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REVIEW ARTICLE

Robyn Carston on semantics, pragmatics and 'encoding'[1]

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Robyn Carston, *Thoughts and utterances: the pragmatics of explicit communication*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002. Pp. x + 408.

1. Introduction

Robyn Carston's *Thoughts and utterances* is, in every sense, a big book. The result of years of thinking about communication from a relevance-theoretic perspective, it is long, wide-ranging, rich, intricate, demanding and radical. And it is (or should be) controversial. Essential reading therefore for anyone with any interest in language and communication, philosophy of language, semantics and pragmatics.

The 'Introduction' is a relevance-theoretic defence of pragmatics against those (e.g. Chomsky, Davidson, Fodor) who believe that as a theory of interpretation it will need, impossibly, to be 'a theory of everything'. This defence is apposite: Relevance Theory (RT) is a theory of something quite specific, however general in its application, namely all that is implied by 'optimal relevance', the cognitive instinct to maximise relevance counterbalanced by the cost of doing so.

More than half the text is taken up by two massive chapters, 'Pragmatics and linguistic underdeterminacy' (chapter 1, pp. 15–93) and 'The explicit/implicit distinction' (chapter 2, pp. 94–221). These explore and develop ideas characteristic of RT: the extent to which cognitive/pragmatic principles are involved in explicit as well as implicit communication, and the claim that natural language expressions fall short of encoding, not just THE message (thought, proposition) explicitly communicated by a speaker, but ANY message. This is RT's underdeterminacy thesis, bound up with its distinction between 'linguistic' and 'real' semantics. These chapters offer considerable

[1] I am grateful to the *Journal of Linguistics* referees, Diane Blakemore, Phil Carr, Deirdre Wilson, David Young and, particularly, Robyn Carston herself for discussion.

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food for thought on issues lying at the heart of RT, so I concentrate almost exclusively on them.

The next two chapters are more specific. Building on previous work by Carston and others, these offer characteristically meticulous coverage of the intricate pragmatics of *and*-conjunction (chapter 3) and negation (chapter 4). The final chapter (5, 'The pragmatics of on-line concept construction') broadens out again and deals innovatively with loosening of lexically encoded content. It departs from the usual RT approach to loose/figurative use, proposing that loosening should be treated in the same way as narrowing and that its results should therefore be regarded as explicated, not implicated as previously assumed. This has interesting general implications for pragmatics and cognition, which I turn to in the final section below.

2. Underdeterminacy and explicit ~ implicit

RT is a reaction against a picture – essentially Gricean – in which the following dichotomies line up neatly in parallel:

(1)	**A**.	Semantics	~	Pragmatics
	B.	What is said	~	What is implicated
	C.	Explicit	~	Implicit
	D.	Linguistically en(/de)coded	~	Not linguistically en(/de)coded (inferred)
	E.	Context-free	~	Context-sensitive
	F.	Truth-conditional (entailment)	~	Non-truth-conditional (non-deductive)

For Grice, (1)A–F are parallel ways of bridging the gap between linguistic meaning and what is otherwise communicated.[2] Carston argues that the gap is more radical than this picture suggests. Take Grice's problematic notion of 'saying'. In ordinary parlance there are two distinct notions of (explicit) 'saying' – call them 'a-saying' and 'b-saying'. To report what Susan has 'a-said' we must (and need only) quote her UTTERANCE: for example, (i) She said 'It's twelve' or (ii) She said 'They're as happy as Larry now'. Here we report on a [SAYING-OF-'P']. By contrast, reporting what she has thereby 'b-said' involves an assessment of the THOUGHT she intended to explicitly communicate. Here we report on a [SAYING-THAT-P]. The latter allows us huge leeway, consistent with perfect accuracy. Depending on context, for (i) we could report her as having SAID THAT the time then was twelve (o' clock) or noon or midday or midnight or on the hour, or that some meeting is or was at twelve/noon/midnight (possibly even: in five minutes), or that there are/were twelve men in a/the cricket team. For (ii), that they or John's family

[2] Grice's notion of 'conventional implicature' is problematic (see Bach 1999), not least because it does not fit this picture (cross-cutting its dichotomies).

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or the students, are or were, happy as Larry or extremely happy or pleased as punch, now or last week or after (and in the light of) having discovered the exam results.

Both a-saying and b-saying contrast clearly with implicating. Since Grice's concern was the saying ~ implicating contrast, he tended to write as if a single notion of 'what is said' was sufficient. At least, he didn't explore in detail the yawning gulf between a-saying and b-saying (see Grice 1989: 25, 118). Carston doesn't put it in terms of 'a/b-saying', but it is the extent and necessity of this gulf that is the focus of *Thoughts and utterances* – the extent and necessity of unencoded, pragmatically/contextually inferred contributions to explicit communication. Hence her subtitle.

In the light of this focus, the parallels in (1) break down. 'What is said' as a theoretical concept is abandoned and distinction B is replaced by RT's explicature ~ implicature distinction. But what results is not exactly B. More is included under explicature than was under Grice's 'what is said'. Conversely, some of what for Grice was 'said' is not explicated, as with ironical and figurative utterances, and banal truths/falsities such as *This will take some time*, *Nothing ever happens*. RT's polar explicature ~ implicature distinction is in fact intended to reconstruct C, 'explicit ~ implicit'. But this doesn't correspond to encoded ~ inferred (D) or to context-free ~ context-sensitive (E). Consider (2).

