific semantic intentions. If ‘expensive’ is intention-sensitive, example (C) is thus a case in which it does not have exactly one semantic value in context. For how could the function that is the standing meaning of ‘expensive’ take an unspecific intention and fix one of the infinitely many candidate semantic values? The choice of one such candidate semantic value would have to seem arbitrary, as there will be many candidate semantic values that are compatible with Claire’s intentions.

This case of unspecific communication thus provides a first reason to doubt that Intentionalist standing meanings are compatible with the Contextualist entailment (Ent). And there are many everyday utterances featuring GQMs that are just like (C1),

⁷⁴ I do not think that this answer can be used to argue *in favour* of S-Intentionalism about ‘that’, for Anne might have equally well answered (Q4) or (Q5) with “By ‘that’ I meant Claire” or “With ‘that’ I wanted to refer to Claire”. These alternative answers also seem to fit with C-Intentionalism and even non-Contextualist views, as they concern what the *speaker* means, and not what the expressions uttered mean.

⁷⁵ Retrospective reporting could also be used to argue against the presence of specific *communicative* intentions.

so this example cannot be dismissed as unusual or exceptional.⁷⁶ But there is room for a Contextualist reply to arguments based on examples such as (C), which I will now consider.

Theorists have used examples featuring apparently unspecific intentions to argue against Contextualist and intention-sensitive standing meanings before. Buchanan (2010), for example, uses a case somewhat similar to (C) in order to show that speaker intentions do not fix exactly one semantic value in context for any use of ‘every’.⁷⁷ I am not aware of Contextualist replies to Buchanan’s arguments, but nonetheless there are no signs of slowing support for views that combine Contextualism and Intentionalism.⁷⁸ This may have to do with the fact that examples such as (C) admit a fairly straightforward Contextualist response: Contextualists might simply deny that Claire’s intentions in (C) are unspecific.

Such a response is likely to go with a view on which specific intentions are widespread and easy to come by, and on which the fact that an agent cannot give a specific articulation of an intention is no indication against her having a specific intention. And this view, in turn, might gain support from observations of how agents articulate their beliefs: Contextualists could argue that the fact that an agent cannot give a specific articulation of a belief should not be taken as a strong indication that her belief is unspecific. If Contextualists share these views concerning intentions, they will resist many of the arguments against specific intentions in (C). For example, they will

⁷⁶ It is easy to see that similar examples could have been given featuring a quantifier or a modal, where the speaker’s intentions cannot fix exactly one domain or exactly one modal base.

⁷⁷ Buchanan argues against the specificity of communicative intentions and is primarily concerned with speaker meaning, not semantic values in context. But his arguments equally apply to the Contextualist’s views on semantic values that are at issue in this chapter.

⁷⁸ Von Fintel & Gillies (2011) and King (forthcoming) are exceptions in this respect, as mentioned above. Von Fintel & Gillies are not moved by the arguments of the kind under consideration here.

say that a speaker can have specific semantic intentions even if these serve no wider communicative goal.⁷⁹

This response raises a number of interesting questions: What is the exact nature of communicative and semantic intentions? What is required for the formation of such intentions? And which parallels are there between beliefs and intentions (and between the formation of beliefs and the formation of intentions)? I cannot and need not look into these questions here. Instead, I will turn to further examples that do not permit a Contextualist response of this kind. In particular, I will consider examples featuring non-literal speech, in which there can be little doubt that speaker intentions are unsuited to single out exactly one candidate semantic value of a GQM uttered.

1.3 Unspecific intentions in indirect communication

Example (C) is plausibly an instance of an everyday utterance in which a speaker lacks specific intentions. But the possibility that Claire does have an intention, communicative or semantic, that manages to fix exactly one semantic value in context for ‘expensive’ cannot be ruled out entirely. For clearer cases of everyday utterances without suitable speaker intentions we have to turn to indirect communication, and in particular to non-literal speech.

Let me introduce the notions of direct and indirect communication and some related terminology. I will say that an utterance is an instance of *direct* communication just in case the speaker communicates a proposition that is a semantic value in context of the sentence uttered, and that an utterance is an instance of *indirect* communication just in case the speaker communicates a proposition that is not a semantic value in

⁷⁹ Though it is unclear how such a response can deal with retrospective reports such as (Ans1)–(Ans3), which explicitly deny the relevant intentions.

context of the sentence uttered.⁸⁰ By communicating directly, the speaker (successfully) *asserts* something, while in indirect communication she *conveys* something.⁸¹ In either case, there is something the speaker *communicates*. So, as I am using the expressions, *asserting* and *conveying* are two subspecies of *communicating*. A speaker can use a single utterance to assert something as well as convey something, which means that an instance of communication can be both direct and indirect.⁸²

Among the most commonly discussed cases of indirect communication are those of *additive implicatures*: cases in which a speaker asserts something and in addition conveys something through a conversational implicature.⁸³ Can such cases be used to improve on example (C)? I do not think so. Consider the following example (in which I have underlined the relevant GQM, as I will do in the examples to follow):

Example (D)

Emily and Fred are moving logs in their garden. Some logs require two carriers, others just one. When Emily lifts the last log, she sees that Fred is about to come over to help her. Emily says:

(D1) This one is light.

Fred replies:

(D2) Great, then I'll wait here and set up the saw.

⁸⁰ I am using the indefinite 'a semantic value' because the distinction should also be applicable to Semantic Pluralism. Contextualists accept (Prop), so they hold that if a proposition is *a* semantic value in context of a sentence, then it is *the* semantic value in context of the sentence.

⁸¹ Pre-theoretically, conveying and communicating require communicative success. This does not appear to be the case for asserting: a speaker could assert something without communicating anything (e.g. because the audience did not understand the speaker). For lack of a better expression, I will use 'asserts' in the sense of 'successfully asserts', to parallel 'convey' and 'communicates'.

⁸² Some theorists use these expressions differently, but I do not think that much hangs on which terminology is employed. I am aware that I am using these expressions in a theoretical way, and I do not wish to claim that they are used in the same way in ordinary discourse.

⁸³ The term *additive implicature* appears in Meibauer (2009: 374).

Emily's main communicative intention in uttering (D1) is plausibly to convey that Fred need not come over. The standing meaning of 'light' cannot use this intention to fix a semantic value in context, whether or not it is specific. On C-Intentionalism (as construed above), the standing meaning will look for an element in Emily's communicative intention that fixes a degree of weight, and it will not find such an element in the intention to communicate that Fred need not come over. However, C-Intentionalists can point out that because Emily is using an additive implicature, she will also have a communicative intention to assert that the log she is lifting is light, and this intention *is* related in a suitable way to the standing meaning of 'light'. I think Emily's communicative intention is likely to be unspecific, but the case for such unspecificity is no better, it seems, than in example (C). So example (D) does not raise any novel worries for C-Intentionalism. Neither does it for S-Intentionalism: S-Intentionalists have to say that Emily's intention to assert that the log she is lifting is light is accompanied by a semantic intention aimed at 'light', and semanticists happy to posit such an intention in example (C) will also be happy to do so here. Example (D) therefore does not introduce any new challenges for theorists wanting to hold onto a view that combines Contextualism and Intentionalism.

But things get worse for Contextualism if we turn to non-literal speech. Examples of non-literal speech have not played a role in the debate between Contextualists and its adversaries, but, it seems, they should play a role in this debate. After all, many or even most of our everyday utterances feature non-literal speech, as Lycan notes:

Philosophers tend to think that literal speech is the default and metaphorical utterances are occasional aberrations, made mainly by poets and poets manqué. But the bias is only a bias; sentences are very often used in perfectly ordinary contexts with other than their literal meanings. Indeed, virtually every sentence produced by any human being contains importantly metaphorical or other figurative elements. [...] Nonliteral usage is the rule, not the exception. (2000: 176)

Note that Lycan is concerned only with metaphorical utterances, but there are many further forms of non-literality: irony, exaggeration and understatement are at least as common as metaphorical language, so we indeed have strong reasons to take non-literality to be the rule. And given that Contextualism is meant to apply to everyday utterances in general, it should thus also apply to utterances featuring non-literal speech. Non-literal speech, however, raises problems for Contextualism, and in particular for Contextualism combined with Intentionalism. For often when speakers use non-literal speech they cannot be said to have suitable intentions, communicative or semantic, that could determine exactly one semantic value in context for the GQMs used.

So let us now turn to everyday utterances featuring non-literal speech. Such cases are standardly analysed as *substitutional implicatures*.⁸⁴ With a substitutional implicature, a speaker communicates *only* something that is not the (or a) semantic value in context of the sentence uttered. Consider the following examples, which feature irony, exaggeration, understatement or metaphorical speech:

Irony

Example (E)

Gertrude and Henry have once again had a terrible lunch at the canteen.

Gertrude says:

(E1) That was delicious.

Henry replies:

(E2) Yes, as always.

⁸⁴ This term also appears in Meibauer (2009: 374).

Exaggeration

Example (F)

Ida is telling John about a recent bicycle accident. She says:

(F1) There was a deafening noise when the tyre exploded.

John replies:

(F2) I can imagine. That must have been a shock.

Example (G)

Kylie and Lucas pass by a café that, once popular, has fallen out of favour. Kylie utters:

(G1) Nobody goes there any more.

Lucas replies:

(G2) Yes, it's almost empty once again.

Example (H)

Mary and Nigel are browsing through prints at an art dealer's. Mary finds a print she really likes. She utters:

(H1) I must have that print, but I can't spend 90 pounds.

Nigel replies:

(H2) Then you should ask the dealer for a discount.

Understatement

Example (I)

Olivia and Paul are travelling in a developing country. The bus they were planning to take arrives and they see that it is in a terrible condition. Olivia utters:

(I1) We might choose a different method of transport.

Paul replies:

(I2) Yes, let's take the train.

Metaphor

Example (J)

Rachel and Stephen are discussing European politics. Rachel says:

(J1) Greece is still shouldering a heavy burden of debt.

Stephen replies:

(J2) That's true. But it is slowly recovering.

Example (K)

Tessa and Umberto have been joined by a new colleague. Tessa says:

(K1) He has made a bright start.

Umberto replies:

(K2) I agree. He's doing well.

The first utterance in each of these examples is an everyday utterance: an ordinary utterance likely to meet communicative success. But each of the speakers intends to communicate only something that is distinct from the semantic value of the sentence uttered. This makes it very unlikely that communicative intentions could be suited to fix exactly one semantic value in context for the underlined GQMs. And in each case it is implausible to assign specific semantic intentions to the speakers that could pick up the slack. Let me take these points in turn.

Could communicative intentions determine exactly one semantic value for the GQMs in (E)–(K)? It is hard to see how. On the one hand, such intentions are almost

certainly unspecific. The three points in favour of unspecific communicative intentions in example (C) apply here, too. Firstly, none of the speakers has a reason to have a specific communicative intention: these are casual utterances and it seems unlikely that it will make a difference exactly which proposition the hearers pick up as a result. What is more, the fact that these speakers are using non-literal speech strongly suggests that their communicative intentions are unspecific. Because of its indirectness, non-literal speech is ill-suited for the communication of a particular proposition, and this will not be lost on the speakers. Secondly, the speakers are likely to get across their communicative intentions. But if they did have specific communicative intentions, it would be very unlikely for these intentions to be realised. The speakers do not offer their audiences any clues that could help them to arrive at exactly one semantic value for the GQMs they use, and their use of non-literal speech does not make things easier in this respect. And thirdly, the speakers plausibly *believe* that they are likely to communicate successfully, which they could not if they had specific communicative intentions (unless they were mistaken about the context or the audience, for which there is no indication).

On the other hand, in most of these examples the communicative intention is clearly not related to the candidate semantic values of the GQMs in a suitable way. In that case, even a specific communicative intention would not suffice to fix a semantic value in context for the respective GQM. This highlights a general problem for C-Intentionalism: it struggles in non-literal speech, where there is a mismatch between the content of the communicative intentions and the sentence uttered.

Consider examples (J) and (K), in which the GQMs are used metaphorically. In (J), Rachel utters (J1) ('Greece is still shouldering a heavy burden of debt') to convey that Greece still has high debt. Could the standing meaning of 'heavy' use this communicative intention to fix a degree of heaviness? On C-Intentionalism (as

construed above), the standing meaning of ‘heavy’ scans the speaker’s communicative intention for an element that could fix a degree of heaviness. Rachel’s communicative intention, however, has nothing to do with heaviness, so the search of the standing meaning will come up empty.

C-Intentionalists might argue that Rachel does intend to communicate that Greece is indebted to a certain degree. Could the standing meaning use this part of the intention? It is very hard to see how such a mechanism would work. Firstly, it is not clear how a degree of indebtedness could be mapped, in a non-arbitrary way, to a degree of weight. These degrees are situated on different scales: one measuring indebtedness, the other weight, and there appears to be no good way to get from a degree on one scale to a degree on the other.⁸⁵ And secondly, how could the standing meaning of ‘heavy’ take a degree of indebtedness as input? The standing meaning of ‘heavy’ will look for degrees of weight or properties that could determine such degrees, so a degree of indebtedness or a property fixing such a degree will be irrelevant to this standing meaning. So the context of (J) provides no suitable input to the C-Intentionalist’s standing meaning of ‘heavy’.

Similar considerations apply to example (K), in which Tessa utters (K1) (‘He has made a bright start’) to convey that her colleague has made a good start. Tessa’s communicative intention has nothing to do with brightness, and thus the standing meaning of ‘bright’ cannot use it to fix a semantic value.

Examples (E)–(I) raise similar problems, even though the mismatch of communicative intentions is not quite as clear in some of these cases. Examples (G)–(I) feature non-literal uses of quantifiers and modals, and in these cases the speakers’ communicative intentions *might* be suitably related to the respective quantifier or modal. Let me illustrate this for (G), in which Kylie utters (G1) (‘Nobody goes there any

⁸⁵ See Kennedy (2007: 32f.) for more on the scales associated with gradable adjectives.

more’) to convey, possibly and roughly, that few people she knows go to the café she and Lucas are passing by. Kylie’s utterance is undoubtedly exaggerated, but it may be so for different reasons: the exaggeration might be due to (i) the strength of the quantifier, (ii) its domain or (iii) both of these aspects. In the first of these options, the domain of ‘nobody’ is the same as the domain she intends to communicate, but she intends to communicate that few people in this domain go to the café, rather than that nobody in this domain does so. If this is what happens in (G), Kylie’s communicative intention is suitably related to the candidate semantic values of ‘nobody’, and the only problem is the unspecificity of this intention. If, however, option (ii) or (iii) offers the correct analysis, the same problem arises as in examples (J) and (K). So C-Intentionalists could insist on an analysis of (G) in line with (i), and pursue a similar strategy in (H) and (I). But even if we grant the C-Intentionalist such an analysis, the problem of the unspecificity of communicative intentions in these examples remains, and so does the mismatch-problem in the metaphorical examples.

Examples (E)–(K) thus clearly show that C-Intentionalism and (Ent) are incompatible: if GQMs are sensitive to communicative intentions, they cannot have exactly one semantic value in context whenever they occur in an everyday utterance.

Now let us turn to S-Intentionalism. The presence of specific semantic intentions in examples (E)–(K) is even less plausible than it is in example (C). The first two points against specific semantic intentions apply here as they did above. Firstly, these examples are not well-crafted, thought-through acts of communication, but casual, spontaneous utterances. It is therefore dubitable whether the speakers can plausibly be said to have *any* semantic intentions. Secondly, there is evidently no point for the speakers to have *specific* semantic intentions, as this will in no way contribute to their overall communicative aims. Unspecific semantic intentions would clearly suffice to realise their unspecific communicative intentions.

The third argument against specific semantic intentions is even stronger for (E)–(K) than it is for (C). Imagine questioning any of the speakers in these non-literal examples about what they meant when they used the respective GQM, or which domain, modal base or standard they had in mind. Such a question would surely lead to an incredulous stare or to an answer indicating that there was nothing in particular the speaker or the expressions used did mean. Does Ida in example (F) intend to exaggerate her account of the bicycle accident to a certain extent? To any extent at all? Or does Gertrude intend a degree of deliciousness for her ironical utterance (E1)? It appears not. This, however, makes an easy-intention reply along the lines considered above seem incredibly far-fetched.

So examples (E)–(K) also present a strong case against the view that S-Intentionalist standing meanings for GQMs are compatible with (Ent).

1.4 How the argument applies to alternatives to Intentionalism

Not all Contextualists are Intentionalists, as we have seen above: Gauker (2008) and Glanzberg (2007) hold that GQMs are sensitive to non-intentional features of the context. I will now briefly show that these views do not fare any better with respect to the examples discussed once these have been fully fleshed out. I will first consider Gauker's view and turn to Glanzberg's view at the end of the section.

Gauker (2008) holds that GQMs are sensitive only to non-intentional features of the context, including what is salient, what has been referred to before the utterance and what is relevant to the conversation, and that their semantic value in context is the entity that best satisfies these accessibility criteria. If this is how the standing meaning of GQMs works, will they have exactly one semantic value in context in examples (C)–(K)? The current descriptions of the examples do not mention contextual features of the kind Gauker invokes, so they have to be fleshed out further to allow a verdict. I do

not have the space to flesh out each of the examples, but considering just a couple of them will suffice. I will show that these examples could be fleshed out in a way that does not make them any less typical as instances of everyday communication, but that does not include contextual features of the kind that would be required to satisfy (Ent) on Gauker's view. The contexts in these fleshed out examples are thus *unspecific*, just like those that troubled Intentionalism.

Let us begin with example (C), in which Claire utters (C1) ('Flats in Oxford must be expensive') while strolling through Oxford. According to Gauker, the context singles out the candidate semantic value of 'expensive' that best satisfies the accessibility criteria of being salient, having been referred to, being relevant, and so on. So for Gauker's view to be compatible with (Ent), there has to be exactly one degree of expensiveness that best satisfies the accessibility criteria. But on a natural way of fleshing out (C), there will be several degrees of expensiveness that equally well satisfy these criteria. (C) might be fleshed out so that Claire's utterance is discourse initial, and that thus no degree of expensiveness was previously referred to. Furthermore, we can assume that there is no single degree of expensiveness that is salient, relevant or the like. Nonetheless, the example remains a typical everyday utterance (likely to be successful). In fact, I think the example is much *more* natural when fleshed out in this way than when fleshed out so as to include exactly one degree of expensiveness that is salient or relevant. Most everyday utterances take place against contexts that are not specific in the way Gauker requires.⁸⁶

As a second example we can turn to (J) and Rachel's utterance of (J1) ('Greece is still shouldering a heavy burden of debt'). Again, Gauker requires exactly one degree of heaviness to best satisfy the accessibility criteria, but, again, the example is naturally

⁸⁶ Gauker (2008: 366) holds that if several candidate semantic values of an expression satisfy the accessibility criteria equally well, the expression has no semantic value in context. So Gauker would say that in the fleshed out version of (C), 'expensive' has no semantic value in context.

fleshed out in a way that does not fulfil this requirement. The description of the example could rule out a salient or relevant degree of heaviness and previous references to such a degree, and this would take nothing away from its status as an everyday utterance or its likelihood of success. Rather to the contrary: such a description would make the example seem more natural than one in which a certain degree of heaviness *is* salient or relevant. And once the example is fleshed out in this way, Gauker's account fails to assign exactly one semantic value to 'heavy' in (J1).

The remaining examples could be fleshed out in a similar way and with the same result. I therefore conclude that if Contextualists construe the standing meanings of GQMs in the way Gauker does, the resulting view is not compatible with (Ent).

How about Glanzberg's (2007) view, on which the standing meaning of GQMs are sensitive to speaker intentions, hearer intentions, what is salient, linguistic meaning and other factors? This view combines the two views discussed so far: GQMs are taken to be sensitive to speaker intentions *as well as* to non-intentional contextual features. I hope to have shown that neither on Intentionalism nor on Gauker's view exactly one semantic value is fixed for the GQMs in the examples, and I take it to be fairly clear that combining these views will not lead to a different result. If e.g. in (C) non-intentional contextual features do not single out exactly one candidate semantic value for 'expensive', then it will not help to add Claire's at best unspecific intentions. Glanzberg's view therefore fares no better than that of Gauker.

We have arrived at the conclusion of the first argument against (Ent): Contextualist proposals for the standing meanings of GQMs do not lead to exactly one semantic value in context for every occurrence of a GQM in an everyday utterance. And it is hard to see how Contextualists could propose different standing meanings that could avoid the problems discussed in this section.

2. The argument from explanatory value

According to (Ent), any gradable adjective, quantifier or modal occurring in an everyday utterance has exactly one semantic value in the context of utterance, and has different semantic values in different contexts of utterance. The aim of the second (much shorter) argument against Contextualism is to show that there are many cases in which assigning semantic values in context in accordance with (Ent) leads to semantic values that the audience cannot identify. Such semantic values therefore cannot help to meet the explanatory aims of semantics. For example, they cannot help to explain communicative success: if a semantic value cannot be identified by an audience, it cannot be used in an explanation of how the audience picks up what the speaker wants to communicate. This speaks against accepting (Ent), and thus against Contextualism.

To show that Contextualist semantic values of GQMs are often inaccessible to the audience, I want to return once more to some of the examples from the previous section. Contextualists assign exactly one semantic value in context to each of the GQMs in these examples. But on a natural way of fleshing out the examples there is no way for the respective audiences to identify this semantic value.

Let us first reconsider example (C). The semantic value Contextualists assign to ‘expensive’ in (C1) (‘Flats in Oxford must be expensive’) features a particular degree of expensiveness. Assume that the example is fleshed out as in the discussion of Gauker’s view above: Claire’s utterance of (C1) is discourse initial, and no single degree of expensiveness is salient, relevant or the like. In this case, there simply is no way for David (Claire’s audience) to decide which of its infinitely many candidate semantic values ‘expensive’ has in this context, and thus to decide which proposition is expressed by (C1).

The same holds in a fleshed out version of example (G). Contextualists assign a semantic value in context to ‘nobody’ that features a particular domain of people. But if Kylie utters (G1) discourse initially and there is no single salient or relevant domain of people in the context of utterance, then Lucas will have no way to ascertain what is the semantic value in context of ‘nobody’.

Finally, consider example (I), in which Olivia utters (I1) (‘We might choose a different method of transport’). Contextualists hold that the semantic value in context of ‘might’ features a particular set of worlds as modal base. But, again, there is a natural way of fleshing out the example on which there are no clues that could point Paul towards exactly one modal base, and in that case he will be unable to identify the semantic value in context of ‘might’. It is easy to see that the remaining examples could be fleshed out naturally so that the hearers would be unable to identify the Contextualist semantic values of the GQMs at issue.

Fleshing out the examples in this way does not make them worse candidates to be examples of successful communication. Even though in the fleshed out examples the hearers are not in a position to identify the semantic values Contextualists would assign to the GQMs, they are clearly in a position to understand what the speakers want to get across. But that means that the semantic values Contextualists assign in these cases cannot play a role in explaining why communication is successful. Assigning such semantic values in these cases does therefore not help Contextualism to fulfil desideratum (Des5), which raises the question whether such semantic values should be assigned at all.

But (Des5) is not the only desideratum on semantic theories. Might the Contextualist semantic values help to fulfil other desiderata? Unfortunately for Contextualism, inaccessible semantic values appear to be of no help in fulfilling any of the desiderata (Des1)–(Des4): desiderata (Des2)–(Des4) concern judgements about

truth, validity or acceptability of utterances, and quite clearly for semantic values to play a role in explaining such judgements they have to be accessible. Contextualists might object that, for all I have said, the semantic values they assign in the examples are accessible to *the speakers* (of the examples), and thus can help to explain judgements of speakers about their own utterances. This move only seems possible on an Intentionalist version of Contextualism, for on a Gauker-style Non-Intentionalist view neither hearer nor speaker will be able to identify the semantic values at issue. But even to Intentionalists the move is of no help, because if the speaker's intentions are unspecific, knowing these intentions will still leave open many candidate semantic values for the GQM in question. So there are many cases in which the Contextualist's semantic values for GQMs contribute neither to an explanation of why communication is successful in those cases (as demanded by (Des5)) nor to an explanation of why the utterances in question lead to certain judgements of truth, validity or acceptability (as demanded by (Des2)–(Des4)).