(2) (a) Mary Jones put the book by Chomsky on the table in the downstairs sitting room.
(b) Mary put the book on the table.
(c) She put it there.
(d) On the table.

Carston argues (p. 117) that any of these 'could be used, in different contexts, to communicate explicitly [i.e. explicate – NBR] one and the same proposition (or thought or assumption)'. I believe this is correct: expressed in terms of a/b-saying, we could indeed report Peter's a-saying any of (2a–d) – or, in the right context, just 'Yes' – by reporting him as having SAID THAT Mary Jones put the book by Chomsky on the table in the downstairs sitting room.

However, although I agree with Carston on that, it seems to me that there is nevertheless an intuitively robust, gradient (Gricean) explicit ~ implicit distinction, in terms of which (2a–d) clearly are ranked in order of decreasing explicitness. Carston acknowledges this (p. 117) but dismisses it as an 'informal' use of explicit ~ implicit and as 'redundant' in merely restating distinction D ('encoded ~ inferred'). Well, it seems to me no more informal than Carston's (and RT's) own explicature ~ implicature distinction (on which more below) and, although it does amount to D, that is no reason for her to dismiss it. It strengthens her claim that there are in fact two concepts of the explicit, a gradient one and one modelled by explicature.

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These two senses of 'explicit ~ implicit' might have been useful in defusing a potential problem for Gricean pragmatics. Consider

(3) (a) It was either Peter or Quilty who did this and it certainly wasn't Quilty.
(b) Peter did it.

Any utterance of (3a) communicates (3b). The problem is that this isn't obviously either explicit or implicit, as those terms are understood in picture (1). It is not obviously 'said' (encoded) but nor is it implicated: (b) is uncancellably (deductively: modus tollendo ponens) entailed by (a). Within RT, it could be argued that (b) is indeed IMPLICIT in (a) as regards gradient explicitness (D); nevertheless it is EXPLICATED, because entailed by the explicature of any utterance of (a). Unfortunately, this solution is not open to Carston (see below).

Carston leaves no stone unturned in providing bottom-up evidence of the deep-rooted extent of linguistic underdeterminacy: ambiguity, reference assignment, ellipsis, sub-sentential utterances – treated as distinct from ellipsis (p. 152) – irony, indirect answers, understatements, narrowings and loosenings, and a good range of other cases – e.g. *Aspirin is better* [than?], *All the boys* [in the room] *were tall* – where what is encoded is less than or departs from what Carston argues is explicitly communicated.

The first chapter is equally devoted to a persuasive top-down discussion of the cognitive NECESSITY of linguistic underdeterminacy, in contrast to a view of it as merely convenient or efficient. Central here is Carston's rejection of 'eternal sentences' and of certain effability principles. It is thoughts that are communicated. Carston here expands on Sperber & Wilson's (1986) argument that, since thoughts are private, inherently couched in context-sensitive egocentric terms, they are not sharable and not as such linguistically communicable. Carston is not denying that thoughts can (approximately) be CONVEYED, only that a speaker's very thought can be exhaustively and faithfully ENCODED in a public language. For those who take propositions to be the platonic senses of public natural language (NL) sentences, this would be disturbing. For them, propositions are context-free eternal sentences. But here Carston (with Recanati 1994) argues convincingly against the effability principle that 'for every statement that can be made using a context-sensitive sentence, there is an eternal sentence that can be used to make the same statement in any context' (p. 134).

The discussion left me wondering whether Carston actually needs, or can have, the philosophical notion of proposition ('thought' in Frege's objective sense). The 'thoughts' she is interested in, and on which her argument depends, are non-Fregean: cognitive, individualist, subjective (Frege's 'ideas'). You might need propositions if you believe in the enterprise of truth-conditional semantics for NL sentences. But the discussion here is designed to undermine that enterprise. Carston is emphatic that, if there is a proper

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domain of truth-conditional semantics, it is constituted by (non-Fregean) thoughts, not natural language sentences. This further undermines the parallels in (1) and brings us to distinction A.

3. 'Linguistic semantics' vs. 'real semantics' and encoding

For Carston, it is only thoughts (and utterances insofar as they explicate thoughts, or explicatures) that have 'real' semantics. 'Real' here means truth-theoretic, fully propositional. Utterable sentences have only 'linguistic semantics'.

On these terms, a semantics ~ pragmatics distinction – A in (1) – is only viable if 'semantics' = 'linguistic semantics'. In that case, A amounts to D and E – but not revised C (explicature ~ implicature) and not F (± truth-conditional). But when 'semantics' = 'real semantics' in RT terms, little of picture (1) remains. Distinction A breaks down because extensive pragmatic input is required in reaching the domain of (real) semantics – namely, explicated thought. Whether a parallel still holds between explicature ~ implicature (C) and ± truth-conditional (F) is a matter I approach below.

But what is 'linguistic semantics'? In this connection, Deirdre Wilson (p.c.) has referred me to David Lewis' (1970) distinction – discussed by Carston (pp. 57f.) – between the 'genuinely semantic' (conceptual-intentional) relation between some symbolic system S and the world of non-symbols on the one hand and, on the other, the relation of translation or 'encoding'. Presumably, the Language of Thought – $S_{(Th)}$ – at least as deployed by individuals, has genuine/real semantics. Mere translation/encoding, by contrast, deals with (non-conceptual-intentional) relations between one symbolic system, S_i, and another, S_j. I assume that 'linguistic semantics' refers to $S_{(NL)}$ – a symbolic system of utterable NL expressions – and its translational/encoding relation to $S_{(Th)}$.

This is an important distinction. To maintain it, though, we need to be careful not to confuse or conflate the encoding with what is encoded. We should not attribute the genuinely semantic properties of $S_{(Th)}$ to the encoding of them in the symbols of the distinct system $S_{(NL)}$. On these terms, I agree that no remotely semantic (conceptual-intentional, truth-theoretic) properties can be attributed to the utterable sentences of $S_{(NL)}$. As with Morse code, what is needed – and all that is actually possible – is not a semantics for the encoding system but a set of encoding conventions.

This distinction between the encoding itself and what it encodes is, I believe, what underlies the '(bottom-up) saturation' vs. '(top-down) free enrichment' debate (Recanati 2002), addressed by Carston in several places (esp. pp. 197ff.). Take (4), for example.

(4) It's raining.

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Any utterance of (4) communicates that it's raining at some location *l*. For (bottom-up) saturationists (e.g. Stanley 2000) this is linguistically directed: the logical form of the SENTENCE includes a location variable which needs to be saturated in the context of utterance. Carston counters, correctly I think, that the fact of a location is not linguistically directed – the sentence includes no such variable. For Carston (and Recanati), it is derived by 'free enrichment'. This is not to deny that – conceptually – it is indeed necessary that if it's raining it's raining somewhere. But this is a matter of $S_{(Th)}$, not $S_{(NL)}$. In partially anticipating $S_{(Th)}$ with variables in $S_{(NL)}$, the saturationist position acknowledges a distinction between them and yet conflates them, importing into $S_{(NL)}$ (the encoding) what pertains only to $S_{(Th)}$ (what is – or, in this case, isn't – encoded).

But Carston is not immune from a conflation charge herself. As in RT generally, her retention of 'semantics' in 'linguistic semantics' reflects a conception of it as being richer (and more traditional) than Lewis' distinction suggests. In fact, she regularly attributes conceptual and logical properties – which, by hypothesis, pertain only to $S_{(Th)}$ and in virtue of which $S_{(Th)}$ is truth-theoretic – to utterable expressions themselves, indeed on the very grounds that they 'encode' those properties.

> The decoding process is performed by an autonomous linguistic system … Having identified a particular acoustic (or visual) stimulus as linguistic, this system executes a series of deterministic grammatical computations … resulting in an output representation which is the semantic representation, or logical form, of the sentence or phrase employed in the utterance. It is [sic] a structured string of concepts, with certain logical and causal properties. (p. 57)[3]

This attribution of semantic properties to sentences, I believe, undermines the 'linguistic' vs. 'real' semantics distinction. I am not disputing the well-taken claim that sentences don't (or seldom) 'encode' THE proposition explicitly communicated by a speaker's utterance. But the claim embodied in 'linguistic'~'real' is that sentences don't 'encode' (=have, in this context) truth-theoretic properties at all, i.e. don't 'encode' (=express) any truth-evaluable proposition/thought. If 'encode' is used so as to legitimise the attribution of conceptual and logical properties to NL expressions, I don't see how this can be sustained. In fact – though this is difficult to establish explicitly (see below) – RT's own notion of explicature seems to depend on attributing to sentences properties that are 'really semantic'.

Carston deals with a complex variety of differing views on this and related questions, notably those of Bach (e.g. 1994a, b), Levinson (2000), Recanati

[3] 'Structured string of concepts' occurs several times (e.g. pp. 57, 64, 321) but it is not clear to me that structures are – or that concepts form – strings.

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(e.g. 1989, 1993, 1994),[4] and (pp. 61–63) what she takes to be my own – which, since unpublished, she labels 'Leon's view' – according to which (5), for example, encodes/expresses the proposition represented in (6).[5]

(5) She carried it.
(6) SOME FEMALE ENTITY AT SOME POINT IN THE PAST CARRIED SOMETHING

For Carston, no proposition is expressed unless referents for the pronouns are assigned – and, since reference is not linguistically encoded, sentence (5) does not encode any proposition (or even, as I understand it, the concept FEMALE). She considers two versions of 'Leon's view'. On version I, (5) and (6) are truth-conditionally synonymous. Carston rightly rejects this. Since (6) contains only indefinites, it is much more general than (5), so they couldn't be synonymous. According to version II, (5) and (6) are not synonymous, but (5) does entail (6). Now, as Carston concedes, entailment holds only between truth-evaluable propositions. Thus (5) as a sentence must encode/express a proposition *P* distinct from but entailing (6). But *P* must also be distinct from the proposition derived and explicated after reference assignment, since this is not linguistically encoded in (5). The problem here is that the identity of *P* is entirely mysterious. Therefore version II must be rejected.

I agree that neither version of 'Leon's view' is plausible. However, neither of these is my actual view, which goes like this. If NL sentences do have conceptual and logical properties, then sentence (5) MUST be regarded as encoding/expressing proposition (6). But (6) does not exhaust what is encoded by (5) – and what (5) encodes over and above (6) is not in itself propositional. Hence (5) itself is not *in toto* truth-evaluable – contra I. So it can't entail (6) – contra II. What (5) additionally encodes is, as Carston puts it (p. 60), procedural – an instruction to identify referents for the pronouns. Now the search for referents is constrained. The referent for *she*, for example, should be a single female. Equally (since it depends on the referents assigned), the proposition derived by that procedure and explicated by an utterance of (5) is constrained: it must entail the encoded proposition (6). In contrast to II above, then, it is not sentence (5) but the-proposition-explicated-by-any-utterance-of-(5) that entails (6).[6]

[4] Strangely, however, Horn's work (e.g. 1984) is not mentioned in this context. Horn is only dealt with in connection with negation (chapter 4).