That leaves (Des1), but (Des1) concerns the composition of semantic values, and the question of which semantic values are assigned to GQMs in context is unrelated to the question of how these semantic values compose further semantic values. (Des1) is therefore not relevant in the current context. The Contextualist's semantic values in the fleshed out examples are thus of no use in accounting for the explanatory aims (Des1)–(Des5) set for these cases, and it is hard to see which further explanatory aims semanticists could accept for which they could be useful.

Contextualists therefore face the following problem: if accepting (Ent) means assigning many semantic values in context to GQMs that are explanatorily inert, then this is a good reason not to accept (Ent). Furthermore, if there is a semantic theory that is of the same explanatory power as Contextualism but that does not accept (Ent) (and the explanatorily inert semantic values that come with it), then this alternative semantic

theory should be chosen over Contextualism. I think there *are* such alternative theories: theories of Semantic Pluralism. I have yet to spell out these theories and to show that they can do at least as well as Contextualism in satisfying (Des1)–(Des5). But I will take up these tasks in the next three chapters. If I manage to show that Pluralist views indeed have at least as much explanatory power as Contextualism, then the argument from explanatory value joins the argument from unspecific contexts as a second reason not to opt for Contextualism.

Together, these arguments provide a strong case against (Ent), and thus against Contextualism. And although the arguments are based on the same examples, they are independent of each other: Contextualists would have to rebut both arguments to avoid trouble for their view. Finally, it should also be clear that it is not an option for Contextualists to avoid the arguments by giving up (Sing) while holding onto (Prop). These arguments are not about compositionality, so giving up (Sing) would be *ad hoc*. And it would not get Contextualists very far, as the arguments could fairly easily be rephrased so as to attack (Ent1) rather than (Ent).

3. Contextualist replies

In this section, I will consider two potential Contextualist replies to the foregoing arguments. Both replies require assigning special standing meanings to GQMs that determine exactly one semantic value even if several candidate semantic values appear to be compatible with the identifiable features of the context of utterance. According to the first reply, what happens in such cases is that the standing meaning selects exactly one semantic value based on superficially irrelevant facts of the context. And according to the second, the standing meaning selects a default semantic value in such cases.

3.1 Epistemicist semantic values

The problems examples (C)–(K) raise for (Ent) are in some ways similar to those well-known vague expressions, such as ‘heap’ and ‘Mount Kilimanjaro’, raise for (Sing) (which states that any expression in an everyday utterance has exactly one semantic value in context). Although these latter expressions are not usually taken to be context-sensitive, they apparently do not have exactly one semantic value whenever they occur in an everyday utterance.⁸⁷ For example, there are many configurations of matter that could be the semantic value in context of a certain occurrence of ‘Mount Kilimanjaro’.

One way to make such vague language compatible with (Sing) is by adopting Williamson’s (1994) *Epistemicist* account of vagueness. On such a view, vague expressions, such as ‘heap’ and ‘Mount Kilimanjaro’, do have exactly one semantic value in context, but speakers do not and cannot know which semantic value this is. Why cannot speakers know this? In short: because the semantic value in context of an expression depends on its actual overall use and speakers cannot distinguish the actual overall use of a vague expression from a slightly different but merely possible overall use. Speaker judgements about the overall use and thus the semantic value in context of a vague expression are therefore unsafe, which is why they cannot constitute knowledge. Nevertheless, speakers can, in some sense, know the semantic value of a vague expression: they can, for instance, know that the semantic value of ‘Mount Kilimanjaro’ is Mount Kilimanjaro.⁸⁸

Now, Contextualists might be tempted to avoid the problems examples (C)–(K) raise for (Ent) by adopting an Epistemicist view of the GQMs at issue. How would such a view work? Contextualists might say that even if there *appear* to be no contextual

⁸⁷ Some expressions, such as ‘tall’ or ‘expensive’, are taken to be both vague and context-sensitive. However, in many discussions of vagueness, the potential context-sensitivity of such expressions is bracketed.

⁸⁸ See Kearns & Magidor (2008: 283).

features that the standing meaning of a GQM could use to single out exactly one of its candidate semantic values, there *are* in fact such features. On an Intentionalist view, these features might e.g. consist in the overall mental state of the speaker, including mental states that are not intuitively relevant; speakers *do* have suitably specific intentions, even if they cannot access them under helpful guises.⁸⁹ According to this approach, I have misdescribed examples (C)–(K): the contexts of these examples do contain suitable speaker intentions after all, so the standing meanings of the GQMs can fix exactly one semantic value in context, *contra* the argument from unspecific contexts. And a speaker can, in some sense, know this semantic value (e.g. she can know that in the context of utterance the semantic value of ‘nobody’ is nobody), *contra* the argument from explanatory value.

Epistemicism is not a widely shared view, so at least some Contextualists will not consider this a plausible reply to the arguments given. But even for those Contextualists who are sympathetic to the standard Epistemicist account of vagueness the current proposal is unlikely to offer a good way out. Firstly, it is unclear whether the account Epistemicists give of how the semantic value in context of a standard vague expression is determined can be generalised to context-sensitive expressions. Epistemicists say that the semantic value in context of a standard vague expression is determined by the overall use of the expression.⁹⁰ This explanation might be criticised, but it is conceivable that some mechanism of this kind does ensure that there is exactly one semantic value in context. By contrast, it is hard to see how Epistemicists could give a plausible explanation of what fixes the mental state of speakers using GQMs. What makes it the case that a speaker has this particular intention and not a different one? The social-externalist explanation offered for standard vague expressions does not

⁸⁹ Adherents of a non-Intentionalist view might appeal e.g. to fine-grained, apparently irrelevant features of the physical surroundings of an utterance.

⁹⁰ To be more precise: the overall use determines the standing meaning, which in turn determines a semantic value in context.

seem to work here. It is therefore far from clear that Epistemicism offers a proper response to the argument from unspecific contexts.

Secondly, Contextualists cannot turn to Epistemicism to avoid the worry that the semantic values they assign are explanatorily inert. Epistemicism about expressions such as ‘Mount Kilimanjaro’ permits speakers to acquire permanent, useful beliefs about the semantic value of vague expressions. Even if a speaker does not know the exact semantic value of ‘Mount Kilimanjaro’, she can know that its semantic value is Mount Kilimanjaro, and such knowledge can aid successful communication. But if Contextualists adopt an Epistemicist account of cases such as (C)–(K), they cannot say that speakers acquire permanent, useful beliefs about the semantic values in context of the GQMs at issue. A speaker can e.g. come to know that in the context of her utterance the semantic value of ‘nobody’ is nobody. But this belief is useful *only* in a single context, and cannot be applied to other contexts, in which, Contextualists hold, ‘nobody’ has different semantic values. There are no non-trivial conditionals that link this belief about the semantic value of ‘nobody’ to other beliefs that are not tied to a particular conversation. As a consequence, it is questionable whether semantic values that are only graspable under such unhelpful guises can play any role in an explanation of successful communication. Epistemicism therefore does not help Contextualists to avoid the argument from explanatory value either.

3.2 Default semantic values

According to a second potential objection, standing meanings of GQMs lead to a default semantic value in unspecific contexts, and audiences assume that such expressions have a default semantic value if the relevant contextual features appear to be missing. If this is how the standing meanings of GQMs work, they will have exactly one semantic value in context in examples (C)–(K).

An objection along these lines might be inspired by the following remark Grice makes about the formulation of communicative intentions (which he calls *linguistic intentions*):

Explicitly formulated linguistic (or quasi-linguistic) intentions are no doubt comparatively rare. In their absence we would seem to rely on very much the same kinds of criteria as we do in the case of nonlinguistic intentions where there is a general usage. An utterer is held to intend to convey what is normally conveyed (or normally intended to be conveyed), and we require a good reason for accepting that a particular use diverges from the general usage (e.g., he never knew or had forgotten the general usage). (1957: 387)

Grice suggests that, in the absence of explicit communicative intentions, a speaker communicates and should be taken to communicate a default proposition: something that ‘is normally conveyed (or normally intended to be conveyed)’ by the use of certain expressions. Contextualists might make a similar move for standing meanings.

This objection invites at least the following two worries. Firstly, it is very implausible that GQMs have a default semantic value. On a simple version of the view under consideration, there is a certain semantic value a GQM has whenever the contextual features it is sensitive to are unsuited to fix a single semantic value. But what would this default semantic value be? What would make it the case that a certain semantic value should fulfil this role rather than a slightly different one? The choice, it seems, would be arbitrary. A more nuanced version of the view might entail that, in the absence of certain contextual features, a semantic value is determined through a default mechanism from the remaining contextual features. This view might, for example, entail that if a speaker has no intentions concerning a use of ‘might’, then, by default, the semantic value of ‘might’ features the speaker’s knowledge as modal base. But here, too, worries of arbitrariness arise. Why should the default semantic value for ‘might’ feature the speaker’s knowledge as modal base, and not, say, the combined knowledge of the speaker and her audience? And what would the default mechanism for

expressions such as ‘expensive’ or ‘everything’ be? These questions seem to have no good answers.

Secondly, it is unclear which explanatory role default semantic values can play. Given that, as I have argued, assignments of default semantic values would have to be at least somewhat arbitrary, it would be surprising if speakers or their audiences could identify a default semantic value on a given utterance of a GQM. But then the argument from explanatory value returns, for such inaccessible semantic values could not play a role in fulfilling (Des1)–(Des5). I therefore conclude that the objection from default semantic values is unconvincing.

I have put forward two arguments against Contextualism, the dominant view in contemporary semantics, and defended them against objections. If I am right that these arguments show Contextualism to be defective, this provides some support for alternative views. In particular, it provides support for Pluralist views, which avoid the problems of this chapter in a straightforward way, namely by giving up the assumption of one semantic value per expression and context. Let us now consider such views in more detail.

Chapter 4

Semantic Pluralism

According to Semantic Pluralism, an expression can have several semantic values in context, even if it occurs in a perfectly normal everyday utterance. Pluralists thus reject (Sing) and (Prop):

(Sing): Singularism

For any expression occurring in an everyday utterance, the expression uttered has exactly one semantic value in the context of utterance.

(Prop): Propositionality

For any everyday utterance of a sentence, the sentence uttered has exactly one semantic value in the context of utterance, and that semantic value is a proposition.

But Pluralism is compatible with different views on how widespread context-sensitivity is, and thus with different attitudes towards (CS):

(CS): Context-sensitivity

Many expressions are context-sensitive.

Those who reject (CS) hold that only expressions on Kaplan's list (plus possibly a few more) are context-sensitive, while those who accept (CS) take many more expression to

be context-sensitive, including GQMs. Different decisions on (CS) thus lead to quite different versions of Pluralism. (CS) is accepted on Flexible Pluralism and rejected on Strong Pluralism.

In this chapter, I will introduce what I take to be the most promising versions of Flexible Pluralism (Section 1) and Strong Pluralism (Section 2). These two versions of Pluralism will be the main focus of discussion in the remainder of this thesis. I will then show how Pluralists can develop a compositional semantics (Section 3) and will demonstrate that Pluralism fits into a broadly Gricean theory of communication (Section 4). Finally, I will consider how Pluralists can capture the notion of what is said (Section 5).

1. Flexible Pluralism

Flexible Pluralism rejects (Sing) and (Prop) but accepts (CS): expressions can have several semantic values in context, but nonetheless many expressions are context-sensitive. Semanticists will adopt a version of Flexible Pluralism if they accept the correspondence view of linguistic communication (mentioned in Chapter 1) and the following general outlook: Contextualists are right to claim that speaker intentions (or other fine-grained features of the context) have an influence on semantic values, but wrong to hold that every context contains intentions (or other features) specific enough to single out exactly one semantic value for each occurrence of a context-sensitive expression.⁹¹ The examples of the previous chapter support such a view: they are compatible with many expressions (including GQMs) being intention-sensitive, but seem to show that Contextualists ask too much of speaker intentions by demanding

⁹¹ Here and in what follows I will focus on an approach on which expressions are intention-sensitive. I will not consider related and less common views, on which many expressions are sensitive to non-intentional, fine-grained features of the context. But the discussion to follow carries over to such non-Intentionalist views.

that they fix exactly one semantic value for any occurrence of a context-sensitive expression (and in particular for any occurrence of a GQM).

The version of Flexible Pluralism I will now spell out in more detail is based on the two assumptions just mentioned: (i) speaker intentions are semantically significant, but (ii) they are not always suited to fix exactly one semantic value in context. In my view, such a version of Flexible Pluralism is highly attractive: it avoids the problems highlighted in the previous chapter, but it does not require a radical departure from the correspondence view of linguistic communication or from the Contextualist approach, which has proven to be fruitful over the past decades. For many occurrences of context-sensitive expressions, Flexible Pluralists can give exactly the same explanation as Contextualists do. But they need not give an explanation of this kind for *every* such occurrence, and can thereby steer clear from unrealistic expectations about what intentions and standing meanings can achieve. This, I will show, leads to an attractive overall picture on which semantic values in some cases merely constrain, but do not determine, what a speaker can assert by uttering a sentence. Furthermore, Flexible Pluralists do not have to introduce novel kinds of semantic values, such as propositional radicals, fragments or schemas, but can get by with standard semantic values and propositions. This gives it an edge over existing theories of non-propositional Minimalism.

Before I turn to the details of Flexible Pluralism I want to fix some terminology. I will call an expression that has several semantic values in context in some (actual or possible) everyday utterance a *multiplier*, and I will say that if an expression has several semantic values in context it exhibits *semantic multiplicity*. If an expression has several semantic values in context it has (or expresses) a non-singleton set of semantic values in context. I will call such a set of semantic values a *semantic value set*, and for ease of

exposition I will from now on talk in terms of semantic value sets rather than in terms of pluralities of semantic values.

In order to see how Flexible Pluralism has to be spelled out if it is to have the attractive features mentioned above, I will consider how its adherents should answer the following two questions:

(Q1) Which expressions are multipliers?

(Q2) Which sets of semantic values do multipliers have in context?

Let us begin with (Q1). Given assumptions (i) and (ii), Flexible Pluralists should say that an expression is a multiplier if it is sensitive to speaker intentions but occurs in some (actual or possible) everyday utterance without specific intentions (that fix exactly one semantic value in context). But which expressions are intention-sensitive? And which intention-sensitive expressions can occur in everyday utterances without specific intentions? Flexible Pluralists share the standard Contextualist view on context- and intention-sensitivity: many expressions are context-sensitive, including those from Kaplan's list and GQMs; and almost all *context*-sensitive expressions are *intention*-sensitive, with only a handful of exceptions, including 'I' and 'today'. Of these intention-sensitive expressions, it seems, most or even all occur in at least some everyday utterances without specific intentions. Examples (C)–(K) suggest that this holds for GQMs. And similar examples can be found for many other expressions Flexible Pluralists take to be intention-sensitive. For instance, 'here' and 'there' occur in everyday utterances without intentions that could fix exactly one area of space, 'now' and 'then' without intentions fixing exactly one interval of time and 'we', (plural) 'you' and 'those' without intentions fixing exactly one group of people or other entities. The following examples illustrate this:

Two school friends are talking on the phone. One of them is on holiday and utters (1):

(1) It's nice here.

A doctor is reporting on a humanitarian aid mission during which she and a large group of helpers handed out medicine. She utters (2):

(2) Then we handed out the medicine.

It seems very unlikely that these speakers should have intentions that could fix a single semantic value for these occurrences of 'here', 'then' and 'we'.

For some demonstratives, such as 'this', 'that' or 'she', it is harder to find cases of this kind. But the following example shows that there are such cases:

A philosopher has used one paragraph of a paper to give an argument against a certain view. The paragraph ends as follows:

(3) Because of this, theorists should not adopt such a view.

This use of 'this' is arguably not accompanied by suitable intentions that could fix exactly one semantic value in context. 'This' might pick out the paragraph, the sentence giving the argument, the argument itself or yet something else, and the philosopher is unlikely to have an intention that favours one of these candidate semantic values over the others. Flexible Pluralists should thus take almost all context-sensitive expressions to be multipliers, including those on Kaplan's list and GQMs.

Flexible Pluralists could add further expressions to the group of multipliers: they could add expressions standardly taken to be context-insensitive but vague, such as

‘heap’ and ‘Mount Kilimanjaro’. I think they *should* count these expressions as multipliers, but I will bracket them here, as the focus of this thesis is on context-sensitivity.⁹² For now, I will assume that the Flexible Pluralist’s set of multipliers is a subset of the set of expressions Contextualists standardly take to be context-sensitive.

Now let us turn to (Q2). Flexible Pluralists should say that, in any context, a given multiplier has (or expresses) a semantic value set that is a subset of its *maximal semantic value set*. The maximal semantic value set of a multiplier coincides with the set of candidate semantic values Contextualists would assign to the same expression. For example, Contextualists would say that the set of candidate semantic values of ‘expensive’ is (roughly) the set of all properties of being expensive to a certain degree; in one context, ‘expensive’ has one of these properties as its semantic value, in a different context, another one. For Flexible Pluralists, then, this same set is the maximal semantic value set of ‘expensive’, and in any context ‘expensive’ has a subset of this maximal set as its semantic value set.

Which semantic value set a multiplier has in context depends on the speaker’s intentions.⁹³ Flexible Pluralists could appeal to communicative intentions or semantic intentions in this role. Which way should they go? I think they should appeal to semantic intentions. For if communicative intentions are taken to fix semantic values, there is a worry about the explanatory value of the values fixed in this way. Suppose a speaker utters a sentence featuring an intention-sensitive expression. If this expression were sensitive to the speaker’s communicative intention, the audience would have to figure out this communicative intention in order to figure out the semantic value of the expression at issue. But once the audience has figured out the speaker’s communicative

⁹² Kölbel (2010: 310–311) mentions but does not endorse a view on which vague expressions are multipliers.

⁹³ Flexible Pluralists could also hold that multipliers are sensitive to other fine-grained features of the context. To keep things simple, I will continue to focus on a version of the view on which multipliers are intention-sensitive, but it should be easy to see how the alternative version of Flexible Pluralism would work.

intention, communication is successful, and there is no point in using the communicative intention to figure out the semantic value of the expression uttered.⁹⁴ So semantic values fixed by communicative intentions could not, it seems, help a theory to satisfy (Des5). On the other hand, semantic intentions are well-suited to contribute to an explanation of communicative success: on a view that appeals to semantic intentions, the audience figures out the speaker's semantic intentions in order to figure out her communicative intention. So a theory that appeals to semantic intentions in this role has an explanatory advantage over a theory that appeals to communicative intentions, which is why Flexible Pluralists should opt for intentions of the former kind.⁹⁵

So as I am construing Flexible Pluralism, the speakers' semantic intentions determine the semantic value set in context of a multiplier. If a speaker has a specific semantic intention directed at a certain multiplier, the multiplier has a singleton semantic value set in context. If she has an unspecific semantic intention, it has a non-singleton semantic value set in context.⁹⁶ And if the speaker has no suitable semantic intention directed at the multiplier, it has its maximal semantic value set in context.

Why say that the absence of a suitable intention leads to the maximal semantic value set? Alternatively, one could say that in such a case a multiplier expresses no semantic value (or the empty set) in context.⁹⁷ But that would lead to cases in which expressions lack semantic values in context but are nonetheless used to successfully communicate. Small children, for example, are unlikely to have suitable intentions directed at their

⁹⁴ This point has been made by Bach (2006a: 549) and Schiffer (2005: 1141).

⁹⁵ While I think that these considerations favour semantic intentions over communicative intentions, I do not think that they can be used as an argument against C-Intentionalism in general. For communicative intentions could still help to satisfy other desiderata, such as (Des2) or (Des3). A further reason to opt for semantic rather than communicative intentions is that the former seem to allow a more convincing analysis of non-literal speech, avoiding the mismatch-problem mentioned in the previous chapter.

⁹⁶ In such a case, it will often be vague which set satisfies the description of being the semantic value set of the expression.

⁹⁷ This would match the standard Contextualist approach, on which a context-sensitive expression has no semantic value in a context lacking the feature the expression is sensitive to. See e.g. Kaplan (1989: 571, n. 14) and Gauker (2008: 366).

uses of multipliers. But they are nonetheless competent and often successful users of such expressions.⁹⁸ Flexible Pluralism can capture these and similar cases nicely by assigning the maximal semantic value set.

Let us return to our example: ‘expensive’ thus has a singleton set of a property to a certain degree in some contexts, and it has a non-singleton set of such properties in others. In any context, its semantic value set is a subset of its maximal semantic value set, but in a context that entirely lacks semantic intentions directed at the expression, its semantic value set is an improper subset of its maximal semantic value set.

For some multipliers, Flexible Pluralists should allow circumstantial features of the context, namely its speaker, audience, place, time and world, to place constraints on semantic value sets. They should, for example, say that any occurrence of ‘now’ has a semantic value set of temporal intervals, each of which includes the time of the context.⁹⁹ Other multipliers with circumstantial constraints include ‘we’ (the semantic value set contains sets of individuals containing the speaker of the context) and ‘you’ (the semantic value set contains sets of individuals containing at least one member of the audience). So Flexible Pluralists should say that while every multiplier is sensitive to speaker intentions, some are in addition sensitive to circumstantial features of the context.

Flexible Pluralism, as I have described it so far, thus earns its name on two accounts. On the one hand, it takes multipliers to be context-sensitive: multipliers have different semantic value sets in different contexts. And on the other hand, it allows multipliers to have semantic value sets of different extent in different contexts. In this way, Flexible Pluralists can imitate the Contextualist analysis in those cases in which speakers plausibly have specific semantic intentions. And for cases in which such

⁹⁸ This is also noted by Speaks (forthcoming: Section 2).

⁹⁹ I am ignoring certain special uses of ‘now’, such as in ‘Caesar now crossed the Rubicon’. In my view, these uses are best accounted for as non-literal uses. But of course Flexible Pluralists can adapt their view to whatever turns out to be the best analysis of such uses.

specific semantic intentions are lacking, they can offer an alternative analysis that does justice to the unspecificity of the context.

2. Strong Pluralism

Strong Pluralism rejects (CS) as well as (Sing) and (Prop): few expressions are context-sensitive, and expressions can have non-singleton semantic value sets. Strong Pluralism fits with the guide view of linguistic communication (introduced in Section 1), and thus with an overall approach that is very different from that favoured by Contextualists or Flexible Pluralists. On this approach, lots of the work that is usually thought to be done by semantics is delegated to pragmatics. In many cases, the semantic value set of the sentence uttered merely constrains but does not determine what a literal speaker can assert by uttering the sentence. Semantic multiplicity is used to capture the constraint an expression places on what a literal speaker can assert.

These more modest expectations on what semantic values are meant to achieve are naturally accompanied by a view on which speaker intentions (or other fine-grained features of the context) are not semantically significant. Speaker intentions merely determine what a *speaker* means, but not what the *expressions* uttered mean (i.e. they have no influence on their semantic values). The only semantically significant features of context are coarse-grained circumstantial features, including who is the speaker and what is the audience, time, place and world of the utterance.

The examples of the previous chapter can also be taken to support this more radical departure from Contextualism. Strong Pluralists might take these examples to show in a particularly clear way what holds for any instance of communication: speakers do not

have intentions that could have an influence on semantic values; and they need not have such intentions to successfully communicate.¹⁰⁰

I will now spell out a version of Strong Pluralism based on the assumptions that (i) sentential semantic values in many cases merely constrain but do not determine what a literal speaker can assert, (ii) few expressions are context-sensitive and (iii) speaker intentions are not semantically significant. Such a view shares some of the attractive features of Flexible Pluralism: it avoids the Contextualist problems in examples (C)–(K), and it gets by without introducing propositional radicals or other novel entities as semantic values.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, it offers a pleasingly simple view of semantics and a natural division between semantics and pragmatics.