[5] Here and below I go along with Carston's (and RT's) sense of 'encode', implying that if an NL expression ENCODES some property/feature *x*, then *x* IS a (semantic) property/feature of that expression. This is 'more traditional' in that it reconstructs the Aristotelian, Saussurian and Chomskian view of NL expressions as 'sound with a meaning' (Chomsky 1995: 2); but see e.g. Burton-Roberts (2000) and section 6 below.

[6] A *JL* referee comments that the referent needn't be female because *she* might be used 'derogatively' to refer to a man. I don't think this affects my argument: the 'derogative' implication arises on the assumption that whoever *she* refers to is female.

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This (version III) is slightly more nuanced. It agrees that (5) can't, taken overall, be assigned a truth-value – is not wholly propositional, since part of what it encodes is procedural – while insisting that PART of what it encodes IS propositional. This seems unobjectionable and, in several ways, actually consistent with RT and Carston's own assumptions.

For example, while insisting that the encoded semantics of (5) is 'incomplete', falling short of being 'a particular proposition', Carston allows that it is a 'kind of template or schema for a range of possible propositions' (p. 57). Although she intends not being 'a particular proposition' as 'no particular proposition', it is in fact consistent with its being a GENERAL proposition – which is precisely what I take a propositional 'template or schema' to be.

Equally, Sperber & Wilson (1986: 72f.) allows that the 'logical form' of a sentence like (5) enters into logical relations – of contradiction (e.g. with (i) NO ONE EVER CARRIED ANYTHING) and therefore implication (e.g. with (ii) SOMEONE AT SOME TIME CARRIED SOMETHING). If so, then at least part of what is encoded simply must be truth-evaluable, false when (i) is true or (ii) false.

Furthermore, some arguments adduced by Carston for the 'unreal' nature of 'linguistic semantics' demonstrate only that it is not wholly real, rather than wholly unreal. For example, the reasonable claim is made that procedural – as against conceptual – aspects of linguistic semantics are not amenable to truth-theoretic treatment. But procedural ~ conceptual seems relevant to the argument exactly to the extent that it suggests, by contrast, that conceptual aspects ARE amenable to such treatment (see especially p. 57). Similarly for sub-sentential, as against fully sentential, utterances.

It is also noticeable that the categorical claim that sentences NEVER encode/express truth-evaluable propositions is so frequently qualified – e.g.'virtually never' (p. 117), 'seldom if ever' (p. 184). If intended to allow that certain sentences – e.g. semantically(!) general ones like *Humans are mammals* – do encode propositions, this again undermines the category distinction suggested by 'real' vs. 'linguistic'.

Were it a category distinction, questions would arise regarding the relation between the two categories, how 'linguistic semantics' could constrain 'real semantics', how the former could be (inferentially) enriched – 'developed' – into the latter. I turn to this now.

4. EXPLICATURE AND 'DEVELOPMENT'

I implied earlier that there is an informality surrounding explicature ~ implicature. Implicature is defined negatively – as a communicated assumption that is not an explicature. Much depends, then, on the definition of 'explicature'. Chapter 2 includes a discussion of the relation between the proposition expressed (not as such communicated) and the explicature, leading to the following definition.

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> An assumption (proposition) communicated by an utterance is an 'explicature' of the utterance if and only if it is a DEVELOPMENT of (a) a linguistically encoded logical form of the utterance, or of (b) a sentential sub-part of a logical form. (p. 124; my emphasis)

I join Carston in wondering what a 'sentential subpart' of 'a logical form' might be. She suggests that, apart from that (and the inelegant disjunction), this definition of explicature 'is descriptively adequate and reasonably clear' (p. 124). But here – as elsewhere (e.g. pp. 118, 123) – she stresses the centrality of the concept of development (glossed as 'inferential/pragmatic enrichment', pp. 123f.). This is important, because the adequacy/clarity of this definition of 'explicature' cannot exceed that of the definition of 'development'. The disappointment here is that, as in RT generally, Carston offers no definition of 'development' or even acknowledges the need for one. The term doesn't even figure in the index or glossary. 'Development' is a black hole at the centre of the theory.[7]

Could it be that (higher-level explicatures apart) a communicated proposition *P* is a 'development' of the encoded logical form *L* of the sentence uttered – and thus explicated – if and only if *P* (asymmetrically) entails *L*? This seems implied by 'enrichment', and by *P* being derived from *L* 'inferentially'. In fact, it amounts to Carston's (1988) Independence Principle.[8] This is why in each of (7)–(9), for example, (b) is explicated, rather than implicated, by an utterance of (a): (b) entails (a).

(7) (a) He shrugged and left. (b) He shrugged and THEN left.
(8) (a) He has three kids. (b) He has EXACTLY three kids.[9]
(9) (a) I've had breakfast. (b) I've had breakfast TODAY.

In my experience, this entailment criterion works pretty well, though not without exceptions (see below), in predicting whether, for Carston, *P* is explicated. It is certainly the only basis that I can imagine for her proposal (p. 123) that (10b) is NOT EXPLICATED by an utterance of (10a).

(10) (a) The judge is my father. (b) The judge is a man.

For Carston, (10b) is not a 'development' of (10a) – it does not entail (10a)'s logical form. Equally, the modus tollendo ponens case above can't be an

[7] Among relevance-theorists, only Iten (2000: 103), to my knowledge, concedes that 'the notion of development of the logical form is problematic'. But she does not elaborate.

[8] Carston expresses ambivalence about the Principle (p. 191), but it continues to inform her thinking (e.g. p. 336). Incidentally, it makes an intuitively incorrect prediction for BECAUSE cases like (i) 'The milkman's ill' said in response to 'There's no milk'. In that context, (i) surely IMPLICATES (ii) 'There is no milk because the milkman is ill'. (For Grice it would be an example of particularised implicature, which RT has never denied is indeed implicature.) But (ii) entails (i). By the principle, then, (ii) must be regarded as explicated.

[9] Assuming *three* encodes 'at least three'.

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explicature either: (3b) is entailed by, but does not entail, (3a). (I return to the proposal below.)

But this entailment criterion for 'development' just cannot be right: it amounts to 'Leon's view' version III, which contradicts the claim that 'linguistic semantics' does not deliver truth-evaluable propositions. If the encoded logical form can be entailed, it must deliver a truth evaluable proposition. Could this be the problem with 'development'?

If so, it is only part of the problem. Consider negation.

(11) (a) I've not had breakfast. (b) I've not had breakfast TODAY.
(12) (a) You won't die. (b) You won't die FROM THAT CUT.

These examples provide good intuitive support for Carston's contention that what is encoded (in (a)) need not form any part of what is explicated (in (b)). But they raise the question: in what sense is (b) a 'development' of (a) here? (b) does not entail – but is entailed by (thus logically LESS rich than) – (a). Intuitively, I understand (kind of) when Carston writes '[r]elative LOGICAL strength of propositions is just not to the point' and appeals to a concept of 'COGNITIVELY stronger' (p. 188). But why should the logical and the cognitive drift apart like this, when the cognitive is supposed to be THE locus of logical (truth-theoretic) properties? Carston is right to concede (p. 190) that '[t]he logical characterisation is simpler and clearer' and the cognitive one 'vaguer'.

5. EXPLICATURE ~ IMPLICATURE, TRUTH-CONDITIONALS AND CANCELLABILITY

The above brings me to a startling central thesis of the book which, as Carston says, 'alters the terms of the discussion completely' (p. 138). In its light, the need for a clear criterion for explicature ~ implicature becomes urgent. One might expect explicature ~ implicature (revised C in (1)) to parallel [± truth-conditional] (F), and expect C and F in turn to parallel – and be criterially tested by – [± cancellable]. Not so! Chapter 2 (esp. p. 138) argues for a double dissociation of explicature ~ implicature and [± cancellable]: explicatures can be cancelled and some implicatures can't. Each of these contentions is problematic – and their combination yet more so.

5.1 *Uncancellable implicature*

Take (10) again (*father* ~ MAN). Not being a 'development' of (10a), (10b) can't be explicated by (10a). Now, given the negative definition of implicature (not explicature), the explicature ~ implicature distinction constitutes an exhaustive and mutually exclusive division of communicated assumptions.

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Hence (10b) must be IMPLICATED by (10a).[10] But it is clearly not cancellable. Hence there are uncancellable implicatures.

The contention that (10a) implicates (10b) is – in Gricean terms – highly counter-intuitive. But it can't be dismissed without knowing what 'implicature' actually means in Carston's theory. Unfortunately 'implicature' depends on 'explicature', which in turn depends on 'development'. In what follows, then, I concentrate on whether the contention is coherent in Carston's own terms.

First, it is noticeably not consistent with her assumption (p. 138) that 'it is pragmatic inference quite generally that is cancellable/defeasible'. It is generally agreed that implicatures are pragmatic inferences, yet the claim here is that they aren't necessarily cancellable.

Second, Carston (p. 141 et passim) defends the contention that (10b) is an implicature of (10a) by appeal to Fodor's (1981, 1998, also Fodor & Lepore 1998) arguments that lexical meanings like FATHER are atomic – not semantically decomposable into defining features. Hence implications like [FATHER → MAN] are not semantically encoded by *father* but inferred – so it is not unreasonable to treat them as implicatures. But this too seems inconsistent with Carston's own assumptions. Fodor's atomism is bound up with his rejection of the analytic ~ synthetic distinction. By contrast, in chapter 5 (e.g. p. 321) Carston distinguishes between encyclopaedic and logical entries for lexical items. Logical entries 'capture certain ANALYTIC implications of the concept' (p. 321, my emphasis), 'defining feature[s] of the encoded concept' (p. 349). Carston duly decomposes logical entries, described (p. 337) as 'encoded meanings': thus *raw* encodes/means RAW, which decomposes into NOT + COOKED (pp. 332, 339); see also BACHELOR (p. 335), EMPTY (p. 337), PORK (p. 141).

In fact, Fodor's atomism only seems relevant here if Carston is seeking to deny that (10b) is analytically ENTAILED by (the explicature of) (10a) – thereby leaving it free to be (regarded as) implicated. But she doesn't deny this. On the contrary, her contention is that it is BOTH IMPLICATED AND ENTAILED (p. 141).[11] It is entailed implicatures that are uncancellable.