How does Strong Pluralism have to be construed to have these features? How should Strong Pluralists answer (Q1) and (Q2)? Strong Pluralists should say that an expression is a multiplier if it gives a literal speaker a choice of what she can assert by uttering a sentence featuring the multiplier: if it constrains but does not determine (in part) what a literal speaker can assert. The Strong Pluralist's group of multipliers is thus a subset of the Contextualist's group of context-sensitive expressions (just as it is for Flexible Pluralists).¹⁰² Of the expressions standardly taken to be context-sensitive, only 'I', 'today' and a handful of other expressions will count as non-multipliers, as these are plausibly sensitive only to circumstantial features of the context and do not give the speaker the leeway mentioned above. In any context, a given multiplier expresses a semantic value set, which is a subset of its maximal semantic value set. And the maximal semantic value set of a multiplier coincides with the set of candidate semantic values Contextualists would assign to the same expression.

¹⁰⁰ I will continue to focus on intention-sensitivity, rather than sensitivity to other fine-grained contextual features.

¹⁰¹ Compared to views of Propositional Minimalism, Strong Pluralism has the advantage of not having to appeal to strong, weak or minimal propositions, which many semanticists take to be suspect.

¹⁰² Strong Pluralists could also take expressions that are context-insensitive and vague to be multipliers. I will continue to bracket these expressions.

Now let us consider how Strong Pluralists should treat different kinds of expressions, beginning with GQMs. Strong Pluralists should take these to be multipliers, but they should construe them as context-insensitive. For GQMs are clearly not sensitive to circumstantial features of the context, and that is the only influence of context on semantic values Strong Pluralists allow. GQMs thus express the same semantic value set in any context, namely their maximal semantic value set. This semantic value set constrains what a speaker *could* assert by uttering a sentence featuring a GQM. For example, if a speaker utters a sentence featuring one occurrence of ‘expensive’, the sentence expresses a semantic value set featuring a proposition each for any property of expensiveness to a certain degree of cost. If an occurrence of ‘expensive’ appears to be associated with a single property of expensiveness, that can be explained by pointing to what the speaker asserts (by uttering the sentence featuring ‘expensive’).¹⁰³

Most other multipliers are like GQMs: they are context-insensitive and express their maximal set of semantic values in any context. This leads to some assignments of semantic value sets that will seem surprising: expressions such as ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’, ‘this’, ‘that’, ‘these’, ‘those’ and ‘there’ are taken to express their maximal semantic value set in any context. But that is the principled thing for the Strong Pluralist to say, as these expressions place only very weak constraints on what a speaker could assert, and because their semantic values are not determined by circumstantial features of the context.¹⁰⁴ As with GQMs, Strong Pluralists can point out that on many occasions

¹⁰³ Strong Pluralists need not (and indeed should not) say that all modals express the same semantic value set in any context. The modals ‘may’, ‘must’, ‘can’ and other modals that can be used to express different modal flavours (such as deontic, epistemic or circumstantial modality) are arguably polysemous, with one standing meaning for each modal flavour. So here Strong Pluralists should posit one semantic value set for each flavour of the modal. See Vetter & Viebahn (2014) for an argument in favour of such modal polysemy.

¹⁰⁴ Which sets are posited as maximal semantic value sets of some of these expressions (e.g. ‘she’ and ‘he’) depends on whether or not one takes gender features to be represented semantically. Strong Pluralism is not tied to a particular answer to this question.

speakers use these expressions to make an assertion about exactly one entity (or exactly one group of entities), and that this masks their status as multipliers.

Strong Pluralists should say that some multipliers are constrained by circumstantial features of the context. These will be the same multipliers for which Flexible Pluralists posit circumstantial constraints and will include ‘now’, ‘then’, ‘here’, ‘we’, ‘you’ and others. For example, the semantic value set ‘now’ has in context is a set of temporal intervals, each of which includes the time of the context. In any context, the semantic value set of a context-sensitive multiplier is a proper subset of their maximal set of semantic values. It is usually a non-singleton set, but in some cases it can be a singleton set, e.g. if a speaker uses ‘you’ and there is only one member of the audience.

Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism go hand in hand with competing visions of the purpose of the notion of a semantic value set. Flexible Pluralism will appeal to those who take the semantic value set of an expression to be closely tied to what speakers assert by using that expression (i.e. the correspondence view of communication). Because speakers enjoy great flexibility in what they can assert, semantic value sets are taken to be flexible. Strong Pluralism, by contrast, will be more to the liking of those in favour of a simpler and less flexible conception of semantics (i.e. the guide view of communication). Semanticists might favour such an approach if they want to keep speaker intentions out of semantics, possibly because this fits best with a modular view of the brain.¹⁰⁵ Or if they think semantics should capture what is conventional about linguistic communication and hold that if intentions are given more or less free reign in fixing semantic values these will not be conventional enough.¹⁰⁶

These different approaches can be nicely brought out by considering the perspectives Flexible Pluralists and Strong Pluralists take on multipliers. The former

¹⁰⁵ See Borg (2012) for a detailed defence of intention-free (though propositional) semantics.

¹⁰⁶ See Soames (2010: 168) for an argument in this vein.

can offer fine distinctions between different kinds of multipliers: they can look at how often a multiplier has a singleton or non-singleton semantic value set, and at how often a multiplier has a semantic value set of small extent or of large extent. For Strong Pluralists, semantics is the wrong place to look for such fine distinctions. They can be found in what speakers assert by using sentences containing multipliers, but not among the multipliers themselves.

3. Pluralist semantics

In this section, I will outline how Pluralists can provide a formal framework for their view. I will show where Pluralists can use elements of standard Contextualist semantics, and where they should innovate. I will first consider the semantics of simple expressions, and then move on to complex expressions.

3.1 Simple expressions

Let me begin by discussing some basic assumptions concerning the semantics of simple expressions that both Flexible Pluralists as well as Strong Pluralists should accept.

On the one hand, there are certain Contextualist tenets with which Pluralists of either kind agree. Just like Contextualists, both kinds of Pluralists hold that at least some expressions are context-sensitive. Pluralists should thus take on board the Contextualist distinction between the standing meaning of an expression and its semantic value in context. For Pluralists, this means distinguishing the standing meaning of an expression from its semantic value *set* in context. And Pluralists should follow Contextualists and say that the standing meaning of an expression is a function from contexts to semantic value sets. This function is constant for context-insensitive expressions and non-constant for context-sensitive expressions.

On the other hand, Pluralists of course do not accept the Contextualist assumption that an expression has a single semantic value in context. They hold that multipliers have non-singleton semantic value sets in context. How about expressions that Pluralists do not take to be multipliers? For such expressions, Pluralists can leave the Contextualist story more or less untouched, introducing just a small terminological change: they should assign singleton sets of semantic values to such expressions. This allows Pluralists to accept a unified view of the semantic values of expressions, and to provide simple rules for the composition of semantic values, which can be taken to operate on sets of semantic values in every case. So Pluralists should say that any expression has a semantic value set in context, but that some expressions (the non-multipliers) have a singleton semantic value set in any context and others (the multipliers) have a non-singleton semantic value set in at least one context.

Pluralists can remain neutral with respect to the question of how contexts should be formally modelled. For example, they could accept a Kaplanian view, on which a context includes an agent, a time, a location and a possible world. They could follow Lewis (1980: 79) and take a context to be a combination of a time, a place and a world. And it seems they could also accept Stalnaker's view, on which a context is a set of propositions mutually accepted by the participants of the conversation. From what I can see, each of these views is compatible with Pluralism, because all that Pluralists require is that a context either includes or determines the features to which multipliers are sensitive. As previously mentioned (Chapter 3, Section 1.1.1), that does not require these features to appear as separate parameters of a context.

Strong Pluralists and Flexible Pluralists will agree up to here. But they will disagree about how to construe the standing meanings of multipliers. Let us first consider what Flexible Pluralists should say about this matter.

3.1.1 Flexible Pluralism

Flexible Pluralists take multipliers to be context-sensitive, and should thus hold that the standing meaning of any multiplier is a non-constant function that takes contexts as arguments and delivers semantic value sets as values. Sometimes the resulting semantic value set will be a singleton set, but often it will be a non-singleton set.

To see how the standing meanings of multipliers function, let us first consider multipliers that are merely intention-sensitive, before turning to multipliers for which there are circumstantial constraints (and that are thus sensitive to intentions as well as to circumstantial features of the context). If a merely intention-sensitive multiplier occurs in a context, its standing meaning scans the context for a semantic intention directed at this occurrence of the multiplier and then spits out a semantic value set. If there is a suitable and specific semantic intention, the result is a singleton semantic value set. With a suitable but unspecific semantic intention, the result is a non-singleton semantic value set. And if there is no suitable semantic intention directed at the occurrence of the multiplier, the result is its maximal semantic value set.

Let me use ‘expensive’ to illustrate this mechanism, with Kennedy’s (2007) Contextualist treatment of gradable adjectives serving as a starting point. If ‘expensive’ occurs in a context with a specific semantic intention directed at the occurrence of ‘expensive’, its standing meaning uses the semantic intention to deliver a singleton semantic value set containing a property of expensiveness to a certain degree of cost. If there is an unspecific semantic intention, the resulting semantic value set contains a range of properties featuring different degrees of cost. And if there is no semantic intention, the semantic value set is the maximal semantic value set, and thus the set of properties of expensiveness to any degree of cost.

The standing meaning of a multiplier with circumstantial constraints works in a similar way. But before it looks for a suitable semantic intention, it uses the relevant

circumstantial feature of the context to narrow down its semantic value set. The standing meaning of ‘now’, for example, will first look at the time of the context to provide an intermediate semantic value set that contains only temporal intervals containing the time of the context, and it will then look for a semantic intention that could further narrow down this set. If there is a suitable and specific semantic intention, the final product is a semantic value set containing exactly one interval of time (which contains the time of the context). If there is a suitable and unspecific semantic intention, the final semantic value set contains a range of intervals of time. And if there is no suitable semantic intention, the final semantic value set is identical to the intermediate semantic value set (which is determined by the time of the context).

3.1.2 Strong Pluralism

Strong Pluralists take some multipliers to be sensitive to circumstantial features of the context, and others to be context-insensitive. They will hold that the standing meanings of context-sensitive multipliers are non-constant functions from contexts to semantic value sets, while they will construe the standing meanings of context-insensitive multipliers as constant functions from contexts to maximal semantic value sets.

The standing meaning of a context-sensitive multiplier looks at the relevant circumstantial feature of the context and spits out a semantic value set that is a proper subset of the multiplier’s maximal semantic value set. For example, the standing meaning of ‘now’ looks at the time of the context and delivers the set of temporal intervals containing the time of the context as semantic value set.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Strong Pluralists could also say that the standing meaning of a context-sensitive multiplier is a set of functions from contexts to semantic values, and that the semantic value set of such a multiplier then is the set of each of the values of each of the functions of its standing meaning. On this view, the standing meaning of ‘now’ contains a function that takes the time of the context to the minute of the context, another that takes it to the hour of the context, and so on. While this approach might work for the context-sensitive multipliers of Strong Pluralists, I prefer the construal on which each multiplier has a single function to semantic value sets as standing meaning. One advantage of this latter approach is that

And the standing meaning of a context-*insensitive* multiplier is a constant function from contexts to its maximal semantic value set. The standing meaning of ‘expensive’, for example, is a constant function from contexts to its maximal semantic value set, which is the set of properties of expensiveness to any degree of cost.

3.2 Complex expressions

Now let us see what Pluralists should say about how simple expressions combine to form complex expressions. In this matter, it is sensible for Flexible Pluralists and Strong Pluralists to say similar things.

If Pluralists accept the semantics for simple expressions outlined above, they will say that what happens in semantic composition is that one semantic value set combines with another semantic value set to form a third such set. But how are two or more sets combined to form a further set? I want to suggest the following mechanism: first, the Cartesian product of the semantic value sets is formed, leading to a set of pairs, triples or other n-tuples (depending on how many semantic value sets are combined); then, the elements of the pairs, triples or other n-tuples undergo composition according to the ordinary compositional rules. The result is a set of semantic values of the appropriate type for the complex expression.

Let us consider a simple example, taking the perspective of a Flexible Pluralist for now. An employee of a flower shop utters (4) while making a vague gesture towards an area of a flower display:

(4) Those are expensive.

Flexible Pluralists will say that, if the speaker has unspecific semantic intentions directed at ‘those’ and ‘expensive’, these multipliers each have non-singleton semantic

it is also available to Flexible Pluralists, which (as far as I can see) is not the case with the multiple functions view.

value sets in context: the semantic value set of ‘those’ (on a direct reference view) contains sets of flowers, while the semantic value set of ‘expensive’ contains properties of expensiveness to different degrees of cost. ‘Are’ is semantically inert (on standard views) and thus does not have a semantic value set. Let us simplify matters by assuming that the semantic value sets of ‘those’ and ‘expensive’ have two elements each, and let us label the former elements t_1 and t_2 , and the latter e_1 and e_2 . On the usual construal of a sentence such as (4), ‘are’ and ‘expensive’ first combine to form a one-place predicate, which then combines with ‘those’.¹⁰⁸ Because ‘are’ is semantically inert, the semantic value set of ‘are expensive’ is the same as that of ‘expensive’. This set is then combined with the semantic value set of ‘those’ by first forming the Cartesian product of both sets and then letting the elements of each pair undergo composition according to the usual rules. The Cartesian product of both sets contains the pairs $\langle t_1, e_1 \rangle$, $\langle t_1, e_2 \rangle$, $\langle t_2, e_1 \rangle$ and $\langle t_2, e_2 \rangle$. If the elements of each pair undergo composition according to the usual rules, the result is a semantic value set for the entire sentence that contains four propositions.

Strong Pluralists will analyse (4) in a similar way: composition works just as it does for Flexible Pluralists, but because Strong Pluralists take ‘those’ and ‘expensive’ to be non-context-sensitive multipliers, their semantic value sets will be much more extensive than on Flexible Pluralism; this, in turn, will lead to a semantic value set for the entire sentence that includes a much greater range of propositions.

There are some cases in which Pluralists might choose to place constraints on the composition of multipliers: sentences (or sequences of sentences) with several occurrences of a single multiplier.¹⁰⁹ Consider the following sentence:

- (5) This flower is expensive and it is not expensive.

¹⁰⁸ See e.g. Heim & Kratzer (1998: Chapter 4).

¹⁰⁹ Similar cases arise if a sentence (or sequence of sentences) contains several multipliers that are related in a certain way, such as ‘tall’ and ‘small’, or ‘expensive’ and ‘cheap’. I will focus on the simpler case of multiple occurrences of the same expression.

A speaker could clearly use (5) to assert a proposition that features the same property of expensiveness to a certain degree twice. In that case, the proposition asserted would be contradictory (i.e. necessarily false). But it seems that (5) could also be used to assert a non-contradictory proposition: a proposition that features two different properties of expensiveness. Pluralists have to decide whether composing the semantic value sets of the constituent expressions of (5) should lead to a set that contains only contradictory propositions, or whether it should lead to a set that contains contradictory propositions as well as non-contradictory propositions.

For Strong Pluralists, there are two options. Either composition in (5) works as described above. In that case, the semantic value set of (5) contains true propositions as well as contradictory propositions, and literal speakers could use (5) to make true assertions. Or there is a constraint of *uniformity* on the composition of several expressions containing the same multiplier. In that case, composition leads only to *uniform* semantic values: semantic values of complex expressions featuring several occurrences of a multiplier, to which each occurrence of the multiplier contributes the same semantic value. If composition is constrained by uniformity, the semantic value set of (5) contains only propositions to which both occurrences of ‘expensive’ contribute the same property of expensiveness to a certain degree, so on this latter view, literal speakers could only use (5) to assert contradictory propositions. But speakers can use sentences such as (5) and (6) to assert something true (while speaking literally):

(6) This is more expensive than this.

For this reason, Strong Pluralists should not accept a constraint of uniformity on the composition of multipliers.

Flexible Pluralists could, in principle, choose either of the two foregoing approaches, but they should choose a third and more flexible approach. They should

say that speaker intentions play a role in semantic composition. Composition is constrained by uniformity if the speaker has a semantic intention that this be the case, and it is not constrained in this way if the speaker lacks such an intention.¹¹⁰ This allows Flexible Pluralists to account for the fact that sentences such as (5) and (6) can be used to assert something true, and it also allows them to capture cases in which a speaker intends to use several occurrences of a certain multiplier in the same way. This use of multipliers can be illustrated with the help of (7):

(7) Anne is tall just in case Bert is tall because they are of the same height.

On the most natural reading of (7), a speaker can only use this sentence to assert a proposition that features the same degree of height twice. Flexible Pluralists should aim to capture this correspondence between both occurrences of ‘tall’ in the semantics of (7), and they can do so by accepting that speaker intentions can play a role in the composition of multipliers: they can say that speakers are likely to utter sentences such as (7) with an intention that composition of both occurrences of ‘tall’ be constrained by uniformity.

3.3 Multiple contexts

To end this section, I want to briefly discuss a view that, at first view, might appear to offer a different way of implementing Semantic Pluralism. Pluralism entails that occurrences of multipliers express non-singleton sets of semantic values. I have proposed to model this semantic multiplicity by treating the standing meanings of multipliers as functions from contexts to semantic value sets. Von Stechow & Gillies (2011: 118ff.) have suggested a different route to semantic multiplicity, which is meant to work while leaving untouched the standing meanings Contextualists ascribe to

¹¹⁰ Such a semantic intention might be taken to be similar to an intention that selects one of several readings of a structurally ambiguous sentence. That speaker intentions resolve ambiguity has been argued e.g. by Bach & Harnish (1979: 20–23).

multipliers. On this view, which might be called the *multiple contexts view*, occurrences of multipliers can have several semantic values if they are located in several contexts. An occurrence of ‘might’, for example, has several semantic values if it is located in several contexts, in each of which it has exactly one semantic value featuring a certain modal base. While von Fintel & Gillies are concerned only with epistemic modals, their view could be easily extended to other multipliers. On the resulting view, the multiplicity would not reside in the function from contexts to semantic values, but rather in the function from utterances to contexts.

Though this is an interesting approach, it is hard to see how exactly it is meant to work, especially on a larger scale. Firstly, von Fintel & Gillies say very little about what contexts are, apart from that they are ‘determinate’ (2011: 119), fixing exactly one semantic value for any occurrence of an epistemic modal. The view is thus somewhat unclear. But it is clear that if the view were extended to cover multiplicity in general, any context would have to fix exactly one semantic value for any occurrence of any multiplier. In that case, however, contexts could not be modelled in a Kaplanian, Lewisian or Stalnakerian way: they would have to deliver a complete interpretation of a good chunk of the entire language, which will not be delivered by a small n-tuple or a set of common ground propositions. It would be a challenge, to say the least, to find a plausible modelling of contexts that could fulfil this task.

Secondly, the multiple contexts view seems to enforce uniformity at the sentence-level. If a sentence contains several occurrences of a multiplier and is located in several contexts, each of the sentential semantic values it express will be uniform. But for the reasons discussed in the previous subsection, this is not a desirable outcome for a semantic theory.

I will thus set the multiple contexts view aside, and in what follows I will stick to the Pluralist semantics sketched above. Such a semantic theory has to be incorporated into an overall view of how communication proceeds – a task I will take up now.

4. Pluralism as part of a Gricean model of communication

In this section, I will show how Pluralism fits into a Gricean model of communication: how speakers can use sentences with semantic value sets to make assertions and convey implicatures. Strong Pluralists and Flexible Pluralists should say different things here, so I will discuss the approaches in turn, beginning with Strong Pluralism. In each case, I will look at direct and indirect communication. Recall that, as I am using the terms, an utterance is an instance of *direct* communication just in case the speaker communicates a proposition that is a semantic value in context of the sentence uttered, and that an utterance is an instance of *indirect* communication just in case the speaker communicates a proposition that is not a semantic value in context of the sentence uttered. By communicating directly, the speaker (successfully) *asserts* something, while in indirect communication she *conveys* something. In either case, there is something the speaker *communicates*.

But before turning to the Strong Pluralist's take on direct and indirect communication, I want to briefly show that Pluralists of either kind should depart from current orthodoxy about how to answer the following two general questions about linguistic communication:

- (Q3) What is it that a speaker intends to communicate with a normal utterance of a declarative sentence?

(Q4) When is a normal utterance of a declarative sentence an instance of communicative success?¹¹¹

Most semanticists would answer (Q3) and (Q4) as follows: What a speaker intends to communicate by uttering a declarative sentence is a particular proposition. And such an utterance is successful just in case the audience recognises the speaker's intention and, as a result, picks up the proposition the speaker intends to communicate.¹¹² This is certainly what semanticists would say about instances of direct communication. They would give slightly different answers for indirect communication: In some cases of indirect communication, the speaker intends to assert a proposition and also intends to convey another proposition (through an additive implicature). In others, the speaker only intends to convey a proposition (through a substitutional implicature), without asserting a proposition. In such cases, communication is successful just in case the audience picks up the proposition the speaker intends to assert (if there is one) as well as the proposition the speaker intends to convey.¹¹³ But on the standard view, the normal case is one in which a speaker intends to communicate a particular proposition, which the speaker has to pick up for communication to be successful.

In light of their take on the examples of the previous chapter, that is not what Pluralists should say in response to (Q3) and (Q4). Pluralists hold that in many cases of indirect as well as direct communication, speakers have unspecific communicative intentions. A communicative intention is unspecific if there are several propositions, (at least) one of which the audience has to pick up for the intention to be realised. So if a

¹¹¹ See Buchanan (2010) for a similar way of setting up this matter, and for criticism of the standard answers to (Q3) and (Q4).

¹¹² Recall that, as I am using the term, an audience *picks up* a proposition if it comes to entertain it or comes to believe it.

¹¹³ Some semanticists would say that speakers sometimes intend to convey several propositions through an implicature. Then communication is fully successful if the audience picks up all of the propositions the speaker intends to communicate, and partially successful if it picks up some of these propositions.

speaker has an unspecific communicative intention, there is not a particular proposition she intends to communicate by uttering a sentence, and that the audience has to pick up for communication to be successful. Rather, the speaker intends to communicate at least one proposition out of a set of propositions, and communication is successful if the audience as a result picks up at least one proposition out of this set. I will say that if a speaker intends to communicate at least one proposition out of a set of propositions then she intends to *indeterminately communicate a proposition set*. *Indeterminately asserting* and *indeterminately conveying* are the corresponding subspecies of indeterminately communicating.^{114 115}

An unspecific communicative intention can plausibly be characterised as an intention to communicate at least one proposition *of a certain kind*. A speaker might, for example, intend to communicate at least one proposition that belongs to the proposition set of the sentence uttered (in context) and that is of interest in the conversational setting. Such an unspecific intention is satisfied if the audience picks up at least one proposition of the required kind. In many cases, the speaker's communicative intentions will not only fail to single out a particular proposition, but also fail to determine a precise proposition set. Then it is vague which set satisfies the description of being the set the speaker indeterminately asserts or conveys.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ This proposal is somewhat similar to that of von Fintel & Gillies (2011: 119), where a speaker can *put into play* a cloud of propositions. However, for von Fintel & Gillies putting into play is a form of asserting, and thus does not cover instances of indirect communication. My proposal differs from the view of *Speech Act Pluralism* defended in Cappelen & Lepore (2005). On this latter view, indefinitely many propositions are asserted by any utterance.

¹¹⁵ When is a speaker in a position to indeterminately assert a proposition set? Von Fintel & Gillies (2011: 120) say: if she is in a position to (flat out) assert one proposition in the set. I am not sure whether to agree with von Fintel & Gillies, for they make it very easy, possibly too easy, to be in a position to indeterminately assert a proposition set. Alternatively, one could say that a speaker must be in a position to (flat out) assert *each* proposition in the set. I will set this question aside for now, as I do not think that an answer is required at this point. But I will briefly return to it in Chapter 7.

¹¹⁶ Pluralists could also adopt the approach of Buchanan (2010 and 2013) and say that speakers assert properties of propositions. I have chosen to stick with proposition sets because this way of speaking fits better with the Pluralist's semantic value sets. But as far as I can see, Pluralism is equally compatible with Buchanan's property-approach.