The problem with this can be approached by asking: WHAT is explicated when a proposition *P* is explicated? The answer surely is: *P*'s constitutive truth-conditional content. In other words, its entailments. The

[10] By the same reasoning, presumably, 'There is a queen of England' will be an implicature of 'The queen of England likes corgis'. This is contrary to all previous analyses of the presuppositions of positive sentences. It also seems inconsistent with Carston's agreement (p. 314, note 7) with Burton-Roberts (1999: 357f.) that implicatures are generally closest to – but presuppositions furthest from – the communicative POINT of an utterance.

[11] While Levinson (2000) would not, I believe, analyse the relation between (10a) and (10b) as implicature, Carston's treatment of it as an implicature would seem to concede his thesis that implicature can contribute to the truth conditions of what is explicitly communicated.

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truth-conditional content of an EXPLICATED proposition is EXPLICATED.[12] If (or to the extent that) the content of *P* is implicated, then (or to that extent) *P* is implicated. Since I take these last two statements to be tautologies, I conclude that if the explicature of (10a) entails (10b), (10b) cannot be implicated. Otherwise, won't it turn out – impossibly – that NONE of the content (= constitutive (sub-)entailments) of the 'explicature' will be explicated?[13]

However, I fully admit to sharing Carston's intuition (p. 140) that (13)B COMMUNICATES a strict answer to (13)A (i.e. 'I have invited a man') but is not itself a strict answer to that question.

(13) A: Have you invited any men to the function?
B: I've invited my father.

That is, I agree there is an element of indirectness here. The question is whether this is best handled in terms of implicature, as Carston suggests. Hopefully, there is an alternative, perhaps in terms of some notion of 'strictness' of an answer. For example: an answer *A* is a 'strict' answer to *Q* iff *A*'s truth-conditional content is BOTH SUFFICIENT AND NECESSARY to answer *Q*. (This defines 'strict', not 'answer'). On these terms, (13)B is NOT a strict answer to (13)A. It communicates a strict answer (because sufficient) but is not itself strict (because not necessary). This captures the indirectness without appeal to implicature and thus in a manner consistent with regarding 'I've invited a man' as EXPLICATED by (13)B – because entailed by the explicature.

5.2 *Cancellable explicature*

Carston's argument (p. 138) is that, since explicatures are pragmatically inferred and since (as quoted) 'it is pragmatic inference quite generally that is cancellable/defeasible', explicatures must be cancellable.

But is this possible in Carston's own terms? Independently of the definition of 'explicature' in terms of 'development', we are told that explicature is the domain of 'real' (truth-conditional, entailment-based, propositional) semantics. And we have just seen that, for Carston, it is precisely those 'implicatures' that are entailments of – i.e. bear a truth-conditional relation

[12] As I assumed when I suggested that the modus tollendo ponens case, (3) above, should be regarded in RT as a case of explicature. But Carston includes such deductive inferences among implicatures (pp. 123, 136).

[13] On those terms, in cases where the logical form L of an uttered sentence is actually communicated, L must be implicated. It can't be explicated because (as I assume) no L can count as a 'development' of itself. So, for example, the utterance of *Humans are mammals* would have to be regarded as implicating (not explicating) that humans are mammals. This raises the question whether explicature ~ implicature does in fact reconstruct any intuitively recognisable explicit ~ implicit distinction.

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to – the explicatures that are not cancellable. On this showing, [+truth-conditional] does imply [−cancellable]. If none of the truth-conditional content (the entailments) of the explicature can be cancelled, the explicature itself shouldn't be cancellable either. Indeed, since every proposition entails itself, the explicated proposition is included among its own (uncancellable) entailments. Cancellable explicature, then, is a logical impossibility in Carston's own terms.

It is worth reminding ourselves here that 'cancellation' is 'cancellation without contradiction of what is said'. As noted, Grice did not clearly distinguish between what is a-said and what is b-said. The merit of RT is that it forces us to clarify this. What is a-said corresponds to the sentence uttered (the linguistic encoding). What is b-said corresponds to the explicature. Now by RT's underdeterminacy thesis, the linguistic encoding is not fully propositional. Since contradiction holds between propositions, nothing could contradict what is a-said. 'Cancellation without contradiction of what is said' must then mean '… without contradiction of what is b-said' (surely what Grice anyway intended). But this, for RT, means 'without contradiction of what is explicated'. Again, it follows that explicature is not cancellable: by definition, an explicature E cannot be cancelled without contradicting E. This conclusion is anyway implied by Carston's own discussion of 'explicating' in terms of 'expressing … commitment' (p. 123) and her gloss of 'communicating … the proposition expressed' (explicating) as 'overtly endorsing' it (p. 124). A speaker cannot, without contradicting herself, cancel what she has committed herself to and endorsed.

In illustration, consider an explicature-cancellation that Carston offers (p. 138).

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

It is true that (14) is not contradictory. But it couldn't be: *She's ready* and *Karen isn't ready to leave for the airport* are merely (non-propositional) linguistic encodings. Contradiction must be assessed at the (propositional) level of explicature. Assume that the explicature of the utterance of the second clause of (14) is (15).

(15) KAREN$_{[k]}$ IS NOT READY AT TIME$_{[u]}$ TO LEAVE FOR THE AIRPORT$_{[a]}$.

In order to know whether (15) is cancelling the EXPLICATURE of the utterance of *She's ready*, we need to know what that explicature was. Here are some candidates:

(16) (a) PAT$_{[p]}$ IS READY AT TIME$_{[u]}$ TO LEAVE FOR THE AIRPORT$_{[a]}$.
(b) KAREN$_{[k]}$ IS READY AT TIME$_{[u]}$ FOR BREAKFAST.
(c) KAREN$_{[k]}$ IS READY AT TIME$_{[u]}$ TO LEAVE FOR THE AIRPORT$_{[a]}$.

(15) contradicts neither (16a) nor (16b). However, it doesn't cancel them either. The only candidate that could be regarded as cancelled by (15) is (16c).

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So (16c) must be the explicature that Carston has in mind here. But it is precisely (16c) that is contradicted by (15). In short, either (16c) IS the explicature but is not (without contradiction) cancellable, or it is NOT the explicature.

Before considering (in section 5.3 below) what else – apart from cancellation – might be going on examples like (14), consider the impact of the above conclusion that explicature is uncancellable on some other cases. Take the negatives, (11) and (12) above. Cancellation in these cases yields:

(11) (c) I haven't had breakfast – but I have had it today.
(12) (c) You won't die – but you will die from that cut.

Each of these is straightforwardly contradictory, as predicted by that conclusion.[14] On the one hand, these are empirical counter-examples to Carston's claim that explicature is cancellable and her contention that 'it is pragmatic inference that is quite generally cancellable/defeasable'. On the other hand, as far as I'm concerned (given the above conclusion), they strengthen her claim that (11b) and (12b) are indeed explicatures and that explicated material is (or can be) pragmatically derived.

However – having re-analysed Grice's generalised conversational implicatures (known to be cancellable) as explicatures (Carston 1988) – RT is committed to cancellable explicature. Take (7) and (8):

(7) (c) He shrugged and left – but not in that order.
(8) (c) He has three kids – and in fact he has five.

These are generally agreed to be genuine cases of cancellation. Given the above discussion, I believe the contention that (7b) and (8b) are explicated – rather than implicated – by utterances of (7a) and (8a), respectively, stands in need of review.

5.3 *Clarification of speakers' intentions*

Discussing (14), I concluded that (16c) either (i) IS the explicature but is not cancellable or (ii) is NOT the explicature. In fact, surely, the fact that (16c) was NOT the explicature is exactly what the utterance of the second clause of (14) – with (15) as its explicature – is making clear. Rather than (impossibly) cancelling her explicature, the speaker is clarifying that (16c) wasn't the

[14] The positive, (9) above, ?*I've had breakfast – but I haven't had it today* is less straightforward. Although cited (p. 138) as a straightforward case of explicature-cancellation, it seems jokey to me; see

Q: Have you had breakfast?
A: Yes, but not since 1963. (Adapted from *Absolutely fabulous*)

As with jokes generally, these have a 'transgressive' feel about them. Could it be that the 'transgression' consists in a contradiction?

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explicature in the first place. If what we have in (14) is CLARIFICATION of explicature, cancellation of explicature is actually unnecessary – a misapplication of the term 'cancellation', I suggest.

Consider another example that Carston cites (p. 138).

(17) (a) He ran to the edge of the cliff and jumped.
(b) Lionel ran to the edge of the cliff and jumped over the edge of the cliff.
(c) He ran to the edge of the cliff and jumped (up and down) but he stayed on the top of the cliff.

For Carston, (17c) is the cancellation of the explicature – (17b) – of an utterance of (17a). This seems wrong. There are two verbs *jump*, one directional (subcategorised for a PP), the other intransitive. In (17a) *jump* could either be (i) intransitive or (ii) directional with the PP complement ellipted. (17b) could be the explicature (a development of the relevant encoded logical form) only in case (ii). Speakers don't explicate – i.e. intend to express, communicate, endorse – developments of ALL POSSIBLE SENSES of the sentences they utter, contrary to what is implied by regarding (17c) as explicature-cancellation. (17c) is a clarification that (17b) wasn't the explicature in the first place; that (17c) itself (up to 'but') was intended as, and therefore was, the explicature. This – clarification rather than cancellation – surely applies to ambiguities generally ('Not the river bank, shtoopid – the NatWest!') and to reference assignment.

(18) A-i. That fellow's playing is lamentable.
B. Too right. Cruelty to cellos, I call it.
A-ii. Not the cellist! The trombonist!

Does Carston really want to say that (A-ii) cancels THE EXPLICATURE of (A-i)? That would seem to make the hearer (B here) the sole arbiter of what's explicated. But reference – and thus explicature – is determined by speakers' intentions. Inference by the hearer aims at recognition of the speaker's intentions – 'determining' the reference/explicature only in the sense of ASCERTAINING what the speaker's intention has, in another sense, 'determined'. That (A-ii) could be regarded as cancellation of explicature reflects RT's emphasis on the hearer rather than the speaker and her intentions (Saul 2002). While it might be argued that this is a needed corrective to Grice's maxims – which might be thought to focus unduly on the speaker – what is implied by 'cancellation of explicature' is, for me, a correction too far.[15]

[15] In fact, I have always assumed that the maxims do apply to the hearer, albeit derivatively: a hearer is co-operative if and only if he presumes the speaker to be co-operative.

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6. 'ENCODING' AGAIN

'Encoding' as used by Carston (in earlier chapters at least) might be called 'C-ENCODING'. 'C' is for 'constitutive': the semantics of an NL expression is CONSTITUTED by what it 'encodes' (see footnote 5 above). On these terms, the English word *not*, for example, CONSTITUTES – is – the logical operator (¬) that it encodes (i.e. C-encodes). This is traditional and how Carston conceives of *not* in chapter 4. But it sits uneasily in the nest of the 'linguistic' ~ 'real' semantics distinction: we have to accept that the ('real') operator itself – a function from true(/false) to false(/true) propositions – can somehow figure in the domain of non-propositional, non-truth-theoretic 'linguistic semantics'.