Let us briefly return to example (C), in which Claire utters (C1) ('Flats in Oxford must be expensive') to David while they are strolling through the centre of Oxford. This is an instance of direct communication, but Claire's communicative intention is arguably unspecific. On the current approach, she might plausibly intend to indeterminately assert a proposition set containing propositions that are in the proposition set of (C1) (in the context of utterance) and that could be of interest to David in the conversational setting. Let us assume that Claire and David are from Manchester, where they have recently bought a flat. Claire's communicative intention then leads to a set of propositions containing e.g. the propositions given by 'Flats in Oxford must be expensive by a Manchester-standard', '...expensive by an England-standard' and '...expensive by Claire and David's standard'. Some propositions are borderline cases for belonging to this set (such as possibly the proposition given by 'Flats in Oxford must be expensive by a Berlin-standard'), and some propositions clearly do not belong to it (e.g. those given by 'Flats in Oxford must be expensive by a skyscraper-standard' or '...expensive by an ice-cream-standard'). Communication in (C) is successful, so Pluralists will say that David picks up one of the propositions in the proposition set as a result of Claire's utterance of (C1).

Communicative intentions are not always unspecific. Especially in direct speech it is not uncommon that a speaker intends to communicate a particular proposition.¹¹⁷ So Pluralists should hold that in some cases speakers intend to communicate a particular proposition and in others they intend to communicate at least one element of a proposition set. To be more precise: in direct communication, a speaker uttering a declarative sentence either intends to assert a particular proposition or intends to indeterminately assert a proposition set; and in indirect communication, a speaker

¹¹⁷ This happens in example (A), in which Anne sees Claire, her violin teacher, cycle by and utters (A1) ('That is my violin teacher').

intends to convey a particular proposition (though this will rarely be the case) or intends to indeterminately convey one or several proposition sets, possibly in addition to intending to assert a particular proposition or to indeterminately assert a proposition set. Communication is (fully) successful if the audience picks up each of the propositions the speaker intends to assert or convey and/or an element of each of the proposition sets the speaker intends to indeterminately assert or convey.

I will now show how Strong Pluralists can explain instances of direct and indirect communication. In doing so, I will assume that speakers and audiences expect something like Grice's *Cooperative Principle* to be observed:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (1989: 26)

And I will assume that the Cooperative Principle leads to the Gricean maxims of *Quantity*, *Quality*, *Relation* and *Manner* or to some similar maxims of this kind. Views of Pluralism are compatible with other approaches in pragmatics. But using this familiar terminology will best bring out how Pluralism fits in with existing views in the debate, most of which are also situated in a broadly Gricean framework.

4.1 Strong Pluralism

Strong Pluralists hold that sentential semantic values often merely constrain but do not determine what a literal speaker can assert. This constraint can be now made more precise: a speaker can use a sentence S in a context c to assert a particular proposition P or an element of a proposition set PS just in case P or PS belong to the semantic value set expressed by S in c. How can speakers and audiences use the constraints semantic value sets place on assertion to successfully communicate?

Let us first consider the case in which a speaker intends to directly communicate (assert) a particular proposition P to a certain audience. Speaker and audience are

competent speakers of English, and believe each other to be so. The speaker knows and believes her audience to know how sentences constrain assertion, and thus chooses and utters a sentence that in the context of utterance expresses a semantic value set containing P. Depending on the conversational setting (e.g. what is salient or relevant), she either utters a sentence that (in context) expresses a singleton proposition set or she utters a sentence that (in context) expresses a non-singleton proposition set. In the latter case, she chooses the sentence so that the conversational setting guides the audience to P within the proposition set expressed by the sentence uttered. If need be, she provides clues (pointing, gestures, glances) as further guidance towards P. The audience deciphers the sentence uttered and arrives at its semantic value set (in context).

In the former case, the sentence expresses a singleton set of a proposition, namely of P. The audience notes that asserting P would be in accord with the Cooperative Principle, and thus assumes that the speaker does intend to assert P. As a result, the audience picks up P, and communication is successful. In the latter case, the sentence uttered (in context) expresses a non-singleton semantic value set. The audience thus looks for clues in the conversational setting or provided by the speaker that could help to figure out the speaker's communicative intention. These clues point to a single proposition in the semantic values set, namely to P. The audience notes that asserting P would be in accord with the Cooperative Principle, assumes that the speaker does intend to assert P and picks up P. In this case, too, communication is successful.

To have a concrete example, let us briefly return to (A), in which Anne utters (A1) ('That is my violin teacher') to Bert while Claire is cycling by. Anne plausibly intends to communicate a particular proposition, namely that Claire is her violin teacher. (A1) expresses a non-singleton semantic value set (in context) that contains this proposition as well as many others (because 'that' expresses its maximal semantic value set). But the

conversational setting (with Claire cycling by) guides Bert towards the proposition that Claire is Anne's violin teacher. Bert notes that asserting this proposition would be in accord with the Cooperative Principle, and thus picks it up.

The Strong Pluralist can thus nicely explain cases of direct communication in which the speaker intends to assert (and indeed asserts) a particular proposition. This explanation evidently takes the form of a rational reconstruction: it does not require speakers and audiences to go through each of the steps in each instance of communication, but merely shows how speakers and audiences *could* use semantic value sets to successfully communicate. In Chapter 2, I have argued that this is the kind of explanation theories in philosophical semantics should aim for.

How about cases in which a speaker intends to indeterminately assert a proposition set? These are explained in a similar way, so I will not go through the entire process. In such cases, the speaker utters a sentence that (in context) expresses a non-singleton proposition set. But the conversational setting and clues provided by the speaker are compatible with several propositions in this set: they narrow down the proposition set, but do not single out exactly one proposition. The audience notes this and that asserting any of the compatible propositions would be in accord with the Cooperative Principle. As a result, it picks up one or several of these propositions.

This is what happens in example (C), in which Claire utters (C1) ('Flats in Oxford must be expensive') to David while they are strolling through the centre of Oxford. Several of the propositions in the set expressed by (C1) in context are compatible with the conversational setting. David notes this, checks that they are in accordance with the Cooperative Principle, and picks up one of the compatible propositions.

That leaves instances of indirect communication. Speakers do not usually intend to convey a particular proposition by communicating indirectly. Indirect communication is ill-suited for this purpose because the audience has to infer what is conveyed along a

non-straightforward route. And often the point of communicating indirectly is to be unspecific (e.g. in metaphorical language). So here the normal case is one in which the speaker intends to indeterminately convey a proposition set (or elements of several proposition sets – I will focus on cases in which only one proposition set is indeterminately conveyed).

If indirect communication involves an additive implicature, the speaker asserts something (communicating directly) and thereby also conveys something (communicating indirectly). Such a case thus begins as described above: a speaker utters a sentence that (in context) expresses a non-singleton proposition set, and several propositions are compatible with the conversational setting. However, asserting any of them would not be in accordance with the Cooperative Principle (because this would violate one or several of the maxims of quality, quantity, relation or manner), unless the speaker also intended to convey a proposition from a further proposition set. The audience thus picks up one or several of the propositions compatible with the conversational setting, and also picks up one or several of the propositions implicated.

An example of such an additive implicature is given by (D), in which Emily and Fred are moving logs and Emily utters (D1) ('This one is light') to implicate (roughly) that Fred need not come over. Emily arguably has a first imprecise communicative intention to indeterminately assert a proposition set containing propositions with different degrees of weight. And she has a second imprecise communicative intention to indeterminately convey a proposition set containing propositions such as those given by 'Fred need not come over', 'Fred need not help Emily', 'Emily can lift the log on her own', etc. Several of the proposition sets expressed by (D1) in context are compatible with the conversational setting, but asserting none of them would be as informative and relevant as required, unless Emily also wanted to convey that Fred need not come over, that he need not help Emily or some other related proposition. Fred can use this

reasoning to pick up at least one proposition Emily would be happy to assert (i.e. one of the propositions in the set she indeterminately asserts), and also to pick up at least one proposition she would be happy to convey, which explains why communication is successful.

With a substitutional implicature, the speaker merely conveys something, but does not assert anything. In such a case, none of the propositions expressed by the sentence uttered (in context) and compatible with the conversational setting are in accordance with the Cooperative Principle. And each of these propositions would violate one of the maxims *even if* the speaker intended to convey something in addition. This happens in non-literal speech, e.g. if there are only false propositions among those compatible with the conversational setting. The audience nonetheless assumes the speaker to be observing the Cooperative Principle, and reasons that she intends to convey a proposition from a different proposition set. Using the set of compatible propositions and further clues, the audience can thus arrive at and pick up one of the propositions the speaker intends to implicate.

As an example of a substitutional implicature, let us briefly consider (J), in which Rachel utters (J1) ('Greece is still shouldering a heavy burden of debt') to Stephen. Rachel intends to indeterminately convey (roughly) the proposition set expressed by 'Greece has high debt' (or a subset thereof). The sentence she utters expresses only false propositions in the context of utterance (as countries cannot, in any literal sense, shoulder debts). But in the conversational setting (Rachel and Stephen are discussing European politics), Stephen can use the proposition set to arrive at one of the propositions Rachel would be happy to convey, namely that Greece has debt that is high to some degree.

I hope this sketch has shown that Strong Pluralists can offer convincing explanations (that take the form of rational reconstruction) of instances of direct and

indirect communication. Strong Pluralism can capture cases that are standardly taken to be the norm: cases in which a speaker has a specific communicative intention and communicates by using a sentence that expresses exactly one proposition (in context), namely the proposition she intends to communicate. But it can also capture common but seldom discussed instances of communication in which a speaker has unspecific intentions and in which the sentence uttered expresses many propositions the speaker does not intend to communicate.

4.2 Flexible Pluralism

Flexible Pluralists posit a closer connection between sentential semantic values and what is asserted: in normal cases of literal speech, what is asserted or indeterminately asserted simply is the semantic value set (in context) of the sentence uttered. When a speaker forms an intention to assert (or indeterminately assert) something, she usually uses a sentence that has what she intends to assert (or indeterminately assert) as its semantic value set (in context). The audience figures out the communicative intention by figuring out the semantic value set of the sentence uttered, which is also the proposition (or set of propositions) the speaker intends to assert (or indeterminately assert).

If the sentence at issue contains a multiplier, this requires narrowing down its maximal semantic value set in a suitable way. On the version of Flexible Pluralism I have developed, this narrowing down is achieved by the speaker's semantic intentions. The speaker then has to not only choose a sentence that expresses the relevant proposition or proposition set, she also has to make her semantic intentions obvious to the audience. She can do so by exploiting the conversational setting (e.g. what is salient or relevant) and, if need be, providing clues (pointing, gestures, glances).

How does this model work in concrete cases? To begin with, there are cases in which the speaker utters a sentence featuring a multiplier while intending to assert a proposition or while intending to indeterminately assert a proposition set, but where the speaker lacks the required semantic intentions. This will happen in various situations, e.g. if the speaker is a small child and therefore cannot be plausibly said to have semantic intentions or if the speaker is unaware that she is using a multiplier. Flexible Pluralists should explain cases of this kind in the same way Strong Pluralists do. The latter deny that speakers have semantically relevant intentions, so for Strong Pluralists these cases are perfectly normal, and the explanations given above apply.

But Flexible Pluralism entails that in many cases speakers do have semantic intentions, and if this is the case, they offer an explanation that slightly differs from that given by Strong Pluralists. To illustrate this, I will briefly look at direct and indirect communication from the perspective of Flexible Pluralism.

A common case of direct communication is one in which a speaker intends to indeterminately assert a proposition set. In such a case, the speaker utters a sentence that (in context) could be used to express the proposition set the speaker intends to indeterminately assert. The speaker's semantic intentions make it the case that the sentence indeed expresses this proposition set in context. The audience can use the conversational setting and clues provided by the speaker to figure out the semantic value set (in context) of the sentence uttered, and notes that asserting any of the propositions in this set would be in accord with the Cooperative Principle. As a result, it picks up one or several of these propositions.

So when Claire utters (C1) ('Flats in Oxford must be expensive') to David in example (C), intending to indeterminately assert a set of propositions that could be expressed by (C1) and could be of interest to David in the conversational setting, she forms a corresponding semantic intention that fixes this set as semantic value set (in

context) of (C1). In the conversational setting, David can roughly estimate what Claire's semantic intentions are, and thus the semantic value set (in context) of (C1). The propositions in this set are in accordance with the Cooperative Principle, so he picks up one (or several) of them.

A second common case is one in which a speaker intends to indeterminately convey a proposition set through a substitutional implicature. In such a case, the speaker utters a sentence with a semantic intention that fixes a set containing only propositions not in accordance with the Cooperative Principle. Any of these propositions would violate one of the maxims *even if* the speaker intended to convey something in addition. The audience uses the conversational setting and any further clues to figure out the semantic value set (in context) of the sentence uttered. It assumes the speaker to be observing the Cooperative Principle, and thus reasons that she intends to indeterminately convey a different proposition set. It can use the semantic value set and further clues to pick up one of the propositions the speaker intends to indeterminately convey.

In (G), Kylie utters (G1) ('Nobody goes there any more') to indeterminately convey (roughly) the proposition set expressed by 'Hardly any people Kylie knows go to the café she and Lucas are passing by' (in the context of (G1)). Let us assume that her semantic intention fixes a semantic value set for (G1) (in context) that contains propositions with different much larger domains (than the domain of people Kylie knows), and that she signals this intention to Lucas by placing an emphasis on 'nobody'. Then Lucas can roughly estimate Kylie's semantic intention, figure out that any of the propositions in the semantic value set of (G1) (in context) would violate the Cooperative Principle, and pick up one of the propositions in the set Kylie intends to indeterminately convey.

This much should suffice to illustrate the Flexible Pluralist's approach in explaining instances of direct and indirect communication. The rational reconstructions offered by

Flexible Pluralists are more complex than those offered by Strong Pluralists: in normal cases, speakers are taken to have both communicative and semantic intentions, and audiences are taken to figure out both of these kinds of intentions. Strong Pluralists avoid this extra layer of intentions and figuring out of intentions, and this, I think, speaks in favour of their view. But the explanations Flexible Pluralists deliver must still count as satisfactory, as they are still no more complex than those given on standard Contextualist views (whether Intentionalist or Non-Intentionalist). And Flexible Pluralism enjoys some advantages over Strong Pluralism in responding to objections to non-propositional semantics, as I will show below.

5. Pluralism and what is said

In this Section, I will show how Pluralists can account for judgements of ordinary language users about what is said. Although none of the desiderata on semantic theories outlined in Chapter 2 mention judgements about what is said, semantic theories should be expected to account for such judgements. Why? For one thing, this allows semantic theories to account for *ascriptions* of what is said, which are made with sentences such as ‘A said that p’. And secondly, it seems likely that judgements of ordinary language users about what is said can, to some extent, help to explain communicative success. At least in some cases, the audience uses what a speaker has said as a clue to find out what she intends to communicate. If this is true, then one reason for why ordinary language users are good at communicating is that they are good at ascertaining what a speaker has said. It would therefore be good if Pluralists

could incorporate judgements of what is said into their theory, and I will now argue that they indeed can do so.¹¹⁸

Judgements of ordinary language users about what is said are manifested in ascriptions of what is said. If we look at such ascriptions, it becomes apparent that ordinary speakers use the expression ‘what is said’ in a fairly liberal way. Let us return to Emily’s utterance of (D1) (‘This one is light’), which she uses to let Fred know that she needs no help carrying the log she is lifting. An ordinary speaker (pointing at the log at issue) might use any of the following sentences to report what Emily has said by uttering (D1):

(R1) Emily said that this one was light.

(R2) Emily said that this one was light by a garden log-standard.

(R3) Emily said that she didn’t need any help carrying this log.

I take (R1)–(R3) to be perfectly natural and representative examples of how ordinary speakers would report what Emily said. And ordinary speakers would, it seems, judge each of the reports (R1)–(R3) to be true.¹¹⁹ While the first two reports (R1) and (R2) stick more or less to the expressions Emily uttered, (R3) reports something she implicated. This strongly suggests that ordinary speakers use the expression ‘what is said’ in at least two different ways, and that they report different things in says-that reports.

To account for this fact, Pluralists should say that ‘says’ is polysemous: that it has several related meanings (or, more precisely, several related standing meanings and semantic values). Which are these meanings? (R3) shows that ‘says’ is sometimes used

¹¹⁸ Some theorists hold that semantic theories need not capture judgements about what is said. For example, Lewis (1980: 97) and Cappelen & Lepore (1997) argue that because for any utterance there are many different reports of what is said that count as true, there is no helpful notion of what is said that is worth capturing. Other theorists, including Kaplan (1977) and Garcia-Carpintero (2008: 133), do think that theories should capture judgements about what is said. Whatever the outcome of this debate is, it surely cannot count against a theory if it is able to capture judgements about what is said.

¹¹⁹ Some semanticists might disagree with this judgement. I will discuss this matter in Chapter 6, Section 1.

to mean the same as ‘implicates’. So Pluralists should say that this is a first standing meaning of ‘says’, and that says-that reports sometimes report what a speaker has implicated. On Pluralism, speakers usually indeterminately implicate a proposition set (in order to indeterminately convey it). A says-that report of the current kind, then, is true just in case it reports (at least) one of the propositions in the set indeterminately implicated. This allows Pluralists to account for the fact that (R3) and similar reports are judged to be true.

A second meaning of ‘says’ is suggested by (R2): sometimes, ‘says’ is used with the same meaning as ‘asserts’. Pluralists should add this as a second meaning of ‘says’. If this meaning of ‘says’ is operative, a says-that report is true just in case it reports the proposition the speaker asserted (if she asserted a single proposition) or one of the propositions in the set she indeterminately asserted (otherwise). This allows Pluralists to capture truth-value judgements about (R3) and similar reports.

Should Pluralists assign a third meaning to ‘says’? Yes, indeed: sometimes reports of what is said simply report what is said. Pluralists should say that this is what happens in (R1). But what *does* a speaker say by uttering a sentence? Most contemporary semanticists would answer: what a speaker says by uttering a sentence is the semantic value of the sentence uttered.¹²⁰ And this is also the answer Pluralists should give. Pluralists hold that sentential semantic values are sets of propositions, so they should say that what is said is a set of propositions. In some cases it is a singleton set, but often it is a non-singleton set. By uttering (D1), for instance, Emily says a set of propositions, namely the set expressed by (D1) in context. And (R1) reports that she said a set of propositions, which explains why it is judged to be true.

¹²⁰ Grice would disagree here, as he holds that a speaker has to mean what she says (otherwise she merely *makes as if to say*). But in this matter few semanticists have followed Grice. See Grice (1975) and, for criticism of Grice’s approach, Bach (2012). See King & Stanley (2005) for a typical view on which what is said is the semantic value of the sentence uttered.

If this account of the third meaning of ‘says’ is to work, Pluralists have to say that, if its says-meaning is operative, ‘says’ has two argument places: one for a speaker and one for a set of semantic values. On this meaning, ‘says’ thus behaves differently than other expressions when it undergoes composition with a set of propositions. It does not take each element in the semantic value set it is given, building a new non-singleton set of complex semantic values. No, it takes the whole set, and the result is a singleton set. So ‘says’ is a special kind of expression: it removes semantic multiplicity, which is why it might be called a *reducer*. Are there further reducers apart from ‘says’? Some good candidates are ‘expresses’, ‘is the semantic value (set) of’ and ‘indeterminately asserts’.¹²¹

This has several interesting effects. Firstly, reports such as (R1) express a singleton set of a proposition, both on Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism. They thus offer the speaker only a single proposition she can assert, and they are either true or false. Secondly, now that reducers are in the picture, it is no longer accurate to say that a sentence expresses a non-singleton set of propositions whenever it contains an expression with a non-singleton set of semantic values. Reducers can cancel out semantic multiplicity, and sentences featuring a reducer might express a singleton set of a proposition despite containing an expression with a non-singleton set of semantic values. These outcomes might, at first view, seem surprising, but I cannot see why they should speak against Pluralism.

At this point it might be objected that even though Pluralists can account for the fact that (R1)–(R3) are judged to be true, their view will count too many reports of what is said as true. This worry will be particularly pressing with respect to Strong Pluralism. Strong Pluralists hold that the proposition set Emily says by uttering (D1)

¹²¹ This answers Cappelen & Hawthorne’s (2009: 25fn) question about what non-propositional views should say about tricky sentences such as ‘That the Molitor Stradivarius is expensive is the semantic value of “The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive” and is neither true nor false’. Pluralists should say that this sentence is true.

contains the proposition that Emily's log is light by a feather-standard, so it might seem as if Strong Pluralists have to say that the following report should be judged to be true:

(R4) Emily said that this one was light by a feather-standard.

No one would in fact judge (R4) to be true, so this would be a very bad result. But (R4) does not come out as true on Strong Pluralism. Strong Pluralism entails that Emily *has* said a proposition set that contains the proposition that Emily's log is light by a feather-standard, but also that she *has not* said the singleton proposition set containing the proposition that Emily's log is light by a feather-standard. So Strong Pluralists do not, as the objection wrongly assumes, take (R4) to be true, and can account for the fact that (R4) is judged to be false.

Summing up, then, Pluralists should say that 'says' is polysemous. Reports of what is said might report what has been implicated, what has been asserted or simply what has been said. In uses of the latter kind, 'says' acts as a reducer: it takes a set of propositions as argument and spits out a singleton set of a semantic value.

I have used this chapter to introduce Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism, and to argue for a concrete way of spelling out these views. I have outlined how both theories can provide a compositional semantics, how they fit into a Gricean view of how communication proceeds and how they can capture the notion of what is said. Of course Pluralist views might be spelled out in very different ways than Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism. But I take these to be natural views of Pluralism, and I think they illustrate the versatility of the Pluralist framework. In the remaining two chapters, I want to show that Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism can withstand the most important objections to non-propositional and insensitive semantics.

Chapter 5

Responding to objections to non-propositional semantics

Theories of Semantic Pluralism are non-propositional: they entail that some sentences have non-propositional semantic values in context. By denying (Prop), Pluralism goes against an immensely popular assumption among contemporary semanticists. One of the main reasons for the popularity of propositional semantics is the widespread belief that non-propositional semantics face a host of difficult objections. In the current chapter, I will consider the most important of these objections and show how Pluralists can respond to them.

To begin with, I will discuss the instability objection to moderately non-propositional theories. This objection argues that any semantic theory that takes the semantic values of *some* sentences to be non-propositional has to say that this is the case for *almost all* sentences. In other words: *moderately* non-propositional theories collapse into *thoroughly* non-propositional theories. This objection is meant to show that departing from propositional semantics means departing from it in a radical way. And it is meant to aid arguments against non-propositional semantics in general: if the instability objection is successful, effective objections to thoroughly non-propositional theories are also effective objections to what seem to be moderately non-propositional theories. I will argue that it is far from clear that every moderate version of Pluralism does collapse into a thoroughly non-propositional theory. But I will nonetheless

suppose that Pluralist views are thoroughly non-propositional in responding to the remaining objections of this chapter.

According to the second objection, non-propositional semantic theories are unable to account for the fact that speakers commonly judge utterances of sentences to be true or false. I will point out three strategies with which Pluralists can explain such judgements, despite assigning non-propositional semantic values to the sentences in question.

The third objection parallels the second in claiming that non-propositional semantics are unable to account for certain speaker judgements, but focuses on judgements of contradictoriness, validity and other logical properties (of sentences and arguments). This nut is harder to crack for Pluralists than the previous one, but it is a nut they can crack. To make this plausible, I will look at Contextualist strategies of accounting for the judgements at hand and then show how Pluralists can adapt these strategies.

The fourth objection argues that non-propositional semantics is incompatible with the claim that ordinary speakers use declarative sentences to give reasons for belief and ascribe beliefs to agents. It sees a tension between the common assumption that beliefs and reasons for belief must be propositional and the view that sentences giving reasons for belief or ascribing beliefs are non-propositional. I will show that there in fact is no such tension.

Finally, I will consider the objection that non-propositional theories are unable to account for judgements of literalness and non-literalness. I will show that Pluralism can nicely account for such judgements, and that in this respect it has an advantage over Radical Minimalism and Propositional Minimalism.