Attending more strictly to the distinction between the linguistic encoding (*not*) and what it is an encoding OF (¬) yields a more thoroughgoing 'linguistic' ~ 'real' semantics distinction, I believe. In chapters 4 and 5, there are signs that Carston is heading in this direction – i.e. moving towards a notion of encoding more consistent with Lewis' distinction mentioned above (so let's call it 'L-ENCODING'). [16] For example, (non-constitutive) L-encoding rather than C-encoding seems implied when Carston writes

> [I]t seems that the 'concepts' encoded by bits of lexical phonological material are a rather different kind of thing from the concepts that feature as ingredients in our thoughts. (p. 361)

In the space remaining I can't do justice to the discussion that leads up to this. I quote it because it acknowledges that the encoding is phonologically constituted. Now this does suggest a genuine category distinction – between what is phonologically but not logically constituted (*not*) and what is logically but not phonologically constituted (¬).

Carston goes yet further in the direction of L-encoding when she suggests (p. 363) that 'word meaning' might be 'not a concept' but merely 'a POINTER to a range of concepts'. This is an intriguing conjecture whose implications merit further exploration. The most immediate question it poses is this: if 'word meaning' is not a concept but merely a pointer TO concepts, do we need – in fact, can we have – any notion of either 'narrowing' or 'loosening'? Surely, those notions only make sense if 'word meaning' is taken to consist in 'a concept' (which might then need to be narrowed or loosened).

Before pursuing the general point further, consider how the above bears on scope of negation, for example. Carston is attracted (p. 287) by Atlas' (1989) proposal that, as far as linguistic encoding is concerned, negation is SCOPE-NEUTRAL. This is attractive: it would rule out on *a priori* grounds scopal ambiguity in the linguistic encoding, and it would obviate the (for me,

[16] This corresponds to 'M-representation' in Burton-Roberts (2000).

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arbitrary) choice as to which scope (wide or narrow) was prior and which pragmatically derived. But if the English word *not* actually IS the logical operator (as with C-encoding), then there must be scope of negation in the linguistic encoding. Wherever (at whatever level of representation) the logical operator itself actually figures, it MUST there have some scope or other. By contrast, if (as with L-encoding) what we have in the linguistic ($S_{(NL)}$) encoding is not the logical operator ($\neg$) but merely phonological material (*not*) which, in English, conventionally POINTS TO that operator, it is not only possible but necessary that there is no such thing as scope of negation in the linguistic encoding. Scope of (real) negation pertains exclusively to $S_{(Th)}$ – where, since thought is unambiguous, there is no question of scope ambiguity (or priority).

These encoding considerations, I believe, offer a solution to a problem that Carston, very honestly, faces up to in connection with the central proposal of chapter 5. Were the implications of her proposal pursued further, I believe, the problem she envisages would be seen not to arise in the first place. I will try to explain why.

Chapter 5, as mentioned, envisages the possibility that most (possibly all) words – e.g. *empty*, *tired*, *bald*, *open*, etc. – are each merely pointers to a wide range of concepts in $S_{(Th)}$. The range of actions encoded by the verb *open*, for example, is wildly heterogeneous. Now, operating with C-encoding, you have a choice: either *open* is many ways ambiguous – not attractive, and Carston rejects it – or it C-encodes a single extremely general and schematic concept. This is Carston's choice. The problem she identifies (pp. 363f.) is that this (C-encoded) concept needs to be SO extremely general and schematic that it is difficult to see what part it could possibly play in our mental lives. But this is a genuine problem only if, by 'encoding', we mean C-encoding – taking the concept encoded to be a semantic property of the word. By contrast, if (as suggested by Carston's own discussion) we mean L-encoding, then the fact that *open* L-encodes such a huge range of concepts by no means commits us to hunting for one inexpressibly general concept to attribute as a semantic property to *open*. As a mere POINTER TO a range of concepts, *open* does not itself have any conceptual attribute. Like *not*, it has only phonological attributes.

I sense that Carston is reluctant to explore these and further implications of her own proposal. Most saliently: if having conceptual attributes is a necessary condition for *open* to have meaning/semantics, the above discussion – and I believe chapter 5 itself – suggests that we should deny that the word *open* HAS a semantics. This is not to deny that it is SIGNIFICANT (lots of things are significant without having a semantics). To sound a Wittgensteinian note – 'Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use' – the English word *open* is significant, not because it has a semantics, but because it is conventionally used as an L-encoding pointer to a range of related concepts in $S_{(Th)}$. And I want to insist, with RT, that it is the latter – and only

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the latter – that have meaning (real semantics).[17] I believe this, or something like it, is what Carston's discussion in chapter 5 is, very interestingly, pointing towards.

In this review I have managed to convey only some of the rich texture of Robyn Carston's discussion. All I can say is 'Read this book!' You will not, I trust, be persuaded by everything in it, but you will be made to engage with a good range of the most pressing issues in contemporary pragmatic theory.

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[17] The implications that I'm seeking to draw out here are consistent with Fodor & Lepore (1998) regarding 'the emptiness of the lexicon' and in fact go further. Fodor & Lepore claim that word meanings are atomic because they are denotational. My discussion suggests that it isn't words that have denotations. Words are merely pointers to (ranges of) concepts. It is the concepts that – in the thoughts of an individual – have denotations.

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