1. The instability objection

The instability objection is aimed at moderately non-propositional semantic theories. Some semanticists will be drawn to such theories because they do not require a radical departure from existing propositional views. This objection is meant to show that any moderately non-propositional theory is unstable: it collapses into a thoroughly non-propositional theory. But the instability objection is mistaken. Even though Strong Pluralism appears to collapse into a thoroughly non-propositional theory, there is a good case to be made that a moderate version of Flexible Pluralism is stable.

The main argument for instability, as given e.g. by Cappelen & Lepore (2006: 471) and Borg (2004: 9–10), can be put as follows: Any moderately non-propositional semantic theory has to give a criterion for which sentences have propositional semantic values and which have non-propositional semantic values. But such a criterion cannot be given. So a semantic theory that takes some sentences to have non-propositional semantic values has to take all (or almost all) sentences to have non-propositional semantic values.

How should Pluralists respond to this argument? A first response would be to show that Pluralists can, after all, provide a criterion for propositionality. But it is hard to see how such a criterion should go. Pluralists might say the following: A sentence has a propositional semantic value (in context) just in case none of its constituent expressions has several semantic values (in context).¹²² But for this criterion to be informative, they would have to give a criterion for when an expression has several semantic values in context. I have not given such a criterion, and do not think it can be given. Above, I merely said that Strong Pluralists and Flexible Pluralists should recruit their multipliers

¹²² A fully accurate criterion of this kind would also have to take reducers (such as ‘says’) into account.

from the group of expressions standardly taken to be context-sensitive.¹²³ Pluralists can say when a *multiplier* has several semantic values in context: Strong Pluralists should take multipliers to exhibit semantic multiplicity in almost any context, while Flexible Pluralists should say that a multiplier has several semantic values (in context) just in case the speaker lacks specific semantic intentions directed at the multiplier. But they cannot, as far as I can see, give a precise characterisation of which expressions belong into the group of multipliers, and consequently they cannot give a helpful criterion for propositionality.

Pluralists should therefore choose a different response: they should deny that a criterion for propositionality *needs* to be given and instead point to clear cases of sentences with propositional and with non-propositional semantic values. What could explain the lack of a criterion? Quite plausibly the fact that the border between multipliers and non-multipliers, and thus the border between sentences with propositional semantic values and sentences with non-propositional semantic values, is vague. There are some expressions that are neither clearly multipliers nor clearly non-multipliers, and because of such expressions it is impossible to give a criterion of the kind Borg and Cappelen & Lepore demand. Bach provides a similar explanation:

[Cappelen & Lepore's] central criticism is that I haven't provided a "principled" basis, a "criterion," for deciding whether or not a given sentence manages to express a proposition, something capable of being true or false. They're right. Such questions have to be settled on a case-by-case basis and what they're asking for is a general criterion. However, the lack of a general criterion doesn't show that the distinction is bogus. After all, there is no criterion, no principled basis, for distinguishing men who are bald from men who aren't. (2006c: 3)

The lack of a criterion thus should not count against moderately non-propositional semantics.

¹²³ Pluralists should presumably also add vague but context-insensitive expressions as multipliers, as mentioned in Chapter 4, Section 1.

But adherents of such theories still have to make a case for the view that some sentences have propositional semantic values and others do not. They have to present clear examples of sentences of either kind. I take the examples from Chapter 3 to provide strong evidence for the view that some sentences fail to express exactly one proposition in context.¹²⁴ But can Pluralists find sentences that do express exactly one proposition in context? This task is much easier for Flexible Pluralists than it is for Strong Pluralists. Flexible Pluralists can point to sentences uttered by speakers that plausibly have the required specific semantic intentions. Anne's utterance of (A1) ('That is my violin teacher') fits this bill: this utterance of (A1) is a clear case of a sentence that expresses exactly one proposition on a view of Flexible Pluralism. Strong Pluralists have to go to greater lengths to find clear examples. Here are a few sentences they might adduce:

- (1) Two plus two is four.
- (2) The Molitor Stradivarius is less expensive than the Lady Blunt Stradivarius.
- (3) Anne is taller than Bert.
- (4) Claire said that Anne is taller than Bert.
- (5) 'Anne is tall' expresses that Anne is tall.

I think that Strong Pluralism can make a good case that at least *some* of these sentences (or sentences of similar kinds) should be paired with exactly one proposition. But the instability objection certainly is harder to avoid for Strong Pluralists than it is for Flexible Pluralists.

This objection brings out a further interesting difference between Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism. For Flexible Pluralists, many of the proposition sets sentences

¹²⁴ Propositional Minimalists might object that the examples do not provide evidence against the view that the relevant sentences express minimal, weak or strong propositions. That is correct, but I think that other considerations speak against pairing the sentences in question with such propositions. I will consider an argument to this end in the final section of this chapter.

express in context are of limited extent (i.e. they contain only a small range of propositions). This is the case e.g. if a speaker has fairly but not fully specific semantic intentions, or if a sentence contains an expression that is vague but not context-sensitive. So Flexible Pluralism does not seem particularly radical even if it is a thoroughly non-propositional theory. By contrast, if Strong Pluralism is thoroughly non-propositional, it is radically different from any propositional theory. That, however, is not all too surprising, given that Strong Pluralism is motivated by very different considerations than those underlying propositional theories.

I thus conclude that the instability objection does not show that *every* moderately non-propositional theory collapses into a thoroughly non-propositional theory. Flexible Pluralism does not, it seems, collapse in this way. But I anticipate that some semanticists will disagree with some of the foregoing considerations, denying e.g. that (A1) offers a clear case of a propositional semantic value. For this reason, I will suppose that both Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism are thoroughly non-propositional in responding to the remaining objections of this chapter.

2. The objection from truth-value judgements

Semantic theories should account for the truth-value judgements of ordinary speakers. According to the current objection, non-propositional semantics are unable to do so, because the sentential semantic values they assign do not have truth-values. But this objection is too quick. Pluralists can account for truth-value judgements, even if their theories are thoroughly non-propositional.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Borg (2004: 5) seems to have something like this argument in mind in the following passage:
 It seems, at least *prima facie*, that the assumption that sentences encode propositional content is quite reasonable. For instance, ordinary speakers seem happy to judge that the sentence ‘Snow is white’ in English expresses something true, while the sentence ‘Grass is white’ expresses something false, or that the sentences ‘Snow is white’ and ‘La neige est blanche’ have the same meaning and are thus true or false together.

To begin with, I want to return to some of the examples from Chapter 3 to have some concrete truth-value judgements on the table. First, there are truth-value judgements of speakers *within a conversation*. In (C), Claire utters (C1) ('Flats in Oxford must be expensive') while she and David are strolling through Oxford. Let us now slightly vary the example and assume that, prior to Claire's utterance, a third person has joined them who has recently bought a flat in Oxford. In this situation, it would be perfectly natural for the third person to reply to (C1) by using (C3) or (C4):

(C3) That's true.

(C4) What Claire said is true.

So here we have a participant in an everyday conversation who judges Claire's utterance of (C1) to be true.

In example (D), Emily uses (D1) ('This one is light') to convey to Fred that she needs no help in lifting a log. If Fred later picks up the log and notices that it indeed does not weigh much, he might well utter (D3) or (D4):

(D3) What you said earlier is true. This log is light.

(D4) You were right to say that this log is light.

In this case, too, a participant in an everyday conversation judges Emily's utterance of (D1) to be true.

There are also truth-value judgements ordinary speakers give *as onlookers* (if they are presented with a description of an example). For example, it seems plausible that ordinary speakers presented with the original descriptions of examples (C) and (D) (plus some further information about the prices of flats and the weight of the log), would judge Claire's utterance of (C1) and Emily's utterance of (D1) to be true.

It is not obvious what these judgements are about: the sentence uttered, the proposition expressed by the sentence uttered, what the speaker has said, what is asserted or yet something else. But in each case there is a judgement about *some aspect of*

an utterance, which is why I am saying that speakers judge *utterances* to be true or false (where I intend this formulation to be read in the weak sense of ‘some aspect of an utterance’).

At first view, Pluralists might seem unable to account for these judgements. On any version of Pluralism (whether moderately or thoroughly non-propositional), (C1) and (D1) express non-singleton sets of propositions (in these contexts). Strong Pluralists hold that these sets are extensive and contain some true and some false propositions. And Flexible Pluralists assign less extensive sets of propositions, which may contain only true propositions, but may also contain some true and some false propositions. This prevents Pluralists from making use of the easiest strategy in accounting for these judgements: they cannot say that these judgements track the truth-values of the semantic values in context of (C1) and (D1). But, I will argue, they can employ other strategies.

Firstly, Pluralists (and defenders of non-propositional semantics in general) can point out that truth-value judgements of ordinary speakers need not track sentential semantic values, but might equally well concern what a speaker asserts (or indeterminately asserts) by uttering a sentence or what she conveys through an implicature. Pluralists of either kind should hold that speakers sometimes use sentences such as (C1) and (D1) to assert a particular proposition or to convey a particular proposition through an implicature (though this latter option will seldom be realised). These propositions might then be used to explain the relevant truth-value judgements.

That truth-value judgements need not track sentential semantic values is especially clear in utterances featuring substitutional implicatures. To see this, let us consider a variation of example (F), in which Ida is talking about her bicycle accident, and where the audience includes a witness of the bicycle accident. When Ida utters (F1) (‘There was a deafening noise when the tyre exploded’), the witness might respond using (F3):

(F3) That's true.

Such a reply seems just as natural and reasonable as the replies in the previous two examples, and it seems to indicate that at least some ordinary speakers judge Emily's utterance of (F1) to be true. But there are very few theorists who would accept that the semantic value in context of (F1) is indeed true.¹²⁶ Most would say that these truth-value judgements track what Emily implicated, namely that there was a very loud noise, and not the semantic value of Emily's utterance. So truth-value judgements do not always track semantic values.

Pluralists could thus say that some truth-value judgements track what is asserted or what is implicated. If this is a single proposition, this should allow a straightforward explanation of truth-value judgements about the corresponding utterance. But this explanation will not always work. For in examples (C) and (D) and in many other cases, speakers cannot plausibly be said to assert or convey exactly one proposition. In such cases, it is much more plausible to say that the speaker intends to indeterminately assert or convey a set of propositions.

At this point, Pluralists can move to a second strategy. They can argue that although a set of propositions is indeterminately asserted in (C) and (D), members of the audience need only pick up one of these propositions (in each case) for communication to be successful. The truth-value judgements expressed by (C3), (C4), (D3) and (D4) can thus be explained if the proposition picked up by the person giving the respective report is true. This strategy may also work for the truth-value judgements of onlookers, if we assume that these also pick up a single proposition from the sets of propositions indeterminately asserted or conveyed. But what if participants in a conversation or onlookers pick up several propositions?

¹²⁶ Stern (2000) might be one of the few theorists accepting (F3) to be true.

Pluralists should handle cases involving non-singleton sets of propositions (as sentential semantic values in context, as propositions indeterminately asserted or conveyed, or as propositions picked up) by saying that a set of propositions elicits a judgement of truth (falsity) if all of the propositions it contains are true (false). So if a member of the audience or an onlooker picks up several propositions, she judges the corresponding utterance to be true just in case every proposition in this set is true. This nicely explains the truth-value judgements for utterances (C1) and (D1), where presumably any proposition in the sets of propositions picked up by the conversational participants or onlookers will be true. But sets of true (or false) propositions can also be employed to capture truth-value judgements more directly. Pluralists can appeal to the sets of propositions indeterminately asserted or conveyed and say that these will lead to judgements of truth (falsity) if they contain only true (false) propositions. This explanation avoids the intermediate step of looking at which propositions are picked up.¹²⁷

It thus turns out that Pluralists *can* account for the truth-value judgements at issue. If Pluralism is thoroughly non-propositional, they cannot do so by simply pointing to the semantic value of the relevant sentence. But they can argue that truth-evaluable content can be found at other levels, such as the level of what is asserted, what is implicated or what is picked up by the audience. And they can argue that there are other things than propositions that can elicit judgements of truth or falsity, namely sets of true propositions or sets of false propositions. The objection from truth-value judgements thus fails.

¹²⁷ This third move is in some ways similar to Supervaluationist approaches to problems of vagueness or the problem of the many. But the Pluralist move does not make use of precisifications or super-truth, which sets it aside from Supervaluationist approaches.

3. The objection from validity judgements

The objection from validity judgements is nicely summed up by Borg in the following passage:

It seems that we can assess arguments in natural language as valid or invalid, yet such assessments *only* make sense if the sentences which form the argument can themselves be the bearers of truth-values. To claim that ‘All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore Socrates is mortal’ is a valid argument seems to presuppose that each of the sentences making up the argument encodes truth-evaluable content. (2004: 5; original emphasis)

The worry here is that non-propositional theories cannot account for judgements of ordinary speakers about the logical properties of sentences and arguments, such as validity and contradictoriness. This worry is, I think, shared by many semanticists, even if it is not often explicitly spelled out.

Among the sentences and arguments speakers would judge to have the relevant logical properties are the following, which will serve as the main examples for the remainder of this section:

(Con) Contradiction

(Con) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive and the Molitor Stradivarius is not expensive.

(Arg) Argument

(Arg1) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive.

(Arg2) The Lady Blunt Stradivarius is expensive.

(Arg3) So the Molitor Stradivarius and the Lady Blunt Stradivarius are expensive.

It seems plausible that ordinary speakers have robust intuitions about the logical properties of these examples, and that they would judge (Con) to be a contradiction and (Arg) to be valid. I will presume these judgements in what follows.

I will now argue that Pluralism (whether moderately or thoroughly non-propositional) can do just as well as Contextualism in accounting for these judgements. To do so, I will first look at Contextualist treatments of validity and contradictoriness. Then I will show how Pluralists can adapt some of these treatments. While the current objection concerns not only judgements of validity and contradictoriness, but also judgements of other logical properties, my discussion will focus on validity and contradiction. It will be apparent how the considerations offered here carry over to judgements of other logical properties.

3.1 Validity judgements in Contextualism

How can Contextualists account for judgements of validity and contradictoriness? To begin with, let us consider how validity and contradictoriness of sentences and sequences of sentences are defined on Contextualist views. Let us assume that we have a previous understanding of validity and contradictoriness for propositions and sequences of propositions.¹²⁸ Then the Contextualist definitions of *sentential* validity and contradictoriness can be given in terms of *propositional* validity and contradictoriness. Contextualists standardly distinguish between two types of validity: validity in a context and validity *simpliciter*.¹²⁹ If Γ ; α is an argument consisting of a set of premises Γ and a conclusion α , then the standard Contextualist definition of validity in a context can be given as follows:

¹²⁸ For example, a modal notion of contradictoriness as necessary falsehood, and of validity as necessary truth-preservation.

¹²⁹ See e.g. Kaplan (1977), Predelli (2005: 83–84) and Iacona (2010: 249–250).

Validity in a context

V_C : Γ ; α is valid in a context c iff the argument from the propositions expressed by Γ in c to the proposition expressed by α in c is valid.

Validity in a context can then be used to define the general notion of validity *simpliciter*:

Validity *simpliciter*

V_S : Γ ; α is valid *simpliciter* iff, for every context c , Γ ; α is valid in c .¹³⁰

Contextualists do not usually provide explicit definitions of contradictoriness, but in line with the definitions of validity these might run as follows (assuming that ‘ α ’ stands for a sentence):

Contradictoriness in a context

C_C : α is contradictory in a context c iff the proposition expressed by α in c is contradictory.

Contradictoriness *simpliciter*

C_S : α is contradictory *simpliciter* iff, for every context c , α is contradictory in c .

Can Contextualists use these notions of validity and contradictoriness to account for the above speaker judgements concerning (Arg) and (Con)? In a first step,

¹³⁰ See Iacona (2010) for similar definitions in terms of validity *on an interpretation*, rather than in a context.

Contextualists have to decide which of these notions are in play in judgements of ordinary speakers: the notions relativized to a context or the general notions. Here, the most plausible candidates are the general notions of validity *simpliciter* and contradictoriness *simpliciter*. After all, the judgements are about arguments (i.e. argument types), and not particular applications of these arguments (i.e. argument tokens). This view is also supported by the fact that the arguments elicit the aforementioned judgements without being situated in a certain context.¹³¹

The question, then, is whether the Contextualist notions of validity and contradictoriness *simpliciter* match those of ordinary speakers. Though this may seem to be the case at first view, closer consideration suggests a different verdict. Consider (Con) once more, which ordinary speakers judge to be contradictory. It is very plausible that a speaker can utter (Con) without saying anything false, e.g. if she is concerned with two different standards of expensiveness. This judgement is strengthened if we consider (Con1), its very close cousin:

(Con1) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive, but the Molitor
Stradivarius is not *expensive*.

Certainly speakers can utter (Con1) without saying anything false, which supports the judgement that the same could be the case for (Con). A natural Contextualist analysis of such a case, adopted e.g. by Braun (1996), is that (Con) expresses a true proposition in the context of utterance. But if Contextualists choose this analysis, (Con) expresses a true proposition at some contexts, and is thus not contradictory *simpliciter* according to C_S.

¹³¹ One might think that some speaker judgements are nonetheless judgements of validity or contradictoriness *in a context*, possibly because one thinks that speakers evaluate sentences and arguments against a *normal* or a *default* context. Whether or not this is the case, it seems very plausible that at least some speaker judgements concern argument-types, rather than applications of argument-types. In what follows, I will focus on these judgements concerning argument-types. If theorists can successfully capture these judgements, they are also likely to be able to capture judgements about individual applications of argument-types.

Similar considerations apply to argument (Arg), which, at first view, might seem valid in any context. It is quite plausible that on some uses of (Arg) different standards of expensiveness are in play. On a natural Contextualist analysis, there are thus contexts in which some of the occurrences of ‘expensive’ in (Arg1)–(Arg3) have different semantic values, and in which the truth of the premises do not necessitate the truth of the conclusion. As a result, V_s classifies (Arg) as invalid *simpliciter* (given that invalidity *simpliciter* is understood as absence of validity *simpliciter*).

The standard Contextualist definitions of contradictoriness and validity therefore seem to deliver verdicts that do not fit with ordinary speaker judgements concerning (Arg) and (Con).

At this point, it will be helpful to introduce the notion of a *uniform interpretation* of a sentence or an argument. An *interpretation* of a sentence or an argument, as I will understand it, is a function that maps a sentence (or sequence of sentences) to a proposition (or sequence of propositions) a speaker can assert by uttering the sentence or the argument.¹³² For Contextualists, an interpretation *i* of a sentence or an argument counts as *uniform* iff *i* is an interpretation of a sentence or argument and, if the sentence or argument contains several occurrences of at least one context-sensitive expression, then *i* maps each of these occurrences to the same semantic value. Otherwise the interpretation is *non-uniform*. For example, in contexts in which each occurrence of ‘expensive’ in (Con) has the same semantic value, (Con) permits only uniform interpretations, and in contexts in which they have different semantic values, (Con) permits only non-uniform interpretations.¹³³

¹³² As I am using *assert*, this requires the speaker to be literal.

¹³³ See Dorr (2014: 33–41, 58) for a similar use of the notion of a uniform interpretation. Note that, on this way of setting things up, interpretations of sentences or arguments that do not contain several occurrences of a context-sensitive expression are always uniform. Note furthermore, that Contextualists hold that a sentence in context *c* expresses exactly one proposition, so that only one interpretation is possible. On Contextualism, thus, context and standing meaning together fix the interpretation of a sentence.

We can now say why (Arg) and (Con) cause problems for the standard Contextualist definitions of validity and contradictoriness: these problems are due to the fact that certain instances of (Arg) and (Con) seem to admit non-uniform interpretations. There are two broad approaches Contextualists might choose in responding to this problem: they might either hold on to the existing definitions and argue that these are not affected by non-uniform interpretations; or they might provide new definitions. I will now present three strategies of the former kind and then one strategy of the latter kind.

Switching contexts

A first Contextualist strategy is to argue that non-uniform interpretations of (Arg) and (Con) require each of these to be situated in several contexts.¹³⁴ If (Con) is situated in a single context, it permits only a uniform interpretation. This means that the claim that the occurrences of ‘expensive’ in (Con) can have different semantic values in a single context is mistaken: two occurrences of ‘expensive’ can only have different semantic values if they are situated in different contexts. The non-uniform interpretation of (Con) on which it is true must at some point involve a context-switch, such that the context of the first occurrence of ‘expensive’ is different from the context of the second. Similar considerations apply for the three occurrences of ‘expensive’ in interpretations of (Arg) on which it is invalid.

This strategy fixes the problem at hand, for if several occurrences of ‘expensive’ cannot have distinct semantic values in the same context, then argument (Arg) is valid in every context and thus valid *simpliciter*. Likewise, (Con) is necessarily false in any context and thus contradictory *simpliciter*.

¹³⁴ Stanley and Williamson (1995) discuss and accept this strategy concerning sentences containing multiple quantified expressions. Braun (1996) discusses and rejects it concerning sentences containing multiple occurrences of ‘this’.

But it is not clear that Contextualists should opt for the context-switching approach, for it seems to greatly diminish the number of cases to which the above definitions can be applied. The switching approach works best for cases in which the context-switch can be posited *between* distinct sentences, such as (Arg). But in order to account for (Con) and other cases, a context-switch has to be posited *within* a sentence or even a clause.¹³⁵ But if contexts-switches are not limited to sentential boundaries, the most plausible thing to say seems to be that there is a context-switch after every word. But then few sentences (or sequences of sentences) will be located in a single context, and accordingly few sentences can be evaluated with help of the Contextualist definitions.

Lexical ambiguity

A second strategy appeals to lexical ambiguity to account for the problematic instances of (Arg) and (Con). This approach also rules out non-uniform interpretations in a single context, and posits, so to speak, a switch of expressions in the invalid instances of (Arg) and the true instances (Con), rather than a switch of contexts.

This strategy is based on the standard Contextualist treatment of pronouns and demonstratives, according to which these feature indices at the level of logical form (which serves as input to semantic interpretation). In order to account for the possible truth of (6), this treatment distinguishes between several sentences that can be expressed by (6):

- (6) This is more expensive than this.

Among the sentences that (6) can express are (6₁) and (6₃):

¹³⁵ Stanley and Williamson (1995: 294) posit an intra-clausal context switch in ‘When we looked out of the window, everyone saw everyone putting up their umbrellas’.

(6₁) This₁ is more expensive than this₁.

(6₃) This₄ is more expensive than this₁₁.

While (6₁) is false in any context (because non-uniform interpretations are not possible in a single context), there are contexts in which (6₃) is true. This explains why some interpretations of (6) lead to true propositions.¹³⁶

The current move, then, is to transfer this treatment of demonstratives to other context-sensitive expressions, including ‘expensive’. Let us briefly focus on (Arg). On the lexical ambiguity approach, there are several distinct arguments that can be expressed by (Arg1)–(Arg3), because ‘expensive’ is, in a sense, ambiguous and bears indices at LF. The logical form of two of the arguments that (Arg1)–(Arg3) can express is more perspicuously given as follows:

Argument (Arg₁)

(Arg1₁) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive₁.

(Arg2₁) The Lady Blunt Stradivarius is expensive₁.

(Arg3₁) So the Molitor Stradivarius and the Lady Blunt Stradivarius are expensive₁.

Argument (Arg₂)

(Arg1₂) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive₇.

(Arg2₂) The Lady Blunt Stradivarius is expensive₉.

(Arg3₂) So the Molitor Stradivarius and the Lady Blunt Stradivarius are expensive₅₆.

¹³⁶ See Heim & Kratzer (1998: 243) for an example of such a treatment for the pronoun ‘she’.

The lexical ambiguity strategy assumes that each of these arguments is situated in a single context, and that several occurrences of the same context-sensitive expression must be interpreted uniformly in a single context. As a result, (Arg₁) is valid in any context, and thus valid *simpliciter*, while (Arg₂) is invalid in at least one context and invalid *simpliciter*.

Now, given the further assumption that speakers in evaluating arguments assume that ambiguous expressions take the same standing meaning on each occurrence within an argument, this strategy can solve the problem (Arg) poses. For then speakers will take (Arg) to stand for (Arg₁) (or a different argument with invariant indices), which is valid *simpliciter*. They will not take (Arg) to stand for (Arg₂) (or a different argument with variable indices), which is invalid *simpliciter*, and which is the disambiguation of (Arg) that caused the problem under discussion. As is easy to see, this strategy can also explain why (Con) is taken to be valid, although it permits interpretations on which it expresses true propositions.

This strategy is not without problems either. For one thing, it does not fit well with the standard analysis of context-sensitive expressions, according to which these have a single standing meaning that leads to different semantic values in different contexts. Arguments such as (Arg) can be constructed with any context-sensitive expression, so to deal with such arguments the current view must entail that any context-sensitive expression has several standing meanings. Furthermore, there is no limit to the length of the arguments we can construct in this way, and to the number of occurrences of context-sensitive expressions these feature. So the lexical ambiguity strategy also has to assume that any context-sensitive expression has many (possibly infinitely many) standing meanings. This does not look like an attractive option. While there are some expressions Contextualists would take to be both context-sensitive as well as ambiguous (including 'long', 'smart' and 'healthy'), 'expensive' does not seem to belong

to this group, and neither do most other expressions Contextualists take to be context-sensitive. Secondly, ‘long’, ‘smart’ and ‘healthy’ plausibly have only a few standing meanings, so not even these expressions fit the picture the lexical ambiguity approach paints. This means that if lexical ambiguity is used to solve the problem at hand, this kind of ambiguity would have to be quite different from the kind of ambiguity commonly accepted, and proponents of this approach would have to make a good case to introduce such new machinery.

Secondly, as Dorr (2014: 47) points out, introducing such widespread ambiguity calls into doubt the motivation to hold on to context-sensitivity as a semantic phenomenon in the first place. Any difference in semantic values between (what appear to be) different occurrences of a certain expression (across or within contexts) could, on the current approach, be explained with help of a lexical difference in the syntax. For example, faced with multiple occurrences of the symbol ‘expensive’, the best guess appears to be that each occurrence of the word designates a different lexical item – after all there are many different expressions ‘expensive’ could designate. Contextualists might be unwilling to accept a solution that places them so close to a view that contradicts the central tenets of their theory.

So there are difficult problems for the lexical ambiguity approach, too. Let us now consider a third approach, which posits structural rather than lexical ambiguity.

Structural ambiguity

A third way to deal with (Arg) and (Con), suggested by Dorr (2011: 950–952; 2014: 47–49), is to hold that they are structurally ambiguous. This view entails that sentences and arguments featuring several occurrences of an apparently context-sensitive expression may or may not receive a uniform interpretation, even in a single context and without the expression being lexically ambiguous. Whether two context-sensitive expressions

are interpreted uniformly depends on whether they stand in the syntactic relation of *coordination* to each other, which is similar to the binding relation. *Coordinated* expressions must have the same semantic value, while *uncoordinated* expressions may have different semantic values.

On the structural ambiguity approach, (6) is two-way ambiguous.

(6) This is more expensive than this.

On one reading, both occurrences of ‘this’ are coordinated and thus have the same semantic value. On the second reading, they are uncoordinated and may have distinct semantic values. The different readings of (6) can be made obvious with indices. But in this case, the role of indices is slightly different: they indicate only whether the relation of coordination holds between two occurrences of an apparently context-sensitive expression. If both occurrences carry the same index, then it does hold, otherwise it does not hold. So the two readings of (6) are given by (6₁) and (6₂):

(6₁) This₁ is more expensive than this₁.

(6₂) This₁ is more expensive than this₁₁.

While the occurrences of ‘this’ in (6₁) are coordinated, this is not the case for those in (6₂). As a result, sentence (6₁) permits only uniform interpretations, while sentence (6₂) permits uniform as well as non-uniform interpretations.¹³⁷

It might be helpful to consider a familiar example of binding to compare coordination and binding. The two readings of (6) can be compared to the two readings of (7):

(7) Every violinist likes her instrument.

On one reading, there is a binding relation that holds between ‘every’ and ‘her’, while on another reading there is no such relation. Here, too, indices can be used to make both reading obvious:

¹³⁷ Instead of indices, one could also use Quine’s (1940: 70) telegraphic notation to mark coordination.

(7₁) Every₁ violinist likes her₁ instrument.

(7₂) Every₁ violinist likes her₁₇ instrument.

Now let us see how the structural ambiguity approach can deal with argument (Arg). Because (Arg) contains three occurrences of ‘expensive’, it is ambiguous between five different readings: on a first reading, all three occurrences are coordinated; on a second, only the first two are; on a third, only the last two are; on a fourth, only the first and the last are; and on a fifth, none are coordinated. The first two readings can be put as follows (with indices indicating coordination):

Argument (Arg₁)

(Arg1₁) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive₁.

(Arg2₁) The Lady Blunt Stradivarius is expensive₁.

(Arg3₁) So the Molitor Stradivarius and the Lady Blunt Stradivarius are expensive₁.

Argument (Arg₂)

(Arg1₂) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive₁.

(Arg2₂) The Lady Blunt Stradivarius is expensive₁.

(Arg3₂) So the Molitor Stradivarius and the Lady Blunt Stradivarius are expensive₂.

Only the first reading, given by (Arg₁), permits only uniform interpretations, while all other readings also permit non-uniform interpretations. Contextualists can then say that speakers presume that structurally ambiguous arguments they evaluate are coordinated, and that speakers thus presume that (Arg) stands for (Arg₁). The existing definitions V_C and V_S thus explain why (Arg₁) is judged to be valid: it is valid in any context, and thus

valid *simpliciter*. (Arg₂), on the other hand, is invalid in some contexts and thus invalid *simpliciter*. Again, this strategy can also be applied to (Con).

The structural ambiguity approach avoids the aforementioned problems: there is no need to appeal to context-switching, and there is no multiplication of standing meanings of context-sensitive expressions. But there may be an issue with certain formulations of the principle of compositionality. As the principle of compositionality is commonly understood, the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meanings of its constituents and the way they are composed. On the current proposal, there would have to be several ways of composing two expressions, depending on whether or not they are coordinated.¹³⁸ I cannot discuss this problem here, but given that coordination is similar to the well-known and accepted mechanism of binding, I think it would not be too surprising if coordination and compositionality turned out to be compatible.

Validity and uniform interpretations

Instead of holding on to definitions V_C , V_S , C_C and C_S , Contextualists can also introduce new definitions of validity and contradictoriness that capture the relevant speaker judgements. Each of the three previous strategies entails that only uniform interpretations are taken into account in evaluating the logical properties of a sentence or an argument in a context, and thereby ensures that only uniform interpretations matter for validity *simpliciter*. The same result can be achieved on a more direct route by building the notion of a uniform interpretation into the definitions of validity and contradictoriness. Instead of excluding non-uniform interpretations of sentences and arguments in context, Contextualists can simply say that what matters for the validity of

¹³⁸ See Dorr (2014: 48–49) for this point.

an argument is whether it is valid on any uniform interpretation.¹³⁹ Likewise, they can say that what matters for contradictoriness is contradictoriness on any uniform interpretation. This approach leads to the following definitions of validity and contradictoriness:

Validity on an interpretation

V_I : $\Gamma; \alpha$ is valid on an interpretation i iff the argument from the propositions expressed by Γ on i to the proposition expressed by α on i is valid.

Validity *simpliciter*_I

V_{SI} : $\Gamma; \alpha$ is valid *simpliciter* iff, for every uniform interpretation i , $\Gamma; \alpha$ is valid on i .

Contradictoriness on an interpretation

C_I : α is contradictory on an interpretation i iff the proposition α expresses on i is contradictory.

Contradictoriness *simpliciter*_I

C_{SI} : α is contradictory *simpliciter* iff, for every uniform interpretation i , α is contradictory on i .

This strategy delivers the right results for (Arg) and (Con). (Arg) expresses a valid sequence of propositions on any uniform interpretation. And (Con) expresses a contradictory proposition on any uniform interpretation.

¹³⁹ This approach is suggested by Dorr (2014: 40–41).

I take this fourth strategy to be the most promising response to the problems presented above. On the one hand, it does not posit novel semantic mechanisms, such as context-switching or lexical or structural ambiguity, and thereby it avoids all of the problems of the previous three strategies. On the other hand, it seems to fit with the way speakers in fact evaluate sentences and arguments. It seems very natural to assume that speakers consider only uniform interpretations in evaluating sentences and arguments featuring context-sensitive expressions.¹⁴⁰ Still, for present purposes I need not decide which is the best Contextualist approach to tackle judgements of contradictoriness and validity. What matters here, is that there are various ways of going about this task, and that there is a promising approach that does not employ the standard Contextualist definitions but instead employs definitions based on uniform interpretations.

3.2 Validity judgements in Semantic Pluralism

According to the current objection, non-propositional semantic theories are unable to account for judgements of validity, contradictoriness and other logical properties because they ascribe non-propositional semantic values to the sentences and arguments in question. However, I will now argue that propositional semantic values are not required to account for these judgements, and that Pluralism can account for them just as well as Contextualism.

In discussing the prospects of non-propositional semantics, I will focus on (Con) (repeated below).

(Con) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive and the Molitor Stradivarius is not expensive.

¹⁴⁰ This is also noted by Iacona (2010: 258), who states that '[when] an argument containing context-dependent expressions is considered, it is quite common to assume that those expressions are understood in the same way'.

At first view, the worry that non-propositional semantics are unable to account for the fact the speakers judge (Con) to be contradictory might seem justified. I am supposing that any non-propositional theory has to be thoroughly non-propositional, and in a theory of thoroughly non-propositional semantics, (Con) does not have a truth-evaluable semantic value. But it is natural to see truth-evaluable semantic values as a precondition for contradictoriness.

Pluralists hold that (Con) contains two occurrences of the multiplier ‘expensive’. Let us briefly look at (Con) from the perspective of a Strong Pluralist. On this view, each occurrence of ‘expensive’ has an extensive set of semantic values in context, containing infinitely many members, each of which features a different standard of expensiveness. When the semantic value sets of two expressions e_1 and e_2 are combined to form the semantic value set of a third expression e_3 , this happens by forming the Cartesian product of the semantic value sets of e_1 and e_2 ; the elements of the pairs in the resulting set then undergo composition according to the usual compositional rules. This means that when the semantic value sets of the constituent expressions of (Con) are put together to form the semantic value set of the entire sentence, the result is a set of propositions featuring many different standards of expensiveness. Importantly, this set will contain many propositions, each of which features two different standards of expensiveness. It will, for example, include those given by (C_{s1}) and (C_{s2}):

(C_{s1}) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive by standard₁ and the Molitor Stradivarius is not expensive by standard₂.

(C_{s2}) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive by standard₇ and the Molitor Stradivarius is not expensive by standard₁₅.

Some propositions featuring different standards of expensiveness and similar to (C_{s1}) and (C_{s2}) are true, which is why (Con) expresses at least some true propositions in some (or possibly all) contexts. This makes it hard to see how Strong Pluralists could classify

(Con) as contradictory. And if Flexible Pluralists have to be thoroughly non-propositional, they face the same problem.

This problem is somewhat similar to the problem of non-uniform interpretations for Contextualists: just like the latter, Pluralists are troubled by non-uniform interpretations of (Con). But because the problems are similar, Pluralists can employ similar strategies to combat them. The main tool is, once again, the notion of a uniform interpretation. For Contextualists, an interpretation counts as uniform just in case, if there are several occurrences of context-sensitive expressions, the interpretation maps these to the same semantic value. This construal of uniformity will not work for Pluralists, for even if two occurrences of a multiplier in a certain sentence have the same semantic value set, the sentence can still permit non-uniform interpretations: interpretations that lead to propositions featuring one element from the semantic value set of the first occurrence of the multiplier and a different element from the semantic value set of the second occurrence. Pluralists should thus count an interpretation i as uniform just in case i is an interpretation of a sentence or argument and, if this sentence or argument features several occurrences of a multiplier, i maps each occurrence of a multiplier to the same element from its semantic value set. On this construal of a uniform interpretation, (C_{S1}) and (C_{S2}) count as non-uniform interpretations of (Con), while (C_{S3}) and (C_{S4}) count as uniform interpretations:

(C_{S3}) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive by standard₁ and the Molitor Stradivarius is not expensive by standard₁.

(C_{S4}) The Molitor Stradivarius is expensive by standard₂₃ and the Molitor Stradivarius is not expensive by standard₂₃.

So uniform interpretations of (Con) lead to propositions that feature the same standard of expensiveness twice.

Once Pluralists have this notion of a uniform interpretation in place, they can use it to explain why (Con) is judged to be contradictory. On a first route, they can modify the standard Contextualist definitions C_C and C_S slightly and adopt one of the strategies involving context-switching, lexical ambiguity or structural ambiguity. If they choose the context-switching approach, Pluralists have to say that sentences and arguments permit only uniform interpretations in a single context. And if they choose one of the strategies positing ambiguity, they have to say that speakers assume that sentences and arguments they evaluate are disambiguated in a way that permits only uniform interpretations in a single context.

However, there are several reasons Pluralists should not opt for this first route. Firstly, it inherits the problems that trouble the Contextualist strategies that Pluralists are imitating. Secondly, each of the three strategies entails that sentences featuring several occurrences of multipliers permit only uniform interpretations in a context. But this does not fit well with Strong Pluralism, according to which (most) multipliers are context-*insensitive*. There is something suspect about a view that rules out that a context determines the semantic value set of a multiplier, but at the same time entails that a context forces several occurrences of a multiplier to be interpreted in a uniform way.

Pluralists are thus better served by imitating the second Contextualist route, which incorporates the notion of a uniform interpretation into the definition of contradictoriness. Recall that this approach adopts the following definitions of contradictoriness:

Contradictoriness on an interpretation

C_i : α is contradictory on an interpretation i iff the proposition α expresses on i is contradictory.

Contradictoriness *simpliciter*_i

C_{SI}: α is contradictory *simpliciter* iff, for every uniform interpretation i , α is contradictory on i .

Pluralists can use these very same definitions of contradictoriness. The only departure from the Contextualist strategy consists in the Pluralist notion of a uniform interpretation, on which a uniform interpretation maps several occurrences of a multiplier to the same element of their semantic value sets. On this approach, (Con) will express both contradictory as well as non-contradictory propositions in context, but only the propositions it expresses on uniform interpretations are taken into account when judging whether it is contradictory. As (Con) expresses a contradictory proposition on any uniform interpretation, it is judged to be contradictory. This approach is open to Flexible Pluralists and Strong Pluralists alike, and it avoids the problems of the previous strategies. It can capture judgements of validity concerning (Arg) with the help of the validity definitions V_I and V_{SI} , and it works for other logical properties and for other sentences and arguments.

I therefore conclude that the objection from validity judgements fails. Pluralists have the resources to account for such judgements concerning sentences and arguments, even if their theory is taken to be thoroughly non-propositional.

4. The objection from belief

According to a further objection to non-propositional semantics, it should count against such theories that the semantic values they ascribe to many sentences cannot be identified with the objects of belief or reasons for belief, as these must be taken to be

propositional. This is the *objection from belief*. There are two versions of the objection from belief: the first version takes the form of a general argument, and is based a) on the fact that sentences can be used to express beliefs and provide reasons for belief and b) the assumption that this is only possible if the semantic values of such sentences are propositional. I will call this version of the objection *the general objection from belief*. The second version of the objection is based on individual examples of belief ascriptions, which, it is alleged, non-propositional semantics are unable to account for. I will refer to this version as *the objection from belief ascriptions*.

I will now discuss both versions of the objection in turn, beginning with the general objection from belief, before turning to the objection from belief ascriptions. Although one way of replying to both versions of the objection is to challenge the assumption that beliefs and reasons for belief are propositional, I will not pursue this route here.¹⁴¹ Rather, I want to show that even if we assume that beliefs and reasons for belief are propositional, neither version of the objection from belief is problematic for Semantic Pluralism.

4.1 The general objection from belief

According to the general objection from belief, sentences must express propositional semantic values because they can be used to communicate beliefs and give reasons for belief. In the following passage, Borg appears to accept this line of thought with respect to reasons for belief:

So, why might we think, with our formal ancestors, that purely lexico-syntactically described objects (sentences) are (at least sometimes) capable of expressing truth-evaluable, propositional contents? [...] [We] might note that it is often claimed that only propositions can be reasons for belief, yet it seems that we give our reasons (both in internal monologue and public dialogue) via declarative sentences [...]. (2012: 8)

¹⁴¹ See Bach (1997) and Recanati (2007) for arguments for the claim that belief can be non-propositional.

A similar objection might be based on the observation that declarative sentences can be used to communicate beliefs (and not merely to give reasons for belief). Pluralists should of course accept that we use sentences to give beliefs and reasons for belief, and I am still supposing that Pluralism has to be thoroughly non-propositional. It might thus seem problematic that none of their sentential semantic values are propositional.

However, the general objection from belief is far from convincing. For it is based on the assumption that a sentence can only be used to communicate a belief or give a reason for belief if its semantic value is identical to the content of the belief or reason. But that assumption is clearly false, as any instance of indirect communication shows. It is clearly possible to indirectly communicate a belief, and in that case the belief communicated is distinct from the semantic value of the sentence uttered. We have come across many such cases above, including example (D), in which Emily uses (D1) to convey to Fred that she needs no help in lifting a log:

(D1) This one is light.

In this case, it seems plausible that Emily manages to communicate to Fred her belief that she needs no help in lifting the log, but this belief is of course distinct from the semantic value any semantic theory should assign to (D1). Furthermore, I hope to have made plausible (in Chapter 4) that communicative success does not require the semantic value of (D1) to be propositional: Emily can communicate her belief that she needs no help in lifting the log even if the semantic value of (D1) in context is a set of propositions.

Adherents of non-propositional semantics can say that something similar happens in many cases of direct communication: although the semantic value of the sentence uttered is non-propositional, it can be used e.g. to assert a proposition, which is why the speaker can use the sentence in question to communicate a belief or give a reason for belief.

Now, one might think that non-propositional theories nonetheless struggle with communication of beliefs and reasons for belief if they entail that what a speaker communicates by uttering a sentence can be non-propositional. I have argued that Pluralists should hold that speakers often indeterminately assert or convey a set of propositions. The worry, then, might be that if beliefs and reasons for belief are propositional, even appealing to what is asserted or what is conveyed will not help to explain how speakers can communicate beliefs or reasons for beliefs.

But this worry is also unfounded. It is true that if a speaker uses a sentence to indeterminately assert or convey a set of propositions, communicative success will not ensure that the audience picks up a particular proposition that could feature as the speaker's belief or as a reason for belief. However, in such cases the speaker's aim will usually not be to communicate a single proposition she believes. Rather, she will aim to communicate a proposition out of a set of propositions, each of which she believes. And this is clearly possible on the Pluralist construal of such cases.

Finally, it might be argued that, even if the foregoing is correct, it is a problem for a thoroughly non-propositional version of Pluralism that *no* sentence has a propositional semantic value. This seems to be Bach's concern in the following passage:

[Not] all sentences are semantically incomplete. If they all were, then not a single thought could be expressed linguistically (assuming that the contents of thoughts are propositions). All thoughts would be ineffable and incommunicable (at least they wouldn't be communicable explicitly). No sentence could be used to make a thought fully explicit, since the thought would have a propositional content but the sentence would not. (2006c: 3)

But I can see no good reason why the mechanisms Pluralists posit to explain how speakers use semantic value sets to give beliefs or reasons for belief should work in some but not in all cases. Thoroughly non-propositional Pluralism does go against the assumption that the content of a belief can be the semantic value of a sentence. But that assumption has much weaker intuitive support than the assumption Borg

mentions, according to which speakers can use sentences to give beliefs or reasons for belief.

The general objection from belief therefore poses no threat for non-propositional semantics, and in particular for Semantic Pluralism.

4.2 The objection from belief ascriptions

The second version of the objection from belief, which is based on individual belief ascriptions, is (once again) nicely summed up by Borg:

[It] seems we are happy to infer from sentences like ‘Ted believes England won the Ashes in 2009’ and ‘Alfie believes England won the Ashes in 2009’ that there is something both Ted and Alfie believe. Furthermore, given some knowledge of the world and of cricket, we can judge that what they both believe is true. Yet this kind of practice seems to entail that the sentences in the scope of ‘believes’ express a certain kind of content (a truth-evaluable content), attributable here to both subjects. (2012: 7–8)

In discussing the objection, I will consider the following analogous sentences, which feature a familiar GQM:

(SB1) Anne believes that the Molitor Stradivarius is expensive.

(SB2) Bert believes that the Molitor Stradivarius is expensive.

Borg would say that from (SB1) and (SB2) speakers can infer that there is something both Anne and Bert believe. And she would furthermore say that, given that the Molitor Stradivarius is indeed expensive, speakers can also infer from (SB1) and (SB2) that what Anne and Bert believe is true. The objection, then, is that this entails that “the sentences in the scope of ‘believes’ express [...] a truth-evaluable content” (2012: 8), which is not the case on a thoroughly non-propositional version of Pluralism.

But Pluralists can account for these inferences despite assigning sets of propositions to (SB1) and (SB2). To begin with, I want to briefly show how Pluralists should analyse belief ascriptions. Although these are superficially similar to ascriptions of what is said,

Pluralists should not say that they express a singleton set of a proposition (which is what they should say for says-that reports, at least on one reading of ‘says’). We are supposing that belief is propositional, so Pluralists should take ‘believes’ to express a relation between an agent and a proposition, and a belief ascription to express a set of propositions, each of which relates an agent to a proposition (a belief).¹⁴²

But Pluralists of course hold that a speaker can use a belief ascription to *assert* a particular proposition, and thus to assert that a speaker is related to a particular proposition. This offers Pluralists a first way of accounting for the inferences mentioned above. If a speaker uses (SB1) and (SB2) to assert one proposition each, both of which relate Anne and Bert to the same proposition (belief), that explains why one might infer that there is something both Anne and Bert believe; and if the belief ascribed in the assertion is true, it also explains why one might infer that what Anne and Bert believe is true.

Pluralists can offer a very similar explanation of the inferences in terms of propositions picked up by the audience. This explanation does not require a speaker of (SB1) and (SB2) to assert a single proposition. And they can explain the second inference (though not the first one) in terms of sets of propositions: if the embedded that-clauses in (SB1) and (SB2) express sets of propositions containing only true propositions, it is safe to infer that what Anne and Bert believe is true.

So Pluralists can make use of moves similar to those discussed in Section 2 of this Chapter to handle the objection from belief ascriptions. In summary, then, the objection from belief is ineffective against Semantic Pluralism. Neither general considerations concerning the communication of beliefs or reasons for belief, nor examples of belief ascription pose insurmountable problems for Pluralism, even if it is taken to be thoroughly non-propositional.

¹⁴² Unlike ‘says’, ‘believes’ is thus not a reducer.

5. The objection from literality judgements

Finally, there is the objection that non-propositional theories are unable to account for judgements of literality and non-literality.¹⁴³ Such judgements are not a primary target of semantic theories, which is why I did not discuss them in Chapter 2. But, just like with judgements of what is said, it should count in favour of a theory if it can account for them. After all, judgements of literality arguably play a role in many instances of communication and reliable judgements of this kind aid communicative success. One might even think that all (or almost all) instances of communication involve judgements of literality, because the audience has to decide whether or not the utterance is to be taken literally in order to find out what the speaker intends to communicate. But it seems likely that speakers and audiences proceed under a *presumption* of literality, and that thus literality judgements only come in if there is an indication for non-literality. Be that as it may, ordinary speakers certainly exhibit robust literality judgements about many utterances, e.g. they reliably detect ironical, exaggerated or metaphorical utterances as non-literal, and it counts in favour of a semantic theory if it can account for such judgements.

On a pre-theoretical understanding of literality, an utterance is literal just in case the speaker asserts (or means) what the sentence uttered means.¹⁴⁴ A natural way to put this in theoretical terms is as follows: an utterance of a sentence is literal just in case the speaker asserts the semantic value of the sentence uttered. But if this is what literality consists in, and given that speakers often assert propositions, it is hard to see how non-propositional theories (and especially thoroughly non-propositional theories) can account for literality judgements. Nonetheless, Pluralists can convincingly capture

¹⁴³ I have not seen this objection in print, but given the previous objections, such a concern about non-propositional semantics seems natural.

¹⁴⁴ It might also be said that a *speaker* uttering a sentence is literal just in case she asserts (or means) what the sentence uttered means. I will stick to utterance-literality to keep things simple.

literality judgements, and indeed more convincingly than Radical Minimalists and Propositional Minimalists, as I will now argue.

Contextualists can give a nice account of literality. They can say that, for any utterance of a sentence, the utterance is literal just in case the speaker asserts the proposition expressed by the sentence uttered in the context of utterance. This fits with the pre-theoretical understanding of literality given above, and it delivers the right results. Returning once more to the examples of Chapter 3, I take it to be very plausible that ordinary speakers would judge the utterances of (A1) and (B1) to be literal, and the ironical utterance of (E1) and the exaggerated utterance of (F1) to be non-literal:

(A1) That is my violin teacher.

(B1) Everything is set up for the meeting.

(E1) That was delicious.

(F1) There was a deafening noise when the tyre exploded.

The Contextualist account of literality accords with these judgements.

What account of literality can Pluralists give? Pluralists cannot say that an utterance is literal just in case the speaker asserts the semantic value of the sentence uttered. Even though Pluralists should hold that sometimes speakers indeterminately assert sets of propositions, it would be implausible to say that this happens in every case, and that, whenever an utterance is literal, the speaker indeterminately asserts the set of propositions expressed by the sentence uttered. (This would be particularly unpalatable for Strong Pluralism.) But I think there is a different and also very natural way to spell out the pre-theoretical notion of literality. One can say that an utterance is literal just in case the speaker asserts something that is *in accordance* with the semantic value of the sentence uttered. And given what I have said so far, it should be clear how Pluralists should spell out the accordance-relation: a proposition asserted (or a set of propositions indeterminately asserted) is in accordance with the semantic value set of the sentence

uttered just in case it is contained in the semantic value set. This allows Pluralists to say that an utterance is literal just in case the speaker asserts a proposition (or indeterminately asserts a set of propositions) contained in the proposition set expressed by the sentence uttered.¹⁴⁵ By construing literality in this way, Pluralists (whether Flexible or Strong) can account for ordinary speaker judgements of literality, including those about (A1), (B1), (E1) and (F1).

Now let us briefly consider the prospects of Radical Minimalism and Propositional Minimalism, beginning with the former. Radical Minimalists should also say that literality merely requires accordance of semantic values and propositions asserted (and not identity). But it is unclear whether they can give a plausible account of when a sentential semantic value is in accordance with a proposition asserted. Bach (1994: 127, 133) states that an utterance counts as literal if a speaker asserts a proposition that is a completion of a propositional radical semantically expressed, and that it counts as nonliteral if she asserts an expansion of a proposition semantically expressed (or of a completed propositional radical). This suggests the following construal of accordance: a proposition asserted is in accordance with the semantic value of the sentence uttered just in case it is either identical to or a completion of the semantic value of the sentence. This notion of accordance could then be used in an account of literality.

But there are two problems with this approach. Firstly, it does not get all the judgements right. As far as I can see, it classifies (A1) as literal, but the other utterances as nonliteral. There is thus a problem with (B1), which ordinary speakers judge to be literal. Bach (1994: 138–139) would say that (B1) expresses a proposition: roughly, the proposition that absolutely everything is set up for the meeting (where ‘absolutely everything’ is to be read without restriction to a particular domain). And that is not the

¹⁴⁵ A more permissive option is to say that an utterance is still literal if the speaker indeterminately asserts a set of propositions that *overlaps* with the semantic value set of the sentence uttered. This, however, would raise the difficult question of how much overlap is required for an utterance to count as literal.

proposition Anne asserts by uttering (B1). Radical Minimalists might be able to avoid this problem by adopting a different view of quantifiers, namely by treating them as gappy. But this is not a route that Radical Minimalists have so far pursued.

Secondly, it is not entirely clear how a propositional radical determines which propositions count as its completions. This is one of the worries about Radical Minimalism I voiced in Chapter 2. Radical Minimalists might say that each gap in a propositional radical comes with something like a *completion set*, a set of objects that can go into the gap. Then the completion of propositional radicals would be properly constrained. But this move makes worries about the metaphysics of propositional radicals even more pressing, so it is not entirely clear whether it can be successful.

Nonetheless, Radical Minimalists might find solutions to these problems, and might well then be able to account for the literality judgements above. But my suspicion is that such a modified version of Radical Minimalism will look a lot like Strong Pluralism.

Finally, we can turn to Propositional Minimalism. From what I can see, approaches of this kind cannot account for the literality judgements at issue. This is due to the kinds of propositions they assign to many sentences. Let us consider (B1) ('Everything is set up for the meeting') as an example. Borg would pair this sentence with the strong proposition that absolutely everything is set up for the meeting (and thus with the same proposition Bach would pair it with). And Cappelen & Lepore would pair it with the minimal proposition that everything is set up for the meeting.¹⁴⁶ However, most semanticists would agree that Anne does not assert either of these propositions by uttering (B1), but rather (roughly) the proposition that everything in the conference room is set up for the meeting.

¹⁴⁶ On a natural way of making the truth-conditions of this minimal proposition precise, it is true only if absolutely everything is set up for the meeting. In that case, the proposition would be trivially false.

This case is representative for what Propositional Minimalists have to say about many utterances: in many utterances, the proposition semantically expressed is distinct from the proposition asserted, and there is no systematic relation between these two propositions. This, however, makes it very hard to see how Propositional Minimalists could account for literality judgements. If they say that the proposition asserted has to be identical to the proposition expressed by the sentence uttered, they have to say that hardly any utterance is literal. But there is no alternative relation, e.g. a relation of being in accordance with, that they could point to instead. Propositional Minimalists could of course embrace the view that literalness is much rarer than we think, but that does not seem to be an attractive option.¹⁴⁷

As it stands, Propositional Minimalism does not have the resources to account for literality judgements. The fact that Pluralists can readily explain such judgements is thus an advantage of Pluralism over Propositional Minimalism.

This leads me to conclude that none of these objections to non-propositional semantics are a danger for Pluralist views. Not all versions of Pluralism collapse into a thoroughly non-propositional theory. And even if Pluralism is taken to be thoroughly non-propositional, it can respond to the objections of this chapter. Pluralism can account for judgements of truth, validity and literality, and it can deal with how speakers use sentences to give and ascribe beliefs.

¹⁴⁷ According to Cappelen & Lepore's (2005: Chapter 13) *Speech Act Pluralism*, many different propositions are said and asserted on any utterance, and the semantic value of the sentence uttered is always among these propositions. Cappelen & Lepore would thus deny that there is a particular proposition Anne asserts by uttering (B1). This feature of Cappelen & Lepore's view does not, however, help to account for literality judgements, as should be easy to see.

Chapter 6

Responding to objections to insensitive semantics

Strong Pluralism is a theory of insensitive semantics. In this chapter, I will discuss two recent objections to insensitive semantics and show how Strong Pluralists should respond to them. In Section 1, I will consider the objection from context-sensitivity tests, while Section 2 will deal with the objection from binding.

1. The objection from context-sensitivity tests

A recent objection to insensitive semantics is based on *context-sensitivity tests*.¹⁴⁸ Context-sensitivity tests are diagnostic tools that are meant to help decide whether a certain expression is context-sensitive. Such tests are used to argue both in favour and against theories of insensitive semantics: Cappelen & Lepore (C&L) (2005) and Lepore & Sennet (2010) use tests based on reports of what is said to argue in favour of insensitive semantics, while Cappelen & Hawthorne (C&H) (2009) criticise C&L's tests and replace them with tests based on reports of agreement and disagreement to argue against insensitive semantics.

I will now try to show that context-sensitivity tests can neither be used to argue in favour, nor against insensitive semantics. I will first discuss C&L's says-that tests, and will argue that they rest on an unstable foundation: intuitions about the truth or falsity of says-that reports diverge, and without clear data the tests do not deliver clear results.

¹⁴⁸ This section is a shortened and revised version of Viebahn (2013).

However, I will also show that if the data were unambiguous, the tests would work in favour of insensitive semantics, contrary to what a number of critics have claimed. Then I will turn to C&H's agreement tests. I will argue that while reports of agreement and disagreement generate clearer intuitions than reports of what is said, they cannot be used to detect context-sensitivity, as what speakers agree and disagree about need not be the semantic value of a sentence uttered. Intuitions about the relevant reports can thus be explained both by sensitive and by insensitive semantics.

1.1 Says-that tests

Says-that tests for context-sensitivity are based on intuitions about indirect reports of what speakers said in previous utterances. They were first put forward by C&L (2005: Chapter 7) and have recently been defended by Lepore & Sennet (2010).¹⁴⁹ Says-that tests come in two varieties: *Indirect Disquotational Reporting (IDR)* uses indirect reports of single utterances, while *Collectivity* is based on collective indirect reports of several utterances. Following Lepore & Sennet, they can be summed up as follows:

Indirect Disquotational Reporting:

If reporters can easily and truly indirectly disquotationally report an utterance *u* of a sentence *S* by an agent *A* with 'A said that *S*', despite indifference or ignorance about its original context of utterance, this is evidence that *S* is not context-sensitive.

Collectivity:

Let *u* and *u'* be utterances of *S* by *A* and *B*. If reporters can easily collect *u* and *u'* into a single true indirect disquotational report with 'A and B said that *S*', despite indifference or ignorance about the original contexts of utterance, this is evidence that *S* is not context-sensitive.

C&L try to show that most sentences satisfy the antecedents of both tests, and that the only sentences that do not satisfy the antecedents are those containing expressions from Kaplan's short list of context-sensitive expressions. Among the sentences that can

¹⁴⁹ Braun (2013) uses a similar test to argue against the context-sensitivity of 'might'.

be easily indirectly and collectively reported, C&L claim, are sentences featuring apparently context-sensitive expressions, including gradable adjectives such as ‘tall’. To show this, they describe a situation similar to the following one.

Anne and some friends are discussing buildings in Oxford. Anne utters (1):

- (1) Carfax Tower is tall.

C&L claim that I can truly report Anne’s utterance of (1) while sitting at my desk by using (2):

- (2) Anne said that Carfax Tower is tall.

They furthermore hold that if Bert also utters (1), but in a conversation about high-rise buildings in Britain, then I can truly collectively report Anne and Bert by using (3):

- (3) Anne and Bert said that Carfax Tower is tall.

C&L would thus say that (1) exhibits *easiness*: it is easy to make true indirect and collective disquotational reports of (1).¹⁵⁰ According to IDR and Collectivity, the easiness (1) displays is evidence that it is context-insensitive, and that ‘expensive’, as a constituent of (1), is also context-insensitive.

A different way to describe IDR and Collectivity is as *argument schemata*. Testing a sentence for context-sensitivity means running an argument from an inference to the best explanation. The argument begins with a certain piece of data: that a sentence does or does not display easiness. This data then needs to be explained. C&L hold that the best explanation for why a sentence exhibits easiness is that there is a common semantic value to each utterance of that sentence.¹⁵¹ C&L also hold that many sentences display easiness, and that the tests therefore support insensitive semantics. If this were indeed the case, C&L’s tests could be used to argue in favour of Strong Pluralism and against Flexible Pluralism (and other views of sensitive semantics).

¹⁵⁰ This term was introduced by C&H (2009: 34).

¹⁵¹ They presumably also hold that if a sentence does not exhibit easiness that is best explained by assuming that it contains context-sensitive expressions. This direction is not explicitly mentioned in their tests, and I will not be concerned with it here.

Conceiving of IDR and Collectivity as argument schemata makes it easy to see in which ways they could be unreliable or defective. On the one hand, it might be unclear how the data pans out; in some cases it might be hard or impossible to tell whether a sentence displays easiness. On the other hand, Contextualist explanations of the data might be available – explanations of why a sentence can display easiness despite containing context-sensitive expressions. I will now show that IDR and Collectivity suffer from the first of these defects, but not from the second.

Unstable data

Can ordinary speakers reliably tell whether a sentence exhibits easiness? For this to be the case, ordinary speakers would have to be able to reliably tell whether indirect disquotational reports are true or false. And while there are many reports that lead to clear and univocal judgements (e.g. reports (2) and (3) mentioned above), there are also less clear cases. Especially separating reports that are true but unhelpful from false ones can be quite difficult, as I want to briefly illustrate. Let us return to the first example, in which Anne utters (1) during a conversation about buildings in Oxford:

(1) Carfax Tower is tall.

Claire is part of this conversation and hears Anne utter (1). Later, Claire talks to David, who is making a list of high-rise buildings in Britain. While discussing high-rise buildings with David, Claire utters (2):

(2) Anne said that Carfax Tower is tall.

Is Claire's report true? That is hard to tell. In one sense it seems to correctly report what Anne said. One may thus think that, strictly speaking, it is true. But an audience of (2) is likely to be misled: (2) conveys that Anne *asserted* and *communicated* that Carfax Tower is tall by a high-rise standard, which is false. So the report is unhelpful and might

even seem false. Intuitions about the truth-value of (2) pull in different directions, and it is therefore unclear whether (1) exhibits easiness.

If the intuitions of ordinary speakers were geared to detect the truth of indirect reports, potential true but unhelpful reports would not be a problem. But there is reason to believe that such intuitions are not geared towards detecting the truth of reports, at least not primarily. After all, language users are often less interested in the literal truth or precise content of a report than in its helpfulness. In some cases they might be interested in what the speaker reported precisely said (e.g. in a court case), but in other cases (most of the time, it seems) they care little about what the speaker reported *said*, but only about what she *communicated*. So the intuitions of ordinary speakers will not reliably track whether a report accurately reproduces the semantic value of a previously uttered sentence, but rather whether it reveals what the reported speaker communicated. Likewise, ordinary speakers will usually detect whether what the report communicates is true (whether the report is helpful), but not whether its semantic value or what is said is true.

Defenders of says-that tests might argue that we should therefore not rely on ordinary speakers' intuitions, but instead on the sophisticated intuitions language theorists, which are trained to keep semantic values and what a speaker communicates apart. But, firstly, semantic theories should not be content with accounting for expert judgements, as argued in Chapter 2, Section 1. And secondly, because theorists in different camps disagree about when semantic values and what is communicated come apart, their intuitions about indirect reports are likely to also diverge. This divergence is indeed evident in the debate: philosophers of language do disagree about the easiness of a number of C&L's examples. Leslie (2007), C&H (2009: 36–37) and Wieland (2010) deny that easiness is as widespread as C&L claim. In their defence of the tests, even

Lepore & Sennet admit that the data concerning reporting of certain expressions is ‘murky’ (2010: 586fn). Murky data, however, usually leads to murky results.

Says-that tests with stable data

What if the data were stable? Would C&L’s tests then speak in favour of insensitive semantics? Hawthorne (2006) and C&H (2009) have argued that this question should be answered negatively. They appeal to (i) parasitic context sensitivity, (ii) lambda-abstracted semantic values and (iii) hidden mixed quotation in indirect reports in order to explain why sentences containing context-sensitive expressions can still display easiness. If any of these explanations were convincing, C&L’s tests would fail: insensitive semantics would then no longer offer the best explanation of easiness. But the alternative explanations put forward are not convincing. In order to show this, I will for now assume that easiness is as widespread and clear as C&L claim and discuss all three strategies in turn. The same fault will become apparent in each case: while adherents of sensitive semantics may be able to conjure up interpretations on which problematic reports would come out as true, these interpretations will not always be plausible given the speaker’s intentions. So if there were more agreement about C&L’s data, their tests would indeed support insensitive semantics.

Parasitic context-sensitivity is described by C&H as a mechanism by which one can use certain context-sensitive expressions ‘in a way that is *parasitic* on features of the environment of the subjects that one is reporting on’ (2009: 40). The semantic value of a context-sensitive expression in an indirect report may thus depend on features of the context of the original utterance. This would provide an alternative explanation for the easiness data of IDR: reports of certain sentences containing context-sensitive expressions are easy because the relevant feature of the context (for those context-sensitive expressions) is the same for the original utterance and the report.

But this strategy (which might be called *parasitism*) does not go very far. For one thing, it cannot account for the data of Collectivity. If utterances from two relevantly different contexts are collectively indirectly reported, the context of the report can only take on features of *one* of those contexts. It is thus easy to find cases where the reported and the reporting context are different: one simply has to turn to collective reports of utterances made in relevantly different contexts. Secondly, it is not even clear that parasitic context-sensitivity can account for all of the results IDR delivers. In some cases of easy reporting it is simply implausible that expressions are parasitically context-sensitive. Consider a case in which Claire hears Anne's utterance of (1) ('Carfax Tower is tall') and Claire is under the impression that she knows that Anne wants to communicate that Carfax Tower is tall by a high-rise standard. However, Anne in fact wants to communicate that Carfax Tower is tall by an Oxford-standard. Claire then reports Anne's utterance of (1) in a conversation about high-rise buildings by using (2) ('Anne said that Carfax Tower is tall'). In this case, Claire cannot be said to have a semantic intention involving an Oxford-standard in uttering (2). Rather to the contrary: the intended contextual feature for the occurrence of 'tall' in Claire's utterance of (1) is clearly the high-rise standard. It is therefore hard to see how Contextualists can avoid having to ascribe a semantic value to (2) that is equivalent to that of (2.1):

(2.1) Anne said that Carfax Tower is tall by a high-rise standard.

That, however, does not fit with C&L's observation (which we are currently accepting as correct and undisputed) that Claire's report is true. Parasitism is therefore not a good option for the Contextualist.

Lambda abstraction is the second tool C&H employ to explain why indirect and collective reporting is easy even if the original utterances contain context-sensitive expressions (cf. C&H 2009: 45ff). Lambda-abstracted semantic values are used to account for ambiguities in sentences such as 'Anne wrote to her brother, and Claire did

too'. This sentence has a reading on which both Anne and Claire wrote to Anne's brother and one on which they both wrote to their respective brothers. To account for the latter reading, one usually assumes that the verb phrase from the first half of the sentence is copied into the second half. The copied material then has to have the same structure as the original, and a plausible candidate for this is ' λx (x wrote to x's brother)'. The sentence is thus taken to have the following logical form:

Anne λx (x wrote to x's brother) and Claire λx (x wrote to x's brother)

C&H repeat this trick for the results of IDR and Collectivity. Imagine a case in which Anne and Bert both utter (1) ('Carfax Tower is tall'), but in which Anne is concerned with buildings in Oxford, while Bert is concerned with high-rise buildings in Britain. In yet a different context, C&L claim, the following collective report is accurate:

(3) Anne and Bert said that Carfax Tower is tall.

C&L take this as evidence for the easiness of (1) and therefore for the context-insensitivity of 'tall'. C&H agree that (3) is accurate, but hold that this can be explained even if (1) is context-sensitive. One way to account for the easiness of (1) is to ascribe roughly the following logical form to (3):

(3 λ) Anne and Bert λx (x said that Carfax Tower is tall by the standard of x's conversation)

This way the report can be true even if the semantic value of the sentences Anne and Bert's uttered is distinct. More generally, C&H ascribe the following underlying structure to (3):

(3 λf) Anne and Bert λx (x said that Carfax Tower is tall_{(by f(x))})

In (3 λf), the function variable 'f' in context designates a function from individuals (utterers) to events. One way this function works is shown in (3 λ), where it maps a speaker onto the standard of tallness salient or intended in the speaker's

conversation.¹⁵² C&H therefore claim that lambda abstraction allows for an explanation of why collective reports can be true even if the original (reported) utterances have distinct semantic values. And if this move works for collective reports, it will equally work for indirect reports of single utterances.

However, this strategy has difficulties with the same kinds of cases that troubled parasitism.¹⁵³ The problem is that although there will be some function that delivers the correct semantic value (in the lambda abstraction of the collective report) for any combination of original utterances, it is often implausible that this is the intended function in the context of the report, especially if reporters and hearers have false beliefs about the contexts of the original utterances. Assume, for example, that Claire thinks that she knows that both Anne and Bert were talking about high-rise buildings in Britain when they uttered (1) in the above scenario, and that she later utters (3) in a conversation about high-rise buildings in Britain. In this case it is extremely unlikely that the function she intends to be in play (possibly by having a semantic intention to this effect) is one that assigns the Oxford-standard to Anne in the lambda abstraction of the report. It is much more plausible that the intended function assigns the high-rise standard to Anne and Bert. The Contextualist should thus claim that the semantic value Claire reports is distinct from the semantic value of one of the original utterances, and that report (3) is false. Again, this does not fit with the apparent truth of the report. Insensitive semantics thus still provides a more accurate account of easiness than a Contextualist view that employs lambda-abstracted semantic values.

Finally, let us turn to hidden mixed quotation. As Hawthorne (2006) points out, a says-that report of a previous utterance can report not only what a speaker said, but also which expressions a speaker used. If the latter occurs, the report contains hidden

¹⁵² C&H do not mention this type of function as a possibility, but it seems like a plausible candidate to account for cases that might otherwise appear problematic.

¹⁵³ Lepore & Sennet (2010: 594f.) argue along similar lines, though they do not attend to the kinds of cases discussed here.

mixed quotation: a part of the report is a direct quote of a part of the original utterance, but that quote is not explicitly signalled. (MQ) serves as an example of *explicit* mixed quotation:

(MQ) Alice said that Bill Clinton is ‘smooth’.

A report containing mixed quotation, such as (MQ), is partially ‘blind to sameness or difference in meaning’ (Hawthorne 2006: 446), because reporting which expressions were uttered leaves open what the semantic values of those expressions are. If the indirect reports used in IDR and Collectivity contained hidden mixed quotation that would explain why sentences might exhibit easiness even if they are context-sensitive. And, as Hawthorne states, it might be hard to distinguish reports that contain hidden mixed quotation from those that do not.

Consider Anne’s utterance of (1) and Claire’s report (2) once more. The first step of the mixed quotation strategy is to claim that a certain part of (2) is in fact a direct quote of a part of the original utterance. With correct punctuation, the report would therefore have to read as in (2Q):

(1) Carfax Tower is tall.

(2) Anne said that Carfax Tower is tall.

(2Q) Anne said that Carfax Tower is ‘tall’.

The quotation marks ensure that (2Q) is a true and accurate report of Anne’s utterance of (1) even if ‘tall’ is context-sensitive and the context changes between utterances of (1) and (2Q). For what is reported in (2Q) is not the semantic value of ‘tall’ but merely the fact that Anne uttered ‘tall’. The second step of the argument is to point out that ordinary speakers are generally very bad at using and signalling the use of quotation marks. They will often *write* (2) when they should write (2Q), and they will even more frequently *utter* (2Q) without indicating the quotation marks. That there are no explicit quotation marks in an indirect report is therefore no evidence that none should be

there. A Contextualist might therefore say that the best explanation of why (1) can easily and truly be reported using (2) is that the latter should be analysed as (2Q). Such an explanation seems available both for single and collective reports.

A first worry one might have about this approach is that it fails to explain why some clearly context-sensitive expressions do have to be adjusted in indirect reports (e.g. 'I', 'my' or 'today'). It might seem that if hidden mixed quotation were as widespread as the Contextualist claims, then it should also be possible to report Anne's utterance of 'Bill is my brother' with 'Anne said that Bill is my brother'. Such a report is clearly false (unless it is made by Anne). But the Contextualist does have some resources to explain why this report is worse than (2). Utterances of (2) can be informative and helpful, even if (2) contains hidden mixed quotation: they are helpful whenever the semantic value of 'tall' is the same (or similar) in the contexts of the original utterance and the report. But that will hardly ever be the case with 'Anne said that Bill is my brother'; unless the speaker herself is reporting, such a report will always be misleading or unhelpful, as the semantic value of 'my' will then differ between the reported and the reporting context. Contextualists can thus claim that speakers do not use hidden mixed quotation for some indexicals because this would make communicative success very unlikely.

But there is a second, more serious problem for the mixed quotation strategy. In order for this strategy to be successful, Contextualists would not only have to show that many indirect reports *could* contain mixed quotation. They would have to show that it is *plausible* to ascribe mixed quotation in those cases of easiness that seem incompatible with Contextualism. However, there are problematic cases that resist the mixed quotation treatment, namely precisely those cases that were problematic for parasitism and lambda-abstracted semantic values. For arguably it is the speaker's intentions that determine whether an utterance contains mixed quotation or not, and for some reports it is very implausible that the speaker might intend to use mixed quotation.

Consider once again a situation in which Claire hears Anne's utterance of (1), believing that she knows that Anne is concerned with high-rise buildings, although in fact Anne is concerned with buildings in Oxford. Claire then reports Anne's utterance of (1) in a conversation about high-rise buildings by using (2). In this case, the Contextualist seems to have two options in analysing (2). Its semantic value is either equivalent to that of (2.1) or to that of the hedged (2Q):

- (1) Carfax Tower is tall.
- (2) Anne said that Carfax Tower is tall.
- (2.1) Anne said that Carfax Tower is tall by a high-rise standard.
- (2Q) Anne said that Carfax Tower is 'tall'.

But given Claire's false beliefs about the original context of utterance, the only plausible way for the Contextualist to assign a semantic value is as in (2.1). There is no reason for Claire to intend to use mixed quotation in her report, as she thinks she knows what Anne was talking about. Therefore (2) cannot be plausibly analysed as (2Q). But if the semantic value of Claire's report corresponds to that of (2.1), then it should not be true. Contextualism is still incompatible with some of the easiness data C&L observe.

None of the Contextualist explanations of easiness thus turn out to be convincing.¹⁵⁴ If there were more agreement about C&L's easiness data, their tests would indeed favour insensitive-semantics. While this might seem like an uninteresting result in view of the controversy about C&L's data, I think that the discussion leading to this result has brought out an interesting methodological point: theorists positing a certain mechanism as part of their semantic theory must do more than to show that this mechanism could in principle lead to the desired effect, e.g. to certain semantic value.

¹⁵⁴ Note that because all three strategies fail in the same situations, it is not possible to defend Contextualism by combining several strategies.

They have to show that it is plausible that this mechanism is at work in the relevant instances.

1.2 Agreement-based tests

C&H's agreement-based tests for context-sensitivity are meant to improve on C&L's says-that tests and are meant provide an argument against insensitive semantics (and thus also Strong Pluralism). Here is how C&H's two main tests run (cf. C&H 2009: 54ff.):

Agree-1

If A sincerely utters S in one context, B sincerely utters its negation in another context, and from a third context they cannot be correctly reported as disagreeing with 'A and B disagree whether S', then that is evidence that S is semantically context-sensitive. If the report is correct, that is evidence that S is semantically invariant across all three contexts.

Agree-2

If A and B in distinct contexts both sincerely utter S, and from a third context can be correctly reported as agreeing with 'A and B agree that S', then that is evidence that S is semantically invariant across all three contexts. If the report is incorrect, that is evidence that S is semantically context-sensitive.

The results Agree-1 and Agree-2 deliver seem to differ strongly from those of IDR and Collectivity: the former appear to give indications of context-sensitivity in many more cases than the latter. As an example, consider utterances of (1) by Anne and Bert, where Anne is talking about buildings in Oxford, while Bert is talking about high-rise buildings in Britain:

- (1) Carfax Tower is tall.

C&H claim that the following report is false:

- (4) Anne and Bert agree that Carfax Tower is tall.

According to Agree-2, this is evidence for the context-sensitivity of 'tall'. And as C&H think that similar evidence can be found for many other expressions, including many

expressions taken to be context-insensitive on insensitive semantics, they hold that Agree-1 and Agree-2 speak against insensitive semantics.

Just like IDR and Collectivity, Agree-1 and Agree-2 can be thought of as argument schemata involving inferences to the best explanation. Each instance of C&H's tests begins with some data: intuitions about whether it is or is not possible to truly report two speakers as agreeing or disagreeing. The second step is then to show that a certain theory provides the best explanation of this data.¹⁵⁵ So these tests, too, are defective if they rely on unstable data or permit alternative explanations of the data. C&H's data is in better shape than that of C&L: intuitions about the truth or falsity of agreement reports seem to be more stable than intuitions about reports of what is said. But things do not look as good for C&H's tests if we consider the second step of the argument schema. Focussing on Agree-2, I will now show that Strong Pluralists and other insensitive semanticists can provide an alternative explanation of the data that is no worse than that of Contextualism.

Against agreement-based tests

According to C&H, the best explanation of why two speakers cannot be reported as agreeing despite having uttered the same sentence is that the sentence uttered is context-sensitive. That is the underlying thought of Agree-2. But does the best explanation really have to appeal to such semantic context-sensitivity?

As mentioned above, adherents of insensitive semantics hold that there are many everyday utterances in which the semantic value of the sentence uttered diverges from the proposition the speaker communicates. If Anne utters (1) in a conversation about

¹⁵⁵ C&L's tests are meant to work in both directions: detecting both the absence and the presence of context-sensitivity. I will only be concerned with how the tests have been employed in the debate between Contextualists and adherents of insensitive semantics, where they have been used to argue for the *presence* of context-sensitivity.

buildings in Oxford, she communicates (roughly) what is given by (1.1), which is distinct from the semantic value of (1) (according to theories of insensitive semantics):

(1) Carfax Tower is tall.

(1.1) Carfax Tower is tall by an Oxford standard.

Strong Pluralists pair (1) with a set of propositions, Propositional Minimalists hold that (1) expresses a minimal proposition or weak proposition, and Radical Minimalists hold that (1) expresses a propositional radical. But any of these insensitive semanticists will hold that the semantic value of (1) is *not* a good candidate to be what Anne and Bert could plausibly agree about when uttering (1).¹⁵⁶ This is obvious if the semantic value of (1) is taken to be non-propositional, as is the case on Strong Pluralism. After all, the objects of ordinary cases of agreement and disagreement are propositions (it is generally assumed). But it is equally plausible for weak or minimal propositions. Take, for example, Borg's view, according to which the proposition (1) expresses is true iff Carfax Tower is tall by some standard. If this were the object of Anne and Bert's potential agreement, then reporting that Anne and Bert agree that Carfax Tower is tall would be true whenever they both utter (1). But clearly that is not the case. This suggests that if, for example, Anne and Bert both utter (1) in a conversation about buildings in Oxford, they agree that Carfax Tower is tall *by an Oxford-standard*, and not merely that Carfax Tower is tall by some standard. Similar considerations apply to the semantic values of Propositional Minimalism.¹⁵⁷

Insensitive semanticists should thus hold that what matters for agreement or disagreement is usually what speakers assert or convey by uttering a sentence, and not the semantic value of the sentence uttered. Accordingly, they will claim that two speakers can only be said to agree (on the basis of certain utterances) if they assert or

¹⁵⁶ Relativists of the kind discussed in Chapter 2 are an exception here. Against such Relativists, C&H's arguments are effective.

¹⁵⁷ Strong Pluralists might say that two speakers can be reported as agreeing if they indeterminately assert the same proposition set. I will bracket such a case to keep things simple.

convey the same proposition with their utterances. And of course on any view of insensitive semantics the proposition a speaker asserts by uttering a certain sentence can vary across contexts even if its semantic value does not.

This explains why one cannot use (4) to accurately report Anne and Bert as agreeing (after they have uttered (1) in distinct contexts), even though (1) does not (as insensitive semantics entails) contain any context-sensitive expressions.

(1) Carfax Tower is tall.

(4) Anne and Bert agree that Carfax Tower is tall.

For insensitive semanticists claim that although (1) has the same semantic value(s) on both utterances, it can be used to assert distinct propositions if it is uttered in relevantly distinct contexts (containing e.g. distinct speaker intentions). If Anne asserts what is given by (1.1) and Bert what is given by (1.2),

(1.1) Carfax Tower is tall by an Oxford standard,

(1.2) Carfax Tower is tall by a high-rise standard,

they do not agree with regard to what they assert, and thus they cannot be reported as agreeing.

This explanation becomes even more plausible if one considers that Contextualists, too, accept that in certain cases what speakers agree or disagree about is what is communicated, and not the semantic value of the sentences uttered. If, for example, both Anne and Bert utter (5):

(5) Juliet is the sun,

but if Anne does so metaphorically and Bert does so literally, then a report of agreement along the lines of (6) is false:

(6) Anne and Bert agree that Juliet is the sun.

Most Contextualists hold that (5) is not context-sensitive in any relevant sense.¹⁵⁸ These Contextualists will say that (6) is false because the potential object of agreement in this case is the proposition Anne and Bert communicate by uttering (5), and not its semantic value.

It thus turns out that theories of insensitive semantics can account for the agreement data while sticking to a view of minimal context-sensitivity. As it is hard to see why the explanation Contextualism provides of the data is any better than that of insensitive semantics, I conclude that Agree-1 and Agree-2 do not provide an objection to insensitive semantics in general, and to Strong Pluralism in particular.

2. The objection from binding

The objection from binding is meant to show that theories of insensitive semantics are unable to account for certain bound readings of sentences containing GQMs and other expressions, while theories of sensitive semantics *are* able to account for such readings. The objection has been discussed in most detail for quantifiers, which is why I will focus on such an application of it here. I will first present the objection and then consider Strong Pluralist options in responding to it.

To see how the objection from binding works, let us consider the following sentence:

(7) One teacher failed every student.

On a natural reading, (7) is true just in case there is one teacher who failed every student *of that teacher*. We can make this reading explicit as follows:

(7.1) One teacher_i failed every student [of x_i].

¹⁵⁸ Stern (2000) is an exception in treating sentences such as (5) as context-sensitive.

Proponents of the binding objection, such as e.g. Stanley (2000), argue that this reading should be explained as follows: ‘every student’ in (7) should be taken to feature a bindable restrictor argument (a variable) at the level of logical form (LF).¹⁵⁹ This variable restricts the domain of ‘every student’, and on the relevant reading it is bound by a variable-binding operator introduced by ‘one teacher’.

Positing such a variable in the LF of (7) fits well with sensitive semantics, on which quantifiers are context-sensitive. Sensitive semanticists have argued that the variable accompanies every occurrence of ‘every student’, and thus also occurrences in which it is not in the scope of a variable-binding operator.¹⁶⁰ For example, it accompanies the occurrence of ‘every student’ in (8):

- (8) Every student is tired.

In (8), the variable is not in the scope of an operator, and thus it receives a value from the context. This seems to nicely explain the context-sensitivity of unbound occurrences of ‘every student’ and of other complex quantifiers.

This is the first step of the objection from binding: sensitive semantics are shown to account for the relevant bound readings. The second step, then, is to argue that this explanation is better than any explanation that could be given by insensitive semanticists. The idea, here, is that if ‘every student’ is taken to be context-*ins*sensitive, it is implausible to hold that it features a variable at LF. Indeed, insensitive semanticists agree that (8) does not contain such a variable at LF. But then, the objection continues, they must hold that such a variable is also missing from (7), and without a variable in the LF of (7), there can be no satisfactory explanation of the bound reading (7.1). Why? Because insensitive semanticists would have to give a *pragmatic* explanation of the

¹⁵⁹ I will assume, as is customary, that the LF of an expression represents its syntactic structure. This fits with Stanley’s (2000) aim of showing that sentences such as (7) provide evidence for the *syntactic reality* of restrictor arguments.

¹⁶⁰ Sensitive semanticists disagree about which part of ‘every student’ is accompanied by a variable. Von Stechow (1994) takes the variable to accompany ‘every’, while Stanley & Szabó (2000) argue that it accompanies the nominal ‘student’.

bound reading. They would have to say that while there is no binding at the level of LF, the relevant reading is available because the speaker could use (7) to *assert* that there is one teacher who failed every student of that teacher. This is where proponents of the binding objection point to the regularity and systematicity with which bound readings occur: bound readings, they say, are available *whenever* a complex quantifier is in the scope of another quantifier. Such regularity and systematicity is not typical of the pragmatic mechanisms invoked by insensitive semanticists, as these depend on the conversational setting, which strongly varies from utterance to utterance. So, the objection concludes, pragmatic explanations of bound readings such as (7.1) are worse than explanations that posit variables at LF, which speaks against insensitive semantics and in favour of sensitive semantics.

The binding objection faces tough criticism: it has been argued to overgenerate, i.e. to provide evidence for variables where there are good reasons to hold that there are none (e.g. in the LF of certain mathematical terms), and it has been argued to rest on mistaken syntactic assumptions.¹⁶¹ But I will set such worries aside for now, and will consider how Strong Pluralists can respond to the objection.

Strong Pluralists hold that ‘every student’ is a multiplier that, in any context, expresses a semantic value set containing a semantic value for every possible domain. The standing meaning of this expression is thus a constant function from contexts to a semantic value set. A first move for Strong Pluralists is to say that ‘every student’ nonetheless features a restrictor argument at LF, and that in any context this argument is assigned the set of every possible domain, unless it is bound by an operator. Sensitive semanticists are likely to object that Strong Pluralists owe an explanation of why this variable is, so to speak, sensitive to operators but not to features of the context. This is

¹⁶¹ See e.g. C&L (2005: Chapter 6) for the charge of overgeneration, and Pupa & Trosseth (2011) for worries about syntax.

a reasonable concern. It is hard to see how Strong Pluralists could provide such an explanation, which is why I will not pursue this response any further.

In a second move, Strong Pluralists could aim to give an alternative explanation of the bound readings. Here, I think, Pluralism does better than other theories of insensitive semantics. For Pluralists hold that (7) expresses an extensive proposition set, and that several of the propositions in this set correspond to the reading given by (7.1): those propositions on which the domain of ‘every student’ is restricted to students of the teacher in question. There are several propositions corresponding to (7.1) because ‘one teacher’ is also a multiplier (which expresses a semantic value of the same kind as that of ‘every student’). Strong Pluralists can thus say that reading (7.1) is available because the proposition set expressed by (7) contains a subset of propositions corresponding to this reading (which I will call the *teacher-domain propositions*). By uttering (7), a (literal) speaker can assert one of the propositions from the set of teacher-domain propositions or indeterminately assert several of them. Furthermore, this explanation enjoys the same regularity as an explanation positing variables at LF because (7) expresses the teacher-domain propositions in every context. It is thus unaffected by the irregularity of conversational settings, and therefore avoids the criticism aimed at the pragmatic explanations mentioned above.

But the Strong Pluralist’s explanation is not entirely without problems. For one thing, it might be criticised along the following lines. The teacher-domain propositions form just a small subset of the entire proposition set expressed by (7). But why do we so easily get a reading of (7) corresponding to this small set, and not readings corresponding to other subsets of the proposition set expressed by (7)? Without an explanation of this preference for the teacher-domain propositions, it might be argued, the Strong Pluralist cannot give a proper account of the bound readings.

However, Strong Pluralists *can* say why the teacher-domain propositions stand out. They can say that the teacher-domain propositions have a feature that most other propositions in the proposition set of (7) do not have: in each of these propositions there is a connection between the semantic values contributed by the two complex quantifiers; to each of these propositions, ‘every student’ contributes a semantic value that is related to the semantic value contributed by ‘one teacher’. This distinguishes the teacher-domain propositions from the other propositions in the propositions set of (7). But Strong Pluralists should say that these are not the only propositions that stand out: propositions that result from uniform interpretations of (7) also stand out.¹⁶² This fits nicely with the fact that there are also (fairly) salient readings of (7) on which ‘one teacher’ and ‘every student’ have the same domain. A speaker might assert such a proposition if, at a certain school, there is exactly one teacher, and if this teacher marked all the exams and failed every student. A related sentence where such a reading might be easier to get is (9), e.g. in a conversation about a poorly staffed hospital in a developing country:

(9) One doctor treated every patient.

(9) has a salient reading on which the domain of both quantifiers is the hospital under consideration. So the teacher-domain propositions are not alone in standing out from the proposition set of (7), which should ease worries about the *ad hoc*-ness of the current reply.

But there is still a challenge for the Strong Pluralist’s explanation in terms of propositions that stand out. There are other sentences similar to (7) that do not exhibit the salient bound readings. One such example is (10):

(10) Every student did badly and was failed by one teacher.

¹⁶² This requires extending the notion of a uniform interpretation beyond sentences containing several occurrences of the same multiplier: uniform interpretations also have to be possible if a sentence contains several suitably related expressions, e.g. several quantifiers.

(10) does not have a (salient) reading on which every student did badly and was failed by one teacher *of every student*. However, on the Pluralist account just given, propositions corresponding to such an interpretation should be contained in (and stand out from) the proposition set expressed by (10). Why, then, is the reading mentioned not available? Strong Pluralists might reply by arguing that (10) does, after all, have such a reading. But if they cannot make a convincing case for such a reading, they still have work left to do if they want to respond to the binding objection with the help of proposition sets.

More would have to be said in a full response to this charge, but even if the moves sketched turn out to be unsuccessful, it is not clear whether the binding objection can do any damage to Strong Pluralism. As mentioned above, the binding objection has been severely criticised, and this criticism certainly raises doubts about the significance of its results.

Strong Pluralism does not face an immediate threat from either of the objections discussed in this chapter. I have just argued that its prospects look good with respect to the objection from binding. And above I have tried to show that context-sensitivity tests cannot be used to provide evidence against insensitive theories, and that Strong Pluralists therefore need not be concerned about the objection from context-sensitivity tests.

Chapter 7

Concluding remarks

The foregoing provides some initial motivation for the Pluralist framework, and in particular for Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism. Of course I have not even come close to providing a full account or even defence of these views. But I hope that even at this early stage of theoretical development some of the attractiveness and potential of the general framework and of the Pluralist views presented has become apparent.

I take the overall framework to be attractive because it offers solutions to problems for existing views while getting by with entities and tools already familiar in semantics. Semantic values are replaced by semantic value sets. Propositions are replaced by proposition sets. And composition is slightly more complicated than on standard views. But those are pretty much the only changes required to standard semantics. And these small changes allow Pluralists to solve some difficult problems for existing propositional theories and to avoid the most pressing objections to non-propositional and insensitive theories.

I have tried to bring out two difficult problems for Contextualism by discussing cases of non-literal speech. Many non-literal utterances are situated in contexts that lack features specific enough to allow the Contextualist standing meanings of GQMs and other expressions to spit out exactly one semantic value in context. And there are worries about the explanatory value of the semantic values Contextualists assign in these cases. Once the requirement of one semantic value per expression and context is lifted, such cases are no longer problematic.

And I have discussed several objections to non-propositional and insensitive semantics that do not affect Pluralists' views. Not all Pluralist views collapse into thoroughly non-propositional views. Flexible Pluralism can withstand such a collapse. And Flexible Pluralism does not seem particularly radical even if it does entail that every sentence expresses multiple propositions, given that many of these proposition sets will be of limited extent. Furthermore, both Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism can account for judgements of truth, validity and literality, as well as for the way speakers use sentences to give and ascribe beliefs. Finally, Strong Pluralism can handle the objection from context-sensitivity tests and does not face immediate danger from the objection from binding.

These objections thus provide no reason against further investigating views in the Pluralist framework. Indeed, they provide reasons to join the Pluralist cause. The objections from unspecific contexts and explanatory value might, I hope, lead some Contextualists to give up the strict adherence to propositionality.¹⁶³ Such Contextualists find a new home in the camp of Flexible Pluralism without having to radically depart from existing views.

And the Pluralist treatment of the other objections might be a reason for insensitive semanticists to sign up for Strong Pluralism. I have tried to show that Strong Pluralism avoids the problems Radical Minimalism and Propositional Minimalism face in accounting for literality judgements, and that it has better prospects in dealing with the binding argument. And I suspect – though I have not argued for this point – that Strong Pluralism enjoys similar advantages over these theories in accounting for judgements of truth and validity. After all, the Pluralist tool of a uniform interpretation does not seem to be easily transferable to these views.

¹⁶³ I think it is a promising sign for Pluralism that von Fintel & Gillies (2011), Dorr (2014) and King (forthcoming) have already taken steps in this direction.

But here are what I take to be the main advantages of Strong Pluralism over Radical Minimalism and Propositional Minimalism. Firstly, Strong Pluralism does not require positing propositional radicals or weak, strong or minimal propositions. I think these entities have played an important part in stopping views of Radical Minimalism and Propositional Minimalism from becoming more popular, and I hope that semanticists will show a much more friendly reaction to proposition sets than they have shown e.g. to propositional radicals. Secondly, Strong Pluralism can capture the constraints semantic values place on assertion in a much more systematic way than its insensitive competitors. Worries about the systematicity of such constraints have, I think, also worked against Radical Minimalism and Propositional Minimalism.

So how do Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism compare? For many, the biggest advantage of Flexible Pluralism will be that it does not require a radical departure from Contextualism. This departure is not only non-radical because widespread context-sensitivity is retained, but also because it seems able to avoid the collapse into a thoroughly non-propositional view. A further, smaller advantage of Flexible Pluralism over Strong Pluralism has to do with truth-value judgements: Strong Pluralists have to say that such judgements almost always track what a speaker asserts or what the audience picks up. Flexible Pluralists can in many cases point to the proposition set of the sentence expressed, which will often contain only true or only false propositions.

The main advantage of Strong Pluralism is that it offers a simpler, more elegant semantics and overall picture of how communication proceeds. This becomes especially apparent in a comparison of how the two Pluralist accounts fit into a Gricean view of communication. Flexible Pluralists arguably have to say that speakers have semantic intentions (which already might count as a disadvantage) and that, in normal cases, the audience figures out the speaker's semantic intention in order to thereby figure out the semantic value of the sentence uttered, which it in turn uses to figure out

the speaker's communicative intention. Strong Pluralists can offer a much simpler picture, on which the audience uses the semantic value sets of the (mostly context-insensitive) expressions uttered to figure out the speaker's communicative intention.

I am undecided between Flexible Pluralism and Strong Pluralism. I take both views to be plausible, and do not think that what I have said in this thesis gives strong reasons to choose one over the other. But such reasons might become apparent in attending to the questions I have not been able to go into, and that I hope to address in further work.

A first such question concerns the notion of a uniform interpretation. As I have introduced the notion in Chapter 5, a sentence (or sequence of sentences) allows non-uniform interpretations only if it contains several occurrences of the same multiplier. But non-uniformity also seems possible in a sentence containing only distinct multipliers, as long as these are related in a suitable way. For example, the discussion of the binding objection brought out that a sentence containing several distinct quantifiers has uniform and non-uniform interpretations. Pluralism requires a fully worked out account of uniformity in order to capture the full range of validity judgements.¹⁶⁴ So Pluralists have to say which multipliers are suitably related so as to allow non-uniform interpretations. I suspect that an approach to this question has to involve considerations about the maximal semantic value sets of multipliers, but I have no worked out account at hand.

Further interesting questions are connected to the Pluralist view of asserting, conveying and the corresponding indeterminate notions. For one thing, it is not clear what Pluralists should say about when a speaker is in a position to indeterminately assert a set of propositions. Von Fintel & Gillies (2011: 120) briefly discuss this question in presenting their multiple contexts framework for epistemic modals, arguing

¹⁶⁴ Luckily for Pluralism, the same is the case for Contextualism.

that a speaker is in a position to indeterminately assert a set of propositions (or, as they say, *to put into play* a set of propositions) if she is in a position to assert *one* of the propositions in the set. On this approach, it is generally easy for speakers to be in a position to indeterminately assert a proposition set. I am leaning towards an alternative view, on which a speaker has to be in the position to assert *each* proposition in the set. This has the positive side-effect of narrowing down the sets of propositions asserted, and avoids cases in which the audience is led astray because the set indeterminately asserted contains propositions the speaker is not in a position to assert. This question requires further investigation, and so does the related question of whether Pluralists can employ standard norms of assertion in giving a full account of indeterminate assertion.

A further question related to indeterminate assertion has to do with the notion of communicative success. Above, I merely said that the audience has to pick up one proposition or several propositions in the set indeterminately asserted. But it seems that Pluralists should also allow the audience to pick up sets of propositions, and more has to be said about how to fully spell out the notion of picking up a set of propositions.

Pluralists thus still have plenty of work left to do. But it seems unlikely that the treatment of these remaining questions will uncover insurmountable problems. I am therefore hopeful that Pluralist views will prove to be attractive additions to the landscape of semantic theories.

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